



PROCHILD

PROTECTION AND SUPPORT OF ABUSED
CHILDREN THROUGH MULTIDISCIPLINARY INTERVENTION



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NEWSLETTER

TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

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PROCHILD PROJECT

The PROCHILD project seeks to create a multi-professional, integrated model of cooperation with stakeholders involved in response to violence against children. The project will tackle underreporting and fragmentation of services and implement a joint approach based on complementary competences and the child's best interest.

BACKGROUND

Child abuse affects all social classes and ethnicities, and it features a variety of characteristics, such as the age of the victim, violence type and severity, the context where it takes place and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. This phenomenon is difficult to identify and monitor due to the cultural mechanisms of minimisation and denial. Child abuse is often repeated and victims get protection and rehabilitative, social and psycho-emotional treatment at a later stage. Clinical evidence

and research have shown short, medium, long-term consequences of violence on health highlighting how physical and psychological damage require early, integrated and specialist treatment.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the project are to:

- Protect fundamental rights of children
- Promote early detection and reporting of abuse/mistreatment cases;
- Adopt a multi-professional model of protection & care of child victims
- Develop integrated and shared protocols among Social and Health Services, Educational Agencies, Police, Judicial Authorities
- Increase the skills of professionals for an early identification of the phenomenon
- Search for viable and appropriate ways to make victims of violence and their families/caregivers, an active part of the assessment and improvement of protection and support services.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The outcome expected from the project includes:

- An e-learning platform for professionals and students that will showcase training materials
- Awareness-raising on what child abuse is, and what to do to give/receive support, targeted to families, minors, school staff, social and health professionals, police and judicial authorities
- Completion of local/ national protocols that contribute to the creation of an integrated intervention model for early detection of abuse/mistreatment, reporting and protection of child victims
- Start of the dialogue for the creation of an Italian epidemiological registry on violence against children that will enable data analysis and intervention.

THE CONSORTIUM

PROChild is a transnational project involving:

- Alma Mater Studiorum, Università Di Bologna, Italy
- Terveyden Ja Hyvinvoinnin Laitos, Finland
- La Voix De L'enfant, France
- IARS International Institute, United Kingdom
- Katholische Fachhochschule Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany
- Institouton Ygeias Tou Paidiou, Greece



PROJECT UPDATES

FINAL PRESS CONFERENCE IN ITALY

RAISING AWARENESS AND INFORMING FAMILIES ABOUT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

At the end of the PROCHILD Project, the UNIBO team developed three dissemination tools to guarantee the sustainability of the project's objectives and activities with the final goal of continuing to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect to the public, families and professionals from Child Protection Services (CPS).

These three tools will be presented online on Thursday 25 February at the final PROCHILD press conference organised by the University of Bologna.

READ MORE ABOUT THE EVENT HERE:

<https://www.prochildproject.org/2021/02/19/raising-awareness-and-informing-families-about-child-abuse-and-neglect/>

REFLECTIONS ON THE KEY MILESTONES FROM THE PROJECT

GREECE

In the context of Work Package 4 - *Development of protocols among the actors involved in the assistance and protection of abused children in accordance with a transferable interdisciplinary intervention model* - the Institute of Child Health (ICH) conducted three focus group meetings and four roundtables with stakeholders from the sectors of social welfare, health, mental health, education, police and justice. The aim of these meetings were to formulate proposals for the reform of the child protection system, in regards to multidisciplinary & intersectoral cooperation, so that secondary victimisation of children who have been abused and/or neglected can be avoided. From these actions, a draft protocol was produced, which provides guidelines for professionals who are involved in the management of child abuse/neglect cases.

In relation to Work Package 5 – *Multidisciplinary training of the professionals involved in violence against children* - ICH led the development of the training programme, taking the initiative to expand the variety of training modules and also to divide them into categories according to different professional specialties. Following this ICH organised two trainings; one for educators in December 2020 and another for psychosocial support professionals in January 2021. More than 80 professionals received the training in total, and the feedback has been extremely positive. The training materials that have been developed by all partners are available on [the e-learning platform](#), so that even more professionals can receive the training.

Last but not least, ICH has organised a final conference for the project on 19 February 2021, in which child protection experts from around the globe participated and presented multidisciplinary child protection models that work well in other countries. Read more about the event [here](#)

GERMANY

In Germany, the PROCHILD Project started with a systematic literature review to map effective practices/interventions that help professionals to detect child maltreatment in order to offer support to victims and to cooperate across professional agencies. The literature review showed that, currently, affected children are identified too late and although there are many existing good practices in Germany, professionals find it difficult to apply existing protocols or guidelines. Another milestone of the early project phase was the systematic literature review on the causes of violence against children in families with parental mental health problems.

The next important milestone of the project was the survey on professional's training needs to establish a ground work for the trainings that were to be developed later. All in all, the German respondents were quite confident concerning their knowledge and their professional skills. The educational professionals were most uncertain about their knowledge and abilities in cases of child maltreatment. The cooperation between professionals was found to be far from sufficient. The focus groups and roundtables with professionals from different sectors conducted later in the project confirmed these findings. The participants had different levels of experience in the child protection process, but welcomed the opportunity to connect with each other and establish new contacts. They agreed that the institutional manifestation of cooperation and coordination is very important, yet it is not established everywhere.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the German training of professionals was conducted exclusively online. It became clear that this setting was ideal to reach professionals with little to no previous training on child protection. Kindergarten and school teachers have been especially interested in participating. Nevertheless, in person training with professionals from different sectors would have been more effective in regards to improving multi professional cooperation.

FRANCE

The research carried out in France during the early stages of the project highlighted the paradox of literature reviews and collection of good practices. Despite there being so many training courses and publications offered around the world that display good practices, professionals continue to look for new approaches, methods and tools. This begs the question of why is it so difficult to adapt something that already exists and is working elsewhere?

The focus group and round table participants were all professionals from different sectors, institutions and hierarchical levels of activity (social, medical, police, justice, education). The evaluation from these work sessions has been very positive, with inter-professionality and inter-institutionality being the most appreciated and effective element. Many professionals affirmed that the daily application of "doing together" as opposed to "side by side" would solve many of the problems encountered in the treatment and support of child abuse and maltreatment. As a result, we have taken a further step towards the application of this practice!

In regards to the PROCHILD training and the ongoing pandemic, we are used to delivering inter-professional in person training and mostly in a professional setting. However, the constraint of working at a distance forced us to review the contents, the progress and the support of the trainees. This new training model has enabled us to reach a population of people with little training on the subject, such as maternal and family caregivers, monitors and trainers. In terms of the dissemination all over France, the PROCHILD training course has been quite significant, thanks to the direct and indirect participation in the overhaul of the national project on child protection.

THE UK

In the UK context, the PROCHILD Project has shed some light on the shortcomings of the current approaches that are used to prevent, detect and report cases of child abuse and maltreatment. During the focus groups and roundtables, professionals from various sectors came together to discuss the obstacles that stand in the way of multidisciplinary approaches and solutions to promote interdisciplinary collaboration. The main takeaways, emphasising the importance of our project, were the need for high quality multidisciplinary training and the creation of spaces and opportunities for professionals to discuss obstacles, solutions, and coordination. Some professionals had never attended a multidisciplinary meeting before they took part in the PROCHILD events.

The delivery of multidisciplinary training to professionals is currently well underway in the UK, and so far over 80 professionals from education, social welfare, mental health and the third sector have participated in the training. Our initial analysis of the feedback has been extremely positive in terms of the increase in knowledge, the applicability to daily practice and the relevance to professionals' needs. The multidisciplinary training course has provided a flexible and easy way to access alternative during a time when face-to-face training is not possible. This method has worked well in the UK as we have been able to reach a wider range of professionals, who are otherwise busy with their work, and they have had the

flexibility to take the course whenever it is convenient to them. However, the multi professional cooperation has not been as effective as it could have been by conducting sessions online.

As the Dissemination Leader for the project, we have been fortunate to work with partners who have been proactive in publicising the project's outputs online through social media, blog posts, newsletters, press releases and events. The PROCHILD website has had over 14,000 views so far. This and the above communication efforts indicate that we have been able to raise awareness on child protection, and to communicate the project's results to a wide range of stakeholders and beneficiaries. We look forward to maintaining the project's results in the future.

FINLAND

In Finland, the PROCHILD Project has worked closely together with the national working group for preventing violence against children. The working group is a multidisciplinary group with representatives from five ministries and other government bodies, university hospitals, the police, local government and NGOs. The working group steered the making of the national action plan called [Non-Violent Childhoods: Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children 2020-2025](#). The action plan consists of 93 actions from different fields. The action plan will be implemented in multiprofessional co-operation in the coming years.



The results from the project's literature reviews, collection of good practices, mapping of training needs and focus groups and roundtables were utilised in the drafting of the Non-Violent Childhoods action plan. In addition, PROCHILD has been taking part in the implementation of the action plan. The training for professionals were organised as online webinars and in addition to raising awareness on the project, we also used this opportunity to raise professionals' awareness on the action plan. We had all together four webinars for multiprofessional audiences with hundreds of participants. The webinars were also recorded in order to disseminate them more widely and they are available on the e-learning platform.

ITALY

The PROCHILD Project has acted at European level to tackle common problems and challenges that are met by local and national Child Protection Services (CPS). This has been done through the development of common methodologies and practices by starting from national specificities and taking into consideration local needs and structures. The approach has enabled professionals to help minor victims of violence and their families by fostering multidisciplinary and integrated interventions. The project arrived at these conclusions after desk-based research; the analysis of best practices from partners' local and regional districts; and the roundtables and focus groups aiming to identify local best practices and success stories of management of cases of child abuse.

The focus groups and roundtables were particularly important as they brought together professionals, sometimes for the first time, from various sectors that are involved in the protection of minors in different capacities. The Department of Medical and Surgical Sciences of the University of Bologna organised three roundtables and focus groups inviting professionals from the police, law enforcement, social & health care service, schools and third sectors of the Bologna District and social and health professionals within the AOPI Network (the Italian Association of Pediatric Hospitals). These meetings allowed us to extend the project results at a national level and to discuss common problems at the Italian level, and thus to plan common actions.

The meetings also offered an opportunity to boost collaboration and interdisciplinarity of interventions among professionals through common training programmes, and they acted as a starting point for the PROCHILD Winter School, within the project's multidisciplinary training programme for the professionals. The Winter School - run from 13th January to 3rd February 2021 - was a specific multi-professional training event that focused on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of the various forms of child maltreatment and domestic and gender-based violence. During the event we trained more than 100 people, both professionals and students. The School included different modules that allowed learners to deepen the clinical, psychological, social and legal knowledge of the pathways related to cases of maltreatment and abuse.

Last but not least, UNIBO is organising a final international press conference for the PROCHILD project on 26th February 2021 to present the project's main results, including a film show on child abuse, an app with parenting



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Follow the hashtag #PROCHILD_PROJECT

<https://www.prochildproject.org/>

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