

# *A National Strategy for Cultural Health*

*Promoting and Sustaining  
the Child's Cultural and  
Artistic Awakening from  
Birth to the Age of Three,  
Within the Parent-Child  
Bond (ECA-LEP)*

Translation  
adapted from Sophie  
Marinopoulos' 2019 report:  
"Une stratégie nationale  
pour la Santé Culturelle©—  
Promouvoir et pérenniser  
l'éveil culturel et artistique de  
l'enfant de la naissance à 3 ans  
dans le lien à son parent  
(ECA-LEP)"

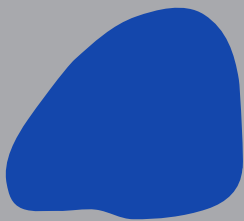
*Universality*



*Parent  
as cultural  
mediator*



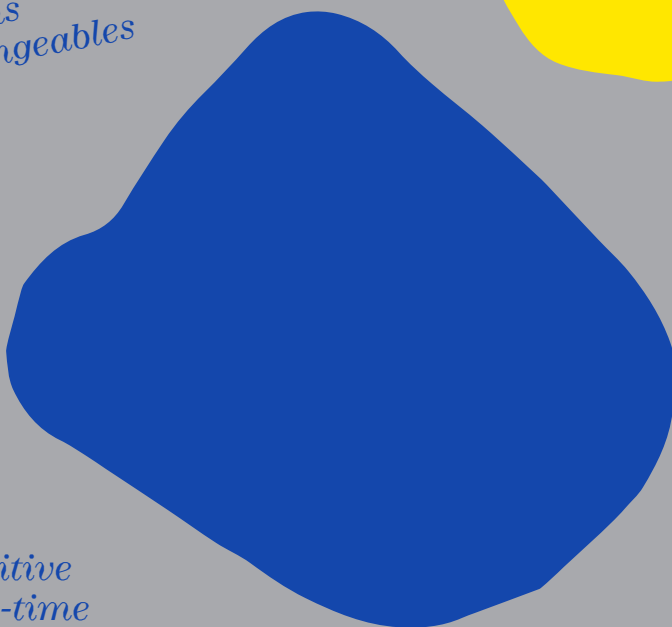
*Birth through  
bonds*



*Sens  
interchangeables*



*Sensitive  
space-time*



*Pluriculture*



*Cultural  
nutrition*



*Cultural  
malnutrition*



*Narrative  
fabric*

*Identification of  
the parent with their child*





# *A National Strategy for Cultural Health*

*Promoting and  
Sustaining the Child's  
Cultural and Artistic  
Awakening from Birth  
to the Age of Three, Within  
the Parent-Child Bond  
(ECA-LEP)\**

\*Translator's note:  
ECA-LEP stands for Éveil  
Culturel et Artistique (Cultural  
and Artistic Awakening) dans  
le Lien Enfant-Parent  
(Within the Parent-Child  
Bond).

Translation  
adapted from Sophie  
Marinopoulos' 2019 report:  
"Une stratégie nationale  
pour la Santé Culturelle©—  
Promouvoir et pérenniser  
l'éveil culturel et artistique de  
l'enfant de la naissance à 3 ans  
dans le lien à son parent  
(ECA-LEP)"

*Translator's Note*

The structure of English—as of any language—presents some challenges when translating. In order to be most inclusive and accurate, we have tried to avoid gendered pronouns. Instead of using “he” to describe a person of undetermined gender (e.g., “the child” or “the parent”), whenever possible we have used “they.” For individual children and babies, we have also used the word “it.” This is a choice in the translation, rather than in the French text; the goal is to avoid adding a gendered meaning where there was not one originally.

# Foreword by Sophie Marinopoulos

Exactly three years ago, Minister of Culture Françoise Nyssen commissioned me to compile a report, after hearing my alarming observations about the poor health of early parent-child bonds, all the while understanding my hope that Culture can help heal these issues.

1 Cultural Health ©Sophie Marinopoulos, INPI DEM-4510999

This is how I came to construct the concept of Cultural Health<sup>1</sup>: to assert that health is inseparable from culture, and to highlight the threat of cultural malnutrition, a symptom of our modernity, which sacrifices our fundamental needs for time, experiences, relationships, language, sharing, recognition, and mutual aid.

Good health of course reflects a body's physiological growth, but that body is also impacted by encounters with outside elements: sensory, aesthetic, linguistic, and imaginative experiences that lead to an intersubjective dialogue carried on within each human relationship. Being alive means yearning to "live together." Culture and art feed directly into this desire, and artists cook up a many-flavored feast of expressions, succulent treats for our beings. And so, starting at birth, we must make cultural policy accessible by developing ambitious initiatives that promote cultural awakening within the parent-child bond (ECA-LEP).

► This report originated in France, but its scope is universal, and Cultural Health similarly knows no borders. Art speaks many languages; this translation project shares our message championing artistic narratives. While allowing wider access, this spreads awareness of the crucial dialogue between culture and health that is held in this report. Distributing this translation will encourage creation for young audiences, will push for significant funding to that end, will expand culture's presence as a lived experience wherever babies are found, and will make room for families in our museums, exhibitions, theaters, concerts, and performance spaces.

As I write this, the battle has not been won. And yet something is afoot! I am excited to feel a cultural breeze blowing across France, carrying big opportunities for our littlest ones; soon, through this translation, it will whoosh around the world. I have heard from many artists who now feel more listened-to and understood by their cultural authorities, and from many childhood professionals who are bringing Cultural Health to a new constructive dialogue with their associated institutions. There have been discussions of adding aspects of cultural and artistic awakening to children's health booklets; a publicity campaign began encouraging cultural institutions to consider children and parents' place within their walls; support has increased for creations aimed at a very young audience; and more cultural spaces have been created exclusively for babies and their parents, including the "thousand shapes" ("mille formes") space in Clermont-Ferrand.

The unprecedented crisis of Covid-19 has only confirmed humans' vital need to see, to hear, to feel, to touch, to experience any type of artistic expression. For those with such access, time has passed more easily and the crisis has felt gentler.

Between March and June of 2020, hundreds of families shared this same observation with myself and with my teams of psychologists.<sup>2</sup> We chose to make ourselves available to families, by phone, from 9am to 9pm. Our team certainly heard about the suffering that cruel social inequalities inflicted on locked-down parents and children. But we also observed another inequality: that of cultural access, which clearly concerns all social strata. This is a question of individuals' capacity to open themselves to the world of the sensitive and of the aesthetic, whatever their family's material conditions.

The people most affected have been those without the inner resources reinforced by symbolic space, by imagination, by subjectivity, by the metaphorical call to thought carried on by the arts. Sharing a book with your child, relaxing

<sup>2</sup> Les Pâtes au Beurre is a free family support center in Nantes.  
■■■ [lespatesaubeurre.fr](http://lespatesaubeurre.fr)



as a family with music, dreaming one's way out of confinement, observing nature as an "escape" from home—all are comforting cultural invitations.

And this world is in serious need of such peace. We find this as we take big steps toward ensuring access to cultural and artistic awakening for all the world's babies, a right that must be championed just as forcefully as education is emphasized for older children. Educating a baby means awakening it. Let's seize the opportunity offered by this English-language edition; let's add to the ranks of those who work for our children.

Together, for the future, let's acknowledge the importance of cultural and artistic awakening in the little one's life. Let's demand that awakening become an indicator of wealth, let's recognize it as an ability, and let's make it a primary human right.

The text presented here is an adaptation of my 2019 report for the French Ministry of Culture, published under the title "Une stratégie nationale pour la Santé Culturelle—Promouvoir et pérenniser l'éveil culturel et artistique de l'enfant de la naissance à 3 ans dans le lien à son parent (ECA-LEP)."

Scènes d'enfance—ASSITEJ is responsible for bringing this international edition to life, and we thank them for this beautiful gesture, which will surely help increase solidarity. ♣ The English adaptation consists of the overview, recommendations, arguments and essential elements of the report. We were not able to include all of the inspiring initiatives that our commission uncovered, nor the annexes attached to the initial report. The French version was made possible through the aid of artists, childhood professionals, and cultural associations who shared their skills with me and deepened my analysis. Aurélie Lesous, of the Ministry of Culture, guaranteed the project's success with her loyal support from start to finish. I extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone involved. The full French version and its annexes may be found at: ■■■ [culture.gouv.fr](http://culture.gouv.fr)

# Table of contents

Foreword by Sophie  
Marinopoulos [3]

Scènes d'enfance  
—ASSITEJ [11]

Émilie Robert: “Committed  
to being a mediator between  
the desires of artists and  
the youngest audiences.”  
[13]

Laurent Dupont: “With  
the small children, I share  
the capacity to venture  
toward the unknown.”  
[15]

Florence Goguel: “We feel  
like tightrope walkers”  
[18]

Report by Sophie  
Marinopoulos  
— A National Strategy  
for Cultural Health  
Promoting and  
Sustaining the Child’s  
Cultural and Artistic  
Awakening from Birth  
to the Age of Three,  
Within the Parent-  
Child Bond  
(ECA-LEP) [21]

Franck Riester’s Introduction  
to the 2019 Report [23]  
Preface [25]  
Engagement Letter [27]  
Acknowledgments [29]

## Overview [33]

A Commission Centered  
on a New Concept:  
Cultural Health [35]  
Strategic Orientation [37]  
Objective of the National  
Strategy of ECA-LEP [38]  
Toward a Policy  
Focused on ECA-LEP [39]  
Charter of Cultural  
Health [41]  
Arguments for ECA-LEP [42]  
Recommendations [45]  
Glossary of Cultural  
Health [52]

# Theoretical Arguments for ECA-LEP [57]

# A

## Toward a New Perspective on Culture [59]

1. **Childhood in Culture: A 50-Year-Old Dilemma** [59]
2. **Culture for Today's Young Children?** [60]
3. **A Triptych: Culture-Baby-Democracy** [61]
4. **Fighting Cultural Malnutrition** [61]
5. **The Role of Screens in Cultural Malnutrition** [64]
  - 5.1 **Screens and Digital Technology** [64]
  - 5.2 **All Screens Are Not Created Equal** [66]
  - 5.3 **Adults and Screens** [67]
6. **Culturally Nourished Versus Cultivated: Two Different Things** [68]
7. **Dawn of a New Concept: Cultural Health** [68]
  - 7.1 **Cultural Health and Universality** [68]
  - 7.2 **Nutrients for Cultural Health** [70]
  - 7.3 **Growing Into Humanity** [70]
  - 7.4 **Charter of Cultural Health** [71]

## Scientific Basis for Our Argument [73]

1. **Our Human Condition** [73]
  - 1.1 **Our Human Condition Is Not Unconditional** [73]
  - 1.2 **Neoteny** [73]
  - 1.3 **The Tale-Tellers** [74]
  - 1.4 **Our Hard Drug** [75]
2. **New Scientific Perspectives** [75]
  - 2.1 **Epigenetics** [76]
  - 2.2 **Brain Plasticity** [76]
    - From Psychoanalysis to Brain Plasticity [77]
    - Brain Development and Environmental Influence [78]
    - Brain Development and Sexual Identity [78]
  - 2.3 **Studies on Mutual Aid** [79]

3. **Filiation: Lines of Descent** [80]
  - 3.1 **The Great Metamorphosis** [80]
  - 3.2 **The Biological Pillar of Filiation** [80]
  - 3.3 **The Legal Pillar of Filiation** [81]
  - 3.4 **The Psychological Pillar of Filiation** [81]
4. **Parenthood** [82]
  - 4.1 **Parenthood: A Neologism** [82]
  - 4.2 **The Contribution of Didier Houzel** [82]
  - 4.3 **Parenthood, Parents' Role and Modernity** [83]
  - 4.4 **Pregnancy and the Birth of a Parenthood Process** [84]
    - The Four Movements of Psychological Pregnancy [85]
    - The Trimesters of Psychological Pregnancy [85]
    - The Birth: An Emotional Symphony of Release and Violence [85]
  - 4.5 **Many-Factored Precarity and Parenthood** [86]
    - Insecurity and Single-Parenthood [86]
    - Insecurity and Separation [86]
    - Material and Social Insecurity [87]
    - Insecurity and Work Transfers [87]
    - Insecurity and Migration [87]
  - 4.6 **Metamorphosis from Adult to Parent: A Cultural Movement** [88]
5. **Development of the Child** [89]
  - 5.1 **From Senses to Thoughts: A Relational Model of Thinking** [90]
  - 5.2 **Identification, A Key Part of Caring for Children** [91]
  - 5.3 **Growing Up, a Team Effort: Attachment as a Work in Progress** [91]
  - 5.4 **Growing Up, a Team Effort: Intersubjectivity as a Work in Progress** [92]
    - Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity [92]
    - Intersubjectivity and Protoconversation [92]
    - Intersubjectivity and Sociability [92]
  - 5.5 **Growing Up, a Team Effort: Language as a Work in Progress** [93]
    - Distance: A Structural Condition of Language [94]
    - The Tragedy and Wonder of Language [94]
    - Social Desire as Opening to Culture and Language [95]
  - 5.6 **A Few Concepts Demonstrating the Value of ECA-LEP** [97]
  - 5.7 **The Child's Aesthetic Sense** [97]
  - 5.8 **The Child's Relationship with Nature** [99]
6. **Lessons from Emotional Deprivation** [101]
  - 6.1 **When the Sensory and Emotional Bond is Neglected** [101]
  - 6.2 **Deterioration in Relationship Health and Its Consequences** [102]
7. **A New Public Health Challenge Requiring Interministerial Coordination** [103]

# Framework for ECA-LEP [105]

Experiences,  
Intuitions,  
Observations  
[107]

# B

1. Live Performance [107]
2. Live Performance:  
Practical Framework [108]
  - 2.1 The Four Phases  
of Live Performance [108]
    - Creation [108]
    - Preparation [108]
    - Performance [108]
    - After the Show [108]
  - 2.2 The Performance Space [109]
  - 2.3 Artistic Elements [109]
  - 2.4 Promotion by the Host [109]
  - 2.5 Hosting Parents and/or  
Guardians and Very  
Young Children [109]
  - 2.6 How to Welcome Children  
and Adults into the  
Performance Space [109]
  - 2.7 Right Before  
the Performance [110]
  - 2.8 During the  
Performance [110]
  - 2.9 After the Performance  
[110]
3. The Book, a Cultural  
Symbol [111]
  - 3.1 Where it All Began [111]
  - 3.2 Two Helpful Paths  
for Children and Books [111]
  - 3.3 Frame of Reference:  
Reading with Little Ones  
and Their Parents [112]
    - Reading Together,  
a Cultural Collaboration [112]
    - Children, Parents  
and Books [112]
    - Reading with a Little  
One in a Professional  
Framework: Who, What,  
Where, When and How? [113]
  - 3.4 At First, there is Nothing  
to “Learn”– Only to Receive  
and Experience [114]
  - 3.5 The “Premières Pages”  
Program [115]

4. Play: An Art of Growing Up [118]
  - 4.1 Development  
and Play [118]
  - 4.2 Game Libraries:  
Toward a Policy of  
Popular Education [119]
  - 4.3 Nature and Play [120]

Imagining  
a Different World  
for Our Children  
[122]

1. A Social Expectation [122]
2. A New Anthropological  
Foundation [122]

# Basics of a Public Policy Blueprint Promoting ECA-LEP [125]

# C

What Should Be  
Included in a Public  
Policy Blueprint  
Promoting ECA-LEP?  
[127]

1. Culture for Little Ones  
is Anything but Superfluous:  
Recognizing Cultural Health,  
Recognizing the Baby  
as a Cultural Being [128]
2. Parents: What Would  
We Do Without Them? [129]
3. Parents and Centers  
for Maternal and Child  
Protection (PMIs) [131]
4. Childhood Professionals [132]
  - 4.1 Classification  
and Training [132]
  - 4.2 Childhood Professionals  
and ECA-LEP [134]
  - 4.3 Hearing from  
Professionals [135]
5. Role of Child and Family  
Protection Specialists  
in ECA-LEP as a Pillar of Support  
for Parenthood [136]

6. Toward a New Way of Teaching:  
The Pluriculture of Awakening  
[137]

7. The Artist [138]

→ Artists Create  
for Little Ones [139]

→ Artists Are Not  
Childhood

Professionals [140]

→ Artists Are Not Just  
Entertainers [140]

8. Manifesto: 40 Proposals  
for Youth [140]

9. Cultural Mediation:

A Pathway to Success  
for ECA-LEP [141]

10. The Role of Associations  
in Championing and Spreading  
ECA-LEP Across France [142]

10.1 Nonprofit Association  
Law of 1901: Classification  
and Mission [142]

10.2 Cultural Associations:  
Our Heritage and an  
Embodiment of Our  
Cultural History [142]

10.3 The Weakening  
of Nonprofit Associations  
[143]

11. What About the Regions? [144]

12. Long-Term Success:  
Striving for Continuity [145]

13. Budgets, or the Price  
of a Peaceful Society [146]

14. Mapping ECA-LEP  
in France [146]

National Studies

Proving the Need

for a Three A's

Policy: Anticipate,

Accommodate,

Accompany [148]

1. Policy Based on the Three A's  
Recognizes that All Social  
Suffering is Cultural Suffering  
[148]

2. Cultural Rights, in Service  
of the Three A's Policy [148]

3. Reflections and Observations of  
the French Public Health Agency  
(SFSP): Accompaniment of  
Parenthood and Social Inequality  
[151]

4. Conceptualizing Cultural Health  
for the Three A's  
Policy by Connecting ECA-LEP  
to Perinatal Measures [153]

5. Toward a Cultural Policy  
with a Social Dimension  
that Considers Environmental  
and Ecological Issues,  
for the Benefit of Children [155]

# Toward a Cultural Policy with a Social Dimension [159]

# D

Toward an Ambitious  
Policy [161]

First "A": A Cultural Policy  
with a Social Dimension  
for "Awaiting" [163]

Second "A": A Cultural Policy  
with a Social Dimension  
for "Accommodating"  
[165]

Third "A": A Cultural Policy  
with a Social Dimension  
for "Accompanying"  
[167]

Solidarity Tickets [169]

Integrating the Concepts  
of Awakening and Cultural  
Health of the Young Child  
into the Major Documents  
on Human Rights [171]

1. Opening our Social Imagination  
to the Idea of Awakening [171]

2. Homage to Frédéric Passy,  
"Apostle of Peace," First to Receive  
the Nobel Peace Prize [172]

3. Cultural Health: "Awakening"  
as a New Indicator of Wealth [172]

4. Recommendations for a New  
Conception of Human Rights  
Between Birth and Three Years  
at the International Level [173]

List of Testimonies

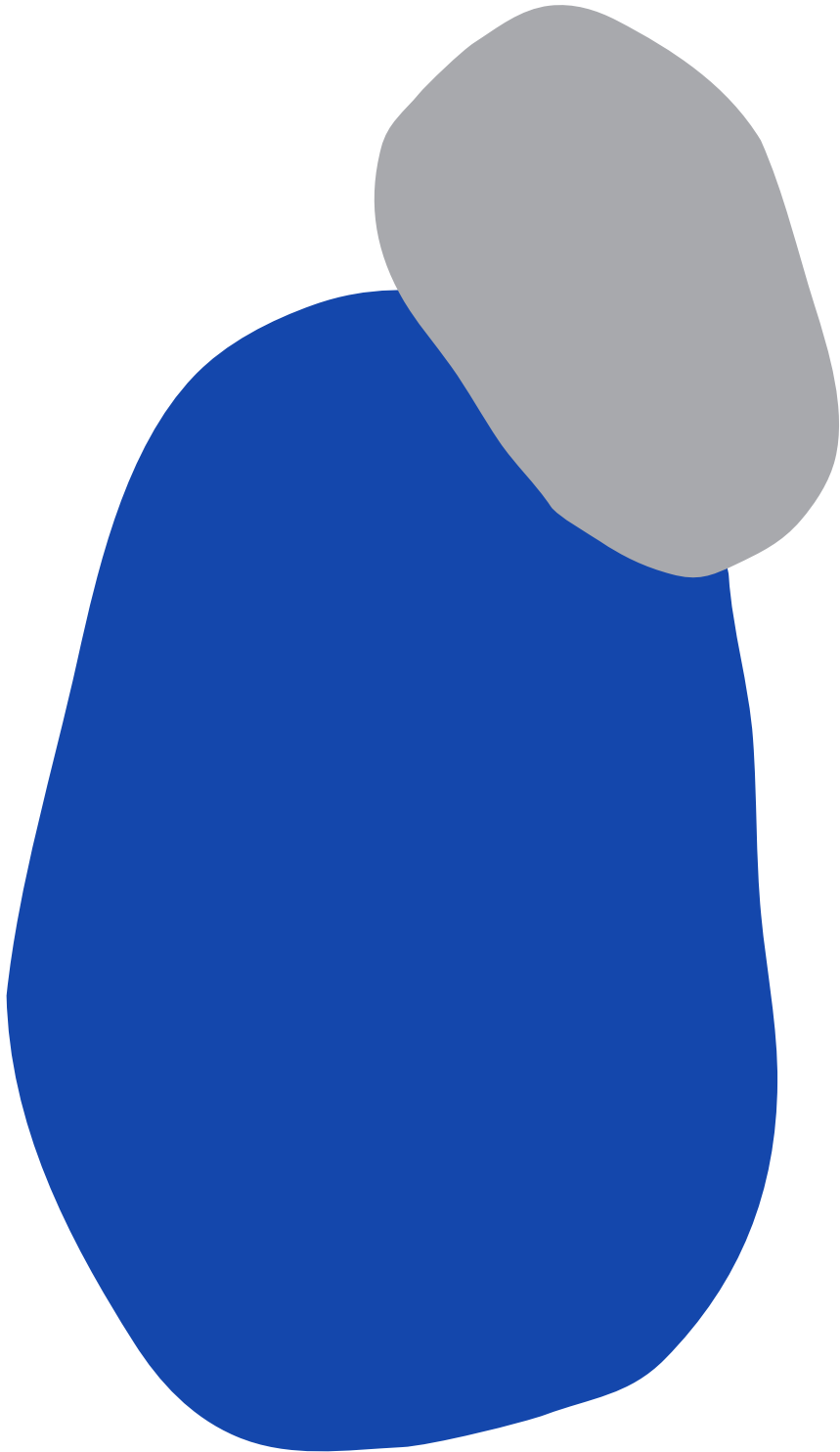
July-December, 2018

[175]

List of Selected

Abbreviations [177]

Credits [178]



Scènes d'enfance—ASSITEJ France was born in 2015, after the merger of Scène(s) d'enfance et d'ailleurs and ASSITEJ France, the French center of ASSITEJ. Representative of the professional stakeholders in the field of performing arts for young audiences, it brings together artists, programmers, mediators, production and diffusion managers, men and women committed to make children and performances meet.

Scènes d'enfance—ASSITEJ France aims to promote the artistic and cultural awakening of babies.

This creation for babies and their families has been particularly abundant in France since the mid-1990s. Versatile and innovative, it is at the crossroads of the diverse disciplines of the performing arts, visual and digital arts included. In the field, it is supported by artists, theaters, festivals, communities, institutions of the social economy – convinced of its value, in terms of cultural democratization, openness to imagination and acceptance of the other. In 2015, the “*Belle saison avec l'enfance et la jeunesse*” (Beautiful season with children and youth) took place: a national focus on the arts for young audiences, carried jointly by the Ministry of Culture and our association. The 2017 agreement “For the artistic and cultural awakening of young children”, signed by the Ministry of Culture and Communication and the Ministry of Families, Children and Women's Rights set the framework for a new commitment of the government in favor of the youngest children and their families, and its implementation through an, until then unseen, multiplicity of operators.

Much more than an update to these policies, the report that Sophie Marinopoulos wrote for the Ministry of Culture, published in 2019, is a theoretical and practical reaffirmation of the capital value of art and culture, from birth on, in the life of every citizen, for themselves as well as for society. Carefully documented, based on the experience of its author as a clinical psychologist, her associative practice, and her meetings with dozens of professionals in the field, it is a valuable tool for all those who fulfill their—often difficult—mission with toddlers and their entourage. It carries a vision to which we, activists for the recognition of the rights to an artistic and cultural life for all children, could not but associate ourselves.

On the eve of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASSITEJ, an international institution founded in France, we are pleased to present it to you in English, in close collaboration with the services of the Ministry of Culture. We hope that it will contribute to the rich debates of the international early childhood community.

We hope you enjoy reading it!

— Cyrille Planson is Vice-president  
of Scènes d'enfance—ASSITEJ France



Émilie Robert: “Committed  
to being a mediator between  
the desires of artists  
and the youngest audiences.”

Today, a still-limited number of cultural organizations choose to include performances for the youngest children in their programming, because hosting babies in a theater demands a very specific type of investment. And yet such opportunities answer one of small children’s fundamental needs: to develop culturally from the youngest age, and particularly within the relationship with their parents.

A cultural organization is above all a mediator between the desires of artists and of their audiences. The structure exists to help the one create for the other, to provide a necessary framework (a setting), and finally to facilitate the encounter. And very young children need to be welcomed and addressed in a very particular way.

Sophie Marinopoulos writes that “Cultural and Artistic Awakening [...] encourages parents to make time for pleasurable moments that build the connection with their child. [...] Sharing sensory and aesthetic encounters encourages identification. Sharing excitement or experiencing a performance together creates a sensory communion that aids the capacity to identify and creates an environment beneficial to the child’s primary needs.”

What high stakes, what responsibility! This work of constructing the experience is thus delicate, precise. It requires that the cultural organizations understand babies’ needs and backgrounds, and that they also acknowledge the accompanying adults. The grownups must be guided to respond (or not) to the little one’s reactions during the performance, and to avoid feeling discouraged when faced with potential hiccups. But they should also feel welcomed as spectators, because the performances address them as well.

Massalia Theater, an organization classified as serving the national interest in the field of art for children and youth, is located at Friche La Belle de Mai, a repurposed factory in Marseille. It has for many years offered early childhood performances and has been recognized for its skill at hosting young children. In addition, it regularly supports artists whose work speaks to little ones, through residencies in early childcare centers or in the theater. It offers logistical and financial support in producing the piece, and shares any practical knowledge about early childhood that can aid in creating the work or welcoming the audience for performances.

Preparation for residencies begins with a shared reflection: observation, experimentation, and exchanges. What will be the focus of the artists’ stay? What role will the early childhood professionals play? Logistical and technical elements are of course key concerns. Next, it is important to construct the project collaboratively with the childcare center, which makes its plans in coordination with the artists. Other residencies take place in the theater, often capped with a final presentation, to which a group of babies is invited: guinea pigs for this early stage of the creation. Here again, the childcare center’s involvement is critical to ensuring that there will be an audience. Furthermore, post-performance reactions of the childhood professionals and the theater’s team prove invaluable to continuing the artistic process.

In order to most effectively carry out these projects, as well as to plan for hosting little ones in a performance space, a resource for sharing knowledge and experimentation—like the Art et

Tout-petit network in Marseille—is priceless. The group brings together early childhood professionals, artists, and a cultural organization (Massalia Theater). It describes itself as a “collective of reflection and experimentation, connecting cultural professionals and early childhood professionals with the goal of developing artistic projects that help build relationships.”

Art et Tout-petit is coordinated by a steering committee that puts on a twice-annual conference to spark exchange around a central theme, to share information, and to introduce projects from artists who might want to participate in a residency at a childcare center. It’s also a moment for learning together, sometimes for comparing perspectives or situations, and for sharing performance experiences. From the perspective of the cultural organization, this is an important place for understanding what’s at stake for the early childhood professionals, for expressing the needs of the artists and the organization, and for working on welcoming the little one in various venues.

A large segment of the creations supported by Massalia Theater for young audiences begin by contacting the resource network, which helps establish the appropriate residencies for the artists. In this way, the collaboration enriches the quality of the encounter between the artists and their very young spectators. It also provides regular opportunities to reexamine the conditions for presenting the performance and hosting the public, so as to ensure the highest quality.

In 2017 an interministerial protocol was released regarding the cultural and artistic awakening of young children. As a result, the process led by Art et Tout-petit and Massalia Theater is no longer solely a matter of on-the-ground experience, because a specific policy is being progressively implemented at the Ministry of Culture, in conjunction with the Ministry of Solidarity and Health. The two ministries have committed to a “Cultural and Artistic Awakening” component in early childcare policy and an “Early Childhood” component in artistic and cultural education policy. They also support integrating these subjects into the initial and continuing education for early childhood professionals, for artists, and for other cultural professionals. Finally, they wish to sustain those professionals’ exemplary and innovative initiatives, especially their creations for a very young audience.

Sophie Marinopoulos’ document represents an important progress report on this new policy. It particularly helped focus on parents’ role as communicators of culture, which is a matter of cultural rights, and on culture’s role in building the parent-child bond. It laid out a common basis for the two professional sectors to cocreate their initiatives.

Today, more and more cultural and early childhood professionals are working together to inspire the little one’s cultural and artistic awakening. New initiatives are appearing, including in regions where they had formerly been lacking. The support of public policies, both in central and regional governments, will play a large role in their success—and in the success of young children’s cultural and artistic awakening as a whole. Now is the moment to raise awareness about the absolute importance of our youngest children’s cultural rights.

— Émilie Robert

Director of Massalia Theater (Théâtre Massalia),  
co-president of Scènes d’enfance— ASSITEJ France

My remarks touch on the inner experience, on how the artist is called upon by young children and how that encounter tests his or her skills.

I began my artistic journey with vocals and dance. I soon came in contact with other artists, as someone who, at the intersection between the different languages we use in our search (visual arts, dance, theater, digital art, etc.), identified the basic principles that unite them (momentum, falling, thrust, suspension, silence), whether manifested in image, sound, or voice.

I started exploring that confluence of different languages, where sound, gesture, and physical matter don't perform “soul-searching” but aspire to trigger it within a synthesis—a composition that melds music with games, a resonant object with the body, sound with poetry. Between aesthetic precision and brief narrative arcs, this theatrical writing seeks to welcome varied readings, leaving interpretation open to each person's sensibilities: The spectators are invited to create their own vision according to their emotions.

In the 1990s, enlightened cultural professionals, true activists, and trailblazing festivals (Ricochets, Méli'môme, Résonances) dared to ask artists how they create for little children. They invited us to follow in the sensitive footsteps of this imaginary world, and affirmed little kids as audience members in their own right. This provoked tensions between the art form's proponents and its outspoken critics, providing us a chance to reexamine our skillsets. What artistic work would be powerful enough to even peek into the little one's imaginary garden, to tug an infant through the middle space of daydreams—of representation?

With the children, I began a process of vocal exploration, to question how I perform and discover how they listen. In this search, I uncovered some fundamentals about working with little ones: the search for a new language, a different way to communicate, a limitless realm of experimentation. Above all, I discovered how adult and young child can share within this two-way conversation, which inspired new paths in my theatrical research and my principles of writing.

Armed with this experience, I opened myself to the little one's abilities to communicate, below the level of language, through sonic expressions—babbling, gesturing—and their modulations. I let myself be guided by my intuitions, knowing nothing for certain, embracing the risk of the moment.

With the small children, I share the capacity to venture toward the unknown with a combination of terror and wide-open curiosity. I also began to listen to the “motherland,” the resting-place of this becoming being's founding emotions. These forces that shake the child from such a young age lie at the heart of our identity. Between my worldview and the little one's perception began a horizontal communication, from being to being: a shared pleasure, an aesthetic pleasure—resonating together. These many intentions crystallize a life experience where we can brush against, affect, and reach one another. Where feelings mix, where inner experience and outer perspective blend. Where the artist questions the world and where the child discovers it... A meeting point between two imaginary worlds.

Through the physical matter where my emotions are anchored and from which I fashion my writing, an opportunity emerged for an encounter with the child's sensory and perceptive universe: tactile material (sand, earth, tissue paper); sonic, vocal, and phonic material; shade and light. In this still-blank place, these actions

trace a series of imprints, a sensory awakening, that echoes the child's own experience.

Little ones question the narrative's timing. Their attention and ways of taking in the world represent the through-line in my compositions: variation, repetition, the magnitude of gestures and sounds, rhythm, suspension, silence—principles mirroring those of the child.

Little ones question the performance space and the arrangement onstage. They disrupt distances, play with proximity, change the rules of the game and force the storyteller to adapt his or her approach, through the breathing so unique to the way babies listen. Each creation invites me to wander the secret gardens of my emotions, a ramble toward a potential path through this otherworld where I am the bearer of images, through analogies and metaphors, depictions tinged with the storm or sunshine of relationships, at the heart of the discovery—or loss—of the other.

Throughout my time in childcare centers, I've been struck by the daily separation of parent and child, a highly emotional moment. We adults have discussed these encounters, the "happiness of," the "sorrow of," the "loss of." This was the starting point for my recent collaborative creation with two dancers. Our performance—entitled "Here...not here!" ("Là...Pas Là!")—speaks of loss. Loss is terrifying, but one can always break free... In the middle of the performance, the room is plunged into darkness and the artists pause as long as possible, reilluminating the room only when they can wait no longer. Something profound thus comes to life between the adult audience, the children, and the storytellers. In this middle-space, what's fundamental is the confidence, the attention, the pause, and the expectation that allow us to deepen and share our emotional experience.

When the performance ends, as the curtain comes down, a reverie descends like a much-needed breath in this liminal space we hardly felt—a deep shroud of silence, the quiet of after. Everything has been put forth, all has been given, the sediment can finally settle. This breath is necessary for the imprints to fully form: a suspension, before leaving that barely-glimpsed "elsewhere." In these relational interplays, a shared memory gets knitted between artists and audience, little ones and grownups, within which they can discover the other and their difference. This is what we attempt to offer them.

Over the years, through the codirection of stage director Agnès Desfosses (who founded the ACTA theater company), and in pursuing its commitment to culture and art, my investigations inspired by early childhood have been able to flourish thanks to the experimentation that takes place in ACTA's home town of Villiers-le-Bel.

The long-term goal of these programs, so consequential for society, is to help implement practices and exchanges. Such experimentation is made possible by the moral and financial support of Villiers-le-Bel's elected officials and of our sponsoring agencies: DRAC, CGET, the General Council of Val d'Oise, and the Regional Council. These endeavors take place within interdisciplinary partnerships and through co-creation among artists, early childhood professionals, parents, and children. They are framed by the rhythm of the relationship.

Everything happens within dialogue, sharing, and emotion. These elements trigger a change in attitude, a spirit of openness, that shows the value of such skills and techniques. This is what we call an encounter. Cultural initiatives have the power to connect us with our world, get to know it, listen to it, and then put it onstage. They have this marvelous potential to act as mediators; they become an expression of understanding and of recognition, where we meet an otherness that opens a pathway to the other. Art becomes a tool to facilitate coexistence and bring together

many communities in a place of completely dynamic relationships. From this perspective, developing similar artistic endeavors is essential to cultivating social connections.

The 2002 creation of *Les Premières Rencontres* (First Encounters), a European biennial event, marked the natural next step in this sharing process. Over three to four weeks, we offer an assortment of French and international performances in various venues across Villiers-le-Bel, and in approximately 15 participating nearby towns. In the years that followed, the two days of the International Forum have become a worldwide meeting—as well as a cultural landmark for the region—that brings together artists, researchers, and early childhood professionals. This is why the report on Cultural Health is so important: It carries on our shared ambition to achieve recognition for artistic and cultural awakening.

All of these exchanges and encounters have facilitated a reexamination of my writing. They help reaffirm art, in its varied forms: art that is alive and engaged, that shares something extraordinary with very young spectators. Art that is aware of the children's presence, aware of the feelings and emotions they express through their gaze and sometimes-dizzying curiosity about the world! We must consider all this with the utmost seriousness, within a mindset that's at once fragile, flexible, visionary, and daring—and attempt to simply give these questions a place in our daily lives.

— Laurent Dupont  
Artistic director and stage director,  
ACTA theater company (Compagnie ACTA)

## Florence Goguel: “We feel like tightrope walkers”

### ▲ How did you end up working with young children?

As a “visiting scholar,” I studied ethnomusicology, dance, and theater with the UCLA film department in California. When I returned to France, I worked on musical programming for the Cité de la musique in Paris. That’s where I discovered the work of Agnès Desfosses, of Brigitte Lallier-Maisonneuve, of Laurent Dupont. I began to feel that there was room for free expression, as compared to the traditional norms—for mixing disciplines, for using the whole body. I see myself as a musician of the body and of sounds. Like small children, I don’t distinguish between movement and music. We also find this in many cultures that I researched over the course of my studies.

▲ During your performances, you invite the audience, including parents or chaperones and children, to participate in small artistic adventures—sometimes static, sometimes moving around the space—that they navigate together, side by side. How do you think of your role in this relationship between children and adults?

It’s true, there are never little kids without adults nearby. We say that our performances are geared toward all audiences, starting with the youngest but with no age limit. The presence of childhood professionals, specifically, and of those who are unaccustomed to artistic creation, is very important to us. I try to resonate with the young child’s state of being. It’s a place of sharing—of communion, even if there’s nothing religious about it. And so our differences disappear and we all experience collectively. We feel like tightrope walkers; it’s the human sharing that keeps us aloft. We feel extremely present. For performers, it’s like street theater. There are no conventions to follow, no safety net. Presence is the only tool we have.

This experience leaves a mark, and I might even suggest that it heals. After the performance, many people approach us and say: “Ah, that did me good!” They feel nourished, relaxed. It’s the body that feels.

▲ Nature, and play within and with nature, are central to your company’s work.

I’m a city girl, so I yearn for nature, and I want my art to help rebuild the spectators’ bond with it. Young children have a connection to the physical world, to its poetry. I try to understand the world through this lens by activating my sensitivity and my sensory perception.

In a collaboration with Dunois Theater (Paris), we are among five theater companies<sup>1</sup> that are currently working with landscape designer Gilles Clément on a new project: the Theater of the Global Garden (Le théâtre du jardin planétaire).

▲ Your company is based in the Seine-Saint-Denis department, which is home to both the poorest and youngest populations in France, with the exception of overseas French territories. How does this context contribute to your work?

Seine-Saint-Denis is a multicultural place, where there is a great need for art. The Departmental Council has long valued the connection between art and early childhood. For example, they organize artist visits in childcare centers, which allow us to try out our work both with children and with childhood professionals. The large demand from such institutions has turned Seine-Saint-Denis into a sort of laboratory. The fact that there are so many languages and cultures has influenced me. We’re surrounded by different dialects, we just need to listen.

We also work quite a bit in Réunion, a French island territory. What we experiment with, both here and there, resonates with the mosaic of cultures. This helps us to stay in touch with humanity's fundamental and universal aspects.

▲ Working as a collective, as part of a network, is also a key element of your artistic practice.

The Puzzle Collective began in Seine-Saint-Denis, in connection with the 1.9.3. Soleil association.<sup>2</sup> It's a network of Paris-area theater companies that perform for very young children; if a company is selected by the collective, that is a token of artistic quality.

We created the "Puzzle Roundtables" ("Plateaux Puzzle"), daylong gatherings for those who work with and create programming for young children. They are a place where we share ideas, solidarity, and reassurance. For example, during the current crisis, we are working together on themes of connection and of touch.

▲ Would you say your craft is easy?

Not at all! I feel I'm in the right place, but we do put ourselves in risky situations. Everything begins with our own fragile inner child. Onstage, we expose that fragility.

— Florence Goguel is a musician and director, and the artistic director of the Compagnie du Porte-Voix, which creates musical theatre shows for young audiences. Remarks gathered by François Fogel.

1 Compagnie du Porte-voix, Collectif I am a bird now, Compagnie AMK, Compagnie Lunatic, Compagnie Praxinoscope

2 "Resource center for live performance geared to very young children in Seine-Saint-Denis and beyond..."





# Report by Sophie Marinopoulos

*A National Strategy  
for Cultural Health  
Promoting and Sustaining  
the Child's Cultural  
and Artistic Awakening  
from Birth to the Age  
of Three, Within  
the Parent-Child Bond  
(ECA-LEP)*



# Franck Riester's Introduction to the 2019 Report

23

Parents are the first to transmit culture to small children. Artists, through their creations and performances, offer those children a chance to seize the world. This is why the Ministry of Culture commits to making art and culture accessible to everyone, starting at the youngest age. Cultural and artistic awakening of young children should, going forward, be the basis of proposals for child development, as well as part of families' daily life. Early childhood is the foundational moment of awakening to oneself, to others and to one's environment. 🍄 I want to thank Sophie Marinopoulos for her work, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, on the report, "A National Strategy for Cultural Health: Promoting and Sustaining the Child's Cultural and Artistic Awakening from Birth to the Age of Three, Within the Parent-Child Bond (ECA-LEP)." Her arguments highlight culture's central role in supporting the parent-child connection, in a spirit of proactive prevention, along with experts in health, family, education and ecology.

Mrs. Marinopoulos is right to recommend "implementing a public policy based on ECA and ECA-LEP across France, and recognizing such policy as a priority in supporting the rights of the child. The awakening of children between birth and the age of three will give momentum to later artistic and cultural programs. Awakening precedes education." Culture and art, starting at the beginning of life, are much more than an introduction to cultural and artistic education. This is the moment where openness to art and culture takes root. The Cultural Health introduced by Sophie Marinopoulos invites us to rethink public policy and to refocus our attention squarely on the child and their parents. This is why, consistent with the interministerial program for artistic and cultural awakening for young children (March 2017), I hope that the Ministry of Culture will continue in its commitment to children, to youth and to their families, in partnership with the Ministry of Solidarity and Health. To this end, I applaud cultural organizations' growing recognition of young children and families. The ministry stands with artists and

other nonprofit workers who speak to the sensitivity and aesthetic awareness that each baby possesses.

The continual enrichment of resources for the very young and young public in the areas of live performance and literacy, as well as the ongoing efforts of museums and historical sites, help move in this direction. By publishing this report, I hope to share the inspiring initiatives found in the course of this mission. We can all adopt this approach to the young child and their family. The collection of initiatives is not exhaustive, and I applaud the commitment of professionals in the worlds of culture and early childhood, and that of local governments as well as numerous institutional and volunteer organizations. 🍄 Working with children and youth calls for a unique skillset and special human qualities. This is why you will also find in this report a remarkable formalized approach, centered on books, reading and live performance, led by Sophie Marinopoulos in concert with artists and professionals of culture and early childhood.

Early childhood is a time of heightened attention from families toward the wellbeing and healthy development of their children. Prioritizing the awakening of young children also means sharing discoveries, wonder and artistic creations with parents and with siblings.

Franck Riester  
Minister of Culture



The report, “A National Strategy for Cultural Health: Promoting and Sustaining the Child’s Cultural and Artistic Awakening from Birth to the Age of Three, Within the Parent-Child Bond (ECA-LEP),” that I directed for the Ministry of Culture, was born of a concern and of a hope. The concern comes from daily practice with my primary teachers—the children—as well as their parents, who today feel lost, burdened with what they describe as an impossible task, in a destabilizing era. They are sad, disappointed, hurt that they cannot meet the challenge. Anxious about their child’s future, they ask to be heard and call for our skills. ♣ This report is written in the hope that we can figure out how to bring together modernity with humanity, and to argue for a policy that cultivates connections, so as to support parents as they raise their children and help them grow their own “parent beings.” ♣ To this end, we began a reflection based on both health and culture, and called this concept *Cultural Health*, reviving the idea of a universal culture, one *without borders*, found in infants’ awakening to their human existence. This particular form of culture stems from the young child’s infinite desire to communicate, to be open to the world, to languages, to others, to other cultures, and to difference. Cultural Health puts the Subject on the path to awareness of self and of those around them. ♣ To the question “Why today?” we respond that this excessive era of acceleration, consumption, efficiency, output, and expert assessments can hinder the development of the parent-child bond. Among these impediments is the monoculture of the screen, which should be questioned and countered with a pluriculture of awakening. ECA-LEP, whose importance is confirmed by the inspiring initiatives that we have gathered, strives to do just that. It represents a will to fight against all that harms the young child’s stage-based development. These initiatives, often offered by early childhood specialists and artists working in concert, are a response to the cultural needs born with each child.

The creations, activities and presentations relate to children's senses, to the aesthetic, to the symbolic and nature. This part of children's being is an element of their health for which we must care, to support them as they "become." 🏔️ Artists know the inner world of the child and draw their own art from the relics of their childhood sensibilities; thus, they continue to be our best allies. It is from this inner life, with which the artist remains connected, that they speak to the child in an artistic language made of an infinite range of expressions, recognizing the child as a fellow conversant with important needs. 🏔️ Supporting the birth of the relational being is a culture-based effort, so this report aims for the implementation of a national strategy for Cultural Health, promoting and sustaining the child's cultural and artistic awakening within the parent-child bond (ECA-LEP). The goal is to make ECA-LEP a central part of public policy. 🏔️ The Ministry and I worked on this book to present the recommendations of my report, to offer a framework for putting the ECA-LEP in place, and to share inspiring actions, so that artists, cultural professionals, early childhood specialists, health professionals and policymakers can together embark upon a strong mobilization for the Cultural Health of children.

— Sophie Marinopoulos

# Engagement Letter

27

from Françoise Nyssen  
to Sophie Marinopoulos  
▲ June 2018

Ministry of Culture  
The Minister

Mrs. Sophie Marinopoulos  
10 rue Saint Simon  
75007 Paris

Paris, June 11, 2018  
Ref.: TR/2018/P/12895/CRA

Dear Madam,

Early childhood is the foundational moment of awakening to self, to others and to the environment. Artistic and cultural awakening, starting in early childhood, is much more than a preamble to artistic and cultural education. It is truly the moment where an openness takes root toward art and culture, thanks to the experience and wonder sparked by encounters with artists and their works. In addition, early childhood, which is central to the construction of the Subject and a period when the human being develops a desire to interpret the world around them, is a time of deep connection with parents, the underlying model of social relations. Artistic and cultural awakening can be one of the tools to fight more widely against cultural segregation by reaching all caretakers, be they early childhood specialists, parents, siblings, or grandparents—because, logically enough, young children are never left alone in their activities.

A protocol for the artistic and cultural awakening of young children was signed on March 20, 2017, by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Families, Childhood and Women's Rights.

This interministerial commitment followed a plan of action for early childhood presented on November 15, 2016. It follows the national framework text for the care of the young child. A national charter for the care of the young child was developed by the Ministry of Families and Childhood at the suggestion of Mrs. Sylviane Giampino.

This commitment to early childhood also stems from important advances in artistic and cultural education and from recent laws that inserted this interministerial policy into the missions of official cultural institutions, as well as from international assessments conducted by UNESCO that show the importance of investing in early childhood.

Beyond this policy, implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Solidarity and Health, the Minister of Culture strives to promote the artistic and cultural awakening of young children within all interministerial policies. This includes the interministerial plan to combat poverty and the orientation of urban policy.

In this evolving context, in which many parties are eager to participate, France is looking to structure its approach.

The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Solidarity and Health initiated, starting in March 2017, a vast collaboration and creation of tools of governance, in order to allow the cultural and artistic awakening of young children to flourish across all French territories. A first snapshot of the initiatives in all territories was published during the first National Convention for the Artistic and Cultural Awakening of Young Children, which took place December 8, 2017. This is why, in light of your skill and experience in the realm of early childhood and parenting, I entrust you with the mission of helping us

to develop thoughts and a plan of action to make culture central to supporting the parent-child bond and early childhood, in collaboration with organizations in the fields of social work, health, family, education and ecology.

Your mission will consist of three parts:

① To collect, working with the inventory begun by the General Administration, the artistic and cultural experiments on our territory, and even a few parallel trials across Europe, whose primary objective is to speak to the child and their parents; and to put together a synthesis, complemented with scientific research concerning the impact of artistic and cultural awakening on the development of young children. This is in order to demonstrate that such an awakening is truly fundamental to the development of a Subject, to their fulfillment, and to the health of their relationships. This collection should allow us to support a cultural policy that favors early childhood and to spread good practices among those in the field;

② To study ways to encourage these practices among professionals, parents and, more broadly, families. You will particularly take into account experiments that include a broad social spectrum. You will propose substantive actions for prevention, integration, equality, and solidarity, aimed at parents and professionals;

③ To propose concrete and operational approaches of a cultural policy with a social dimension that favors the parent-child bond, in collaboration with the Ministry of Solidarity and Health and with participants from the family sector, including the National Office for Family Allocations (CNAF) and local governments, within a logic of interministerial collaboration. You can, in this capacity, propose incentivizing measures. Regarding these approaches, you will also define a frame of reference for the needs of young children and their parents and caretakers, on which the cultural advisors at regional cultural affairs boards will rely to stimulate, accompany and evaluate the development of this policy within their territory.

To this end, you will work in close collaboration with the General Administration of the Minister of Culture, and more specifically with the Department of Education and Development in Art and Culture.

In order to do so, you may conduct, at the Ministry or in any other location convenient to you, any hearings of experts from the worlds of culture, social issues, health, education, family, ecology or from any other field that seems relevant to you. The organization of interviews and useful letters for this mission will be undertaken according to your judgment by an office tasked with the coordination of cultural policies and the innovation of the General Administration.

A budget will be allocated to this commission, controlled by the General Administration, in order to allow you ten trips within France and three international trips that serve your work.

I'd like you to submit a report with your recommendations on December 15, 2018.

Respectfully yours,  
Françoise Nyssen



Before I begin the report, I would like to thank the Minister of Culture, Mr. Franck Riester, who ensured the continuity of my commission. I also extend my thanks to Mrs. Françoise Nysen, who gave me her total confidence for the realization of this mission. Her commitment to culture for all and her interest in supporting the development of the youngest children in a culturally-immersive environment have allowed this work to find its place in a ministerial framework. The Ministry of Culture has focused on the bond between young children and their parents, extending the work on artistic awakening of small children begun by its predecessors in 1989.

More broadly, this report helps extend the notion of culture, started in 1970 with the Cultural Intervention Fund (FIC), and agrees with Jacques Duhamel's vision that cultural policy should not only consist of a democratization of artwork, but should also be at the heart of society in order to enrich citizens' daily lives. 🍄 This is why, for decades, those on the ground—artists; artistic and cultural associations; ministerial, departmental and municipal officials; researchers, and early childhood specialists—have worked tirelessly, building indispensable connections to make culture accessible to the largest possible population and to transform it into a social tool, an instrument of integration for the child and for their caregivers. All share the same ambition: that children be recognized as full and active spectators, with their own needs, deserving of respect and cultural nutrition. Considering children, addressing them, creating a public policy of cultural and artistic awakening (ECA) for their benefit, and taking into account their parental connections (LEP), allows us to examine the societal model we want to offer to future generations.

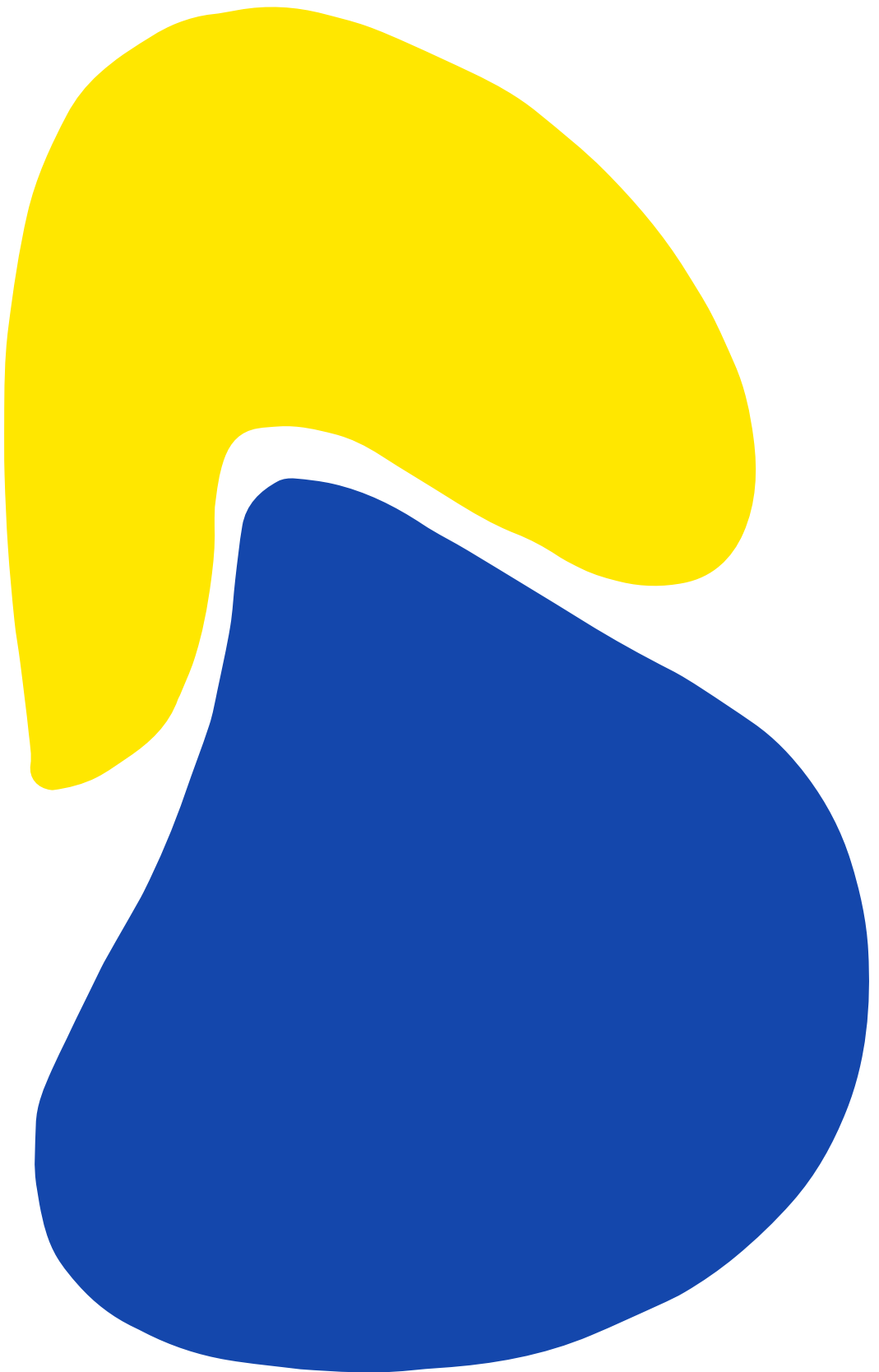
Turning to the “experts on the ground” to collect their opinions, experiences, wishes, and viewpoints, receiving in return their generosity and commitment, seemed like the obvious thing to do. Given the time allotted, we could not meet with all concerned parties, but we tried our hardest to find experienced individuals, bearers of the history of cultural and artistic awakening, who could play a major role in its transmission. Each one guided and nourished me, in order to help me best understand both the realities of their work and the framework within which awakening can develop. As I prepare to put this in writing, I want to send them my sincerest thanks and my deepest gratitude.

My thanks also go to the General Administration of the Ministry of Culture, and especially to Aurélie Lesous, who has been at our side for the duration of the project with her indispensable technical know-how, but also with patience, professionalism and advice that were invaluable to me. 🍄 I would like to extend special thanks to: Mrs. Mariette Darrigrand for her help in assembling the glossary of Cultural Health and the list of inspiring initiatives contained in the original publication; 🍄 Mr. Daniel Lenoir for his advice and generous availability throughout the writing of this report 🍄 Mrs. Corinne Lepage, former Minister of the Environment, for her encouragement and sound advice 🍄 Mrs. Isabelle Martin, for having

taken the time to gather a working group of artists and experienced professionals

- Professor Jean-François Mattei, former Minister of Health, for his availability and enlightening expertise, which allowed me to embolden my recommendations
- Mrs. Anne-Laure Rouxel for her loyal presence, her inspiring experience and her creations for the benefit of the youngest children and their parents
- Mrs. Élise Roy for her attentive and benevolent editing
- Mrs. Joëlle Turin for her perspective, her immense experience, generosity and coordination work, combined with her reassuring presence
- Mr. Vincent Vergone for his stimulating thoughts, the richness of his work and the time spent coordinating the working group Nature that he led for this project.





# Overview

## ECA-LEP for Children and Parents

- ◉ supports their psychological process during pregnancy: maturative/mutational/narrative/interpretive
- ◉ recognizes intra-uterine bonds as a cornerstone of health
- ◉ asks as much of fathers as of mothers
- ◉ nourishes their bonds by sharing sensory, aesthetic, and emotional experiences, starting at birth
- ◉ facilitates their personal experiences
- ◉ allows a mutual recognition that fosters openness to difference
- ◉ creates a universal approach to human connection
- ◉ encourages intersubjective encounters based on reciprocal recognition
- ◉ nourishes or restores a parent's ability to identify, which will help them to empathize with the child's feelings
- ◉ reaches out to the injured child within the parent, allowing the adult to lower their psychological defenses and to better listen to their child's needs
- ◉ encourages mutual dialogue
- ◉ pacifies their interactions
- ◉ recognizes balanced relationships as essential to health
- ◉ brings together the ideas of health and culture within the concept of Cultural Health
- ◉ helps breed equality and social recognition
- ◉ fights against discrimination and exclusion
- ◉ combats cultural malnutrition

## ECA for Children

- ▲ acknowledges their birth as a cultural Subject
- ▲ acknowledges the rhythm of their growth
- ▲ develops the cultural side of their health by taking care of their bonds
- ▲ respects their path to maturity
- ▲ encourages inner growth, which is the basis for later academic study
- ▲ allows them to feel their body and to have a unified awareness of it: construction of their body ego
- ▲ fosters an environment where they can actively participate in their development
- ▲ offers more aesthetic, fun, sensory, and narrative experiences, which help them grow
- ▲ gives meaning to their feelings
- ▲ creates narrative artistic ideas geared toward them
- ▲ offers cadenced and repeated narrative and artistic experiences that open them to the world
- ▲ awakens their desire to relate
- ▲ places them in a world of symbolism
- ▲ stimulates their representational imagination, which is the basis of their secure attachment
- ▲ helps them learn to regulate emotions
- ▲ encourages age-specific cultural attention
- ▲ mobilizes their body and gives them a taste for words: "To speak is to move"
- ▲ offers a sensory language, enabling them to organize their internal life
- ▲ invites nature to play a central role

## Nature's Role for Children

- stimulates their curiosity
- encourages discovery of their internal resources
- allows a better awareness of self and personal limits
- develops empathy
- awakens their playful creativity
- facilitates autonomy
- enlarges their linguistic expression with a richer vocabulary
- promotes a better ability to assess and decide about risk
- contributes to motor skills
- stimulates their imagination
- fosters mutual aid among peers
- gives a sense of responsibility
- helps them grow into and own their movements through time and space
- is a source of calm for the child, internally and in relation to others
- by interacting with nature, the child feeds their early inner acquisitions from the start (from birth to three years old), which is indispensable for any future learning at school

# A Commission Centered on a New Concept: Cultural Health

Our commission focused on the connection between parent and child, from birth to the age of three. We deliberately chose this *sensitive* period because of the internal transformations that it sparks, the personal realignment experienced by the adult as they become a parent, and the complexity of the child's development within its familial bonds. The process is fed by encounters, exchanges, time, sensoriality, emotions, and symbolism: cultural nourishment that is indispensable to the birth of the Subject.

We suggest a closer look at this period so we can cultivate early connections in order to support the birth of the *relational being*. In promoting the *culture of bonds*, we are asking people to look after our society. The collective responsibility to which any democracy should aspire can be found in simple acts of care and attention.

Ecologists have proven that we have reached all acceptable limits by plundering our natural reserves and destroying our planet, with all of its living elements; the same is true of our humanity.

Small humans have inescapable needs. To exist, they need other humans, time, empathy, affection, physical experiences, sensory awakening, symbolism, language, thoughts, projections, to see and be seen... They are far from being fragile, but they exhibit a native vulnerability. Progress must not blind us to this if we are to reconcile modernity and liberation.

"That modernity should be 'in crisis' is nothing new. In fact, fundamentally, it's the cliché of the discussion about modernity. And for a simple reason: Modernity isn't *in* crisis, it is a crisis—humanity's adolescent crisis."<sup>1</sup>

And it is our littlest ones who can lead us to assess our needs, who can guide us in our journey through a complex world. A child must grow by more than centimeters and kilos; they have to be constantly nourished in being as well as body. The medicine of the being,<sup>2</sup> which we defined a dozen years ago, has its own concept of hygiene, care and nutrition. What we call the cultivation of our bonds, of our *movement of humanization*, which the baby exhibits in its social yearning (that is, its cultural yearning), justifies an interministerial reflection on public policy. We place this at the heart of our work on what we call Cultural Health, a concept centered on the idea of awakening.

Cultural health revives the idea of a universal culture, one *without borders*, found in infants' awakening to their human existence. This particular form of culture stems from the young child's infinite desire to communicate, to be open to the world, to languages, to others, to other cultures, and to difference. Cultural Health puts the Subject on the path to awareness of self and of those around them. It allows each Subject to construct their identity and to share with others. Cultural Health brings personal peace and collective calm.

Culture for everyone does not impose itself; it is experienced, it gets incorporated into families' daily lives, starting with the birth of the child. Imbued with the shared experience of awakening and what that offers, as much for the baby as for themselves, the parents will realize the power of growing up in a culturally-immersive environment.

1 Frédéric Guillaud, "La modernité: crise d'adolescence de l'humanité?," *Le Philosophoire*, 2005/2, n° 25, pp. 77-88.

2 Sophie Marinopoulos, "La médecine de l'être," in Didier Sicard and Georges Vigarello (ed.), *Aux origines de la médecine*, Fayard, 2011.

Cultural awakening, reading, singing, fine arts, dance, theater, puppetry, games, museums, circus arts: All are capable of helping children grow up within a sensitive and aesthetic approach that helps them find their equilibrium. This is an important challenge for our society, which should rely on parents, who are the first to interact with the child.

Why today? This valid question finds its response in our excessive era of acceleration, consumption, efficiency, output, and expert assessments—all of which can hinder the creation of the parent-child bond. Among these impediments is the monoculture of the screen, which should be questioned and countered with a pluriculture of awakening.

In 2001, the Ministry of Culture produced an assessment of the association Enfance et Musique (Childhood and Music). It noted a “decline in cultural transmission” linked to the evolution of family sociology<sup>3</sup> and suggested that cultural transmission is threatened by the prevalence of single-parent families, women working, distant grandparents, and the lack of outside help.

Beyond this loss of cultural transmission within the family, we observe effects on the psychological level, particularly when it comes to the construction of family bonds, at all income levels. Knowledge of relational health<sup>4</sup> and my practice with families over the course of three decades bring me to conclude that the children from our cultures—safe from famine, physically well-nourished—show signs of *cultural malnutrition*: impoverishment of language, personal insecurity, loss of self-esteem, lower tolerance for frustration, volatility toward others, a lack of reassuring experiences... This is a malaise to which our lifestyles are no stranger, an unease shared by parents who have told us of their difficulties in early bonding with their child—a reality that translates into more and more parents coming to us for help raising their children.<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, this modernity is ours, and even if we denounce its negative aspects, we should also set goals, stay constructive, keep hope alive. In other words, we must imagine how to make the most of our times and turn modernity into an ally. By asking ourselves “What are the best parts of modernity?” we wish to give culture the opportunity to respond by helping us become more humane and free—preconditions for the Subject’s birth.

With this report, then, we call for a cultural policy conscious of the potential role of cultural and artistic awakening in small children’s connection with their parents; this encourages the children’s development and the parents’ support. Putting the brakes on what some call *mechanical civilization* is at the heart of our mission. Our human condition isn’t unconditional.

And this is urgent. We must altogether re-nourish our little ones. Just as post-war children were nourished with milk, the children of hyper-modern society should be fed the symbolic milk of human connection. The baby does not want to communicate with objects, but with other Subjects, who should offer it true cultural nutrition.

- 3 Association Enfance et Musique, “Rapport d’évaluation, février 2011,” par Sylvie Pébrier, inspectrice des enseignements artistiques-musique, et François Rouchard, expert analyse financière, service de l’Inspection.
- 4 Sophie Marinopoulos, “La médecine de l’être,” *op. cit.*
- 5 “Les Pâtes au beurre,” in Nantes (the organization PPSP—“Les Pâtes au Beurre”), is a free center where any parent can stop in, free of charge, anonymously, without an appointment, with or without their children, regardless of the age of the latter. In 2017, 4,500 people passed through. See ■■■lespatesaubeurre.fr. We also note the existence of various REAAP (networks of listening, support and accompaniment for parents), maintained by the National Office for Family Allocations across the French territory.



6 Study report of INET-France urbaine, “Réussir la généralisation de l’éducation artistique et culturelle,” 31 May 2018, edited by Claire Aïtout, Olivier Mérot, Aurélie Pasquier and Noor-Yasmin Djataou.

We aim to promote and sustain the child’s cultural and artistic awakening within the parent-child bond (ECA-LEP), and to make this a tenet of public policy. We continue in the spirit of France Urbaine, who in May 2018 published the report “Achieving Universal Access to Artistic and Cultural Education”<sup>6</sup> under an ambitious slogan: “Reaching 100% of youth with an artistic and cultural education program.” They use the abbreviation EAC to represent artistic and cultural education. Our acronym contains the same three letters—E, A, and C, with the E of “education” replaced by the E of “*éveil*,” or “awakening”—and makes the equally ambitious political argument that awakening must precede education. For artistic and cultural education to mean something, it must be placed within a continuum that begins with awakening. Democratizing artistic and cultural consciousness requires that we seek out young children and parents where they are—and that this consciousness be woven into the fabric of family life—so that awakening can spread far and wide.

Our integrative approach is founded on an understanding of what’s at stake in the child’s development and of their fundamental needs, which transcend nutritional and medical concerns. Even in urgent situations where medical intervention is essential, we want cultural nutrition to be recognized as crucial to the parent-child bond.

Now that the baby is considered a *person*, a *Subject*, we propose to include health and cultural initiatives in anti-poverty programs. Health cannot exist without culture. The distribution of diapers, clothes, and milk is just as important as providing moments of awakening if we want our children to stay inspired to live and become.

That is why, in terms of policies benefitting childhood and parenting, we advocate for collaboration between ministries, via written agreements, approaching the ECA-LEP initiatives as an obligation instead of an option.

These policies would have the virtue of placing the baby and its parents at the center of our commitments. They would implement a Cultural Health approach in three phases, which we call the three A’s:

- ① Anticipate
- ② Accommodate
- ③ Accompany

This helps us think of the health-culture connection: ① while anticipating the child, ② at birth, and ③ while accompanying the three first years of family life.

“A baby alone doesn’t exist,” according to the well-known quote by Donald Winnicott. In so saying, he underlined that the baby is a relational being whose need for early connections should be recognized. Regarding cultural and artistic awakening within the parent-child bond (ECA-LEP), we posit that:

*“Where there are babies, there should be ECA-LEP.”*

# Objective of the National Strategy of ECA-LEP

The national strategy to promote and perpetuate the little one's cultural and artistic awakening within the parent-child bond speaks to policymakers, to regional health, culture and social aid agencies, as well as to all types of organizations, federations, and nonprofits. In a larger sense, it strives to champion arguments and recommendations for ECA-LEP that can be adopted most widely, including within interministerial protocols, information services, informational literature, or preventative messaging for families.

Its goal is also for ECA-LEP, a component of Cultural Health, to be recognized as a new indicator of wealth and as a true social value, an indicator of life quality. The objectives undertaken are thus to:

- use ECA-LEP as a new measure of wealth
- recognize culture as a humanizing force
- assert the importance of ECA-LEP in light of research on child development
- recognize the small child as an individual participant with rights (cf. the rights of the child) and as a citizen with a cultural craving
- recognize ECA-LEP as a vehicle for health; incorporate Cultural Health into all public policy documents
- sensitize policymakers and regional boards to the importance of ECA-LEP as a basis for the child's development and for supporting parenthood, by highlighting inspiring initiatives
- reinforce ECA-LEP as a way of fighting exclusion and discrimination
- reinforce the presence of art and culture in early childhood environments
- give the oldest organization the means to preserve their literature, thereby safeguarding our cultural patrimony
- support nonprofit organizations so they can carry out initiatives across France
- emphasize the artist as an essential interlocutor for the Cultural Health of children
- construct a cultural policy with a social dimension across France
- create "Culture and Parenting" centers to encourage ECA-LEP, styled after adolescent centers
- create a map of ECA-LEP throughout the country
- assert the connections between ECA-LEP and important international texts on childhood
- support the pluriculture of awakening to fight against the monoculture of the screen by reducing screens' role for very young children (one of every two children under the age of three uses a portable device with a screen, without supervision in 30% of cases<sup>7</sup>) through an increase in initiatives based on ECA-LEP
- champion the integration of ECA-LEP into important international documents including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the constitution of the WHO

<sup>7</sup> "La vie numérique des tout-petits," Plan d'action de la Fondation pour l'enfance, 2017-2018.

Birth into life, into culture, and into humanity are inseparable processes. We are linguistic beings, storytellers who search endlessly for the meaning of what we experience, share, and construct. Since the beginning, we have invented forms of dialogue that art has passed on through the centuries. It is essential to preserve this ability to use language in all its forms.

As a storytelling species, we carry on our culture. This brings together women and men from birth to death. It creates family—the first social space, place of humanization, where one becomes a member of society. A family that changes, evolves, tries out new configurations, never able to escape that which defines it: connections. We are relational beings, and the smallest social atom is the relationship.

It strikes us as important to remind people that the brain does not retain the neural connections formed from the best relational experiences, but rather from the most frequent ones. This is why we chose to look at the parent-child bond from birth to three years old. It must be at the core of cultural policy, a policy of attention to the birth of our beings.

8 Bernard Stiegler, “De la misère symbolique,” *Les Cahiers d’éveil*, n° 3, 2005.

9 Stéphane Habib, *Faire avec l’impossible. Pour une relance du politique*, Hermann, 2017.

“Politics is the art of guaranteeing a unity of the polis in its desire for a collective future, its individuation, its singularity as a merging entity.”<sup>8</sup> “One of the earliest and most recurrent questions in politics is that of the social bond.”<sup>9</sup> The child’s arrival, how their birth is received, and the quality of their development are at the heart of all democratic agendas.

Childhood is a time when we find our place within a common human history, one that is meant to be shared. Studying this means considering the child as a unique citizen with rights that should be respected. The Convention on the Rights of the Child lays out all of the conditions that guarantee their development and well-being. However, it is clear that these theoretically-recognized rights are not sufficiently taken into account in our practices, especially concerning children younger than school age. Our goal is to stand up for international propositions that value children’s right to awakening as highly as their right to education.

To make ECA-LEP as strong as possible, we should push for a cultural approach starting at birth, an approach that makes clear our cultural belonging from the very dawn of life, a message defending the values of the *policy of attention* that we desire: solidarity, equality, social diversity, a fight against discrimination, and popular education.

10 Dominique Bourg, *Une nouvelle Terre. Pour une autre relation au monde*, Desclée de Brouwer, 2018.

Ecology aspires to “prevent the extinction of life,”<sup>10</sup> according to Dominique Bourg, professor at the University of Lausanne. Culture, likewise, tries to preserve the conditions vital to the Subject’s construction. It asserts itself as the guardian of relations by caring for the parent-child bond.

In this report, we promote an approach of early childhood connections that contributes to the social objective of “living well” called for by “transitional” societies like France. In their moral codes, these

societies recognize the foresight of social actors at work on accompanying the human from birth until death, which is critical for healthy cohabitation.

We believe that artists deserve the same recognition. Through their sensitive approach to all that's at stake in human relations, they illuminate the inner element that connects beings to each other. They are indispensable, acting as protectors to all societies. "[T]hanks to the work of the artist something new is emerging that causes transformations beyond all explanation. Artistic work deals with all that the mind cannot grasp. It transcends this barrier, making it possible to access the inaccessible and transforming what it touches."<sup>11</sup>

A society that commits to ECA-LEP for 100% of its children heralds this call for transformation.

11 François Ansermet,  
in Prune Nourry,  
*Serendipity*,  
Actes Sud, 2018.

In addition to postnatal care, nutritional advice, and programs to address illnesses, we would like to see in all public health recommendations—in countries' health records for individuals, national public health recommendations, and the central documents of the WHO—a section that promotes the small child's awakening by highlighting its benefits to global health. In so doing, Cultural Health hopes to widen recognition of human individuality.

We define the general frame of Cultural Health within the 12 following articles:

Article 1 Cultural Health asserts that a child's awakening is imperative to its equilibrium. To awaken is to humanize.

Article 2 Cultural Health encourages recognizing the small human as a relational being who yearns to communicate.

Article 3 Cultural Health takes into account the small human's vital need to find its place in a narrative fabric that opens it to life.

Article 4 Cultural Health posits that emotional, sensory, gestural, physical, and linguistic expressions are full-fledged artistic expressions, carrying meaning and sustaining the living part of the Subject.

Article 5 Cultural Health asserts that its foundational needs are universal.

Article 6 Cultural Health posits that its practice has a humanizing effect.

Article 7 Cultural Health recognizes that artists should play a major role in promoting Cultural Health programs aimed at children.

Article 8 Cultural Health recognizes that childhood professionals figure prominently as interlocutors of children and their parents.

Article 9 Cultural Health confirms that self-knowledge and recognition of others pass through a process of growth that brings about personal and social peace.

Article 10 Cultural Health is pluricultural and recognizes the nourishing influence of each culture on the development of children.

Article 11 Cultural Health occupies a central place among cultural rights. It can break down barriers between the cultural world and the social and medical worlds.

Article 12 Cultural Health, in claiming awakening for all, fights against inequalities and exclusion.

# Arguments for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP speaks to the child who longs for connections. It exists within relationships and experiences and not within consumption. In this way, it provides sensory, emotional, linguistic, and relational nutrition, indispensable to the small child's construction of inner resources.

ECA-LEP pushes us to see the child not as a miniature adult, but as an emerging individual. ECA-LEP fights against "adultomorphism" by thinking of the child as a developing being moving through phases of growth.

ECA-LEP recognizes the baby as an agent in the relationship and builds on its ability to communicate physically, with the parent's help. By offering original creations, ECA-LEP pushes back against the poverty of thought caused by the consumption of mass-produced objects.

ECA-LEP provides opportunities for the child and parents to share a sensitive, aesthetic experience, composed of emotions and connections. Watching a film as a group is a cultural experience that allows children to process images in an environment designed for them.

ECA-LEP encourages parents to make time for pleasurable moments that build the connection with their child. ECA-LEP offers an alternative to the easy temptation of screens, which isolate members of the same family. More ECA-LEP means more shared experience.

ECA and ECA-LEP allow the child to grow in humanity by offering sensitive and aesthetic experiences, plus the time and space to connect with their body.

ECA and ECA-LEP keep intact the receptiveness and sensitivity that lead to empathy.

ECA-LEP responds to our human condition, which is relational. "To live is to live together."

In speaking to both the child and their parents, ECA-LEP has the potential to feed their relationship.

To awaken is to humanize. It means giving the little one access to a meaningful mode of expression that embodies life. The body language dimension offered by ECA-LEP gives depth to words that help the child open to abstract thought.

ECA-LEP is a humanizing reception into a narrative fabric that takes many forms: theater, reading, dance, music, puppetry, art, circus...

ECA and ECA-LEP support the path from sensing to making sense of things, which develops the child's inner life.

ECA-LEP, by helping create a quality environment for developing the parent-child connection, enables equal opportunities, the potential of which is demonstrated by epigenetics.

Our brains retain connections not from the *best* experiences, but from the *most frequent* ones. The brain's plasticity can be a great opportunity or a great vulnerability. ECA-LEP offers an immeasurable chance at early nourishment of children's inner resources.

The principle of mutual aid is basic to living beings and should be cultivated from the youngest age by offering a pluricultural environment—the mission of ECA-LEP. Development of a cooperative attitude depends 70% on the quality of the environment offered to the child.

ECA-LEP is an approach that relies on the values of promoting equality and fighting all exclusion. It recognizes every type of family and speaks to all parents without exception. It thus helps build the feeling of parenthood through societal recognition.

ECA-LEP cares for the formative process invoked by the birth of the parent, a psychological shift that builds with time. ECA-LEP calls for experiencing intimate feelings together, which fosters mutual recognition and openness to difference. With its approach, ECA-LEP strengthens the parent-child bond.

Mothers and fathers are called on equally by initiatives promoting cultural and artistic awakening, each parent uniquely mobilized by the anticipation of the child. ECA-LEP contributes to gender equality in the parent-child relationship.

ECA-LEP plays a constructive role while awaiting a child, supporting the internal psychological processes (maturative, mutative, interpretive, narrative) inherent to bonds that parents will soon build. This period of significant psychic reorganization causes a large transformation that ECA-LEP, with its sensory approach, can accompany. Feeling movement in the mother's stomach to make the baby exist, talking to it, giving it a place in the family story, preparing for its arrival: All are needs to which ECA-LEP can respond.

ECA-LEP can play a foundational role in all socially precarious contexts by interrupting isolation, emphasizing social connections, nourishing exchanges within the parental bond, and creating a continuity of collective focus between healthcare, social services, and family professionals. ECA-LEP, by respecting social and cultural diversity, recognizes each parent as unique, keeping their dignity and roots intact.

A parent, to grow into parenthood, needs to be offered humanizing cultural experiences. ECA-LEP helps the parent give meaning to their emotional experiences and to grow from them psychologically. To this end, ECA-LEP listens to the injured child within the parent to help it heal and diminish the risk of abuse.

ECA-LEP is a catalyst for parent-child dialogue and the emergence of the small child's thinking. This preventative approach must be privileged especially in situations with parental difficulties. To this end, ECA-LEP is an instrument of social health. It invites us to create initiatives benefitting the bond between child and parent in the waiting rooms of Centers for Maternal and Child Protection (PMIs), at facilities for mothers, at group homes for children, at LAEPs (drop-in centers for parents and children under six), family homes...

Sharing sensory and aesthetic encounters encourages identification. Sharing excitement or experiencing a performance together creates a sensory communion that aids the capacity to identify and creates an environment beneficial to the child's primary needs.

Repeatedly sharing sensory and aesthetic parent-child experiences helps build the representative imagination that allows for secure attachment, which is crucial to developing self-confidence and emotional control.

ECA-LEP encourages the infant's innate intersubjectivity. The child is born with a mind hungry for interaction and receptive to the others' changing moods. This social need is a cultural need.

ECA-LEP allows the small human the priceless experience of being the object of adults' attention, as well as intersubjective encounters that support development and allow the brain to structure itself.

Beauty evokes the sensation of being “touched,” sparking a deep feeling that must be recognized by the parent. This helps the child progressively organize what they feel in their body. The artist, with their sensibility, their poetic and sensory world, communicates directly with this sensitive/aesthetic part carried by the baby, just as the parents do during their mutual birth. ECA-LEP focuses on this humanizing aesthetic feeling to nurture the child’s development.

Play is a cultural and universal movement crucial to early acquisitions that open the child to the world, as called for by ECA-LEP.

Art and nature are universal. Together they help weave bonds amenable to pacification. ECA-LEP places itself in this union between art and nature.

ECA and ECA-LEP call for a direct relationship with the arts, with culture and with nature. Together, they create the necessary conditions to avoid the risk of stress, improve attentiveness, balance moods, and curb aggressiveness.

With its sensitivity-focused approach, ECA-LEP reaches out to the parent’s fragile part and connects them to their emotions, so that they can in turn empathize with their child’s emotions. Embraced in their psychic vulnerability, the adult slowly adjusts to the child and discovers them in their uniqueness. Sharing emotions, as encouraged by ECA-LEP, is a way of restoring the parent-child bond.

By recognizing the wounded inner child of the adult-become-parent, ECA-LEP touches on the raw physical feelings they harbor. This experience can help lower psychic defenses and build a confident relationship, for a better capacity to hear and welcome the emotions of the child.

ECA-LEP, with its approach geared toward the sensitive part of the relationship, meets the objectives of Cultural Health.

ECA-LEP boosts affect attunement, which is a harmonious exchange between child and parents. The body of shared feelings creates a deep rapport with sensitivity, immersing the baby, making it feel secure, nourishing its bonds and giving them substance.



## Recommendation n° 1

The commission recommends that governing bodies recognize the cultural and artistic awakening (ECA) of the child between birth and three years old as a cornerstone of health, and cultural and artistic awakening within the parent-child bond (ECA-LEP) as a cornerstone of preventative health and support for parenting. Thus, the commission suggests breaking down barriers between ministries so as to facilitate the best possible communication and to sensitize all of society to the rightful place of the child and to their fundamental need for ECA.

## Recommendation n° 2

The commission recommends implementing a public policy based on ECA and ECA-LEP across France, and recognizing such policy as a priority in supporting the rights of the child. The awakening of children between birth and the age of three will give momentum to later artistic and cultural programs. Awakening precedes education.

## Recommendation n° 3

The commission recommends that the government take into account that ECA-LEP is a universal approach to children and their parents, that it encourages equality, fights discrimination, and brings hope for more peaceful connections.

## Recommendation n° 4

The commission recommends progressively generalizing and cementing the implementation of ECA and ECA-LEP in centers for early childhood and in family spaces—PMIs, social centers, RAMs (support centers for home-based childminders), and LAEPs so as to alleviate the effects of cultural malnutrition. This approach recognizes and takes into account the growing child, the changing parent, and the evolving bond.

## Recommendation n° 5

The commission recommends recognizing artists as partners of early childhood professionals and participants in the global development of the child's relational dynamic.

## Recommendation n° 6

The commission recommends recognizing cinema as a cultural stimulus for the small child and encouraging research on connections between cultural awakening, cinematographic images, development of the child and effects on the parent-child bond.

## Recommendation n° 7

The commission recommends that the Ministry of Culture engage in persuasive promotion of ECA-LEP as a pillar of the child's development and of bonding with their parents. To formulate the messaging, the Ministry should consider creating a task force composed of artists engaged in different disciplines, associations advancing Artistic and Cultural Education (EAC), those who work with children, experts on children and families, researchers, and public agencies.

## Recommendation n° 8

The commission recommends that the Ministries of Culture, of Solidarities and Health and of Ecological and Solidarity Transition create common documentation on ECA and ECA-LEP. Their messages would distinguish awakening from stimulation: Awakening children does not mean stimulating them, but rather creating an environment that allows them agency in their growth.

## Recommendation n° 9

The commission recommends integrating Cultural Health into the declaration of the WHO: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

In so doing, the WHO would acknowledge that the future of all societies depends on children and inspire attention to the health, growth and development of each person. The commission encourages the government to proactively advocate including EAC and ECA-LEP in the health programs of the WHO.

#### Recommendation n<sup>o</sup> 10

The commission recommends that, alongside nutritional advice given to parents, health record booklets should track the child's "growth within humanity," which ECA and ECA-LEP support. Cultural Health would thus be named and recognized as a tool for calming social relations and pacifying intercultural ones.

#### Recommendation n<sup>o</sup> 11

The commission recommends supporting artists' creations, which nourish the narrative fabric crucial to the small child's formation of identity. Narration is the very essence of life; artists respond to children's quest to understand the world around them and find their place as Subjects.

#### Recommendation n<sup>o</sup> 12

The commission recommends including ECA-LEP in all policies supporting parenthood, whatever the family configuration, cultural origin, social situation or material status. A policy of ECA-LEP will facilitate prioritizing encounters and exchanges between parents who have chosen distinct family structures.

#### Recommendation n<sup>o</sup> 13

The commission recommends professional support during pregnancy. It suggests that the time with the child in utero be paralleled with an artistic and cultural accompaniment and preparation for birth. ECA-LEP is aimed at expectant parents. The preparation for a child's arrival demands more than a medical program; it must include cultural intentionality. This recommendation aims to incorporate the place of the expected child as a cultural being into public health programs. Cultural Health is a linchpin of health that should be included in public health programs. The preparation for birth should

be envisioned within a broader approach that includes the mother and father. The commission recommends creating a working group on this subject in order to formulate general proposals.

#### Recommendation n<sup>o</sup> 14

The commission recommends formulating a policy of genuine support for parenthood, beyond its social and material dimensions, to confront various types of instability. The changing shape of families, the need for instant gratification and the dominant culture of consumption, saturation and individualism have increased instability for families, which expect to be recognized and supported. Many families fall through the cracks, particularly when their socioeconomic condition is not of concern. We call on the ministries to look more closely at the challenges families face today and to remain by their sides. Bringing together experts on these questions is crucial to confronting situations' complexity.

#### Recommendation n<sup>o</sup> 15

The commission recommends spreading public health messages as widely as possible that promote including linguistic maturity in Cultural Health programs. These programs should expose those who care for very young preschoolers and kindergartners to the following idea: "One does not teach a child to speak." Language is felt through encounters, through openness to the world, through shared sensations and emotions. To speak is to move is to have humanizing experiences which give a taste for words. Protoconversations meld biological and social rhythms, which underpin the first forms of cultural engagement.

#### Recommendation n<sup>o</sup> 16

The commission recommends recognizing the relationship with nature as a basis for the equilibrium of the child and of the parent-child bond. It recommends that ministries cooperate to disseminate public health messages emphasizing nature's importance for the child's development. The Ministries of Solidarity and Health, of Family, of Culture, and of Ecological and Solidarity Transition should work

together to finance preventative health messages that unite the ideas of childhood, care, nature and culture.

**Recommendation n° 17**

The commission recommends including continuing education in the curriculum of professional readers in order to keep thinking fresh about approaches to children.

**Recommendation n° 18**

The commission recommends preserving all writings produced by book-centered associations digitizing them, so as to create a widely-accessible library.

**Recommendation n° 19**

The commission recommends creating a university degree centered on small children and literature.

**Recommendation n° 20**

The commission recommends continuing development of the “Premières Pages” (First Pages)<sup>1</sup> program, particularly in regions where it is limited or nonexistent.

**Recommendation n° 21**

The commission recommends facilitating exchanges of best practices through national and regional seminars.

**Recommendation n° 22**

The commission recommends enlisting the CNAF (National Office for Family Allocations) to incite its local branches to participate more in deploying the “Premières Pages” program and to work on accompanying parenthood through relevant regional agencies.

**Recommendation n° 23**

The commission recommends bringing game libraries under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture by recognizing them as cultural facilities.

**Recommendation n° 24**

The commission recommends recognizing the profession of game librarian and creating an accreditation based on a standardized curriculum.

**Recommendation n° 25**

The commission recommends constructing a cultural policy blueprint for promoting ECA-LEP by changing how we perceive our rapport with culture. Through children, we see the importance of Cultural Health, which calls for including awakening in our health programs.

**Recommendation n° 26**

The commission recommends including ECA-LEP as a ninth approach in the *National Strategy for Supporting Parenthood 2018-2022*. This approach would take into account the fundamental needs for humanization that the parent-child relationship supports.

**Recommendation n° 27**

The commission recommends that PMIs always place health and cultural objectives within their missions. This means organizing ECA-LEP offerings in each PMI waiting room in order to support the parents and help spur the child’s awakening. Professional readers are one of the best choices for this setting.

**Recommendation n° 28**

The commission recommends that each training program for early childhood professionals include an obligatory module on ECA-LEP. This would be enriched by exchanges with artists. Sharing different perspectives would serve children and create an environment that fulfills their need for the care and culture essential to their growth.

**Recommendation n° 29**

The commission recommends that training for childhood professionals include a mandatory module sharing scientific work on how nature affects the child’s development. New ways should be imagined, in collaboration with parents, to integrate nature into centers for children from zero to three years old.

**Recommendation n° 30**

The commission recommends that the training of early childhood professionals include encounters with the world of art and culture, museum visits, and performances. These should be offered so that each professional can personally

<sup>1</sup> See Premières Pages, p. 115

have a sensory and aesthetic experience. In the connection with the “beautiful,” there is a kernel that cannot be learned. It is lived and felt; it nourishes the professional in their being. This emotional nutrition will allow the professional to feel the calm and serenity offered by the world of art and, moreover, to understand how those feelings can nourish the thought, the imagination, the rapport with the world that surrounds us.

#### Recommendation n° 31

The commission recommends including child development, as well as notions about parenting, in the core curriculum for child and family protection specialists (TISF). It also recommends including a mandatory training module on ECA-LEP, enriched with encounters with artists.

#### Recommendation n° 32

The commission recommends gathering, starting in 2019, a group of experts to rethink the training of health professionals on Cultural Health. A mandatory common curriculum aimed at all childhood and family professionals, no matter their focus (midwives, doctors, pediatricians, nurses, general practitioners, nursery workers, educators of young children...), should be included in all existing training programs.

#### Recommendation n° 33

The commission recommends overhauling child health record booklets with an eye to Cultural Health, and including awakening as a distinct part of the child's health. A “Cultural and Artistic Awakening” page would be found at the end of the booklet so that parents who so desire, as well as professionals who follow the child's development, can note completed activities, performances seen, music and books appreciated, moments spent with nature, etc.

#### Recommendation n° 34

The commission recommends that the child undergo, once per year, a pediatric or medical consultation called a “long consultation” (because of its length and corresponding cost). It would consist of ensuring the global development of the child with a focus on their Cultural Health.

#### Recommendation n° 35

The commission recommends recognizing the artist and the importance of their contributions alongside childhood professionals, while emphasizing the latter as role models for the child.

#### Recommendation n° 36

The commission recommends encouraging and financing every artistic initiative that benefits early childhood so that artists are not impeded in their creation. This would happen notably by clarifying their status and standardizing methods of remuneration for their presentations.

#### Recommendation n° 37

The commission recommends taking into account the 40 proposals made by Scène(s) d'enfance et d'ailleurs for an artistic and cultural policy of live performance directed at youth, and to add a 41<sup>st</sup> proposal underlining the importance of ECA-LEP in this policy.

#### Recommendation n° 38

The commission recommends training artists who practice ECA-LEP about childhood development and the institutions that facilitate it.

#### Recommendation n° 39

The commission recommends training cultural mediators about early childhood and ECA-LEP in order to adapt their work to small children's need for cultural and artistic awakening.

#### Recommendation n° 40

The commission recommends recognizing nonprofits' important work by giving them concrete technical and financial help so they can focus on their primary mission of serving the public, and by enabling the continued success of their ECA-LEP initiatives, which are tools of Cultural Health.

**Recommendation n° 41**

The commission recommends assembling and digitizing all literature produced by associations, which is currently decentralized, for the purpose of preservation. They can form a library accessible by students, researchers and professionals, as well as by elected officials who want to learn about inspiring experiences or theories.

**Recommendation n° 42**

The commission recommends sensitizing elected officials across France to the idea that culture supports individual development, facilitates connections that make regions more dynamic, and opens up opportunities for intentional partnerships that benefit youth, early childhood, and parents. ECA-LEP would be the focal point of this effort.

**Recommendation n° 43**

The commission recommends including ECA-LEP in public health programs in France so that Cultural Health initiatives can be made permanent.

**Recommendation n° 44**

The commission recommends ministerial collaboration on the artistic and cultural needs of small children and their parents. It calls for an interministerial policy of ECA-LEP.

**Recommendation n° 45**

The commission recommends a collaboration between ministries to recognize and fund Cultural Health.

**Recommendation n° 46**

The commission recommends the diffusion of public health messages on ECA-LEP by the ministries of Health and Culture, in collaboration with the CNAF (National Office for Family Allocations), to meet today's health challenges.

**Recommendation n° 47**

The commission recommends sharing a map of ECA-LEP, starting in 2019, in order to exchange and spread awareness of experiences.

**Recommendation n° 48**

The commission recommends expanding birth preparation classes to include Cultural Health's

approach of artistic and cultural awakening:

Reading, dance, and music are all moments that prepare parents for the birth and improve the quality of connection with the expected child. The commission also recommends including ECA-LEP initiatives in the standard instructions of the Haute Autorité de Santé (French National Authority for Health) and the Plan périnatalité (Perinatal Plan).

**Recommendation n° 49**

The commission recommends facilitating artists' participation in the curricula of birth preparation classes via framework agreements between the Ministry of Solidarity and Health and the Ministry of Culture. The experiment of the dancer Anne-Laure Rouxel in preparing the pregnant body for childbirth is an exemplary collaboration between ECA-LEP and health.

**Recommendation n° 50**

The commission recommends sensitizing the medical profession to the cultural dimension of birth and adding a certification in Cultural Health to the continuing education for doctors. This would allow a merging of medical and cultural objectives, aiding both the birth of the child and of the parent.

**Recommendation n° 51**

The commission recommends including in the training of future medical professionals (doctors, specialists, midwives, nurses) and of childhood professionals (educators of young children, those who work in special education, nursery workers and assistants, and home-based daycares) an obligatory module on Cultural Health based on ECA-LEP.

**Recommendation n° 52**

The commission recommends designing the physical spaces in centers for expectant parents (maternity wards, birthing centers) to encourage bonding; organizing contests among young architects to this end; and seeing birth as a cultural beginning that nourishes bonds, an understanding that should be symbolized in the architecture.

#### Recommendation n° 53

The commission recommends thinking of parks and gardens as vital to the needs of future parents. All studies confirm the need for green spaces, trees, and natural life to promote peace and fight stress. To these ends, the commission recommends bringing representatives of the Ministry of Solidarity and Health, of Culture and of Territorial Planning around the same table—cooperation crucial to envisioning how to bring together birthing places and natural spaces.

#### Recommendation n° 54

The commission recommends that, during the short stay in a maternity ward, parents be welcomed culturally through attention to the aesthetic of the premises: rooms for reading and music, green spaces, convivial places for exchange, family nooks, and more.

#### Recommendation n° 55

The commission recommends developing agreements between the ministries of Health and of Culture in order to promote opportunities for ECA-LEP in all hospitals for young children, maternity wards, neonatal and pediatric departments, hospitals for children and mothers, etc.

#### Recommendation n° 56

The commission recommends rethinking the child's health record booklet. Example additions could include fields for the development of sensory, motor, language and play skills. At the end of the booklet, a space could be reserved for parents' notes regarding the child's period of awakening. (Example introduction: "Your child grows and marvels throughout their first years. Their awakening activities are essential to their development. For both your own memories and your child's annual consultation, you can list: their first music, their first book, their favorite park, their first concert, their first performance, their first exhibition, their first dance steps, etc.")

#### Recommendation n° 57

The commission recommends that, following the Anglo-Saxon model and in line with the Plan périnatalité (Perinatal Plan), a qualified professional pay home

visits each week for the first six weeks after leaving the maternity ward. During this visit, the parents would be given a booklet summarizing resource centers and other practical information: PMIs, locations of ECA-LEP, LAEPs, "Pâtes au beurre" family spaces, game libraries, media libraries, cultural associations, etc.

#### Recommendation n° 58

The commission recommends that particular attention be paid to very young children who have been removed from their families, so that parental visits can include ECA-LEP initiatives. This connection-building approach is essential to restoring quality relationships. The same goes for maternal centers, where a method focused on the mother-father-baby relationship is essential.

#### Recommendation n° 59

The commission recommends that the CNAF (National Office for Family Allocations) take stock of the holistic health needs of the child between birth and three years old and look closer at how to best accompany the parent-child relationship in the spirit of Cultural Health.

#### Recommendation n° 60

The commission recommends that each PMI greet parents and children with professional book readings in waiting rooms. These opportunities would respond to the need for early intervention and support of parenting, two ways of reducing social health inequalities.

#### Recommendation n° 61

The commission recommends the implementation of a long annual consultation (billed like a one-hour consultation with a specialist) to assess the Cultural Health of children during their first six years. This consultation enables a global monitoring of children's health.

#### Recommendation n° 62

The commission recommends developing ECA-LEP initiatives across France by providing cultural associations and to troupes, artists, and theaters with the means to respond to the early cultural needs of small children and their parents.

Recommendation n° 63

The commission recommends including ECA-LEP in support programs for parents, particularly in cases where there is a weakened parent-child bond, by bringing together childhood professionals and artists trained about early childhood.

Recommendation n° 64

The commission recommends encouraging travelling performances and making them more widely available, to remind people that everyone has the right to culture.

Recommendation n° 65

The commission recommends organizing, every two years, under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture and of the Ministry of Solidarity and Health, an international forum on ECA-LEP.

Recommendation n° 66

The commission recommends dedicating permanent funding to ECA-LEP, distinct from the government budget and tied to “solidarity tickets.” This budget would be entirely devoted to the development and support of ECA-LEP initiatives, and thus to children from birth to three years old and their parents.

# Glossary of Cultural Health

in collaboration with  
Mariette Darrigrand

A glossary is a selection of essential words that explain a global concept. Cultural Health uses the following 20 terms in its pursuit of public health. Sophie Marinopoulos defines them based on her theoretical work and her practice as a specialist. They are geared toward both professionals and parents, in the interest of exchange.

## 1. Sensory communion

The human spirit is interactive. No baby can begin to develop if it is not anchored within a common parent-child body language. This language sets the pace for sensory encounters that help create a shared energy, a vital rhythm, through which the baby can detach itself from the chaos it feels at birth. The parent, by offering their own reassuring emotional rhythm, invites the child to experience the fruitful fluctuations of life: Displeasure is followed by pleasure, absence by newfound presence, waiting by the excitement of an experience... Taking the time together to look, touch, listen, taste, feel—these are what ECA-LEP proposes, so that parents and child live a true sensory communion that brings out their own tempo.

## 2. Primal aesthetic excitement

The baby possesses an aesthetic dimension in the first sense of the word: It is “moved by Beauty.” On the day of its birth, this element is conveyed instinctually as a yearning to be born. The baby shows that it longs to be touched by the world’s beauty—and to be part of it. The little one expresses a stream of emotions in a sensory language that helps it organize what it feels in its body, which is sometimes terror. Thanks to creations by artists, who have kept their primal emotional and poetic intelligence intact, ECA-LEP’s offerings help the baby deepen this initiatory experience. The artist speaks and understands the baby’s sensory aesthetic language.

## 3. Child scholar

If it is in a mutually-loving relationship, the baby can become an agent in its growth by way of unrestricted experimentation. To this end, it should be invited—not incited—to freely evolve at its own rhythm in space. By repeating bodily experiences which introduce it to contrasting and varied concepts (inside/outside, seen/hidden, over/under, big/small, hard/soft...), it interprets its body, like a small scholar studying itself, and it accumulates a whole base of bodily knowledge. ECA-LEP centers the child within its creations as a naturally clever collaborator. In so doing, it offers appropriate artistic material that aids the child’s internal work, which progressively transforms their yearning into curiosity, from which the desire to learn will later sprout.

## 4. Sensitive space-time

A little one feels time when rhythms, sequences, and breaks are established. If time seems chaotic to them, too fast or too slow, this shakes their whole sensibility. On the other hand, when it is well-adapted to the child’s rhythm, time starts to figure significantly in their humanizing awakening and sensitive development of memory and thought. Through performances, workshops, or challenges, ECA-LEP creates a wide variety of moments during which the child and parent share the synchrony of their rhythms and the great heartbeats of life (absence/presence, silence/sound...).

## 5. Humanizing awakening

The oldest studies, just like the most recent, confirm that the sensitive world experienced by the child constitutes the first stage of thought. Through their extreme body/mind sensitivity, feelings begin to surface: reactions to smells, to lights, to the vividness of colors, to their first images, to variations in sound, to music, to reassuring tactile sensations... Thought is, above all, a feeling body. The body is thought, the thought is physical; here resides the baby’s growing humanity. ECA-LEP creatively and delicately activates the baby’s senses, never rushing it, at a tailored pace, by nourishing it with appropriate and multisensory offerings. When this sensitive awakening (which is felt



through every sense) succeeds, it puts children on the path toward being human. They start to explore their various forms of intelligence, leading them to discoveries on which later learning will rely. These discoveries come from within; the learning comes from without. Starting with preparations for birth, it is possible to promote the mother/father/child bond by offering prenatal sensory dialogues that encourage a calm birth.

## 6. Awakening to nature

Within Cultural Health's global framework of sensory awakening, nature plays a central role. Cultural Health is based on the scientific research of the last decade, which confirms that children who regularly interact with nature are sick less often, more sociable, and more attentive. It is imperative to their development that we provide structured opportunities to feel, touch, and play with substances, vegetables, minerals, and small animals. The sensory knowledge gained through these flirtations with nature provides a strong foundation for their first revelations, enhancing their motivation and autonomy. ECA-LEP integrates opportunities into its artistic offerings that combine art with experiences in nature, gardens, and outdoor settings. Natural play spaces feed the little one's most basic needs.

## 7. Growing into humanity

People are not automatically human at birth. They must refine themselves from raw beings into sensitive, thinking, communicating, conscious beings. Growth, then, does not mean simply developing physical capacities. It means launching one's psychic being, one's inner space. It means exploring one's resources and getting to know one's vulnerability. It means being able to picture one's life and to tell its story, to define and take center stage in one's destiny. Such a process is long and requires specific types of experimentation, supportive attention, presence, and recognition, within human encounters repeated daily. Each human risks missing out on these, which can cause deficiencies, if their environment isn't consciously created to meet their physical and psychic needs. ECA-LEP, through its rich relational techniques—which rely on sensitive, aesthetic, and poetic expression—allows us to address potential problems, and more broadly to feed each child's natural yearning for humanization.

## 8. Identification of the parent with their child

To be born into parenthood psychologically, a father or mother should be capable of empathizing with their baby. Identification helps them understand and respond to the child's physical, emotional and relational needs. This comprehension creates an attentive presence that benefits the little one's personal development. In recognizing their primary role, the adult becomes a parent, capable of providing the baby with vital, comprehensive nutrition. By putting parents and child in a mindset to share beautiful and emotional moments, ECA-LEP facilitates this important parental skill and inspires the creation of beautiful parent-child encounters composed of surprises, shared emotional discoveries, and simple pleasure.

## 9. Experimental playfulness (games for growth)

Play means setting the tempo for and repeating experiences that encourage the journey from unknown to known, from fear to fun, from senseless to meaningful. To the child, playing means experiencing first their own body, then objects and caretakers. Play means striving to understand the world, to seize one's own story, which is created through this experimental fooling-around. Play, then, is one of Cultural Health's weapons in the fight against cultural malnutrition, which starves children of connections. If the toy brings true joy, it should encourage both solitary and shared experience. ECA-LEP can help revive experimental playfulness, which holds the potential for all future discovery through its promise of structuring relationships. The child, recognized as a collaborator in the offering, is invited to play and their creativity is respected.

## 11. Cultural malnutrition

Children's physical malnutrition is well-known. Cultural malnutrition, however, has slipped below the radar. It is an invisible evil that can be defined as a lack of relational experience. It also involves neglect of children's need to share and to be spoken to and of, so as to one day speak their own language. From there unfold signs of unwellness that can include loss of curiosity, linguistic impoverishment, emotional neediness that makes the child demanding, and ill-contained swings between anger and apathy. This new malnutrition is striking France, with all of its material wealth and hyperconsumption. It breeds within opulence. Many children can't "get their fill" emotionally; they remain famished

for the foods of love and symbolism. There is an urgency today—in a materialistic world that tends to forget the possibility of a shared rapport with the beautiful, the aesthetic, the sensitive—to substantially re-nourish human beings, starting with our youngest. Just as post-war children were nourished with milk, the children of hyper-modern society should be fed the symbolic milk of human connection and culture in its most basic sense. ECA-LEP arms us for the fight against cultural malnutrition.

## 12. Inner movement

Inner movement describes the sensory waves the baby feels in its body and which interweave, forming an inner space and personal unity. Moving freely, reassured by its relational environment, the baby gradually brings continuity to its being. This invisible internal growth is essential to the construction of identity. ECA-LEP offers many occasions for the child to have visual, acoustic, gestural, linguistic, and metaphoric experiences, created by artists; these experiences reinforce their inner life. The baby's inner movements echo the external ones it is offered. Dance is particularly good at inspiring the sensory echo phenomenon.

## 13. Birth through bonds

After entering the world, the child will have to engage in a second birth: a cultural birth comprised of encounters, relationships, emotions, and attentiveness, borne by the looks, caresses, words, and thoughts that their parents, close relations, and caretakers will offer them. These many bonds, indispensable, creators of the child's inner life, will be building blocks of their cognitive life, of their evolution into a thinking being. ECA-LEP uses many tools as well as metaphorical language to narrate to babies the birth they are experiencing. Art is a succession of connections, of meanings, that each child can delight in harvesting, feeding their hunger to take in the world. Babies, conscious of the value of this food, feel these moments with great intensity.

## 14. Cultural nutrition

Being culturally nourished does not mean being cultivated, but rather awakened to one's inner life thanks to the intentional care that develops body awareness and humanizing awakening. A baby needs milk and words, caresses and thoughts, attentiveness and fantasy, reality and symbolism. The infant is nourished by all the gifts that culture (in its humanizing movement) and its partner nature offer it.

These establish an existential foundation, a future shield against the void of depression. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, when children are culturally malnourished, deprived of relationships that give structure and strength—leaving them with weakened cognitive, linguistic, relational, empathic, and emotional resources—cultural nutrition should be considered paramount. ECA-LEP is at the heart of this cultural nutrition with its sensitive, poetic, aesthetic, metaphorical approach. The young children drink up artists' offerings like "good milk" that helps them grow.

## 15. Parent as cultural mediator

The parent is the person who commits to the child and who gives them indispensable support and attention. The small human cannot awaken on its own—this trait is specific to human condition—which renders it particularly vulnerable and necessitates parental presence. As the primary referent, through empathy, the parent will understand and respond to the baby's needs. Thus, not only do they offer nutrition essential to physical growth, but also to psychic development. The parent makes mental space for the child so that the latter may in turn learn to think; they guide the baby to use its own strengths to process sensations. The initiatives of ECA-LEP support this parental role through performance or any other cultural activity adapted to the baby, in the pleasure of shared creativity. The father and the mother accompany their child's journey toward culture as a representation of the world. A parent-child protoconversation begins as well, rich with emotional connection, which helps determine the child's future curiosity, acquisitions, desire to learn, etc.

## 16. Pluriculture

Cultural Health bases its approach on a whole palette of awakening that is essential to the child. This palette is pluricultural because it contains such a rich variety of tools that stimulate the baby's yearning to hear, feel, see, taste, listen, vibrate, move, babble, and play, but also to see itself within a comforting story. The baby is cradled by the voice that narrates, the body that dances, the music that caresses it. For a little one caught up in the movement of humanization, everything is culture, everything is food, everything helps it grow. In their wide diversity, the offerings of ECA-LEP are like so many nutritious and diverse dishes in which the baby delights, allowing its emotions to choose an expression (screams, gestures, tears, laughter, babbles, silence...).

## 17. Preventative health

Preventative health is a significant tool of Cultural Health. It works through a focus on connections that sometimes need mending due to injuries sustained by a mother or father during childhood. Thus, the injured child within the parent must be treated so they can let go of their psychic defenses that impede resonance with their baby. Letting go allows the birth of an emotional confidence, critical to empathic function. ECA-LEP, in this case, provides a tool as individualized as it is effective. Its offerings reactivate a sensoriality in the adult, a feeling for the aesthetic, that was interrupted during childhood.

## 18. Body knowledge

Very early childhood, from birth to three years old, is a period when the small human stores up a library of body knowledge. Children are like scholars who make observations using their own bodies and adjacent objects: a parent's body, food, various substances, emotions—every moment is an opportunity for discovery. They conduct their study using three natural tools: testing, repetition (a baby never makes a gesture only once), and rhythm (finding their own is crucial). Using their bodies allows them to construct an internal knowledge, a knowledge that is felt before it is thought. ECA-LEP offers not just entertainment, but a whole palette of experiments that test the principles of perception—discovery of inner/outer, of presence/absence, of shadow/light, of rhythms, of changing tempos—in order to respond to the little one's needs.

## 19. Interchangeable senses

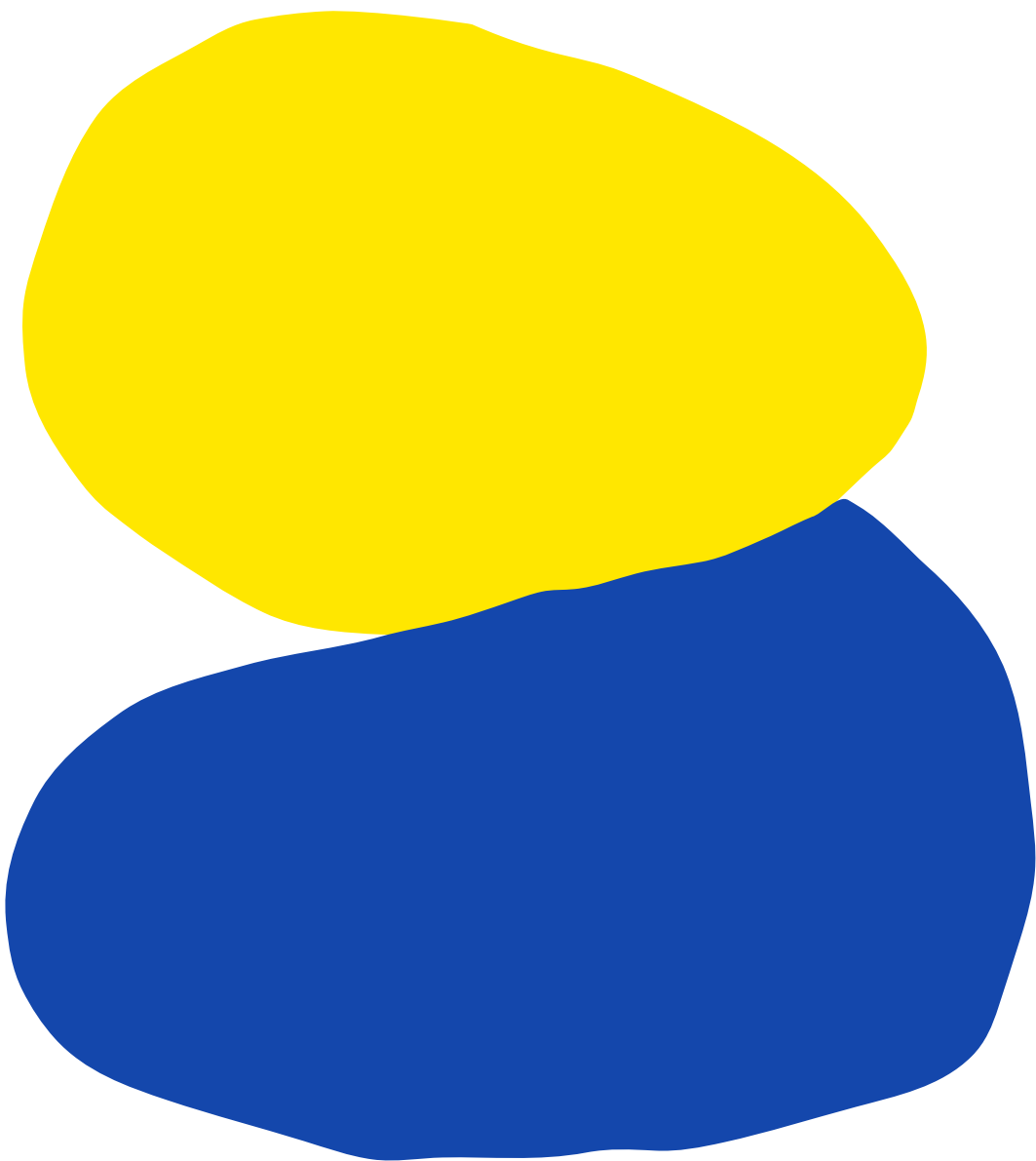
Babies swim in a constant bath of sounds, smells, sights... And they themselves are perfectly polymorphic. As soon as they experience something, all of their senses are engaged and become interchangeable. Little ones are able to listen with their skin, to touch with their mouths, to watch with their ears. Cultural Health reminds us that each child owns senses that need to be awakened. A child with sensory or physical limitations will know how to differently harness their hunger to understand and interpret the world, by looking to the resources they already have. Artists who dedicate themselves to very young children have held onto the genius of interconnections. This is why their works, performances, and creations that endeavor toward ECA-LEP resonate so well with the polymorphic sensibility of infants and manage to transcend sensory and physical challenges.

## 20. Narrative fabric

The human being is a creature of speech and story. That being is born into a story, both familial and cultural, that is recounted to them by their inner circle. One must be discussed and addressed, in order to learn to speak. But the narrative fabric does not limit itself to words. Sign language is a beautiful example. While stories can be told aloud, they are also the stuff of vibrations, expressions, gestures, and consideration, and it puts children on the path toward their own stories. Caught up in the narration, they sense that they are the object of attention. Well before they can talk, they weave the words of their own narrative; well before writing, they sketch their stories. The small human belongs to a "tale-telling species," in the words of Nancy Huston. The offerings of ECA-LEP are all narrations (readings, dance, music, marionettes, theater, art, circus) that speak to children and awaken them to the construction of meaning, thus encouraging the process of identification through narrative.

## 21. Universality

No matter where in the world it was born or in which culture it was raised, the baby awaits humanizing attention from its parents and those around it. This first relationship of recognition is the basis on which it will begin to awaken and become a speaking Subject. One can talk to a baby in any language, because the undertone of each tongue is the will to live—and the baby understands that. This universal process, which takes place everywhere in the world, is made valuable, playful, shareable by ECA-LEP. Through its offerings, ECA-LEP builds the practices of sharing and openness to other cultures. It allows parents to take ownership and proudly play their roles.



# Theoretical Arguments for ECA-LEP

A



# Toward a New Perspective on Culture

## 1. Childhood in Culture: A 50-Year-Old Dilemma

In 1959, a ministry was created specifically for cultural affairs, and André Malraux was placed at its helm. Its goal was to democratize culture. Twelve years later, in 1971, the FIC (Cultural Intervention Fund) allowed Jacques Duhamel to make regular cultural access a reality for all. For him, an interministerial dimension was essential to cultural policy, and the FIC encouraged it by building contracts on the ground with local governments, launching many initiatives for the broader public, opening libraries in the city of Clamart, exposing children to art in schools (through the association Les Musicoliers), creating connections between culture and lived environments (building public play spaces for children), and finally by opening up cultural access for underprivileged populations and implementing programs for housing, social life, territorial planning, and more.

From 1977-1979, the first initiatives aimed at infants, led by the AER (agency for Educational and Research Assistance), took root with “Infant Workshops” aimed at disabled children younger than six—and at their parents—offered in daycares, preschools, and specialized facilities.

Starting in the 1980s, the FIC committed to initiatives in PMIs and began to support the programs established by ACCES for books, by Enfance et Music for musical awakening, by ADEC for dance, and by MIRE (Movement for Information and Reflection on Children), which worked on creating a center for parents in the 17<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris as well as spaces for awakening in rural areas.

We see how culture has taken childhood under its wing, building a presence in disadvantaged neighborhoods and rural areas and supporting those with disabilities—topics dear to the FIC—in the hope of helping local governments advance this wider policy.

In accordance with the FIC’s main tenets, the DDC (Agency for Cultural Development) signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Education in 1983.

Three years later, after the dissolution of the DDC, responsibility for early childhood policy was taken up by the new DEF (Delegation on Teaching and Training).

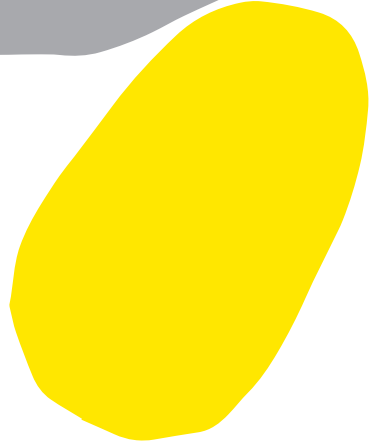
The year 1989 brought a joint policy of cultural and artistic awakening for young children, spearheaded by the ministries of Family and of Culture. The protocol signed in June of that year affirmed the need to integrate cultural and artistic awakening activities into the educational components of centers for young children, and to include parents in that implementation. This protocol encouraged the participation of professionals from the world of culture in training and sustaining those who work with young children; it also supported exemplary initiatives that emphasize culture in centers for small children.

Beginning in the 1990s, the funding for early childhood policy by the Ministry of Culture was decentralized. The general idea has been to support the DRACs (Regional Cultural Affairs Committees) in applying this policy regionally. The new structure thus requires collaboration between DRACs and DDASSs (Departmental Health and Social Services Agencies), which has not always been easy. Still, the initiatives continue, and have notably resulted in the publication of “Abécéd’Art: Éveil culturel et petite enfance” (“Art Alphabet: Cultural Awakening and Early Childhood”), a brochure written for professionals both in the world of culture and in early childhood centers. An inventory was also conducted that demonstrated the diversity of initiatives encouraging cultural and artistic awakening for young children.

At the end of François Hollande’s term, a new memorandum of understanding<sup>1</sup> on cultural and artistic awakening for young children, signed by Audrey Azoulay, Minister of Culture, and Laurence Rossignol, Minister of Family, Childhood and Women’s Rights, confirmed the importance of artistic and cultural awakening in the quality of attention to early childhood. A national framework for

---

1 *Pour l’éveil artistique et culturel des jeunes enfants*, memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Culture and Public Relations and the Ministry of Families, Childhood and Women’s Rights, 20 March 2017.



the care of young children<sup>2</sup> was signed in 2017, organized around the “Ten Core Principles for Growing Up in Total Security.” The fifth principle concerns the artistic and cultural awakening of the young child and is currently undergoing further development. The sixth principle connects nature to awakening.

## 2. Culture for Today’s Young Children?

Over the course of our hearings, which featured artistic and cultural associations, artists, troupes, childhood professionals, DRACs and other agencies, all parties called for more consistency and clearly wanted to transform culture for small children. While the exchanges highlighted the general desire to improve early childhood, we also observed that, paradoxically, culture for babies remains a divisive issue. Those on the ground hear reactions like “superfluous,” “not a priority,” “pointless,” etc. Their testimonies point to a large gap between the actions that are recommended and publicly applauded and those that are actually implemented. This discrepancy causes much disappointment and overall fatigue for those we interviewed, particularly the artists, whose creations are often ignored and rarely chosen for child programming.

In order to fight the discrimination in cultural access from which part of our society suffers—namely, babies—the commission makes the following recommendations:

### 🏡 Recommendation n° 1

The commission recommends that governing bodies recognize the cultural and artistic awakening (ECA) of the child between birth and three years old as a cornerstone of health, and cultural and artistic awakening within the parent-child bond (ECA-LEP) as a cornerstone of preventative health and support for parenting. Thus, the commission suggests breaking down barriers between ministries so as to facilitate the best possible communication and to sensitize all of society to the rightful place of the child and to their fundamental need for ECA.

### 🏡 Recommendation n° 2

The commission recommends implementing a public policy based on ECA and ECA-LEP across France, and recognizing such policy as a priority in supporting the rights of the child. The awakening of children between birth and the age of three will give momentum to later artistic and cultural programs. Awakening precedes education.

### 🏡 Recommendation n° 3

The commission recommends that the government take into account that ECA-LEP is a universal approach to children and their parents, that it encourages equality, fights discrimination, and brings hope for more peaceful connections.

---

<sup>2</sup> Cadre national pour l'accueil du jeune enfant, Ministry of Families, Childhood and Women's Rights.



### 3. A Triptych: Culture-Baby-Democracy

Our commission believes in the spirit of the 1970's, with the major contributions of Jacques Duhamel toward enlarging the role of culture in society. We synthesize this with an assertion: *The baby has a crucial role to play within our democratic agora.*<sup>3</sup> While we are all former babies stripped of conscious memories by our childhood amnesia, the perspective we have on our youngest ones hints at our common origins. Caring for them is caring for everyone.

By granting the baby the consideration it merits, we implicitly recognize its power to positively influence our many philosophical, ethical, and legal debates. We strongly believe in focusing on the months before birth, worrying about how the child will be born, and giving credence to first connections. To look at a baby is to see a part of ourselves, a root of our humanity.

In this respect, we can take a lesson from the controversies sparked by assisted reproduction technology. Conflict arose between those who want to increase availability and those who impose drastic restrictions, not because the technique exists, but because we use it to directly meddle with our nature. More precisely, the technique weaves its way into our modern myths around childbirth.

If it is truly the procedure that is being attacked, we should acknowledge our profound fear at seeing it shake the core of our “tale-telling species” (to use Nancy Huston’s term)—we fear never again being able to find our place in a narrative, whether for our own benefit or to recount to others. Which, incidentally, is the first response of those who use the technique. They promise they will “tell everything” to the child: a true story that explains procreation while leaving out that of birth, combining fantasy and symbolism.

So the fear, never directly acknowledged, remains: Can we still give meaning to our births? Can we still write our stories—we, cultural beings caught up in complex symbolic connections? We must recognize that the small human, even before conception, holds a mirror to our humanity and our need for narrative. It keeps us awakened to and focused on our cultural condition.

Another question underlines the role of culture in our societies: *What do we rely on to feel alive or real?* The response is a statement: Life is not just the ability to breathe on one’s own. Life is an awakening where the small human should have a chance to be enveloped in a will to exist passed on by those committed to them—their parents—and in which they are autonomous agents. Parents care, protect, stimulate, empathize—and are at the same time symbolic figures who see children in their growth and give them the emotional resources needed to grow up. Existence is relational, and a political focus is necessary to sustain the longing to live. ECA-LEP is key.

Finally, drawing on the words of the philosopher Marie-José Mondzain, we wish to add: “Culture is multilingual; dictatorship knows only one language.”<sup>4</sup>

### 4. Fighting Cultural Malnutrition

Children’s physical malnutrition is a well-known problem, but few people have heard of cultural malnutrition—whereas many recognize its consequences. So, what does it mean?

The concept blossomed from my 30-plus years of clinical experience: consultations, listening sessions with parents, child therapy, and a parallel engagement, since 1999, in a family support center that I founded. The center is called Les Pâtes au beurre<sup>5</sup> (Pasta with Butter) because it is centered around a kitchen where anyone can come relax and nourish themselves psychologically. Free, anonymous and operated on a walk-in basis, it is a place where families show up freely, with or without children and irrespective of age, to find support when they feel ready to speak. It is a place of solidarity, open to all social and cultural backgrounds, striving to increase equality and fight discrimination. Over the years, parents have built trusting relationships with the space and its teams of psychologists and occupational therapists.

My clinical experience, combined with hundreds of other experiences shared by clinicians in France and around the world, constitute a veritable laboratory for shared reflection. They allow us to catalogue a number of child behaviors that are more pronounced within the lifestyles of the last three decades. Lifestyles that are materially rich and yet poor, regardless of social status—which brings me to use the term

3 Appeal made by Sylvain Missonnier regarding the fetus in “Le premier chapitre de la vie? Nidification fœtale et nidation parentale.” *La Psychiatrie de l’enfant*, 2007/1 (vol. 50), p. 61-80.

4 Marie-José Mondzain, *Confiscation. Des mots, des images et du temps*, Les Liens qui Libèrent, 2017.

5 ■■■lespatesaubeurre.fr.

*cultural malnutrition*. It is an invisible ailment caused by lack of experience, which weakens self-knowledge and recognition of others.

This new malnutrition strikes our modern societies, where material comfort and hyperconsumption prevail. It thrives in opulence: Screens, accumulated objects and toys, loss of contact with nature, lack of awakening experiences, less unstructured play—all weigh heavily on the child’s development.

For simplicity’s sake, let us examine the place of the toy in our western societies. The vast majority of children, including those from less wealthy families, own many toys. The profusion has become almost universal, even as parents continue to tell us that their children play less and less with all those toys, which confirms child specialists’ observations that very young children play only briefly with toys before dropping them. They lose their desire to get acquainted with the toys, to playfully discover them, which is important to their inner development. Interaction with the object—and its discovery—which allow the child to use their resources, are replaced by the thrill of possession.

Frenzied consumption, which provides ample opportunities to “possess,” does not always come with self-discovery or inner growth. The same is true of activities, which have become a compulsion. One must “do something”; boredom is a no-no. We no longer see being bored as an opportunity for exploration, exercising the child’s capacity to find an activity—which means delving within, letting their imagination improve their cognitive capacities.

To grow, the child needs to expand its sensory, emotional, affective, motor, and linguistic experiences. All of these rely on a body that is free to act, invent, and create, at a pace specific to each child. Experience is always individual.

The children of our societies are losing touch with their active bodies. Safety rules mean that spaces for young children are built around adults’ fears, to the detriment of the child’s primary needs. They also lose contact with the space offered by nature, with moments of boredom, and with the development of imagination and thought. The body is thought and thought is physical, as highlighted in the writings of many early childhood clinicians whose opinions I endorse.

Of course, I don’t recommend confiscating toys, which are a source of joy for the child when they receive them; we should understand, though, that material abundance, if not accompanied by relationships, is synonymous with

deprivation. Many parents complain that their children “have everything” but “don’t know how to entertain themselves.” Indeed, the toy alone, just like an “object” or “activity,” does not nourish the child. We agree with Maria Montessori’s statement on the subject: “Objects [...] should be ‘presented’, offered as a gift, work and source of culture, [...] opening a path to a humanizing activity for the child.”

Experience remains the core of the child’s life and requires, first and foremost, a presence. Children cannot have calm experiences when they are excited by an abundance of objects—and drowning under that excess. We see, then, the degree to which contradictory reactions can intertwine. Children have everything and nothing at the same time. They simultaneously do it all and accomplish nothing. They are always surrounded—and alone.

So, we see two layers of existence taking shape: a visible one, which we can call social, and the invisible internal, psychological life. Culture speaks to this invisible layer, which is part of the process of humanization that we must preserve.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

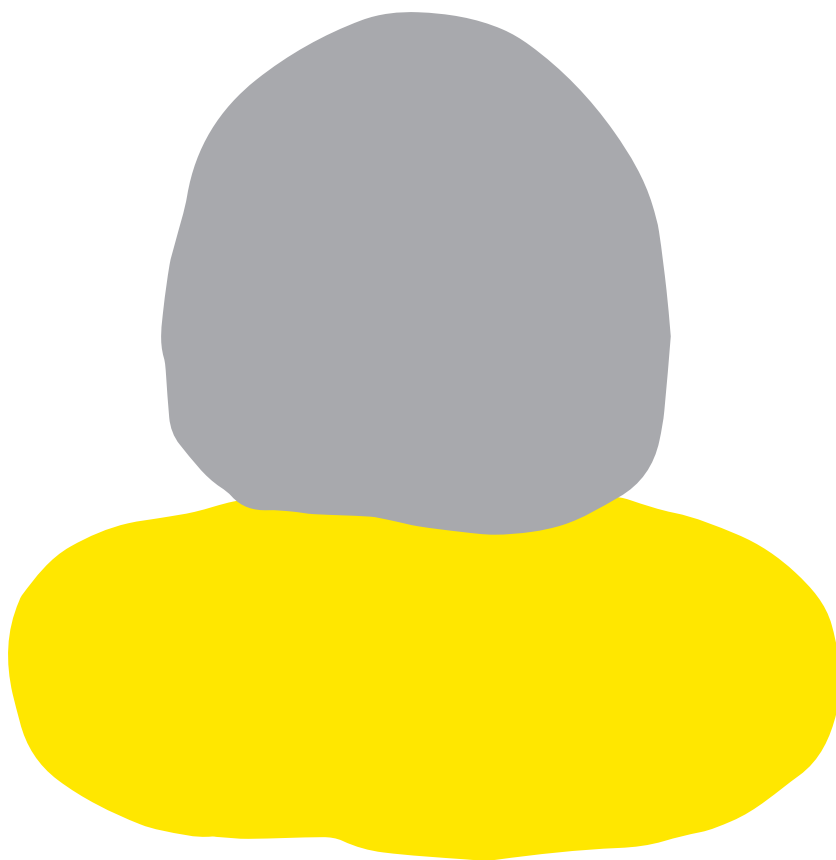
ECA-LEP speaks to the child who longs for connections. It exists within relationships and experiences and not within consumption. In this way, it provides sensory, emotional, linguistic, and relational nutrition, indispensable to the small child’s construction of inner resources.

To be deprived of experiences that teach us about ourselves, and thus of inner resources, causes a number of consequences. This explains why today we hear ourselves saying that children are awkward, can’t concentrate, are uncoordinated. This leads them to struggle with mathematics and abstraction, linguistic development, expression, ability to structure language, and comprehension of the language and its rules.

Our modernity, blinded by its ambitions, does not want to see the injury it inflicts on the small human. Our era ignores the fact that it starves children of essential cultural food. It sees the child within an adultomorphic logic: as already a small adult, rather than as someone who is developing into one. To me, the children’s struggles seem like indicators of cultural malnutrition.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP pushes us to see the child not as a miniature adult, but as an emerging individual. ECA-LEP fights against “adultomorphism” by thinking of the child as a developing being moving through phases of growth.



We should take this question head-on and acknowledge to what degree ECA-LEP is an ally in the fight against this malnutrition. Our vigilance will help us counter our children's challenges: linguistic trouble, academic struggles, suicide attempts by children aged eight to twelve, addictions, and more.

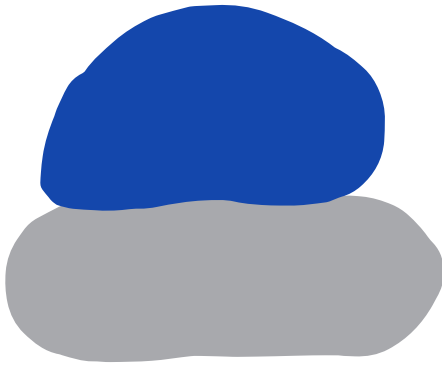
Majid Rahnema perfectly illustrates, in his book *Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté*<sup>6</sup> (*When Misery Replaces Poverty*), this question of opulence and poverty. The book has greatly inspired our work because it emphasizes how important it is to preserve the depth of our relationships. Rahnema stated that, for millennia, our societies lived and produced based on principles of simplicity and conviviality. But then we turned a corner and shifted to a production-driven economy and a quest for personal profit. Women and men who, until then, had lived with enough to subsist, in solidarity with their communities, were suddenly thrust into new forms of poverty.

For Rahnema, modern poverty appeared because of the proliferation of new socially-fabricated needs that most people find impossible to fulfill:

Convivial poverty is unique to vernacular societies (Ivan Illich first used this term, instead of *traditional societies*), societies that have an organic character, where there are not yet individuals in the modern sense of the word, but *Subjects* (*subjectum*, subjected to something), within a social body of which they are *members*. This category of poverty is not chosen, but lived as a commonsense reaction to necessity. It is a condition founded on the principles of simplicity, frugality, sharing and consideration of one's neighbors. It embodies the concept that Iranians call the *qana'at* (contentment with what is perceived as each person's role in the cosmic order). It represents an ethic and a will to live together, following culturally-defined criteria of justice, solidarity, and social cohesion. This type of poverty was the fate of all pre-industrial populations: to make the best of what one shared or could share. Vernacular societies represented microcosms in which rich relationships guaranteed a balanced life, if one marked by frugality.<sup>7</sup>

6 Majid Rahnema, *Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté*, Actes Sud, 2003.

7 Majid Rahnema, "Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté," *Revue Quart Monde*, "Reconsidérer la pauvreté?", n° 192, 2004.



He adds: “To Thomas Aquinas, poverty represented the lack of the *superfluous*, and misery, the lack of the essential.”

Through his focus on traditional societies, Majid Rahnema calls for a better understanding of our economic logic, so as to more intelligently attack the problems caused by our ways of life and invent solutions adapted to our modern age.

Bernard Stiegler speaks of “symbolic misery,” regarding industries that manipulate our aesthetic sensibilities for the purpose of individual consumption. Our uniqueness, which we owe to the singularity of the objects we interact with, is perverted by standardized, industrial items:

[T]he audiovisual techniques of marketing cause my whole lived past, through all these images and these sounds that I see and hear, to gradually become like that of my neighbors. [...] Because my past is built, more and more, of sounds and images that media dumps into my consciousness and of objects and relationships with objects that these images drive me to buy, it loses its singularity, which means I lose myself as singularity.<sup>8</sup>

To return to the question of our children and the paradox they inhabit, we emphasize the indispensable role of ECA-LEP in our collective response. ECA-LEP does not promote profusion or consumption—it prioritizes *relation*. The artist offers, through their work, a moment of awakening that nourishes relationships, allowing the child and parents the chance to engage at their own rhythm and in their own style. Culture doesn’t impose itself on this time of life; it proposes itself.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP recognizes the baby as an agent in the relationship and builds on its ability to communicate physically, with the parent’s help. By offering original creations, ECA-LEP pushes back against the poverty of thought caused by the consumption of mass-produced objects.

#### ▲ Recommendation n°4

The commission recommends progressively generalizing and cementing the implementation of ECA and ECA-LEP in centers for early childhood and in family spaces—PMIs, social centers, RAMs (support centers for home-based childminders), and LAEPs so as to alleviate the effects of cultural malnutrition. This approach recognizes and takes into account the growing child, the changing parent, and the evolving bond.

#### ▲ Recommendation n°5

The commission recommends recognizing artists as partners of early childhood professionals and participants in the global development of the child’s relational dynamic.

## 5. The Role of Screens in Cultural Malnutrition

### 5.1 Screens and Digital Technology

In the first quarter of 2016, the Fondation pour l’enfance<sup>9</sup> (Childhood Foundation) hosted workshops that brought together about thirty participants, including the author of this report. We were invited to share our experience, from a variety of backgrounds, on the topic “Children and Digital Technology.” At first, we concentrated on access, available content, supervision and the many consequences of technology for children from birth to six years old. Then we tackled the same questions for children between the ages of seven and ten. Our work resulted in a booklet about the digital life of small children, with two sections: “Observations” and “Plan of Action.”

Within “Observations,” ten points were identified, including:

- We note a consistent decrease in the age at which children regularly use technology, alone or with supervision.
- It is important to focus on children younger than ten, for whom the implications of technology, how it should be used, and strategic responses are underdeveloped.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Stiegler, “De la misère symbolique,” *Les Cahiers d’éveil*, Enfance et Musique, no. 3, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Fondation pour l’enfance: ■■■ [fondation-enfance.org](http://fondation-enfance.org).

- Within this age group, it is particularly useful to focus on those under six years old. Children from birth to three demonstrate a lively interest in digital stimuli; those from four to six become completely immersed.
- Those between zero and six have been abandoned by researchers, as well as by educational and public policy, even as commercial interests take aim at them.
- Physical and psychological effects of technology are often talked about but insufficiently studied.
- Children use and explore technology regularly, whereas certain acquisitions crucial to their development (sensory, motor, psychological, relational) are not yet fully formed.
- Technological overinvestment can hide educational underinvestment.

Adults acknowledge technology's role in children's lives, without knowing what types of usage are appropriate to the child's age and corresponding needs.

- Intensive usage can lead to a high risk of isolation. Whatever its advantages, technology cannot replace the presence of adults or the diversity of interactions with them.
- Protection for children's digital identity is almost nonexistent; the same is true of efforts to make parents and childhood professionals aware of this grave issue. The subject is even more delicate because there are neither legal or regulatory frameworks that apply to minors, nor adequate guidance or tools provided for adults.

Based on these observations, the *Fondation pour l'enfance* recommends the following:

- No digital technology without adult supervision.
- Learn about family practices, especially since parents themselves are often over-connected.
- Offer simple rules that families can use.
- Technology cannot teach everything.
- Apply limits and guidelines rather than prohibitions.
- Preserve times and spaces of freedom and creativity, away from technology, for children.
- Clearly define a child's needs according to their age.
- Evaluate the quality of content and its appropriateness for the age and needs of the child.
- Provide information about products that meet children's needs in order to allow adults to make an educated choice.

- Establish the child's right to digital privacy from birth, flesh out the applicable legal framework, and encourage parents to learn and respect these guidelines. Create standards for the collection and use of minors' personal data.

These recommendations, which we see as fairly moderate but important, provide for the imposition of limits and acknowledgement of the child's needs.

We believe that parents should respect their children's choices, should not vilify screens, and should include outside activities, games, and interactions with peers. Demonizing screens does not allow us to consider it constructively. But we do need to remain aware that screens of any type should not deprive children of a relational existence. Kids must not wall themselves off with technology.

Pediatricians, through the AFPA (French Association of Ambulatory Pediatrics),<sup>10</sup> have since 2011 followed the recommendations of Serge Tisseron.<sup>11</sup> They explain that screens are extraordinary tools for entertainment and education—as long as they are introduced at the right times and under the right conditions.

Tisseron formulated the “3-6-9-12” rule, alerting parents that they need to prevent abuse and misuse of screens:

- No screen time—or as little as possible—before three years old, given that much research demonstrates that children under three gain nothing from regular use of screens.<sup>12</sup>
- No portable gaming consoles before six years old. Once digital games are introduced, they monopolize the child's attention at the expense of other activities. Moreover, before the child learns to read, only allow games that encourage sensorimotor function and rhythmic, repetitive motions.<sup>13</sup>
- No internet before the age of nine; then, internet use should be supervised until middle school. Parental supervision is not only important for shielding the child from shocking images. It should

10 The AFPA is a national association of more than 1,600 pediatricians, or over 60% of ambulatory practitioners (child medicine outside hospitals: independent pediatricians and those working in PMIs or other institutions). It is part of the CNDP (National Pediatric College) along with six other pediatric organizations.

11 Serge Tisseron, *3-6-9-12. Apprivoiser les écrans et grandir*, Ères, 2017.

12 Serge Tisseron, *Les Dangers de la télé pour les bébés*, Ères, 2009.

13 Isabelle Gravillon and Serge Tisseron, *Qui a peur des jeux vidéo?*, Albin Michel, 2008.

allow the parent to instill three basic principles of the internet: Anything put online risks becoming public; everything one posts remains forever; not all that one finds online should be believed, because it's impossible to know if it is true or false.

- Allow the independent use of internet starting at age 12, but with caution. Parental accompaniment is still important. One must define rules of use for the child, establish limited times for browsing, and install a parental filter.

The “3-6-9-12” rule is essential but insufficient. It is critical to set boundaries for screen time at any age. Between the ages of three and five, children gain nothing from more than an hour in front of a screen. In addition, educational institutions must help them understand how various media are produced and sourced, and the business models behind them.

Screens should be presented within a critical framework from the youngest age; the child should be educated about media. “3-6-9-12” is a major part of this effort, but only one part.

These proposals are warnings, part of our effort to spotlight screens' effect on very young children. But day after day, we hear parents, at our drop-in center or our office, lament their sense of defenselessness; they feel trapped in a hectic, complicated life that leads them to allow their children screen time, despite knowing that excessive use is harmful.

Most often, their admissions reveal to us that the screen acts as babysitter, while it soothes their fear of what the child would be doing if left to its own devices: “This way, I know where he is”; “When he's watching something, I can go clean the house or take a shower”; “At least he isn't getting into trouble”; “It calms him down”; “I don't have to listen to his ruckus, and that does me a world of good”; “It gives me a little time to myself...”

Screens thus serve multiple purposes for the parent of a young child: They reassure the adult, give them a break, avoid difficult confrontations with the child, play nanny, instill silence... These are all scourges of the parent-child bond, and we should try to address them beyond of the question of screens. Because that question is truly one of childhood behaviors, of the child's place in the family, but also its place in society and the rules that govern family life and vary between households.

This is why the proposals for spreading ECA-LEP want to refocus on the following questions: What is a child? What are their needs? How can we best support them so they open up to the world? ECA-LEP prioritizes exchanges with the child, the sharing of emotional and sensory experiences, time spent together to imagine and dream, places to discover one's child. The goal is not to eliminate screens, which are central to our era, but to make them allies in our children's growth, rather than enemies.

Today, children's struggles to relate (social isolation) and to contain their emotions (acting out), their short attention spans (difficulty concentrating, which takes effort, while the screen offers a passive choice), and their hyperactivity (physical release after the extreme immobility caused by screens) are all important to consider in terms of the screen's dominant role in the young child's life and its connection to the cultural malnutrition that we observe.

## 5.2 All Screens Are Not Created Equal

It would be a mistake to conclude that the screen is, by definition, a “bad thing” for the child. What about young kids and cinema, for instance? The Ministry of Culture, aware of the importance of this cultural instrument for little ones, decided in 2019 to sponsor research on what cinema offers very small children.

With this in mind, Cinémas 93<sup>14</sup> dedicated one of its Professional Days (held November 14-16, 2018 in Pantin, France) to small children. For the occasion, professor Bernard Golse<sup>15</sup> focused his remarks on *Culture and Imagery: From Early Acquisitions to the Learning Process*:

“The first acquisitions are not learning. Staying seated, walking, speaking, saying ‘yes, I...are surfacings that transform ability into action. Acquisitions emerge from within; what is learned comes from outside and from others (in comprehend, we find the root prehend—“to take”). The shift from acquisition to learning is marked by behavioral challenges at the age of two and a half (Geneviève Haag),

---

14 Cinémas 93 works to increase cultural access through a network of 24 public and nonprofit screening rooms in the Seine-Saint-Denis department. It also offers classes on analyzing images, coordinates departmental initiatives (My First Screening, School and Cinema, Middle School at the Movies), and supports filmmaking, via l'Aide au film court (the Short Films Fund).

15 Bernard Golse is a child psychiatrist, university professor, hospital practitioner of child and adolescent psychiatry at Paris Descartes University, head of the child psychology department at Necker-Enfants Malades hospital, and a psychoanalyst. He is also president of the organization Pikler Lóczy France.

which should be considered in the debate over when to start schooling. From this perspective, accompanying the child in interpreting images and film does not only mean exposing them to culture, but also helps them move from acquisition to learning—this, only if the child is not left alone in front of the images, but rather watches with an adult in an atmosphere of shared interest and pleasure.”

Here we find the necessary “ingredients” for the little one to be able to benefit from a performance of any type, including the “cinematic performance”:

- Prepare the child to go to the performance or screening.
- Consider the parents.
- Think about the venue in terms of the child’s young age.
- Do not leave the child to experience the showing alone.
- Allow everyone to express their reactions to the performance or screening.
- Keep in mind the little one’s attention span.
- Choose only quality presentations.

Cinema for little ones is at the crossroads between art forms, and has an important role to play in the artistic and cultural awakening of a young child.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP provides opportunities for the child and parents to share a sensitive, aesthetic experience, composed of emotions and connections. Watching a film as a group is a cultural experience that allows children to process images in an environment designed for them.

#### ▲ Recommendation n°6

The commission recommends recognizing cinema as a cultural stimulus for the small child and encouraging research on connections between cultural awakening, cinematographic images, development of the child and effects on the parent-child bond.

### 5.3 Adults and Screens

We must also examine the role of screens in a parent’s routines. We see how, in families’ daily lives, the screen “screens out” the child’s need for attention. The little one, seeing their parent otherwise occupied, further intensifies their pursuit of connection, exhausting the parent with repeated requests. This parent, present yet unavailable, brings to mind the studies

on shortcomings in care and on maternal depression; such work guided our understanding of how *psychological absence of the parent* affects the child. Absence in the sense that parents cannot bring themselves to think about the child, to pay attention and try to understand its needs. Caught up in the rhythm of their lives, constantly distracted by mind-scattering texts, emails, and calls that seem to require immediate replies, parents lose sight of the child’s reality.

Far from being a value judgment, this remark is born of concrete observations on how these new screens impact the parent-child bond. Today’s children must beg for attention, becoming in the process demanding and difficult. Contrary to what people say, they do not impulsively demand more and more; they simply hunger for vital psychological nutrition.

As we watch the parent-child bond suffer—along with child development overall—we also observe a generation of adults staggering under the weight of frustration. Today’s adults do not know how to—do not *want* to—wait. For example, they constantly scroll through their phones looking for answers, for where to go, for where they can buy a desired object, etc. They get everything quickly, which propels them into an ever-accelerating relationship with time; the pause between desire and delivery keeps shrinking like there is no tomorrow. During consultations, we observe adults caught up in the impossibility of wanting everything, right now, from their child. Parents want the child to understand house rules immediately and unquestioningly—whatever their age—to thrive in their development, etc. This relationship with frustration, which is linked to screens’ responsiveness, causes tension and misunderstandings in the parent-child connection.

Today, we need to be able to educate parents about screens so as to help them find rules that can improve family life.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP encourages parents to make time for pleasurable moments that build the connection with their child. ECA-LEP offers an alternative to the easy temptation of screens, which isolate members of the same family. More ECA-LEP means more shared experience.

## 6. Culturally Nourished Versus Cultivated: Two Different Things

In western societies, decompensation, depression, and suicide attempts among the young and the less-young continue to shock because they happen in a social and psychological context that is thought to imply a certain quality of life. Popular thinking goes that “having everything at one’s fingertips” should ensure inner balance and social equilibrium. Our so-called modern societies tend to associate “wealth” with “wellbeing,” dragging us in the race to possess, to consume. It’s a society of satiation, of saturation, whose members become individualistic strivers who want to do right, perform well, unconsciously integrating the motto “always more”—always faster, more effective, stronger—while listening less to their inner voice, to their emotions, and to others. Individualism degrades diversity and the connections on which it is based.

Stressed-out, tense, without guideposts or meaning, people try to survive mentally by isolating themselves more and more each day. Some have noted that this hands an opportunity to merchants of “better living,” who restore meaning to one’s life with a plethora of pricey programs. These “detoxifying” seminars, often weekends of silence, dieting, meditation or isolation, should be understood as “psychological oil changes” for mechanized individuals. Of course, only those who are well-off can afford these gifts, which is in itself a sign of the times.

This approach to living has also filtered into the messages our youth hear in school. The cult of immediate results, of succeeding by stockpiling knowledge, is still too prevalent. The slogan “Work hard and you will succeed” appears very early in the life of a child and drowns out *self-experience*, which is the central work of childhood. It allows the child to understand and interpret the world by bringing together cultural nutrition, success and the process of becoming “cultivated.”

To preserve the meaningfulness of life, which drives the human condition, we have to offer babies and young children cultural nutrition that includes sensory experiences and time for feeling, experimenting and being agents in their discoveries. It means recognizing the baby’s dignity, its status as Subject, respecting it in our priorities—all by reinforcing the confident connection with its parents.

Encouraging parents to share lively and emotional experiences with their children, experiences rooted in the world of feeling and beauty, directly benefits the child’s cultural development. Cultural and artistic awakening, by concentrating on the needs of the parent-child bond (as our commission wishes to encourage) would send a powerful public health message. Artists, in conjunction with childhood professionals, would play a central role, with the support of their organizations, which themselves would be supported by the ministries.

### Recommendation n°7

The commission recommends that the Ministry of Culture engage in persuasive promotion of ECA-LEP as a pillar of the child’s development and of bonding with their parents. To formulate the messaging, the Ministry should consider creating a task force composed of artists engaged in different disciplines, associations advancing Artistic and Cultural Education (EAC), those who work with children, experts on children and families, researchers, and public agencies.

### Recommendation n°8

The commission recommends that the Ministries of Culture, of Solidarities and Health and of Ecological and Solidarity Transition create common documentation on ECA and ECA-LEP. Their messages would distinguish awakening from stimulation: Awakening children does not mean stimulating them, but rather creating an environment that allows them agency in their growth.

## 7. Dawn of a New Concept: Cultural Health<sup>16</sup>

### 7.1 Cultural Health and Universality

The concept of Cultural Health contains the idea of universality, which opens us up to our human civilization. It applies to all of the children of the world, whether they are born in Asia, Africa, America, Europe or Oceania.

We are reminded by Cultural Health that, at birth, the human baby—no matter its cultural origin—is consumed by a desire to relate. Interacting with others (those outside of oneself) is part of our human heritage, and babies demonstrate this yearning for togetherness. Birth of self and recognition of others form the cradle of human history and the basis for the equilibrium and health of every person.

---

16 Concept created by the author of the report, born from her work on childhood, family and society.





© Les cafés ludiques, Avignon - Café du Vauchise

Cultural Health agrees with the spirit of the WHO's declaration: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." The WHO thus recognizes that the future of all societies depends on children and encourages consideration of the health, growth and development of everyone. Nevertheless, the detailed texts of the recommendations, while oriented toward a holistic conception of health, are heavily focused on malnutrition and infectious diseases that affect newborns around the world. In contrast, I would like to describe my experience working within NGOs in a country at war, so as to illustrate that healing a child of course requires care for their body, but also for their being. This is where Cultural Health comes in.<sup>17</sup>

My experience unfolded several years ago, collaborating with medical teams brought in to save many children from dying. In the warring countries where the teams worked, children were innocent victims of armed conflict. The experienced teams realized that, once "saved" physically, the children often

entered a deep depression. They no longer played, barely ate, spoke little. While their lives had been spared, they were letting themselves die psychologically. I had been asked to teach the teams about playing as a health tool for children, and to envision how to integrate, in these war-torn countries, game libraries into the medical teams' work. Here, play allowed a rediscovery of life's meaning, a reconnection with the experiences at the basis of each person's living center.

This example demonstrates that human health goes far beyond bodily fitness, and we should take note. Children know how to tell us that they refuse to live if we care only for their bodies. Clearly, health is of paramount importance; we should protect the health, growth and development of everyone, as the WHO recommends. This should be done in a holistic way that integrates the ideas of Cultural Health, which recommends a universal approach that implements programs worldwide.

#### 📌 Recommendation n°9

The commission recommends integrating Cultural Health into the declaration of the WHO: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease

17 The idea of Cultural Health was discussed with psychoanalyst Roland Gori, who prefers speaking in terms of "care" rather than "health." While our terms may differ, the idea behind them is essentially the same. See Annex 37 in original report.

or infirmity.” In so doing, the WHO would acknowledge that the future of all societies depends on children and inspire attention to the health, growth and development of each person. The commission encourages the government to proactively advocate including EAC and ECA-LEP in the health programs of the WHO.

## 7.2 Nutrients for Cultural Health

Everything begins at birth. Behind the small human’s routine function, with its simple and repetitive activities, hides a process of humanization that one would never have imagined. The baby sleeps, eats, opens its eyes, cries—and from these activities a complex creation emerges. When the child nurses, a whole chain of significance is born. In receiving the milk, it feels a satisfaction in its body that transcends the simple act of eating. Nursing causes the baby sensations that give birth to emotions, in a relational dialogue that prepares it for encounters with beings outside of itself. To be born as oneself and recognize the other are two movements within relational health, which is itself part of an overarching concept: Cultural Health. From the beginning of its life, the baby shares a very primal, native experience that creates it and gives birth to its thoughts.

This is how language is born from East to West, from South to North: simple life movements that are expressed through the body. This is the speaking being, at the dawn of its birth. Its reality is limited to pushing its mouth toward something it doesn’t know, something it doesn’t even know exists, but which its whole body cries for through a regiment of reflexes. With its mouth, it announces its hunger, states its wish. From the first experience of suckling, it will keep repeating the movement, again and again: swallowing the milk, but also and above all feeding its imagination.

Satiated by this novel experience of the images that emerge from its satiated body, the baby opens up to thought. The body is thought. Thought is physical, because it at first appears as a picture book, and nothing—not modernity, not scientific or technological advances—has changed how speaking beings are born. Let us also note that, in drinking, the small human also absorbs, with its whole being, someone other than itself. Several weeks are required before the baby can feel the distinction between its own body and the one that feeds it. A fundamental process in its movement toward becoming a small speaking being: recognition that a duality exists. Two to talk, to experience; to communicate by exchanging glances,

touching and imagining each other, letting the feeling of being thought about wash across one’s mind—it takes two to be touched by another’s existence. Otherness is a language that brings together birth and recognition. Through the act of communicative thought, the baby is distinct from all other living beings: It is born human—it is human.

At our human birth, which is to say at the dawn of our career as a communicator, at day zero, we could not have imagined this reality. Our outstretched mouth, open or filled in a continual rhythm, was our whole world. In this tiny motion, we find everything that makes up our speaking world: the self, the other, and a mutual desire to exchange. Culture exists within this triptych, as well as art, which is a way to tell someone outside oneself something about oneself. “To speak to” is a cultural motivation synonymous with cultural awakening. This is fully part of the little one’s communication skills; they know how to listen to words directed at them and to respond with their sensory palette.

And in the world of babies, the senses interchange, allowing for numerous combinations. They observe with their skin, feel with their eyes, taste with their hands, smell with their ears, hear with their bodies, sensing us as if invisible strings surrounded us, tying us to them. They awaken thanks to what their sensory, emotional, relational environment offers—an awakening at the heart of their development that serves as the cultural nutrition the baby cannot do without. It is the prerequisite for the little one’s growth.

## 7.3 Growing Into Humanity

To grow within humanity until one is of adult age, one must be able to access, in one’s body, sensitive and aesthetic experiences that are themselves cultural food. Progressively more complex and varied, these foods open the door to autonomy. This means self-birth and the recognition of others, inner security, the capacity to give and to receive affection, intersubjectivity, imagination, empathy, appropriate distance from others, and the ability to understand symbolic representation. Growing culturally is a very unique process which is not linear, but rather made up of waves of experience that result in a form of maturity. The ego of the small human is a “mille-feuille ego” (after the elaborate pastry) that adds on new experiences by stacking, layer after layer, fine sheets of self. Through this process, the evolving images of their own person will allow the child to emerge as a Subject.

When we offer a little one cultural experiences and encounters with an aesthetic and sensory environment that employs many forms of art, we place that child within a long narrative: that of humans who, from time immemorial, have known how to recount the stories of the epoch—a form of cultural nutrition. Sharing these tales allows us to voyage through our common history as well as to give each child the opportunity to construct itself. Gaining access to one's sensitive side and being touched by beauty are signs of equilibrium and harmony that should not be ignored. In losing the capacity to be touched, we also lose our ability to consider the other, to empathize, and to listen, all while respecting difference. Estrangement from these skills means losing the values of sharing, mutual aid, and relational equilibrium. To fight against incivility and self-centeredness, we should promote Cultural Health, the sustenance of our civilization.

Cultural Health calls for a wider approach to healthcare than that proposed by our current public health programs, which are still narrowly faithful to bodily health. Along with the nutritional advice dispensed to parents, we need humane recommendations for fostering parent-child connections, pacifying social relationships, and bringing peace to intercultural interactions.

● **Argument for ECA-LEP**

ECA and ECA-LEP allow the child to grow in humanity by offering sensitive and aesthetic experiences, plus the time and space to connect with their body.

● **Argument for ECA-LEP**

ECA and ECA-LEP keep intact the receptiveness and sensitivity that lead to empathy.

🏠 **Recommendation n° 10**

The commission recommends that, alongside nutritional advice given to parents, health record booklets should track the child's "growth within humanity," which ECA and ECA-LEP support. Cultural Health would thus be named and recognized as a tool for calming social relations and pacifying intercultural ones.

#### 7.4 Charter of Cultural Health

Next to postnatal care, nutritional advice, and programs to address illnesses, we would like to see in all public health recommendations—in countries' health records for individuals, national public health recommendations, and the central documents of the WHO—a section that promotes the awakening

of the small child by highlighting its benefits to global health. In so doing, Cultural Health hopes to widen recognition of human individuality.

We define the general framework of Cultural Health through the twelve articles below:

**Article 1** Cultural Health asserts that a child's awakening is imperative to its equilibrium. To awaken is to humanize.

**Article 2** Cultural Health encourages recognizing the small human as a relational being who yearns to communicate.

**Article 3** Cultural Health takes into account the small human's vital need to find its place in a narrative fabric that opens it to life.

**Article 4** Cultural Health posits that emotional, sensory, gestural, physical, and linguistic expressions are full-fledged artistic expressions, carrying meaning and sustaining the living part of the Subject.

**Article 5** Cultural Health asserts that its foundational needs are universal.

**Article 6** Cultural Health posits that its practice has a humanizing effect.

**Article 7** Cultural Health recognizes that artists should play a major role in promoting Cultural Health programs aimed at children.

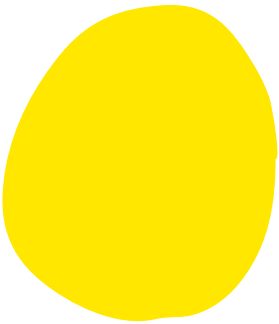
**Article 8** Cultural Health recognizes that childhood professionals figure prominently as interlocutors of children and their parents.

**Article 9** Cultural Health confirms that self-knowledge and recognition of others pass through a process of growth that brings about personal and social peace.

**Article 10** Cultural Health is pluricultural and recognizes the nourishing influence of each culture on the development of children.

**Article 11** Cultural Health occupies a central place among cultural rights. It can break down barriers between the cultural world and the social and medical worlds.

**Article 12** Cultural Health, in claiming awakening for all, fights against inequalities and exclusion.



## 1. Our Human Condition

### 1.1 Our Human Condition Is Not Unconditional

Our modernity, an excessive era of acceleration, consumption, efficiency, output, and expert assessments, is a minefield of hindrances to creating the parent-child bond. More broadly, we observe that the progress that makes everyday life easier is also the source of new ills. This is the other face of modernity. It seems that humans are struggling to keep up with the rhythm they impose on themselves. Perhaps our human condition is reminding us that it is not unconditional?

Vanquishing biological destiny—most importantly, death—changing institutions, liberating ourselves at any cost, living fast, avoiding all suffering, having more freedom, boosting happiness: These are, at random, some of modernity’s ambitions. But we are setting ourselves up for disappointment if we believe that “new” always means “better”:

“[...] the most common, least developed idea—which we find, for example, on television—[says that] *modernity* is that which is freshly arrived. And since our world wants to appear modern, we will impulsively embrace any innovation. This endorsement cannot be separated from a specific way of living and thinking that valorizes change for change’s sake, movement, and constant innovation, without examining their content. The question, then, is no longer even whether the change brings us closer to the principles of modernity (individual liberty, for example) or whether it further separates us (through a form of regression that erodes individual liberty), because all that matters is that ‘change is in the air.’”<sup>18</sup>

Humanity needs movement. It *is* movement. But it cannot adapt to every situation; it has its limits. The birth of the human being is, in itself, a demonstration of the fundamental needs of existence.

Ecologists have proven that we have reached all acceptable limits by plundering our natural reserves and destroying our planet, with all of its living elements; the same is true of our humanity. Small humans have inescapable needs. To exist, they need other humans, time, empathy, affection, physical experiences, sensory awakening, symbolism, language, thoughts, projections, to see and be seen... They are far from being fragile, but they do exhibit a native vulnerability. Progress must not blind us to this if we are to reconcile modernity and liberation.

“That modernity should be ‘in crisis’ is nothing new. In fact, fundamentally, it’s the cliché of the discussion about modernity. And for a simple reason: Modernity isn’t *in* crisis, it *is* a crisis—humanity’s adolescent crisis.”<sup>19</sup>

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP responds to our human condition, which is relational. “To live is to live together.” In speaking to both the child and their parents, ECA-LEP has the potential to feed their relationship.

### 1.2 Neoteny

Freud wrote in 1926, in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, that the primary cause of neurosis is the small human’s state of distress and dependence, explicitly linked to its neoteny. This biological factor creates the first situations of danger and a need to be loved that will always stay dear to the human being. “Thus, we compensate for our neotenic condition with a neurotic condition.”<sup>20</sup> Incomplete in the world, a Subject in distress, the small human has an insatiable longing

19 *Ibid.*

20 Israël Nisand and Jean-François Mattei, *Où va l’humanité?*, Les Liens qui Libèrent, 2013. [TN: Our translation.]

18 Frédéric Guillaud, “La Modernité: crise d’adolescence de l’humanité?” *Op.cit.*

for connections, which are part of its vital needs. It is through exchange with someone outside itself that it will feel its existence in its body, before knowing consciously that it is alive. In this way it will shift from dependence to independence; it will attempt to create the appropriate distance required by human relationships.

Through the entanglement of bodies, the emerging little one can discover the culture of life—through its awakening sensory body, which will feed its yearning to communicate. A linguistic being, the baby speaks “body” before speaking words.

“The strength of this naturally-weak being is to impose the advent of human culture.”<sup>21</sup> Whereas the animal has no past or future, living in the moment and therein exhausting its intelligence, the human’s survival depends on compensating for weakness by inhabiting time. It knows how to anticipate, knows that it will die, and its instrument—*language*—allows it to bring absent things into the present: to re-present them. Language puts a sign, an image, in place of a presence. Thus, education seems like a process of transmission—passing on the trajectory of humanization, from presence to absence. Speech allows us to make present that which is absent, creating the human capacity to use symbolism. Incidentally, Dolto sees education as tied to humanization. In addition, we see awakening and humanization as an inseparable pair.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

To awaken is to humanize. It means giving the little one access to a meaningful mode of expression that embodies life. The body language dimension offered by ECA-LEP gives depth to words that help the child open to abstract thought.

### 1.3 The Tale-Tellers<sup>22</sup>

The reign of Frederick II, born in the Marches region of Italy—King of the Romans, of Germany, Italy, Sicily and of Jerusalem—lasted from 1220 to 1250.<sup>23</sup> This highly cultivated man (he spoke nine languages: Latin, Greek, Sicilian, Arabic, Norman, German, Hebrew, Yiddish and Slavic), passionate about poetry, mathematics, natural sciences and falconry, sacrificed several children’s lives in his quest to find a *natural language*. What could it be? Probably the tongue of Adam and Eve. Unless

it was the language that God spoke while creating the world. Might it be Hebrew? Aramaic, perhaps? The mystery anguished the king and drove him to conduct the experiment described by the Franciscan monk Salimbene of Parma. Frederick placed several babies—perhaps a dozen—in the care of wet nurses, who were instructed not to speak to them under any circumstances. The nurses could change the babies’ diapers, bathe them, and nurse them, but any words, gentle touch or cuddling were forbidden. Every last one of them wasted away and died.

To be born alive is one thing; the desire to live is another question entirely. At the crossroads of culture and health, this example incontrovertibly demonstrates our fundamental needs and our neotenic condition, which requires the presence of an Other who talks, carries, comforts and dreams: an Other who is full of life. To be born into culture means being welcomed by the language. Dignified birth means being born into a caring, welcoming culture.

Our human condition inspired Nancy Huston to write *The Tale-Tellers*, which reminds us that only humans are conscious of death and of time, which causes intense anguish. To avoid this pain, humans interpret, create, invent, and recount “fictions” to each other again and again, wanting to give meaning to their existence so as to make it manageable. Narrativity becomes the selfsame essence of life, ending reality with meaning. Our narrative fabric is second nature, and it is part of the developmental process of the human being, along with the process of subjectification.

“There are countless forms of narrative in the world,” said Roland Barthes, underlining the degree to which narrative is characteristic of humanity.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP is a humanizing reception into a narrative fabric that takes many forms: theater, reading, dance, music, puppetry, art, circus...

#### ♣ Recommendation n° 11

The commission recommends supporting artists’ creations, which nourish the narrative fabric crucial to the small child’s formation of identity. Narration is the very essence of life; artists respond to children’s quest to understand the world around them and find their place as Subjects.

21 *Ibid.*

22 Nancy Huston, *The Tale-Tellers*, McArthur & Co. Pub., 2008. [TN: Original report refers to the French edition, Nancy Huston, *L’Espèce fabulatrice*, Actes Sud, 2010.]

23 Ernst Kantorowicz, *L’Empereur Frédéric II*, Gallimard, 1987.

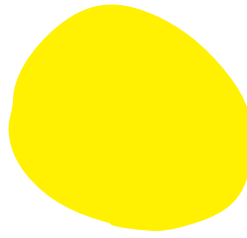
The ability to recount, to talk about ourselves, is the bedrock of our individual and collective equilibrium. According to Nancy Huston, our hard drug is interpreting the world around us so as to understand it: “Meaning depends on the human, and the human depends on meaning.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, the human invents meaning because it’s a survival tool. Narrativity and interpretations are vital to us. In fact, unconsciously, we constantly tell ourselves stories through our myths, religion, fables and family legends. Narrative gives meaning to life on all levels of our existence. Paul Ricœur spoke of the narrative identity:

“[E]ach individual owns their identity, or even constructs it, within a narrative of self that is continuously reinvented. The story is not objective; as screenwriter and reader of my own life, ‘I’ tell me about myself. Personal identity is thus built through narratives that it produces and through ones that it continually integrates. This is the narrative identity.”<sup>25</sup>

A baby also needs to make sense of what it feels. Thanks to the care it receives at the dawn of its life, after having filled up on sensory, emotional, and loving food, the small human will explore the storytelling path, the way of language, of thought. This will allow it to one day begin its phrases with “I” and to narrate to itself, taking pleasure in navigating the new world of the words that make up its life. As both its own actor and spectator, it constructs its world, its story, sorting through many feelings, distinguishing between what comes from within and what comes from others, finding the right place for each in a psychological and symbolic narrative.

The riddle that children pose very early in their games comes from this life experience. Behind the visible game turn the gears of self-construction.

“Comfortable on its mother’s back, it rubs its hands to scrape off the sticky sand, sometimes trying to grab from between its fingers a minuscule grain that it throws in the air; then it bends its face toward the flat part of its mother’s body below. Suddenly it is no longer laughing, and its whole body tenses toward one activity: tracing shapes directly on her skin with its finger. The child is so serious that this almost doesn’t seem like play. It begins.



The first letter is traced, but so clumsily that the mother cannot guess it. She asks for a second try. OK! But...nothing. She doesn’t have a clue. She cannot decode the meaning of the drawing on her back. Is there one, in fact? The child does not yet know how to write. It has seen some letters at school, but what it remembers is anyone’s guess. The mother realizes that she cannot find the answer because the child is not drawing anything meaningful. [...] She begins to understand... to understand the game. The child is not trying to draw letters. It is creating a pretext to play with her skin, to explore it in a tactile way. [...] The infant palpates her skin, eyes closed, sometimes grabbing it between thumb and forefinger, practically painless pinches, just enough to feel its mother shudder, absorbing that through its own skin until the latter shudders in turn. The child then leans forward, rests its head on its mother’s shoulder blades, listens to her skin vibrate as it’s pinched, puts thumb in mouth, half-open lips soon letting saliva slip, and, face bathed in its own liquid output, it listens to its mother. Her internal noises, her flowing blood, her enveloping odor. Its liquid mother, watery, aromatic, whom it had all to itself in the dark of her depths. So it creates darkness, closes its eyes to reproduce the blackness of before...before-before. And it remembers. When they were born, together: she into maternity, the child into life.”<sup>26</sup>

For the child, drawing from the “meaning” of what they feel is part of the path to construction. In order to grow, the little one needs to understand, to make sense of what’s happening. Awakening experiences help do just that; in the process, they help the child’s early development.

● **Argument for ECA-LEP**  
ECA and ECA-LEP support the path from sensing to making sense of things, which develops the child’s inner life.

24 Nancy Huston, *op. cit.* [TN: Our translation.]

25 Paul Ricœur, *Le Champ psycho(pathologique)*, cité par Bernard Golse et Sylvain Missonnier, *Récit, attachement et psychanalyse. Pour une clinique de la narrativité*, Érès, 2005.

26 Sophie Marinopoulos, *Dites-moi à quoi il joue, je vous dirai comment il va*, Les Liens qui Libèrent, 2010.



© Francis Pigeot, 2020

## 2. New Scientific Perspectives

Two new scientific perspectives offer an enlightening outlook for our strategy to promote ECA-LEP. They consist of research on epigenetics and brain plasticity, which demonstrate the importance of environment in helping our children become adults.

### 2.1 Epigenetics

Epigenetics, the ultimate 21<sup>st</sup> century science, looks at how all the elements of an environment can cause changes in our genomes. The field holds much promise: It demonstrates that everything is movement, interdependent, which introduces a new way of understanding what we are made of. Epigenetics does away with the supposed nature/nurture dichotomy, making the related debate obsolete. It has considerable consequences for the theories of evolution, casting doubt upon the established doctrine of DNA sequences' role in transmitting characteristics from one generation to the next. It has been demonstrated that epigenetic mechanisms also control such inheritance, proof that there is a link between environmental stimuli and how certain genes are expressed.

Before this discipline developed, most biologists had been certain that living beings were purely the products of their genes. We thought that we were predetermined by a genetic program. Today, we know that we have true potential to change our genome, because our DNA can be influenced by our

lived environment: food, stress, relationship quality, social life, where we live, etc. Our life choices can impact our “being.”

By extension, epigenetics allows us to imagine a more just society where every person can benefit from a *healthy* environment, in all senses of the word. Clearly, a child who enjoys better conditions from birth will develop more harmoniously, but epigenetics goes beyond what we know about the effects of family environment on our behavior and personalities: It demonstrates that our “fluid” beings are subject to a much wider range of influences.

There is something extremely joyful about this perspective. The scientist Joël de Rosnay, PhD, advisor to the president of Univescience and Executive Chairman of Biotics International, points to the latest discoveries in epigenetics in calling for a participative democracy, beseeching the younger generations to practice cooperation and optimism.<sup>27</sup> Many of the findings of epigenetic research confirm the importance of deploying ECA-LEP nationwide.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP, by helping create a quality environment for developing the parent-child connection, enables equal opportunities, the potential of which is demonstrated by epigenetics.

---

27 Joël de Rosnay, *La Symphonie du vivant*, Les Liens qui Libèrent, 2018.



## 2.2 Brain Plasticity

*Brain plasticity* describes the brain's capacity to adapt itself to its experiences.<sup>28</sup>

### From Psychoanalysis to Brain Plasticity

Although we do discuss brain plasticity in this report, we would like to underline that the child is not simply a brain. The little human is a being with hopes and longings, as psychoanalysis—that great, oft-decried lady—always reminds us. Perhaps her discourse has gone out of style, or her approach is not accessible enough to be listened to. Perhaps it's some other reason entirely.

The psychoanalytical approach is Subject-based. And any discussion of the Subject carries with it the ideas of construction, singularity, freedom of thought, psychological independence, fulfilling relationships with others, transmission, narration, recognition and consideration for vulnerability, for empathy and for mutual aid. All these are now questioned by the dominant discourses on individual self-determination, individualism, messaging instead of transmission, odes to efficiency, norms, the erasure of personal stories...

But it is clear that the more we try to hush psychoanalysts, the more often children will remind their elders that it's not good to forget one's origins—storied origins of a speaking Subject who is part of, and product of, a narrative, and who needs to give meaning to their own experiences. So, our little ones are our strongest resistance fighters. Through their behaviors, their "symptoms," which we often brand nonsensical—even though they illuminate the child's suffering—they show that they do not accept a modernity that is greedy for speed, performance, all-powerfulness, and immortality. That type of modernity does not harmonize with humanity.

Children say this in their own way and demand an environment better-suited to their needs. The greatest work on emotional deprivation was done in the 1950s; it demonstrated how an *insecure* environment could harm a child's construction of self. Separation, abandonment, and maternal depression leading to insufficient early care were examined, conceptualized, and theorized, informing a generation of childhood specialists. Many of their

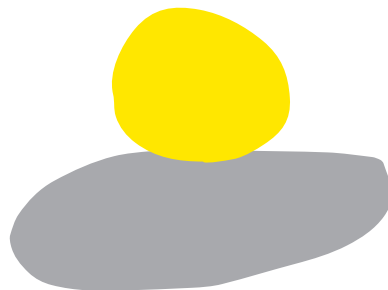
approaches have proven so effective that they have become familiar, "self-evident" techniques.

Before we get to brain plasticity, let's spend a moment on the role that screens play in parents' lives. Observe, for example, how a parent who feeds their baby while talking on the phone, looking at the screen or playing a game responds to the child's physiological needs but starves them of psychological essentials. The Winnicottian concept of *holding*, which says that the baby needs to be carried physically and psychologically, is incomplete in this scenario. Carried and fed, the child is still dying inside, victim to a sense of loss—even if it does not show.

In our consultations, the parents complain of "unstable" children who "can't handle frustration," "can't concentrate in school," reflecting perfectly the demands that children—specialists in the realm of internal life, questing for connection at any cost—face daily. Today, many parents struggle. They are prisoners of the pressure to be a good parent, trying to conform to imposed norms, to please their children in the name of the dictatorship of happiness. The children who come to our clinics are simultaneously nurtured and abandoned. The challenge of our modern times lies in this indescribable paradox: parents worried about doing things well, or more precisely about "being good," searching for the perfection promised by modernity, which betrays them at every turn. Theorists formulate supportive techniques for parents so as to extricate society from collective guilt, but year after year we are just left with a jumble of formulaic approaches and disturbing recommendations.

Here is where brain plasticity becomes relevant; it can help us to see that the factors in a child's environment have a huge effect on their development, and that we thus bear a monumental responsibility.

28 Catherine Vidal, *Nos cerveaux, tous pareils, tous différents!*, Belin, 2017.



## Brain Development and Environmental Influence

When the newborn emerges, its brain contains 100 billion neurons. From that moment on, those neurons will continuously multiply. But the brain is far from finished: connections between neurons have barely begun to develop. At birth, only 10 percent have formed; the other 90 percent will follow suit in the future.

In the latter phases of brain development, which are extremely complicated, interaction with the outside world plays a leading role. To develop its thinking, the baby weaves the information it finds in its environment into the fibers of its brain. Each image, each interaction leaves a mark—the memory of the experience—by connecting neurons. These neural connections are called synapses. They begin forming in the womb and continue at a faster pace after birth. The child thus acquires a great number of synapses during the first years of its life. Interacting with the world is enough to form a proliferation of neural connections that guarantee development of the major sensory, motor, and cognitive functions. In this process, the way that brain matter gets structured reflects the child’s experiences.

Insufficient support and exploration during this period lead to a “malnourished” brain and hamper the development of intelligence. This is why, during the early years, it is essential to interact with the child and to let them explore the world. As they grow, a gradual sort of synaptic pruning takes place; in other words, the brain declutters itself. After having made billions of neural connections, it starts to strengthen those it uses most while allowing those used least to weaken and eventually disappear. When we grow, we lose two-thirds of our neural capacities while becoming experts in the remaining third, the most-often employed. So, far from losing intelligence, we become specialists in language, in culture, in behaviors we observe and repeat regularly.

Regarding the subject of our commission, it is crucial to remember that “the brain retains not the neural connections linked to the best experiences, but rather those linked to the most frequent ones.”<sup>29</sup> We carry a heavy responsibility today: We can use the brain’s plasticity as a great opportunity, or it can become a great vulnerability. ECA-LEP offers a priceless chance to nourish our children’s resources from the youngest age.

## Brain Development and Sexual Identity

As Catherine Vidal explains, the brain’s adaptability sheds new light on the processes that help form our sexual identities.<sup>30</sup> At birth, the small human is not conscious of its gender. This awareness comes progressively, as its cerebral capacities develop. Only at two and a half years can the child identify with one of the two sexes.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, from birth, it develops within a gendered environment. Indeed, bedrooms, games, and clothing differ according to the child’s biological sex. Many psychological experiments have demonstrated that adults unconsciously interact unevenly with babies: They have more physical exchanges with baby boys, while speaking more to the girls. Relationships with family, social, and cultural environments are the ones that will guide the child’s tastes and strengths and help form their personality traits in terms of societally-dominant masculine and feminine norms. But the story doesn’t end in childhood. At every age, the brain’s plasticity allows a person to modify habits, learn new skills, change life paths.

### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

Our brains retain connections not from the *best* experiences, but from the *most frequent* ones. The brain’s plasticity can be a great opportunity or a great vulnerability. ECA-LEP offers an immeasurable chance at early nourishment of children’s inner resources.

### 2.3 Studies on Mutual Aid

When we talk about culture, humanity, the biological basics of life, we cannot skimp on a “close examination of the breadth of life—from bacteria to humans to plants and animals—[which] shows that mutual aid is not just ubiquitous, but has been around since the dawn of time. It’s simple: All living beings are involved in mutually-assistive relationships. Every single one. Mutual aid is not just a fun fact; it’s a principle of living things.”<sup>32</sup>

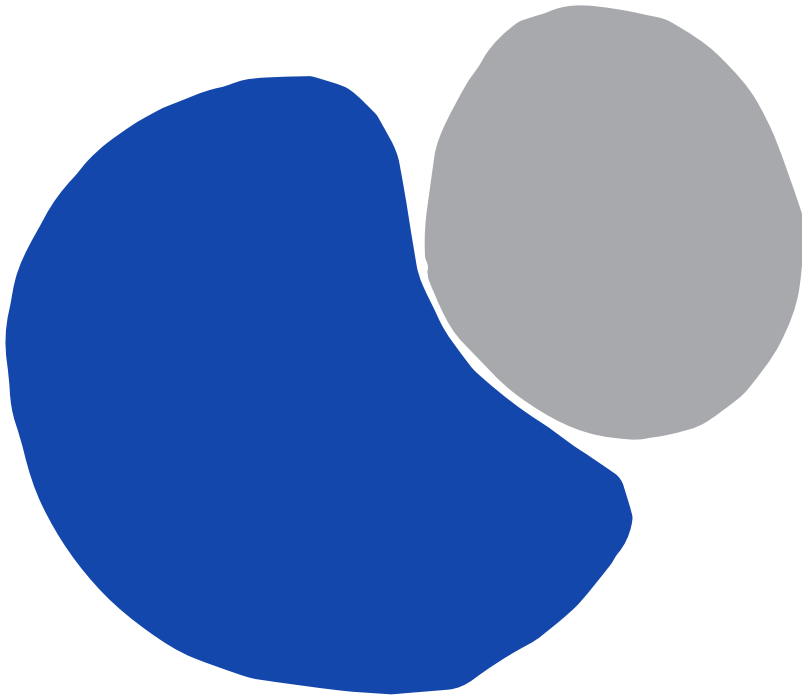
In examining the child’s first environment, meaning its life with parents, we should consider which conditions facilitate absorbing examples of mutual aid early-on. As Jean Claude Ameisen writes, culture imprints itself in our biology, generation after generation:

---

30 *Ibid.*

31 Gaïd Le Maner-Idrissi, *L’Identité sexuée*, Dunod, 1997.

32 Pablo Servigne and Gauthier Chapelle, *L’Entraide. L’autre loi de la jungle*, Les Liens qui Libèrent, 2017.



“More simply, in each generation the newborn is reeducated by an adult individual, in this case the mother, biological or adoptive; this is a specific type of self-creation. Beyond the particular genetic qualities and DNA a child inherits from its parents, the external environment and some characteristics acquired by the parents throughout their lives also form part of what we ambiguously call heredity.”<sup>33</sup>

Thus, heredity is a mix of many elements, and our role is to look after the environment of each newly-arriving child—its relational environment with its parents.

This is the very ethic behind our wish to promote a quality environment through what we call a *policy of attention*—that is to say, observing child’s needs. This observation is a way of slowing time, taking a close look at the child and its primary needs, in order to set off the helping relationship that serves as a model for future mutual aid. We could speak in terms of *awakening children to mutual aid*, stimulating a sense of awareness and availability to those outside themselves, opening them to the world so that they feel at home there and in turn care for that home.

Since epigenetics shows that we need to move beyond the binaries of nature/nurture and innate/learned, we must consider the fact that genetic inheritance and the environment work *together* to mold our behavior. There are constant interactions between genes and the various aspects of environment. What we learn from epigenetics changes our perspective and confirms what we observe of mutual aid. David Cesarini, researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), broke down the influence of genetic factors versus that of cultural ones in the expression of cooperative behavior, by conducting experiments with identical twins.<sup>34</sup> It appeared that genes accounted for 10 to 30 percent of the expression of certain cooperative behaviors; environment accounted for 70 to 90 percent.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

The principle of mutual aid is basic to living beings and should be cultivated from the youngest age by offering a pluricultural environment—the mission of ECA-LEP. Development of a cooperative attitude depends 70% on the quality of the environment offered to the child.

33 Jean Claude Ameisen, *Dans la lumière et les ombres. Darwin et le bouleversement du monde*, Fayard, 2008.

34 Cesarini D. et al., “Heritability of cooperative behavior in the trust game,” *Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences USA*, N°105, pp.3721-3726.

### 3. Filiation: Lines of Descent

#### 3.1 The Great Metamorphosis

It is hard to speak of ECA-LEP without mentioning the great metamorphosis of filiation, and more generally of family and kinship, in contemporary Western societies. According to the authors of the ministerial report on families, “the baby boom generation now in positions of power”<sup>35</sup> has since the 1970s seen itself as embodying this metamorphosis. Indeed, it is when baby boomers became adults that we saw the emergence of modern contraceptive methods, sexual liberation, cohabitation and children outside of the confines of marriage, couples where both partners work, the emphasis on gender equality, separations and divorces, and single-parent and stepfamilies.

“And now, for the first time, this generation finds itself questioned, in turn, by its own children, who ask what it did or did not accomplish. A new generation of adults who admittedly inherited the familial upheavals of the latter third of the 20th century, but who also bear witness to new problems, who bring new quandaries and above all new ambitions and hopes. We see this in the proliferation of mixed couples in an increasingly international world, the growing use of new reproductive technologies, the significant expansion of same-sex parenthood, the ambition to amplify men’s role in reconciling home and work life, the broadening of the father’s concrete role, a renewed questioning of masculine and feminine identities... Regarding filiation, origins and parenting, will the baby boom generation—which sparked the changes—accept being questioned by the generations that follow? Will it know how to listen? Will it be able to reexamine some of its philosophies and reassess what it took for granted? These are the queries that inevitably surface when one looks closely at the huge question of filiation as a changing concept.”<sup>36</sup>

Let’s linger a little longer on the idea of filiation so as to better understand the family structures—and thus the parents—with which we interact today, that arise from an intergenerational story full of mutations.



Filiation, even if it appears shaken by a cross-societal movement, is still built on its three original pillars. These elements of filiation will from now on be pushed to adapt.

#### 3.2 The Biological Pillar of Filiation

Procreation is the biological pillar of filiation. The child results from bodily processes. We speak of a *biological* child to explain the bodily link to those who created it. Progress in assisted reproductive technology (ART) has significantly complicated this dimension, which until recently was considered synonymous with “natural.” Now that it is possible to create children with or without sexual intercourse, with or without a body, and even with or without life (*posthumous assisted reproduction*), unprecedented questions are surfacing. We know how to build a body, how to replicate biological processes, by isolating and reproducing cells. But that does not answer how to give life to Subjects, how to allow them to find their place in a story, live that story and pass it on. This is the challenge of today’s novel families.

In March 2002, one might have encountered the following sentence, regarding “gay desire,” in the daily paper *Libération*: “All one needs is a jam jar and a syringe to become a father.” This declaration, which focuses on the biological, almost zoological, aspect, entirely omits any discussion of parenthood. Becoming and being a parent is no biological process, and stories of adoption demonstrate that

---

35 Irène Théry (Commission Director) and Anne-Marie Leroyer (Commission Rapporteur), “Filiation, origines, parentalité. Le droit face aux nouvelles valeurs de responsabilité générationnelle,” report for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, ministry assigned to family affairs, 2014.

36 *Ibid.*

the process of filiation involves construction. Thanks to same-sex parenthood, a whole debate opened up regarding the connections between parenthood, sexuality and biology, catching society off-guard as it faced its own transformation, throwing it into disarray. Same-sex couples' insistence on the right to raise a child within a union that today is recognized as valid shook the era's mainstream standards. The debates continued in 2018 with the law regulating ART, which gave rise to questions around the ideas of paternity and maternity, particularly when multiple adults coordinate having a child. Our commission cannot ignore these new discussions at the heart of the parent-child bond, relayed to us by early childhood professionals.

### 3.3 The Legal Pillar of Filiation

Once born, the child is acknowledged by its father and mother and included in a family record book. This recognition, based on legal definitions of filiation, names the protagonists of the family and marks their birth into society. One cannot declare oneself a parent. The child becomes the son or daughter of a man legally transformed into father and a woman legally transformed into mother. The law is the internal frame from which the psychological questions may spring that come with any family origin story. It should play the role of third party and create a buffer that keeps individual wishes at bay.

Laws codify the bonds of filiation outside of biology, for example in the case of adoption. Here, the child is established as son or daughter of the couple, as if it were born to them, laying the groundwork for the trio to inhabit the roles that bind parents to children. The legal formulations are meant to create a fictional foundation upon which a family can be built, with father, mother, and son or daughter who then will define their common destiny through their respective stories. Familial mutations even call into question the terms “father” and “mother,” igniting debates over what to call the parents within family record books—for example, “Parent 1” and “Parent 2” to leave space for two parents of the same gender.

### 3.4 The Psychological Pillar of Filiation

The psychological pillar of filiation is a subjective construction that develops with time. Emotional filiation ties together family bonds and guides the mutation of each figure within a family lineage. The child is biologically born into a family and then is born into its psychological self within the early bonds that give meaning to private

family life. The psychological Subject is the inward-facing part of an individual, that which refers to an internal family. Organized around a complex emotional life, psychological filiation regulates the inner family bond. The family novel writes itself in this context, and the symbolic Subject, caught up in a psychological whirlwind, must live the full spectrum of its infantile neurosis. Symbolic law, which comes from within, regulates the family, dictating what is forbidden and defining the main characters of a story who will play their unique, non-interchangeable roles.

Our commission, aware of all these questions surrounding family, wished to include them as a reality of our times so as to speak to all children and all parents, without discriminating based on social status, culture, or family configuration. The family is mutating, and welcoming all families within ECA-LEP, taking into account the emotional connection that the child created with the committed adults around it, is at the heart of the values of diversity and the fight against exclusion.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP is an approach that relies on the values of promoting equality and fighting all exclusion. It recognizes every type of family and speaks to all parents without exception. It thus helps build the feeling of parenthood through societal recognition.

#### 🏠 Recommendation n° 12

The commission recommends including ECA-LEP in all policies supporting parenthood, whatever the family configuration, cultural origin, social situation or material status. A policy of ECA-LEP will facilitate prioritizing encounters and exchanges between parents who have chosen distinct family structures.

## 4. Parenthood

### 4.2 The Contribution of Didier Houzel

#### 4.1 Parenthood: A Neologism

The French word *parentalité* (translated from the English *parenthood*, which combines the idea of *parenté*—suggesting kinship or connection between people—with that of *parentèle*—which describes blood relatives and extended family) is a neologism describing the whole of the conscious and unconscious psychological processes that occur when the desire for a child is expressed and becomes a reality. The term is inspired by *maternalité* (close to the English *motherhood*), which was introduced in 1961 by Paul-Claude Racamier. He was referring to the processes specific to the feminine psyche in the pre- and postnatal periods.

In the 1970s, the term *monoparentalité* (*single parenthood*) appeared, describing families in which the child is raised by just one parent. “This translation of the English expression [...] was suggested within a feminist perspective, to put an end to the stigmatization of mothers who raise children alone due to a separation or abandonment rather than widowhood. Single parenthood, step-parenthood, same-sex parenthood, and grandparenthood, are terms that describe real situations, breaking free of earlier conceptions because of societal changes to the formerly-exclusive conjugal model of parenthood.”<sup>37</sup>

These parental situations, which demonstrate the crisis of the nuclear family model, are on the rise. The decline of the institution of marriage directly throws into question the three components of the parental realm—biological, legal, and psychological—which today might seem disconnected. The facets of filiation yield clues to understanding the evolution of family and the discussions they instigate.

On both theoretical and psychoanalytical levels, parenthood is seen as a *process*, which reminds us that it is vital to emphasize its *maturative* and *mutative* dimensions (Gutton). To be “born into parenthood” transforms the adult, and it is a true metamorphosis, in a period that will see many other transformations.

Parents must be born into a role that will continually force them to sacrifice and make changes. Newly born, they share a first discovery with their infant that will evolve throughout the course of the child’s growth. The growth of child and parents will have to harmonize to meet the challenge of “parenthood.”

In the late 1990s, with times of certainty but a distant memory, all of the landmarks delineating what “acceptable parents”<sup>38</sup> look like were thrown into question. One could find less and less reliable or indisputable advice. Everyone was asked to find their own path to being a “good-enough” parent, with a broad menu of approved approaches to choose from. Staring at this avalanche of suggestions, synthesis seemed out of reach, which made it hard for professionals to provide support. The central question was: Can we define the familial configurations most likely to give a healthy structure for children to develop?

In order to answer all of these questions, the Ministry of Social Affairs formed a working group, under the direction of Didier Houzel. At the end of its investigation, the results of which were published in 1999, he proposed looking at parenthood through the lens of three completely-interwoven elements.<sup>39</sup> This approach inspired enthusiastic responses among professionals, who in it found common ground for reflection.<sup>40</sup>

It seems important to restate the three elements of *parenthood* so as to illuminate this neologism, which sprouted from the world of psychoanalysis to delineate the child-parent connection.

- **The Exercise of Parenthood:** the rights and responsibilities assumed by each parent when a child is born, which invest the parent with an obligation to choose for, supervise and protect their child’s education and health. Dysfunction crops up either because of “too much” parenting (rigidity of demands that are excessive for the child’s age) or “not enough” (trouble exercising authority, incitement of antisocial behaviors, lack of continuity in bonds). This element also represents all that, in a given society, symbolically structures the parental roles and places them within a lineage and genealogy.
- **The Experience of Parenthood:** the sensations, the emotions, the experiences, the subjective psychological dimension, the sense—or lack thereof—of being this child’s parent. It thus involves the emotions and imagination and encompasses the gaps that can exist between the imaginary baby and the real one. Here as well, excesses can arise,

---

38 We owe this expression to Bruno Bettelheim.

39 Didier Houzel (ed.), *Les Enjeux de la parentalité*, Ères, 1999. See also *Lien social*, n° 492, 24 June 1999.

40 The year 1999 also saw the birth of Networks for Listening, Supporting, and Accompanying Parents (REAAP).

---

37 Gérard Neyrand, *Soutien à la parentalité et contrôle social*, Yapaka, 2013.



either “too much” (excessive attachment, domineering relationship, layering of parents’ experiences over those of their children...) or “too little” (rejection, disappointment, the child feeling persecuted, mistreatment...). The experience of parenthood relies on the underlying psychological life and showcases the conscious and unconscious aspects of emotional entanglements within a family.

- **The Practice of Parenthood:** the concrete acts of daily life. Put another way, it is about the implementation of parental care and interactions: tasks of the domestic sort (meals, laundry...), technical ones (home repairs, arrangement of living spaces...), oversight (supervision, presence for the child...), care (feeding, washing, healing, consoling...), education and socialization (teaching of social behaviors, inspiration to learn...). Here again, dangerous imbalances can appear, either through excess (overprotection, overemphasis on learning...) or through deficiency (neglect in hygiene or nutrition, inappropriate living situation for a child, child left to its own devices, insufficient medical attention, lack of opportunities for awakening...).

- **Argument for ECA-LEP**

ECA-LEP cares for the formative process invoked by the birth of the parent, a psychological shift that builds with time. ECA-LEP calls for experiencing intimate feelings together, which fosters mutual recognition and openness to difference. With its approach, ECA-LEP strengthens the parent-child bond.

#### 4.3 Parenthood, Parents’ Role and Modernity

The profound changes we are experiencing and the shake-up in family structure that initiates new social dynamics do not come without repercussions for those who work with children and their parents. Today, women work, single-parent families are on the rise, and the number of households with same-sex parents is growing. The roles of parents, children, fathers, mothers, and extended family find themselves reexamined. Who counts as family nowadays? And, by extension, for those who work with families: Who are we working with?

Raphaël Noël and Francine Cyr challenge the traditional representation of a dyadic maternal relationship as the jumping-off point.<sup>41</sup> The results of their research on development confirm the stance of developmental psychologists: The child is born into a plural entity that includes father, mother, child and siblings.

As for the notion of parenthood, it highlights that at the heart of parental duties lay many aspects shared by both sexes. Parenthood includes the father and the mother, which overwrites the old claim that some activities are intended for one sex or the other. It establishes a parental role that is more evenly shared. In a way, the maternal and paternal spheres are neutralized by the word *parenthood*.

---

41 Raphaël Noël and Françoise Cyr, “Le père: entre la parole de la mère et la réalité du lien à l’enfant,” *La Psychiatrie de l’enfant*, vol. 52, 2009/2, pp.535-591.

Gérard Neyrand says:

“As far as language is concerned, the mother and father are eminently gendered, while parents are not tied to one sex. In other words, parenthood is a way of approaching the abstract relationship to the child without making a distinction between the parents, and thus it can include a dimension that is not directly gendered, unlike the real people on whom it is based.”<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, he clarifies that fathers do not *mother* but *father*, with behaviors, gestures, and approaches all their own, without consequence to their masculinity. Mothers, on the other hand, *mother* even when they fill a role of authority toward their child. We share this perspective.

In psychoanalysis, the wait for the child, the birth, and the labor engage the woman’s body and project her into the ancient experiences that seem difficult to dismiss in the name of equality. The father’s body, which is not pregnant but is nonetheless called upon in the flesh, can testify to the destabilizing effect of this expectation.<sup>43</sup>

So, we acknowledge differences between males and females in how they bond, in order to recognize each person’s unique involvement with the world. Because “every recognition of an identity is, at its base, recognition of a difference.”<sup>44</sup>

Birth into fatherhood and birth into motherhood are two internal processes that play out personal stories, individual experiences that call on the deepest level of each parent’s psyche. They cause distinct changes that defy comparison and do not predict a parent’s aptitude to educate, to be a mother or to be a father.

We should remember this when we construct a preventative strategy using ECA to help parents’ connection with their child between birth and three years old.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

Mothers and fathers are called on equally by initiatives promoting cultural and artistic awakening, each parent uniquely mobilized by the anticipation of the child. ECA-LEP contributes to gender equality in the parent-child relationship.



#### 4.4 Pregnancy and the Birth of a Parenthood Process

Whether it is expected, planned, hoped for or not, pregnancy is in itself an emotional disruption, a time of crisis (Paul-Claude Racamier), a deep modification that corresponds to the process of psychological nesting (Sylvain Missonnier). The future child takes root in the endometrium and in the psyche, an out-of-the-ordinary situation that can trigger a profound destabilization. “I try to convince myself that terror is not the lifeblood of this strange love.”<sup>45</sup> So wrote the novelist Marie Darrieussecq after the birth of her first child. Motherhood is often associated with strong words. Various testimonies paint a picture that ranges from “madness” (for the theorist) to “terror” (for the writer) to “devastation” (for Lacan)—which is not to detract from the surges of joy that it often brings to many women.

Psychoanalysts have for centuries looked into the psychological activation provoked by motherhood; their teachings guide our understanding of this extraordinary period in a human’s life. Monique Bydlowski’s

42 Gérard Neyrand, *La Parentalité aujourd’hui fragilisée*, Yapaka, 2018.

43 Franck Stives, “À chacun ses 9 mois: devenir père,” in Sophie Marinopoulos and Franck Stives, *Devenir mère, devenir père*, published by Les Pâtes au beurre, 2018.

44 Joyce McDougall, *Plaidoyer pour une certaine anormalité*, Gallimard, 1978, p.68.

45 Marie Darrieussecq, *Le Bébé*, POL, 2002.



concept of psychic transparency describes a state that stimulates childhood memories and the softening of customary resistances. It is as though the unconscious were exposed. Wilfred Bion speaks of psychic reshufflings that open up a capacity to dream, which is essential in the wait for the child and helps prepare for *affect attunement* (Daniel Stern) to lay the groundwork for construction.

#### The Four Movements of Psychological Pregnancy<sup>46</sup>

The wait for the child enacts several movements deep within each parent's being.

- A maturing movement that requires inner growth in the transformation from adult to adult-parent. It is a relationship with the "virtual object"—the fetus—that encourages the parental nesting (to use Sylvain Missonnier's expression) at the basis of the *containing function*.
- A mutative movement, transformation within a sort of mourning of the self to make space for the reality of this maternity/paternity which, at the beginning, was a childhood dream. Its reflection in the physical body marks an active movement that transforms the daughter-woman into daughter-mother, the son-man into son-father. Here the self divides, a separation that recognizes the part that has died and the part that is alive and full of desire. All of the contingencies of pregnancy will graft onto this mutation and form its destiny.
- An interpretive movement that gives meaning to internal experiences, and births the child in the parent's mind. This movement makes a place for the expected child, as the parents-in-process and their inner child experience the transformations at the heart of their individual construction.
- A narrative movement, basis for a story that places the child in its genealogy. Maternity and paternity are marked by a story that each participant will look to adopt as they create their own family novel. This means imagining a real child-to-come, while giving up on earlier dreams of an abstract child.

#### The Trimesters of Psychological Pregnancy

Each of these movements run parallel to the three trimesters of pregnancy:

"Pregnancy is a double metamorphosis, both progressive and interactive, of becoming a parent and becoming human: The fetus is not born human, but becomes so during pregnancy; one is not born

a parent, but becomes one; the uterine/placental space is the connection between fetus and environment; the prenatal metamorphoses stay with the human throughout life."<sup>47</sup>

The time of pregnancy breaks into three major chapters.<sup>48</sup> The first trimester is a time of introspection. Peaceful or turbulent, family bonds—and particularly those with immediate family—play an active role in this story. Physical changes are subtle, leaving the body's curves mostly untouched; this moment instead inspires a profound transformation of the psychic body. This is the *trimester of upheaval* for the adult who is becoming a parent, as they experience meaningful, morphing connections that create inner family.

In the second trimester, the wait for the child is felt through the mother's interpretations of sounds, of movements she feels, giving a body to the coming baby. Ultrasounds, now standard, allow a glimpse at the baby in its uterine universe. This exam is never neutral because of the ways it helps or hampers the parents' phantasms. Many have written of the hazards that this sometimes-intrusive technique poses to parental imagination. Professor Michel Soulé described the risk that the parent could interrupt their phantasmatic pregnancy. The developments in phantasm and imagination that accompany pregnancy allow the creation of intimate bonds between the baby, its mother and its father, who themselves form a fragile system.

The third trimester comes closer to the idea of separation. During the final months, the fetus's rhythm distinguishes itself from that of its mother. One mother noted, for example, that "when I sleep, he always parties"—a story of two separate beings that testifies to the beginning of difference. Preparation for birth is as much a psychic as a physical exercise. Verbal and visual representations of distinct bodies reinforce the child's status as a discrete being from whom one must separate. The act of birth, even if longed for, is also feared. Pain and suffering mingle with the impossibility of voicing the fear of separation.

#### The Birth: An Emotional Symphony of Release and Violence

Birth, which is often described as a liberation, is also a trauma because of its inner violence.

46 Sophie Marinopoulos and Israël Nisand, *9 mois et cætera*, Fayard, 2007.

47 Sylvain Missonnier, "Le premier chapitre de la vie? Nidification foetale et nidation parentale," *La Psychiatrie de l'enfant*, 2007/1, vol. 50, pp.61-80.

48 Sophie Marinopoulos, *Le Dûni de grossesse*, Yapaka, 2008.

The trauma of birth into motherhood<sup>49</sup> is a loss, a separation, the opening act of a tragedy, a descent into a conflictual experience in the mother's body, perception, and new psychological existence. It is the birth of a fundamental ambivalence in the relationship with the child, fluctuating in a mostly chaotic manner between moments of fusion and moments of separation that cause feelings of anguish, collapse or fragmentation. The violence represented by birth destabilizes some mothers beyond words and requires psychological care.

Birth thus marks the end of the symbiosis of the uterine era, bringing to life the mother-child dyad and the mother-father-child triad, signs of continuity. Loss causes mourning; *absence ushers in birth*.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP plays a constructive role while awaiting a child, supporting the internal psychological processes (maturative, mutative, interpretive, narrative) inherent to bonds that parents will soon build. This period of significant psychic reorganization causes a large transformation that ECA-LEP, with its sensory approach, can accompany. Feeling movement in the mother's stomach to make the baby exist, talking to it, giving it a place in the family story, preparing for its arrival: All are needs to which ECA-LEP can respond.

#### 👤 Recommendation n° 13

The commission recommends professional support during pregnancy. It suggests that the time with the child in utero be paralleled with an artistic and cultural accompaniment and preparation for birth. ECA-LEP is aimed at expectant parents. The preparation for a child's arrival demands more than a medical program; it must include cultural intentionality. This recommendation aims to incorporate the place of the expected child as a cultural being into public health programs. Cultural Health is a linchpin of health that should be included in public health programs. The preparation for birth should be envisioned within a broader approach that includes the mother and father. The commission recommends creating a working group on this subject in order to formulate general proposals.

## 4.5 Many-Factored Precarity and Parenthood

“Many families—and therefore children—live in very precarious and isolated situations. The rate of poverty among youth has skyrocketed in recent years: Today France is home to 3 million poor children, or nearly one in five. The problem is multidimensional: social, geographic, cultural, educational, etc. According to the most recent study by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), 140,000 people in France lacked housing in 2012, including 30,000 children. In Île-de-France [which includes the Paris metro area], three-quarters of them are put up in hotels. Out of 34,127 individuals accommodated on April 10, 2018 by the Hotel Accommodation and Reservations Division (PHRH) of the Social Emergency Rescue Service of Paris (SAMU Social), 15,691 are children—that is to say, roughly half. 2,667 of them, or 17 percent, are under the age of three.”<sup>50</sup>

In the context of widespread precarity, many situations can further destabilize a family struggling with deep poverty and its accompanying isolation and exclusion. Instability tied to material living conditions clearly need our immediate attention, but we also wish to look at a wider range of precarious situations. Expanding our understanding of insecurity is crucial to our ability to help families.

### Insecurity and Single-Parenthood

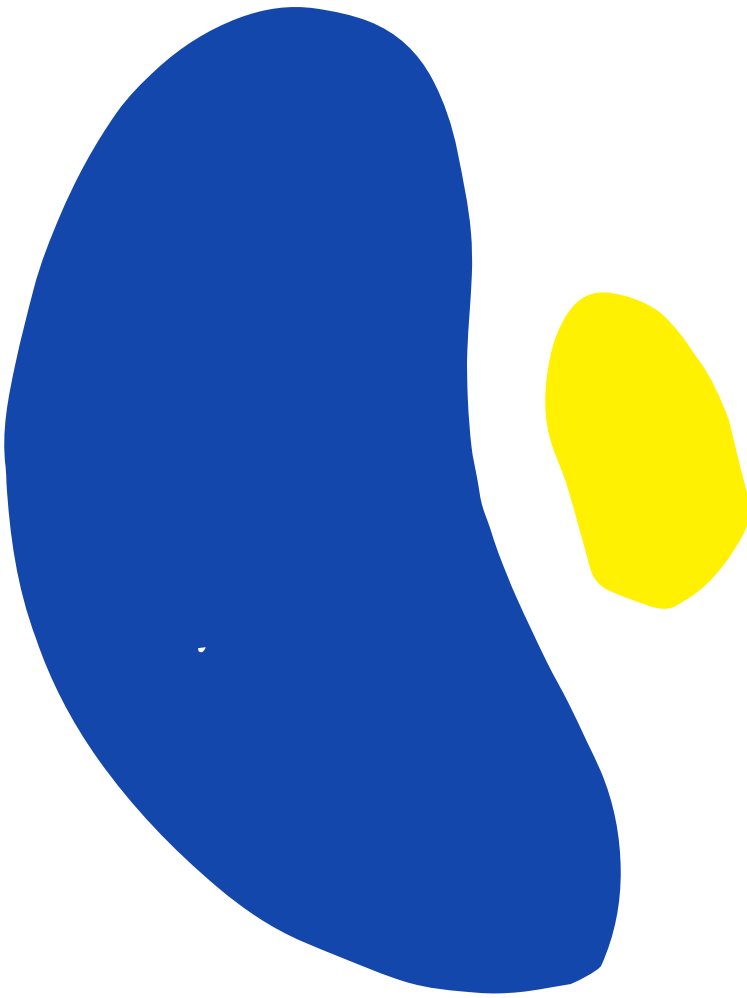
More and more single mothers face insecurity. Approximately one-third of mothers raising their child(ren) alone live below the poverty line. Their children are thus thrust into difficult living conditions, causing behavioral and psychological issues that impact the quality of their relationships, which are essential to their wellbeing. Even when not in extreme poverty, single mothers face psychological vulnerability: feelings of isolation, excessive fatigue, trouble sleeping and eating, impossibility of trading off care so as to catch their breath... And so, exhaustion strikes, attacking women's health, posing a major risk of depression.

### Insecurity and Separation

Separation of partners brings about a new kind of insecurity, especially if it is conflictual. It tends to greatly diminish the material conditions and purchasing

49 Sophie Marinopoulos and Israël Nisand. *Elles accouchent et ne sont pas enceintes*, Les Liens qui Libèrent, 2014.

50 Project “Respirations—Le laboratoire culturel scientifique et solidaire des enfants, jeunes et familles sans domicile,” conducted by the Fédération des acteurs de la solidarité, in partnership with Les Petits Débrouillards and Cultures du cœur, 2018.



power of women, isolating them. Those from all social backgrounds are impacted, but families already in difficult circumstances face an even greater risk of conditions deteriorating.

#### Material and Social Insecurity

Social life is directly impacted by material situation. Thus, we see families living in insecurity pull back enormously from social life. Feelings of shame and guilt are a constant backdrop, and parents besieged by poverty often find meaning only in their relationship with their children. Regarding women sequestered by such a situation, Gérard Neyrand notes: “The specter of social isolation hangs near, and often the only thing that keeps them from collapse is taking care of their children, to whom some cling as to a buoy.”<sup>51</sup>

#### Insecurity and Work Transfers

This form of insecurity, following a move for a job, isolates couples. But it is most often the women who leave their job, their region, their family to follow a partner. They then founder, isolated socially, separated from friends, emotionally alone—an isolation caused by others’ lack of comprehension, while material comfort hides the fragility of their being—and cannot find the help they need to be a parent.

#### Insecurity and Migration

Migration mixes up all landmarks, and exile always threatens to break bonds.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, insecurity and isolation weaken individuals. In a 2002 report, the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health demonstrated that psychological problems caused by migration affect all generations.<sup>53</sup>

---

51 Gérard Neyrand, *La Parentalité aujourd’hui fragilisée*, *Op.cit.*

52 Claire Mestre, “Parentalité, migration et exil : comment prendre soin des parents?,” *Spirale* (Èrès), n° 73, “La parentalité: une notion à déconstruire et des pratiques à construire,” edited by Patrick Ben Soussan, p. 272.

53 Office fédéral de la santé publique (OFSP), “Rapport d’évaluation migration et santé,” 2002.

All of these precarious situations have negative consequences on the health of families, couples, mothers, fathers, children. Caught in a spiral of unwellness, they switch to a psychological survival mode that profoundly impacts their inner resources. These vulnerable situations should be accompanied holistically, meaning through cultural access as well. Many foundational documents recognize this as a priority. On a global level, these include the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; in France, we have the 1998 law against exclusion (*loi contre les exclusions*), the New Territorial Organization Act of 2015 (*Nouvelle Organisation Territoriale de la République* or *NOTRe*), the Equality and Citizenship Act of 2016 (*loi Égalité et Citoyenneté*)... But even with these strong suggestions, we have not seen a true mobilization against exclusion.

Our commission undertakes to work alongside the National Strategy to Prevent and Fight Poverty (*Stratégie nationale de prévention et de lutte contre la pauvreté*), to concretely and widely exercise the cultural rights proclaimed in all of these texts.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP can play a foundational role in all socially precarious contexts by interrupting isolation, emphasizing social connections, nourishing exchanges within the parental bond, and creating a continuity of collective focus between healthcare, social services, and family professionals. ECA-LEP, by respecting social and cultural diversity, recognizes each parent as unique, keeping their dignity and roots intact.

#### 4.6 Metamorphosis from Adult to Parent: A Cultural Movement

An adult's transformation into a parent is based on the acceptance and respect of what is allowed and denied by the family structure. The "inner" family life—meaning "emotional"—focuses the development of psychic life and makes it coherent, tempers how parents relate to their children, sets the family rhythm, erects inner barriers to protect private thoughts, removes and defuses sexual and violent elements from the parent-child bond.

According to Christian Flavigny, the conditions for a thriving family life are: ① that adults' urges be tamed, ② that the sexual be transformed into simple tenderness, and ③ that violence be transformed into gentle guidance that encourages education. "These are the necessities that allow the adult to engage

in a close relationship with their child."<sup>54</sup>

When these imperatives are disregarded, we see the emergence of family strife, situations where children are objectified or mistreated, or face violence and abuse that sometimes leads to death.

The enlightening work of Daniel Rousseau on cultural formation reaffirms the idea that the non-integration of basic taboos of parenthood poses a major threat to the child and should not be confused with social precarity.<sup>55</sup> Infanticide, incest, and cannibalism are among these fundamental prohibitions. These are the essential interdictions and symbolic laws that underpin a child's life. While cannibalism has disappeared from most cultures, the same is not true of infanticide or incest, which deprive the child of life—physical in the former case and psychological in the latter.

Few authors take care, when discussing these transgressions, to distinguish between social and psychological poverty. Daniel Rousseau writes of *a-culturation* to clearly distinguish it from precarity, with which it is often confused. *A-culturation* is caused by the non-integration of core cultural taboos. These interdictions permeate the Subject's psyche and are the basis for family bonds, reinforcing the rights of child and family and allowing each to find its place. The child will grow in their parents' company and find their place in the family line. The parents will accompany and allow for their existence and development, accepting to one day be dethroned by the child-become-adult who, in turn, will join the ranks of parenthood with their own children.

If parents do not integrate these basic limits, their child's psychological and physical existence faces a real danger. The lack of cultural infusion stems from shortcomings in emotional and educational development during these parents' childhoods. We see this in individuals who shelter themselves early on from suffering by avoiding emotional vulnerability and then find themselves deprived of emotion and love, which can cause a-culturation.

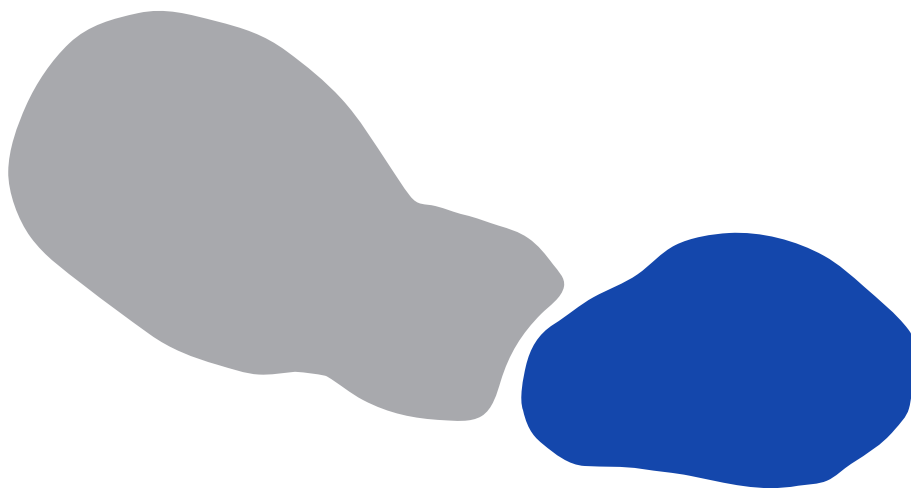
In order to shed some light on the a-culturation that robs the child of its status as Subject, we will make a short digression about family dramas that lead to murder. Odile Verschoot, specialist in infanticide, retraces the paths of some filicidal parents<sup>56</sup> and describes the dead ends posed by their

---

54 Christian Flavigny, *Parents d'aujourd'hui, enfants de toujours*, Armand Colin, 2006.

55 Daniel Rousseau, *Parentalité et structures familiales*, Apsyl, 2007.

56 Filicide is the murder one's own child.



parental dysfunction, underlining that “the crime of filicide is no accident.”<sup>57</sup> Whatever their class origins, psychic poverty and psychoactive misery caused these individuals, from the youngest age, to divorce themselves from their emotions. This separation is the tool that allowed them to survive.

Let’s remember that when children have emotional experiences devoid of meaning because of poorly-adapted care, they cannot build the necessary psychological and emotional library to relate to others and understand difference. Opening up to emotions is the first movement toward humanization. If nobody pays attention to the little one’s sensory birth, there is a high risk that the child will not be able to give meaning to their experiences, and thus may develop outside of culture. Consequences are terrible for their future relationships, the possibilities for which are snatched away at the very beginning of life.

Deprived of constructive, humanizing encounters that are part of a relational culture, the baby turns inward and creates a world where others do not truly exist. More specifically, it “consumes the other,” accepting semi-nourishment in order to survive. Its world divides. The very young human shows a certain adaptation, but its emotional life atrophies. Later, as a child, an adult, and finally a parent, despite apparent social, familial, and professional normality, they will suffer from unfathomable solitude and existential anguish, bearing an enduring sense of loss.

In family clinics, specialists of the psyche find that these adults-become-parents

possess personalities characteristic of a stolen childhood. The psychological and emotional immaturity they display testifies to a cruel absence of parents during their youth—not of real parents, but of symbolic ones. These beings, maladapted to the needs of their children, who sometimes go so far as to *put those children in danger*; are “former children still waiting for symbolic parents.”<sup>58</sup>

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

A parent, to grow into parenthood, needs to be offered humanizing cultural experiences. ECA-LEP helps the parent give meaning to their emotional experiences and to grow from them psychologically. To this end, ECA-LEP listens to the injured child within the parent to help it heal and diminish the risk of abuse.

#### ▲ Recommendation n° 14

The commission recommends formulating a policy of genuine support for parenthood, beyond its social and material dimensions, to confront various types of instability. The changing shape of families, the need for instant gratification and the dominant culture of consumption, saturation and individualism have increased instability for families, which expect to be recognized and supported. Many families fall through the cracks, particularly when their socioeconomic condition is not of concern. We call on the ministries to look more closely at the challenges families face today and to remain by their sides. Bringing together experts on these questions is crucial to confronting situations’ complexity.

57 Odile Verschoot, *Ils ont tué leurs enfants*, Imago, 2007.

58 Sophie Marinopoulos, *Infanticides et néonaticides*, Yapaka, 2015.

## 5. Development of the Child

In our anxious, hurried society, sworn to the cult of results and performance, overstimulation and early learning are all the rage. But these trends cut short the time needed for the *processes* of learning, of thought, of internalization.

### 5.1 From Senses to Thoughts: A Relational Model of Thinking

At birth, the baby is thrown into a very complicated world, so chaotic that they will begin to grasp it only after enormous effort at understanding. This beginning is referred to as the child's original state. But in order to think, the baby needs a physical and interactive mooring.

Physical mooring because there is no thought without perception, without sensation. To think, one must feel, touch, hear, palpate, smell. These sensations are then "psychized," or brought to the brain and turned into images. "So, this is physical mooring—thought rooting itself in sensations."<sup>59</sup>

But this physical anchor is not enough. A baby alone does not exist, as Winnicott said; this is because the child's transformations are based in an interactive mooring—in encounters with another thinker, most importantly with a parent. Thus, even if babies can perceive and sense, they cannot organize stimuli into thoughts without the embrace of an outside relationship. They must relate to an Other to launch their own thought. They need interaction, interrelation, the psyche of the other.

This is the heart of the little human's birth. Being held, being nourished physically, physiologically, is not enough—as demonstrated by Frederick II's awful experiment. To avoid death, to come to life, a baby needs more than a live birth; it needs someone else to welcome it, to lend it their thought machine. This is, incidentally, the crux of the therapist's work: making their thought machine available to the patient.

The presence of the adult is entirely essential. At the beginning of the child's life, the ability to distill symbolic material and to form a very early mental representation depends enormously on the quality and quantity of adult presence accompanying the child.<sup>60</sup>

The time spent caring for the baby, made up of apparently simple actions, is in reality highly complex because it engages many distinctions central to the child's growth: presence/absence, myself/someone else, continuous/discontinuous, conscious/unconscious, body/mind. At this very early stage of bond-building, the baby's processes of subjectivation are inseparable from its intersubjective state.

The baby's early repertoire of symbolization depends on its immediate experiences of the "good enough" parent's rhythm of presence/absence (to use Winnicott's term). Once a rhythm of care is established, the family group can share a continuity of "internal" thought, which thus creates an "external." "The baby's efforts toward symbolization rely on two pillars. On the one side are its existence as a being in relation with the world, its perceptions of self, of others, of its body; on the other side lies its sociability, with the psychological work of the family group."<sup>61</sup>

Psychoanalytic studies show that "the child's capacity to symbolize maternal absence depends first on the amount of maternal presence."<sup>62</sup> The growth process follows a gradient. In the beginning, the baby thinks in the presence of its adult caretaker, who helps it connect sensations to representations. At the end of this mental growth, the child can begin to think alone and imagine that which is absent.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP is a catalyst for parent-child dialogue and the emergence of the small child's thinking. This preventative approach must be privileged especially in situations with parental difficulties. To this end, ECA-LEP is an instrument of social health. It invites us to create initiatives benefitting the bond between child and parent in the waiting rooms of Centers for Maternal and Child Protection (PMIs), at facilities for mothers, at group homes for children, at LAEPs, family homes...

---

59 Bernard Golse, "Les premières représentations mentales: l'émergence de la pensée," in Julien Cohen-Solal and Bernard Golse (ed.), *Au début de la vie psychique. Le développement du petit enfant*, Odile Jacob, 1999, p.145.

60 *Ibid.*

---

61 Albert Ciccone and Denis Mellier, *Le Bébé et le Temps*, Dunod, 2007.

62 René Diatkine, quoted in Bernard Golse, "Les premières représentations mentales: l'émergence de la pensée," article cited, p. 146.

## 5.2 Identification, A Key Part of Caring for Children

Parents' early concept of appropriate attention for their baby relies on their ability to identify with the infant, to feel what the child feels. Generally, from birth on, parents and particularly mothers become exclusively concentrated on caring for the newborn. Reliving their own experience as infants, they find themselves once again in that vulnerable, dependent state. As an example, it is hard to carry a baby correctly if one does not identify with it. In caring for their child, the parents keep sacred the baby's continuity of existence—the ensemble of processes at play in the first chapter of its life.

“We find that the main feature is that [the mother] knows about the infant's needs *through her identification with the infant*. In other words, we find that she does not have to make a sort of shopping list of things she must do tomorrow; she feels what is needed at the moment. In the same way we do not have to plan the details of what we must provide for children in our care. *We do have to organize ourselves so that in every case there is someone who has time and inclination to know what the child needs.*”<sup>63</sup>

### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

Sharing sensory and aesthetic encounters encourages identification. Sharing excitement or experiencing a performance together creates a sensory communion that aids the capacity to identify and creates an environment beneficial to the child's primary needs.

## 5.3 Growing Up, a Team Effort: Attachment as a Work in Progress<sup>64</sup>

Since the 1940s and 1950s, attachment theory has held that the child's vital need is to exist in connection, to be in reassuring proximity to an *attachment figure*, regardless of whether other needs are satisfied. The attachment figure is the person to whom the child turns for reassurance, security and protection. Often the mother fills this role, but it seems that a baby can have several attachment figures, who it ranks according to what they provide.

Attachment behaviors are those which the child employs when they feel threatened and distressed; they vary according to age and abilities. This system of behaviors reflects an unconscious underlying strategy of attachment, and organizes itself around goals. The parent, in turn, is guided by their “parental instinct.” If there is no danger, attachment behaviors are replaced by explorative ones.

This is why making children feel secure, thereby calming them, helps develop their curiosity, exploration, and autonomy, building blocks for future learning. A child's *secure base* depends on the attachment figure's ability to respond appropriately. When the adult is unable to do so, the child engages *insecure avoidant, resistant or ambivalent* strategies. We see *disorganized/disoriented* attachments that are actually the absence of an attachment strategy, where behaviors and moods are sometimes contradictory or sudden, including *freezing, stilling* (suspending activity), or abnormal movements.

Attachment theory shows that repetition helps the child build increasingly stable representations of self, of others, and of expectations from relationships. This is the infant's *internal working model of attachment*, through which the theory of attachment looks at the symbolic life, in an approach similar to psychoanalysis. Thus, a repeatedly *insecure* way of relating puts later relationships at risk. The theory does not describe how the child will relate forever, but rather explores the destabilizing effects of an *insecure* environment.

For 30 years, the team of the Minnesota Study has conducted research on attachment bonds, in the process finding links between the type of attachment experienced in early childhood and the development of self-confidence, abilities to control emotions, and the emergence and development of social skills.<sup>65</sup>

### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

Repeatedly sharing sensory and aesthetic parent-child experiences helps build the representative imagination that allows for secure attachment, which is crucial to developing self-confidence and emotional control.

63 Winnicott, D. W., *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*, International Universities Press, 1965.

64 Pascal Richard, “Un outil pour penser la clinique du placement en accueil familial : la théorie de l'attachement,” in Hana Rottman and Pascal Richard (ed.), *Se construire quand même*, PUF, 2009.

65 L.A. Sroufe, B. Egeland, E. Carlson and W.A. Collins, *The Development of the Person. The Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation from Birth to Adulthood*, New York, The Guilford Press, 2005, p. 384.

#### 5.4 Growing Up, a Team Effort: Intersubjectivity as a Work in Progress

##### Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity is the group of processes and mechanisms that allow the child to find the proper psychological distance. To feel oneself exist in a distinct way, one must differentiate “me” from “someone else.” The baby experiences this slow process through its *secure attachment* to an adult. By way of repeated and reliable relational experiences, the baby discovers the space between itself and the adult it interacts with. This space is intersubjectivity.

Loving bonds emerge from intersubjectivity, which establishes a way of coexisting by granting the other party a separate identity. Sensing oneself, *feeling* alive before knowing that one is alive, separate, and an agent in the relationship, are the psychic steps toward each Subject’s birth. For over half a century, developmental psychologists have studied parents’ primitive, preverbal bonds with their babies. Whether through the lenses of attachment, of Daniel Stern’s affect attunement, of empathy or of Henri Wallon’s tonic dialogue, we observe the construction of a bond with a distance amenable to the emergence of self.

We see processes of intersubjective arrangement in all social animals who need parental attention and care at the dawn of their existence. But the little human is unique in its *narrative consciousness*, its capacity to move toward communication thanks to a particularly intense mental effort. This aptitude allows the child to begin a veritable dialogue—mimetic forms of emotional/physical responses which later evolve into language.

Subjectivity requires an individual and intentional consciousness. Infants can create connections between objects, situations, and themselves, and imagine consequences. This demonstrates their own subjectivity, their capacity to make sense of their existence.

Intersubjectivity begins at the moment when the Subject, to communicate, adapts or adjusts its subjectivity to that of someone outside itself.

##### Intersubjectivity and Protoconversation<sup>66</sup>

The theory of innate intersubjectivity suggests that the infant is born with a consciousness that perceives others’ subjective states, and that it wants to interact with them. The theory

was created over 25 years ago to explain the behaviors of newborns filmed with their mothers, who tried to engage their babies in a one-on-one conversation while playing with them (Trevarthen, 1974, 1977, 1979, 1998). In various fields of research, filmed interactions between adults and several-month-old infants surprised scientists. They saw similarities in timing and expressions between the simple, intuitive human encounters, on the one hand, and informal conversation and playful behavior among adults, on the other (Stern, 1971, 1974, 1977; Bateson, 1971, 1979; Brazelton, Kozlowski and Main, 1974; Tronick, Als and Adamson, 1979). *Conversation analysis* techniques, with precise study of the timing of adult-infant exchanges, statistically confirmed these similarities (Stern, 1971; Condon and Sander, 1974; Fogel, 1977, 1985; Beebe, Stern and Jaffe, 1979; Beebe, 1982; Beebe, Jaffe, Feldstein, Mays and Alson, 1985; Feldstein, Jaffe, Beebe, Crown, Jasnow, Fox and Gordon, 1993).

Mary C. Bateson (1971, 1975, 1979) called the mother-child interaction “protoconversation” and highlighted its importance in developing language and cultural rituals. At six months old, babies’ protoconversational games are replaced by more active games with objects as well as with their own bodies: Children play with their sensations and physical limits to construct a unified body identity. This is a rich period of development during which they are as interested in playing with objects as in communicating with others. Children’s opening to interactions beyond their body-to-body relationship with their mothers can be sparked by all sorts of opportunities for artistic and cultural awakening that fertilize its growth and guide their development.

At one year old, the baby’s and parent’s common interest in their surroundings reach a turning point. The baby then develops intersubjective motivations, playing around with the intentions and emotions of its game partner.

##### Intersubjectivity and Sociability

It is important to note that babies’ consciousness of others and intersubjectivity have been demonstrated through detailed studies describing spontaneous behaviors, as well as through frame-by-frame video analysis that allowed a granular measurement of response time. This aimed to determine if, when and how infants respond physically and above all expressively, sometimes provoking the other person to respond. The behaviors seen as characteristic of infantile intersubjectivity—the child’s manner of looking, their facial expressions, their voice, hand movements, the way they move their

66 Colwyn Trevarthen and Kenneth J. Aitken, “Intersubjectivité chez le nourrisson : recherche, théorie et application clinique,” *Devenir*, 2003/4, vol. 15, pp. 309-428.





© photo Barbara Gressmann- Lis avec moi! La Sauvegarde du Nord

head and body to welcome or reject contact—resemble the behaviors necessary in complex adult intersubjectivity for any intentional collaboration, including conversation.

Communicative expressions between infant and adult are regulated and negotiated with intention and feeling, using simultaneous processes of reception and expression in different forms (Stern, 1974; Stern et al., 1977; Kuhl and Meltzoff, 1982; Dore, 1983; Stern et al., 1985; Fernald, 1989; Jaffe, Stern and Peery, 1973; Murray and Trevarthen, 1985; Trevarthen, 1978, 1984, 1993; Trevarthen, Kokkinaki and Fiamenghi, 1999; Weinberg and Tronick, 1994; Braten, 1998). It has been demonstrated that the infant's capacity to appreciate and desire conversation with a parent can be recognized, and thus elicit a response, from any other person—even by an infant of the same age—which is *not* the case for signals of infantile urges for attachment, such as attempting to nurse or looking for the mother's support or comfort.

This potential for a “generalized sociability,” and its usefulness in communicating within groups of more than two people, have only been seized upon by a few early-childhood specialists (Hay, Nash and Pederson, 1983).

Starting at six months old, trios of infants can engage in productive conversation without adult help (Selby and Sylvester-Bradley, 2003). This discovery leads to important conclusions about the workings of infants' social consciousness, the emotions engaged and their place in language-learning—a message that unambiguously points us toward ECA-LEP.

- **Argument for ECA-LEP**  
ECA-LEP encourages the infant's innate intersubjectivity. The child is born with a mind hungry for interaction and receptive to the others' changing moods. This social need is a cultural need.

### 5.5 Growing Up, a Team Effort: Language as a Work in Progress

How do children find their words? A host of psychoanalysts, linguists and researchers have tried to answer this question; we will review some of their illuminating discoveries. We already mentioned that children need a physical and interactive mooring to awaken to otherness. This allows for intersubjectivity, construction of self, and the inception of thought. We will examine the keys that allow access to language through a close analysis of what early body-to-body bonds can look like and the appropriate distance they require.

## Distance: A Structural Condition of Language

Talking, “speaking to,”<sup>67</sup> creates one of the structural conditions of language: the child’s renunciation of exclusive “possession” of its mother. To break this exclusivity, the mother must somehow frustrate the child. “The first trigger for frustration is the mother, through the phenomenon of presence/absence. The introduction of the presence/absence dichotomy allows symbolic order to emerge,”<sup>68</sup> which distinguishes itself from the real relationship with the mother as object of satisfaction. The mother in this way becomes a symbolic agent as she introduces the child to the presence/absence opposition. The little one, in its first nurturing bonds, should be able to handle periods between being fed—with “food” meaning both milk and its mother’s touch.

Slightly older children struggle to imagine that their parents have any purpose aside from their care. We see clearly how young kids physically tighten their grip on mother or father when someone from outside the family approaches. But the quest for an exclusive relationship has to be a “losing battle.” To grow, the child must quickly grasp that they can look elsewhere for pleasure. If this does not sink in, they wear themselves out, walled off in search of exclusivity, leaving the parent overwhelmed and the child underdeveloped, without the words to grow up.

Thus, physical and interactive mooring are coupled with the essential creation of a space between baby and parent that only words can fill. In this step toward intersubjectivity, tied to the appearance of words, there are two complex and intertwined movements: carving out intersubjective space, and at the same time building bonds. Growth relies entirely on the ability to stay together despite distance—remaining next to the parent’s body without being glued to it. This is not easy for the child, who must journey from “right up against mother’s breast” to “right up against her chest,” then to a livelier posture where it holds up its head—thus ungluing it from the mother’s body—before finally supporting its chest and sliding down to make its own way.

The more the infant detaches from the physical body, the more it uses its sonic body to connect. Babbling during separation is essential to the process. Making its nest of sounds, creating early linguistic connections, keeping an eye out to reassure itself that the person who set it down will not disappear—these are all subtle movements of growth.

But separation doesn’t happen overnight, and its movements are uniquely timed. If a parent moves too quickly, they can disturb the baby’s feeling of security. We find this notion in Daniel Stern’s theory of affect attunement; in other writers’ reflections on imitation, empathy and projective identification; and in Henri Wallon’s work on tonic dialogue. Preverbal connections support the intersubjective space that will one day allow language to appear. ECA-LEP nourishes preverbal connections.

## The Tragedy and Wonder of Language

During a conference held at Les Pâtes au beurre in Nantes, Bernard Golse remarked that language is beautiful, even marvelous, but also tragic, because each time we speak—whatever we say—we are saying, “You and me, that makes two.” If this weren’t the case, we wouldn’t need to converse; preverbal communication would be enough.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, speaking testifies to the intersubjective gap, a fact to which Jean-Bertrand Pontalis alludes: “If language continues to move us throughout life, it is because language only speaks of separation—language is separation itself.”<sup>70</sup>

“I love you” is our way of saying, “You and me, that makes two.” On that note, children who declare their love to their parents cannot help embracing them at the same time, as if to counteract the separation the words imply. To linguists, language makes children grow; as they drink in the world, they pepper adults with questions, and each response is a personal victory. Just as we don’t tug on a baby’s head to make it grow, we don’t teach a child to speak. Children can access language at their own pace by slowly absorbing their environment.

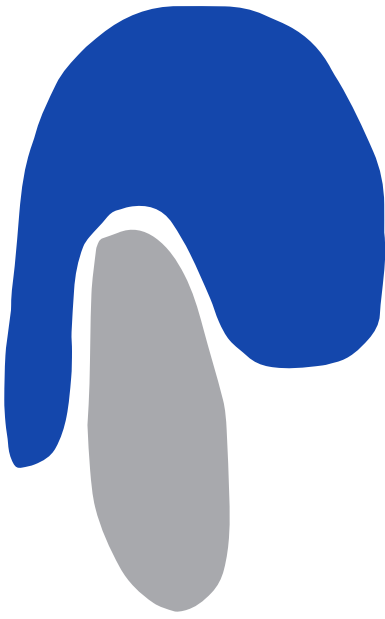
The baby, unbeknownst to us, questions and tries to make sense of the world around it. In a monologue that is at first internal, it will feed its ability to decrypt what it experiences, what it feels, so as to one day launch into the thousand questions of “why” and “what’s that for?” The conquest of language places children within a long human history, with the will to “impose their thoughts on the world by force of the verb. Creators more than imitators, discoverers instead of followers, they construct their language rather than reproducing that of others. In this quest, they should be accompanied by mediators who are simultaneously benevolent and

67 Jean-Pierre Lebrun, *Les Couleurs de l'inceste. Pour se déprendre du maternel*, Denoël, 2013.

68 *Ibid.*

69 Bernard Golse, memo from a session of the Journée annuelle de formation du réseau national des lieux d'accueil, Les Pâtes au beurre, Nantes, October 2016.

70 Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *L'Amour des commencements*, Folio, 1994.



of expression that can liberate and shape communication's verbal and nonverbal dimensions, teachers give children multiple "means of discovering and constructing sense." At the same time, they learn how each child finds and forms meaning in terms of the situation, the context, and the activity—for example, in dance, mime, clowning, playful activities, drawing, painting, song, nursery rhymes, stunts, role-playing, theater, interactions with animals, etc."<sup>72</sup>

Mastering language is an ambitious and necessary challenge: The equilibrium of our connections is at stake. This mastery depends on many personal, familial, social, and cultural factors. We need strategies to make sure that all children, even those in difficult situations, gain a command of language. This is what ECA-LEP offers: It supports the child's linguistic creativity, which sprouts from a primal desire to communicate. The yearning to speak through their body, their senses, their emotions, will later settle on language as the primary tool.

demanding, who light the [children's] way, pointing out dead ends, encouraging them to keep pushing past the comfortable limits of complicity and proximity."<sup>71</sup>

Spoken language may be the primary mode of communication, but it isn't the only one. Let's keep in mind that young children have an extraordinary capacity to transmit messages without words. During a period that varies between children, this transmission happens through nonverbal *manifestations* that are more or less combined with elements of spoken language. This is a necessary step in their journey as a Subject who wants to understand, to share, to transmit, and who is capable of speaking without words.

"As for children in nursery school, they use nonverbal communication not just to "signal" basic difficulties and needs (hunger, fatigue, discomfort, suffering, etc.) or to share an experience, but also to "broadcast" emotional messages (joy, fear, sadness, anger, disgust, surprise, etc.), to send intentional messages in social interactions (expressions seen in their gaze, pointing; requests via their body, their hands, their voice, etc.) as well as to communicate and share cognitive and intellectual messages ("codes" of social skills, of know-how, "codes" shared through imitation, manipulations of objects, interactions in "resolving problems"). By facilitating and stimulating the different modes

#### Social Desire as Opening to Culture and Language<sup>73</sup>

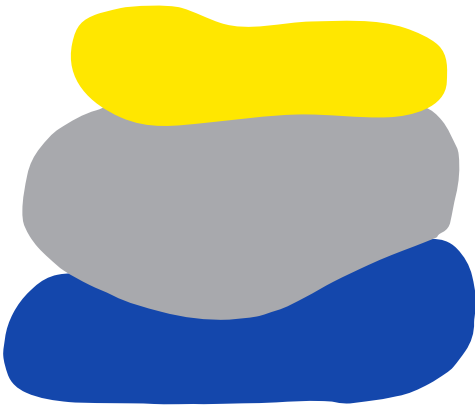
Maya Gratier studies the processes that make the baby an increasingly active *participant* in encounters with close contacts, *before being able to speak*. Her research examines the modalities of communication between parents and babies from birth to the age when sounds start to resemble language. She looked very closely at the *nature* of the sounds babies make in the first weeks of life in social contexts of play and of care; she particularly focused on the *interactive rhythms* within which the baby's nonverbal expressions take form.

She believes she has confirmed that the baby is born with an enormous social yearning that greatly exceeds its needs for protection and survival. One could say that, from day one, the baby is hunting for culture, if we allow that culture is above all an experience—one that relies on the senses and that binds people together in a shared moment. Research conducted on this or that aspect of early development might seem a world away from the worries of adults caring for babies, because it focuses on what appear to be details. But its results are key to understanding and orienting approaches.

72 Hubert Montagner, "Les dérives du professeur Alain Bentolilla dans son rapport au ministre de l'Éducation nationale," *Journal du droit des jeunes*, 2008/3 (n° 273), pp. 17-25.

73 Article by Maya Gratie, in Patrick Ben Soussan and Sylvie Rayna, *Le Programme Parler bambin: enjeux et controverses*, Èrès, series "1001 BB," 2018.

71 Alain Bentolilla, "Enfant, être de langage."  
 ■■■beziere-perinatalite.fr/texte2014/AlainBentolilla.



For our commission, Gratier summarizes her conclusions in five points:

- From birth, the baby expresses its interest in others with its body: energy, gaze, changes in posture. When the adult encourages this motivation, forms of reciprocity are established (imitation, tonic and vocal dialogue). The child is thus born within the intersubjective encounter. Infants have immediate, direct access to the experiences of those who open themselves to them, who watch them, listen to them, or touch them. Researchers have presented empirical evidence that the newborn gazes longer at a face focused on it than at a face looking elsewhere. Through these intersubjective encounters, the child develops and its brain self-organizes. The experience of being the object of another's attention is thus integral to the human being's future. Everything starts there.
- All of the newborn's senses are functional, awake and resonant. The senses should no longer be considered as separate information receivers. Looking, listening, and touching are fundamentally linked—in reality, they are different facets of the same activity. Thus, the dynamic *patterns* of sound, of touch, of light arising from the environment sometimes overlap. Developmental specialists have shown that *patterns* repeat across adults' voices and facial/bodily movements when they speak to babies. They have also demonstrated that the baby perceives and reacts to these multi-channel expressions.
- The baby lives according to its body's biological rhythms, those in nature, and social ones. But it does not simply put up with them; it helps establish and transform them into resources.

We have seen the degree to which biological rhythms set the pace for shared human moments. Martine Van Puyvelde, a Belgian colleague of Maya Gratier, showed for example that a baby's heartbeat adjusts to that of its mother when it lies against her chest. Several studies reveal surprising physiological synchronies and convergences between adults and babies when they are present and attentive to each other. This is why an adult can guide a child to a calmer or more awakened state. By speaking, walking or singing in rhythms adapted to the babies, adults share emotions with them. These are foundational cultural experiences, because they allow the baby to identify people and relationships. Through these experiences, the baby recognizes other people who speak the same language, sing the same melodies and use their bodies just as its closest companions do.

- The biological and social rhythms of these first cultural practices (protoconversations, interactive singalongs) form the basis for a coherent experience of passing time, which underpins the processes of both memory and imagination. Human timing is created in the intimacy of sensitive encounters, at the intersection between rhythms. Modern, high-speed, disembodied media has, in our opinion, weakened this human timing.
- As adults and babies share sensitive exchanges in healthy, appropriate environments, the sensitive mutates into meaning. Access to speech is part of the development of deeply expressive modes of communication, founded on an active connection to the senses, which others recognize and help structure. Many researchers believe, as we do, that language is as much a matter of usage as of learning. Babies find the words they need to express their experiences and intentions—without explicit instructions. In fact, this is why they so often invent words, and their inventions are extraordinary, poetic and spot-on. They are agents in the evolution of languages! Gratier says that this convinces her that babies arrive at language through its musical and poetic dimension.

To conclude her contribution to our commission, Gratier encourages adults to welcome the child's endeavors, to recognize and respect their way of understanding the world. Because now we know that the baby thinks long before speaking, and that its way

of thinking is rooted in a multi-sensory experience that unfolds at a human pace. As a result, today there is an urgency to safeguard the period of intersubjective experience between adults and babies. We must understand that this stage is long, a time of slow, necessary, creative detours—time that cannot be measured, but which is felt and experienced in attentive cooperation.

Maya Gratier led a group gathered for its expertise on nature's role for the child, which led her to the following proposition: It is becoming clear that the experience of nature should be a fundamental right for the child, one that should supersede the right to own toys. The experience of nature roots the baby in sensoriality and connects it to natural rhythms. In the baby's experience, nature and culture are not in opposition; they are two sides of the same coin.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP allows the small human the priceless experience of being the object of adults' attention, as well as intersubjective encounters that support development and allow the brain to structure itself.

#### ▲ Recommendation n° 15

The commission recommends spreading public health messages as widely as possible that promote including linguistic maturity in Cultural Health programs. These programs should expose those who care for very young preschoolers and kindergartners to the following idea: "One does not teach a child to speak." Language is felt through encounters, through openness to the world, through shared sensations and emotions. To speak is to move is to have humanizing experiences which give a taste for words. Protoconversations meld biological and social rhythms, which underpin the first forms of cultural engagement.

### 5.6 A Few Concepts Demonstrating the Value of ECA-LEP

Senses switch places: A baby sees with its mouth, listens with its skin, touches with its eyes, etc. The baby is thrown into a sensory soup, which allows it to drink in its environment through all of its senses—and then to find meaning. ECA-LEP speaks to this body of senses, which allows babies with limitations to benefit from all opportunities for awakening.

The sensory body gives birth to thought: Babies feel before thinking. They *feel* alive before *knowing* that they are. The psychological journey is a process of construction that starts with sensory experiences, which produce an emotional life—birthplace of the representations that feed relationships.

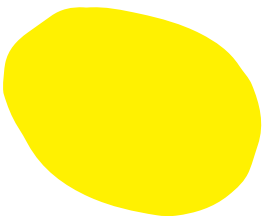
Starting to habituate the child to absence in a *secure* climate allows representations and symbolization to emerge. Thus, since the parent knows how to be present, when they step away, the child becomes agent of its own experiments. These will anchor the baby's self-construction.

Object permanence creates an inner security that encourages the shift from "thinking body" to thought. Fed by experience "with" and "without" their parent, the child will slowly construct an image of the absent person, and thus make them present in continuity even when they are away physically. Thought supplants the reality of presence. The baby builds autonomy through this reassuring psychological tool.

Transitional space is a zone that stimulates openness toward the world and the creation of meaning. ECA-LEP offers such transitional spaces and fosters experiences of self.

The voyage from having to being is a succession of sacrifices. The movements of growth force one to leave behind attained comfort in order to "reach outward." At 18 months, the child thinks that the object contains the pleasure, so they desire the object for the pleasure it holds. Then they realize that pleasure is an experience, a state of being that they can create with or without the coveted object.

Vulnerability lies at the heart of bond-building—and of our species that tells tales to communicate meaning. The transition from bodily and sensory connections to those of thought creates the psychological maturity necessary for each Subject's autonomy. Getting to know one's limits and one's vulnerable side helps with psychic equilibrium.



## 5.7 The Child's Aesthetic Sense

The rapport with the aesthetic, with the beautiful, is far from simple. We choose the complex and enlightening perspective of Donald Meltzer, who asks: Why do we find something beautiful? His examination was guided by the idea of empathy, which was born in Germany from the branch of aesthetic psychology.

The feeling of empathy is a fundamental step: Subjects see a piece of themselves in a landscape, a person, an object that inspires them with a feeling of beauty. Empathy is thus a sort of communication that is emotional, innate, ancient: between oneself and the outside world, but also between oneself and other human Subjects, and with nature.

Empathy means “feeling something inside,” which Freud considered essential (contrary to popular belief). Indeed, he used this idea in his theory of identification, recalling that the ego—at the heart of personality—is built on the basis of identification, which in turn relies on imitation and empathy.

This affective communication between Subjects is central to the little one's development—but also in every relationship. Feeling inside oneself what the other feels is the path to empathy, the beginning of a capacity for a balanced relationship with someone else. “Sympathy does not bring consolation. Empathy is closer to knowledge—knowledge of the other and the ability to feel this type of inner emotional resonance.”<sup>74</sup>

Donald Meltzer, who cowrote *The Apprehension of Beauty*,<sup>75</sup> is one of the rare psychoanalysts who uses the lens of aesthetics and beauty to study how the brain and processes of symbolization form. He explains that the baby *in utero* already has unconscious drives; as it approaches birth, it experiences a sort of push to be born, an eagerness. This drive relies on the maturity of its sensory channels and on the feeling that its “uterine bedroom” has become too small. According to Meltzer, the experience of the long-awaited birth is rich in discoveries about the beauty of the world, the “beauty of the object”—in this case the mother's breast—along with all this implies in terms

of nutritional and psychological purpose. (*Object*, in psychoanalysis, means that which is invested with emotional energy.)

The newborn's encounter with the world is overwhelming. The tension and pain exceed the proto-symbolic abilities of the psychological machine, already active *in utero*. Meltzer states that, in the final months of intra-uterine life, the fetus develops signs of a psychic life characterized by capacities of attention, interest and emotion relating to its surroundings and to sounds.

At birth, Meltzer continues, a space is hollowed out between the intensity of stimulations, which engulf the baby and cause it very strong aesthetic reactions, and the ignorance of the whole world into which it is born. The gap can be seen as a sort of gradient between surface stimulations, perceived by its senses, and the more intimate, more internal knowledge of its mother. This compels the child to cleave, or separate, its feelings into two worlds that don't connect. The processes of cleavage thus appear during this first emotional experience, too intense and too painful to be processed by an immature psychic apparatus.

A sense of anxiety, or even of being threatened, stems from the baby's ignorance of what's *within*. The baby must flush out this feeling so it can escape a primal depression, caused by its powerlessness to resolve a riddle: *Are things also beautiful inside?* It becomes the mother's burden to address her newborn's distress, to break it free from this *paranoid-schizophrenic* (cleaved) state. This state will settle itself, a little at a time, by reintegrating the different aspects of the object: a sorting of the baby's inner objects.

In simple terms, birth itself terrifies the baby: It lands in an unknown world, its inner order is under threat, and it will need the help of a “rescuer” to free itself from the invisible cage of psychic cleavage, creating from the same object<sup>76</sup>—the mother—a concept of good and bad objects. For children to learn to think, they must have parents who think and who introduce themselves as thinking objects. In this way, little ones can unlock an awareness of their own thoughts.

Beauty has ancient roots in the trials of birth, which, according to Meltzer, breeds investment in the world, in others, in relationships with others—all while representing a place of uncertainty, even threat. This experience should be accompanied so the baby can progressively find equilibrium in its inner life.

---

74 Didier Houzel, interview, “Abécédaire: B comme Beauté,” 2017, on Psynem, a website that provides information on child psychiatry, maintained by the association À l'aube de la vie, directed by Professor Bernard Golse, head of the child psychology department at Necker Hospital.

75 Donald Meltzer and Meg Harris William, *The Apprehension of Beauty*, Karnak Books, 1988.

---

76 The “object” in psychoanalysis is that which is invested with emotional energy; this may refer to a person.



Meltzer doesn't in any way say that the baby doesn't find its mother pretty; he tries to inhabit the baby's inner world. Beauty is directly tied to the fact of having been "touched," which suggests a profound feeling, and "carried." Such a state of mind is welcomed by the mother, which allows the baby to progressively organize its inner physical experiences—the seeds of its thought.

● **Argument for ECA-LEP**

Beauty evokes the sensation of being "touched," sparking a deep feeling that must be recognized by the parent. This helps the child progressively organize what they feel in their body. The artist, with their sensibility, their poetic and sensory world, communicates directly with this sensitive/aesthetic part carried by the baby, just as the parents do during their mutual birth. ECA-LEP focuses on this humanizing aesthetic feeling to nurture the child's development.

5.8 The Child's Relationship with Nature

"Nature should be considered not as a resource that we exploit, but as a place that shelters us and offers us life, like a living and inexhaustible library from which we learn." – Felwine Sarr<sup>77</sup>

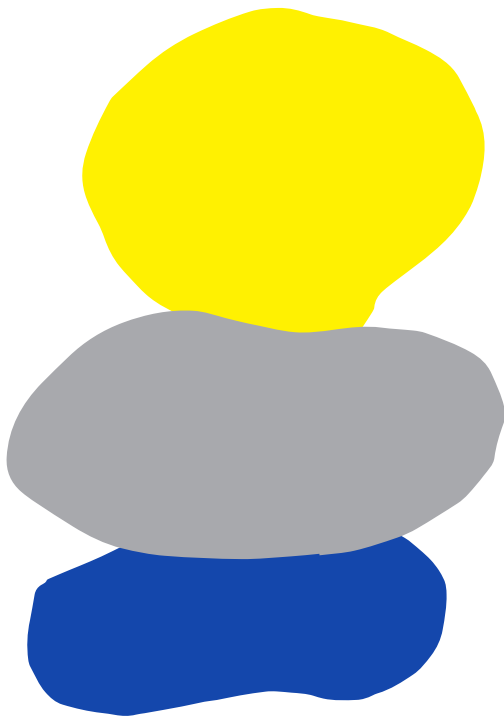
In France, children are cut off from nature. They can identify more than a thousand corporate logos, but less than ten plants from their own region!<sup>78</sup> Other European countries, including Switzerland, Sweden, and Italy, plan the outdoor spaces at childcare centers and schools with the same care as the indoor ones, and have no qualms about creating venues for young children out in nature. In France, we are still far from this reality. That said, AGAPI childcare centers are trying hard to build an approach that puts nature at the center of welcoming a child. They believe that children develop through and with nature, and that venues built for them should keep this in mind.

Society has long ignored the importance of the little one's awakening to their environment. Most of the time, outdoor spaces are nothing more than areas for group play, build to stringent safety standards. The natural environment is often abandoned in favor of an artificial or recreational-oriented one. Yet we know how much contact with nature contributes to the child's development—just as culture does.

Dr. Qing Li, an immunologist, examines the mechanisms that allow trees to reinforce our natural immune systems, notably to help prevent cancer. His work may not focus on children, but it is possible to extrapolate

77 Felwine Sarr, *Habiter le monde. Essai de politique relationnelle*, Mémoire d'encrier, "Cadastres" series, 2017.

78 "Être un enfant aujourd'hui," *Télérama*, 24 December 2016.



In order to keep these spectacular immune benefits in the long term, forest hikes must be a monthly practice. Dr. Li and his colleagues attribute the benefits of “forest bathing” to phytoncides, aromatic molecules that trees emit to protect against insects, bacteria, and fungus. Phytoncides are aromatherapy for our bodies. Dr. Li continues to delve deeper, exploring whether these effects are replicable in closed environments like hotels and malls. He conducted one study in a hotel where he ground up phytoncides—mostly essences of Hinoki wood—in volunteers’ rooms, and found that their aromas improved sleep, calmed people, and reduced blood pressure. But the impact on immunity was 50% less pronounced than in the forest.

Interest in natural landscapes and their health benefits is nothing new. Countless artists, painters, writers, landscape designers, and poets have glorified or tried to reproduce enchanting natural scenes (waterfalls, forests, farmland, wild or cultivated gardens, mountains...). The divide between city and nature only began to appear in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the industrial revolution.

Urban life is stimulating, but it seems that beyond a certain point, it comes at a “cognitive cost.” We lose the ability to control our attention, to focus; we become more impulsive, more reactive to sudden changes in urban and human surroundings.

Facing today’s overstimulation and the countless daily choices in our consumer society, we constantly need to restrain ourselves, which takes a lot of energy. This energy surge causes mental fatigue, a cause of diminished directed attention. Reduced directed attention has several consequences for our intellectual functions, including weaker capacities for self-control, abstract thought, creativity, flexibility, and planning. A person who is bereft of mental energy—or, more precisely, whose directed attention is exhausted—can be overcome with irritability, anger, impulsivity, or rage.

This is where nature takes the stage. Many studies show that, by helping us physically take a step back (hiking in nature) or offering us a calming diversion that is purely visual, nature acts as a buffer against anxiety and all of its variations (social phobia, anxious dysfunction, signs of depression, etc.). During an experience in nature, mental recovery follows a four-step process: ① The mind clears, ② directed attention rebuilds, ③ lucidity sharpens, ④ reflection begins about oneself, one’s goals, one’s potential. Much research has also demonstrated nature’s impact on

his conclusions.<sup>79</sup> Dr. Li is a researcher, co-founder of the Japanese Society for Forest Medicine, a member of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), and a professor in the Department of Hygiene and Public Health at the Nippon Medical School in Tokyo.

Since 2005, he has focused on the forest’s impact on immunity. His research team followed twelve middle-aged men, who work at large companies in Tokyo, during a stay in the woods of Iiyama (Nagano Prefecture). Iiyama is home to unimaginably beautiful conifer and beech forests that are crisscrossed by mountain springs hurtling down the mountainside. The volunteers’ only task was to walk, slowly (two hours the first day, four hours the second day...). After three days and two nights in the forest, the researchers took blood and urine samples and found a significant increase in the activity and quantity of NK (*natural killer*) cells. These cells, which one might compare lymphocytes, protect our bodies from infections, from viruses, and from some tumors. The researchers found 52% more NK cells than they had found at the beginning of the trip. At the same time, Dr. Li noted a spike in the activity of some cancer-fighting proteins: Perforin was 28% more active, while granulysin was 48% busier. By comparison, a control group that walked in the city did not show any increased NK activity.

---

79 Information cited in the following passage are extracts from Pascale d’Erm, *Natura, Les Liens qui libèrent*, 2019.



our cognitive capacities. A study conducted by Stanford University (on 70 residents of the San Francisco Bay area over the course of 15 months) confirmed the significant benefits of walking for cognitive restoration.<sup>80</sup>

Urban parks are also sources of rejuvenation. It seems that even short “nature breaks” at lunchtime can have significant effects—as long as they are a regular occurrence, because the effects are cumulative. Neuropsychological tests have shown that walking 30-60 minutes in a verdant park, rather than on an urban street, encourages processes of cognitive restoration and creativity, and has important benefits for children suffering from attention deficit.<sup>81</sup>

This is not the place to enumerate nature’s benefits for our bodies, but we would like to highlight the importance of considering nature because of the constructive relationship it fosters with young children. When designing new child-oriented facilities, the overall vision should include coexistence with nature.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA and ECA-LEP call for a direct relationship with the arts, with culture and with nature. Together, they create the necessary conditions to avoid the risk of stress, improve attentiveness, balance moods, and curb aggressiveness.

#### ▲ Recommendation n° 16

The commission recommends recognizing the relationship with nature as a basis for the equilibrium of the child and of the parent-child bond. It recommends that ministries cooperate to disseminate public health messages emphasizing nature’s importance for the child’s development. The Ministries of Solidarity and Health, of Family, of Culture, and of Ecological and Solidarity Transition should work together to finance preventative health messages that unite the ideas of childhood, care, nature and culture.

## 6. Lessons from Emotional Deprivation

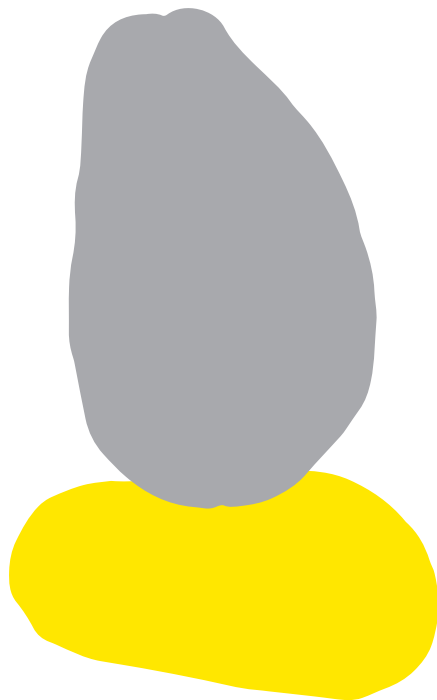
### 6.1 When the Sensory and Emotional Bond is Neglected

For some babies, growing up is simply too hard, because they are not accompanied by structuring and pacifying human presence. So, they “choose” to dull their feelings. They close off their sensations, creating costly defenses against experiences that evoke the fear of death. They perceive inputs without a way to process them. This defense means not just suppression, which still recognizes reality, but shifts toward denial of the feelings in the baby’s own body, preventing sensations from forming into images.

A yawning gap opens in the mind, a blank space where there should have been a representation. This happens below the surface: We find ourselves faced with a baby who grows physiologically but who responds very passively to the care it receives—care which, in this case, is given by a mother who is herself mostly absent from her own emotions. This blockage of representation, this *denial*, which shuts out emotional experience, causes a serious failure in the ego—while still leaving it room to grow. It is as though a psychotic center had wormed its way into a neurotic-seeming organism.

80 G.N. Bratman, G.C. Dailyn, B.J. Levy and J.J. Gross, “The Benefits of Nature Experience: Improved Affect and Cognition,” *Landscape and Urban Planning*, vol. 138, June 2015, pp. 41-50.

81 A.F. Taylor, F.E. Kuo, “Children with Attention Deficits Concentrate Better after Walk in the Park,” cited in Pascale d’Erm, *Natura*, *op. cit.*



adjusts to the child and discovers them in their uniqueness. Sharing emotions, as encouraged by ECA-LEP, is a way of restoring the parent-child bond.

## 6.2 Deterioration in Relationship Health and Its Consequences

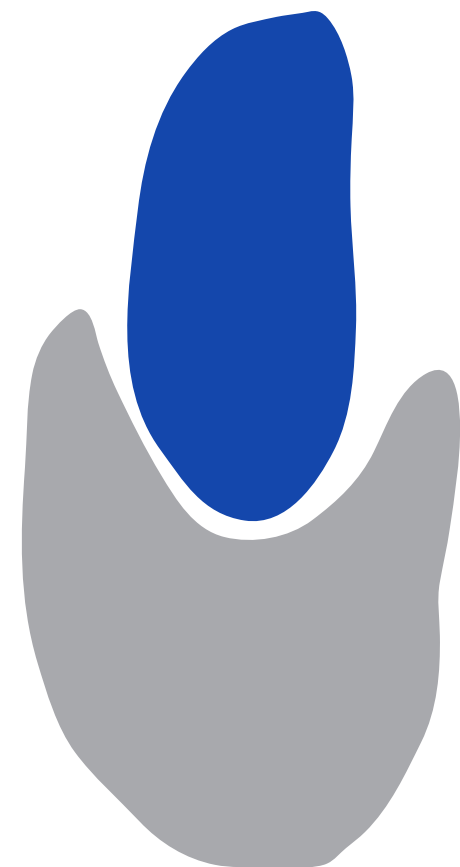
We owe a lot to the childhood specialists studying children who have suffered emotional deprivation, traumatic separations, and mistreatment in relationships due to lack of appropriate attention and ability to interpret their needs. In the 1960s, Jenny Aubry, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst at the Fondation Parent-de-Rosan, exposed the consequences caused to relationship health by early deprivation of appropriate physical and psychological care. Her observations, still referenced today, showed that children cannot handle excessive disruptive stimulation because their psyche is immature. Their thought machine—in this case their body—cannot process such a flood of stimulations in a situation of insufficient care such as mistreatment, neglect, abuse, or intrusiveness. Hence, to reduce their suffering, young children will devote all of their energy to erecting costly psychic defenses that will alter their relationship with the world, their surroundings, others and themselves.

To summarize all of these observations, Maurice Berger and Emmanuelle Bonneville coined the term *early relationship trauma* (*traumatisme relationnel précoce*).<sup>82</sup> They state that:

“The earlier the trauma, the deeper it is. When the trauma happens at a young age, children cannot pinpoint its origin, leading them to feel responsible for their parents’ inappropriate behaviors (*primary guilt*). Early trauma shocks the mind, causing a sort of freeze-frame effect. Children’s anxiety is caused by their parents but, like in cases of Stockholm Syndrome, they look to their parents for comfort. Without adults capable of empathizing, the child is left alone to experience the anguish and terror they feel as they stare into a relational abyss. In order to survive and feel alive, the child may actively stir up the traumatic situation. Several schisms develop in the child’s psyche: One part identifies with the aggressor, another feels terrorized, and yet a third

---

82 Maurice Berger and Emmanuelle Bonneville, “Pathologie des traumatismes relationnels précoces et placement familial spécialisé,” in Hana Rottman and Pascal Richard (ed.), *Se construire quand même*, op.cit., pp. 227-242.



This weakness remains; the child grows up and shows signs of disaffection in relationships (clinical expression of an ego without hope, unheard), but these symptoms are quickly glossed over by family and friends who describe the child’s demeanor as reserved, unexpressive, polite... Those who are closest deny the psychic death and absence of emotion. This means that the whole family dynamic needs to be questioned, because everyone, having found their “economy of psychic motion” (their own self-protective strategies), adapts to the situation. Nobody seems able to do differently.

This wounded part of the developing childish ego coexists with another, better-adapted side that pulls the wool over everyone’s eyes. Invisible turmoil certainly lurks in the background, creating psychic defenses that take a heavy toll because they deny reality so as to avoid suffering.

### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

With its sensitivity-focused approach, ECA-LEP reaches out to the parent’s fragile part and connects them to their emotions, so that they can in turn empathize with their child’s emotions. Embraced in their psychic vulnerability, the adult slowly

denies the situation and idealizes the experience. The child is caught up in physical sensations that do not make sense—raw images without the ability to process them.”

● Argument for ECA-LEP

By recognizing the wounded inner child of the adult-become-parent, ECA-LEP touches on the raw physical feelings they harbor. This experience can help lower psychic defenses and build a confident relationship, for a better capacity to hear and welcome the emotions of the child.

## 7. A New Public Health Challenge Requiring Interministerial Coordination

ECA-LEP makes our inborn vulnerability one of its central points of focus. It takes into account:

- the child’s relationship with its body
- the environment in which the child spends time
- the adult who is becoming a parent
- the adult watching the child, and the child watching the adult watch them
- timing, rhythms, and connections
- cultural nutrition that allows adult and child to grow together

ECA-LEP is not an anecdotal reflection about childhood, undeserving of government attention. We stand against such a dismissal and call for the creation of a Ministry of Vulnerability to address the challenges and the crises faced by humans of all ages. Being born, growing, living one’s adult life, aging, dying: On this long journey, an individual may endure illness, disability, mourning, separation, mistreatment, abuse, conflict, inner/psychological suffering... Our humanity imposes these challenges on us, and we should address them collectively.

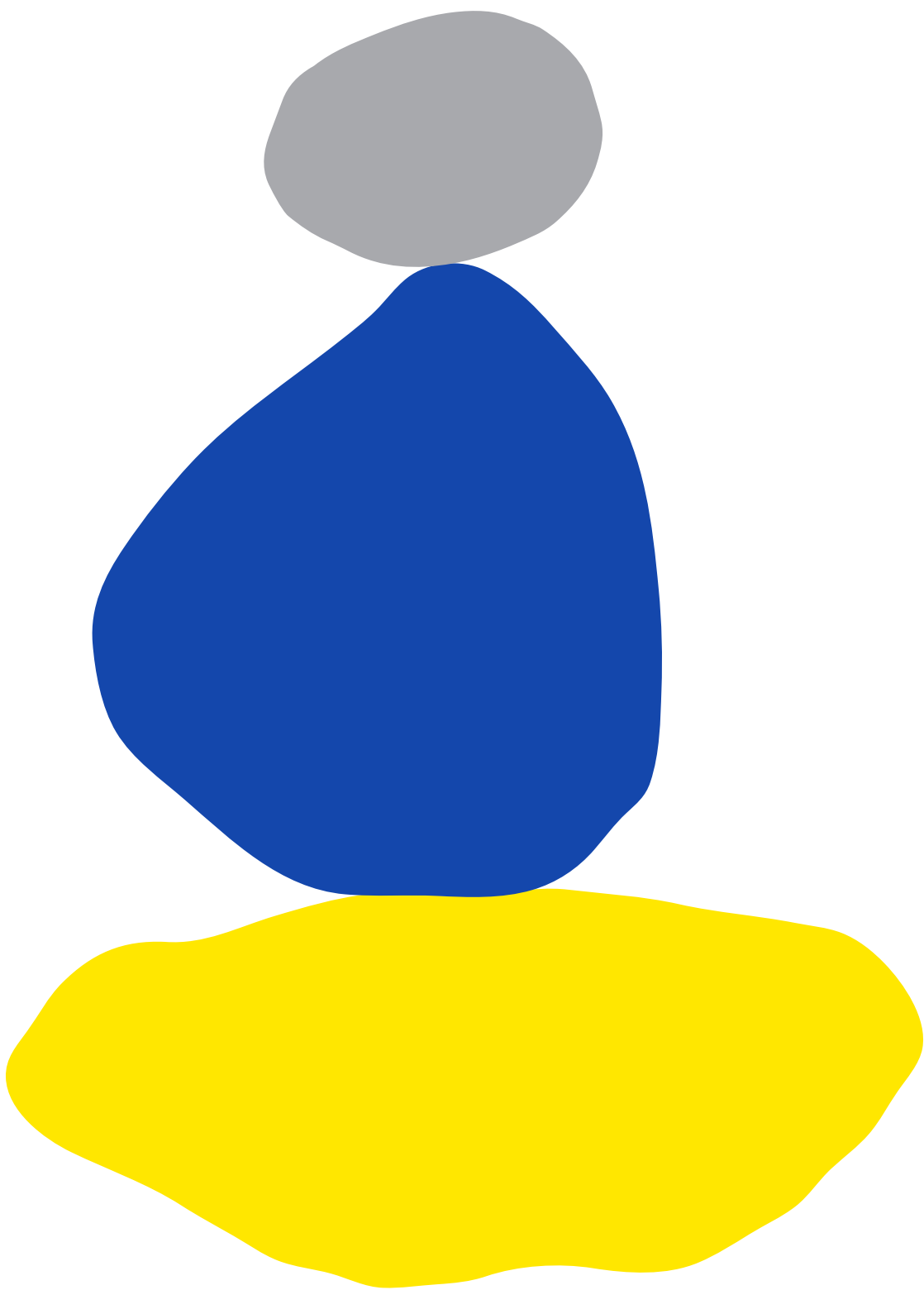
Democracy exists to defend our shared cultural heritage. It relies on our capacity to deliberate together, which requires communicating with others. But to approach another person, to handle our differences and the encounters they produce, we must first know how to “debate with ourselves.” Self-encounter is the departure point for debating with someone else. Finding the path to one’s self, in order to “go toward,” happens by discovering one’s body, one’s senses, one’s movements, and the connection to the other person’s body, at the heart of their thoughts. One must be acknowledged in order to think. All of these inner constructions underly our capacity to internalize otherness.

There is one condition to which we are “obliged”: our human condition. Forgetting this puts us at risk of getting lost, individually and as a group. The desire to evolve, to advance, to use one’s thoughts and creations—for example, technology or other new modes of production—is not in itself reprehensible. But forgetting the conditions of our existence is. Let’s not become *miserable*, in Majid Rahnema’s sense of the word. Let’s not lose our inner wealth, our social bounty of presence, attention, love, respect, dignity, empathy, conscience, limits. Let’s not leave anyone standing by the side of the road as modernity charges onward.

This health challenge is a cultural challenge as well. Understanding and accepting it constitutes a first step toward solving it.

● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP, with its approach geared toward the sensitive part of the relationship, meets the objectives of Cultural Health.



# Framework for ECA-LEP

**B**



## 1. Live Performance

Live performance has no goal other than nourishing children and their parents with an imaginary, symbolic, poetic world, in a pleasant environment that stimulates interest. This guarantees neither profit nor efficiency, implicitly questioning our society's reflex to justify projects by quantifying them. Thus, the little one reminds us of our human condition and our primal needs, which do not fit into spreadsheets or checklists. Which brings to mind the words of Patrick Viveret: "Wealth is what counts, not what's countable."

In our allotted time and conditions, our commission could not meet with representatives of all art forms, but we believe our process is relevant to art as a whole. The live art-inspired awakening that we call for can happen through all types of creative process. Across artistic domains, we see that art for little ones is not quantifiably useful, but rather responds to the small human's essential needs on their path to equilibrium. Creators from each discipline underlined that we must consider the little one as a unique individual who should be addressed as such—a person capable of taking in and interacting. A quality partner in dialogue.

Artists' expressions, across various fields of expertise, sweep up children, captivate them, tell them stories. Dancers' movements, singers' voices, musicians' interpretations, visual arts—all represent openness, sharing, dialogue. Here we find the richness of artistic and cultural awakening, in the exchange of experiences and gifts that help the child flourish. This is an objective without an object, *a philosophy of intention without intention*. At the moment when a performance is conceived, one doesn't know exactly what each person will experience during this moment of poetic sharing through dance, music, storytelling, theater, games, circus, opera, or exposure to nature. What we do know is that the child will feel something in their body, a nourishing experience that will wholly

belong to them. This experience is the stuff of faces, of gazes, of babbling, of bodies in motion, and we will never be able to put our finger on what exactly happens in the child spectator's inner self. Who cares! We know one thing for certain: This essential cultural nutrition satiates their appetite to "be."

As we saw in the prior section, childhood researchers and clinicians have demonstrated how periods of awakening affect the child's growth and behavior. On the other side, artists, parents, and professionals describe what they observe during these moments: a baby's deep focus, the intensity of its sensory attention, the communion of a shared moment, the calm and appeasement brought by this "freedom to be." In a child's life, rare are the moments of true liberty, free from obligation, with no expectation of results—moments that simply show that the child is engaged in their humanizing process, that they already count as *present*, as beings of language and of culture, before knowing how to talk.

As far as the parent-child connection goes, let's recall that these shared moments encourage the attunement so important to Daniel Stern. Attunement is a harmonious encounter supported by the experiences of each participant, a "being-together" that surrounds and holds the baby. Words whispered in the child's ear—or the silence of bodies looking in the same direction—are among the signs of a collective readiness to "share" during a performance, and above all to learn to listen to oneself, to recognize oneself. This cultural, aesthetic invitation touches the child and opens them to the world they are surrounded by; it awakens the child's longing to connect with others.

Myriam David<sup>83</sup> uses an eloquent image: For her, the benevolent life experiences offered to the child are like coins we put in a piggy bank, a little "nest egg" to deal with

---

83 Myriam David is a psychoanalyst, pediatrician and psychiatrist specialized in mother-baby interactions.

future events. This should encourage us to deposit coins at every opportunity so that young children don't find themselves penniless on their path to development.

Once again, clinicians agree with researchers. Indeed, Myriam David's words remind us of psychoanalysts' recommendations—or, more recently, the lesson drawn from discoveries about cerebral plasticity: how crucial it is to care for one's environment. Winnicott, who has proven to be a guide for everyone, reminded us that we must care for the little one's environment so that they can take in and open to the world. A strong argument for ECA-LEP.

● Argument for ECA-LEP

ECA-LEP boosts affect attunement, which is a harmonious exchange between child and parents. The body of shared feelings creates a deep rapport with sensitivity, immersing the baby, making it feel secure, nourishing its bonds and giving them substance.

## 2. Live Performance: Practical Framework

Every institution that wants to create a performance for very young children and their parents should be aware of its place within a process. Over the course of our interviews, we have identified four sections, or phases, that are interdependent. We then identified several elements that guarantee the success of a performance for young children (0-3 years) and their parents/caretakers, so as to create a frame of reference for hosting such spectacles.

Before we begin, we would like to say, loud and clear, that performances for young children are not of a lower caliber—that they should be conceived of with care, aiming for the highest artistic quality. From writing to technique, everything should be done with the greatest respect for the young spectators. For a little one, discovering a moment of theater, dance, music, clowning, circus, or puppetry is a powerful emotional experience that should never be discounted.

### 2.1 The Four Phases of Live Performance<sup>84</sup>

#### Creation

This is the moment of thought, of writing, of shaping. It's a process, a phase that advances step by step. Creation can happen in a shape-shifting language, at the meeting point between knowledge and practical application—for example, a creation mixing philosophy, visual art, and science. Sometimes, during various stages of the creative process, artists choose to spend immersive moments exchanging with children, their parents, and professionals about the work.

#### Preparation

Well in advance, the organizer, artists, hosts, and technical crew—with audience input—share and discuss the best ways to welcome the public in a manner suited to the performance. In the case of an EAJE (a cooperative early childcare center), it is useful to meet with the childhood professionals there to introduce them to the performance and adapt it to the host location and schedule. This is also a good time to talk about practical aspects: hours, location, acoustics, capacity, darkness of the theater, when and how to set up the space, etc.

#### Performance

The performance happens in a time and place imagined and arranged with consideration for the child and their parent or guardian. The duration and physical elements take into account the child's young age.

#### After the Show

We have pinpointed two after-periods: the *immediate*, a time of convivial debriefing that opens up discussion about what was just experienced, and the *long-term*, where we observe enduring effects. We also see different levels of transformation among the adults. All of them report gaining a new perspective on the child, including parents who say they didn't recognize their child during this moment of listening, focus, and receptiveness. And the professionals report feeling reinvigorated by the experience and inspired to create more in their daily interactions with the child.

---

84 Work carried out with: Anne-Laure Rouxel, dancer and choreographer; Isabelle Martin-Bridot, director of Les Hivernales-CDCN; Noëlle Dehousse, choreographer; Marie-Hélène Hurtig, childcare worker and educator; Emmanuelle Dutour, aide at social service agency CAF du Vaucluse; Malgven Gerbes, choreographer, troupe S.H.I.F.T.S.; Ingrid Wolff, choreographer, dancer (Denmark). Thank you to Anne-Laure Rouxel for her many rereadings and contributions that enriched this collective endeavor at drafting a framework.





Schlaf gut, schlüsser mond – Ischungel Wien & Jyasa © Daniel Hehner

## 2.2 The Performance Space

- The space should not be too big, so as to remain cozy. This can be achieved with partitions or hanging curtains, if necessary.
- Lights projected on the floor can shape the space.
- The artists' physical proximity is important.
- Keep in mind the audience of babies/young children: The floor should be cleaned with water, the temperature comfortable, etc.
- Work with the artist or technician to ensure appropriate sound levels.
- Think about the light and darkness in the space.

## 2.3 Artistic Elements

- Artistic quality is central and requires a special effort: The young child is a demanding spectator.
- The artist should be familiar with child development.
- The artist should create a narration that speaks through physical and sensory expression.
- The artist creates a piece that speaks to the way the child listens through perception, senses, emotions, and to their social desire.
- The performance is a shared moment, built around an aesthetic and sensory experience that nourishes the child-parent connection.

- The performance allows the child and parents to experience shared listening and encourages tonic and emotional dialogue.
- The presentation should not last longer than 40 minutes. It can be followed by artistic activities and explorations, for the child and/or their parents, tied to the performance.

## 2.4 Promotion by the Host

Advertising should always be approved by the artistic team. The publicity should mention some important details regarding how this very specific audience will be received:

- Come a little early for welcoming rituals (taking off jackets and sometimes shoes, getting to know the space, the hosts, perhaps the artist...).
- Leave time after the performance to gently reenter normal life.
- Bring the child's cuddly toy/security blanket, in case they are overcome with emotion.

## 2.5 Hosting Parents and/or Guardians and Very Young Children

- Designate someone to welcome guests, because this time is so important.
- Consider the arrangement of the room where the children will wait before the show.
- Have a place for "parking" strollers, a coatrack, etc.
- Anticipate having a diaper-changing area and toilets nearby.



© François Fogel, 2020

## 2.6 How to Welcome Children and Adults into the Performance Space

- Invite children and their parents to sit close to each other.
- Make sure each person is comfortable.
- Each person should be able to see—consider installing tiered seating.
- Children should be able to touch the floor with their feet, if seated.
- Ensure that the lights are not blinding for the children, depending on the type of presentation (forward-facing, theater in the round...).
- If darkness is part of the show, transition gradually.

## 2.7 Right Before the Performance

- Remind the adults that it is normal for a child to react emotionally during the performance: They may laugh, move, cry, or sit in silence.
- Mention that it is no problem to leave quietly and come back, but that, if possible, it is preferable to step aside and remain in the room while helping the child calm down.
- Highlight that it is not helpful to comment on the performance or show the children that there is something to see.
- Ensure parents understand the importance of staying near their child.

## 2.8 During the Performance

- The performance should be a personal, uninhibited experience.
- The spectacle should allow for equality between children and adults.
- The adult should welcome all emotional reactions.
- This is a moment of sensory, emotional, and relational sharing.

## 2.9 After the Performance

- Let the child speak spontaneously.
- Allow the child to remain quiet after the show.
- Welcome questions and reactions from parents.
- Offer a moment of dialogue and conviviality before everyone leaves.

## 3. The Book, a Cultural Symbol

### 3.2 Two Helpful Paths for Children and Books

# 111

#### 3.1 Where it All Began

Let's give credit where credit is due. In 1982, to address the inequalities in cultural access and their repercussions on child development, psychoanalysts Marie Bonnafé, René Diatkine, and Tony Lainé founded ACCES (Cultural Actions Against Exclusion and Segregation) to offer readings of children's books in locations frequented by children and their guardians. The goal is to contribute to a harmonious development of the child's personality, to equalize chances for success and social integration, and to encourage learning of reading and writing through discovery of written language as early as possible.

Using the network of public libraries, the organization's professional readers present in various settings, adapted to the young children's development and their specific needs, and informed by experiences on the ground. Among the main features of this method are individualized reading, out loud, in a small group; the freedom left to the children; the presence of parents; and the careful selection of books from which the children may choose.

The creation of ACCES signaled an awareness of the importance of early encounters with books, which now happen through associations across France. These associations nurture children's development by feeding them with high-quality books, with nursery rhymes, with lullabies that satisfy their taste for images and stories. Thanks to an exhaustive process of observation, organization, and reflection on books and reading for little ones, enormous progress has been made and continues to be made, enriching our cultural heritage in this realm.

While nonprofits have played an extremely important role, their founders having successfully piqued children's interest, we cannot forget the many others who have helped sustain that desire. Among them is Joëlle Turin, professional reader and instructor, who offered our commission her wealth of knowledge by bringing together the mainstays of the movement. Sustained and helped by Sylvie Gueudre, Nathalie Virnot, and Léo Campagne, from the organization Quand Les Livres Relient, she allowed us to work with the whole group to assemble a frame of reference that we will discuss below.

"Reading is more of an art than a scholastic discipline." All of the associations working on reading and literacy, as well as all of the professional readers, would agree with this declaration made by Dominique Rateau while testifying before our commission in July 2018.

As we listened to the specialists, one thing became clear: The role of reader is very unique. Artists in their own right, tireless, committed to making culture speak to little ones, they work hand-in-hand with childhood and family professionals in all domains: social, psychological, medical, educational, carceral, judicial. We find them in PMIs, in RAMs, in libraries, in prison visiting rooms, in building lobbies, in social centers, in CAMSPs (centers for early interventions with children who have sensory, motor or mental challenges)... They describe a multitude of experiences that unite supporting parenthood and awakening the young child, in the spirit of equality, of solidarity, of education for all, of social diversity, and of the fight against all forms of discrimination.

We are currently seeing two fundamentally-different approaches emerge regarding the role of books for children. The first aims to widely distribute physical books through volunteer-based programs across France. The goal is to make the book a part of children's daily life. The second approach focuses on the reading connection as something that "lives and breathes." It is driven by professionals who rely on others' earlier reflections regarding these questions.

Our commission wanted to work with these specialists in order to create a framework. Our jumping-off point was the role of the professional reader, who uses an artistic approach to encourage child-parent interactions and feeds the child's primary need: a humanizing process that lays the groundwork for their psychic growth. The professional reader carries a collective memory; with children and parents, these readers share an essential body of knowledge inherited from their predecessors about the act of reading, the reader's posture, their qualities, the role of books, and how they are chosen.

Informed by experience, every professional reader carries their own framework, which allows them to "wander." The ability to change locations—to go read in a PMI, in a neonatal center, in child protection or social centers, in maternal facilities—requires a solid theoretical basis on what reading means. Only the framework gained

through a shared knowledge can give the professional the inner ease that allows them to succeed in all of these reading venues. Readers carry their frameworks deep within.

Each new venue requires readers to meet with and introduce themselves to the hosting team. They explain their role, their approach, making the activity into a collaboration with the professionals who work with children and their families.

As we gathered testimonies from the readers we invited for the working group, we also read studies, theories, observations, and the experiences of many reading initiatives. From there we assembled a list of ideal conditions for reading out loud.

### 3.3 Frame of Reference: Reading with Little Ones and Their Parents<sup>85</sup>

“Reading with babies not only helps bring about language, it helps just as much in constructing the person, and thus is a work of civilization.”  
—Bernard Golse<sup>86</sup>

Reading Together, a Cultural Collaboration  
Reading with a little one means sharing stories with them from our artistic and cultural heritage—in writing and in images. This offers an opportunity to jointly explore different worlds and characters and experience feelings and emotions. These sensations help launch the child toward discovering the world and understanding otherness. Reading with a little one means opening doors together to a shared culture in which everyone can partake, according to personal desire, rhythm, needs, and tastes. Reading with a little one and encountering their uniqueness charts a shared path to new habits. These habits eventually grow routine because we can read everywhere, at any moment. The pleasure of stories thus becomes as simple, essential, and natural as eating, playing, speaking, sleeping, dreaming.

Children, Parents and Books

◎ The Book in the Child’s Life: A Fertile Ground for Growth and Self-Construction  
A welcoming act into human society, that society of “makers-of-sense,” reading is an entry point into culture, language, and storytelling. Shared reading of children’s books is a land of infinite exploration for the child, made of thoughts, words, images, reveries, imagination, and play.

In this space, little ones:

- internally shape their thoughts
- develop their language: discovery and fascination for new words, syntactic complexity, prosody (musicality, rhythms, sounds...), temporal relations, the many levels of language, the wealth of narrative forms
- enrich and reinforce their reading and knowledge of images, as well as their capacity for symbolic representation (to the child, images say as much as words do)
- perceive and experience, through the repetitions and rhythms inherent to storytelling, the variations in time essential to their growth
- gain the experience of permanence through regular shared readings, on which basis they can build a sense of continuity of being that carries them through newness and surprise

Shared reading with little ones supports, comforts, and facilitates the weaving of bonds with those around them.

◎ Sharing Reading with One’s Child: An Everyday Experience that Keeps on Giving  
The parent is naturally the most honored collaborator in their child’s life. Parent and child, by reading together, share experiences together and individually—artistic, aesthetic, and literary—thanks to the beauty of images, the music of words, the quality of stories. Reading books with one’s children:

- gives an equal role to father and mother, in this way nourishing the parent-child bond and encouraging attunement
- leads to joint attention that brings parents and children closer while allowing them to differentiate themselves, to separate; the book is a liaison between the children and parent
- allows the children, leaned up against their parents, to read for themselves and to interpret
- accentuates discovery of the child by the parent, who is surprised and impressed by the little one’s abilities—and by their own

85 Work carried out with: Joëlle Turin, instructor for professional readers, specialist in reading to young children; Evelyne Resmond-Wenz, ACCES-Armor; Dominique Veaute, Livre-Passerelle; Francesca Ciolfi, (Z) Oiseaux Livres; Isabelle Sagnet, Lis Avec Moi; Nathalie Virnot, ACCES; Olga Baudelot, LIRE (Le Livre Pour L’insertion); Chloé Seguret, LIRE; Sylvie Joufflineau, Lire À Voix Haute Normandie; Corinne Do Nascimento, Lire À Voix Haute Normandie; Patricia Paganini, Grandir Ensemble; Marie-Jo Erotot, Grandir Ensemble; Dominique Rateau, Quand Les Livres Relient; Léo Campagne-Alavoine, Quand Les Livres Relient; Mélissa Rouzier, Croq’ les Mots, Marmot; Mayenne Communauté; Sylvie Gueudre, educator of young children, LAEP Essonne; Jean-Rémi François, director, BDP Ardennes; Valérie Granier, Médiathèque Pierresvives, Conseil Départemental Hérault; Zaïma Hamnache-Gaessler, coordinator of national cooperation, BPI.

86 Bernard Golse, “Lire, lier,” in *Les Tout-Petits, le monde et les albums*, Agence Quand les livres relient/Érès, series “1001BB,” 2017.



- contributes to family storytelling (tales, nursery rhymes, songs, legends...) in a multicultural way, reassuring the parent of their ability to pass on this legacy

Reading together—morning, noon, or bedtime, to relax or wake up, before spending time apart or when reuniting—helps build bridges between home, family life, and the wide world.

Reading with a Little One  
in a Professional Framework:  
Who, What, Where, When and How?

“Let’s give kids access to children’s books and poetic stories in places one wouldn’t expect, and the most serious people will be surprised to see their wonder. This is the most certain path to ensuring that they will understand the world and want to change it.”  
—René Diatkine

#### ④ Being a Reader with Little Ones

Reading with a little one is not so simple. It requires specific aptitudes and abilities that must be learned and cultivated. Shared readings with parent and child require listening, attention, respect, patience, flexibility, consideration for all who are present... These qualities allow space for the processes active within reading. It is important to know a little about early childhood (development of motor skills,

psyche, social skills, and language) in order to trust in the child and their innate abilities. It is also essential to know about the books available for children and to select them for diversity in form, content, style, etc.

Children are full participants in shared reading. The reader is at their side physically and mentally, following their pace, rhythm, and signs (words, gestures, mimicry, expressions, movements) that show they are interpreting and forming hypotheses. Readers’ position is anything but dominant. They respect confidentiality and discretion; they recognize, validate, appreciate, and encourage the child to read, without intruding on the process.

Shared reading exists outside of the desire to teach and cannot be measured. On the other hand, the reader finds some clues about what is happening during the reading by paying careful attention to the child’s choices, behaviors, and actions. This also allows the reader to work on their own movements (joy, frustration, impatience, surprise...), to change and refine their techniques. In order to keep track of what works, it is best to note after each performance what happened (children’s names, ages, books read, attitudes, small or large happenings...). To go further, it is also important to have places to debate, share, and learn (working groups, seminars, workshop days, conferences, etc.).

② A Reading Session with Little Ones Requires Preparation, Consideration, and Construction

One can read absolutely anywhere: in a garden, on a beach, at the market, in a library bus, while hiking... The reader is a worker without a fixed workplace. But certain aspects are important:

- laying the groundwork and taking
- the time to look around the location, presenting the project, explaining one's practices, spreading awareness among/convincing the professionals who are present
- adapting and adjusting one's manner to diverse working environments
- giving oneself long enough timeslots so that the children can get comfortable at their own rhythm in the reading space and within the stories (anticipate sessions of at least one hour)
- modifying the space in order to create a warm, convivial environment with cozy nooks, some games, and carefully selected books that are accessible to everyone

The reading is tailored within the group, always addressed to one child in particular. That child chooses the books, handles them with the adult's help, carries them, "abuses" them, even chews on them. Free in movement and position, the child reads seated, squatting, lying down, feet in the air, standing, walking, while playing... They move and change places to go find another book or game, to privately experience their emotions, to take a bit of space from the others, to come back... When a baby is not yet ready to move about, it helps to pay attention to signs of interest in order to be able to respond to them. Sometimes, when parents and children read together, they must accept that one or the other does not want to participate.

③ Read, Yes—But Not Just Anything!

The different characteristics of a children's book influence the quality of the shared reading and the caliber of the message that gets communicated, from which the child will draw what they need or want.

Due to the profusion of new books, it is essential to read and get to know the books of yesterday and of today, in order to offer children the diversity and richness they need. This means taking the time for careful selection. Illustrations, text, narration, layout, value of the story, and coherence of storytelling are all equally important to consider.

One should choose books that:

- offer variety in illustration techniques, formats, themes introduced, and

literary forms (poetry for children, nursery rhymes, list-based stories, children's tales, etc.)

- have metaphorical relevance (as opposed to tasteless stories about daily life)
- offer several readings and meanings—"open" stories that cannot be reduced to just one theme, moral or demonstration
- prioritize speaking directly to the child rather than an artificial discourse on children and childhood
- evoke laughter, fear or tears—albums that respond to the young child's needs to experience and share strong emotions and sensations

From one session to the next, the child should find both a certain consistency in the selection of books and moments of surprise and discovery of new titles.

3.4 At First, there is Nothing to "Learn"—Only to Receive and Experience

"When my three children started to read, to truly read, folded into an armchair, legs dangling over the armrests, or engrossed by a key passage, frozen mid-gesture as they reached for a sweet, I felt that they finally had a tool that would protect them from life's hazards for longer than their parents could."

—Marc-Alain Ouaknin

Before children can take books and "read to themselves," cradles and nursery rhymes make up a large part of the parent-child bond. These universal little poetic texts accompany physical movements, breaths, murmurs, a pleasure of listening and telling. A book that is read brings the baby mental, psychological, emotional, and sensory pleasure that, like good milk, nourishes and pacifies them. The pleasure of learning to read will come later, once the child has stored up, day after of day, the joy of experiencing these texts that are just for them.

Patrick Ben Soussan said that "there is no such thing as an illiterate child"; thus, reading books to very young children, to babies, does not help combat illiteracy. The National Agency for Combatting Illiteracy (Agence nationale de lutte contre l'illettrisme) defines illiteracy as a situation where "people who, even after having had five years of schooling in French, cannot manage, alone and with only written resources, to read a written text about situations in daily life, and/or cannot effectively convey a message through writing." Reading books to young children is an act of welcoming, of bringing the child into our storytelling species.

### Recommendation n° 17

The commission recommends including continuing education in the curriculum of professional readers in order to keep thinking fresh about approaches to children.

### Recommendation n° 18

The commission recommends preserving all writings produced by book-centered associations digitizing them, so as to create a widely-accessible library.

### Recommendation n° 19

The commission recommends creating a university degree centered on small children and literature.

## 3.5 The “Premières Pages” Program<sup>87</sup>

Since 1987, the departments of Val-de-Marne and Seine-Saint-Denis, as well as the city of Grenoble and the departmental library in the department of Ardèche, have been at the forefront of projects promoting books in early childhood. Among their programs, they distributed picture books that would later be called “baby books.” Hérault and Puy-de-Dôme were also among the first departments to implement serious local projects focused on cultural awakening for young children. In 1988, the region of Bourgogne hosted the initial “Baby Readers” fair, where the first memorandum of understanding on cultural awakening was signed that took into account the importance of books and stories in the lives of children and families.

In 2009, the Ministry of Culture created the national “Premières Pages” program (“First Pages”) promoting books for little ones. This program’s goal is to make families—particularly the most vulnerable and farthest removed from books—aware of the importance of reading, starting at birth. It aims specifically to:

- reduce inequalities in access to books and writing
- expose babies and very young children to books
- encourage collaboration between those who work with books and those who work with young children
- valorize children’s literature

For its first four years, the program involved giving each newborn’s family an original children’s book, a guide for parents, and reading advice. This resonated with

the mission of the National Office for Family Allocations (CNAF), which decided to participate in the experimental phase. The trial took place in seven departments (Ain, Lot, Puy-de-Dôme, Pyrénées-Orientales, Réunion, Savoie, and Seine-et-Marne) and reached around 60,000 newborns per year.

After an evaluation carried out in 2012, the General Committee on Media and Cultural Industries, Books and Reading Division (DGMIC-Service du livre et de la lecture) suggested reorganizing the program with an emphasis on increasing local participation. In this second “life” of Premières Pages, the operation expanded to new departments and municipalities, with a goal of reaching 200,000 newborns in 2015. A wider range of projects has also been carried out by local administrations in order to provide services that meet each area’s needs.

Since then, we have seen this model illustrated in the national policy of artistic and cultural education (EAC). An early relationship with books and with all forms of reading, before or during preschool, does encourage access to arts and culture. The program benefits from many national partnerships with advocates for books and early childhood: the organizations ACCES, Enfance et Musique, and Quand Les Livres Relient; the National Union of Family Associations (Union nationale des associations familiales); the National Center for Youth Literature (Centre national de la littérature pour la jeunesse), and the youth division of the National Publishing Union (Syndicat national de l’édition).

To participate in Premières Pages, any local government or grouping of governments can submit a proposal to the Ministry of Culture. These projects bring together early childhood professionals with those from the world of books in order to focus on exposing kids between birth and three years old, and their families, to reading—if possible, through regularly-held events. The quality of each application is judged in terms of the type of action, which partners it collaborates with, and the type of planned assessments, keeping in mind that reading and book distribution should play a central role in the program. Priority is given to projects that particularly promote exposure to arts and culture. The French government takes care of certifying programs, coordinating nationally, and funding, if necessary.

In 2018, the program was active in 41 regions, including 30 departments. It has reached almost all parts of mainland

<sup>87</sup> “Petit guide de voyage au pays des histoires,” Ministry of Culture. See Annex 13 in original report.

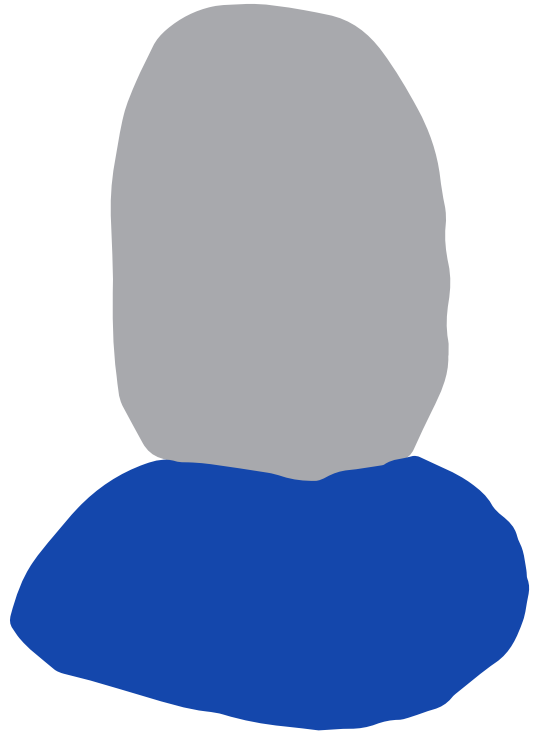
France (except Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, where the Yonne was expected to apply in 2019, and Brittany), as well as the overseas department of Réunion. The number of children involved is hard to calculate because of the wide diversity of initiatives. In 2019, 49 regions and 37 departments are expected to participate in Premières Pages.

Giving books at birth is only one action among many. A number of departmental libraries work on training childminders and organize combined book/early childhood trainings in different ways, from annual workshop days to supporting rural communities' projects. Some put on fairs or children's book festivals that bring in selected authors and illustrators. This is often the case in Public Establishments for Intermunicipal Cooperation (EPCIs), which include the Grand Angoulême; the Pays de Haute-Mayenne region with the Croq' les Mots, Marmot program; Tinquieux; Nancy; and more. Still others create resources (reading lists, informational brochures for parents, decorative height charts created in Gers, reading advice included in children's health record booklets in Ain, etc.).

Aside from certification and subsidies (€4,000-15,000 per territory), the Ministry of Culture gives projects visibility, particularly through its booth at the Montreuil youth book and journalism fair, by way of workshop days, and via its website, [■■■premierespages.fr](http://www.premierespages.fr). The ministry also works to improve the exchange of best practices by connecting certified regions and organizing national and regional seminars.

Regarding baby books, 16 out of 41 areas (mostly departments) currently distribute books to children and parents. This is organized in a variety of ways. Here is a small overview of the spectrum:

- Diversity in the choice of books: creation contests (less and less common, due to the cost, but relevant for certain projects, including those focused on Franco-Creole books in Réunion; also found in Val-de Marne and in Vendée), artist residencies (only in Grenoble), self-publishing (in rare cases). Most often, books are chosen from existing catalogues.
- Diversity in how books are chosen: most of the time, a panel of professionals from the book world (libraries, bookstores, regional book organizations), from the world of childcare, and other selected representatives, sometimes in coordination with the DRAC (regional cultural affairs committee). More and more often, decisions are voted on by



parents (Hautes-Pyrénées, Creuse) or by children (in Ain, the decision is made based on childcare assistants' observations of little ones' reactions to the reading—which also helps improve the professionals' observational capacities).

- Diversity of languages: Franco-Creole in Réunion, a book each in Catalan and French for babies in the Pyrénées-Orientales.
- Diversity in modes of distribution: books in gift bags handed out by the maternity ward (Hérault), sent when the baby turns six months old (to avoid those babies who die unexpectedly), on the occasion of a specific holiday during the year (Réunion, Agglo Paris-Vallée de la Marne in Seine-et-Marne, Tinquieux).
- Diversity in the types of publicity for parents, depending on the partnerships created by libraries: at the least, a letter sent in partnership with the PMI; several areas work with the CAF (in Lot, an initial certified letter with two further attempts via SMS; as the departmental head of Premières Pages says, "People always open letters from the CAF...") or place messages in children's health booklets; other more traditional communication tools are used as well (department newsletter; website of a partner group; posters in libraries, CAFs and PMIs; regional newspapers; etc.).



- Diversity in settings for distributing the baby book: at small live performances in the area, at a big festival with the author present, at parent-child workshops, etc.

These types of mediation are clearly much simpler to execute when parents retrieve the book from a fixed location. In many departments, PMIs and libraries are invited to offer this option. The department of Somme has an interesting approach: The baby book is distributed by the nurse during the post-natal visit. The professionals can thus directly show the book to the parent and child, and discuss the benefits of books and reading. In addition, arriving with a “gift” elicits a warmer welcome from families.

Finally, several territories publicize spaces for small children while offering the baby book. Vendée distributes them with a brochure about the network of departmental libraries that participate in Premières Pages.

Let’s look at the diversity in modes of distribution: Besides automatically sending books to all parents, which is often costly and ineffective at mediating the experience, there is the option of pickup in fixed locations (often CAFs, libraries, and PMIs). The rate of pickups is generally low (around 25%) when projects are launched, but it gradually increases over time and with increased awareness about the program (today 50% of families are reached in Lot and Savoie). By collaborating with the CAF, Lot has been able to demonstrate that parents’ average salary no longer determines whether they will come to pick up the books.

The project seems ideal in terms of accompaniment, but Mr. Colin Sidre, who heads the Books and Reading Division, notes its limits: It does not reach the whole department (only 60% of newborns), and moreover, because of the chain of intermediaries, libraries struggle to evaluate the program and the quality of service provided.

In a general sense, it is difficult to propose a universal framework for Premières Pages initiatives. This is what the program tried to do in its earlier incarnation, from 2009 to 2013, in cooperation with the CNAF: a nationally-chosen baby book, distributed through the CAFs and libraries in three (and later seven) partnering departments, all of which remain certified today. Starting in 2014, the regionalization of projects allowed more areas to take ownership, each according to its means, existing partnerships, etc. This also allowed departmental and

intermunicipal libraries to reach out to those who are farthest-removed from libraries and the practice of reading.

Today, the program tries to encourage idea-sharing between programs to advance the project overall, which works well enough in most certified departments. The DGMIC and the DRACs are in any case very attached to local governments’ independence in creating their programs. This is often the best driving force for developing initiatives around books and childhood (even though the first version of Premières Pages, more constrained because it focused exclusively on the baby books, struggled to get off the ground).

All of this variety makes it very difficult to calculate the cost of projects on a per-child basis. Each project reaches only some children, and moreover, the relationship evolves over time (cost per child decreases as more are reached). Overall, Premières Pages costs around €1.50 per birth, and €0.50 per child between birth and three years old.

A Premières Pages certification is often the occasion for an area to consolidate its cultural policy on early childhood, sometimes synthesizing several initiatives already in place. It is also a moment for regrouping existing political guidance, reinforcing and formalizing partnerships, and finally making initiatives permanent (inclusion in the departmental programs for public reading or for family services, “Reading Region” [“Territoire lecture”] contracts, etc.).

#### 📌 Recommendation n°20

The commission recommends continuing development of the “Premières Pages” (First Pages) program, particularly in regions where it is limited or nonexistent.

#### 📌 Recommendation n°21

The commission recommends facilitating exchanges of best practices through national and regional seminars.

#### 📌 Recommendation n°22

The commission recommends enlisting the CNAF (National Office for Family Allocations) to incite its local branches to participate more in deploying the “Premières Pages” program and to work on accompanying parenthood through relevant regional agencies.

## 4. Play: An Art of Growing Up

### 4.1 Development and Play

*Playful maturity* combines the ideas of development and play. Fooling around is an “art of growing up,”<sup>88</sup> part of the cultural movements the humanizing process calls for. By stimulating the child’s awakening, play supports self-discovery, construction, recognition of others, and peaceful apprehension of their environment.

From birth, the baby’s games consist of repeated sensory, affective, emotional, cognitive, motor, linguistic, and rhythmic experiences that encourage its understanding of the outside world while constructing its inner one. A baby who plays is an agent in its process of growth, in its own maturity. This step is visible but subtle, one game always hiding another.

Let’s not confuse the child who throws a toy with the one who drops it. An object that slips through the fingers does not indicate the same intention as one that’s thrown. By intentionally throwing an object, a baby at least six months old is showing us clues about its mental development. It is not only trying to develop motor skills; it is attempting to emotionally process the physical separation from its parent. By throwing the object, the child chooses to separate itself from the item so the adult will intervene and bring it back. Once the adult picks up the object and returns it to the child, they restart the experiment of “thrown-retrieved.” At first very serious while they await the thrown-retrieved object, they relax after several throws and start to laugh at the game.

This well-loved game is highly symbolic. The child thus repeats an activity that, at the beginning, caused displeasure; they will transform that feeling, within the relationship, by experiencing the object’s return. All this, to find pleasure—the pleasure of rediscovering the parent who had wandered away. The game stimulates growth because it reinforces the idea that distance does not mean loss. It allows the child to grow, to become more independent, and to later accept playing away from the adult.

A short way down the road, the child will recreate the exercise, identical to the original but this time played alone. They will throw an object, then go pick it up, pretending to have lost it. The game seems insignificant—but how wonderful when the child can handle

knowing that an object is distant but not lost! They will remember this later when their parent leaves the room. First a deep fear of loss will well up, but then they will recall the earlier experiment with distance. Playing to grow their mind: This is the true art of the game. It’s an invisible but permanent step that nourishes the little ones’ relational equilibrium.

By the same token, when one sees a two-year-old grab a little red car from their buddy, even though they have a car of their own available, don’t call them “mean.” Seeing a peer laughing while holding a little red car, the child wants to hold not only the car, but its accompanying laugh. The blue car that you offer instead does not have the same qualities as the friend’s red one: It does not laugh. At two years old, *being* and *having* are equivalent. Accumulating items in an attempt to feel well is a playful experience of very early childhood that should fade quickly, making room for a sense of wellbeing independent of any possessions.

Games are thus an ally of our little human being in the making. While play occupies a role during the first six years of life that promotes kids’ maturity, with time it will facilitate older children’s ability to exchange with peers, to produce, imagine, and construct within collaboration. Interactions with others teach, through play, how to lose without losing face, how to balance one’s self-esteem to become a “good sport,” meaning a player who enjoys being together—and the accompanying self-discovery. The transitional space that play creates, a space-time for self-fulfillment and testing limits, enables useful experiences. Play is an awakening and an education in citizenship, and it holds a rightful place among our cultural concerns, on an equal plane with what art offers.

One more thing: Free time for play is also time for self-construction. Young children’s acquisitions stem from lived experience, and thus from their own initiative.<sup>89</sup> This self-motivated, free experimentation helps little kids grow, and their learning will be able to lean on these lessons. We should keep in mind that children who play are taking in the world, learning about themselves, assuming their roles in relationships that open them to otherness and lead them to live in harmony with others.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

Play is a cultural and universal movement crucial to early acquisitions that open the child to the world, as called for by ECA-LEP.

88 Sophie Marinopoulos, “L’art de grandir,” unpublished conference, 2017.

89 Sophie Marinopoulos, *Jouer pour grandir*, Yapaka, 2013.



© CLAVIN - Issy-les-Moulineaux

#### 4.2 Game Libraries: Toward a Policy of Popular Education

In light of its important work on the ground and the value of its approach, we wanted to yield the floor to the Association des ludothèques françaises, a national organization that unites, represents, and supports game libraries in France.<sup>90</sup> The organization embraces a mission of popular education that it describes as follows: ① to allow an education complementary to that found in traditional or institutional settings; ② to encourage an education that allows each person to become aware of their strengths and unique aspects; ③ to facilitate access to different forms of culture (fun, scientific, technical, artistic), whatever their supposed value in societal, symbolic or institutional hierarchies; ④ to accompany individuals' emancipation by developing agency that allows each person to assume their role as a citizen and participate in transforming society.

In its 2015 policy document, the Association des ludothèques françaises states:

The mission of game libraries is to provide access to games, to accompany

their play, and to spread the culture of play. Playing implies freedom to decide, without cost, in a fictional, rules-based and uncertain scenario. By “freedom,” we mean an action that relies on the decisions of the players, their choice to play, their choices within the game; by “without cost,” we mean an action without expected results, where one plays for fun; by “fictional,” we mean an action in the second degree, outside of reality; by “rules-based,” we mean an action that unfolds according to preexisting rules, or ones that are created during the game; by “uncertain,” we mean an action whose outcome cannot be predicted. We believe that the acts of playing, observing, or accompanying a game provoke a physical and mental activation that can elicit pleasure or personal evolution, reinforce learned lessons, or allow us to experience or liberate emotions in the fictional world, thereby facilitating how we handle them in reality... We describe these potential outcomes as “indirect effects.” We contend that game libraries, through their process built around these effects and the freedom of the players, are organizations deeply anchored in popular education.”

The 1,200 game libraries in France do very important work. And yet these cultural resources remain unrecognized, lacking any sort of certification. Only their mission statement structures and organizes

90 Testimony of Mrs. Anne Jacopé. See documents related to the ALF in Annexes 29 and 30 of the original report.

the activities carried out, as the concept continues to evolve. While there may be a job description for game librarians, no common training curriculum exists: One can find a certification for game coordinators and a degree in running and hosting a game library at IUT Bordeaux Montaigne; a degree in sciences, education, and games at Université Paris 13 Nord; and, for a more commercial angle, a program in game careers and the role of game librarian at Université Angers-Cholet.

Game libraries often set aside special times for children under three years of age, providing parents and kids the opportunity to share playful experiences without any expectation of performance or success, simply in order to “spend time together.” We feel that such libraries could benefit from offering the small children “pre-performance” sessions in a playful universe before they attend a presentation.

These spaces are part of a network, along with partners like PMIs, social centers, media libraries (or libraries of media and games), LAEPs, RAMs, nursery schools, and cultural spaces. Some game libraries have a mobile component that allows them to reach a wider audience. This is particularly the case in rural areas, but also in “priority” urban areas. During her testimony to our commission, Mrs. Jacopé underlined the importance of linking game libraries to other centers, because more fertile exchanges take nothing away from each space’s uniqueness.

Game libraries fit perfectly into our recommendations with their free-play approach, “without intention,” which we see as part of ECA-LEP. The values carried in games—of liberty, free access, mental and physical activation, pleasure in being and in making, maturity, emotional discovery, awareness of one’s own abilities and limits, and awakening to consciousness of self and other—are also movements critical to our humanizing process. Recognizing this means affirming that places of constructive play should be encouraged integrated into public cultural policy.

#### 🏞️ Recommendation n°23

The commission recommends bringing game libraries under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture by recognizing them as cultural facilities.

#### 🏞️ Recommendation n°24

The commission recommends recognizing the profession of game librarian and creating an accreditation based on a standardized curriculum.

Given the current ecological context and the daily distress signals we receive from the environment, our commission would be remiss to exclude current work on the importance of kids’ connection with nature. These studies make clear that a child learns by playing in, and with, nature. In this vein, forest schools (born in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, and found widely in Scandinavian countries) are great sources of inspiration. Their pedagogy is based on discovery, autonomy, and play. Children are constantly encouraged to play or to interact with their teachers:

Wandering through the forest to identify edible plants becomes a class in history or ethnobotany; playing with pebbles on a riverbank teaches mathematics; writing in the sand and listening to stories about plants develops native language and imagination and reweaves intergenerational, ethnic, and cultural bonds with those who come to tell stories... These institutions have now validated a philosophy of connections with nature and their benefits.<sup>92</sup>

According to Pascale d’Erm, who evaluated much research on the subject, frequent visits to a forest school help foster equality between genders, levels of education, and socio-professional categories. In just a few months, children build motor skills, physical coordination, autonomy, and self-confidence. Researchers Liz O’Brien and Richard Murray (2005, 2006, 2007) note that their creativity is stimulated—not just in an artistic sense, but in their ability to resourcefully respond to situations and problems. The studies uncovered an enlarged vocabulary, a capacity to innovate and think differently, and even a different relationship with risk.

We would like to linger for a moment on the work of Karen Malone and Paul Tranter, whose experiments since 2003 have demonstrated how children value nature and how it inspires moments of bonding that solidify their inner beings. In Pascale d’Erm’s words:

Children’s construction of identity when in touch with nature is facilitated through relationships with friends. When one asks a child what they’re “looking for” in nature, they most often respond: “My friends!” Researchers speak of

91 “L’appel dans la forêt,” *Le Monde Magazine*, September 2018.

92 Turncliffe, 2008; Tabbus and O’Brien, 2003. Cited by Pascale d’Erm, *Natura, op. cit.*

“interaction with their peers.”<sup>93</sup> Playing outside encourages empathy and self-awareness, erases social hierarchies, and reduces bullying. While those with type-A personalities might rule urban playgrounds, the creative and imaginative kids are lords of the land in wild, natural spaces. The researchers thus conclude that free play in nature is a form of education in citizenship, because it encourages a rotation of power roles and better overall collaboration between children.<sup>94</sup>

Awakening to nature is central to the work of Élise Mareuil, educational director of AGAPI childcare centers, which champion children’s relationship with nature. Mareuil published a book on the subject of awakening workshops.<sup>95</sup> She says that the child’s time in nature can be playful, pleasurable, and a moment of sharing with their parents. A young child who has enjoyed nature will respect it.

While gathering research to better understand how children can connect with nature, Mareuil began her own reflection. She started with fundamentals, pedagogies, and the most recent scientific research. Her project integrated theory and practice in order to make her awakening workshops as concrete as possible. She thus distinguishes pedagogies *of nature*, whose objective is to discover and learn how to look at nature, and pedagogies *through nature*, where nature acts as teacher. For example, the child can discover the colors through elements of nature (leaves, fruit, herbs, etc.). In addition, Mareuil includes in her process the possibility of learning through salvaged objects, a reminder that respect for nature also happens through sustainability.

This approach lies at the heart of AGAPI, which has worked for over ten years to incorporate cooperation, parenthood, creativity, and awakening to nature as fundamental practices of early childhood professionals. The network includes six EAJEs (centers for young children) in Île-de-France—which contains the Paris metropolitan area—and an organization that trains early childhood professionals.

AGAPI’s first institution was opened as a cooperative organization (SCIC) of Île-de-France, and all of the nursery schools in the network operate within the realm of social

and solidarity economy. The SCIC status allows the employees and families to cooperatively own the institution, placing parents at the heart of the system. These cooperative childcare centers also play a role in placing and supporting families in the AVIP program, which guarantees places in daycare for children of single parents while helping the parents find employment or return to work.

The AGAPI centers are “ecological” in the sense that their buildings are constructed with consideration for the environment—as is true of the materials, furniture, etc., that they use—but, above all, because their unique approach is built around discovering nature from the youngest age and spreading awareness of sustainability among adults.

In order to encourage the training of its internal teams and to spread its values throughout the field of early childhood, AGAPI has also created a training organization that works with all early childhood institutions in France and its territories abroad. Its “unique trainings” help early childhood professionals in their work, particularly through reflection on themes such as goodwill, emotional expression, positive communication, accompaniment of parenthood, encouraging family participation in EAJEs, the young child’s creative process, awakening to nature, exposure to ecology for little ones and adults, etc.

#### ● Argument for ECA-LEP

Art and nature are universal. Together they help weave bonds amenable to pacification. ECA-LEP places itself in this union between art and nature.

93 Delalande, 2008; Pelegrini and Kate, 2004; Lindstrand, 2005; O’Brien, 2005; Thomas and Thompson, 2004. Cited *ibid*.

94 Malone and Tranter, 2003, cited *ibid*.

95 Élise Mareuil, *Jouer avec la nature. 70 ateliers d'éveil pour le tout-petit*, Dunod, 2018.

# Imagining a Different World for Our Children

## 1. A Social Expectation

We can attest that every person we interviewed and every text we read reflected a common sentiment: cultural and artistic awakening within the parent-child bond—ECA-LEP—aims to nourish the child’s cultural yearning. It is never interested in exacting performance from children, making them more capable, or cultivating fresh artists by giving them a taste for music, dance, or reading. We are entirely against the race toward excellence that begins at birth and even before, affecting the process of becoming a parent. Artists and childhood professionals jointly denounce the pressure placed on children and appreciate that artistic and cultural awakening creates a space of freedom, of sensory moments that stimulate imagination and thought.

Our commission places itself squarely in this ethic of awakening, rather than in that of learning. ECA-LEP is sustained by time, observation, freedom for the child, and unique and personal rhythms. It does not prescribe any expected individual outcomes or artistic results. By recognizing children as agents in their own right, ECA-LEP supports their yearning to communicate, to understand the world, to interpret it, to make sense of it. Artists nourish parent-child connections through the senses; they help improve the quality of interactions that solidify psychological bonds. ECA-LEP doesn’t expect results; it wants movement.

“He who does not get lost cannot find himself,”<sup>96</sup> said Nietzsche. This adage perfectly summarizes ECA-LEP’s underlying philosophy, the idea of a goal detached from expectation.

## 2. A New Anthropological Foundation

Recognizing that little ones and their parents have a right to culture acknowledges the process of humanization. A baby’s awakening to the sensory and aesthetic world lays the groundwork for transition from acculturation to humanization. By taking steps toward awakening, we recognize that we live in a culture of acceleration, consumerism, and saturation, one that demands a profound transformation if we wish to support our children. The humanizing process is cultural—a culture of bonds that must be preserved. We must truly protect our children’s Cultural Health and ensure that they receive proper cultural nutrition.

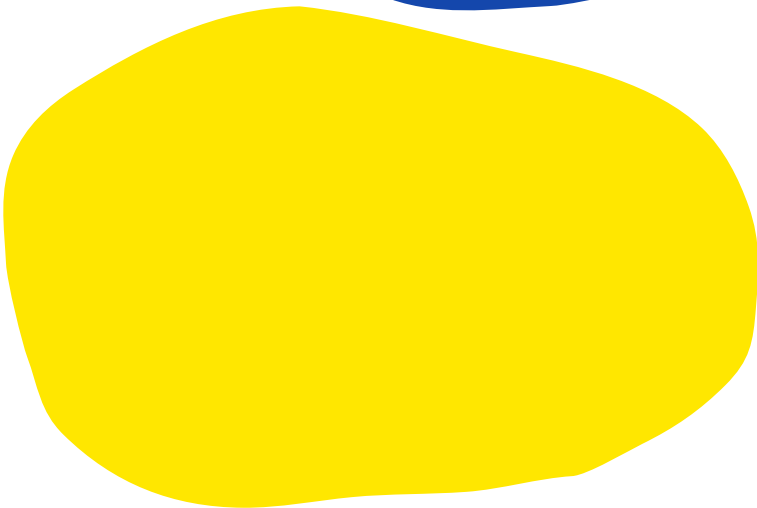
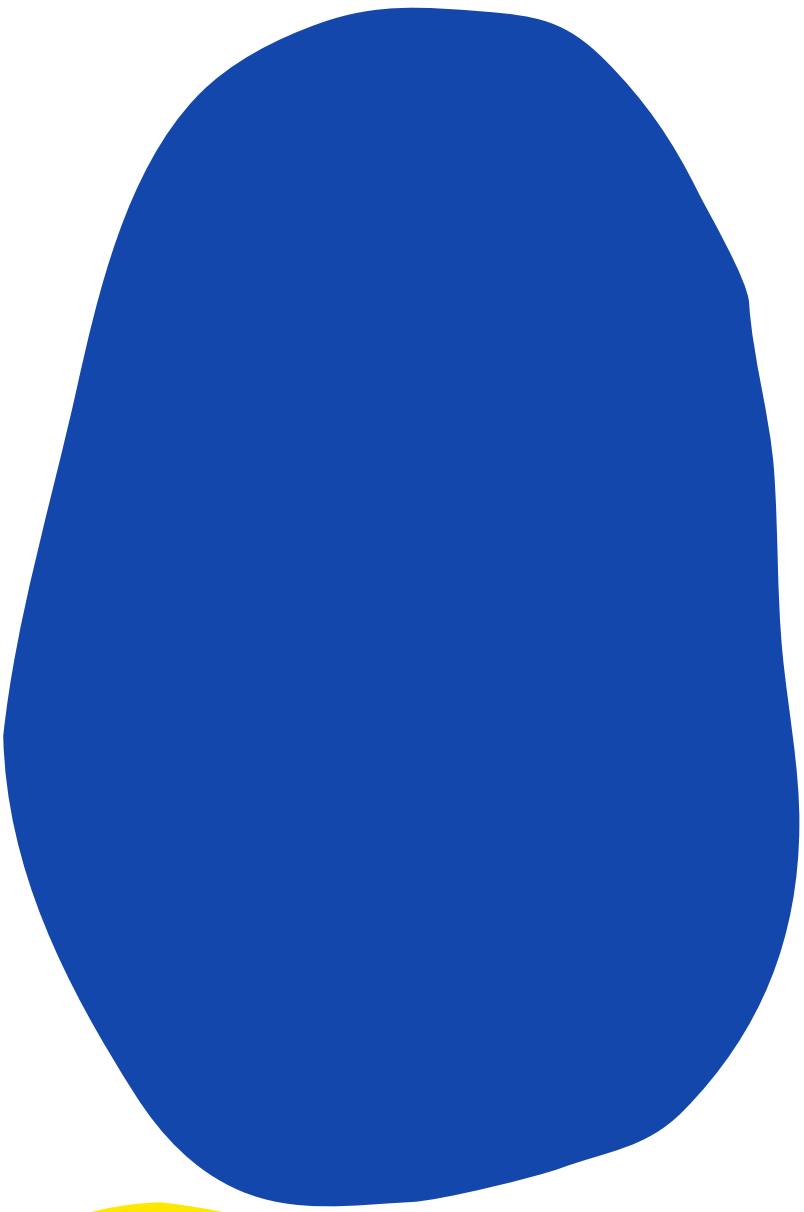
The idea that a baby is a person, as Françoise Dolto taught us, is now widely accepted. Her perspective on the child was much-needed, an inevitable reconceptualization. It was part of a historic societal movement toward individualism, a movement that we have now internalized and that gives individuals the right to flourish and be happy. But our times have pushed individualism to its limit, creating solitude, causing a retreat into identity groups and a hunger to belong, so as to fight the fragmentation of our society and of family. Today, we need to make an epistemological leap, to assert that “living means living together,” and to focus on connections—in politics generally, and specifically in cultural policy for childhood and family. Family and childhood policy cannot exist without a cultural one. So, we must break down the walls between ministries to reflect the interdependence that defines our humanity.

At this moment of historic change, we maintain that our children have a right to more than just the social inclusion that democratic societies promise: They deserve cultural awakening. We need to move beyond

the question of emancipation and step away from individualistic concerns, to approach a post-individualism that sees the Subject as a being-in-progress—through the construction of self, the recognition of others, and the connections to its environment. We advocate for an anthropological foundation built on the idea that all children, whatever their birthplace, their familial or social milieu, should have access to cultural and artistic awakening. This is a multicultural and economically-diverse approach.

Because the question of awakening is universal, it should be found in the cardinal texts of human rights. At present, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the documents of the WHO, and all major international texts about childhood discuss education—but they never mention awakening.







Basics of  
a Public Policy  
Blueprint  
Promoting  
ECA-LEP

C

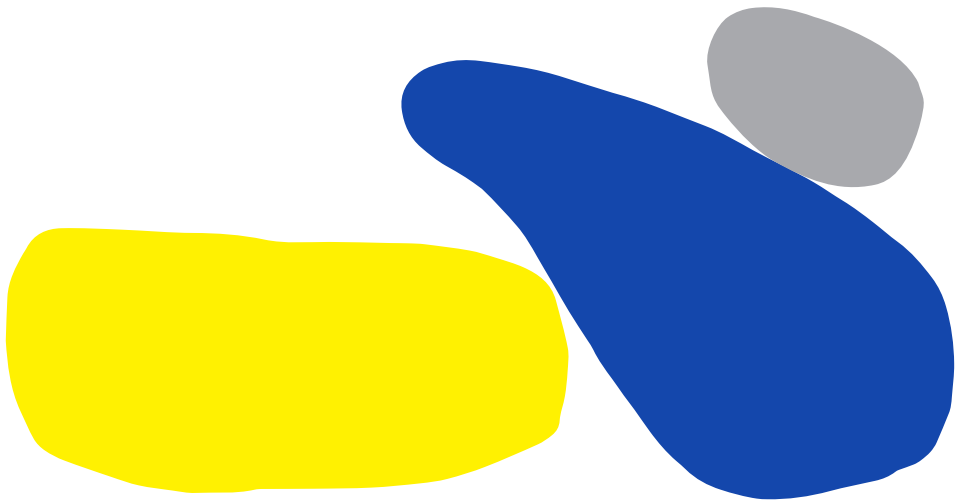


# What Should Be Included in a Public Policy Blueprint Promoting ECA-LEP?

A glance at the initiatives we came across during this project gives us reason for hope. We see the dynamism our country can offer and the widespread desire to respond to the needs of little ones and their parents.

But, in parallel to this Tour de France in search of concrete initiatives, the many testimonies we heard, reports we read, and on-the-ground encounters (with childhood professionals, artists, troupes and institutions) made clear the numerous difficulties confronting those who work on ECA-LEP—constraints that we highlighted and that allowed us to clarify what is essential to carrying out a lasting public policy benefitting ECA-LEP:

- Recognize the baby as a cultural being who needs a cultural welcome—from which it follows that culture is not superfluous for little ones.
- Acknowledge ECA-LEP's support of parenthood by seeing parents as the child's first interlocutors and cultural mediators.
- Support childhood professionals, who work with families, in their roles by including ECA-LEP in their training curricula.
- Keep in mind those professionals such as child and family protection specialists (TISF), who enter family spaces and can thus bring ECA-LEP initiative home to parents.
- Recognize pluriculture as a bearer of Cultural Health that ties together health and awakening.
- Support artists and their creations, which nourish the child in its movement of humanization. These are critical partners for ECA-LEP.
- Recognize cultural mediation as a tool of ECA-LEP.
- Give cultural associations the financing to continue functioning and carry out long-term initiatives.
- Train elected officials so they can include culture meaningfully in regional initiatives benefitting ECA-LEP.
- Stop trying to create innovative initiatives; instead, come up with lasting ECA-LEP interventions from a public health perspective.
- Set aside funding for ECA-LEP, which is recognized as central to building quality human connections.
- Create a map of ECA-LEP so as to better balance its availability.



## 1. Culture for Little Ones is Anything but Superfluous: Recognizing Cultural Health, Recognizing the Baby as a Cultural Being

“Isn’t that a bit superfluous?” Artists often hear this question while putting together their performances for babies. “There are surely more important things to do,” childhood professionals are told when they discuss their plans to bring art into their daycares. Many institutions are complicit: cultural, childhood, and social. All have at some point evinced skepticism about cultural projects for babies and their parents. They cast doubt on the “usefulness” of artistic and cultural initiatives for little kids.

This has been observed across France, which shows that people do not associate awakening with health, nor with the child’s primary needs. They see it as a bonus, a luxury, even in the life of a child, of a family, of a daycare, a social space, a RAM. Our society’s cultural life is organized without regard for a significant sector of citizens: very young children and their parents.

Museums do look for ways to welcome families, and regions work hard all year on festivals for younger children, but the question of culture in daily life remains absent from current policy platforms. We need to fix this and reexamine what we take for granted, to change the paradigms for our rapport with culture. Children are our guides in this question; their basic needs are the foundations of our world, of our societies. Modernity may keep on attempting “always more,” “always faster,” but we should counter with the radical idea that our humanity has its limits.

Our changing society, more than ever, needs its artists—the people who give us new reference points while preserving our humanity in this current phase of emancipation. We should listen to the political and poetic ambition borne in their projects for our children. Creating for children means hearing their needs, responding to their yearning and their desire to relate. Considering them helps us care for the continuum of humanity that starts while awaiting the child and continues through adulthood. DRACs (regional cultural affairs committees) also call for care when they note that “to give meaning to artistic and cultural education, one must first include awakening in cultural policy platforms.”<sup>97</sup> I would add: “...and take into account health as it connects to our human condition, our culture of connections.”

Many years ago, witnessing the birth of a healthy baby who then let itself die psychologically opened my eyes to the vulnerable side of our humanity. We’re vulnerable not just because of the dependence of our neotenic condition, but above all because we need to somehow ignite a desire to exist in the world. This complex reflection pulls us toward an irrational part of our being, as we summarized earlier: “To be born alive is one thing; the desire to live is another question entirely.” This is a call for recognizing little ones and their fundamental needs, which should be included in Cultural Health policy.

So, there’s nothing superfluous about an idea that seeks to culturally nourish the very young child, that takes the time to accompany the child’s connection with their parents, that approaches the relationship

## 2. Parents: What Would We Do Without Them?

by way of the senses, aesthetics, music, movement, words, and reading, live performance in general—whether theater, circus, marionettes, visual arts... Nothing revolutionary, we should say, about acknowledging the baby as a Subject with rights, a cultural being whose health relies on our capacity to awaken it and give meaning to its life. *Sense through the senses* is a central concept often studied by psychoanalysts, who constantly remind us that thought is physical and the body is thought.

Some pedagogical approaches fit directly into Cultural Health. Among the most famous is that of Pikler Lóczy. Emmi Pikler created the Lóczy institute, named after the Budapest street it calls home. The institute champions respect for the child's rhythm and freedom of movement to help along their entrée into the culture of words—an approach founded on the awakening of free movement that gives birth to thought.

Artists and childhood professionals call with one voice for the little one's cultural and artistic awakening. This awakening approaches children just as Emmi Pikler did: with respect for their actions, their connection to surroundings, their ability to digest sensory and aesthetic nutrition. We should have this *confident mindset* toward little ones and their parents, which should seep into the relationships of anyone who does anything regarding babies. The members of the Nature<sup>98</sup> working group, whose testimony we heard on two occasions, inspired us with their ability to think and act together; the group often used the word “confidence”<sup>99</sup> to respond to my question: “What makes work with children possible?”

“When the umbilical cord closes, the mouth opens,”<sup>100</sup> wrote Bernard This in the 1970s, offering a wondrous image of our culture: the child preparing to be a speaking being.

### Recommendation n°25

The commission recommends constructing a cultural policy blueprint for promoting ECA-LEP by changing how we perceive our rapport with culture. Through children, we see the importance of Cultural Health, which calls for including awakening in our health programs.

An adult who becomes a parent is forever transformed. Parents' words, gathered in public settings, media, scientific studies, and our own consultations, echo a common desire to offer their best to their children. Every day they try harder to be “good parents,” causing a persistent feeling of tension. “Do it well and do it fast” echoes throughout their lives as modern parents.

The website Familylab.fr describes parental “challenges” with a metaphor:

“Becoming a parent is a little like being tossed in the middle of a pool without knowing the slightest thing about swimming. No surprise, then, that we take a joyful breath when we manage to keep our head above water! Nothing odd, either, about regularly gulping water or touching bottom, before rising once again to the surface.”

Our public policies reflect a certain awareness of this “dive into parenthood,” with its consequences and complications; they have developed some methodologies for what we now call *support for parenthood*. This approach draws attention to the structural development of parenthood (see “Filiation: Lines of Descent”), as well as to development in our current context, the changes we are experiencing and their repercussions for families.

The French government's desire to help families is evident in the National Strategy for Supporting Parenthood 2018-2022 (Stratégie nationale de soutien à la parentalité) recently published by the Ministry of Solidarity and Health. This methodology, involving many participants, is designed as a critical tool for holistic, widespread preventative health across many fields. Representatives from national government agencies, local governments, professionals in the family sector, and the nonprofit world were asked to form a strategy around eight major pillars, on the basis of parents' stated concerns.

Our commission believes that this new plan should be expanded to include the overlooked—but central—section on ECA-LEP, vehicle of preventative health and, above all, integrator of health and culture through acknowledgment of our human condition. Societies—and especially parents—of the 21<sup>st</sup> century expect a strong, ambitious commitment from these policies that

98 Brought together by Vincent Vergone, sculptor.

99 First used by Maya Gratiot.

100 Bernard This, *Naitre*, Aubier-Montaigne, 1972.

considers the realities and cultural aspects of today's world. "We won't change the world if we don't transform imaginations."<sup>101</sup>

Parents expect the government to be present for them. The mothers and fathers I meet every day need involvement, words, shared moments, fellowship with peers. Underlying many demands is citizens' cry for their beings to be recognized, for their dignity and self-esteem—that is, the "health" of their beings—to be protected. All of these parents, anxious, struggling through often-tense social, familial, conjugal relationships and friendships, feel a deep need to be heard.

So, support should be offered more broadly than just in "priority" areas—everyone is asking for help. Creating places accessible to anybody, without stigmatizing one neighborhood or another, has for decades been one of my professional aspirations. If we want social diversity and equality, we should lead by example, uniting parents in a space dedicated to them. The "family resource spaces"<sup>102</sup> project, set to launch in 2019 under the aegis of Les Pâtes au Beurre, aims to respond to this crucial need for social diversity.

In 2009, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett put forward a simple thesis in *The Spirit Level*, which they summarized in their 2019 sequel: "[P]eople in societies with bigger income gaps between rich and poor are much more likely to suffer from a wide range of health and social problems than those living in more equal societies." The proofs they present make clear that inequality provokes major psychological consequences, and that many of these problems result from heightened social stress. So, our western societies, scarred by widespread social inequality, should not be surprised that imbalance lies at the root of their poorer overall health.

Stress affects everyone:

"One of our more surprising findings was that *inequality affects the vast majority of the population*, not just a poor minority. [...] It is because inequality affects most people that the differences in rates of health and social problems between more and less equal societies are often very large indeed. We found that mental illness and infant mortality rates were two or three times as high in more unequal

countries. Teenage birth rates, the proportion of the population in prison and, in some analyses, homicide rates were as much as ten times higher in more unequal societies."<sup>103</sup>

Because of this, the authors call for building a "better society" with "[g]reater equality at [its] heart [...] because it is fundamental to the quality of social relations in society at large." The quality of relationships should be part of a political platform for families. Our experience and expertise prompt us to consider the little human's need for awakening as a tool for taking care of them, of their parents, of the connection that binds them together. Our commission embraces its role as a driving force for change.

Stating a public policy of ECA-LEP responds directly to the needs of a changing society and of today's parents. Its axes are as follows:

- a policy of equality for all parents
- a preventative approach to the child's overall health: Cultural Health, healthy connections
- a proactive method for fortifying the child's identification, empathy, affect attunement, composure—all underpin relational health
- a tool in the fight against discrimination
- a policy that encourages social and cultural diversity
- an approach that helps integrate disabled children by relating to the little one's capacity to interchange their senses
- an orientation that welcomes all family structures, making no distinction between them

Let's keep in mind that children's identity construction begins with their parents, who form the foundation. So, it is essential to focus on conditions during the wait for the child, on how the baby is welcomed, and on the child's development, with an eye to feeding their yearning to enter into culture. Culture is where transmission and storytelling happen, along with human experiences, shared above all with parents.

#### 🏡 Recommendation n° 26

The commission recommends including ECA-LEP as a ninth approach in the *National Strategy for Supporting Parenthood 2018-2022*. This approach would take into account the fundamental needs for humanization that the parent-child relationship supports.

---

101 Édouard Glissant.

102 Supported by the Niarchos Foundation, the Arsène Foundation, the Abbé Pierre Foundation, and the Fondation de France. These locations include several supportive spaces: a Pâtes au Beurre center, a cultural and artistic awakening space, a professional training and planning center, and a library for parents.

---

103 Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level*, Penguin Press, 2009. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Inner Level*, Penguin Press, 2019.

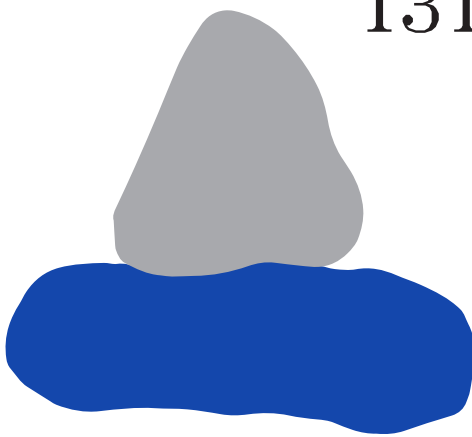
### 3. Parents and Centers for Maternal and Child Protection (PMIs)

Among the many institutions offering help and advice for new parents, PMIs (Centers for Maternal and Child Protection) stand apart. As a service supervised by the president of each departmental council, it is tasked with ensuring the health of mother and child, up to the age of six. Access and consultations are free of charge; PMIs are concerned with solidarity, offering inclusive, equal-opportunity spaces for families. Today, they also play a role in preventative health and accompaniment for current and future parents, and aim to support parenthood through activities for parents and for children. Their goal is to counsel, helping parents—particularly mothers—to feel confident.

To be sure, this is not the PMI's primary objective. In its over 70 years, the agency has undergone a profound transformation, paralleling those seen in families and in society as a whole. The story of the PMI begins in the post-war period, when the psychological and health-related aftershocks of conflict were seen everywhere. At the time, 60% of adults had lost weight, and one in three children exhibited growth issues. During this time, newborn survival was of primary concern. More generally, emphasis was placed on protecting pregnant women, young mothers post-birth, and children under six. To this end, pre- and postnatal visits became a priority, a system was created for childcare, and health information was distributed to women.

A first turning point was reached on July 6, 1964, when a law was passed envisioning a PMI as part of each department. The 1970s were driven by a will to fight perinatal mortality as well as to screen for psychological, sensory, and motor disabilities.

But it wasn't until December of 1989 that the larger issues of protecting and promoting childhood and family health were brought to the fore, along with the mission of spotting and supporting "vulnerable" groups. As part of this public health objective, the PMI was tasked with evaluating applications for the role of childminder through individual interviews, visits to the applicant's home, and an interview with applicant's partner. This was in addition to overseeing approved childminders and regularly verifying that they continue to meet the conditions for certification.



Since 1989, the PMI's responsibilities have broadened in the realms of psychic and physical health. Its teams are now subjected to a frantic rhythm and have less and less time to interact with the families they see. Issues or suspicion of mistreatment are among the agency's primary concerns, although no substantive training has been instituted to this end. Every week I get calls from PMI professionals who feel buried under their workload because of the limited time they have to deal with increasingly complex family situations.

Given the current context, it's clear that the support offered in spaces open to families is of utmost importance. But that support must be thought out, structured, and adapted to locations where parents can meet each other to exchange, share, and foster social connections. Many mothers, in particular, describe feeling helpless in the relationship with their children and are not in a position to listen to health advice that they don't always understand. As an on-the-ground professional for over 35 years, I can attest that young parents feel insecure in the connection with their children. This feeling of not being good enough, of failing to meet a demanding society's norms for the parent-child bond, is found in all social spheres. Today's parents feel isolated not just socially, but also because they cannot reveal how they feel about their babies.

Societal taboos prevent us from accepting ambivalence. The messages of so-called positive psychology and nonviolent communication have run aground. A deeply-ingrained lesson tells parents that they can only share happy thoughts. Once they feel overwhelmed, they withdraw, as if it were shameful to doubt, to not know, to feel something besides wonder about their child. We are very disturbed by this observation. The role of the PMI as a place for sharing, for

helpful and nonjudgmental perspectives, is central to preventing regular instances of family violence.

As we concluded our report, we were able to talk with Mrs. Michèle Peyron, a deputy in charge of a commission evaluating PMI policies. We discussed the importance of ECA-LEP in waiting rooms, and its role as a preventative measure for the parent-child connection. Mrs. Peyron confirmed that she wants to include ECA-LEP as a recommendation in her commission's work.

ECA-LEP can indeed play a not-insignificant role in supporting parenthood at PMIs, facilitating care for parents in search of attention and children in need of awakening. Their waiting rooms are ripe, then, for ECA-LEP interventions and have a part to play in questions of public health.

#### 🐷 Recommendation n°27

The commission recommends that PMIs always place health and cultural objectives within their missions. This means organizing ECA-LEP offerings in each PMI waiting room in order to support the parents and help spur the child's awakening. Professional readers are one of the best choices for this setting.

## 4. Childhood Professionals

### 4.1 Classification and Training

The various early childhood professionals are key to young children's needs for care and awakening. Their career paths differ widely, and the type and content of their training depend on the relevant ministry (Health, Solidarity, National Education). Training programs exist in many institutions, from ministries to academies to hospitals, all offering instruction on health, education, and social work.

Sylviane Giampino put together a particularly thorough analysis in her report, "Development of the Young Child, Childcare Options, Training of Professionals" ("Développement du jeune enfant, modes d'accueil, formation des professionnels"), submitted to Minister Laurence Rossignol on May 9, 2016. We selected some of her observations regarding early childhood professionals to complement our commission's exploration.

Her report discusses the lack of professionals, childminders, and personnel for EAJEs (cooperative early childcare centers). A closer look at the age distribution among childminders found that a third will have retired by 2020. This shortage can

be explained by the lack of available spots in training schools for early childhood educators, nurses, and childcare workers, by high costs, by sometimes-ineffective recruitment approaches, by a lack of respect for the line of work (due to limited opportunities for advancement), and by the fact that the professions tend to be compartmentalized.

We need a larger number of competent and qualified professionals in order to respond to the high expectations of society and families. But for over 15 years, we have seen a decrease in transmission of knowledge about the fundamentals of child development. *Giampino's commission thus recommends reinforcing knowledge about child development*, while taking into account changes in early childhood theory and its application to young children's current conditions—this, in addition to teaching techniques that don't separate care, education, relationships, and emotions. The more professionals know, the less they will take a normative and rushed approach, instead trusting children's biological and mental momentum.

We need to develop a shared professional identity so as to encourage career advancement, which today is quite rare. Giampino's commission thus recommends "guaranteeing the effectiveness of pathways from one degree to the next in early childhood careers."

We must create a common basis for training early childhood professionals. This shared platform would synthesize an informed and updated understanding of the young child's development; the specificities and variations in parents' relationship with childcare centers, as evidenced in the way that parents are welcomed; professional perspectives; and the operational principles of childcare institutions. In the commission's words, this common frame of reference for all early childhood occupations, built around a democratic idea of accommodation, would aim to "break down barriers between all professions without dismissing their particularities." This means building bridges and connections, and reaffirming the sense that everyone belongs to the same profession—childcare—rather than melting down all professionals into a new occupation.

We have to facilitate access to initial early childhood training programs in order to fill the vacant childcare positions. So, we must create more training centers and give them more respect. It is important to emphasize diversity: 99% of current EAJE workers are women and only 3.9% of educators are men.





© Cie Minscroppik

One of the more common childcare options is to place kids at the home of a childminder (*assistante maternelle*). Childminders, who are mostly women, tend to work alone. They are now classified as employees (with parents as their employers), and their primary challenge is to reconcile home and family life with their work. To this day, it is impossible to determine the childminders' level of professionalism. But there is a noteworthy sociological evolution: We are starting to see young women join this line of work with an eye to practicing differently, collaborating with others on projects, and teaming up to fight isolation.

On this subject, it's important to discuss RAMs, resource centers for childminders, parents and children. They were created in 1989 on the initiative of the National Office for Family Allocations (CNAF), with the goal of accompanying childminders, the most common form of childcare in France. But it wasn't until 2005 that the RAMs and their objectives were recognized in legislation. They are mostly managed by regional governments (primarily towns and cities) and associations, and are accessible at no cost. In general, an educator of young children (EJE) or someone with a childcare background directs the RAM.

At the beginning, RAMs had two main objectives: supporting and accompanying childminders, with the underlying goal of ending under-the-table employment. In 2011, the CNAF expanded that mission to include nannies who work at the children's homes (*auxiliaires parentales*, or parental auxiliaries) so that their subset can benefit from the same valorization and push toward professionalism. This is why, in larger cities, the centers are often called RAM/RAP (RAP refers to the parental auxiliaries).

The childminders, before receiving any training, must first be certified by a commission of PMI professionals who evaluate the candidate and the appropriateness of their home for childcare. A reference document establishes criteria, to help standardize this process across France.<sup>104</sup>

This is followed by a mandatory 120-hour training course, half of which is completed before the childminder cares for their first client; the remaining hours are spread across the two following years.

104 Decree n° 2012-364, issued 15 March 2012, pertaining to the reference document establishing criteria for certifying childminders.

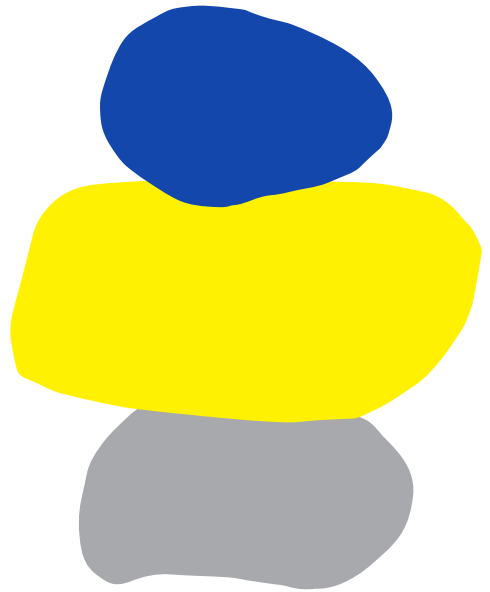
To complement this, the childminders are asked to complete the first part of an early childhood professional certification (CAP) within five years after the initial certification, with the goals of encouraging skill improvement and establishing a pathway to other early childhood professions.

- Sylviane Giampino's commission put together a number of recommendations for those who care for children outside of institutions:
- Lengthen the mandatory initial training for childminders to facilitate completion of the early childhood CAP. Connect this with an internship in a group childcare facility or with another childminder, so as to simplify access to other trainings or guidance toward working in group childcare facilities.
- Improve continuing education through regulation. To take into account the uniqueness of childcare administered by individuals, the commission recommends that parent-employers, public agencies, and administrative organizations and intermediaries get involved in enforcing this obligation. In practice, this would involve parents freeing time for the childminders' training, with curriculum broken into day-length units.
- Continue enlarging the mission of RAMs in coordination with the services offered by PMIs, to help implement continuing education for childminders.
- Make RAMs the hubs for certifying childminders and experiment with new missions for the agencies. The commission deems it necessary to sensitize childminders to the importance of RAMs but does not envision making visits to them mandatory.

Regarding parental auxiliaries, who travel to domiciles and care for children of one or several families, there is currently no obligation for training or a degree, and there is no supervision of their profession. Giampino's commission recommends a certification process for these auxiliaries, drawing inspiration from those already envisioned for childminders, with consideration for differences in their situations.

#### 4.2 Childhood Professionals and ECA-LEP

We agree with all of the recommendations by Sylviane Giampino's commission regarding early childhood professionals and their training. Our commission on ECA-LEP wishes to reinforce her report's positions through theoretical and scientific arguments.



Childhood professionals help support, accompany, and reassure parents about their children's development. They play an important, close role that we would like to encourage and solidify through awakening as a vector of health. Parents, the child's first cultural mediators, emphatically need this approach within the connection to their child, especially because that bond is vulnerable.

The child's rapport with the sensory and aesthetic is a backbone of their growth, echoing the parents' role in their harmonious development. We cannot circumvent this point of departure, which will nourish the child and sustain their discovery of the world, an encounter that happens through tight connections between physical, sensory, emotional, loving, relational, cognitive, and motor aspects. Young children, starting at birth, love to be immersed in a cultural bath, one offered by the arts.

As we assemble this report, the High Council on Family, Childhood and Aging (HCFEA) is finalizing the national charter on educational quality in different types of early childcare. The fifth element of the charter relates to us specifically: "I develop my creativity and awaken my senses thanks to artistic and cultural experiences. I open to the world through the richness of intercultural exchanges." The same goes for the sixth element: "True contact with nature is essential to my development." Implementing these ideas involves training childhood professionals in artistic and cultural awakening for children, which has begun to be taught following specific lesson plans.

### Recommendation n°28

The commission recommends that each training program for early childhood professionals include an obligatory module on ECA-LEP. This would be enriched by exchanges with artists. Sharing different perspectives would serve children and create an environment that fulfills their need for the care and culture essential to their growth.

### Recommendation n°29

The commission recommends that training for childhood professionals include a mandatory module sharing scientific work on how nature affects the child's development. New ways should be imagined, in collaboration with parents, to integrate nature into centers for children from zero to three years old.

### Recommendation n°30

The commission recommends that the training of early childhood professionals include encounters with the world of art and culture, museum visits, and performances. These should be offered so that each professional can personally have a sensory and aesthetic experience. In the connection with the "beautiful," there is a kernel that cannot be learned. It is lived and felt; it nourishes the professional in their being. This emotional nutrition will allow the professional to feel the calm and serenity offered by the world of art and, moreover, to understand how those feelings can nourish the thought, the imagination, the rapport with the world that surrounds us.

## 4.3 Hearing from Professionals

Marie-Hélène Hurtig, interviewed for this report, has long worked in early childhood—first as a daycare worker, then as director of a childcare center, and finally as a trainer for childhood professionals for over ten years. She wanted to draw our attention to certain aspects of the connections between culture, childhood and parenthood.

We felt it important to transcribe her responses to our question, "Why should professionals who care for young children (teams in EAJEs, RAMs, childminders...) have a full role in planning how to make art and culture central to accompanying the parent-child bond?"

First, she told us, this is because centers for children can offer various forms of artistic and cultural initiatives: hosting performances, inviting artists to lead an activity, receiving artists-in-residence,

going to museums. Through these initiatives, professionals can talk with parents about the value of cultural awakening for their children. This sparks excitement and curiosity, and they note a change in how the parents see the child. These offerings help the professionals become transmitters of culture and open up possibilities in the parent-child relationship. Of course, Hurtig notes, it is essential that educators themselves be convinced of these presentations' value to the child's development, rather than seeing them as "time-fillers." They must discuss the offerings in a way that inspires the parents' desire and interest by emphasizing their legitimate role as mediators for these initiatives.

While clearly beneficial, these ideas are far from widespread application. It is not uncommon to see institutions host artists without inviting parents to share the experience. Thus, a performance might be reported to parents in the same way as "he slept well, he ate enough," without making clear why it's so critical to bring artists to a daycare or RAM. Early childhood personnel and institutions should be trained so they can see the value of inviting artists and live performances.

Second, early childcare centers can invite parents when a performance is given, or even (if the occasion arises) organize a museum or theater outing that brings together children and parents. In this scenario, professionals fully inhabit their role as mediators to facilitate the shared experience between parent and child, to allow professional and parent to exchange perspectives on the child, and to provide an opportunity for discussion. We see this role of welcoming, accompaniment, urging, invitation, and awakening through the lens of Winnicottian holding. These actions help parents dip their toes into art and culture and bolster this kind of relationship with the child.

Early childcare centers should continue to develop parental participation in live performances. These practices build recognition of their work and its importance. Offering artistic and cultural awakening to very young kids and their parents is a vehicle for valorizing professionals, who hunger for appreciation from their administrations. But supporting and organizing these initiatives also helps improve how they value themselves.

For those who have not yet reached the milestone of organizing artistic and cultural activities, they should know that it's possible, that it's interesting, and that doing so nourishes the bond between parents,

children, and caretakers. The shared experience provides an anchor for relationships and encourages the confident connections and closeness necessary to offer quality care to the young child. Organizing such events is part of the mission of early childhood professionals.

These artistic offerings should not be seen as occasions for consumption or overstimulation. Training should explain what these initiatives represent—how they illuminate the importance of sharing sensory experience and art, which feeds relationships and gives birth to shared emotions.

In a good number of French regions, one cannot find any artistic offerings within a 50-kilometer radius. Many parents (from all socio-professional categories) are unaware of such opportunities and never attend performances themselves. Invitations from childcare centers thus align with the government's recommendations for making culture available locally. In addition, Hurtig recounts how, in the town of Fuveau,<sup>105</sup> inspired by performances and workshops offered at early childcare centers, mothers decided to put on a daylong festival for children, including babies, which has now continued for 12 years.

In many rural areas, as well as in some neighborhoods or small cities, parents of children under three do not have any space to meet and form social connections. If they want to, they can look for a LAEP (drop-in center for parents and children), but these are not available everywhere. Thus, childcare institutions fill this role and help introduce parents to each other, build solidarity, and reduce isolation. Experience and testimonies have demonstrated that artistic programming for little ones provides an extraordinary opportunity for encounters between adults, between children, between adults and children. These are offerings that nourish social connection and the life of a neighborhood or area.

Early childhood professionals come in frequent contact with parents. If they are trained, they can plan, and organize their space to welcome parents and build a regular connection with families as well. During performances, they assume their role as mediators, encouraging closeness, creating confident connections with the parents. Moreover, in many areas, the professionals and childcare centers initiate and organize these times for artistic offerings, either in their own spaces or elsewhere.

## 5. Role of Child and Family Protection Specialists in ECA-LEP as a Pillar of Support for Parenthood

To complete the overview of professionals who work closely with families, we decided to consider the role of child and family protection specialists (TISF, or *techniciens d'intervention sociale et familiale*), who conduct home visits. Situations vary, but family difficulty is clearly their general focus. They organize support for parents who temporarily cannot handle daily tasks—if a parent is hospitalized, for example—as well as in cases of child protection, whether ordered by a social service employee or by a court. This may result from mistreatment, a difficult divorce, or the need to sort out visitation rights for parents who have lost custody of their child. The range of interventions is wide, from assisting with everyday functions to helping plan a family budget to accompanying the job of parenting. In this particular setting, most important are the relationship with children and parents and support of the child's bond with its parents.

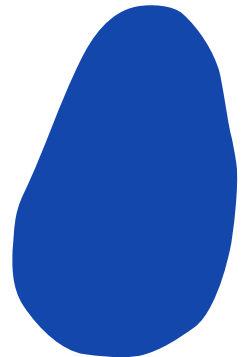
Initial training does not require any degree, but each establishment administers tests that demonstrate competence at the level of a high school graduate. Then, the training for a government-issued degree happens, continuously or in segments, over a period of 18 months if it is an initial training or 24 months if the applicant is already working. It consists of 950 hours of theoretical instruction and four on-the-job internships totaling 33 hours.

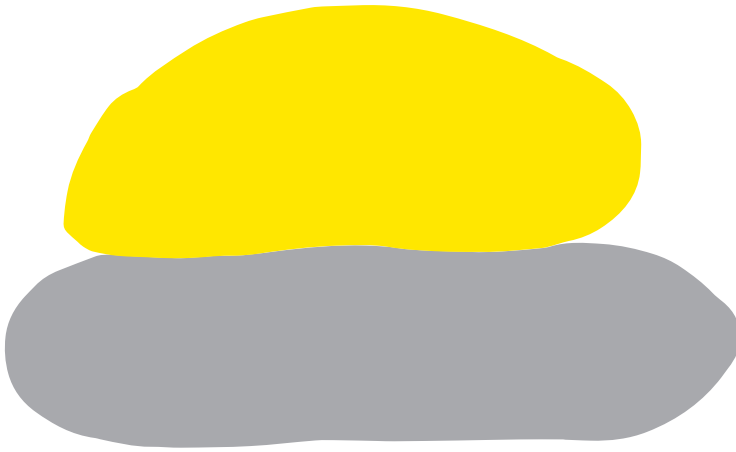
### Recommendation n°31

The commission recommends including child development, as well as notions about parenting, in the core curriculum for child and family protection specialists (TISF). It also recommends including a mandatory training module on ECA-LEP, enriched with encounters with artists.

---

105 Article "Petite enfance et mouvement dansé: du Fuveau à Charleroi." See Annex 26 in original report.





## 6. Toward a New Way of Teaching: The Pluriculture of Awakening

During an exchange with professor Jean-François Mattei (Minister of Health from May 2002 through March 2004) regarding this commission's goals and my desire to make Cultural Health a pillar of health, he replied: "In fact, you're proposing a new branch of health. This isn't just about daycare; you're talking about pluriculture."

Indeed, Cultural Health intends to champion the connection between childcare—caring for the child in its growing body—and the multifaceted approach offered by awakening. It does this through a health-oriented perspective on humanization, on relationships with others. Cultural Health recognizes our neotenic condition, our dependence on an external person in order to grow up. This acknowledges that our tale-telling species swims in a culture of words, of stories, always looking to give meaning to what we experience.

The baby begins this *narrative identity*<sup>106</sup> at birth. Our health programs should nourish that process by drawing on these two approaches—childcare and awakening—and offer children and their parents a common perspective on the little human's "growing-up." This should be a pluralistic approach, without blurring the lines between the childhood specialists (across several fields) and the artists who work with children in mind, themselves spread across different disciplines.

In our first section, we tried to define Cultural Health and to frame it through 12 articles. The following represents our glossary of Cultural Health.

- Birth through bonds
- Cultural nutrition
- Child Scholar
- Humanizing awakening
- Inner movement
- Sensory communion
- Interchangeable senses
- Parent as cultural mediator
- Identification of the parent with their child
- Sensitive space-time
- Experimental playfulness
- Narrative fabric
- Preventative health through culture
- Growing into humanity
- Cultural malnutrition
- Universality
- Pluriculture of awakening
- Body knowledge
- Awakening to nature
- Primal aesthetic excitement

Health, seen through a cultural lens, is many-faceted, plural. It comes through awakening to others, which opens young children to otherness, as they explore space and become aware of their body through the senses that organize their emotions. From these emotions, their relational existence will emerge as they make sense of their rapport with the sensory and aesthetic. Pluriculture in childcare requires that the professional who ensures the child's health be knowledgeable about awakening's role in child development and be able to observe and discuss progress with the parent.

This new approach to health requires that the ministries of Health and Culture consult with a group of psychologists, child psychiatrists, pediatricians, anthropologists,

106 Paul Ricœur, *Le Champ psychopathologique*, *op. cit.*

doctors, early childhood professionals, and birth specialists—gynecologists, midwives, daycare workers, educators of young children—as well as researchers on child development and nature’s influence therein, and artists and cultural mediators who work on the awakening of little ones.

Such fundamental changes to our outlook on health and the health of our connections are required to face the emergency at hand. Our health programs, as defined in the postwar period, have remained centered on physical health without considering modernity’s challenges for very young children and their parents.

This shift in perspective will also drive us to rethink how we monitor children’s development. This also means creating an annual “long consultation” with the pediatrician or generalist to get the larger picture of the child’s development by moving beyond normal measures (height, weight, motor skills, nutrition, language). Billed like an extended consultation, this appointment would be mandatory for the child’s first six years so as to guarantee that they grow up in an environment that benefits their overall health.

#### 📌 Recommendation n°32

The commission recommends gathering, starting in 2019, a group of experts to rethink the training of health professionals on Cultural Health. A mandatory common curriculum aimed at all childhood and family professionals, no matter their focus (midwives, doctors, pediatricians, nurses, general practitioners, nursery workers, educators of young children...), should be included in all existing training programs.

#### 📌 Recommendation n°33

The commission recommends overhauling child health record booklets with an eye to Cultural Health, and including awakening as a distinct part of the child’s health. A “Cultural and Artistic Awakening” page would be found at the end of the booklet so that parents who so desire, as well as professionals who follow the child’s development, can note completed activities, performances seen, music and books appreciated, moments spent with nature, etc.

#### 📌 Recommendation n°34

The commission recommends that the child undergo, once per year, a pediatric or medical consultation called a “long consultation” (because of its length and corresponding cost). It would consist of ensuring the global development of the child with a focus on their Cultural Health.

## 7. The Artist

Dictionaries define the artist as an individual making work, improving or mastering an art, knowledge or technique, in whom one observes (among other traits) creativity, poeticism, originality of creations, of acts, of gestures. Their works are a source of emotion, reflection, feeling, spirituality, or transcendence. One might also use *artist* or *poet* to describe someone strange, marginal, idle, a dreamer who does nonsensical things, someone without a sense of reality or rules. This is sometimes a pejorative way to disqualify such a personality type as rebellious or crazy, but the same traits can also be appreciated as signs of genius.

For the purposes of our commission, we choose the second definition. The child and the artist share a space that we could call “transitional” after the Winnicottian concept, allowing for play outside of reality and rules, in a space-time where imagination is king. Letting ourselves leave reality behind to “make believe” might just be a little crazy, and it’s this crazy aspect that gives credibility to those performances that draw in little ones.

“Playing seems so simple — “like child’s play” — and yet it’s our work as artists. So, one might say that artists don’t really work, because it’s just play: Art is nothing serious, just a useless hobby. One might even say that “artists are parasites.” Incidentally, one could say the same of children, who also spend their time playing, whom we feed in return for nothing. Life is easy for them. Yet if we dig a little deeper, we quickly realize that playing isn’t as simple as all that. [...] [W]e need so much persistence, work, mastery of our art to haul ourselves up to this level of agility, to find the innocence of first discoveries. The great challenge in the history of art, of ideas, and of thought in general has been to evolve toward complexity without losing the charm of simplicity, the clarity of the obvious.”<sup>107</sup>

Child and artist are accomplices, close collaborators who think surprisingly alike. The child completely digs what the artist has to share, this poetic nutrition that the little one digests in a deeply personal way—they are the only person who can make the story meaningful. There is more than one way to take in an artistic and cultural presentation; each individual sees it through their own story. This is why, after a performance or exhibition, debates spring up between those

---

107 Vincent Vergone, *Libre jardin d'enfants : vivre et penser une culture naturelle*, pictures by Agnès Desfosses, Ressouvenances, series “Pas à pas”, 2018.



© François Fogel, 2020

who “loved it” or didn’t, those who “got it” or didn’t, depending on their sensitivity and receptiveness to the work’s aesthetic.

How do babies “say” what they felt, loved, heard, understood? It’s so hard to accept that we won’t “know” everything about this child, sensor of meaning and emotion, who has taken in an experience that henceforth belongs to them. Here, in a nutshell, is the challenge of theater for the very young—for the parents, the childhood professionals, the artists themselves, and the institutions, who always crave concrete assessments based on the visible, countable, and profitable.

The artist’s work leads us down these backroads, where progress isn’t measured quantitatively and everyone is left with their own experience. Qualitative replaces quantitative; the artist offers refuge from societal dictates that constantly want to “measure” actions’ effectiveness.

Of course, our commission understands that most European countries now recognize and even value the emancipatory effect of access to culture and art for a young audience, as seen in their inclusion in UNESCO’s Convention on the Rights of the Child. Nonetheless, we want this emancipatory dimension to take on a humanizing role rather than serving an individualistic model, as it often seems to do in the political sphere.

Children under three years old should be able to access culture not just to liberate themselves, but to construct themselves. At stake is the process which, far from being linear, happens through waves of internal progress. Nothing is settled in the child’s first years, and it’s impossible to make any prediction regarding development, but it does seem clear that the young child needs to be sustained (and well-sustained, at that), to bathe in an empathetic atmosphere that’s aware of its fundamental needs—beyond the bounds of the primary ones (to eat, sleep, have clean diapers, and be carried).

Thus, we could simply say that the artist should be present in children’s lives, arriving at an early age to nourish them with expertise in art, which speaks to them in a poetic, aesthetic language. Three points strike us as critical:

#### Artists Create for Little Ones

When choreographer and dancer Anne-Laure Rouxel speaks, she is already dancing—her phrasing swings and whirls. The same goes for her colleague Noëlle Dehousse, who musicalizes her remarks in a totally different approach to spoken movement. It’s like this: The artist carries their art, carries culture, and the children clearly understand that they are watching an adult who can address their humanizing movement. They get that this person who came to move about, play, dance, make art (visual arts, puppetry, theater,

music...) speaks to their physical, sensory, cognitive, emotional, relational bodies—that the artist’s language is an infinite range of sounds, movements, and expressions that will awaken their desire for interaction.

The children are not mistaken. The very young child observes and understands that we are all different and that all of these adults have the potential to nourish. Childhood professionals, attentive to their development, there to guarantee the quality of the child’s life—the basics—are by their side. They know how to reassure the child by providing the continuity of being that the infant will slowly internalize. The adult awakens the child throughout the day, simultaneously satisfying the primary needs: to be fed, changed, carried, spoken to, seen while playing and awakening.

#### Artists Are Not Childhood Professionals

Artists know the child’s inner world. They make their art by relying on and resonating with relics of childhood sensibilities—the inner life with which they stayed in touch. And it’s from here that the artist speaks to children, exchanges with them. From experience as a performer, the creator knows that the child is a demanding interlocutor. I could sum up every artist’s testimony in one sentence: “With children, if you aren’t present, it doesn’t work.”

#### Artists Are Not Just Entertainers

“The artist isn’t there to do or to entertain, but they allow something to come alive through what emerges.”<sup>108</sup> This communication between the children, wrapped up in an inner movement of construction, and the artists—who set themselves in motion for the kids’ benefit—is an exchange that exists outside of words. Performances aimed at children thus bear messages without making them explicit. Here we again find our idea of the “intention without intention” carried within ECA-LEP: This includes, above all, the little ones’ inextinguishable desire to be considered within the connections they create with loved ones.

## 8. Manifesto: 40 Proposals for Youth<sup>109</sup>

In his document *Performances for a Young Audience (Le Spectacle jeune public)*,<sup>110</sup> Cyrille Planson recounts the birth of the manifesto and its 40 proposals. At the initiative of the professional association Scène(s) d’enfance et d’ailleurs (created in 2004, orchestrated and directed by Geneviève Lefaure), reflection workshops brought together cultural players for a collaborative process.

“This measure followed completion of an overview studying creation and diffusion for young audiences in France, very appropriately called “Snapshot of a Fragile Dynamic.” Based on these workshops, the association published a manifesto of 40 proposals at the end of 2013. Proposal number 39 of this platform was adopted by the Ministry of Culture and gave birth to the “Summer of Childhood and Youth” (“Belle Saison avec l’enfance et la jeunesse”), which debuted in July 2014. Within the same professional sector, the association ASSITEJ France, a branch of ASSITEJ International, was created in February 2011, bringing together artists, organizers, and professional associations and federations. Connected to the international network of ASSITEJ (representing 85 countries), it is committed to working toward cultural cooperation in creating for a young audience and circulating works and artists. As 2015 drew to a close, the two entities came together to form a single, unified provider representing the entire sector. The history of creation for youth—and for the adults that accompany them—is being written a little at a time. It is far from finished because it responds to such high-stakes issues, including cultural access for all, the imagination, and, in the background, the building blocks of our society.”

In December of 2017, an 18-month process of themed exchanges began, through the platforms and networks created by professionals in France and its overseas departments. In partnership with local institutions, the “Tour” was created to highlight innovative projects that inspire French youth in hard-to-reach areas. Ten years after the “Snapshot of a Fragile Dynamic,” it will give insight into the current state of affairs on the ground

109 Manifesto for an Artistic and Cultural Policy of Live Performance for Youth. See Annex 29 in original report.

110 Cyrille Planson, *Le Spectacle jeune public. Histoire et esthétiques*, La Scène, 2016.

108 Catherine Morvan and Jean-Claude Oleksiak, from the troupe Praxinoscope.



and collect information for a national study on the ideal conditions for creating youth performances.

Our commission agrees with these 40 proposals, which call for a cultural policy recognizing artistic creation as a societal priority. These proposals call for the government to evaluate children's cultural and artistic needs and emphasize the importance of launching artistic and cultural initiatives so that all children and their parents can access them.

In all future work and proposals toward a cultural policy, our commission would like the child's status as a Subject, starting at birth, to be taken into consideration. Indeed, the notion of "youth" is often associated with school age, around three years old, which disregards a whole swath of the child population. We include the wait for the child in our focus on those three and younger, and underline the importance that babies be welcomed into a culture that acknowledges them. This means designing live performances, museums, exhibition spaces, urban environments—any place where art can be expressed—with consideration for very young children.

#### Recommendation n°35

The commission recommends recognizing the artist and the importance of their contributions alongside childhood professionals, while emphasizing the latter as role models for the child.

#### Recommendation n°36

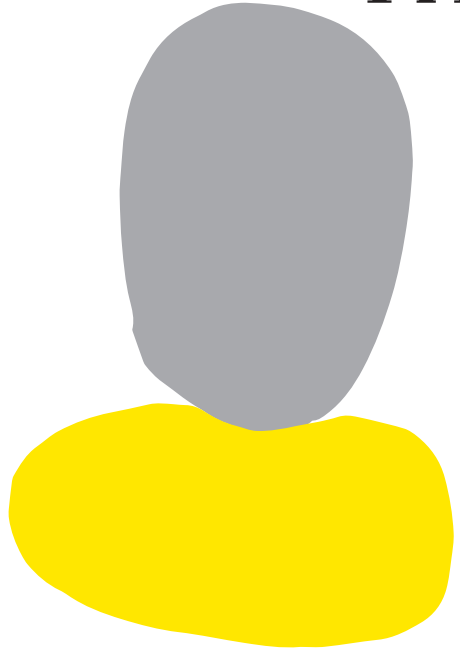
The commission recommends encouraging and financing every artistic initiative that benefits early childhood so that artists are not impeded in their creation. This would happen notably by clarifying their status and standardizing methods of remuneration for their presentations.

#### Recommendation n°37

The commission recommends taking into account the 40 proposals made by Scène(s) d'enfance et d'ailleurs for an artistic and cultural policy of live performance directed at youth, and to add a 41st proposal underlining the importance of ECA-LEP in this policy.

#### Recommendation n°38

The commission recommends training artists who practice ECA-LEP about childhood development and the institutions that facilitate it.



## 9. Cultural Mediation: A Pathway to Success for ECA-LEP

It is useless to discuss good practices for cultural and artistic offerings if no mediation is planned in advance. In the course of our commission's work, we heard concerns expressed by museums that are asked to host young children and their parents without forethought regarding ideal conditions. The presence of a young group and their parents in a cultural establishment requires, first and foremost, reflection about specific arrangements. But beyond that, it requires a dialogue: What is a child? How can we best accompany them in their artistic discoveries?

For this commission, I asked mothers to describe museum visits or artistic outings with their children. Some mentioned premises that lacked any facilities for babies, complicating tasks such as diaper changes. One told me about when her three-year-old son visited a museum with the youngest section of his preschool, for which she was invited as a chaperone. When they arrived, the children were made to sit in a circle to hear explanations of all that was forbidden—talking, running, jumping, touching, laughing, making noise, getting upset—and all that was required, such as listening, behaving, opening their eyes wide...

We need a full reflection on how to open our cultural institutions to the youngest crowd, through considerations in their facilities and the way they welcome the public. While cultural mediators certainly are well-trained for that job, they should also have the necessary preparation for hosting very young children and their parents. In order to change the current state of affairs and give babies their rightful place in our cultural spaces, we must be mindful of how we welcome them—and train cultural mediators to do so.

Among the cultural mediation initiatives that caught our eye was the project “My Own Books” (“Des livres à soi”). It is a program for young children’s literature organized by the association behind the Youth Book and Journalism Fair (Salon du livre et de la presse jeunesse) in Seine-Saint-Denis, and it is certified by the National Agency for Combatting Illiteracy (Agence nationale de lutte contre l’illettrisme). The project is supported by the Ministry of Culture, the National Center for Books (Centre national du livre), and the Fondation de France. Also, as winner of a contest organized by the foundation La France s’engage, it receives a grant supporting youth-oriented experimentation.

The program created a mediator’s notebook, filled in by each intermediary over the course of the family-focused activities. This notebook begins with several pages of recommendations to mobilize the parents and inspire them to share awakening moments with their children. A text follows about preparing training workshops, helping the professionals and volunteers who will put on these workshops to get familiar with the books in the bibliography. It also deals with assessments, preparation for outings, and closing ceremonies, which can include photos and videos distributed as souvenirs. Finally, several pages are reserved for recognition of each workshop’s organizer: observations, remarks from the parents, positive and negative reflections on the initiative, profile and number of participants, etc. This tool has the advantage of accompanying the mediators’ work and giving them landmarks, as much for organization as for purposes of evaluation. It would be useful to extend this idea beyond Seine-Saint-Denis. A curriculum still needs to be developed that would give more weight to these observations in terms of ECA-LEP.

#### Recommendation n° 39

The commission recommends training cultural mediators about early childhood and ECA-LEP in order to adapt their work to small children’s need for cultural and artistic awakening.

## 10. The Role of Associations in Championing and Spreading ECA-LEP Across France

### 10.1 Nonprofit Association Law of 1901: Classification and Mission

In France, the associations that fall under the Law of 1901 are more plentiful and diverse than ever. They bring together an ever-increasing number of citizens and decisionmakers through organizations of many shapes and sizes, just like the society that supports them. There are more than 1.3 million such institutions across France, working across all economic sectors.<sup>111</sup> They are therefore a popular tool for action and expression, particularly in rural regions. This collaborative liveliness, in a context where social relationships are infused with individualism, makes a strong argument against the defeatist mindset we often encounter.

In terms of legal status, the association is the ultimate framework for collective action. The first article of the Law of 1901 describes “An agreement through which many persons pool, in a permanent way, their knowledge or activities for a purpose other than sharing profits,” thereby creating a structure for a collective project to inhabit. Whether they are enlivening an area or developing it through original initiatives, constructing or affirming an identity, or more broadly fighting for ideas, the majority of those carrying out projects come from the nonprofit world.

The various testimonies we heard allowed us to see the degree to which associations are the lifeblood of our territories, often as pioneers of stimulating projects, capable of invigorating and structuring the local environment. Their heartfelt goal is to bring life to their native regions. Built around values of solidarity, proximity, accessibility, social diversity, fighting exclusion, and popular education, they are often founded by strong characters who want to contribute to community life.

### 10.2 Cultural Associations: Our Heritage and an Embodiment of Our Cultural History

The participants in the associations named in this report, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for their many enlightening explanations, taught us about the history of the French Republic. Thanks to their efforts, we were able to see how cultural projects unfolded across many decades and a changing political landscape.

---

111 Cécile Bazin, Marie Duros, Floriane Legrand, Guillaume Prevostat, and Jacques Malet, “La France associative en mouvement,” Recherches et Solidarité report, September 2018 (16th edition).

It is clear that the child's place in cultural concerns has evolved quite a bit over the last three decades. This we owe to a strategic change that led to cultural democratization. As a reminder, it was during the 1980s that Jack Lang, as Minister of Culture, pushed for a different approach to art and culture:

“Cultural democracy becomes a strategy for responding to the urgent need for social cohesion. With the rising influence of the regional governments in cultural affairs, cities in particular are invited to implement their own cultural policies, on the basis of developing access to real culture, as well as for projects more relevant to local populations. Thus, for over 20 years, cultural activity has been connected to urban programs and to social and educational projects, notably carried out through urban policy. The implementation of interdisciplinary measures like urban policy leads to establishing new connections between “the social and the cultural.” Culture becomes a means of valuing underserved areas and populations, even if, in practical terms, local elected officials have institutionalized the separation between two networks: that of cultural action and that of sociocultural action.”<sup>112</sup>

This movement, which aims to bring together childhood—early childhood specifically—and culture, has, like most movements, moved forward at a pace that demonstrates the difficulty of putting humanist ideas into action. Because one must first believe in humanist movement before one can consider the little one as a cultural being, a yearning being, a Subject with rights. While memoranda of agreement between the Ministry of Solidarity and Health and the Ministry of Culture have existed since 1989, no governmental action was taken at the time. Instead, associations took the lead in creating cultural initiatives geared toward children. For three decades, they have been at the forefront of this shift in cultural policy for the young child.

Associations that are a patrimony in their own right have shared a wealth of testimonies and texts that illuminate for us how this interest in children evolved. We should protect this history by asking the Ministry of Culture to gather all of the work done by associations so as to create a library accessible by students, researchers, and professionals on the ground.

The main testimonies by associations describe the exhausting process of creating their project, explaining it, and arguing for it; all lament the energy wasted on time-consuming administrative nuisances that directly counteract the realization of projects. They also report a lack of appreciation for direct work with very young children and their parents, even though it plays an essential role in improving daily life, social connections, and community dynamics, particularly in rural areas.

Between the moment when an association conceives of a project and its implementation, often way too much time goes by, tiring out the organizers despite their commitment in the mission. The obstacles, while not always insurmountable, are in any case very real and varied: conflicts, divisions, confrontations between associations and governments, “infringement on or competition with the economic sector;”<sup>113</sup> divergences in approach to the cultural Subject—so many elements that slow down or hinder the realization of associative initiatives. As a warning about this weakening of associations, we quote an editorial by Alain Fievez, president of Livre Passerelle, published on the organization's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017:

“Just like every year, the pages of this activity report will detail for you the many places where Livre Passerelle participates: lectures, trainings, networking sessions, parent-child events, etc. But nonprofit associations are getting weaker by the day. So, what is becoming of us?

To some, we seem like oak trees, proud and lasting. Our crown could stop the sun's rays, could brave the fiercest storm. But we feel more like reeds, swaying on the humid outskirts of the kingdom of wind...We bend but do not break! How long can we last?

Of course, Deleuze would write of the rhizomes that we have woven since 1998. A horizontal, multidirectional, perennial perspective. No hierarchical divisions, all of the elements of the structure are important and invigorate each other, no center, no beginning, no end. We bring the random into our flourishing virtuality (as beautiful as the wait for a grant approval!). Every link in the chain holds potential, can disappear as easily as

112 Chloé Langeard, “Les projets artistiques et culturels de territoire. Sens et enjeux d'un nouvel instrument d'action publique,” *Informations sociales*, 2015/4, n° 190.

113 Estelle Regourd, “Les associations culturelles, porteuses de projet pour de nouvelles ruralités?” *NOROIS: Environnement, aménagement, société*, in “Patrimoine, culture et construction identitaire dans les territoires ruraux,” 2007/3.



## 11. What About the Regions?

When we talk about regions, we mean all of their committed partners, including local government officials, participants on the ground, technical staff, associations, residents. While cultural initiatives may be the perfect ally for those officials tasked with the future of a town or region, our hearings made clear that, for some of them, culture does not seem worthy of public investment; they would rather put the money elsewhere. This is even more true of culture created for young children.

And yet our overview of inspiring initiatives demonstrated that a well-thought-out cultural policy is an invigorating factor in running a city and has a positive effect on the life of the community, as well as being a draw for outsiders. During the course of our hearings, I had an informal discussion with a couple who explained to me that, in choosing where to move, they considered the cultural offerings available for themselves and for their children.

By inviting culture to their regions, especially culture aimed at children and their parents, leaders give themselves the means to transform the area. Far from existing only within the bounds of a project, considering culture builds bridges to many other domains, all the more so in predominantly rural areas. Transforming a territory through culture invariably leads officials to consider the population as a whole. Indeed, no project can come together on its own; it always results from both individual and collective participation. By listening to artists, to leaders, and to professionals specialized in childhood, integration, and social intervention, we have identified the essential condition for bringing any project to fruition: considering the human dimension that allows men and women to cooperatively improve their region.

Culture thus has positive effects on the whole of a territory, but it is the leaders who must seize these opportunities. They should pay particular attention to cultural offerings benefitting families, which requires that leaders be made aware of and trained in this type of approach. A better understanding of ECA-LEP—starting from the observation that, beyond its usefulness for development of parents and children, it helps build social bonds, fight discrimination, build relational harmony, equality, openness to others—will allow them to implement an appropriate model of governance. ECA-LEP isn't a fun pastime; it is an opening to welcoming little ones and their parents in a humanizing way, an occasion to reconsider the questions of health, of prevention, of protection, of support.

it can develop. Such is the case for the places where we work and train. Our tool of the trade, youth literature, is a cornerstone firm in its durability and alive in its perpetual creativity.

Frequent recognition of the quality of our work has, until now, led to reliable and diverse financing. What will become of it tomorrow?"

Reality's complexity makes definite prediction impossible. A passionate team carrying out remarkable work, indispensable to the blossoming of many: Will all this allow us to continue convincing our funders?

We hope so.<sup>114</sup>

### 📌 Recommendation n° 40

The commission recommends recognizing nonprofits' important work by giving them concrete technical and financial help so they can focus on their primary mission of serving the public, and by enabling the continued success of their ECA-LEP initiatives, which are tools of Cultural Health.

### 📌 Recommendation n° 41

The commission recommends assembling and digitizing all literature produced by associations, which is currently decentralized, for the purpose of preservation. They can form a library accessible by students, researchers and professionals, as well as by elected officials who want to learn about inspiring experiences or theories.

Elected officials must formulate a model of governance that fosters the maximum amount of concrete participation. This will happen in phases that allow for an increase in proficiency through *dialogue*—the magic word in this realm. Dialogue is a tool for exchange, recognition, familiarization, conflict resolution. In human society, nothing happens without discussion.

The education of officials will be at the core of this cultural transformation on a social, intellectual, and general level. This is how culture works: It opens up new horizons, offers a sort of psychic mobility, a curiosity, new ways of seeing things. Culture isn't amusement, even if some cultural activities are fun; it means, above all, openness to others, to other cultures, other modes of thought, other aesthetic approaches. It's an officeholder's best friend because it instigates transformation and development, breaking the chains of ignorance about others or about a particular topic.

But many chains have been wrapped around culture for little ones. It's still hard for people to imagine that a baby can access art and culture, to see the child as a bearer of humanity and peace. ECA-LEP makes this possible. Our 21<sup>st</sup> century absolutely must commit to a true reflection on ECA-LEP, carried out by regional leadership for the benefit of citizens.

#### 🏞 Recommendation n°42

The commission recommends sensitizing elected officials across France to the idea that culture supports individual development, facilitates connections that make regions more dynamic, and opens up opportunities for intentional partnerships that benefit youth, early childhood, and parents. ECA-LEP would be the focal point of this effort.

## 12. Long-Term Success: Striving for Continuity

We noted that many projects are introduced with the buzzwords of “innovation” and “action.” Requests for proposals ask associations for “innovative initiatives.” As a result, effective, constructive, and relevant approaches developed by experienced organizations find themselves questioned anew each year. The notion of innovation stymies any long-term success, even standing in the way of learning from past initiatives.

The inspiring initiatives (featured in the original report) should allow us to move from the idea of “action” toward that of an overall plan:

“A plan designates actions carried out primarily by the greater society, for which it guarantees long-term operation, as much in its engineering as in its funding. The resulting investment, unlike a ‘project,’ requires the allocation or reallocation of structural support, on the basis of a strong political policy.”<sup>115</sup>

Our witnesses confided that, once the message gets through about the importance of considering the child's needs in terms of cultural and artistic awakening, they feel the work hits a dead end. We heard about projects cut short because their mission had supposedly “already been accomplished,” as though an initiative for kids, parents, and childhood professionals could continue without its creators. Behind this logic lies an ignorance of artistic work, of what an artist is, and of their priceless contributions to humanization, social construction, and pacification—the essence of Cultural Health.

ECA-LEP, like any significant public policy, should be made permanent as well as continually reexamined and improved. We would never dream of cancelling a public medical program—vaccinations for example—on the pretext that it has “already been done.” Our young children expect an investment that provides a renewed, nurturing cultural presence each year. We should work from a mindset of continuity. The idea of perpetual innovation runs counter to the needs of children and their parents.

#### 🏞 Recommendation n°43

The commission recommends including ECA-LEP in public health programs in France so that Cultural Health initiatives can be made permanent.

#### 🏞 Recommendation n°44

The commission recommends ministerial collaboration on the artistic and cultural needs of small children and their parents. It calls for an interministerial policy of ECA-LEP.

115 Study report of INET-France urbaine, “Réussir la généralisation de l'éducation artistique et culturelle,” *op. cit.*



### 13. Budgets, or the Price of a Peaceful Society

It is time to broach a sensitive subject: money. Cicero called money the “sinews of war.” We would rather call it the “price of peace,” to communicate the degree to which investing in environmental, relational, and sensory quality is essential to making our connections peaceful. This chapter could just as well be called: “We Have to Put our Money Where our Mouth Is.”

Witness after witnesses expressed the financial difficulties in keeping their art alive, with several mentioning—often with great sadness—a question of “survival.” Getting grants is often an obstacle course, time-consuming and costly because the process requires drawing up budgets that only expert accountants can create. Receiving support from DRACs and local governments thus depends on a huge effort, stealing precious time that would otherwise be used to develop projects or spend with children and their families. If individual creators want to both make art and apply for funding, they may quickly find themselves overwhelmed or discouraged by the staggering scope of the tasks.

According to Dominique Sagot-Duvauroux and Helga Sobota, “the two main public funding mechanisms for culture [are] urban areas (municipalities and municipal groupings), on the one hand, and the national

government, on the other. [Governments of] regions and departments play a much smaller role.”<sup>116</sup> However, notes Emmanuelle Le Coq, “this type of financing is not the easiest to obtain: All of the troupes interviewed for the field survey spoke of difficulty getting funding, even from local governments. This is mostly due to budget cuts decided on a national level, but also sometimes because of some officials’ ignorance of dance for young audiences.”<sup>117</sup> Artists often told us that there is hardly respect for kids and for the creative process geared toward them.

#### Recommendation n° 45

The commission recommends a collaboration between ministries to recognize and fund Cultural Health.

#### Recommendation n° 46

The commission recommends the diffusion of public health messages on ECA-LEP by the ministries of Health and Culture, in collaboration with the CNAF (National Office for Family Allocations), to meet today’s health challenges.

116 Dominique Sagot-Duvauroux *et al.*, “Dépenses culturelles des collectivités: nouvel état des lieux,” *L’Observatoire. La revue des politiques culturelles*, 2014/1, n° 44: p.4.

117 Emmanuelle Le Coq, “Dynamiques culturelles: politique, espace, pratiques,” thesis for a Master’s degree under the supervision of Philippe Bouquillion, not published.

## 14. Mapping ECA-LEP in France

The goal of this map is to create a network of projects and to bring successful ideas to light. A national ECA-LEP policy could use existing initiatives as a basis by exploring their founding values. Gathering initiatives in each department would reveal some basic elements: How have the associations conceived their initiative? For whom? What is the goal? Who are their collaborators, whether other associations or institutions? Where does their funding come from?

This preliminary survey would be followed by analysis, which would allow a map to be assembled, showing what is happening and how it is done—but also what has not yet been accomplished. For example, we would see how the principle of cultural rights can move toward reality through practices and methods within the departments of France: how a team of artists and institutions bring to life the ideals held within cultural rights. With the help of this bird's-eye view, we would better understand what exists today, as well as what's still missing.

Such an observation would also allow us to see how participants are connected, and how they support cultural programs. We would find that, in some regions, culture roams more widely, forging partnerships with many child-centered institutions (PMIs, libraries, social centers...). In other cases, we would note efforts focused on “culture and populations Won the fringes,” and identify useful resources for helping these efforts succeed.

The map, a true perspective on the state of affairs, should be accessible to all, facilitating connections. A department could thus discover an initiative in another municipality and design a similar program. This would be a tool for sharing experiences in a spirit of collaboration, a place for discussion, exchange, inspiration, and cooperative collection of democratically-accessible resources.

In this sense, the map would serve to fight disparities, help organize meetings to brainstorm innovations, and break down the walls between ministries.

### Recommendation n°47

The commission recommends sharing a map of ECA-LEP, starting in 2019, in order to exchange and spread awareness of experiences.



# National Studies Proving the Need for a Three A's Policy: Anticipate, Accommodate, Accompany

## 1. Policy Based on the Three A's Recognizes that All Social Suffering is Cultural Suffering

Constructing a cultural policy with a social dimension builds bridges between the worlds of culture and social aid, as we propose with Cultural Health. Such decompartmentalization is essential to moving beyond a purely cultural approach (arts, patrimony, museums) and to ensuring that social aid isn't reduced to managing marginal populations, reinforcing an already discriminatory environment.

“Social suffering is, first and foremost, cultural suffering,”<sup>118</sup> caused by the sense that one's identity, history, origin, life path, or knowledge has not been respected. Alain Touraine proposed replacing the social paradigm with a cultural one, to remind us that culture forms the basis of all social dynamics.<sup>119</sup>

In this regard, we are obligated by our mission—benefitting children under three in the connection with their parents—to reflect on how to unite various policies.

Our choice to focus on small humans, their conception, their birth, their growth, and their first three years directly relates to culture. This emphasis on our natural and developmental conditions looks to the future and promotes the values of solidarity, diversity, and fighting discrimination and exclusion, by acknowledging each human's dignity. We are speaking beings, built from connections and stories that must make sense in order that the ego's outline can root itself in the story of humanity. This definition directly echoes UNESCO's declaration in 2001 that cultural activities are “vectors of identity, values and meaning.”

Giving birth to cultural Subjects with respect for their right to a peaceful period of growth, to a history, to parents, to a country, and to origins unites children's rights with human rights. This objective should be concretely within reach in everyday life. Caring for early human needs is a societal investment that holds the promise of a better life for all people.

The Three A's policy, by bringing together culture and health, represents a proactive cultural policy with a social dimension recognizing that all social suffering is cultural suffering. Its health programs would include ECA-LEP, which lies at the heart of Cultural Health.

---

118 Patrice Meyer-Bisch, “Le droit à la beauté pour tous,” *Agir par la culture*, 21 October 2013.

119 Alain Touraine, *Un nouveau paradigme. Pour comprendre le monde d'aujourd'hui*, Fayard, 2005.



## 2. Cultural Rights, in Service of the Three A's Policy

According to Patrice Meyer-Bisch, cultural rights include everything that relates to identity and cultural resources:

“Cultural rights do not come last, as an afterthought to other rights; they are absolutely foundational to those other rights. This is the opposite of our usual assumption that culture comes later, once we have shelter, food, and work—and then, all the better if one has the money for cinema or theater. Cultural reality is much more fundamental. Take, for example, those who never experience meals with their families: They don't benefit from a culture of healthy eating, of sharing friendship and social life, of respect for one's food and its connection to one's body, for animals, for plants. This knowledge is also extremely important in life. Culture means the circulation of knowledge in all realms of life, all that makes experience meaningful.”<sup>120</sup>

All children deserve to be born into a cultural bath that awakens them, allowing them to experience the processes of identification that lead them to autonomy and free thought. Access to cultural resources as a baby opens first to self-knowledge, through encounters with its sensory, emotional, relational, and aesthetic environment, in a swirling bath of nature and culture. This openness supports the overall right to knowledge. We should keep in mind that the newborns' yearning is the basis for their future curiosity and their desire to join the ranks of thinking beings, that their physical and psychological growth is both endogenous (development) and exogenous (exchanges/sharing), and that this dynamic guides them toward a future that is fully theirs.

In January of 2018, Françoise Nyssen, then Minister of Culture, reminded us that “[t]he fight against cultural segregation should imply, above all, affirming that cultural rights imply cultural access for everyone.”<sup>121</sup> Knowing her particular fondness for the youngest children, we understand “for everyone” to mean “for all human beings,” babies included.

In the government report evaluating the public policy of cultural democratization,<sup>122</sup> we were struck by the words of the director of Louis Aragon Theater in Tremblay-en-France, and the National Federation of Street Art (Fédération nationale des arts de la rue). She said that “There is no such thing as a natural audience”; one must bring the art to the public, rather than the other way around. According to the woman who heads the Maison de la danse in Lyon, interest begins with experiences of beauty, emotion, sensation, “by increasing the number of experiences, these decisive moments when the taste for art appears, when the individual is in direct contact with the work, when they have a strong aesthetic encounter that breaks through their psychic barriers.”

We support the movements mentioned here, those of “reaching outward” and of bringing cultural rights to fruition through a simple, regular presence that creates an ongoing rapport with the sensory and aesthetic. Encounters with beauty should be ripe for the picking everywhere we live—in our cities, our parks, our collective spaces, our streets. Art belongs as a form of narrative expression in all childcare facilities so as to encourage emotional encounters.

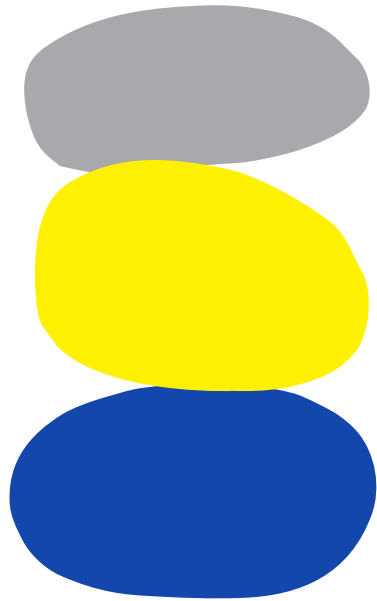
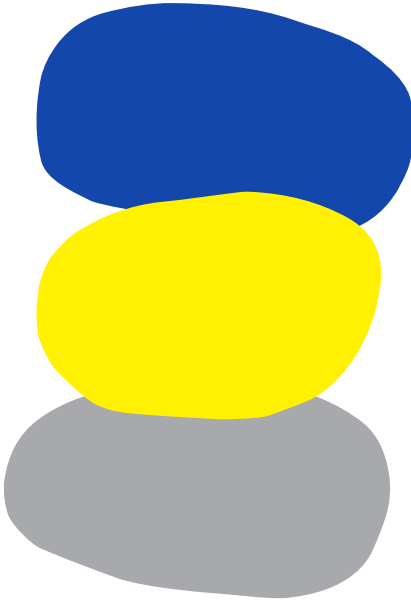
The above-mentioned report, assembled in 2016 and submitted in 2017, refers to the ministerial structure at the time. Thus, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and that of Family, Childhood and Women's Rights included three sections about cultural democratization—“Women's Rights,” “Early Childhood,” and “Health”—based on three programs: Program 137, “Equality Between Men and Women”; Program 204, “Preventative Health, Health Security, and Healthcare Availability”; and Program 304, “Social Inclusion and Protection for Individuals.”

In the “Early Childhood” section, artistic and cultural awakening are described as contributors to child development. Action 17 of Program 304, which received 14.5 million Euros in 2015, helps finance several associations that offer training on how to create cultural initiatives. It refers to Sylviane Giampino's report, which spells out several major principles for childcare and devotes a large section to artistic and cultural awakening.

120 Patrice Meyer-Bisch, “Le droit à la beauté pour tous,” *op. cit.*

121 Françoise Nyssen, in *La Scène. Le magazine des professionnels du spectacle*, n° 90, September-October-November 2018, p.62, “La lettre du spectacle.”

122 Report of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, Supervisory Board for Cultural Affairs, analysis and action plan published March 2017: “Évaluation de la politique publique de démocratisation culturelle,” written for the Prime Minister's General Administration for the Modernization of Public Action (secrétariat général de la Modernisation de l'action publique), n° 2016-35.



Overall, this report—very thorough in most respects—remains focused on artistic and cultural awakening (EAC) for school-age children, while our commission chose to focus on children under three. In addition, we speak of Cultural and Artistic Awakening (ECA) within the parent-child bond (LEP). Nonetheless, the report’s conclusion is encouraging:

“The notion of cultural democratization has undergone a mutation: From universal access to resources, it’s evolving to embrace the long term, as a process implemented through appropriate actions including, notably, the recognition of local customs and practices, with a special emphasis on quality and openness to others nearby. This leads to a change in approach, with a diversification of partnerships and a general openness to diversity, making space for the cultural rights described in recent laws.”

The Three A’s policy, through its close ties with cultural rights, calls for lasting programs, proximity, adaptability, and flexibility to consider each person’s needs. It implies changing our perspective on the fundamental needs of child and parents; more widely applying universality to parental support and accompaniment of young children’s psycho-affective development; giving ECA-LEP a role that

allows it to nourish children in ways that help them grow and reinforce the parent-child bond; not closing off debate in the name of budgetary concerns; rethinking the concept of precarity; and recognizing the holistic approach of Cultural Health in the sense defined by the WHO, and as a tool in the fight against social inequalities in health (inégalités sociales de santé, or ISS).

Thinking about our changing world leads our eyes to the roots of humanity: our children. Children have this knack for forcing us to be better versions of ourselves, for making us ask questions: What is the meaning of this cultural rights policy? What can it offer to the people? Caring for children’s arrival, care, and accompaniment in their first years of life means caring for our society, our common future, our world. This urgency is felt by all people, as we have seen in the spread of citizen movements fighting for a more just world. Parents, childhood professionals, artists, those who work in public and private institutions, associations—all call for reflection on how we can move toward a peaceful existence.

The Three A’s policy as a cultural right represents an investment in the future. Its interventions early in life carry the promise of more equality and social pacification. Cultural Health, through its ECA-LEP offerings, directly supports cultural rights.

### 3. Reflections and Observations of the French Public Health Agency (SFSP): Accompaniment of Parenthood and Social Inequality

“Accompaniment of Parenthood and Social Health Inequalities” was the theme of a seminar put on by the French Public Health Agency on September 12, 2016, with the goal of creating a framework for reflection. Future seminars on “action” and “ethics” were planned.

The report opens with a question: “Why is the French Public Health Agency concerned with accompaniment of parenthood?” The response mentions three basic reasons: “First of all, because the fight against social inequalities in health (ISS) is one of the main tenets of the agency’s program; secondly, because one of the goals of the SFSP is to bring together public health professionals to share knowledge, deepen the conversation, and contribute to the development of public policy benefitting public health; finally, and most importantly, because early intervention and parental accompaniment are two particularly effective strategies for reducing social inequalities in health (ISS).”

Mrs. Flore Moreux<sup>123</sup> opened the seminar by reminding attendees of the impacts of the law of January 26, 2016, regarding the modernization of the health system:

“[It has] reinforced action on the early determinants of health through measures at various scales: via a concerted global strategy on child health, carrying out initiatives for protecting the health of mothers and young children, developing health education programs in schools, guarding against exposure to secondhand smoke, encouraging midwives to vaccinate those who care for the newborn, and expanding the system centered on the child’s regular doctor. Helping and supporting the family’s parental function, starting at pregnancy and continuing throughout childhood and adolescence, have been essential components of this initiative on the determinants of health.”

The then-president of the SFSP, Pierre Lombraill, also commented on the decision to venture into the area of parenthood:

“This might appear out of place, but the connection became obvious for us.” I could adapt this remark to the field of ECA-LEP: “ECA-LEP might seem out of place in January of 2019, as we finish our report, but it is evident that this report can help reduce social inequalities in health.” It’s plain to see that ECA-LEP can protect the health of the parent-child bond, support parents, nourish the child early on, and thus encourage equality for everyone. It is a global tool for fighting social inequalities in health—a universal approach of social pacification.

We were thrilled to hear that the SFSP wants to expand beyond traditional themes of preventative health (alcoholism, tobacco) to focus on social suffering as well, an evolution that it sees as necessary in order to allow everyone access to a fulfilling parenthood.

- For our reflection, we selected several inescapable observations about social inequality that support our arguments:
- Gaps are growing, even though there is an overall increase in health.
- Social inequalities in health (ISS) are spreading at a more local level, in regions and neighborhoods.
- Social differences are seen in many determining indicators for life expectancy.
- The ISS are more pronounced in the least equal societies.

From where we sit, we have indeed noted for years that social inequalities in health, contrary to popular belief, are not necessarily synonymous with precarity, poverty, and social exclusion. This is why these inequalities drive us to more broadly redefine the idea of precarity by focusing on the Subject’s construction, independent of social standing. Therefore, familial exclusion is a type of precarity; the same is true of abundance that deprives the Subject of relationships. One’s life path should always be taken into account.

“Given this connection between the indicators of social position and health, we have two strategies,” wrote the SFSP:

“We can choose to concentrate our resources on those who are most disadvantaged, those who are excluded, those who have the most health problems, and thus reach a small slice of the population. Or we can put the emphasis on the social gradient, which affects everyone, and try to adapt our interventions to where population subgroups fit into the social gradient. The latter would imply universal

123 Assistant to the director of the “Santé des populations” department of the Direction générale de la santé.

interventions, for everyone, that would always be adjusted to the needs and type of disadvantage of individuals and of their social groups. This is what we call proportional universalism, meaning that we offer universal interventions while making sure to focus on actions that help break down barriers to access.”

We do suggest taking care when applying this idea, and agree with Didier Houzel’s doubt that we should measure parental inequalities by looking at them through the lens of the social gradient, because we risk stigmatizing certain populations:

“There are no norms when it comes to parenthood—none that are well-defined, as there often are in terms of economic resources, cultural knowledge, or physical health. The socioeconomic gradient cannot serve as the only point of reference in this sphere. I do not believe that one should be ignorant of it, but I think that it shouldn’t be the only benchmark.”<sup>124</sup>

Take the example of Shaken Baby Syndrome: Such situations, tied to the most severe parental dysfunction, are equally prevalent across the social spectrum.<sup>125</sup> Here, factors besides socioeconomics seem to act as triggers.

By the same token, in an approach limited to the social gradient, there is a high risk of stigmatization. We know that all parents, as they begin to form connections with their children, at times feel they aren’t up to the task and often dismiss their own abilities. But this doubt, this questioning, could inform our understanding of a parent’s capacity to support their child’s construction. “Not knowing” allows one to look closer at what’s at play in interactions with the child, what provokes behavioral changes. For a parent, “fumbling forward” is the pathway to success, proof of a certain inner security: It shows a capacity to tackle questions head-on without getting caught up in fears of being a bad parent. The 2013 IGAS report<sup>126</sup> suggests presuming that parents are competent so as not to stigmatize them. It proposes organizing parental support according to a principle of universality, similar to the proportional

universalism recommended by the SFSP.

The mother, the father, the parental partnership: These form the frame for relational, psychic, and psycho-affective development. They are containers, in Wilfred Bion’s sense of the word.<sup>127</sup> To quote Didier Houzel:

“So, all that disturbs the mother’s emotional equilibrium, firstly, and then that of the parents—complicating their ability to communicate with each other and question themselves if necessary—represents a risk to their parenthood. Parents, through their educational acts, pass on to their children a language, a culture, knowledge, and values that school and education will continue teaching outside of the family circle. But they first pass on an emotional environment, an intimacy, an ability to share the same universe—psychologist Daniel Stern calls this ‘being-with’—all of which forms the basis for personality, and is thus irreplaceable.”<sup>128</sup>

This is why taking the time to care for newly-born parents, for the bond they build with their child, is in itself an investment in the future.

The WHO encourages this commitment early in the child’s life through its project, “Closing the gap in a generation,”<sup>129</sup> which Julie Poissant discussed during the SFSP seminar. The section of her presentation titled “Take Action from Early Childhood” reminds us that:

- One of the most promising measures toward reducing social inequalities in health within one generation is investing in the first years of life (WHO, 2009).
- Giving all children a chance to start life on a good foot should be the highest priority for policies aiming to reduce health inequalities (Marmot et al., 2010)
- Prioritizing a good beginning in life means (WHO, 2014; Morisson et al., BMC Public Health, 2014):
- care and services before and during birth to ensure a healthy outcome
- adequate social support for families
- helping build warm and conscientious family environments
- universal health and education services that are affordable and of high quality
- benevolent and stimulating environments

---

124 Didier Houzel, “Les inégalités parentales se mesurent-elles à travers le gradient social?” Cited in the SFSP report, “Accompagnement à la parentalité et inégalités sociales de santé,” September 12, 2016.

125 A. Tursz, “Prévenir la maltraitance des enfants par le renforcement du rôle des médecins et de la coordination entre secteurs professionnels,” report by the follow-up committee of the Colloque national sur les violences faites aux enfants, October 2014, p. 143.

126 B. Jacquey-Vasquez, M. Raymond, P. Sitruk, “Évaluation de la politique de soutien à la parentalité,” IGAS report, RM2013-015P, February 2013, p. 201.

---

127 W. Bion, *Learning from Experience*, William Heinemann, 1962.

128 Didier Houzel, “Les inégalités parentales se mesurent-elles à travers le gradient social?” *Op. cit.*

129 WHO, “Closing the gap in a generation,” 2009.

All of these reflections, made by prestigious public service institutions, demonstrate that it is impossible to separate “support for parenthood” from “early acknowledgment of the little one.” The documents that have recommended support for parenthood since 1999 insist on applying this concept universally. Universality means that the methods we develop should address all strata of the population, without regard to social, economic, or cultural status—a similar approach to that used by the PMIs (support centers for mothers and children) since 1945, matching the theory behind universally-applied health visits like the one during the fourth month of pregnancy.

The Three A's policy and its Cultural Health approach propose that ECA-LEP should become a means of offering universal preventative health actions to all segments of the population, without distinction between social, economic, or cultural status. ECA-LEP is a mechanism for fighting social inequalities in health (ISS), improving global health and encouraging social cohesion.

#### 4. Conceptualizing Cultural Health for the Three A's Policy by Connecting ECA-LEP to Perinatal Measures

The World Health Organization defines *perinatal* as the period between the 28<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy and the seventh day after birth. In reality, the term covers a longer span of time: It includes all that arises during pregnancy, birth and the neonatal period. The goal is to find a way to ensure that pregnancy and birth play out in the best-possible conditions, as well as to prevent health problems for the child and mother after birth. These moments of great psychic reshuffling require a special type of attention, as we discussed earlier in the report. Perinatal measures are therefore among our concerns and subject to regulation.

Instruction n° DGOS/PF3/R3/DGS/MC1/2015/227, pertaining to the update of and coordination between the missions of regional perinatal health networks, was issued July 3, 2015. It provides a set of requirements to the regional health agencies, which is intended to help facilitate this harmonization and cooperation. It offers a template for multiyear contracts regarding shared objectives and approaches between those agencies and the perinatal health networks, and replaces the memorandum issued March 30, 2006.

Israël Nisand, professor of gynecology and president of the National Association of French Gynecologists and Obstetricians (CNGOF), describes women's mental fragility during the process of becoming a mother. Referring to the work of Dr. Alain Grégoire,<sup>130</sup> he notes that the primary cause of maternal mortality is not hemorrhage during delivery, embolism, cardiac issues, or infections—it is suicide. The CNGOF thus decided to work with pediatric psychiatrists to help shed light on the basic needs shared by all women in terms of psychic health. In addition, there have been alarming observations of depression's effects on children, and a correlation between maternal depression and adolescent depression. These issues require an urgent response.

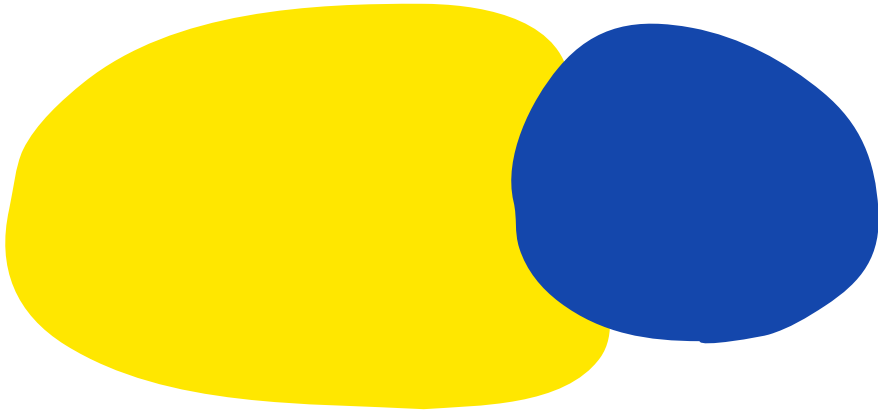
In the United Kingdom, one third of the funding for British psychiatric reform (2015-2020) was allocated toward perinatal mental health and psychiatry, after a successful advocacy campaign. A true shift in awareness laid the groundwork for this financial commitment, a symbol of governmental will to extend a helping hand during the perinatal period. In France, the funds that the Perinatal Plan (Plan périnatalité) dedicated to ensuring the presence of psychologists in maternity wards represented five percent of the third plan (2005-2007).

Aware that the statistics on maternal health are disquieting, the CNGOF wants to push France toward the British model. Indeed, in France, out of 800,000 annual births:

“1,600 are followed by postpartum depression requiring hospitalization  
1,600 involve mothers with histories of chronic mental issues and require psychiatric hospitalization  
24,000 are followed by severe depression  
24,000 are followed by severe anxiety, sometimes associated with posttraumatic stress  
80,000 are followed by moderate depression and/or anxiety  
120,000 are followed by difficulty adapting, with a reaction of distress”<sup>131</sup>

130 President of the Alliance pour la santé mentale maternelle périnatale (MMHA); director of the “Everyone's Business” campaign; consultant perinatal psychiatrist and honorary senior lecturer at the University of Southampton; first president of the United Kingdom and Ireland Marcé Society.

131 Presentation by Michel Dugnat, Journée scientifique du réseau Méditerranée, Université Toulon Lagarde, 22 June 2018.



In other words, out of 800,000 births, 251,200 (or 32%) require special attention due to destabilizations of varying degree tied to pregnancy or birth. The number is striking enough to merit the attention of the National Authority for Health (HAS), which should take a step back to look at the realities of childbirth and mental health.

In its 40<sup>th</sup> newsletter, dated July to September, 2014, the HAS notes the objective of this health program:

“Guarantee the continuity of care between home and hospital, coordinate the interventions of the concerned parties, consider the health impact of elements such as environment, lifestyle, socio-professional background... These should be the goals of care.”

The objective, beyond achieving greater efficiency in the health system, is to guarantee patients a holistic treatment approach without interruption, as close as possible to where they live and adapted to their situations.

“In the field of perinatal care, the health planning begins when the parents start planning a pregnancy and continue through the return home of mother and child. It consists of five steps: before conception; the antenatal period (with an early prenatal visit, birth preparation sessions, clinical and paraclinical follow-up...); the birth and time spent in the maternity ward; early postnatal follow-up at home; and finally, the accompaniment of mother and child through the months after birth.”

We wish to include ECA-LEP in steps two through five of this process, and to make Cultural Health a central element of these recommendations. A cultural policy with a social dimension would thus build preventative health into the existing rules.

Humanizing care and welcome—as well as attention to the mother’s and father’s words and needs as they await the child, when it arrives, and during the postnatal period—would be considered as freestanding elements of health. This is what I championed in 2013 at the National Institute for Prevention and Health Education (INPES) within my group of experts; I described the great potential in the link between health and parenthood. To me, the wellbeing of our connections and of our relationships represent our century’s great health challenge. And I define this wellbeing in terms of Cultural Health. Connection to children is central to their overall health, which needs attention, prevention and care. It is the liaison between health and parenthood.

The Three A’s policy, by introducing the ECA-LEP approach as one of the missions of perinatal health networks, reinforces the attention given to mothers, to fathers, to children born and soon to be born. Cultural Health is the liaison between health and parenthood.

## 5. Toward a Cultural Policy with a Social Dimension that Considers Environmental and Ecological Issues, for the Benefit of Children

There is no divide between children and nature. Children thrive in natural environments, whose ecology carries awakening and wellbeing. We point to a large body of research highlighting the benefits of nature for children and for humans in general, as we cut to the chase: One cannot speak of nature without speaking of children, and vice-versa. In our eyes, ecologists often miss the mark on this issue. They think of environment as something external, rather than the selfsame process of which we are made. In the spirit of Gilles Deleuze,<sup>132</sup> we advocate for a cultural policy with a social dimension that endeavors to emphasize the *becoming* of our children rather than *what they become*. While the former leaves a well-deserved space for desire and invites creativity, the latter represents what society projects onto children.

Naturally, when we mention environment, up pops the question of urban landscape. We believe that the role of nature in our cities should be viewed in terms of cities' relationships with children: Where do children fit into our towns? Is there an awareness of the child's needs for healthy development?

Uniting the ideas of the playful city and the green city would give birth to a town where kids could grow up while taking pleasure in environments that fulfill their needs, which are not limited to ecological ones. This means considering the cultural environment as a vehicle for meeting children's expectations.

While I was assembling this report, a mother—who had heard about my commission through the publisher Bayard Presse—emailed me to share her reflections on improving children's surroundings. She discussed the idea with her two kids, aged three and five, whom she is raising in a city with over a million inhabitants, and passed on some of the resulting suggestions:

- Drastically reduce car traffic to make the city environment simply “livable.”
- Add more space (when possible) between traffic lanes and sidewalks/bike paths—for example, by planting low bushes

that create a small barrier between humans and cars.

- Plant fruit trees (heirloom varieties of regional trees, and especially fruit bushes) in ALL possible public places to create as direct a connection as possible with the nature recounted in stories and fairytales (seasons, fruits, etc.). Offer opportunities to pick blackberries or raspberries on the way to school.
- Make all spaces accessible to strollers and wheelchairs by lowering sidewalks and access ramps, as well as to little ones by creating spaces more adapted to their size (ramps, modified stairs, handles).
- Integrate playful designs into every renovated sidewalk or paved surface (hopscotch games, treasure hunts, checkerboards...).
- Include water (fountains, water games, flowing streams) as much as possible to provide a way for those stuck in urban environments to cool down, in anticipation of climate change.
- Make spaces greener (by planting trees) to protect from summer heat and encourage people to come outside despite it, with benches and lawn bowling courts for the elderly, for example.
- Add music to certain emblematic places (see the musical bridge of Salzburg, for an example) to create a pleasant association each time one passes through that space.

These suggestions align with the thinking of Dutch geographer and urbanist Gerben Helleman,<sup>133</sup> who founds his work on three questions:

“Why make the city more accessible and playful for children? What are the goals/reasons? How to make the city playful? What are the conditions/criteria for making this happen? In concrete terms, what form can this playful transformation take to benefit the youngest kids?”

To respond to the first question, Helleman reminds us that, by playing outside, children develop their capacity to learn and their problem-solving skills. Thanks to this exploration of the public space, their inner resources are stimulated; using powers of observation, they identify objects, shapes, colors, spaces, and absorb many experiences (speed or balance on a bike, swing or toboggan).

132 Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, Flammarion, series “Champs Essais,” 1996.

133 See his blog, Urban Springtime: [urbanspringtime.blogspot.com/2018/07/playable-cities-what.html](http://urbanspringtime.blogspot.com/2018/07/playable-cities-what.html).

On a relational level, children interact with other people and develop their linguistic abilities. The public space is a learning tool that helps the smallest kids to build their own identities:

“Playing games with other children also teaches them to show empathy and how to deal with losing and disappointment. [...] Walking or cycling through and playing in a neighborhood make kids more aware of their environment. It enriches their spatial cognition and mapping abilities. It gives them a sense of place and makes them in a way ‘streetwise,’ creating the ability to navigate and experience a city.”

Finally, Helleman notes that playing outside has a positive impact on health. Regular physical activity reinforces endurance and physical capacities, and reduces the risk of developing chronic illnesses.

Regarding the question of “how,” Helleman expands the idea of a playful city, adapted to the littlest ones, beyond the bounds of playgrounds. All public spaces should become truly playful places—courtyards, gardens, parks, plazas, sidewalks, etc.—because kids can play anywhere. At the same time, certain preconditions should be met. At the scale of a city, Helleman maintains that the placement and quantity of playful spaces adapted to young children are two factors for success. Enough spaces, properly located, must be planned in terms of accessibility and proximity to major infrastructure and public facilities. Without these basics, children will not be permitted to travel there by their own means. Public space must be made attractive both to parents and to children through cleanliness, comfortable urban furniture, maintenance, and visually-interesting design. Gardens or water features that offer shade and refreshment and attract animals help achieve this impression (trees, lawns, prairies, flowerbeds, fountains, etc.). Beyond these basic needs, a playful space becomes popular through a diverse selection of games for all ages. The play space should be stimulating and encourage exploration and imagination, and visits should be facilitated by efforts to be accessible.

Helleman then details approximately 100 proposals for designing a playful city. He suggests making towns more compact, reducing travel distances, making them more accessible, and diversifying use, in order to render public spaces attractive and dynamic. Sometimes, minimal, low-cost interventions like drawings on the ground can create play spaces. This is the big idea behind the cleanup campaign underway since July, 2018 in Lille, which brings together playfulness

and civic-mindedness. *Nudges* (stencils) of hopscotch, footsteps, or other playful images are strategically placed near public trash cans. The act of throwing something away becomes a game. Attractive and lighthearted, this civic campaign feels fun, avoids guilt-tripping, and recognizes that it takes work to keep a city clean. It’s an educational approach for the youngest kids.

In addition to this effort to develop a playful city, making a city green is a way to respect future generations by taking into account their fundamental needs. A “sustainable” city means greening urban landscapes, be they public spaces or private buildings: roofs and facades, sidewalks, working spaces... In this way, cities move toward becoming *green* in the literal sense of the word. In parallel, *green buildings* offer urban vegetation while responding to occupants’ desire for wellbeing, energy efficiency, and increased biodiversity.

The environmental benefits of such urban vegetation are plentiful and well-known: absorption of heat islands, better soil drainage, reduced pollution, added biodiversity, contribution to the blue and green infrastructure that forms ecological corridors... In France, local governments have already developed ambitious revegetation strategies, and the Paris’ objective of 100 hectares of green roofs and walls by 2020 has been recognized as a “green” commitment.

Finally, there is “the experience of being in the world,” to borrow the expression of landscape painter Hélène Ruffenach.<sup>134</sup> An experience of seasons that transform weather into colors, smells, the promise of good food, morphing this movement of “being in the world” into a sensory and eye-opening experience. Reading Ruffenach’s writings, we start to ask ourselves about our green cities: As towns reinvent themselves, will they know how to impart green spaces with the maturative quality that the seasons offer humans? Will they carry on the movement that inspires attention to nature—the movement we must pass on to our children so that they can, in turn, “interact with and on behalf of nature?”

With this hope in mind, we repeat our enthusiasm about the AGAPI childcare centers, who champion nature as the child’s ally. We implore that rules about hygiene and security not counteract the needs of our little ones. We would love to see regularly-held hikes through nature, forests, fields, coastal trails, seashores, wild gardens, and mountains, for kids at all types of childcare centers.

---

134 Hélène Ruffenach. “Tout commence en hiver.” unpublished text. See Annex 22 in original report.



The city of La Rochelle planned to put on a child-oriented ecological festival in 2020, in partnership with Éric de Kermel of Bayard Presse, who directs the “Bayard Nature and Regions” imprint; we find that this project fits perfectly with our mission. De Kermel’s decades-long commitment to promoting nature is seen in many organizations across France. Over the years, he has reminded us that we must let children form close connections with nature, by adapting where they spend their time, improving their rapport with the earth, with plants, with the world of animals. As one example, recesses in concrete schoolyards could be replaced with walks outside.

Among the initiatives benefitting the environment on a global scale, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity has, since 2011, inspired big cities like Singapore, New York, Montreal, and Toronto to dedicate an increasing number of roofs to urban agriculture:

“These ‘vegetation strategies’ [...] [are a] very specific form of vegetation. Promoting short circuits, [they invite] us to rethink the relationship between cities and their surrounding countryside while creating jobs and innovation. Urban agriculture is the epitome of how environmental, social, and economic issues can join forces in a single activity and fit perfectly within the urban environment.”<sup>135</sup>

In his 1996 report,<sup>136</sup> Jean-François Mattei expounded at length on the importance of ensuring a good environment for children. We are assuming the mantle of this interest in small citizens—still developing—who have their own needs that must be protected. “It seems to us that their small size most doubtless make this world seem like it is built for giants,” writes Mattei as he discusses the child pedestrian. He highlights the primordial role that “paths” play in the socialization of the child, because “wandering means weaving connections.” The path leads children from their *private space*, embodied in their home, to the *collective space* represented by places nearby (the apartment building, neighborhood, or childcare center where they spend their day)—“the aesthetics of surroundings are no doubt part of the child’s quality of life”—and finally to the *public space*, comprised of parks, markets, libraries, downtowns, etc.

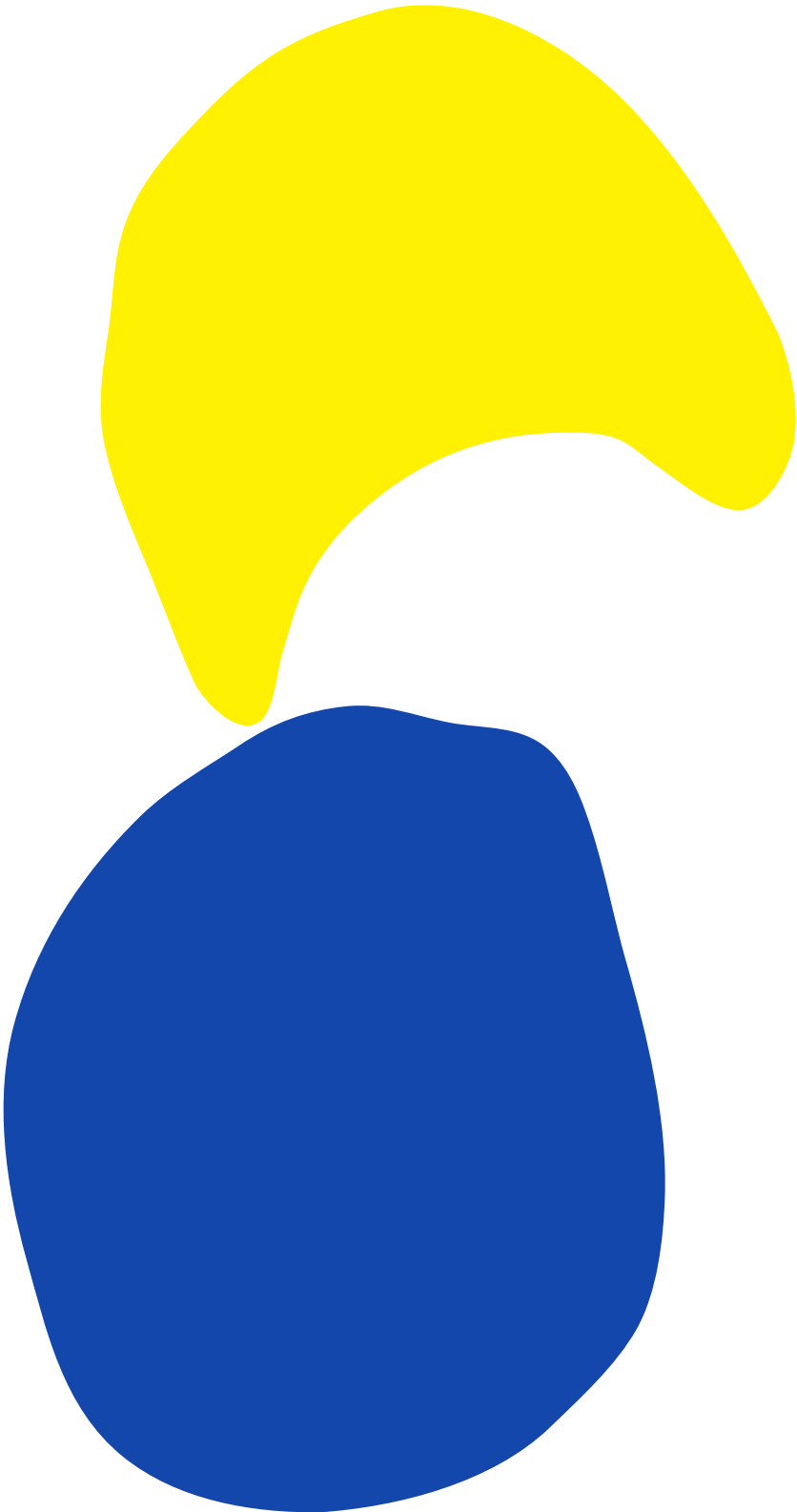
This vision has the merit of considering the role of walking in children’s lives; their extreme need to live in places that respect their sensitivity; the way they experience the world through their senses, emotions, and motions; and their yearning for beauty, poetry, and the aesthetic. Mattei’s report remains relevant from cover to cover, and was one of my main inspirations as I reflected on the Cultural Health of the child.

Additionally, as the Ministry of Culture and the association France urbaine are currently collaborating on the project “Cultural Capitals of France” (“Capitales françaises de la culture”), we suggest including certain obligations for cities who apply for such classification. In addition to connecting citizens of the most culturally-deprived areas to permanent cultural initiatives—an act of solidarity—they should offer a cultural program for children starting at birth, in the style of Charleroi’s “City Built for Babies” initiative (“Ville bébés admis”). Of course, the connection here between culture and nature strikes us as absolutely essential. With the first year of the program planned for 2021, it is time to think about including this request on behalf of our youngest citizens and their parents. Incorporating our youngest citizens into a project of this caliber would confirm the baby’s personhood, Subjecthood, and status as a cultural being.

A cultural policy with a social dimension should adapt our shared spaces and recognize babies’ role in them. The Three A’s policy champions the importance of creating private, collective, and public spaces that take Cultural Health into account, which includes environment and nature among its highest priorities. We would like to see these perspectives integrated in the selection process for “Cultural Capitals of France” for 2021.

135 ■■■ [knowledge.essec.edu/en/sustainability/video-green-city-explained-3-minutes.html](https://knowledge.essec.edu/en/sustainability/video-green-city-explained-3-minutes.html)

136 Jean-François Mattei, “Les liens entre la santé et l’environnement, notamment chez l’enfant,” report filed with the office of the President of the National Assembly, 22 February 1996, n° 2588.



# Toward a Cultural Policy with a Social Dimension

D



A cultural policy with a social dimension benefitting our very young children and their parents means a preventative approach involving a reflection of the highest quality, an ambitious effort that brings together our public institutions. The Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the Ministry of Solidarity and Health, could facilitate dialogues on the realm of parenthood and the parent-child bond. Our ministries, our places of governance, could become spaces where we gather the questions raised by this policy of attention. This would lead to formalizing new protocols to build a universal set of resources available to children under three and to their parents.

Such a policy hinges on a new approach to health, to the health of our bonds, to the culture of our humanity, and to our process of humanization—the great challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As early as 1996, Jean-François Mattei was calling for a broader definition of health:

“When we speak of health, we cannot be satisfied with simply trying to prevent illnesses. We must also include a quest for better living conditions, so that human beings can reach a state of contentment far beyond a purely physical accomplishment. As we have already seen, humans are distinguished from all other living beings by a spiritual life and by their social behavior. Thus, it is important that they be able to reach fulfilment in these areas so they can wholly realize their humanity.”<sup>137</sup>

By defining health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity,” the World Health Organization significantly enlarged this idea by pushing health’s many dimensions to the forefront and extricating it from the limited concept of bodily integrity.

The new public health challenge I refer to in my work<sup>138</sup> directly associates the need to envision health broadly, as stated by the WHO, and the need to include the health of our connections—Cultural Health—as a means to fight the harmful effects of modernity. The cultural malnutrition described in this report raises questions about children’s right to health protections, by reminding us of their environmental needs for growth (physical, sensory, spatial, psychological, relational...). Public authorities are responsible for collectively protecting their populations against health risks. This responsibility corresponds to the new urgency that this report promotes.

The situation is even more pressing, as humans seem to be losing sight of their primary needs—the needs of childhood, in other words, and early childhood specifically. The more we use our intelligence to advance technology, the more we deny our origins as speaking beings. Children are impacted first, especially babies: They bear the brunt of this galloping modernity that whisks away their development.

Throughout this report, we have emphasized the necessity of opening kids’ eyes, of defending our tale-telling species, of accepting that we can’t always do everything—for example, “moving fast *and* growing up well.” Speed and child development do not mix well, and the effects on children are immediate. If we continue to deny today that the impoverishment of our bonds impoverishes our beings as well, we will wake up tomorrow facing that reality as our dominant health concern.

We will save neither the planet nor humans if we don’t form a common viewpoint on their respective—and often shared—needs. Pablo Servigne and Gauthier Chapelle demonstrated this for us: The living world is also one of bonds, of mutual aid. Our intelligence, which can turn into greed, must not shut out our origins. Such a fine line separates forgetfulness and denial,

---

137 Jean-François Mattei, “Les liens entre la santé et l’environnement, notamment chez l’enfant,” *op. cit.*

---

138 This is an expression that I use to denote the health of bonds in all of my public communications.

and we must do all we can to stay on the right side of it. Denial of our senses, of our emotions, of otherness,<sup>139</sup> of the reality of life, is a plague that cleaves humans from their own humanity and causes them to risk their lives.

You can't teach children to love nature; you must put them in situations to feel it, to share it. We must unite environment and growing up like two good friends.

You can't teach children to love the arts; you open them to the life of the sensory, of the aesthetic. Some children will become artists; others will enjoy appreciating, practicing, or experimenting with art. Together they will form the cultural world.

You can't teach children to respect others; you model attention to each person's needs by awakening bonds. This supports an anchoring that helps build peaceful human relationships.

You can't train children to be human; you accompany the little ones in their development. Awakening comes first. On this basis, education will take form and continue the child's growth.

And so, we want to reformulate the question of rights in our national and international texts by including the right to awakening.

In the spirit of Cultural Health, we propose formalizing, most importantly at the national level, a cultural policy with a social dimension following the principle of the Three A's, which encompasses the first chapter<sup>140</sup> of the child's life:

- the Awaited child, soon to be born
- the Accommodated child, just born
- the Accompanied child, as the little one grows up

We call on the government to adopt a courageous objective: to implement a Three A's policy for 100% of parents and children. Because we truly need courage to confront the dark side of our modernity and see clearly how it affects our Subject.

Cultural and artistic awakening within the parent-child bond (ECA-LEP), a vehicle for delivering nourishment as called for by Cultural Health, would thus be recognized as an ongoing public policy, with a budgetary allotment facilitating its development at the regional level. In this way, the national government would encourage local ones to invest in ECA-LEP and would ensure an equal

distribution of offerings and initiatives in all areas of France, in accordance with the principle of universality.

Through the Ministry of Culture, the government would create a promotional campaign for ECA-LEP in the spirit of popular education. It would take the form of posters; of pamphlets available for download from the Ministry's website, aimed at parents and professionals; and of short preventative health videos that explain the stakes of ECA-LEP, a powerful tool for the child's growth and for social pacification. In tandem with the Ministry of Health, initiatives would be started that bring together an approach of physical health with that of ECA-LEP. On this question, the PMIs would be a creative force, welcoming all families in a spirit of universality.

But we must set our sights above all on a regional ECA-LEP network so that 100% of children between birth and three and their parents can benefit from cultural nutrition. The CNAF could spread the word to the public about ECA-LEP initiatives and finance the most effective initiatives for fighting social inequalities in health (ISS), as recommended by the SFSP—this means early intervention and support for parenthood.

Mark these words: Caring for children is caring for our society. Professor Mattei speaks thus of "child sentinels": When a child's health suffers, it is urgent to take steps to prevent possible consequences to their health and that of adults. In this way, the child acts as the one who "sounds the alarm as a sentinel would."

Let's get the big picture of our children's health needs by introducing a public health policy that includes Cultural Health. Because we all know that, if we don't make public health policy our priority, the most vulnerable suffer the consequences.

---

139 My work on what I called the "denial of pregnancy" touches on the overall effects of denial. My first work on the subject is *De l'une à l'autre : de la grossesse à l'abandon*, Hommes et Perspectives, 1996.

140 Expression of Sylvain Missonnier, professor of psychology, when he describes the different periods of child development.

# First “A”: A Cultural Policy with a Social Dimension for “Awaiting”

Birth into parenthood and birth into life: simultaneous emergences that overwhelm each protagonist. A cultural policy with a social dimension for “Awaiting” considers and makes room for this time of vulnerability as much on a material level as on a human one.

Given that parents are vulnerable while awaiting the child, as each adult experiences an inner reorganization toward their new roles;

Given that preparation for birth requires attention to the bonds that mother and father create with the expected child;

Given that prenatal bonds play a role in postnatal relationships;

Given that nature tends to ease stress and anxiety, and generally contributes to wellbeing;

Given that pregnancy, in its process of psychic growth, induces a need to conceptualize the baby so as to make it exist and envision its birth;

Six recommendations have been developed for the first “A”—as in “Await”—of this cultural policy with a social dimension.

## Recommendation n° 48

The commission recommends expanding birth preparation classes to include Cultural Health’s approach of artistic and cultural awakening: Reading, dance, and music are all moments that prepare parents for the birth and improve the quality of connection with the expected child. The commission also recommends including ECA-LEP initiatives in the standard instructions of the Haute Autorité de Santé (French National Authority for Health) and the Plan périnatalité (Perinatal Plan).

## Recommendation n° 49

The commission recommends facilitating artists’ participation in the curricula of birth preparation classes via framework agreements between the Ministry of Solidarity and Health and the Ministry of Culture. The experiment of the dancer Anne-Laure Rouxel in preparing the pregnant body for childbirth is an exemplary collaboration between ECA-LEP and health.

## Recommendation n° 50

The commission recommends sensitizing the medical profession to the cultural dimension of birth and adding a certification in Cultural Health to the continuing education for doctors. This would allow a merging of medical and cultural objectives, aiding both the birth of the child and of the parent.

## Recommendation n° 51

The commission recommends including in the training of future medical professionals (doctors, specialists, midwives, nurses) and of childhood

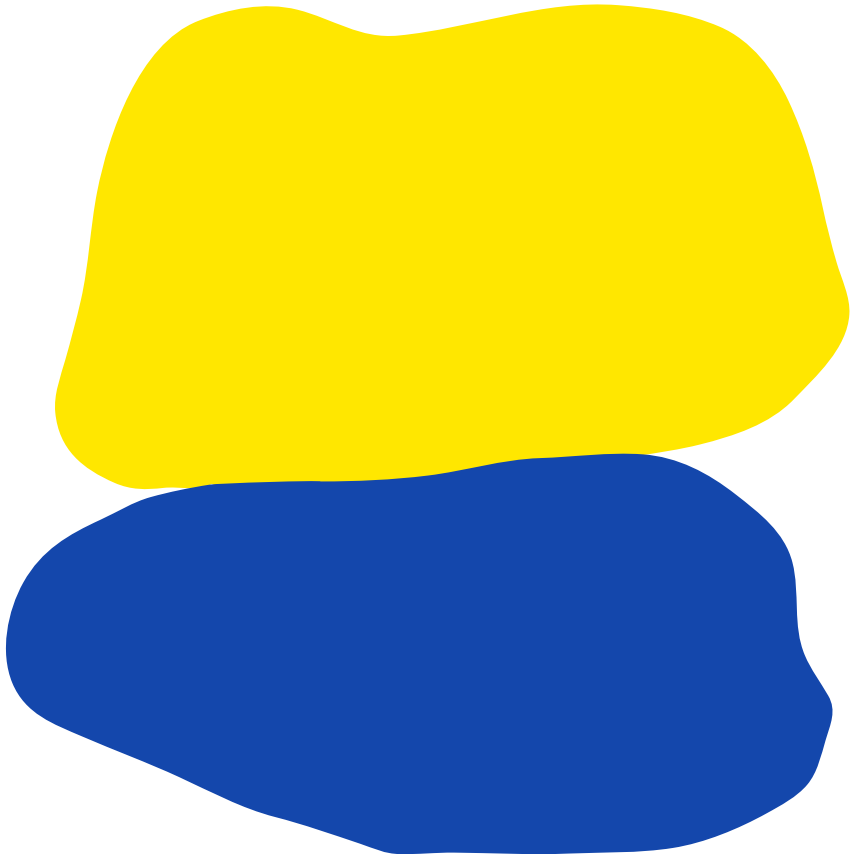
professionals (educators of young children, those who work in special education, nursery workers and assistants, and home-based daycares) an obligatory module on Cultural Health based on ECA-LEP.

🏔 **Recommendation nº 52**

The commission recommends designing the physical spaces in centers for expectant parents (maternity wards, birthing centers) to encourage bonding; organizing contests among young architects to this end; and seeing birth as a cultural beginning that nourishes bonds, an understanding that should be symbolized in the architecture.

🏔 **Recommendation nº 53**

The commission recommends thinking of parks and gardens as vital to the needs of future parents. All studies confirm the need for green spaces, trees, and natural life to promote peace and fight stress. To these ends, the commission recommends bringing representatives of the Ministry of Solidarity and Health, of Culture and of Territorial Planning around the same table—cooperation crucial to envisioning how to bring together birthing places and natural spaces.





# Second “A”: A Cultural Policy with a Social Dimension for “Accommodating”

Our children are in good physical health. Advice on hygiene, nutrition, childcare methods, and medical exams plays a regular role in their lives. But the question of healthy bonds, of healthy relationships—which begin with self-knowledge and recognition of others—is not even on the agenda. Just look at our kids’ health record booklets: To this day, they make no mention of psychological development, nor do they mention their needs for awakening (sensory, motor, linguistic, playful, symbolic, metaphorical...).

And yet, throughout this report, we have illustrated the poor health of our connections and the new public health challenge of improving that wellbeing. We have emphasized the consequences of cultural malnutrition, which is often associated with poor relational health in children. The monoculture of the screen; the tyranny of instant gratification; increased dissatisfaction; individualism, and its resulting isolation—a perfect storm of injurious impacts on the health of our bonds. In these troubled times, we must have the courage to stand up to this version of modernity with a fresh perspective on our 20<sup>th</sup>-century model.

Given that our children suffer from cultural malnutrition;

Given that mothers leave the maternity ward just 48 hours after giving birth and that over 32% of them exhibit signs of suffering with risk of serious psychological consequences;

Given that fathers are still treated as “guests”<sup>141</sup> during the prenatal and postnatal periods and receive no specific attention;

Given that parental presence provides an irreplaceable emotional environment central to the little one’s identity construction;

Given that a cultural policy with a social dimension is a proactive approach to reaching all people;

Given that all health institutions recognize that early intervention and accompaniment of parenthood are two particularly effective strategies for reducing social inequalities in health (ISS);

Six recommendations have been developed for the second “A”—as in “Accomodate”—of this cultural policy with a social dimension.

## Recommendation n° 54

The commission recommends that, during the short stay in a maternity ward, parents be welcomed culturally through attention to the aesthetic of the premises: rooms for reading and music, green spaces, convivial places for exchange, family nooks, and more.

## Recommendation n° 55

The commission recommends developing agreements between the ministries of Health and of Culture in order to promote opportunities for ECA-LEP in all hospitals for young children, maternity wards, neonatal and pediatric departments, hospitals for children and mothers, etc.

## Recommendation n° 56

The commission recommends rethinking the child’s health record booklet. Example additions could include fields for the development of sensory, motor, language and play skills. At the end of the booklet, a space could be reserved for parents’ notes regarding the child’s period of awakening. (Example introduction:

---

141 Term used by fathers in *Devenir mère, devenir père*, published by Les Pâtes au beurre, *op. cit.*

“Your child grows and marvels throughout their first years. Their awakening activities are essential to their development. For both your own memories and your child’s annual consultation, you can list: their first music, their first book, their favorite park, their first concert, their first performance, their first exhibition, their first dance steps, etc.”)

#### Recommendation n° 57

The commission recommends that, following the Anglo-Saxon model and in line with the Plan périnatalité (Perinatal Plan), a qualified professional pay home visits each week for the first six weeks after leaving the maternity ward. During this visit, the parents would be given a booklet summarizing resource centers and other practical information: PMIs, locations of ECA-LEP, LAEPs, “Pâtes au beurre” family spaces, game libraries, media libraries, cultural associations, etc.

#### Recommendation n° 58

The commission recommends that particular attention be paid to very young children who have been removed from their families, so that parental visits can include ECA-LEP initiatives. This connection-building approach is essential to restoring quality relationships. The same goes for maternal centers, where a method focused on the mother-father-baby relationship is essential.

#### Recommendation n° 59

The commission recommends that the CNAF (National Office for Family Allocations) take stock of the holistic health needs of the child between birth and three years old and look closer at how to best accompany the parent-child relationship in the spirit of Cultural Health.

# Third “A”: A Cultural Policy with a Social Dimension for “Accompanying”

By prioritizing its most vulnerable members, a society shows true awareness of our fundamental human needs. It affirms the importance of cultural rights and recognizes that social suffering is cultural at its root, embodying this in the policy of attention that this report recommends. The baby, the very young child, and the adult navigating the path to—and of—parenthood all belong to these vulnerable populations that we must accompany.

We have seen that young children need a story in order to begin their self-construction. Not simply a genetic explanation, but a relational legend woven with their parents, with childhood professionals, with the adults around them. These grownups should help orient the little ones within their family narratives, their social groups, and their cultures, feeding their narrativity and providing the experiences on which their future depends.

According to Serge Lebovici, when children look at their mothers, they actually see the latter looking at them.<sup>142</sup> This dynamic establishes the narcissism (in the Freudian sense) of mother and child. Where does our society stand on this adult/child narcissism? Today, this dynamic seems to suffer from “narcissistic injury.” This is what we are led to believe, in any case, by the many negative observations we hear regarding our children and adolescents.

In addition, consideration of little ones and their parents, and accompaniment of their early bonds through sensory

encounters, represent pathways to intergenerational reconciliation that we fully believe in.

Given that the baby is a cultural being;  
Given that the little ones and their parents construct a dialogue, throughout their lives, that requires community attention;

Given that Cultural Health is a concrete way of providing the attention crucial to human beings’ holistic health;

Given that awareness of vulnerabilities in the parent-child bond is a question of Cultural Health;

Six recommendations have been developed for the third “A”—as in “Accompany”—of this cultural policy with a social dimension.

## Recommendation n°60

The commission recommends that each PMI greet parents and children with professional book readings in waiting rooms. These opportunities would respond to the need for early intervention and support of parenting, two ways of reducing social health inequalities.

## Recommendation n°61

The commission recommends the implementation of a long annual consultation (billed like a one-hour consultation with a specialist) to assess the Cultural Health of children during their first six years. This consultation enables a global monitoring of children’s health.

## Recommendation n°62

The commission recommends developing ECA-LEP initiatives across France by providing cultural associations and

142 Serge Lebovici and Émile Noël, *En l’homme le bébé*, Flammarion, 1994.

to troupes, artists, and theaters with the means to respond to the early cultural needs of small children and their parents.

🏔 **Recommendation n°63**

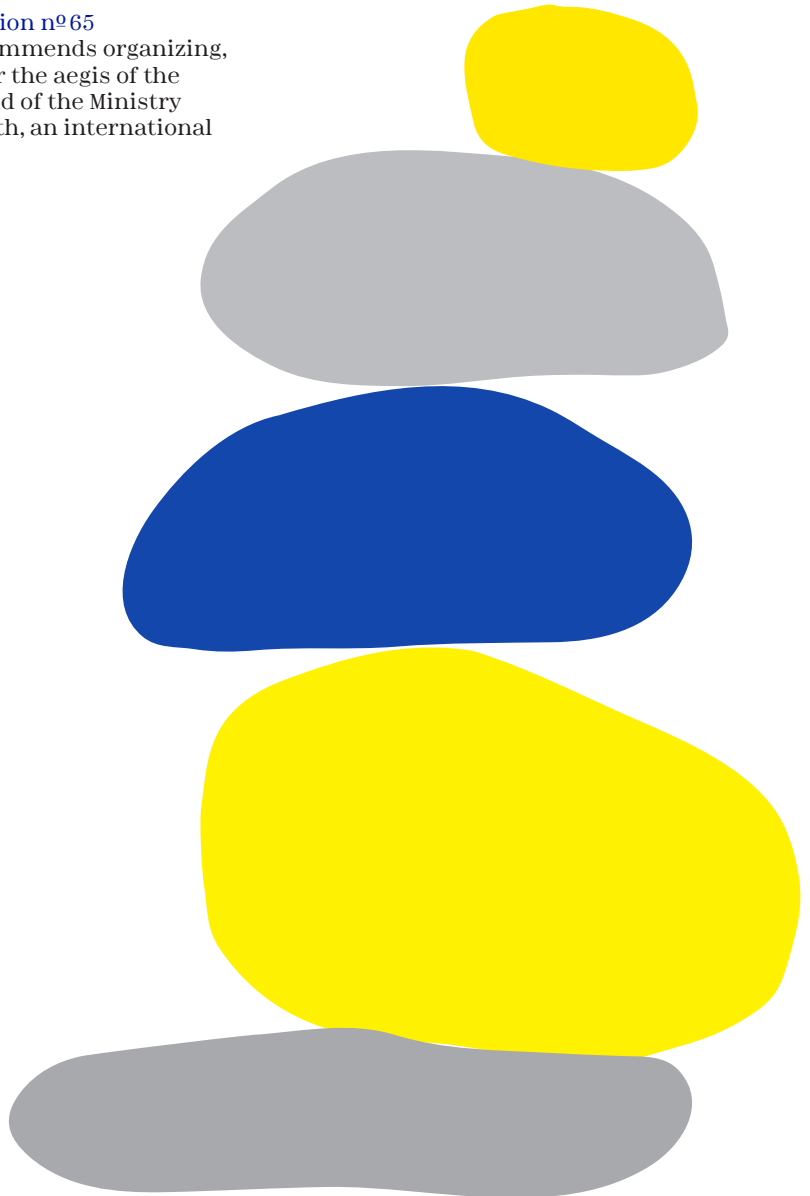
The commission recommends including ECA-LEP in support programs for parents, particularly in cases where there is a weakened parent-child bond, by bringing together childhood professionals and artists trained about early childhood.

🏔 **Recommendation n°64**

The commission recommends encouraging travelling performances and making them more widely available, to remind people that everyone has the right to culture.

🏔 **Recommendation n°65**

The commission recommends organizing, every two years, under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture and of the Ministry of Solidarity and Health, an international forum on ECA-LEP.



One can't discuss solidarity without mentioning social connections and mutual aid, the embodiment of a chain of people collaborating to bring wellbeing to the widest possible population. We can practice solidarity within family, through an organization, or more broadly around national concerns. Solidarity can thus extend to all members of society. This is the goal of solidarity tickets, which would create a budgetary allotment that would help democratize culture for parents and their very young children.

For decades, Sylvie Rayna's work<sup>143</sup> has demonstrated the importance of contributing to very young children's cultural awakening by viewing their parents as their primary interlocutors. She describes initiatives that demonstrate how bringing culture to little ones is entirely relevant to their construction, to nourishing the parent-child bond, to fighting exclusions, and to encouraging social diversity. Her many studies are an international point of reference, and we would like to highlight their centrality to the concept of Cultural Health.

What is a solidarity ticket? It means recognizing that all children need initiatives to spark cultural and artistic awakening, but that today—as we explained in this report—the groundwork has not been laid for universal access to such awakening.

Consequently, we must attempt to create a budget that supports the principle of universal access to ECA-LEP, in order to:

- encourage creation benefitting children under three and their parents
- expand artist residencies in the world of early childhood

- facilitate performances in early childhood spaces (PMIs, childcare centers, RAMs)
- enable traveling performances in calm circumstances that respect the needs of children, parents, childhood professionals, and artists
- adapt the spaces and furniture in cultural venues to welcome families
- support initiatives promoting very young children's connection to nature

We could thus imagine that a cultural or artistic performance or workshop would have two cost tiers:

- a normal ticket (which could include, as is typical, special prices for large families)
- a solidarity ticket that allows people to pay a higher price of their choosing, with a minimum

The funds collected with solidarity tickets would form a special budget benefitting ECA-LEP. This budget would be used to create a cultural and artistic approach for the youngest children—especially babies—and for their parents. It would give breathing room to artists and artistic fields that want to dedicate themselves to very young children. Of course, artists wishing to do so would have to cite either a former project or training specific to working with young children and their parents.

We envision the creation of a fund dedicated to ECA-LEP, distinct from the government's general budget. This could be privately supported or funded through intermunicipal cost-sharing contributions.

The private fund would be solely financed through the solidarity tickets and would fall under the auspices of, for example, the Fondation de France. Its executive board could consist of individuals with in-depth knowledge about children, parenthood, and the arts, as well as representatives of the ministries that oversee culture, solidarity, and health, so as to bolster the development of ECA-LEP initiatives.

---

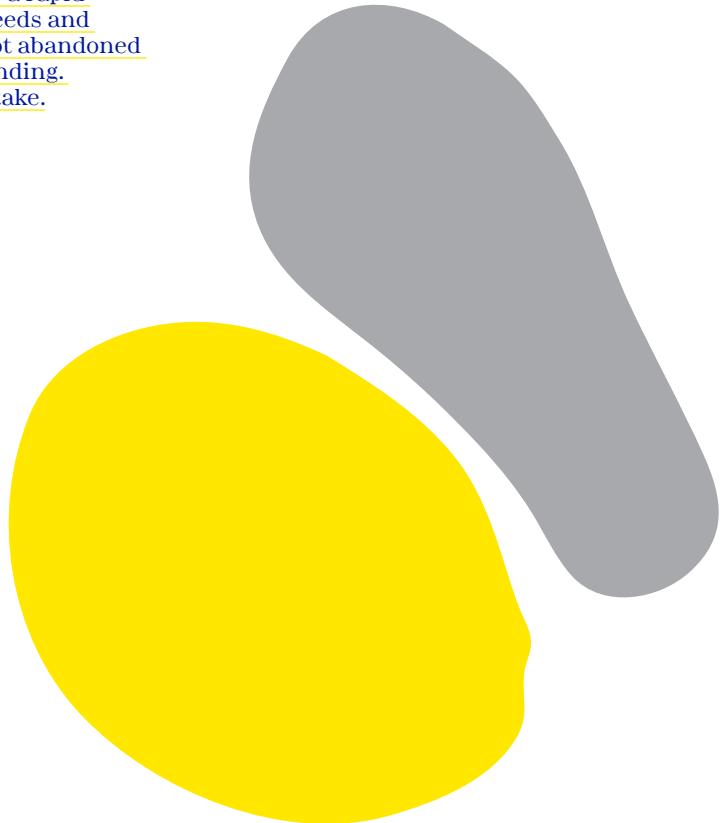
143 Sylvie Rayna is a lecturer in education sciences at EXPERICE (Université Paris 13-Sorbonne Paris Cité). She conducts her research within several international networks and in collaboration with professionals of early childhood, of arts, and of culture. She published *Avec les familles dans les crèches!* (Ères, 2016) and, in collaboration with Patrick Ben Soussan, *Le Programme "Parler bambin": enjeux et controverses*, Ères, Series "1001 BB," n° 161, "Les bébés et la culture," 2018.

The dedicated cost-sharing fund could operate under the banner of “Third-Party Contributions to Initiatives Enhancing ECA-LEP.” It would be coordinated by the national government, including the Ministry of Culture, making it a Culture-Oriented Fund (Program 224). A decision-making authority within it, comprised of experts from the worlds of childhood, parenthood, family, and the arts, would support and sustain specific projects (creations, requests for project proposals, development), all while ensuring accessibility for the most people. This budget would be funded by private contributions, notably those stemming from solidarity tickets, and would supplement the public money allotted to ECA-LEP projects.

🏠 Recommendation n°66

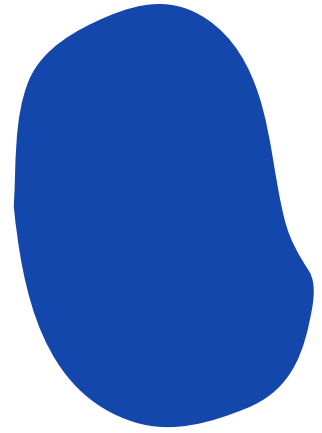
The commission recommends dedicating permanent funding to ECA-LEP, distinct from the government budget and tied to “solidarity tickets.” This budget would be entirely devoted to the development and support of ECA-LEP initiatives, and thus to children from birth to three years old and their parents.

A cultural policy with a social dimension benefitting the Three A's policy and based on ECA-LEP requires earmarked funds, with solidarity tickets as an important funding source. This would help enable a rapid response to Cultural Health needs and ensure that such needs are not abandoned in the name of insufficient funding. The health of all people is at stake.



# Integrating the Concepts of Awakening and Cultural Health of the Young Child into the Major Documents on Human Rights

171



## 1. Opening our Social Imagination to the Idea of Awakening

Cultural Health, through its universal approach, reaffirms that children are Subjects in their own right. It champions recognition of children's existence and protects their legal status, their cultural and social environment, and their psychological wellbeing. Each child has a right to the respect and dignity that all humans deserve—starting from day one. Their circumstances of birth should never deprive them of a humanizing welcome. This means we must acknowledge children from the moment they enter the world, and advance a worldwide public health policy oriented to their needs.

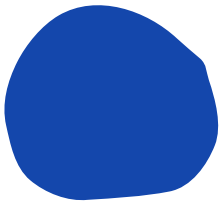
The little one's awakening is the heart of their development. We would also like to see awakening introduced into discussions about education, because babies don't *educate* themselves: They open their eyes to life, accompanied by their parents and the adults around them. These adults support their need to interpret and make sense of their environment, to assume a role in their own story. Herein lies the baby's challenge as it strives toward full participation in humanity.

"Living means living together," as we explained in the early pages of this report. Small humans need someone outside of themselves. Our humanity is based on our vulnerability—a reliance that lays the groundwork for entry into the human world, a speaking world where culture and language push the baby to assume agency.

Each society has its language, its way of eating, of dressing, of living, which leads Cornelius Castoriadis to say that this shared social life, this societal unity, plays out through "social imaginary significations."<sup>144</sup> Thus, two infants born in two different places in the world are assigned, through their social imagination, divergent roles and functions. These significations are called "imaginary" because they are creations, neither rational nor real. They are "social" because they are shared by society as a whole. Individuals integrate the imagination of the society from which they come.

---

144 Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, MIT Press, 1997.



## 2. Homage to Frédéric Passy, “Apostle of Peace,” First to Receive the Nobel Peace Prize

My ancestor Frédéric Passy,<sup>145</sup> who jointly won the first Nobel Peace Prize, championed the importance of pacifying our connections by considering each society’s “social imagination.” As a pacifist, he felt that we should never discount one social imagination in favor of another. He always called for respecting differences and invited people to live together under this principle. The present report, which pushes for the universal values of pacification and human connections through early awakening—so that very young children begin life already aware of others different from themselves—is dedicated to him. By working toward societal harmony throughout his life, Passy earned his nickname as the “Apostle of Peace.”

While there are certainly differences between social imaginary significations, they are outweighed by the fundamental needs that humans share at birth. All babies need to be welcomed, recognized, respected, and spoken to, so they can create their future. These primary needs, identical around the world, should be recognized in the major documents on human rights.

## 3. Cultural Health: “Awakening” as a New Indicator of Wealth

This approach to childhood contributes to the objective of “living well” promoted by “transitional” societies. These societies recognize that those who advocate for policies specific to the periods of life—accompaniment from birth until death—are forward thinkers.

Let’s note that the desire to rethink basic economic principles in terms of fundamental needs is ahead of its time and an element of “living better.” ECA-LEP is among these fundamental needs. Awakening, through its origins in Cultural Health, should be considered as an indicator of wealth, in accordance with Patrick Viveret’s model.<sup>146</sup> Viveret demonstrates that, when asked “what matters most to them,” people only mention money 5% of the time—but when they’re asked “what gets counted,” they realize that nobody counts “what counts.”

More broadly, Viveret notes that monetary measures have a faulty vision of what counts, because they do not bother verifying whether excessive profits reflect excessively-harmful practices. He asserts that returning to the original meaning of “benefit,” meaning “*bienfait*” or “beneficence,” would break us free from the logic of financial benefits.

Awakening, an element of Cultural Health that takes into account the health of our connections, is one of the new indicators of wealth that we would like to see created. It is among the benefits that our era should value.

---

145 Frédéric Passy, born May 20, 1822, is the great-great-grandfather of my mother, who was born 100 years to the day after him and who still lives in Nantes. This extraordinary—but forgotten—man (he was not mentioned during the commemorations of November 11, 2018), founded the League of Peace and Freedom (Ligue internationale de la paix et de la liberté) on May 21, 1867, then the Société d’arbitrage entre les nations, predecessor to the UN, in 1870. A feminist before the movement existed who also favored abolishing the death penalty, he jointly received the Nobel Prize on December 10, 1901, with Henri Dunant, founder of the Red Cross.

---

146 Patrick Viveret, *Reconsidérer la richesse*, Éditions de l’Aube, 2002 (report prepared at the request of Guy Hascoët, Secretary of State for the Solidarity Economy). Viveret is a humanist philosopher, essayist, alter-globalist, who calls himself a “passer-gatherer.”



It recognizes the ecological and human dimensions ignored by macroeconomics. Additionally, it helps counter relational violence by pacifying human bonds, starting with those formed in early childhood. We hope that this new wealth indicator will be recognized and championed in the wake of this report.

France, the country of human rights, could proactively push to expand the various universal texts on human rights. And so, I would like to finish this report by suggesting modifications to three major documents.

#### 4. Recommendations for a New Conception of Human Rights Between Birth and Three Years at the International Level

Proposition n<sup>o</sup> 1: Integrate the right to awakening in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26

The right to education is, after all, the first cultural right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By the same token, we suggest including a right to cultural and artistic awakening among human rights. When we discuss the right to education, we overlook a marginalized group of our humanity: the babies. You don't educate babies; you help them open their eyes, you accord them the right to personal fulfillment, to an inner life through which they grow—to a culture of self.

With this aim, we propose adding the following text to Article 26:

##### Article 26

① All children have the right to awakening, from birth: awakening of their senses, of their motor skills, of their emotions, of their relational abilities, so they can construct their inner world and build up resources that facilitate self-knowledge and recognition of others. Awakening precedes education—it lays the groundwork. It should be free of charge and play a role in any health intervention, recognizing that the child is not just a mouth to fill, but a being to build.

② Every person has the right to education. Education should be free, at least for fundamental and elementary education. Elementary school should be mandatory. Technical and vocational courses of study should be universally accessible; higher education should be open to all, as a function of merit.

③ Education should aim to help each individual attain personal fulfillment,

and reinforce respect for human rights and basic liberties. It should encourage understanding, tolerance, and friendship between all nations, and between all racial and religious groups, as well as form the core of UN programs focused on maintaining peace.

④ Parents have the prerogative in choosing the type of education for their children.

Proposition n<sup>o</sup> 2: Integrate the right to awakening in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 28

For historical context, awareness of children's rights first appeared just after World War I with the 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The UN continued in that vein, expanding the Declaration in 1959. On November 20, 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child solidified this recognition as the first legally-binding international document giving children fundamental rights. While this is an unquestionably significant achievement, now is the time to suggest several improvements based on research explaining how children enter the world and begin to understand it.

With this objective in mind, we propose adding the following text to Article 28:

##### Article 28

① The member states accord children the right to awakening in their first three years of life, which is a central element of their development. This right recognizes the child's growth as both a physical and psychological construction within the psycho-affective bonds, and should be acknowledged as constitutive of their global health. A baby must have access to care that encompasses vital needs including and exceeding its physical necessities. Accompaniment of the baby's health must be an approach that considers its status as a human being who needs others to speak, acknowledge it, help it find its place, and protect its dignity.

② The member states recognize the child's right to education, with an eye to increasing equal-opportunity access:

- a. They make primary education mandatory and free for everyone;
- b. They encourage the establishment of various forms of secondary education, both general and vocational, made available to all youth, and take appropriate steps to implement free education and financial aid when needed;
- c. They ensure access for all to higher education, as appropriate to each

person's aptitudes, through all appropriate means;

- d. They make educational and professional information and counseling available and accessible to all children;
- e. They take steps to encourage regular school attendance and to reduce dropout rates.

③ The member states take all appropriate measures to ensure that scholastic discipline be applied in a manner compatible with the child's dignity as a human being and in conformity with the present Convention.

④ The member states promote and encourage international cooperation in the realm of education, specifically in order to eliminate ignorance and illiteracy in the world and to facilitate access to scientific and technical knowledge and to modern educational methods. This concern is all the more relevant in developing countries.

### Proposition n° 3: Integrate Cultural Awakening into the WHO Programs

According to its charter, the objective of the WHO is to bring the world's population to the highest possible level of health, with health defined as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." The organization is directed by its 192 member states, whose delegates meet at the World Health Assembly. The Assembly's primary function is to approve the platform and the budget of the WHO for the following two fiscal years and to rule on its overall political priorities.

The WHO undertakes a great many actions that are essentially elements of physical health: vaccination programs, infectious disease prevention, cancer research, access to medication, fight against pandemics... An additional, more global approach should be added to these essential initiatives so as to more fully embody the definition of health put forward by the WHO itself.

To this end, we propose that the WHO create research programs on Cultural Health and integrate an approach to relational health and Cultural Health in its future interventions.

Cultural malnutrition, which is widespread in developed countries due to limited awareness of the health of our bonds, deserves our full attention. This plague costs our societies dearly, even though a preventative and inexpensive approach would suffice. Our report wishes to proactively push the WHO to recognize the baby's vital needs for "milk and kinship." A baby alone does not exist, said Winnicott. The small human needs to be addressed and respected in their dignity as a speaking being.

Having been confronted many times with situations where infants are in extreme distress, especially in orphanages, I saw the consequences when these vital psycho-affective needs go unrecognized—a problem that continues to this day. The babies may have been well-fed, but they were starved of human bonds. These impossible situations should be recognized, and the WHO must initiate health programs that aim to consider the baby as a human being in its own right, to address its overall health.

# List of Testimonies July-December, 2018

175

In parallel with our hearings and interviews, we worked regularly with Aurélie Lesous (SG/SCPCI/DEDAC), of the Ministry of Culture.

## ▲ National Political Institutions

### Ministry of Culture Administration

- Elisabeth Daumas, coordinator, Culture/Urban Policy
- Maryline Laplace, director, SCPCI
- Aurélie Lesous, coordinator, Culture/Early Childhood/Health/Medico-Social Concerns
- Nicolas Monquaut, coordinator, Culture/Tourism
- Nicolas Merle, coordinator, Culture/Justice, Department of Media and Cultural Industries
- Agnès Saal, Senior Civil Servant, Department of Equality, Diversity and Discrimination Prevention, SCPCI; Department of Education and Artistic and Cultural Development
- Colin Sidre, coordinator, Youth, EAC and Social Cohesion, Books and Reading Division of the Ministry of Culture (Books)
- Laurence Tison-Vuillaume, former chief of staff for Françoise Nyssen

### DRAC Pays de Loire

- Cécile Duret-Mazurel, director, Center for Creation, Cultural Industries and Cultural/Territorial Activities
- Christophe Poilane, advisor for youth programming
- Christophe Fenneteau, advisor; director, Department of Cultural and Territorial Activities

### National Assembly

- Michèle Peyron, MP overseeing the mission of PMI
- Fabrice Verdier, MP from Gard
- Pascale Rossler, former parliamentary assistant

### Ministry of Solidarity and Health

- David Bliin, director, Department of Families and Parenthood, DGCS
- Maëlle Stéphand, coordinator, Department of Families and Parenthood, DGCS

### Defender of Rights

- Geneviève Avenard, defender of the rights of the child

### Other Political Figures

- Corinne Lepage, former Minister of the Environment
- Professor Jean-François Mattei, former Minister of Health, Family, and Disabled Persons

### CNAF - National Office for Family Allocations

- Patricia Chantin, deputy chief of staff for the director; coordinator for parliamentary and institutional relations
- Laurent Ortalda, director, Center for Early Childhood, Department of Childhood and Parenthood, Administration of Family and Social Policy
- Emmanuelle Dutour, aide, CAF of Vaucluse
- Mylène Moal, CAF of Finistère
- Daniel Lenoir, former director, CNAF; inspector, IGAS

### High Council on Family, Childhood, and Aging (HCFEA)

- Sylviane Giampino, psychologist; psychoanalyst (Espace analytique); honorary president, National Association of Early Childhood Psychologists (A.NA.PSY.p.e); president, HCFEA

### Cultural Administration of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation

- Laurent Moosen, director, Literature Service
- Laurence Ghigny, attachée, Department of Books and Literature

### Local Governments

- Pauline Blison-Simon, cultural director, Departmental Council of Seine-Saint-Denis
- Guillaume Gaudry, Parks Service, Departmental Council of Seine-Saint-Denis
- Anne Desdoigts, director, Childcare Service, Departmental Council of Seine-Saint-Denis
- Corinne Atger, director, Early Childhood Department, City of Uzès
- Édouard Cholet, mayor, Barjac

## ▲ Researchers and Academics

- Maya Gratier, psychology researcher, director of BabyLab
- Anne-Caroline Prévot, research director in environmental psychology, CNRS
- Marie-José Mondzain, philosopher
- Roland Gori, psychoanalyst
- Bernard Golse, professor emeritus of child psychology; head of department, Necker
- Sylvie Rayna, senior lecturer in education sciences, Université Paris 13—Sorbonne Paris Cité
- Mariette Darrigrand, semiologist

## ▲ Literature and Reading Professionals

- Joëlle Turin, instructor specializing in books and reading for young children
- Évelyne Resmond-Wenz, ACCES Armor
- Dominique Veaute, Livre-Passerelle
- Francesca Ciofli, (Z)Oiseaux Livres
- Isabelle Sagnet, Lis Avec Moi
- Nathalie Virnot, ACCES (Cultural Actions Against Exclusion and Segregation)
- Olga Baudelot, LIRE (Books for Integration)
- Chloé Seguret, LIRE
- Patricia Paganini, Grandir Ensemble
- Marie-Jo Ercot, Grandir Ensemble
- Dominique Rateau, Quand Les Livres Relient
- Léo Campagne Alavoine, Quand Les Livres Relient
- Méliissa Rouzier, Croq' les Mots, Marmot, Mayenne Communauté
- Sylvie Gueudre, early childhood educator, LAEP Essonne
- Sylvie Joufflineau, Lire À Voix Haute Normandie
- Corine Do Nascimento, Lire À Voix Haute Normandie
- Valérie Granier, Pierresvives Media Library, Departmental Council of Hérault
- Diane d'Ormesson, director, Media Library of Uzès
- Jean-Rémi François, director, BDP of Ardennes
- Zaïma Hammache, coordinator of national cooperation, BPI

## ▲ Performers and Artists

- Isabelle Martin-Bridot, Les Hivernales-CDCN
- Noëlle Dehousse, choreographer
- Anne-Laure Rouxel, dancer and choreographer
- Malgven Gerbes, choreographer, shifts troupe
- Ingrid Wolff, cultural intendant Netherlands
- Héloïse Pascal, director of the 1.9.3. Soleil festival
- Agnès Desfosses, artist and photographer
- Émilie Lucas, administrator, Praxinoscope troupe
- Catherine Morvan, Praxinoscope troupe
- Jean-Claude Oleksiak, Praxinoscope troupe
- Guilaïn Roussel, landscape artist
- Christian Regouby, "Manger citoyen"; spokesperson for Restaurants et Producteurs Artisans de Qualité
- Laura Regouby, entrepreneur
- Marc Caillard, Enfance et Musique
- Annie Avenel, Enfance et Musique
- Graziella Végis, Massalia Theater, Marseille
- Philippe Bouteloup, director, Musique et Santé
- Éric de Kermel, editor in chief for Terres sauvages; organizer of the children's ecology festival of La Rochelle
- Chantal Grosliéziat, Musique en Herbe
- Jean-Marie Lorde, director, Bastille Theater

- Cyrille Planson, festival Petits et grands, Nantes
- Nicolas Marc, festival Petits et grands, Nantes
- Joël Simon, director, Nova Villa, Reims
- Hélène Ruffenach, landscape artist
- Laure Coutier, Très Tôt Théâtre, Finistère
- Anne Jacopé, director, Association des ludothèques de France
- Vincent Vergone, artist

## ▲ Specialists in Health, Women's Issues and Early Childhood

- Marie-Hélène Hurtig, early childhood educator and teaching instructor
- Samia Bayodi, director of Orge'Mômes, a resource center for childminders
- Elise Mareuil, pedagogical director of AGAPI childcare centers
- Marion Latuillière, director, Friche Belle de mai childcare center
- Alexandra Christides, director, École des parents
- Bruno Jarry, director, Espace Andrée Chedid, Issy-les-Moulineaux
- Frédérique Philippe, psychologist, PPSP support for parenthood
- Stéphanie Allenou, mother; special educator; founder of L'îlot familles, LAEP in Nantes; author of Mère épuisée; moderator of support groups for mothers suffering from burnouts
- Gilles Colomb, Association Agir pour la petite enfance
- Thomas Ulmann, Association Agir pour la petite enfance
- Arnaud Geannin, Association Agir pour la petite enfance

# List of Selected Abbreviations

**ACCES**  
Cultural Actions Against  
Exclusion and Segregation

**ADEC**  
Association for Cultural  
Development and Exchange

**AER**  
Agency for Educational and  
Research Assistance

**AGAPI**  
Network of childcare centers  
that champion children's  
relationship with nature

**ALF**  
National association that  
unites, represents, and  
supports the game libraries  
in France

**ART**  
Assisted Reproductive  
Technology

**CAF/CNAF**  
Office for Family Allocations  
(CAF)/National Office for Family  
Allocations (CNAF)

**CNGOF**  
National Association of French  
Gynecologists and Obstetricians

**DDASS**  
Departmental Health  
and Social Services Agencies

**DRAC**  
Regional Cultural Affairs  
Committee

**EAC**  
Artistic and Cultural Education

**EAJE**  
Cooperative early childcare  
center

**ECA-LEP**  
Cultural and Artistic Awakening  
from Birth to the Age of Three,  
Within the Parent-Child Bond

**FIC**  
Cultural Intervention Fund

**HAS**  
National Authority for Health

**ISS**  
Social inequalities in health

**LAEP**  
Drop-in centers for parents  
and children under six, with  
games for children and support  
for parents.

**MIRE**  
Movement for Information  
and Reflection on Children

**PMI**  
Center for Maternal and Child  
Protection

**RAM and RAM/RAP**  
Support center for childminders  
who run home-based daycares  
(RAM), sometimes extending  
to nannies who work at the  
childrens' homes (RAM/RAP)

**SFSP**  
French Public Health Agency

**Three A's**  
Anticipate, Accommodate,  
Accompany

**TISF**  
Child and family protection  
specialist

**UNESCO**  
United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural  
Organization

**WHO**  
World Health Organization

>

# Credits

## *Author*

Sophie Marinopoulos  
(Cultural Health © Sophie

Marinopoulos, INPI DEM-4510999)

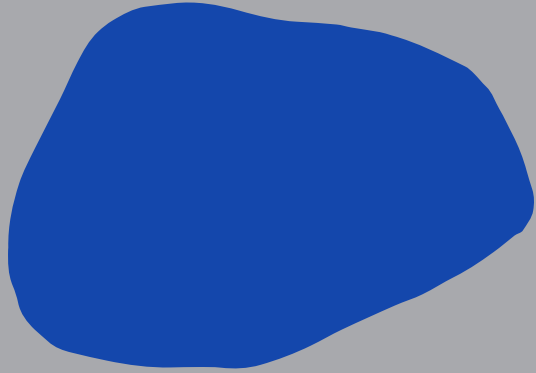
🍷 *Editorial advisor* Mariette Darrigrand

🍷 *Editorial coordinator* Aurélie Lesous, project manager, Ministry of Culture 🍷 *Contributors from Scènes d'enfance—ASSITEJ France* François Fogel, vice president, ASSITEJ International • Estelle Derquenne, general coordinator, Scènes d'enfance—ASSITEJ France • Émilie Robert, Director of Massalia Theater (Théâtre Massalia), co-president, Scènes d'enfance—ASSITEJ France • Cyrille Planson, vice president, Scènes d'enfance—ASSITEJ France • Florence Goguel, musician and director, and artistic director, Compagnie du Porte-Voix • Laurent Dupont, artistic director and stage director, ACTA theater company (Compagnie ACTA) 🍷 *Graphic designer* Sophie Cure 🍷 *Translator* Jeremy Sorkin, French (France) to English

Printed  
in March  
2021



*Growing  
into humanity*



*Awakening  
to nature*

*Primal  
aesthetic  
excitement*

*Child  
scholar*



*Body knowledge*

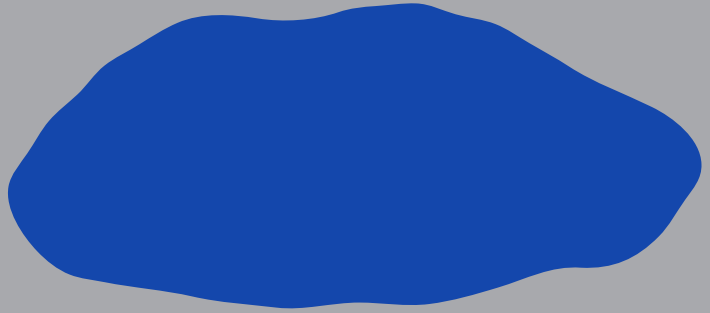






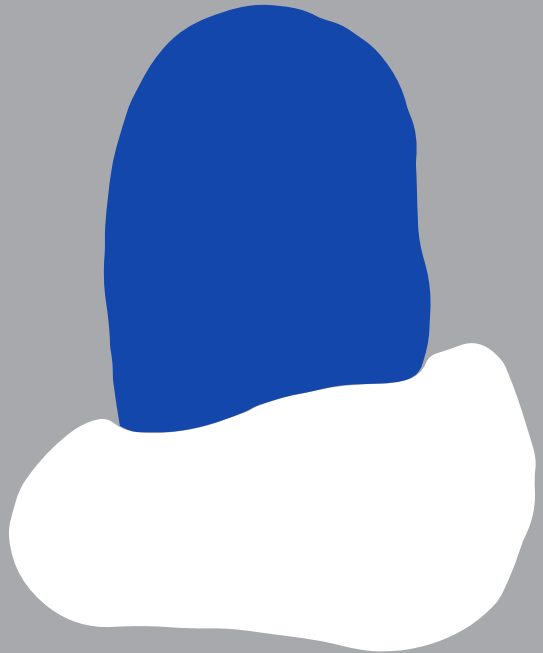
*Inner  
movement*

*Preventative  
health*



*Sensory  
communion*

*Humanizing  
awakening*



*Experimental  
playfulness  
(games for growth)*

Soutenu par



**MINISTÈRE  
DE LA CULTURE**

*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*



**SCÈNES  
D'ENFANCE**  
ASSITEJ-FRANCE