✔alChild

Newsletter

Issue 3 – December 2020

"Making childminders´ competencies visible"

1. Introduction

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic rules and regulations have increased and advice is given at policy level to ensure the health and safety of children and their families. This is stressful for all concerned and the competences, resilience and commitment of childminders is paramount.

This time is an opportunity for learning and developing skills in all walks of life especially as a childminder. The competences of a childminder is growing and a new set of rules have to be understood and implemented. This requires self-reflection skills along diligence to ensure children are safe at all times.

VALCHILD has developed a model and tools to describe such learning experiences, techniques to prove that they have specific competences and to have these validated. In section 4 of this newsletter, the model and the competence profile for a childminder are described.

2. Covid-19 and the ValChild project

Working in a European project is an interesting and rich environment in which each partner brings in information and experiences from Childminding in their country, Including the national structures, laws and regulations, competence profiles, validation systems and phases of development .

During the past few months like other projects, ValChild partners were unable to travel to each other's countries and attain first-hand information pertaining to child minding and validation systems. We also missed out on the face to face discussions, the relationship building, the exchange of ideas that a transnational meeting affords project partners.

Also meeting up with the national stakeholders, test training with childminders and information days are difficult to organise. Work with the childminders was unfortunately limited by the Covid-19 regulations in each of the partners´ country.

Although we find ourselves in this very surreal situation it is important to note that despite all, the ValChild Partners have demonstrated versatility and dedication over the past number of months to continue with the project activities.

Like the rest of the world, we embraced Zoom and engaged in monthly online meetings and even though this was not new to us as a means of communication we made a bigger effort to check in and discuss progress and support each other through the different activities of the project.

3. Childminding and competences

And now... the work on ValChild continues and we ask ourselves the practical question – how can validation of prior learning help childminders?

Childminders support children's development, ensure their health and well-being and guide

them in their daily routines and activities. Legal requirements strive to underpin the development of pre-school children and to ensure their health, safety, and welfare.

In Childminders´ homes, hygiene needs a high standard. This level of hygiene has been extended during the Corona-pandemic and includes also indirect a societal influence:

- Parents are instructed how to handle by bringing and picking-up their children

- Children are taught how they can prevent becoming ill and how they have to behave, at the childminders´ place and at home. Also, the standard for hygiene has been raised and the level of their knowledge, skills and behaviour has gone up. This increased the level of competencies which are not formally recognised yet.

And, last but not least: The first form of childcare that was reopened which meant that they were leading the way in relation to implementing change and forming strong relationships and partnerships with parent – working together to deal with the restrictions of COVID-19. This flexibility and resilience is another important competency to recognise and acknowledge

4. Project results

4.1. Childminder competence profile

Each form of "Validation" needs a standard / norm to validate the outcomes against. In case for education it is the National Qualification Frameworks[1]. Each profession has its own standard for qualification. This standard is written in a qualification profile, containing a description of the context, the level of the qualification, the common activities, and description of competences.

Also, the Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) of Childminding should have such a standard. "… should have…", but it is not that simple for several reasons like

- Legal differences, for instance what a childminder is allowed to do and what not
- The level of the childminder diploma / certificate (for example: in NL from EQF-level 2/3, in PT and EL EQF-level 5)
- The different other diplomas that are allows persons to childmind
- The phase in development of the NFQ (In NL and FR fully implemented in IRL, PT and EL in development)
- Educational certification or Branche certification
- The age of children (age e.g. 0-3, or 0-6, or 0-12yr)

It was from the beginning clear that with these differences, it would be impossible to develop a Childminder qualification, let aside the time it would cost to have such a qualification endorsed by the different countries.

The first step the ValChild partners took, was to find the common ground in the 5 partner countries and to develop a core competence profile for the profession of childminding, all based on EQF-standard and on the existing qualification and competence profiles.

ValChild found that the competences of a childminder could be divided in 5 competence domains:

1. Working on your own organization - legal framework in the childminder's activity
2. Child Development and Learning
3. Health & Wellness
4. Early Childhood Education
5. Family and local communities' involvement

These domains were split into fields of activity as described in the table below.

Table: ValChild competence profile of a childminder

1.	Working on your own organization - legal framework in the childminder's activity

Identifies own country legal requirements and conditions for the childminder activity – e.g. Legal requirements regarding the organization of the childminders space, ratio adult/children, … namely by:

1. Identifying, selecting, and organizing the documents required for the contract with the family

to be signed with the parent of each child.

2. Recognizing, valuing, and putting into practice the ethical-deontological competences of the childminder activity: development of an action considering and respecting interpersonal relationships - families, children, community; civic responsibility; professional secrecy and confidentiality.

3. Using the support and referral mechanisms predicted in law (child protection policy) in order to protect children at risk.

2. Child Development and Learning

Recognizes the development stages of children from 0 to 6 years old in all dimensions and their individual needs, namely by:

1. Welcoming and respecting each child's individual characteristics, rights and needs.

2. Developing bonds and building relationships with children by giving attention, showing affection and praising their achievements and learning.

3. Creating conversational interactions by supporting and encouraging children to develop their language skills, in a supportive and enabling context.

4. Valuing unstructured materials as a resource for exploration and play, giving freedom to the child's initiative, encouraging the decision making and problem solving.

5. Identifying warning signs related to developmental problems of children from 0 to 6 years

3. Health & Wellness

Promotes safe environments for child minding - health, nutrition, hygiene, safety, rest, and comfort - ground rules, namely:

1. Applying basic child health care.

2. Applying the basic rules and standards of hygiene, rest, comfort, nutrition, and safety, providing a safe and stimulating environment.

3. Identifying and implementing accident risk mitigation measures - conducting risk assessments.

4. Applying first aid techniques.

4. Early Childhood Education

Enhances daily routine care and activities to promote child's wellbeing and development, creating opportunities for children within the home, namely by:

1. Recognizing the importance of integrating educational values and principles in the childminder's activity.

2. Identifying play materials and other equipment for the childminder's activity.

3. Planning daily routines and activities that promote children's development.

4. Developing play activities relating them with children's daily lives in the family and community.

5. Optimizing children's learning and development through meaningful and challenging proposals.

6. Being able to use observation and registration of child behaviour as instruments of communication with families and professional development.

5. Family and local communities' involvement

Develops partnership relationships with families and with the local community, expanding the educational opportunities offered to children:

1. Recognizes and supports family characteristics and different ways of parenting.

2. Building positive partnerships with parents and promoting parental involvement.

3. Organizing, in close articulation with parents, the integration and child's adaptation.

4. Creating diverse opportunities for active parental participation in the childminder's home/context.

5. Reconciling family life and childminder activity.

6. Demonstrating affection and responsiveness while respecting the rights of children and their families.

7. Observing and reflecting about the child's family and social context with a view to better understanding their needs and interests.
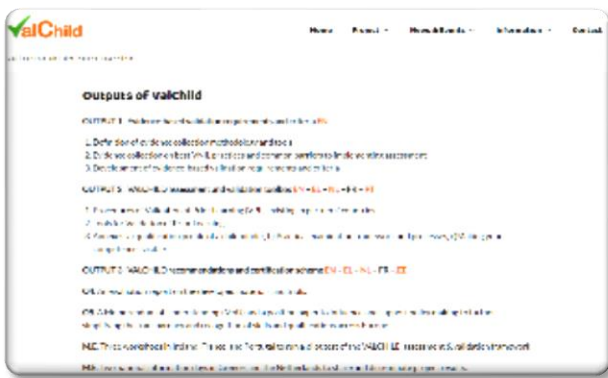
8. Developing partnership relationships with the

> local community, expanding the educational opportunities offered to children.

This and more is describes in the 2nd output of the project: the ValChild Toolbox.

4.2. VALCHILD assessment and validation toolbox.

The toolbox is available in EN, FR, NL, EL and PT at
www.valchild.eu/outputs/

The content of the toolbox:

1. **Procedures of Validation of Prior Learning** (VPL), existing in partners´ countries

2. **The validation process**:
   a. Screening / clarifying
   b. Admissibility process
   c. Evaluation/validation by certification commission
   d. Post certification
   e. Post VPL

3. **Tools for Validation of Prior Learning**
   a. Application
   b. Process descriptions
   c. Portfolio of applicant
   d. Certificate
   e. Dissemination tools

4. **Annexes:**
   a. *qualification profile of a childminder*
   b. Practical examination framework and

processes
c. Dissemination.

5. Transnational ValChild meeting (online)

Travel to and from a ValChild-transnational-meeting was impossible during the first CoVid-19 pandemic. Instead of the fourth transnational project meeting in Lisbon, the project had to take a decision and had an online meeting. It also decided to intensify regular, monthly online meetings. of the VALCHILD project

The online meeting worked quite well, but it showed clearly that a European project is more than a business-like taking care of pure project operations. An essential part of a transnational meeting is to understand the national and regional context and situation, like social, cultural, educational, political, technological and economic aspects and its influence on education, learning, the validation of prior learning in specific for the Childminding sector in Portugal.

The importance of a visiting another country is not only to experience the culture but to also engage in actual practical experiences of the project topic and in this case the possibility of visiting a validation centre or an international contribution to a national multiplier event. EU projects are more than just the business of meeting deadlines and achieving outputs and it is important to remember that as we move forward.

A special thanks to our Portugal partners, who shared examples of their culture and colleges via video, making the best of a difficult situation. At such moments it is felt that the high value of digesting (next to the taste food in one of the Bairros while listening to Fado-music) all information of the meeting and prepare for the continuation of the meeting next day.

Partners:

Follow ValChild on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/groups/valchild

www.valchild.eu

ValChild Partners

1. Early Childhood Ireland (ECI Ireland)- project coordinator
2. Hellenic Society for the promotion of Research & Development (PROMEA, Greece)
3. Foundation European Centre for Valuation Prior Learning (EC-VPL, The Netherlands)
4. French Institute for the professionalization of family employment (IPERIA L'INSTITUT, France)
5. Escola Superior de Educadores Infância Maria Ulrich (ESEIMU, Portuga

Partners: