



PROCHILD

PROTECTION AND SUPPORT OF ABUSED
CHILDREN THROUGH MULTIDISCIPLINARY INTERVENTION



Co-funded by the Rights,
Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC)
Programme of the European Union



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PROCHILD PROJECT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE PROJECT PARTNERSHIP	4
FOREWORD	5
INTRODUCTION	7
NATIONAL CHAPTERS	9
ITALY	10
GREECE	14
FRANCE	19
GERMANY	23
FINLAND	28
UNITED KINGDOM	32
CONCLUSIONS	36

THE PROJECT PARTNERSHIP



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TERVEYDEN JA
HYVINVOINNIN LAITOS

**TERVEYDEN JA HYVINVOINNIN
LAITOS**

Finland



LA VOIX DE L'ENFANT
Notre combat, c'est leur avenir

LA VOIX DE L'ENFANT

France



**THE IARS
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE**

United Kingdom



**KATHOLISCHE FACHHOCHSCHULE
NORDRHEIN-WESTFALEN**

Germany



**THE INSTITUTE
OF CHILD HEALTH**

Greece

FOREWORD

BY THE PROJECT COORDINATOR

Alma Mater Studiorum Università Di Bologna

The PROCHILD Project has come to an end after more than two years. Its efforts have been addressed mainly to professionals working in Child Protection Services (CPS) and public and private organisations (health, social, school services, police forces and judicial authorities).

In the past months, PROCHILD Partners have tried to produce flexible and dynamic materials and toolkits to support professionals in their daily activities, in addition to the protocols and guidelines already in use in their organisations. Moreover, several results of PROCHILD have been addressed also to institutions and policymakers to help them develop national and local policies and procedures; and to society as a whole, since the general public plays an active role in promptly detecting cases of M/A and preventing them.

The tools developed and offered by the PROCHILD Consortium will be a legacy for future projects in our organisations and for other professionals and institutions in the European Union.

PROCHILD activities started from national/regional specificities and demands to develop common recommendations and tools that can provide professionals with useful and common competencies that will assist them in their daily working routine. Moreover, it favoured a cross-Europe discussion, which led to the creation of a bank of knowledge, best practices and

procedures from partners' local and regional districts. This is inspiring and helpful to other organisations outside of the PROCHILD consortium. All these results have been made publicly available and shared at the local, national and European level thanks to the PROCHILD organisations' commitment and a widespread communication strategy to reach the widest public possible.

This ensures the EU-added value of our project which, starting from national and local specificities, have allowed us to identify some similar needs and interests in all partner countries, from professionals working in Child Protection Services and from families and children who benefit from them.

It is worth mentioning the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on our project. The pandemic challenged the activities of professionals working with abused children and their families in all countries around the world, driving society's priorities towards facing this common challenge. The restrictions imposed by governments have caused significant disruptions of the environment where children grow and develop, and has confined families in stressful domestic isolation. This may lead to an increase in cases of maltreatment, mainly in the most vulnerable families, who are already the ones presented with socio-economic difficulties, parental instability or inadequacy, or minors with a disability or chronic disabling diseases¹.

The Covid-19 pandemic offered PROCHILD partners the possibility to extend their field of research and think about how to potentialise services for children victim of maltreatment and abuse and their families, in peculiar situations as the ones we are living now.

It goes without saying that strengthening the competences and skills of professionals, building more resilient networks of relations among CPS and raising awareness over the issues and consequences of violence against minors is of paramount importance in these days when detecting and treating these cases is even more difficult than it was before.

¹ Lanari, M., Morgan, L., D'Innocenzo S., Gennari, M., (2020). "Consequences of the lockdown from the Covid-19 pandemic in Italy: what are the risks for minors?", *Youth Voice Journal*, ISSN (online): 2969.

INTRODUCTION

PROCHILD - Protection and support of abused children through multidisciplinary intervention - is a transnational project that was delivered in partnership with six European countries. The project aimed to create a multi-professional, integrated model of cooperation with stakeholders involved in response to violence against children. The project tackled underreporting and fragmentation of services and implemented a joint approach based on complementary competences and the child's best interest. The project has been co-funded by the European Commission under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme (REC).

The specific objectives of the project were to:

- Protect the 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, an active part of the assessment and improvement of protection and support services

In order to achieve the above objectives the partnership worked on a number of different work packages (WP) and carried out activities within these. The specific work packages were:

1. Management and coordination of the project (WP1)
2. Communication and dissemination of the project (WP2)
3. The mapping of operators' needs and good practices of an early and integrated detection and treatment of abused minors (WP3)
4. Development of protocols among actors involved in the assistance and protection of abused children in accordance with a transferable interdisciplinary intervention model (WP4)
5. Multidisciplinary training of professionals involved in violence against children (WP5)

This is the final publication of the project, and it integrates two years of learning and practical results across the partnership both at national and European level. The publication also considers sustainability of the project, and how the results will be maintained after the project completion.



NATIONAL CHAPTERS



ITALY

Alma Mater Studiorum Università Di Bologna (UNIBO)

REFLECTIONS

AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The PROCHILD Project brought several benefits in the district of Bologna. Moreover, some of the results were also shared out of the District, reaching a regional and national visibility, with the involvement of associations and professionals from regional and national institutions, including AOPI, the Italian Association of Paediatric Hospitals as well as regional authorities.

Among the benefits, it is worth mentioning the creation of dialogue opportunities and the exchange of best practices among local stakeholders involved in Child Protection Services (CPS). Thanks to the project, we organised discussions among representatives of several CPS at regional and national level. Indeed, we were able to involve both employees and professionals directly committed in safeguarding families and children in the field, as well as representatives from regional and national authorities and institutions. Involving workers and professionals from the health, social, educational, judicial sectors and the police, it was fundamental to listen to their needs and difficulties and it allowed for the creation of new forms of collaboration. The needs and expectations of the professionals were then brought to a higher political level with the involvement of officers from local public and private institutions and organisations. Indeed, mainly thanks to the organisation of focus groups and roundtables from November 2019 to January 2020 (within *WP4*), UNIBO was able to involve several professionals in the working group activities, including representatives from the Police (both police officer and carabinieri, postal police); law enforcement representatives (attorneys, Bologna Bar Association), representatives of the Municipality of Bologna and of the Emilia Romagna Region; health and social operators, school representatives, third sector organisations.

Thanks to the project, the already existing European and international practices were spread at the local level: the projects results, deliverables and main outputs were disseminated at the local level and communicated to relevant stakeholders through the project and UNIBO channels. Also thanks to the local network of relations established within the S. Orsola University Hospital, which involves third sector organisations, the postal police, the Bologna District Court and other relevant actors. These activities were carried out mainly within *WP3* and *WP4*.

Lastly, multi-professional discussions were also the opportunity to boost collaboration and interdisciplinary interventions among professionals through common training programmes and were the starting point to organise the PROCHILD Winter School, within the project's *WP5*. The Winter School ran from January 13th to February 3rd 2021, and was a specific multi-professional training course on the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of the various forms of child maltreatment, domestic and gender-based violence. It

allowed more than 100 people to train among professionals and students. The School included different modules that allowed learners to deepen the clinical, psychological, social and legal aspects of the pathways related to cases of maltreatment and abuse. These lessons were also open to students from different medical, social and psychological departments of the University of Bologna and the general public, to allow the widest participation possible and the spread of useful information.

REFLECTIONS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

The prompt detection of cases of violence against minors, their treatment and the effective collaboration among professionals working in CPS is of paramount importance in all countries. According to national/regional specificities and needs, there are specific protocols and procedures at the local, regional and national level that PROCHILD partner organisations adopt in their daily working routines. However, their needs can change and should adapt to evolving situations and demands. For this reason, having access to knowledge, best practices and procedures from partners' local and regional districts can be helpful to adopt new practices in one's own organisations and discuss together on how to tackle common problems. Indeed, despite national and local specificities, some similar needs and interests emerged in all partner countries from professionals working in Child Protection Services to the families and children beneficiary of these services.

Through the project, we wanted to address professionals working in Child Protection Services (CPS), organisations (health, social, school services, police forces and judicial authorities) and institutions/policy makers; in order to help the former in their daily activities and the latter in the establishment of guidelines and procedures at the local and national level.

The main results are recommendations, stemming from these discussions, on how to detect and report cases of mistreatment effectively, in order to reduce underreporting; what procedures and collaboration to activate; how to conduct treatment and protection of minors from a social, medical, psychological and legal point of view.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

Discussions carried out in roundtables and focus groups proved to be extremely satisfying for all the participants who expressed the willingness to carry out these activities and create a “permanent working table” for these issues. It was agreed, in the light of the excellent and qualified participation, to continue these roundtables in order to give a practical implication for the work of this multi-professional table, to collect the already existing materials, and, if necessary, to produce new documents that are useful in shared and multidisciplinary management of cases of maltreatment and abuse.

With the PROCHILD Winter School, the University of Bologna organised an official Master Course

addressed to different professionals with the purpose of providing them with basic and specific competencies to detect and treat different forms of abuse and maltreatment and to favour multi-professional cooperation. It will be institutionalised and will be proposed again in the future as a master course for professionals and students.

The film show CHILD ABUSE will be disseminated through relevant regional, national and European social media channels, and after the end of the project to reach a wide public, including families, children and adolescents, institutions and professionals working in CPS.

The Shaken Baby Syndrome App will remain as one of the main legacies of PROCHILD, providing parents with tips and suggestions about parenting and to prevent and raise awareness of the risks associated with the shaken baby syndrome. It will be downloadable from App stores both for Android and iOS.

The PROCHILD rocking horse will be donated and permanently exposed at organisations and institutions hosting abused minors and their families with the purpose of recalling children to their world. It will also be presented in places where the necessary procedures for verifying and protecting minors are carried out.

Lastly, the recommendations for professionals produced in WP4 and the training materials resulting from WP5 will be shared at the regional and local levels as an informative and training tool for professionals in their daily activities.



GREECE

The Institute of Child Health (ICH)

REFLECTIONS

AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The PROCHILD project has achieved many of its goals in Greece, despite the difficulties arising from the pandemic and the corresponding protection measures. In fact, the project has not only been beneficial for child victims and their families, but also for children at risk, the general public, professionals that get involved in child abuse and neglect cases as part of their everyday work and last but not least, policy makers.

One of the main goals of the project was the strengthening of the interdisciplinary cooperation among services from different sectors that work with child abuse and neglect cases. This was by defining an integrated intervention protocol, based on best practices and specific needs of the service beneficiaries and secondarily, of the service providers. In order for this to happen, the Greek team of the consortium conducted:

- a. Two surveys; one aiming to identify how the investigation and support services function after a case is reported; and seven meetings, showing that the lack of cooperation among the relevant services leads to the child victims telling their story repeatedly and therefore being re-victimised and one assessing the training needs of the professionals.
- b. Seven meetings with stakeholders from various agencies in the country, during which the difficulties of the child protection system were discussed, and specific suggestions were made for the reform of the system in regards to the improvement of the cooperation among professionals.
- c. A mapping of good practices concerning identification, reporting, investigation and management of child abuse and neglect cases.

The above actions led to the drafting of a collaboration protocol, which is expected to be of benefit mainly to child victims, as the services will have complementary rather than duplicating responsibilities throughout the investigation process that lead to the child's secondary victimisation. Professionals often feel overwhelmed by the duplication of responsibilities and the lack of organisation regarding the flow of actions during investigation, as they often struggle to identify the next step of the process, including where to refer the case. Therefore, it is more than clear that they will also benefit from a protocol that will provide specific guidelines on such issues. The professionals in health, (paediatricians, doctors, nurses, midwives from emergency rooms, inpatient units, outpatient surgery units etc.), social care (psychologists, social workers etc), as well as, school teachers, police officers and justice operators benefit from mutual learning and specific training, learning how to interact in the process of violence detection-reporting-protection-legal proceeding. Moreover, the protocol of multidisciplinary and intersectoral cooperation will provide very useful information to the policy

makers who are responsible for the structure of the child protection system.

Another important objective of the project was to increase the skills of the professionals who are responsible for the protection and support of child victims and for the management of relevant legal procedures, finally improving the interaction among social, educational & medical services, police, and judicial authorities. Apart from the fact that the Institute of Child Health led the development of training materials for all professionals involved in child protection, it organised and delivered two trainings. One addressed to educators, who had participated in the survey regarding the training needs of professionals and been identified as the professionals with greater need to be trained in relation to the identification of child abuse and neglect cases, as well as, their role in such cases, and one addressed to professionals of psychosocial support. The first one aimed at increasing the educators' knowledge regarding fundamental issues about child abuse and neglect, like types of abuse, risk determinants and indicators of abuse, but also training them on what their responsibilities are when they come across such cases, and how they can respond to relevant suspicions or to disclosures from child victims. The second one was also aimed at increasing the knowledge of psychosocial support professionals regarding fundamental issues about child abuse and neglect, but it also aimed at raising their awareness regarding issues like the assessment of a child's needs, out of home placements, implications of institutionalisation and family reunification.

The immediate beneficiaries of this action are the professionals who attended the training sessions, but of course there are benefits to child victims and their families, as it is expected that better trained professionals will be in a position to provide services of higher quality through identification, investigation and management of cases. Children at risk of child abuse and neglect, as well as their families, will also benefit from the implementation of training educators, as it builds the capacity of educators who work with the general population, to identify children at risk early and be able to act accordingly.

Another objective of the project that is of benefit for child victims, children at risk, but also for the general population including families, minors, school staff, social and health professionals, as well as police and judicial authorities, was the awareness-raised on what constitutes violence, what consists child abuse and neglect and most importantly, what can be done when someone needs to seek for support. For example, which agencies can provide it, and what can be done when someone suspects that a child is being abused or is at increased risk of being abused and wants to start the process for the child and the family to be supported and the violence or the adverse experiences to stop taking place.

The Institute of Child Health, as the rest of the partners, has contributed to this cause by communicating and disseminating the project results to the general public. More specifically, dissemination tools such as the website, the web platform, the blog and the Facebook page of the project have been used to promote materials accessible by everyone. An outstanding action was the delivery of the project leaflet that circulated in electronic version, aiming to inform families, minors and professionals concerning the increase of domestic violence cases during the lockdown that was imposed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It also let them know where to refer to, in case they are in danger and need help or in case they know someone else who does. Moreover, the press conference titled: "Journalists for the protection of children. Child protection and Media – Suggested management of child abuse and neglect cases according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child" that took place in November 2020, with the support of the Greek Ombudswoman for the Rights of the Children, hopefully helped to change the views of journalists on how they should respond to shocking news concerning child protection cases. Which in turn will be beneficial for child victims and their families, but it is also expected to be beneficial for the general public, as the way that child abuse and neglect cases are often presented so far creates misunderstandings around the phenomenon.

Last but not least, the final dissemination event that took place in February 2021 was of benefit for ap-

proximately 200 professionals who attended it. Besides the presentation of the project activities and results, many international experts on the field of child protection presented good practices on how to tackle the lack of cooperation among different stakeholders. Furthermore, the local dissemination event targeted policy makers, as three of them attended it and participated.

REFLECTIONS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

The fact that the project was delivered in six European countries provided all the project partners the opportunity to share and receive knowledge and experience from different contexts; this meant that each partner could be inspired by good practices from services in other European countries, but also from the whole structure of the child protection system in these countries. Apart from the positive differences among countries, it was also interesting to share experiences on the difficulties that each particular country face in regards to child protection, which easily led to the conclusion that both good practices and difficulties are universal. Most partners mentioned that they face the same problems in their everyday work, therefore the responses or solutions to such problems can also be universal.

One important objective of the project was to produce a model for integrated intervention towards violence against children, reducing underreporting and preventing secondary victimisation, which would be adaptable and transferable into different European contexts. Although the protocols or guidelines that have finally been developed are on national/local level, since it would be too hard to implement an international protocol, one can observe many similarities among the different protocols.

The main impact of the project at European level is that the consortium managed to develop an integrated training programme addressed to professionals from the sectors of social welfare, health, mental health, education, law enforcement and justice, which is common for professionals in all six countries not only in structure, but also in content. This way another goal is achieved; to ensure that mentalities of professionals among different European countries are oriented towards the same direction. This serves as an added value of the project to the European Union.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

The Institute of Child Health has contributed to the visibility of the project activities and achievements throughout the implementation of the project, exploiting its networks and organising dissemination events to promote the project objectives and results to the main stakeholders and the general public concerning protection and support for child victims of violence. Such activities have been the publication of an article describing the objectives of the project in an international specialised journal, the press conference that took place in November 2020, the dissemination event that was released in February 2021, the four press releases and the leaflet that circulated.

Regarding the sustainability plan of ICH, namely the ways in which the project's aims and results will

keep on having an impact after the project is over, it is considered that the main ways are the ones described below:

- The project website that has been developed by IARS will remain linked to the website of the Department of Mental Health and Social Welfare of the Institute of Child Health, for further communication and dissemination purposes. Apart from the fact that the website will be accessible to anyone interested so that they can be informed about the project's results, it is also important that people visiting the website can also be redirected to the web platform, which is probably the main way for the project's sustainability.
- The web platform that was developed by IARS and hosts training materials developed by all project partners, will be available both for students and for professionals who are willing to follow the training courses and enhance their knowledge on issues concerning child abuse and neglect.
- ICH is going to participate in the international conference held online by ISPCAN in June 2021 and present the results of the project. ICH has already submitted a summary that has been approved by the conference.





FRANCE

La Voix De L'enfant (LVDE)

REFLECTIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

La Voix De L'Enfant (LVDE) became involved in the project, because its aim corresponded to the association's core concerns: to reduce under-reporting of child abuse/neglect and to develop protocols adaptable to the national context, which improve the well-being of children who have suffered violence or are in danger. The actions planned and carried out in this project have all contributed to achieve this goal.

In France, LVDE runs a network of 80 Unités d'Accueil Pédiatrique Enfants en Danger (UAPED) care paediatric units and Children in danger units, which work in close collaboration between professionals from the social sector, police and justice, in adapted premises with high-performance technical means which allow the child to be treated by all in a friendly manner and be protected from possible over-traumatisation. Despite this, France still has many problems to face in the field of child protection.

First of all, France is one of the countries that do not have specific laws to penalise people who do not report alarming information or maltreatment of a minor, but a general law that penalises people who know of situations that put others in danger and who do not report them, so there is indeed an obligation to report. Several audio and television campaigns have been deployed, and a book co-written by the president of LVDE, entitled “ MELEZ VOUS DE CE QUI NE VOUS REGARDE PAS “ (Interfere With What Doesn't Concern You) is an advocacy for child victims so that early reporting protects them from serious harm. On this point, the project has shown that there is a need to raise awareness among the general public, and repeated and relevant information campaigns can improve current results in the short and longer term. Drawing inspiration from what is being done in other European countries, for example, in Finland for the project, and starting at an early age in children's communities (crèche, day-care centre, nursery and primary school afterwards) to educate the youngest children in non-violence.

The more countries in Europe that work together, the more likely it is that they will learn from each other's good practices, as long as countries listen to one another. The most important contribution of the project in this field is training. It has been developed in a modular way and covers a large part of the knowledge that professionals in regular contact with children should have, such as teachers, caregivers, childminders, preschool assistant, sports, cultural, leisure, religious educators...and some of the modules or parts of the modules of the training are well adapted to this population. France has just carried out an initial experiment with these populations as part of the training programme, at the very beginning of the year. In France, but also in other countries, there are many professionals to be trained as part of lifelong learning and for young people currently in training, it is essential to obtain from the authorities that this knowledge be an integral part of the training

courses for all these people.

Secondly, the integrated protocol for children victims to ensure them friendly care and safety must be further developed to ensure that all victims throughout France have access to these protective devices. There are not enough UAPEDs, not even an average of one per department. Also because the sooner children are detected, the better it will be for them and because a certain number of children do not go through the police and justice, but are directly taken in charge by the social services.

The work carried out within the framework of the project in Activity 4 is very much in line with this need. The recommendations made by the inter-professionals and inter-institutional participants in the round tables and focus groups not only reflect needs and wishes, but also suggest how solutions can be implemented. This is why, on the basis of the report from all the Prochild partners concerning activity N° 4, the French team drafted a version adapted to the French context, which was given to the Secretary of State during the summer of 2020. This was so that he could have a feedback of the needs and recommendations of the professionals in the field, not on the spot, but after the participants had listened to each other and sought a compromise that would allow them to take into account each other's barriers and above all their skills. This report was particularly timely since in September 2020 the "Pact for Children" scheme, led by the Secretary of State for Children and Families, was launched. This mechanism generated a call for tenders to propose training programmes, among others for the public we had in training within the framework of the project. The training programme was therefore proposed to the General Directorate for Social Cohesion/Ministry of Health and Solidarity with a view to obtaining its agreement and referral.

REFLECTION AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

Working in partnership with several European countries is interesting and necessary, as it is desirable that a subject as important as child protection should be dealt with in a coherent way at least in Europe. Of course it is not a question of imposing a single protocol, but of setting out the main steps and outlines and leaving it to the different countries to adapt them to their own context.

Working in partnership between several European countries on the same theme and with the same goals is much more productive than entrusting the same work to a single organisation, regardless of the country concerned because we are smarter with several people. But above all because creativity is much more developed when different points of view confront each other, which is almost always the case between professionals / experts from different countries.

When Europe wishes to deal with a problem or explore an issue in greater depth, it wants the proposals it can make to the people of the 27 countries of the European Union to correspond to the expectations of each of these countries. What better way can it find to get teams from different countries to work together, to negotiate compromises and find solutions acceptable to all? Thus, the added value for Europe is twofold, if the projects have been well selected and if they have respected their commitments: goals to be reached, while respecting the schedule and budget, Europe has obtained what it wanted in optimum conditions, all the more so as at its level it will be able to compare with the results of other project teams. Which will also have provided quality work, and thus be able to make proposals that best correspond to the majority of the populations of the European Union.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

The first activity that will undoubtedly be maintained is training. It will probably have to be adapted according to any requests that may be made by the ministerial departments if it is approved and referenced. It may also have to be adapted according to candidates' requests, but the teaching materials are ready and their modularity makes them easily adaptable in terms of content, duration and practical arrangements for implementation, either in person teaching or by video or a combination of the two.

If the training receives an agreement, financing will be possible for salaried persons through state and company funds dedicated to lifelong learning. In the case of young people undergoing training, the funds will be negotiated with the training organisation/school, it can be public or private, and there can be many different cases. If staff dependent on local or regional authorities are concerned, it will still be a little different, but in any case, there are some solutions.

In order to ensure abused, neglected or at-risk children continue to be friendly and safely supported, funding is more problematic and complex, as several public or private structures are involved. In fact, if we want to get professionals to work together, with not a simple sharing of tasks, but a real collaboration throughout the entire time the minor is in care, but nevertheless each one must obtain what he needs to give care, to carry out his/her inquiry and everyone must keep their professional responsibility, the human, material and financial means must be negotiated with social services, hospitals or doctors, police, justice and sometimes other entities.

However, the state wants to make child protection a national priority, such a decision should be accompanied by strong obligations and/or recommendations for the support of the minor, but also by sufficient human, material and financial means. It may be difficult, the improvement may be slower than one might wish, but we will certainly make progress. Fortunately, the children's cause is generally well accepted, which does not necessarily lead to additional resources, but at least it is easier to present and defend this cause.



GERMANY

Katholische Fachhochschule Nordrhein-Westfalen (KathO NRW)

REFLECTIONS

AT NATIONAL LEVEL

PROCHILD project started with a systematic literature review to answer the following questions for each country:

1. What kind of good practices are there to detect child abuse and neglect?
2. What kind of good practices are there to provide support for abused minors?
3. What kind of good practices of integration are there among services for the protection and support to abused children?

The aim of this first step was to map effective practices/interventions that help professionals to detect child maltreatment, to offer support to victims and to cooperate (WP3, D3.1). The conducted literature review showed that currently, there are many good practices regarding child protection strategies in Germany. However, due to a fragmentation of services, professionals from different regions often do not know about specific procedures and/or guidelines that already exist, and therefore, do not apply them. Instead of developing new interventions or procedures, it is of the utmost importance to promote the already existing good practices. The project published the collected good practices from all partner countries and helped to disseminate them.

Although there are many good practices in Germany, abused and neglected children are still identified too late. This is due to fragmentation of services, a lack of multiprofessional cooperation and in some parts a lack of knowledge regarding certain risk factors for child abuse and neglect in professionals.

Therefore, 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 (WP 3, D3.2). Parental mental health problems, especially substance abuse, have been consistently linked to higher risks of child abuse and neglect. Currently, affected children are identified late, referrals from alcohol treatment agencies to child protection services are rare and children from affected families are often placed in out of home care. It is therefore necessary to improve the identification of problems earlier and to better connect interventions between child agencies and the health system. Cooperation has to be integrated into a fixed framework to create material and time resources in institutions and thereby establish an exchange of activities, decisions and developments that is independent of individual professionals.

The next important milestone of the project was the survey on professionals training needs (WP3, D3.3 & D3.4) to establish a ground work for the trainings that were to be developed later. The survey was distributed through

personal and professional networks of the German researchers and reached a total of 49 professionals in Germany. 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 far from sufficient. The respondents, who worked in professions with clear responsibilities and official directives, felt more confident and better informed on child maltreatment. All respondents were far more confident working with other professionals than with possibly affected children and their families.

The later conducted focus groups and round tables with professionals (WP4, D4.6) from different sectors confirmed these findings. The participants had different levels of experience in the child protection process and 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 and yet not established everywhere. The focus groups were a very valuable part of the project for KatHO NRW. Although KatHO works with professionals on a regular basis, most of these interactions regard specific projects and mainly professionals from health care and mental health care. The focus groups provided an opportunity to establish connections with professionals from social care and education from different parts of Germany as well. These connections will be nurtured after the project ends and therefore provide a valuable link between research and practice.

Due to the pandemic, the German training sessions of professionals were conducted exclusively online. It became clear that this setting is ideal to reach professionals with little to no previous training on child protection. Especially educators, such as kindergarten and school teachers, have been interested in participating. The training evaluation confirmed that professionals enjoyed the opportunity to work on the modules in their own time. That way, they were able to use less busy times during their workdays instead of having to take one or two days off. One major disadvantage of the online training was the lack of interaction between participants. The project aimed at the improvement of multi-professional cooperation between professionals in child protection. Such a successful cooperation is based on a shared language, monetary and time resources, networking, coordination, as well as, knowledge on other sectors' resources and regulations. While the e-learning platform is not optimal to connect professionals, it is useful to establish a shared language and knowledge about other professionals' resources and regulations. This may improve the everyday interactions of participants regarding the cooperation with other professions.

REFLECTIONS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), all children have a right for protection regardless of their age, gender, religion or nationality. Although the aim of protecting minors from child abuse and neglect unites European countries, the means used to tackle violence against children vary significantly among the nations. Therefore, a transnational project provides a good opportunity to compare national practices and to benefit from other nations experiences. The fragmentation of services in the reaction to child abuse and neglect does not only happen on a national level, but on an international one as well. The results of the project offer an international overview of good practices tackling this fragmentation.

For example, the focus groups revealed difficulties in cooperation between professionals in all countries,

as well as, a need for training and education. Difficulties in information management came to light, not only with regard to uncertainties about what information can be shared with other services, but also to what extent suspicious cases release professionals from professional confidentiality. To have these obstacles found in different countries and professions highlights the transnational need to establish adequate procedures and protocols in all countries.

Another important aspect of the project is the dissemination of knowledge. Typical international dissemination of research results includes publication in journals and presentations at conferences. The selection of published research results in high numbers of gray literature that is never published due to insignificant results. However, the cooperation of organisations from different EU countries in the context of a project like PROCHILD allows for direct communication and information exchange. Established partnerships provide more formal and informal opportunities to talk freely about good practices as well as obstacles. The majority of German research results about child abuse and neglect is published in German. Since especially the older generation of professionals in social care and education are not fluent in English, this makes sense. However, this prevents researchers and professionals from different countries from reading the research and learning from it. Our project provided all publications and reports in English, as well as, in the national languages. This broadens the audience significantly and from our experience, professionals were excited to learn more about the child protection process, guidelines and procedures from other European countries.

Another significant contribution of the project is the raised awareness of child abuse and neglect on a transnational level. Child abuse and neglect is not a singular phenomenon in a country, but an international occurring one. Therefore, tackling violence against children in Europe should be a European aim. Nevertheless, establishing a good practice in a regional or even national context is easier than in the European context. There are significant differences in each country when it comes to resources, training level, published protocols and guidelines. Those differences have been reduced before a European procedure can be implemented. Therefore, this requires more time and effort than a single project can provide. Nevertheless, it is a good step into the right direction.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

Regarding the sustainability of the project at KatHO NRW, the web platform will be especially important. Over a short period of time, the e-learning has already reached about 50 German professionals. Although the project ends in February 2021, KatHO will continue to promote the platform in Germany - especially among its students. KatHO students are predominantly aspiring social workers, a profession that plays a key role in identifying and preventing child abuse and neglect. The focus groups showed that the topic of child protection is neglected in the university education of social workers, health care professionals, psychologists or police officers. Therefore, disseminating the e-learning platform among our students will be a great opportunity for these important future stakeholders in child protection.

Over time, new modules could be added to the existing ones to address participants who have not yet been reached by the project. In Germany, this includes professionals from the justice system, the police, but also from the health and mental health sector. The focus groups showed that there are still gaps in knowledge, especially within the police, which is why there is an urgent need to train these professionals. With regard

to the future, further projects in cooperation with the police could be a good idea.

In relation to the German e-learning participants, it is noticeable that most of the participants so far worked in the educational sector. Those professionals originally reported the highest insecurity and training needs in the survey conducted in WP3. Nonetheless, in the e-learning evaluation the educators reported the highest prior knowledge to all other groups. Therefore, it is uncertain whether there are actual differences between different groups of educators, for example kindergarten and school teachers. If these differences exist, future training and projects should address them. Therefore, KatHO NRW plans to analyse this further and will use this knowledge in other current projects. The project allowed KatHO NRW to establish new connections with professionals from health care, mental health care, education and justice. These contacts are very important in order to disseminate future research results from DISuP and will hopefully provide a link between our research institute and the practice.



FINLAND

Terveyden Ja Hyvinvoinnin Laitos (THL)

REFLECTIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

In Finland, the PROCHILD project has been carried out in close co-operation with the drafting and implementation of Non-Violent Childhoods – Action Plan for the prevention of violence against children 2020-2025 (Korpilahti et al. 2020). The multidisciplinary action plan was drafted together with 81 experts from various fields. It brings together national targets and policies for the prevention of violence against children, as well as, early identification of violence and the referral of children and young people for help and support. There is an extensive multidisciplinary steering group that supervised the drafting of the action plan and is responsible for monitoring and assessing the implementation of the action plan in the coming years. The steering group consists of representatives from national, regional and local levels, as well as, non-governmental organisations.

The reports, surveys and reviews conducted in WP3 served as background information for the drafting of the action plan. Focus groups, roundtables and surveys conducted in WP4 helped in formulating the targets and concrete actions for the plan. The training and materials drafted in WP5 served the implementation of the action plan, and will continue to do so in the future. The online training enabled us to reach professionals working with children and families across the country. We were happy to notice that professionals also from somewhat remote areas of Finland were able to participate in the training. In addition, the webinars were recorded for later dissemination. Altogether, we had 809 registered participants in our online webinars, and the recordings have been watched 666 times to this day.

The press conferences in WP2 enabled us to have a dialogue with the press on how the rights of children should be taken into consideration when reporting cases of CAN in the news. In addition, we organised dissemination events. We presented the project's results to the national working group for preventing violence against children at different stages of the project. We also presented the project and its results in various events organised by our stakeholders.

The development of mainstreaming practices compliant with the Barnahus standards in Finland (THL 2021a) started at the same time as our project. This work is implemented in THL, and it enabled us to have discussions and share ideas between two projects with the same objectives to protect children. One outcome of this co-operation is the Barnahus online course for professionals working with children and families that addresses the same issues that the PROCHILD project's training materials. The Barnahus standards will be the model of multidisciplinary intervention implemented in the whole of Finland in the upcoming years. It integrates the work in child protection services, primary health care, special health care, the police and law enforcement.

As a part of developing the training materials, we translated the basic modules concerning child protection policy in Finnish. These materials are planned to be used in the future for updating THL's own organisation's child protection policy.

REFLECTIONS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

The direct benefit of European level projects is the chance to learn from different EU countries and to share experiences, thoughts and ideas. From the Finnish perspective, we were able to disseminate the action plan to other project partners as a good practice, once the action plan was translated to English. The project also enabled us to deepen our understanding on the best practices of child protection in European countries. In developing the Barnahus model, THL is taking part in the trans-European project Promise 3 that develops and deepens the competencies of professionals in building child-friendly services for abuse victims.

In 2020, Finland became the member of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, i.e. Pathfinding country (End Violence Against Children 2020). This means that Finland has committed to prioritising children's safety by making a formal commitment to ending all forms of violence against children, appointing a government focal point to lead the in-country process and developing evidence-based and costed national action plan. THL coordinates the development, implementation and monitoring of Finland's engagement as a Pathfinder country and Ulla Korpilahti is one of two senior government focal points. This enables us to build future partnerships in European and Global level.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

THL will continue the work to safeguard children on many levels. The project's results will be put into service in the implementation of the Non-Violent Childhoods action plan, as has already been done. Ulla Korpilahti is coordinating the implementation in THL. We have also created a webpage to inform professionals about the project and its results (THL 2021b). It also collects the materials and recordings from our webinars for later dissemination. The project's results will also be disseminated when we are invited to give talks to our stakeholders. The End Violence Partnership enables us to disseminate the results at European and global level. The development of the Barnahus model ensures the future development of multidisciplinary interventions in Finland.

During the project, we worked together in close co-operation with the national working group for preventing violence against children. The working group consists of four ministries (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education and Culture and Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment) and 28 other organisations (University hospitals, government organisations, local government, NGOs, etc.). We have presented the results of the project to the working group several times during the project. The working group was also invited to the roundtable sessions. The working group will continue its work at least until 2025 and the project's results are sustained in the work of the group and its organisations. Ulla Korpilahti is the secretary of the working group.

The implementation of Non-Violent Childhoods action plan is also linked to Finland's first Child Strategy that was issued in 2021 (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2021). The Strategy underlines the prevention of violence against children together with minimising the harm of CAN. All these plans, strategies, projects and networks described above build a network of multidisciplinary co-operation where the results from project will be sustained in the work to safeguard all children.

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UNITED KINGDOM

The IARS International Institute

REFLECTIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

In the UK context, the PROCHILD Project has provided a number of benefits at a national level. We started off by collecting good practices from the UK on how to detect violence against children, how to support minor victims and how to integrate services for their protection. In total, we identified four core models of safeguarding that have been developed, identified and analysed as positively detecting violence against children and adolescents in the UK. The benefit of the models were that they all emphasised the need to develop collaboration between professionals from different fields for the effective safeguarding of children. We also surveyed professionals, with the majority of them working in education, on their strengths and weaknesses when it came to the identification of potential cases of child maltreatment and to address any training needs they might have. This enabled professionals to have their say and to have an active role in the development of the training programme later on. The activities carried out at the start of the project were hugely impactful on a national level, as they identified good practices and contributions from professionals, which acted as a starting point and laid the foundations for the focus of the project in the UK.

Good practices, hindrances and training needs were further validated during the focus groups and roundtables, when professionals from different fields came together to discuss obstacles, solutions and coordination. The obstacles that were identified in the coordination and integration of services pertained to a number of themes, including lack of integrated systems for communication and information sharing, streamlining practice, lack of cooperation among services and scarce funding and resources. These meetings were beneficial for professionals themselves, as they enabled cross-sectoral exchanges and understanding of different professionals' capacities, scope of work and resources. On a national level, the findings again stressed the importance of the project, the need for multidisciplinary training and the creation of spaces and opportunities for professionals to discuss obstacles and solutions to promote interdisciplinary collaboration. Furthermore, IARS were able to establish connections and build relationships with professionals who we have continued to work with during the subsequent phases of the project and will continue to work with in the future.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the delivery of the multidisciplinary training course, we were able to create a positive impact on a national level. Due to the accessibility and use of online webinars and meeting platforms, we were able to increase our reach to a wide range of professionals across the UK. Such professionals would otherwise be unable to attend face-to-face training. The training has benefitted over 100 professionals across the UK over the course of a month, and we anticipate the e-learning course to reach many more professionals in the months to come, and thus, multiplying the impact on a national level.

IARS have managed to raise national awareness of the project through events such as the Violence against Children & Young People- Multidisciplinary Learning Seminar, which took place on 13th of November 2020. From this, the aims of the webinar - to raise awareness on the issues and multidisciplinary approaches on preventing, tackling, detecting and reporting violence, were successfully met. The seminar gathered a wide range of attendees from all over the UK, including experts in gender based violence (GBV), children's rights and domestic abuse advocates, researchers from Public Health England and youth workers, as well as, interested stakeholders and professionals from the third sector. This was invaluable to the project, as we were able to present the outcomes of the project, and collect and use the feedback from our fellow organisations and professional attendees, to improve and check the effectiveness and relatability of the project. By using the seminar to promote the project, we were able to increase our reach of participants significantly, thanks to the accessibility of the online aspect. As a result, not only did the seminar allow us to inform and bring together professionals from a range of sectors from our target audience and various locations in the UK, but it also allowed us to create more awareness and drive for the project and issues addressed at a national level.

REFLECTIONS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

The benefit of working at a European level on this project has been the ability to learn from organisations that are beyond the target group of Child Protection Agencies, local authorities and social workers, and the opportunities to have cross-sector interactions. By disseminating the project findings and training across our partner organisations, we have also enabled partners to disseminate to their wider national and international networks. This has the effect of multiplying the impact of the project across a number of different fields, and in countries that are not directly involved in the project. For example, by holding joint seminars and workshops across the IARS gender-based violence programmes we were able to facilitate discussion across different sectors, and achieve cross-over into professionals from the PROCHILD network engaging in an international conference on GBV with over 160 participants from Europe and beyond. This cross-fertilisation of ideas from different but related fields and good practice can then be adapted; ensuring that the impact of the project will continue after it has been completed.

Through the dissemination efforts, IARS have been able to promote the project on European and international levels. The project website and social media have aided us in the dissemination of project results and information, in order to raise awareness on child abuse and maltreatment and the project's outcomes. This has been achieved through a wide range of dissemination work and social media campaigns that have highlighted the importance of the project and the effectiveness of it. Our efforts have included blog posts, newsletters, press releases, dissemination events and social media campaigns linking the project to international days, such as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Universal Children's Day. Our comprehensive communication strategy has enabled us to reach an even wider audience in Europe and worldwide and to multiply the mainstreaming effects of the project.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

As outlined in the previous sections, IARS have brought together professionals from a wide range of sectors that allows the project to have transferability and sustainability within the UK context across a range

of areas; including gender-based violence, migration and anti-human trafficking. Professionals from all of these areas have taken part in multidisciplinary roundtable discussions or the online training, and we intend to continue these events and ensure that the PROCHILD findings are shared and disseminated at future conferences and events. We are also increasingly working with teachers and educationalists, and intend to run events focused on how parents, teachers and other professionals can work together to prevent abuse towards children and young people in various forms.

The online training will remain available and the website maintained, with IARS committing to maintain this through its own funds for a further five years after the official conclusion of the project. We have also been in discussions with the Department of Work and Pensions and their JobCentre Plus network with the aim of offering the multidisciplinary training to their staff. It has become increasingly clear that professionals who were not initially within the scope of this project but who work in the welfare system, for example Job Centre staff who manage individuals on benefits and who are looking for work or those who work in foodbanks, are dealing with multiple and complex problems that often include child protection issues but they are not trained to recognise the signs as it is outside the scope of their work. However, staff are asking for training and awareness of the issues, so that they can effectively signpost clients to the right areas.

IARS have been in contact with Derby University, the largest provider of youth work degrees in the UK, to discuss how the multidisciplinary training can be rolled out to their students. IARS is also planning to deliver the training in face-to-face settings as soon as we are able to do so as part of a suite of training courses that are on offer to young people and professionals working with young people, e.g. youth workers, local authorities, teachers.

CONCLUSION

This final publication concludes two years of learning and practical results from the PROCHILD Project and shares the partnership's reflections on national and European level, and considerations for sustainability of the project results.

From the reflections in this publication, we can see the European added value the project has had within the consortium from raising awareness on child abuse to starting a dialogue, sharing information and promoting best practices. The project has provided a chance to learn from different European countries and to share experiences, thoughts and ideas, but also to reflect on the difficulties countries face in regards to child protection. Our research has identified that both best practices and difficulties can be universal; therefore, the solutions to such problems may also be universal. As a result, the multidisciplinary training programme, which promotes European best practices and solutions, ensures that the mentalities of professionals from different European countries are guided towards the same cross-sectoral direction and integrated interventions in the protection of children.

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