



## UEL Research & Knowledge Exchange Conference 2013

### Call for Abstracts

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<b>Title of Abstract:</b>	<b>Towards competent systems. A critically-ecologic perspective on processes of professionalisation of the early childhood workforce in Europe</b>
<b>Key Theme/ Key words:</b>	Theme: Early Childhood Education and Care Keywords: Early childhood education and care, competence, professionalism, critical ecology

#### **Abstract (No more than 400 words):**

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) has been, since the 1992 Council Recommendations on child care, a recurring topic on European policy agendas. In recent years the importance of high quality services for young children has been further emphasised. Socio-economic, educational and civil rights based rationales for investing in high quality services for young children and their families have been laid out in European and international policy documents. Throughout the EU, there is a consensus on the need for more and higher quality services, increasing integration of 'childcare' and 'early education', and enhanced training and status for the workforce whose members are seen as essential to quality provision. But this consensus does not extend to how to achieve these goals: national strategies and approaches vary and – according to a European Commission document – there is a lack of understanding of the competences of practitioners working with young children, and their relationship to the outcomes for children.

This paper presents findings of a pan-European study on 'competence requirements in early childhood education and care' – CORE (Urban, M., Vandebroek, M. et al, 2011, 2012). The study was funded by the European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture, and conducted by a research team based at UEL (lead institution, PI) and the University of Ghent, Belgium. Adopting the perspective of a critical ecology of the profession (Urban, M., 2007, 2010;

Dalli, C. & Urban, M., 2010, Urban, M. & Dalli, C., 2012), the paper identifies and discusses key challenges of professionalisation in the highly complex context of working with young children, families and communities and argues for a re-conceptualisation of 'competence' in a systemic framework.