

## Output 4

### Report on processes, process evaluation and results of the professionalization trajectory in the ECEC institutions<sup>1</sup>

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#	TASK	Status/progress
1	Evaluate professionalization in the selected ECEC through interviews with professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews completed in O1 phase (database of transcripts available)</li> <li>Final findings available in this report but also in O1 Execution report and O2 - <i>Toolbox. Outlines for using video analysis and video coaching as a tool for professionalizing ECEC workforce and training future ECEC professionals</i> and O3 -<i>Lessons learnt from case studies</i></li> </ul>
2	Evaluate the effects of video coaching on professionalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics to be researched stem from Output 1 and are noted in this report</li> <li>A suggested questionnaire design is included in this report</li> <li>All country teams conducted evaluation through follow-up questionnaires and /or meetings with engaged professionals</li> </ul>
3	Involve parents in the evaluation component (TBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot process in Belgium tried out</li> <li>As it was very difficult to reach parents directly team suggested teachers or childcare workers to select a few video fragments for small conversations with some parents, with focus on parents in a vulnerable position who are worried about their child's growth and inclusion in the classroom."</li> </ul>
4	Evaluate how the video-coaching tool can be propagated in the context of inequalities beyond the participating institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We collected comments and evaluation from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"train the trainer" activities in three countries,</li> <li>dissemination activities (international conferences</li> <li>Polish Multiplier Event</li> </ul> </li> <li>Our recommendation regarding using the video coaching beyond the project context are also included in <i>O2 Toolbox</i> and <i>O3 Lessons learnt from case studies</i></li> </ul>

The O4 was formulated as follows:

**Report on processes, process evaluation and results of the professionalization trajectory in the ECEC institutions (in each country)<sup>2</sup>**

The evaluation component (O4) of the TRACKS project is an integral part of the entire project's design: it completes the key outputs of O1 to O3 and demonstrates sustainability, the degree of success and possible challenges for going forward, meaning as to whether the TRACKS toolbox can be propagated to further ECEC settings in the participating countries and beyond. The dimension of evaluation (O4) is what the focus has been placed on the TRACKS project's implementation. Following the formulation of the Output 4, the tasks needed to fulfill the goals of TRACKS regarding O4 were:

- a) Report on processes of professionalization and on the effects of the TRACKS video coaching on professional pathways of ECEC institutions across participating countries.
- b) An evaluation of the TRACKS project from the perspective of the professionals.

We have focused on mapping the issues around professionalization and comment on the general challenges relevant to this area across Poland, Belgium and Italy and this topic is the main contribution to O4 reported here. Secondly, we also addressed the formalized evaluation tools and results of evaluation that were deployed in the second period of work on Output 4 and also some recommendations coming from “train the trainer” and dissemination activities and from Multiplier Event realized in Poland on June, 25 2020.

## **Introduction**

While professionalization in teaching has been a global debate and a general argument about the necessity of promoting professionalization in education has been accepted, there is a

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<sup>2</sup> The tasks for this output were planned and realized till August 2019. However, we decided to update it and add some comments also later, in the O3 phase of the project as they are useful for the Output.

significant variability as to how various countries address it (Zierer 2015, Cochran-Smith, Zeichner 2005, Evetts 2003, Beauchamp et al. 2015, Hargreaves 1997, 2005). The main discrepancies in how professionalization is formulated and implemented, lie in the national contexts (often politicized), as well as the level of the educational system on which professionalization is to take place. In the TRACKS project, both these challenges had to be addressed. Firstly, the professionalization process occurred in three different European states, which research told us are not comparable (see also Ostinelli 2009, Peleman et al. 2018 and Ślusarczyk et al. 2018 – the [TRACKS Working Paper 1 Comparing ECEC across Italy, Poland and Belgium](#)). Furthermore, the project was very specifically located in the realm of ECEC, the initial stage of educational process which might or might not be treated the same as other teaching education arenas, also in terms of professionalization (Lazzari et al. 2013, Balduzzi, Lazzari 2015, Peleman et al. 2018). In that sense, the evaluation of professionalization had to take into account the local setting and the level of its understanding, which was substantially different in Poland when compared to Italy or Belgium.

As argued by Zierer (2015), there are two main approaches to professionalization. The first is the *competence-based approach*, in which “a teacher is regarded as a professional if she or he shows a high level of competencies in particular domains of teaching and learning”. Importantly, the array of skills should be defined in an internationally-conceived framework that makes it measurable. With the TRACKS project being a small-scale comparative design, we are more attentive to the second approach to professionalization, which is built on the *critical reflection approach* (ibid.). Accordingly, success of a teaching/ECEC professional means that she or he is “dealing with pedagogical antinomies like nearness vs. distance, organization vs. interaction, and autonomy vs. heteronomy” (Zierner 2015). Reflexivity about everyday situations in the workplace – which are increasingly marked by superdiversity’s impact on heightened uncertainty and indeterminacy – is the core feature of professionalization of this approach and a corner stone of the TRACKS model.

Nevertheless, the national teams in TRACKS quickly realized that to evaluate the functionality of the video coaching for combating inequalities and increasing professionalization,

they all begin from different starting points. Specifically, the Belgian and Italian teams worked in the context wherein foundations have been laid by previous research and professional practice. With efforts on professionalization ongoing in the ECEC realm for a significant period of time (see Lazzari, Balduzzi 2013, Lazzari et al. 2013, Oberhuemer 1995, Verhaeghe, Wastijn 2017, Hostyn et al. 2018), the Belgian and Italian teams faced challenges that are different from the ones that needed to be tackled in the Polish ECEC.

Below we present our findings and recommendations concerning professionalization in these three contexts:

### **Professionalization needs**

In reporting on evaluation of professionalization in Belgium and Italy, it has been noted that the ECEC professionals in their countries are relatively **open to video-coaching** methods:

*"watching the videos within the working group allows you to highlight critical issues and positive aspects (...) allows you to reflect on and getting involved on your educational actions in the context of the nursery, help you to improve and rethink your attitude towards children" (ECEC educator, Italy).*

*"being able to observe oneself while interacting with children allows me to notice behaviors and attitudes of which one is not completely aware; being able to review a situation makes it possible to read the different levels of what happens, from macro to micro, to the detail that risks getting lost in everyday life; re-reading situations in groups, with people you work with on a daily basis (and year after year) allows you to better know and understand the actions of colleagues." (ECEC educator, Italy).*

They are, however, some differences. While **team setting** is well established in the Italian practice (at least the regions or ECEC settings where they worked for TRACKs), it does not apply in the same extension to Belgian / Flanders context, teachers and care workers are rather used to work individually (face-to-face with a coach). This innovative component was needed in the context of how ECEC chosen for the project operate and the Belgian team, in particular, is attempting to **expand professionalization in ECEC by increasing competencies within team-setting of video coaching**. In other words, the focus here was on a **multi-step professionalization**,

in which we will try to make a ‘transfer’ from the individual to the team level, as an **experiment**. This is being done in a form of showing the selected video fragments to the teams (if coachee agrees). In this way, the coachee can share with the team what he or she is proud of, learned, grew more conscious about, so that also the **entire team is stimulated by this reflection process**. The evaluation of the professionalization will therefore take place in a collective setting of a team working together in a given ECEC. As – what we stressed in all phases of the project and expressed in our *Toolbox*, the method is not supposed to be used as a tool for judging but a way of growing up professionally it is important to create a friendly environment which in turn will enable building teams to work together.

Unlike in the two cases above, the Polish ECEC institutions have not been exposed to professionalization to the same extent and the efforts towards it are somewhat in the scattered and nascent state rather than imposed as a generalized framework (see Muchacka 2000, Cieslenska 2017, Musial 2017). Thus, **professionalization hinges upon the structural conditions in a particular ECEC, as well as on an individual pathway that an ECEC professional forges for herself/himself**. This can be observed in several arenas. The first one is the distinction between private and public institutions. As we have demonstrated in our TRACKS country report (Ślusarczyk et al. 2018), there is a discrepancy in that privately-run entities can be more competitive when it comes to acquiring those more willing to engage in professional development and, in turn, they also have the resources and capabilities to enable it. Two quotations from an interview with an employee of a private institution below demonstrates it.

*“I have thought that a private kindergarten gives greater chances for a teacher willing to develop. I thought so and indeed, if one has this inner-imperative and one wants to do something not only for the children but also for oneself, then I truly believe that private kindergarten makes it possible in a greater way.” (ECEC teacher, Poland, private setting)*

*“We can implement our own ideas and support them with materials and tools that a public kindergarten would not be able to afford because of budget limitations.” (ECEC head, Poland, private setting)*

Therefore, in the evaluation tool the Polish team had to take this private/public dichotomy into account, because the ECEC employees might not have the same opportunities for reflection and development. Similarly, the availability of professional help like speech therapists or psychologists is very different. Especially in the smaller rural settings, our respondents explicitly stated that **they need coaching and assistance which is currently completely absent from their professional surroundings:**

*“We would need a speech therapist (for children), that for sure. Also a psychologist, if there were problems it would be good to have a chance to work with someone like this. Also for us (teachers), to get advice, or maybe even get someone on the phone when we have a problem or do not know something.” (ECEC teacher, Poland, public setting, rural area)*

The second challenge in Poland is a generational one and stems from the shift towards professionalization in higher education, which is not uniformly understood by different ECEC personnel. The younger teachers have been educated with a strong emphasis on the curriculum and expect that professionalization will be realized in the ready-materials and technology-enabled assistance that a teacher should follow and use in an educational process. Conversely, some of the “older” respondents in Poland did not fully internalize the reasoning behind the curriculum. At the same time, our interviewees commonly underscored **an accidental nature of their professional pathway**. For example, one of the ECEC employees has said:

*“My degree is in Geography: I was going to teach it (...) but a kindergarten was being opened and no geography teachers were needed, so I have done additional studies and work here now.” (ECEC teacher, Poland, public setting, rural area)*

With this type of entry into the profession of the ECEC teacher, the challenges to professionalization must be evaluated. More broadly, **there is an explicit need for support because the teachers usually did not see their education as a form of professional preparation for the ECEC workplace:**

*“At university it was different from what it is at work. One must learn a lot. Now I already have some knowledge, practice. One has to learn all the time and search some extra courses, I search*

*online a lot. I honestly think that a person really learns at work: during studies it is theoretical knowledge”. (ECEC teacher, Poland, private setting, city area)*

When it comes to the direct topic of inequalities, the ECEC teachers raised the issue of needing the tool that is **integrative** and not just **inclusive**:

*“There is a boundary because if there are five children with disabilities (...) then everyone is focused on these children and the children who have no disabilities are forgotten (...) We need to be aware that all children need our attention”. (ECEC head, Poland, private setting)*

With this challenge, it is crucial to notice the role of video coaching as a means for integrative inclusivity across all types of inequalities in the TRACKS project. It is believed that the ECEC professionals might focus on the children that are “a priori” viewed as problematic. Through video-coaching and its evaluation, we focused on **equal support for all children** and **evaluate teachers’ awareness of difference**.

Finally, for all three countries there was a need to **involve parents in the findings of the video coaching**, as we have specifically asked for parents’ opinions through the research component. The TRACKS partners tried to develop – in the second part of the O4 period – a way for evaluating parental effects and views on video coaching. The Belgian team asked teachers or childcare workers to select a few video fragments for small conversations with some parents, with focus on parents in a vulnerable position who are worried about their child’s growth and inclusion in the classroom, the Polish team tried to involve parents into video analysis (as in the rural ECEC settings run by Komensky Institute parents are engaged in care process and one of them is usually present in the setting during the day). We tried to conduct these conversations in a mutual, reciprocal mindset, so that there was a shared feeling of mutual understanding. It is, however, important to stress, that Polish parents are not used to be involved in educational evaluation processes and they often feel afraid to express their minds, so there is a need to develop this component in the future. In other contexts (Belgian / Italian) there was also a communication problem (e.g. with migrant parents). Again, this is a completely **new and innovative element**.



### **Method evaluation regarding professionalization processes**

By planning the evaluation with took into the consideration all aspects: evaluation of the method and the tool, follow-up comments and observations and the issue of the professionalization processes – if video coaching method could meet their needs expressed during research and coaching. We prepared a set of possible questions to choose and every team realized the evaluation according to local context and opportunities. The questions raised issues as follows:

1. Quality of education
  - a. How happy were you with your teaching training?
  - b. What were the strong/weak points? (open question)
2. Professionalization of the workplace
  - a. Is professional assistance from specialist available for children who need?
  - b. Can you receive professional assistance when you need it? From whom? (fellow-teacher, management, external coach, external specialist etc.)
  - c. How would you evaluate professional development opportunities in your ECEC?
  - d. What does it mean for you that an ECEC is “professional”?
  - e. What are the signs of professionalization?
3. Video-coaching – method evaluation
  - a. Do you think that video-coaching is a useful process for teachers in ECEC?
  - b. Was it useful for your institution?
  - c. How would you evaluate the video coaching process of the TRACKS project’s overall effects for you? What were the main challenges of this for you?
  - d. How would you rate the impact of the video coaching on your professional practice?
  - e. Do you think video-coaching can help combat inequalities in ECEC?
4. Video-coaching – inequalities issue
  - a. Do you think video-coaching is generally better when it is done individually or in a team? Why?

- b. Which kinds of inequalities were you able to notice within the context of your professional practice during the video-coaching process? (economic/disability/ethnicity etc.).
- c. How would you rate the change in your professional practice as regards the inequality aspects noticed during video coaching?
- d. When it comes to inequalities, would you say that video coaching is most helpful for...(integration, inclusion, support, unhelpful in this regard etc.).

## Country insights

### *Belgium*

During the social research in Ghent the goal was to gather meanings about vulnerability and social inequality – what do kindergarten teachers and childcare workers, directors and coordinators, and parents tell us about this and how they work and activities could be improved in a professionalization process to reduce the inequalities? The question were:

- What do they think about "social inequality / social vulnerability"?
- What signals do they pick up and how do they tackle this?

We conducted interviews with 5 ECEC directors/coordinators (experts), 1 ECEC policy support staff member, 4 pre-school teachers, 4 out-of-school childcare workers, 1 childcare worker in childcare center, 2 parents.

All the interviews were analyzed and a conclusion was submitted to the Local Advisory Board of Belgium to be analyzed and discussed. The recurrent themes in the conversations can be summarized as follows:

### *In general*

The out-of-school care and schools (and daycare center) should work closely together. This is not evident in the Flemish context. It is the ambition of the Ghent city council to remove as many ‘thresholds’ (e.g. communication barriers, problems regarding the institutional culture, so called

“way of doing”) as possible and work on ‘**pedagogical continuity**’, in the interest of the children. However, there still remains a kind of ‘implicit’ hierarchy in which the childcare workers are ‘subordinate’ to the kindergarten teacher what impedes the communication and hinders the openness in a daily work.

### *Signals about vulnerability and social inequality -professionals approach*

All professionals referred to very diverse types / dimensions of vulnerabilities. Especially the signals that refer to poverty or exclusion were told spontaneously. They were aware that the school and institutions were located in a neighborhood characterized by various challenges. These were both the general living conditions and - more specifically - the signals about housing, finances, food, health, etc. Moreover, the professionals 'read' signals about 'striking' behavior of the children, and they carefully tried to find out the causes, preferably in consultation with the parents. Some interviewees indicated that a language barrier could impede to make certain signals negotiable.

The professionals were aware of the complex mechanisms behind social inequality and poverty. Some had another (pre)education/certificate/diploma besides that for childcare or pre-school teacher. This extra expertise helped them in daily contact with vulnerable families. All involved professionals referred to the attempts to develop trustworthy and good contact with the parents. They tried to approach the parents unprejudiced and without judgment and make it clear to the parents that together with the school they could look for solutions for specific needs of their children. The evolution of the institution policies was striking: both starting childcare workers and teachers were well coached in the perceptions on the families they would be working with.

These findings and analyses served as the basis for critical reflection on the vulnerabilities and for adjusting the approach (e.g. in communication with these families) to basic values such as respect, openness and equality, and to a professional attitude of encouragement and positive / constructive treatment.

### *Evaluation – follow-up meeting*

On the 10th of January 2020, the **participants of the video coaching sessions** in Ghent, Belgium, (pre-schools, ‘stibo’-workers and child care workers) came together to discuss the further

implications of the video coaching method for their daily practice, as an individual professional and as a team member. Together with their coordinators and directors, we exchanged the impact of the video coaching on the team reflection culture. The local project team used train the trainer-methods to stimulate this exchange.

During this focus group, we consciously worked with images (for the occasion: photos) to look for beliefs, opinions, meanings, perceptions and experiences. Through these photos we wanted to provoke a reaction, a story and thus also get answers to the questions below. The aim of the focus group was **to hear each other's opinions, discuss them and understand each other's perspective**. The chosen questions were as follows:

- 1 - Why would you recommend video coaching to another professional or coordinator?
- 2 - What made you wonder and grow as a professional?
- 3 - What difficulties, opportunities do you see when using videos?
- 4 - What support do you need to continue video coaching? What do we need at team level? Suggestions?

The participants confirmed that the video coaching method offers many possibilities, provided that the necessary preconditions are met. A common thread was that you do not have enough eyes to see everything that happens around you with all those children and that the camera provides **extra eyes**.

Another common surprise was how **much conversation material and insights** you can get **from relatively small video fragments**. There were instructive moments for both the individual professional and the team. The video material created strong reflection moments for the entire team. In usually busy times it was not easy to do pedagogical reflection with all colleagues. The fact that images could quickly 'awaken' conversations like this was a huge plus. Below there are some relevant quotes from **participants** and **coordinators**:

- Quotes from **participants (ECEC teachers and care workers)**:

*"You see things that would otherwise elude you. E. g: children who are sharing things."*

*"You could see better what a child actually needs, it increases your understanding of the needs of a child, making adjustments possible. Example: I thought 'she doesn't play, I give her best toys', but then I saw in the video fragments that she actually got too much choice."*

*"Surprised that the toddlers also learn a lot from each other."*

*"You see yourself busy as a professional and that also reinforces, 'I'm apparently doing well', which is a nice experience. I now do the things more that went well. It gives me more confidence."*

*"I now dare to let go more, I have gained more confidence."*

*"It is nice to be able to decide for yourself what can be filmed, what not, what is discussed,... I think that ownership is important."*

*"I can write much more about children now, through that video coaching explanation and training (referring to the frameworks we used). Through better observation I learn to see the development of the children better. I try to integrate it into the daily operation, I don't see it as something 'on top'."*

*"In this way there will be better opportunities for the quiet(er) children, to which you pay less attention. This is also a good medium for language support and for emotional support for children."*

How to involve parents in the evaluation component – an experience:

**"A small positive image fragment can mean so much to a concerned parent" (teacher)**

*"When the class is talking about 'leaves', the boy is eager to tell something about spiders. Without using words, he makes his connections very clear: he points to Spiderman on a sweater of a classmate, he takes a book about spiders from the book corner and shows it to his class friends. Then he goes to the big spider web in the classroom and shows how the spider makes his web. He shows his need to communicate and is also given the space to think and communicate without words."*

We recorded this whole scene and showed the video fragment to the mother of the boy because we liked the scene so much. The mother was very concerned about her son, 'how would it go, would he improve in his language development?' She got up with it and went to sleep with it. When she came to school it was mostly to hear things that were not so nice. But after seeing the images, she was so happy! She was not really aware of how things were going in the classroom. As a parent you didn't get much chance to see that, to see your child 'in action'. She was very pleased."

#### Quotes from **coordinators**:

*"We gained more self-confidence, as a coach / coordinator I give a lot of appreciation, but this method does this even more strongly."*

*“It is a search for a balance between the exciting, the uncertain / uncomfortable, vulnerable and confronting on the one hand, and the enormous growth opportunities of the method on the other; on the one hand the limited time you have as a professional and on the other hand creating time and space to see things, gain insights. ”*

*“The aim is to offer opportunities from a positive support to a growth process and to gain more insights into a growth process: in terms of self-confidence, self-esteem; in the field of pedagogical skills: insight into the needs of children, insight into the impact of their own behavior on children; and get counselors in the same direction. ”*

### Evaluation with the Pedagogical Guidance Services of the City of Ghent

We also had discussions with the pedagogical guidance services that we spoke to during the start of the project (DIKO, pedagogical guidance service for child care, PBD-SOG, ped. Guidance services for municipality schools). We also planned a ‘train the trainer’ moment for various pedagogical counselors and their coordinators from the City of Ghent, to pass on the insights described in this booklet. That was not possible because of the corona crisis. In this way, we hoped to contribute to strengthening professionalization at all levels and to a closer collaboration between all professionals and services involved in the growth of young children (child care centers, out-of-school care and pre-schools).

### **Quotes from participants of this meeting:**

*“TRACKs challenged us to see video coaching as a worthy alternative. That has set things in motion within our team. We are now implementing this for all supervisors: working with images, shared methodology.”*

*“Tracks helped us to change the training period for colleagues. We now work with images from the start by already using video clips at the welcome bath: recording interaction of yourself. So from the start we will work with images and look at interactions. We hope this lowers the threshold.”*

*“TRACKs have brought the two Services - Childcare and education - of the City of Ghent closer together. TRACKs has stimulated cooperation. The language and culture is different, you can work on it by looking at images together, looking at those interactions from the same perspective.”*

*“There is not always - or not yet - a culture in schools to make you vulnerable. Teachers are not accustomed to someone coming into their class and fear ‘judging’. That is why it is important to emphasize that video coaching is not about assessment, that they can choose images themselves, that it is intended for their growth ...”*

### Professionalization recommendations

When asked about these needs, the professionals pointed to Various possibilities: from additional in-service training and ‘refresher courses’ concerning specific sub-themes of poverty and social inequalities, to even more efforts as a team for a common approach - also across the transition between school and out-of-school care. Among recommendations we could suggest:

- more cooperation with / for a group of children (co-teaching), smaller groups;
- the need for a mediator (link with parents);
- more consultation and 'sitting in line' between school and out-of-school care;
- language development (crucial in work with migrant families);
- support in co- and pre-teaching;
- more time for consultation e.g. with pedagogical coordinators or other experts (e.g. speech therapists, psychologists);
- time to develop new didactic tools / learning materials and discuss them in team.

The professionals generally expected from their institutions to give incentives and create a team culture so that there would be a common vision and approach regarding social inequalities, especially in learning to deal with prejudices, first impressions and judgments, stereotyping.

The reactions on this report by the Local Advisory Board can be summarized as follows:

- There is a clear need for support and coaching to give behavior meaning;
- There is a need to watch out for the pitfall of exclusion and stigmatization. We recommended to submit some quotes from interviews to people from poverty organizations / poverty experts, e.g. experts from Networks against Poverty. Their reflections could help to prevent stigmatizing children and parents from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and to help in searching for new empowering ways for work with children and parents,

- In relation to social vulnerability, co-teaching is extremely valuable because professionals could exchange their observations and opinions with their colleagues wondering e.g. how they would act in such situations or disseminate the best practices;
- We should not focus too much on deficit thinking. On the other hand, the video coaching methodology, starts from strengths and opportunities to initiate the necessary reflection on vulnerability: questioning images and expectations of children, opening eyes and awareness of the consequences it would have for children.

### *Italy*

#### *Reflections on challenges and opportunities in using video-coaching: key-success factors*

The Italian case study has attempted to show the benefits of video-elicited discussions and video-coaching that can be used as powerful tools to sustain the professional growth of in-service educators and pre-school teachers through collective reflection and pedagogical guidance. Video-coaching could help professionals reframing their educational objectives, as well as finding possibilities to center children's needs and intentionality, and align them to the latter. In addition, video-coaching help identifying specific moments in which the intentionality of the educators supersedes that of children. Video-coaching and video-elicited discussions have the potential to shift the paradigm of practitioners' in-service education, and it promises to become a tool for documenting educators' practices in relation to issues of diversity, adult-child interactions and inclusion (Cescato, Bove & Braga, 2015). It also promises to become a powerful documentation tool for ECEC services. In this sense video-coaching could be pedagogically relevant when it becomes a useful tool for re-designing and re-thinking daily educational practices. For example, an important issue that has been discussed by the practitioners in the Italian case study relates to how videotaping reading activities carried out with a small group of children has helped educators understanding what they could do better to further develop children's linguistic capacities, while enacting inclusive practices. As stated by the pedagogical coordinator of one of the services involved:



*“Our main objective when we started recording videos was to concentrate on actions that would make our practices related to language learning better. In one of our classrooms we have 99% children from migrant background that need to learn Italian to be able to succeed in primary school. So, video-recording and video-analysis helped us understanding what we can do better in our practice for teaching Italian but also [...] focusing not only on our attitudes but also on the children’s intentionality and interaction”. (Pedagogical Coordinator 1, Service 1)*

This account shows the potential of using video-analysis as a tool to provide pedagogical guidance to practitioners and assist them in their in-service professional development. Along these lines, it shows how it generates fruitful discussions among the educators and other professionals, assisting them in (re)thinking their consolidated practices.

#### Follow-up questionnaires

We administered “follow-up questionnaires” to all educators involved in the project, with the aim to better understand their experiences and points of view about the video-coaching process. These questionnaires consisted of three open-ended questions that give teachers the opportunity to express their thoughts on the process that accompanied this project:

- Thinking back at the way video coaching was implemented in the project, what did you find most useful for your professional growth?
- In your experiences, which were the critical issues and difficulties encountered in the use of videos?
- In order to continue working with the video coaching methodology in your service, what kind of support do you think it would be needed?

In particular, the questions we asked aimed to understand which aspects of this methodology represent an opportunity for growth and which could represent a possible problematic issue. The third question, in particular, aims to bring out what are the elements that teachers consider essential to make video coaching a methodology that help their growth and professional reflexivity. The

main goal of this phase of the project is to better understand key-success factors by focusing on practitioners' feelings and suggestions to improve the project itself.

The main topic/themes emerged from practitioners' answers to question n.1 - *Thinking back at the way video coaching was implemented in the project, what did you find most useful for your professional growth?*- are related to the **useful dimension of professional growth**. By answering this question, educators highlighted the positive dimensions of video-coaching by starting from their own experience of the project. First of all, they underlined the value of reviewing and analyzing practitioners' behaviors and reactions that could facilitate their critical reflections. Second, they pointed out they feel more involved as professionals because watching videos could help them in the process of questioning their own educational practice. Third, they stressed the value of **collective reflection on the actions for improving consciousness and professional growth**.

When answering to the first question some educators argued:

*"At the moment, the strengths are: getting involved as professionals, having new insights from the working group [colleagues], share the way the group look at the situation, find a common way of acting in everyday educational practice"* (educator, IT).

*"When I saw myself more times I had the opportunity to ask myself questions about my attitude towards children"* (preschool teacher, IT).

The main topics/themes emerged from practitioners' answers to question n.2- *In your experiences, which were the critical issues and difficulties encountered in the use of videos?*- were related to the **critical issues and problems** that arose during the project. Specifically, educators underlined the technical problems related to the audio/video quality, time and availability of educators and sometimes the high number of children. Some educators also highlighted the problem of spontaneity in front of the camera closely related to the "performance anxiety" and to the fears of others' judgement.

Most of the educators' answers to question n.2 were presented by them in a "list" format like the following answers:

*“children's attention to the camera, little spontaneity, performance anxiety, lack of people who could video-record the activity” (educator, IT)*

*“critical issues at a practical level: who makes the video, with what tools”. (preschool teacher, IT)*

*“I technical issues: what I can frame and what I can lose (e.g. looks or context); audio and voice missing; (...) an initial embarrassment; attention to the judgmental dimension that could be created in some groups or with some colleagues.” (educator, IT)*

The main topic/themes emerged from practitioners' answers to question n.3 - *In order to continue working with the video coaching methodology in your service, what kind of support do you think it would be needed* – were related to the **support that practitioners think are useful to continue using this methodology**. In particular, practitioners demanded more collective moments to reflect together and purpose a reconstruction of a phenomenon. Have more time for going more in depth with a single phenomenon could help practitioners to re-think their intentionality and change their point of view towards children. During the reflexive process, educators and pedagogical coordinators understood the value of video-coaching in sustaining professional growth. For this reason, they asked to have systematic and scheduled meeting where to discuss together also because- by working in team- educators could learn from each other's experiences.

In the third question of the follow-up questionnaires educators underlined also the value to have appropriate technical support to improve the quality of video recording. The quality of a video could impacted on the process of reflection that accompanied the work on the video itself. If the quality of the audio or the image wasn't good enough, practitioners could have troubles in analyzing the phenomenon.

By answering to the third question, some educators argued that:

*“it would be necessary to have a good video equipment, to have co-presence between educators to be able to make the videos reciprocally; to create scheduled moments to be able to review the videos and to reflect on them in group at multiple levels. a first vision of the videos in the section group and a second vision in extended group together with the pedagogical coordinator.” (educator, IT)*

*“to continue working with this methodology would be useful you have a video camera with a good resolution and with an excellent audio. Especially have the opportunity to review the videos in groups in which you can discuss them between colleagues.” (educator, IT)*

*“I believe that in order to continue to work with this methodology it is necessary to have a certain perseverance in planning the meetings in order to make this approach more and more familiar.” (preschool teacher, IT)*

*“In addition to a tool appropriate for video shooting, it is necessary to have more moments of discussion to view and reflect together on the recorded situations in order to implement actions or otherwise more appropriate to the emerging needs of children.” (educator, IT)*

The educators’ answers and argumentations helped us to focusing on such dimensions that practitioners consider pivotal for ensure the growth of the service itself and of all the professional involved. Those dimensions are the core of the key-success factors that we were illustrated in the Italian case study report within O3.

## ***Poland***

### ***Professionalization needs***

During the first phase of the project, by social research we asked also about professionals’ needs regarding their personal development and institutional quality improvement. We identified here the important differences in dimensions on “inequalities axis”: region, city – rural area, public – private setting dimension. In public settings and / or rural areas the most important need was **to have a support in professionalization**. It meant e.g. an access to experts, specialists, opportunity to take part in professional courses / trainings:

*“For example, this year it just happened that I have two disable children. One that requires my attention and the other that requires my attention. I have to learn this.”*

*“Well, a speech therapist comes, but what is a speech therapist when she comes once a month. There is nobody nearer here.”*

*It would certainly be nice if a psychologist or speech therapist would come to kindergarten here. It is difficult to go to a bigger city (Rzeszów or Przemyśl).*

*A psychologist... Sometimes if there are any problems, it is also good to talk to someone like that, even to get a piece of advice..., on the phone, if there is a problem or we do not know something.*

In private / non-public /alternative settings the professionals usually had an access to some resources and collaborated with psychological-pedagogical coordinators. In their case the important issue was to preserving the cohesion of kindergarten groups, especially those with children from disadvantaged milieus (characterized by lower social status, poverty or migrant background) or disable children.

*I think at the time it seemed to me that private kindergartens provide more opportunities for a teacher who wants to develop. I thought so. And indeed, if there is this internal imperative and a person wants to do something not only for children, but also for herself. We can implement our own ideas, right? We can support these own ideas with various aids, which the state kindergarten cannot afford, limited by a budget. Cooperation with various specialists, it is true, which is not possible in the state kindergarten. Alternatively, we work with a psychological and pedagogical counseling center.*

*There is such a limit. Because if there are three or five disabled children in the group and an integration kindergarten and specialists, then somehow everyone is leaning towards these disabled children and they start to forget about non-disabled children a bit, right? Here is a huge role and the awareness that simply all children need our attention.*

All teachers stressed the need of **initial training**, especially for heterogenic groups:

*“This is how I remembered the first days of my work. Me, completely without preparation...”  
(ECEC teacher about her first day in the group with a disable child)*

### Follow-up meetings

After finishing the coaching processes and analyzing recordings we met with all engaged professionals to evaluate the process and discuss the using of video coaching methods in ECEC settings. We decided to ask a few questions tackling following areas:

- How would you evaluate the video coaching process of the TRACKS project's overall effects for you?
- What were the main challenges of this for you?
- What difficulties, opportunities do you see when using videos?
- Do you think that video-coaching is a useful process for teachers in ECEC?
- Was it useful for your institution?
- Do you think video-coaching can help combat inequalities in ECEC?
- Why (if so) would you recommend video coaching to other professionals?

The main conclusions from these meetings were as follows:

- Introducing video coaching method and analyzing the recordings, the teacher can strengthen some behaviors of children and can work more consciously with them. The method helps us to give children feedback about their resources and ways of acting in specific areas where they will succeed. A teacher acquires **knowledge and skills how to develop their self-confidence and agency**;
- In Poland the education of children aged 3-6 is realized according to formal programs implemented by teachers. Each program must comply with the core curriculum. Traditionally, kindergarten teachers recognize the implementation of the program as a primacy in their work. It is due the fact that if it would not be implemented, it must be justified before the headmaster, who is also often afraid of his/her mentor, i.e. the Board of Trustees. The source of this tension is related to our history - the time of excessive control in educational system during the socialism but also in the last years. The video coaching method concept when children and their needs are and not a curricula and programs in the center **opens the way for innovations**;

- In Polish educational system there is no such position of as a pedagogical coordinator (it used to be, she/he was called methodological advisor). The person responsible for supporting the professional development of ECEC teachers is a headmaster - but due to the fact that she/he combines educational and administrative functions, she/he is not able to be a coach. However, as part of teachers' professional development, we have so called **promotion levels**. At each level a teacher is supported by a mentor, usually an older, experienced teacher. In our opinion video coaching could be an important method for their mutual cooperation and a tool supporting professional development of teachers.
- Video coaching can support not only the quality of teaching through professionalization, but first and foremost explore its **potential for facilitating the processes of inclusion** (inclusive education and pedagogy). Teachers and childcare workers can identify their best practices and have an opportunity to observe how their decision influenced the whole group.

Below we present some quotes from these meetings:

*"You look now from a different perspective, if I'm inside, I can't see all the children"* (ECEC teacher)

*"When we watch the film for the first time we are not ready to see children really. We can just see what we think about them. We see our thoughts, impressions. We can concentrate on children's needs and their actions only when we are aware of that."* (comment from the group discussion)

*"I didn't realize how much progress we made. It was like we tried and nothing happened. But really, he managed to come to the center of the room."* (ECEC teacher).

*The opportunity to learn something new all the time, you learn all the time, right?* (ECEC teacher)

### Multiplier Event in Poland

On 25<sup>th</sup> June we organized the Polish Multiplier Event. Due to Covid-19 risk it was necessary to conduct it in virtual way. There were two meetings, each of them lasted four hours and 41 persons took part in them. They represented ECEC institutions (public and private, also innovative settings – forest kindergartens), primary schools, nurseries, ECEC students,

pedagogical experts, educational NGOs representatives. We presented the video coaching method and discussed – among other topics – their potential impact on professionalization processes. The main comments were:

- The method could foster competencies necessary for working with children with special needs (e.g. disable children, migrant children);
- It could foster professional development and professional growth as it focuses on professionals' strengths, it creates the culture of change;
- It creates an environment for individual professional development, everybody could work on his / her practice in an individual and evolutionary way.

## Conclusions

In the TRACKS project we came to realize that the general argument about the necessity of professionalization makes a whole lot of sense. Especially in ECEC settings, where professionals are encountered with many challenges that are connected with the diverse societies we live in, be it on the level of languages, inclusion of children with disabilities, newly arrived migrant families, etc. These professionals should be aware of the daily consequences of their interactions with these children, which might be affected by generalizations and stereotypes. A strong method to confront those ideas and try to change behavior, is video-coaching.

Within the TRACKS project, being a small-scale comparative design, we chose to be very attentive for a specific approach in professionalization: **critical reflection**. With the three country teams together we decided that this one topic might unite us all – in spite of all the differences in systems, institutional background, history and educational policies: reflexivity about everyday situations in the workplace.

However, each team had its own challenges. The **Belgian team** was attempting to expand professionalization by increasing competencies and reflexivity in the teams, supported by the pedagogical counselors. That means: professionalization in making a transfer from the individual to the team level. In **Italy** video-analysis was proven to be a tool that can provide pedagogical



guidance to professionals in assisting them in their in-service professional development. Fruitful discussions among educators and other professionals helped to rethink consolidated practices. For the **Polish case**, professionalization is dependent on the structural conditions in ECEC settings, as well as on individual pathways that professionals chooses. In this context video-coaching is a means for integrative inclusivity across all types of inequalities. Through video-coaching and its evaluation, we focused on equal support for all children and evaluate teachers' awareness of difference.

Every team organized evaluation meetings with the participants. Very important for TRACKs was to evaluate whether the professionals feel, so to say, 'professionalized': did they think that through video-coaching they became more assured to tackle the specific challenges in their ECEC settings, especially on issues as social inequalities and inclusion. A common perspective throughout these evaluation is that video-coaching offers you a 'second pair of eyes': you and your colleagues get to see what remains largely unseen. The video material created strong reflection moments for entire teams. Most participants became aware of the value of reviewing and analyzing their behaviors and reactions, in order to facilitate critical reflection. They felt more involved as professionals and using video fragments as a tool for reflection helped them in the process of questioning or deconstructing their own educational practice. So they claimed, video-coaching helped them in their professional awareness and growth. Video-coaching supports the quality of the daily interactions with (vulnerable) children and explores the potential for processes of inclusion. Teachers, childcare workers and out-of-school care workers emphasized the need for further training and reflection on this. The three country teams are glad to have contributed to these kinds of results.