



The Wanda method: overview and steps forward

Report of the PLA

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1. Framework

The international debate underlines how quality in ECEC should be seen as an *on-going contextualized process* made by negotiation. As pointed out by the CoRe research (2011; 2016), ECEC quality is strongly related to a professional competent workforce. But individual competences are not enough. They need to take shape in a competent system, which includes collaboration between individuals, teams and institutions, as well as competent governance at policy level. A competent system has to link staff's initial good education to the possibility of constantly reflecting on ideas and practices, as underlined also by the European Quality Framework for ECEC (EC Thematic Group on ECEC Quality, 2014).

The complexity of our society needs indeed a workforce that is capable to deal with differences and commonalities, to negotiate, to deal with uncertainty, to reflect on the meanings of what they think and do (Schön, 1983), to question themselves, as stated also in the document edited by the DECET/ISSA Working Group on Professionalism (DECET/ISSA, 2011). That is why team reflection is recognized as a fundamental aspect of the work in the ECEC sector (Peeters et al., 2015), and as one of the key elements to create Professional Learning Communities (Brajković, 2014), in which networks of settings and different profiles of staff work together in different ways with the same goal related to increasing quality. This is also underlined in one of the last NESET II reports prepared for the European Commission by VBJK and PPMI (Sharmahd et al., 2017), and realized with the collaboration of 3 organizations part of the ISSA network (Open Academy Step by Step Croatia; Educational Research Institute, Centre for Quality in Education, Slovenia; VBJK Center for Innovation in the Early Years, Belgium).

Although there is a general consensus about the importance of team reflection on practice in ECEC, how to concretely realize these reflection moments is often less clear.

Taking all this into account, in 2010 VBJK (Centre for Innovation in the Early Years) and Artevelde University College (Gent, Belgium), with ESF (European Social Fund) funds, started a project called WANDA to develop a new method (based on *Analyse de Pratiques* and *Appreciative Inquiry*) of professionalization for low qualified practitioners in the 0-3 sector of the Flemish Community of Belgium. WANDA is a method to support professional group reflection, with specific attention to valuing each other, with respect towards the child, the family, the colleagues, the community. By so doing, WANDA aims to improve quality in ECEC for children and families. It is a method that can be adapted to ECEC and socio-educational organisations in different contexts and in different countries. By winning the ESF-ambassador award in the Flemish Community of Belgium, WANDA gained the possibility of being adapted to other EU countries. That is why in 2013 VBJK, Artevelde University College and ISSA started a 2 years project called "When WANDA meets ISSA", founded by the ESF and realized in collaboration with four organizations in four pilot countries within the ISSA network:

- Step by Step in Czech Republic
- Partners Hungary Foundation in Hungary
- Open Academy Step by Step in Croatia
- Educational Research Institute, Centre for Quality in Education, Slovenia

The aim of the project has been to re-elaborate WANDA in order to improve the quality of this sector by increasing the reflective competences of the staff. The project has thus built a specific method that ISSA can use with practitioners working in the 0-10 sector in their own contexts, with a specific link to the ISSA Quality Resource Pack. Wanda has been then further readapted also to the Estonian context in 2016, through an ISSA PLA activity (Wanda training) organized by Artevelde University College (Belgium) and Hea Algus (Estonia). Another ISSA PLA has been organized by Artevelde University College (Belgium) and Step by Step (Czech Republic) in 2017, with the aim of having a first exchange about Wanda in the two countries.

Besides the involvement of organizations within the ISSA network, Wanda has been re-adapted also in other contexts: in 2016, through a Unicef project, VBJK has given a Wanda training in Albania to responsables of the ECEC sector (focus on services for 3-6 years old children). Wanda is being now

experimented also in the Netherlands, in Latvia and in Norway within the SEED (*Social and Emotional Education and Development: Upscaling awareness and skills in ECEC practice*) project, which aims at improving socio-emotional wellbeing of young children (focus on 3-6 years old) through staff group reflection. Open Academy Step by Step (Croatia) and Partners Hungary Foundation (Hungary) are also part of this project, and they are readapting the Wanda method with a focus on socio-emotional wellbeing of children. Artevelde University College is also planning to re-adapt Wanda to the context of Vietnam, within an Erasmus + project focused on 'Capacity Building' in Higher education, and aimed at supporting the implementation of reflection on practice in the Vietnamese curriculum.

Summary of **Wanda projects** until now:

- 2010-2012: adaptation in the **Flemish Community of Belgium** by *VBJK* and *Artevelde University College* (for childcare)
- 2013-2015: **When WANDA meets ISSA** project: 4 countries involved – Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Czech Republic
- 2016: Training in **Estonia (ISSA PLA activity)** – Arevelde + Hea Albus
- 2016: **Unicef** Training project about WANDA in 3-6 settings in **Albania**
- 2017: **ISSA PLA Czech Republic (Step by Step) – Belgium (Artevelde)**: analysis of Wanda in the two countries
- 2018 -2020: **SEED project (Erasmus +): Social and Emotional Education and Development: Upscaling awareness and skills in ECEC practice** – Netherlands, Latvia, Norway, Croatia, Hungary, Belgium
- 2019 – 2022: **Capacity Building Project in Vietnam** (Artevelde)
- 2018: **ISSA PLA** 'Overview and future possibilities of WANDA'

Materials developed through the projects:

- Wanda **website** with materials, exercises, videos, links...: www.wanda.community
- **Wanda Manual** for facilitators: available on Blurb (www.blurb.com) in **6 languages**: English, Czech, Slovenian, Croatian, Hungarian, Dutch (Dutch version to be revised)
- **Wanda toolbox** available for who followed a Wanda training

2. Wanda in practice: short description of the method

The main goal of Wanda is to improve the wellbeing of children and families in ECEC centers through a group reflection process.

When working with children and families, there are numerous 'small moments' when we do not know how we should respond to what is happening ('a child doesn't want to eat at school'; 'a father expresses anger towards a teacher' etc.). When such situations arise, we often tend to instantly come up with a quick solution or a conclusion. Nonetheless, we do not always have the right 'answers' on hand, because our experiences always take place in a specific context and standardized 'recipe books' do not exist.

We can choose to let a situation like this simply pass and hope that it improves. Or, we can see the opportunity that lives in it: how can we turn such a situation into a learning moment? Group reflection is a good answer to this kind of question. It can be realized in many ways and the Wanda method is one of them.

Wanda can be organized within a team of practitioners/teachers that work together, or by creating a group made by people that work in different institutions, have the same role or function and want to

reflect on their practices. It's important to have a quite stable frequency and group composition, in order to focus on the process, more than on fragmented meeting. Each group gets together around once every 4-6 weeks to have a Wanda session, which takes more or less two hours and is guided by what we call a 'facilitator' (which can be a pedagogical coordinator, a supervisor, a mentor etc.). During each session, the group starts from a specific situation, analyze it, deconstruct it, and find possible ways to re-construct it. This happens by going through 5 different phases¹:

1. **LOOKING BACK:** once that the Wanda path is started, each session will begin by looking back to the last meeting. The facilitator will ask to the contributor of the previous case what happened during these weeks referring to the discussed case.
2. **SELECTING A CASE:** after looking back, each participant that feels like it can bring a case, a situation that touched or surprised him/her in a positive or negative way. After listening to all the cases, the group decides which one will be the subject of this specific Wanda session. In this way we underline that the group is responsible of the session and of its own learning path. The person who brings the case that is selected is the "contributor".
3. **ASKING QUESTIONS:** once that the case is decided, the group asks open, non-interpretative questions, in order to clarify the context. This is a phase that proportionally requires the most time: the more contextualized a situation becomes, the more the group can search for possible meanings and, ultimately, develop possible actions.
4. **COLLECING PERSPECTIVES:** the situation is analyzed from different perspectives, giving voice to all the people involved and to what they could think, want, feel. The case is explored through different glasses (the glasses of the child, of the parents, of society, of the ISSA quality principles etc.). The basis of an appreciative perspective is that behind every behavior a positive intent is hiding and that everyone is taken into account with respect.
5. **GIVING ADVICE:** starting from what came out from the session until now, the group finds possible advice for the contributor, the team, the organization, the society. It is not about finding "the" solution, but about suggesting "possible roads".



Although each session is separated from the other, it is important to underline that Wanda is a process in which the group grows towards appreciation and respect for diversity, and this asks some time. Having just 1 or 2 Wanda sessions will not effect daily practice.

¹ On www.wanda.community you can find more information about the method and its phases.

For detailed information about the method, visit www.wanda.community.

The Wanda identity

During the meeting foreseen for this PLA activity, we didn't have time to deeply discuss the Wanda identity and how to keep the identity of Wanda within the different ways Wanda needs to be contextualized in each country.

But three important main points have been repeated, in order to provide some 'borders', as specified also in the Wanda Manual for Facilitators:

- 1) Wanda is a method for **professional development**. It cannot be used with groups of families and children. It is meant for professionals that work with people. Using it with parents and children could go too close to therapy. For children and parents there are other possible methods.
- 2) Not everything can be discussed in a Wanda session. **Some cases are not made for Wanda**. For example, it is better to avoid cases in which relationships between colleagues come across, in order to not get into difficult dynamics in a situation in which the whole group is present. There are other moments/methods to deal with conflicts between colleagues.
- 3) **Wanda is first of all a process**, during which the group grows towards reflection, respect, appreciation. That is why, although each session deals with one case, the sessions are linked to each other, the group should stay stable and it should meet regularly. Having just one or two Wanda sessions will not bring change in practice. We need to create 'Wanda paths'. The amount of time needed to change practice depends on the context, on how much the group is used to reflect etc. But we usually saw that at least one year of Wanda sessions (with meeting every 4-6 weeks) is needed to bring change and start creating a reflecting attitude in daily life.

3. Why this PLA activity?

Considering the fact that some years are passed since the involvement in the Wanda meets ISSA project and the PLA in Estonia, and that each country has carried on its own Wanda path in the local services/schools, VBJK and Artevelde University College received several questions from local (Belgian) and international partners concerning the need of 1) getting insight on the process development of Wanda in the different countries involved; 2) re-thinking about possible next steps concerning Wanda locally in each country, but also internationally (e.g. through EU projects).

That is why we decided to plan this PLA activity, which involved participants of all the 7 organizations that are using Wanda in 6 countries (Belgium, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia), in order to meet and discuss the above mentioned points and design possible common paths.

The PLA involved the following organizations:

1. **VBJK, Center for Innovation in the Early Years (Belgium)**
2. **Artevelde University College (Belgium),**
3. **Step by Step (Czech Republic)**
4. **Partners Hungary Foundation (Hungary)**
5. **Open Academy Step by Step (Croatia)**

6. Educational Research Institute Step by Step (Slovenia)
7. Hea Algus (Estonia)

The coordination of the PLA has been realized by VBJK and Artevelde University College (BE).

This PLA activity concerns the three first ISSA's Strategic Goals:

1. Advocate for and support competent Early Childhood systems for all children, especially the most vulnerable: by re-investing in Wanda we aim at improving ECEC quality within competent inclusive systems. Investing in the reflective competences of staff means supporting the creation of inclusive ECEC services open to dialogue with diverse children and families, with special attention to the ones at risk of exclusion.
2. Increase awareness of the importance of ECD and of a qualified workforce: working on Wanda means investing in the professionalization of ECEC staff, which is directly linked to ECEC quality. Reflective and relational competences are at the core here.
3. Be a leading EC network and learning community that promotes quality, equitable and integrated services for children, families & practitioners: working with Wanda gives the possibility to create/strengthen the professional learning community each service should be part of. Besides, by bringing together all the ISSA organizations that are working with Wanda, we aim at strengthening not only the local PLCs, but also the 'international' PLC composed by the international organizations involved.

4. Aims of the PLA

This PLA aimed at creating a peer-learning activity, involving all the organizations within the ISSA network that are using Wanda in their contexts.

The specific objectives of the PLA have been:

- 1) **Getting an overview** on what (and how) has been done with Wanda on a local level in each country: which services have been involved, with which frequency did they organize Wanda sessions, what has been the impact, what are the strengths and the critical points that come out, what are the needs of the target groups etc.
- 2) **Co-reflecting on the strengths and challenges**, with the aim of fine-tuning the different Wanda paths: the aim is not homologating the peculiar experiences of the different contexts, but finding coherency within the differences (agreeing on what is Wanda and what it is not, discussing possibilities and borders, stimulating each other by getting to know the different experiences that took place etc.).
- 3) Considering all this, thinking together about **possible next steps** for Wanda, both on a local level in each country involved, and on an international one (f.e. through EU projects).

5. Phases and method

The PLA has been organized in the following phases:

- **April 2018**: preparation of a research instruments (questionnaire + grid for interviews) aimed at getting information from the services involved on how they are using Wanda
- **May -September 2018**: each organization realized the 'survey' by sending the questionnaire² and doing the interviews with the facilitators/organizations/services that until

² The questionnaire (then adapted to each context) is attached at the end of this report

now have been using Wanda in their country. The answers have been collected and analyzed by each organization.

- **October 2018:** each organization prepared an overview of the results obtained through their survey.
- **November 2018:** a 1,5 day transnational meeting has been organized in Budapest. Two representatives of each partner organization took part to this meeting. The aim has been 1) getting to know each other experiences with Wanda; 2) discussing strengths and challenges and discuss how to maintain the 'Wanda identity' within the different contexts that are using this method; 3) thinking and planning together possible steps for the future of Wanda locally and internationally.

Schedule of the meeting:

1st day:

- Presentations of survey results in each country
- Reflection on common strengths and critical points: which framework for Wanda?
- Which possible next steps locally?

2nd day:

- Possible future EU projects
- Concrete thinking about possible themes, aims, method, partners...
- Action plan and next steps

- **December 2018:** preparation of the final report (this paper).

The following pages are a report of the analysis of the data of the surveys, and of the ideas that came out from this analysis during our meeting in Budapest.

6. Overview of Wanda in 6 countries:

In this paragraph we will give an overview of the use of Wanda in each of the countries involved in the PLA. The overview comes out by the results of the survey (questionnaire and interviews). From these data each organization summarized some conclusions/suggestions/ideas/challenges concerning the further development of Wanda on a local level.

a. Czech Republic

ECEC in Czech Republic

Early childhood education and care in Czech Republic is organised as a split system. Childcare for children under 2 years old almost doesn't exist. It is usual and widely spread that mothers stay home with their children until 2/3 years.

Pre-primary education in kindergartens (*materšské školy*) for children aged 2/3 years up to 6/7 years and preparatory classes for 6 to 7 year olds with deferred school entry come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, whereas the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for 'children's groups' (*dětské skupiny*) – a new form of provision for 1- to 6 year olds.

Change and innovation in teacher's education is promoted by NGOs and private entities, but is not valued on a structural level. Teachers are not used to reflect together.

Some challenges of the sector are the low prestige and low payment of teachers, and the (related) lack of teachers.

Future teachers have several options where they can get their qualification. Either they can study at a high school that focuses on preprimary education or they can sign up for a university bachelor programme.

Staff qualifications

The qualification requirements for core practitioners and other staff in ECEC provision vary according to the specific setting in which they work.

Kindergarten Teachers work both in kindergartens and preparatory classes. In some cases Educational Support Workers may be employed for part of the time to support individual children. Staff working with children under 2 years old can be defined as caregiver and have different kinds of qualifications.

CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

All employers are obliged to support the skills development of their employees. This means providing obligatory CPD. Professional development is aimed both at (1) broadening competences or (2) raising the formal qualification level. For staff in social care facilities for under 3-year olds there is no further framework of requirements other than the Employment Act (2006).

The main forms of CPD provision are the same for both core practitioners and support workers.

Childfree hours

The working hours of Kindergarten Teachers in full-time employment are split into so-called direct and indirect pedagogical work. Nine hours per week are allocated for indirect pedagogical work. This includes, for example, working with parents, team discussions, networking, preparing materials, planning, follow-up, evaluation and documentation.

In the case of full-time Educational Support Staff the director decides as to how many hours should be allocated for indirect pedagogical work. Up to 20 hours from a total of 40 may be allocated for the indirect work. The childfree hours of a full-time caregiver in other ECEC settings (children's groups, social care provision for under 3-year olds) are not regulated by law (only the 40-hour working week).

The Wanda path in Czech Republic

In 2014, a team of teachers, mentors and teacher trainers attended a Wanda training by VBJK and Artevelde University College in Prague within the When Wanda meets ISSA project. Based on this training, Wanda was implemented in the teacher training programmes at the Department of Primary and Preprimary education, Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague. It became one of the tools to reflect the students' teaching practice in the fifth year of their Master studies. Both, pre-service and in-service teachers had the chance to use this method.

The following year, Wanda was implemented in several primary schools, mostly within supervision sessions. Sessions were facilitated by an external facilitator (e.g. mentor) or internal facilitator (e.g.: school headmaster, one of the teachers).

In 2017, we carried out the first research focusing on Wanda from the perspective of primary school teachers. In autumn 2017, all Wanda facilitators got the chance to meet, discuss and get a further training during a PLA activity in Prague organised by Artevelde University College.

Aims and method of the survey

We were mostly focusing on how teachers/facilitators perceive Wanda, what kind of advantages and risks they can see and whether they would be interested in continuing Wanda sessions on a regular basis in the future. We involved 3 different groups of participants: WANDA facilitators, university teachers and primary school teachers.

Three different methods to collect data were used: in-depth interviews with university teachers, questionnaires for primary school teachers and focus group for Wanda facilitators. For data analysis, we used the method of open-coding. Three different people were involved in coding to obtain as objective results as possible.

Results and analysis of the data

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the setting where the respondents to the questionnaire work and their function.

1. Which setting/organization

| TYPE | n. | % |
|-------------------------------|----|-------|
| Childcare | 0 | 0% |
| Family childcare | 0 | 0% |
| Out of School care | 0 | 0% |
| Kindergarten & primary school | 5 | 71.4% |
| Secondary school | 0 | 0% |
| Adult Education | 1 | 14.3% |
| Higher Education | 1 | 14.3% |
| Other | 0 | 0% |
| TOT | 7 | 100% |

As we can see, there are 3 facilitators using Wanda with professionals (Kindergarten & primary school), 2 are facilitators using Wanda with students (Higher education + Adult education), and 2 are directors using Wanda with professionals (Kindergarten & primary school).

2. Function of the respondents

| TYPE | n. | % |
|----------------------------|----|------|
| Coordinator/Responsible | 3 | 42.9 |
| Pedagogical coach | 0 | 0% |
| Director | 2 | 28.6 |
| Teacher (Higher Education) | 2 | 28.6 |
| Other | 7 | 100 |
| TOT | | |

Table n. 3 investigates the intention to use Wanda or not in the following year.

3. Use of Wanda

| | Intention to use Wanda next year? | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|
| | YES | NO |
| Never used Wanda (1) | 1 | 0 |
| Ever used Wanda, but not during previous year (3) | 2 | 0 |
| Used Wanda during previous year (3) | 3 | 0 |

As we can see, all of the respondents that are using Wanda now, have the intention to use it also next year.

4. Frequency and organization Wanda sessions

| Frequency | n. | % |
|---|----|-------|
| 1 or 2 times with one group | 1 | 14.3% |
| 1 or 2 times with multiple groups | 2 | 28.6% |
| On a regular basis with one group | 2 | 28.6% |
| On a regular basis with multiple groups | 2 | 28.6% |
| TOT | 7 | 100% |

Wanda is mostly used on a regular basis with students at the Charles University in Prague, because it leads to development of metacognitive (reflective thinking) skills. There is hope that the students from the Charles University will interiorize this method and further expand it throughout the Czech educational system.

5. Strengths and impact of Wanda

Our aim was not to analyze the perspective of different groups separately, we rather wanted to create a picture about how is Wanda perceived by Czech practitioners.

One of the most frequently discussed aspect was that Wanda created a "sense of belonging". Many teachers mentioned that Wanda helped them to realize that the other colleagues are facing the same kind of problems. They appreciated that Wanda enabled them to share, to discuss and to built trust among participants. In other words, Wanda can help to build a professional learning community within a group of teachers from the same school, but also within the participants of a university course.

Second most frequent aspect was coded as "looking at the problem from different perspectives". This was perceived as one of the main benefits of Wanda and all respondents mentioned it at some point. Another strong point of Wanda is the development of reflective skills, especially to discover and describe the source of the problem. Further, the pre-graduated students spontaneously recognized the highlights of the method as most relevant to two areas that also corresponded with the goals of their teaching practice. The first area was the development of metacognitive (reflective thinking) skills. The questionnaire often contained formulations such as: „ *I attained the greatest growth in not only seeing in black and white, but instead knowingly trying to perceive and think about several other perspectives...* ", „ *The phase of Asking questions enabled me to better understand my experience, to clarify my understanding of the situation and to realize it's possible triggers, why it occurred in the first place*".

The second area was the knowledge of strategies and resolution guidelines for common situations. Here is an example of such response: „ *Most useful are especially the ideas of others – the greater the number of heads – the greater the knowledge.* "(Czech proverb) or „ *One gains alternative solutions for own practical experience, that one would not be able to come up with on its own.* " And „ *Most productive was the phase of brainstorming. The majority of the situations could apply to everyone and considering the number of the ideas, everyone can choose something that they might find useful someday.* "

All aspects similar to this one were coded under the name: "well-structured framework for reflections".

6. Challenges in organizing and using Wanda

We have found out several challenges of Wanda. First, teachers find the sessions too long and they tend to claim that the phases could be shortened or even skipped. We think is due to the fact that Czech teachers are not used to devote time to group reflections or other activities that strength the professional learning community within the school. They might not see the importance of devoting time to such kind of professional development. There are some free-child hours but teachers usually spend it by preparing activities and materials for children. This is the main focus and main goal together with the necessary administration.

Group reflections as Wanda are not very common in Czech context and it is not easy to explain to practitioners how important it might be.

Another risk might be the fact that teachers within the reflecting group need to feel trust. Unfortunately, it is not always the case. It might happen that teachers are not willing to share cases and ideas because of the other participants in the group.

Conclusions and ideas for Czech Republic

First schools, principles and teachers need to understand the importance of collaborative and reflective professional learning. Then, they will be more willing to create conditions for implementing Wanda on a regular basis.

This is the reason why we see as very important to implement Wanda in teacher training programmes and teach students different methods of group reflection right we have them in the first year. This could help students to develop positive attitudes to collaborative and reflective professional learning in general, which is crucial for implementing Wanda and other reflection methods into practice.

Concerning the schools, we plan to work with mentors (teacher coaches) who facilitate collaborative activities and professional development in several schools at the same time. The cooperation with these practitioners has already been established and will continue in 2019.

We have also noticed that Wanda is a good tool to diagnose teachers' professional needs. It can show what kind of further training and seminars would be interesting and relevant. That is why, we suggest to organize occasional seminars on specific topics that appeared in Wanda (e.g. solving conflicts, communication with parents, approaching mixed ability classes). It would concern especially the areas where teachers feel hopeless and not sufficiently qualified.

This is connected with the last aspect that we find crucial and important. We think that Wanda facilitators should from time to time encourage participants to choose a case that the group is fully competent to solve (e.g. teaching methods and strategies). We observed that it strengthens the group as a professional community and reinforces participants' confidence. It might also raise teachers' willingness to participate in Wanda sessions in the future.

Sources:

Loudová Stralczyńska, B. 2017. "Czech Republic – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. www.seepro.eu/English/Country_Reports.htm

b. Hungary

ECEC system

The ECEC system in Hungary is a split one. ECEC for children younger than 3 years of age (bölcsőde/creche) is regulated as part of the welfare system, whereas ECEC for children between 3 years and compulsory school age (óvoda/kindergarten) is part of the education system. However, both sectors come under the auspices of the Ministry of Human Resources, within which bölcsőde is the responsibility of the Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs and óvoda is the responsibility of the State Minister for Schools. Provision and organisation of bölcsőde and óvoda are delegated to local authorities.

Staff qualifications

Staff qualifications are different for core practitioners in ECEC centres for children under the age of 3 and in those for children between the ages of 3 and 6. The minimum qualification requirement for Early Childhood Caregivers and Educators has been at the upper secondary vocational level since 2001 (college or university). However, many older workers still have earlier, lower level qualifications, which are accepted as equivalents with a specified number of years' experience. A minimum qualification (a course of 160 hours) is required for Auxiliary Co-workers (Assistants) who do the cleaning, bring the food to the children's room, prepare the room for nap, etc.

CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

CPD is defined by legislation both childcare workers and kindergarten teachers. Assistants (who count as technical staff) are not required to attend CPD. In practice, there are several problems that limit rights for and choices of CPD programmes. Paying fees is one of these, since CPD programmes charge often registration fee. Also, it no widespread and common tradition for CPD, except for the fact that kindergarten and school teachers have to attend further courses to collect 120 credit points every 7 years during their practice. These courses/trainings are not uniform in Hungary, it is mainly the education institution who decides which courses their teachers will take part in.

Childfree hours

Legislation states that the contact time for core practitioners 0-3 is seven hours per day. One hour per day can be used for anything else, such as preparation work, meeting, CPD activities. Contact time for core practitioners 3-6 institutions is 32 hours a week. The other 3 can be used for preparation work, or anything else related to their work. In kindergarten, teachers usually have 3 childfree days per year. They usually spend these three years with staff meetings and trainings (to obtain the necessary credit points).

The Wanda path in Hungary

Wanda was first introduced in Hungary in 2015 as part of the WANDA meets ISSA project. It was introduced in 5 kindergartens. WANDA facilitators gradually tried to train facilitators but only one teacher proved capable of leading this process, so Partners Hungary Foundation decided that there were not going to be systematic training of trainers sessions. By means of online intervision and live training we coach the partners in the implementation process of Wanda into their own context. Since the end of that project, WANDA has been used in the Safe Arrival Project with 2 vocational training schools, and also as parts of other schools projects but, due to lack of funds, these were only short WANDA paths (2-3 meetings) or individual sessions.

Aims and method of the survey

Since only Partners Hungary trainers are WANDA facilitators in Hungary (the one teacher who was successfully trained to become a facilitator), we conducted personal interviews within the team.

Results and analysis of the data

1. Which setting/organization

| TYPE | n. | % |
|-------------|-----------|----------|
|-------------|-----------|----------|

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----|
| Childcare | - | |
| Family childcare | - | |
| Out of School care | - | |
| Kindergarten & primary school | - | |
| Secondary school | - | |
| Adult Education | - | |
| Higher Education | - | |
| Other | 5 | 100 |
| TOT | 5 | |

2. Function of the respondents

| TYPE | n. | % |
|----------------------------|--------------|-----|
| Coordinator/Responsible | - | |
| Pedagogical coach | - | |
| Director | - | |
| Teacher (Higher Education) | - | |
| Other | 5 (trainers) | 100 |
| TOT | 5 | |

3. Use of Wanda

| | Intention to use Wanda next year? | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|
| | YES | NO |
| Never used Wanda (0) | | |
| Ever used Wanda, but not during previous year (0) | | |
| Used Wanda during previous year (5) | 5 | |

4. Frequency and organization Wanda sessions

| Frequency | n. | % |
|---|----|----|
| 1 or 2 times with one group | 1 | 20 |
| 1 or 2 times with multiple groups | 0 | |
| On a regular basis with one group | 0 | |
| On a regular basis with multiple groups | 4 | 80 |
| TOT | 5 | |

5. Strengths and impact of Wanda

A great number of participants experienced the power of WANDA

- cca 400 people who were trained to become mediators (teachers, other school experts and professionals working in the social field).
- cca 150 people in the educational field who participated in WANDA sessions apart from mediation training.
- 12 employees from Hungarian Telecom – once – aiming to discuss problems arising from every day work.

Partners Hungary's practice with WANDA shows the following experience:

- We regularly encounter needs of professionals working in various environments (school, social professionals, mediators) for self-reflection, better cooperation and a sense of community, and WANDA can help reflecting on this need
- It fits well with our other process-oriented methodologies
- WANDA is a well-structured, clear methodology
- It counts as a novelty for the participants, even if they have already participated in a similar session
- It is easy to convince stakeholders of the necessity of self-reflection through WANDA sessions

The greatest impacts of WANDA based on participants' feedback:

- "I have no power to proceed" attitude at the beginning transforms to "I can find ways to go on" by the end of the session
- "I am not alone with my issues"
- "I am so grateful for this session, I thought this was an impasse but now I see a way forward"
- "Wow, this is what that person would exactly say" while looking at perspectives
- Taking all the stakeholders perspectives can enhance partnerships instead of hierarchy

6. Challenges in organizing and using Wanda

- The feeling of novelty passes after a certain number of sessions
- Within the school environment, it is difficult keeping time limits: starting and finishing on time (classes of different teachers finish at different times)
- Limited time frame (aiming for 2 hours but we mostly have to do 1.5 hours)
- School professionals can usually do WANDA sessions in their free time
- Hard to engage a group for a lengthy WANDA path
- Hard to find time and financing for a proper WANDA path
- Hard to keep the know-how, people think they are equipped to become facilitators after participating in one session
- It is hard to find other creative elements other than LEGO and Dixit for visualization
- There are situations where it is hard to come up with usable ideas

Conclusions and ideas for Hungary

- It would be a great opportunity for growth to share experience with other facilitators
- We would love to have supervision for cases that have a great emotional impact on the facilitator
- Case studies on difficult situations/WANDA sessions

- More non-directive means for facilitators
- Psychological background, more pedagogical methods
- We still seek opportunities to try and use the full potential of the „WANDA path“ and experience its impact on professional development - SEED
- There is more potential in WANDA in business and organizational development. Is this coherent with Wanda?
- Potential in use
 - among CSOs
 - SBS learning communities (staff of one institution, inter-institutional context
 - Among „learning groups“ – new initiative in Hungary

Sources:

Korintus. M. 2017. "Hungary – ECEC Workforce Profile." In Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. www.seeepro.eu/English.Country_Reports.htm

c. Croatia

ECEC system

The ECEC system in Croatia is an integrated one, regulated by the Ministry of Science and Education. Institutions are managed through local self-governments, while the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education verifies and approves all ECEC programmes. ECEC in Croatia is thus both unified and decentralized.

Different qualifications are possible to work in Croatian ECEC centers, but the only professional staff specifically qualified for working with children up to 7 years of age and who work with them full-time are the ECEC teachers, qualified at Bachelor level. Teacher assistants that help with children with special needs don't require a qualification.

CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

Promotion in the ECEC profession is based on three requirements, one of which is participation in CPD courses. For CPD activities staff can be awarded a specific number of credit points (not ECTS points). During their professional career, ECEC teachers can advance to the status of a mentor or counsellor, dependent to a certain extent on their participation in CPD courses.

Childfree hours

ECEC teachers work in direct contact with children for 27,5 hours weekly. The rest of the time (12.5 hours) is allocated for the planning, programming and evaluating of work, preparation, organisational and material resources, collaboration with parents and other participants of ECEC processes, and for professional development.

The Wanda path in Croatia (how did it start, projects etc.)

OA Step by Step was included in the project 'When Wanda meet ISSA'. During that project 15 Step by Step trainers participated on a first Wanda training and 10 of them participated on the second part of the training (2015). Wanda was implemented in the work of professional learning communities funded by the IPA project 'Quality Education for Roma Children' in 6 primary schools. Also, Wanda facilitators use the Wanda method in their own settings (PLCs).

Wanda was integrated in the project 'Building local and national capacities for educational integration of children (aged 4-15 years) seeking international protection and migrant children' (UNICEF) and was used in 3 preschools and 5 primary schools in the path of 5 sessions.

Wanda is also part of the project 'Inclusion of children with special needs' in the Town of Sisak. Three groups of teachers participated in the path of 4 WANDA sessions.

Two Step by Step trainers participated on a Training of trainers for WANDA participants in Budapest during 2016. One training for facilitators was conducted in 2017. 25 future WANDA facilitators participated.

Aims and method of the survey

We used two methods: the questionnaire for WANDA facilitators and the focus groups with participants of the WANDA sessions (project 'Building local and national capacities for educational integration of children - aged 4-15 years - seeking international protection and migrant children').

6 facilitators answered to the questionnaire via e-mail.

15 participants participated to the focus groups.

Results and analysis of the data

1. Which setting/organization

| Organization in which the facilitator works | | % |
|---|---|-----|
| NGO | 2 | 34% |
| Kindergarten | 4 | 66% |

2. Frequency and organization Wanda sessions

| Frequency | n. | % |
|---|----|------|
| 1 or 2 times with one group | 5 | 83% |
| 1 or 2 times with multiple groups | 6 | 100% |
| On a regular basis with one group | 3 | 50% |
| On a regular basis with multiple groups | 2 | 33% |

5 participants responded that they plan to use WANDA next year and 1 responded that he/she are not sure.

3. Strengths and impact of Wanda

- getting ideas to solve potential problems or challenges;

- jointly ways of seeking solutions;
- shared understanding and probing of existed school/kindergarten values;
- broadening the 'picture'/ look at yourself and your practice from other's perspectives;
- a team agreement about changing the policy of the institution;
- building group cohesion and sense of learning community and sharing responsibilities;
- clear structure of the meeting;
- asking questions as a process of learning;
- making insight into the challenges of a group and/or institution

4. Challenges in organizing and using Wanda

- when a group is not composed of people who participate voluntarily (challenge of motivation);
- building mutual trust between participants;
- when participants say they do not have a case;
- selection of the relevant case;
- defining the learning question;
- in the questioning phase sometimes participants do not ask descriptive questions;
- stay focused on the case in a way contributor describe it when other participants know a lot about the case as well;
- selection of visualization techniques;
- avoiding stereotypes when vulnerable groups are included in case;
- quality of suggested solutions or small amount of solutions;
- need of participants for fast problem solving solutions
- to remain within the framework of the meeting structure
- uncertainty when to move on the next phase of WANDA session

Conclusions and ideas for Croatia

WANDA facilitators in Croatia need support in networking in order to reflect on the WANDA sessions and process (for example the role of facilitator, how active should the facilitator be?, non-active participants; avoiding stereotypes; how to include/exclude other information about the case from others who are not the contributor). Also, they need more supporting materials such as examples of WANDA meetings or examples of the process of finding the question for learning. Also, they need more exercise of using 'challenging' perspectives (for example 'theory'). Facilitators are interested in possibilities of using WANDA in different contexts, for example on the level of institution/management.

Sources:

Bouillet, D. 2017. "Croatia – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer.

www.seeepro.eu/English/Country_Reports.htm

d. Belgium

Context

ECEC in Belgium (FL)

Belgium is a federal and multilingual country comprising three autonomous Regions (Flemish Region, Walloon Region, Brussels Capital Region), three language Communities (Flemish, French, German-speaking), and four language areas (Dutch, French, German, and French-Dutch in the Brussels Capital Region).

Each Region and language Community has its own ECEC system. Here we will focus on the Flemish Community, because this is where Wanda has been developed and used.

The ECEC system in the Flemish Community is a split one, which means that different ministerial authorities are responsible for provisions for children under 2 ½ years old (childcare sector, under the Flemish Ministry for Welfare, Families and Equal Opportunities – and managed by the Flemish government agency 'Child and Family' – *Kind & Gezin*), and for children from 2 ½ years up to compulsory school, which starts at 6 years old (education sector, under the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training).

This means that there is a clear division between 'education' and 'care' in the approach and management of ECEC services. In some kindergarten classes, childcare workers (assistants) are employed to work alongside the teacher and are responsible for care tasks and for looking after the children outside the classroom periods (during meals at midday, in the play-ground, during sleeping moments). While meant to support the teacher, this is in effect resulting in a split between caring and teaching roles, whereas what is needed is a holistic approach in which education and care are inter-twinned (Van Laere, 2017; Peeters, Sharmahd, Budginaitè, 2016).

Currently, the sector is in a process of transition on different levels:

- 1) In April 2014, a new decree on childcare for the 0- 3-years old sector was implemented in the Flemish Community. The development of the Wanda method, together with the CoRe research (2011; 2016) had an influence on this decree. The latter stipulates that all staff working in childcare needs to have some kind of qualification by 2024, and that every childcare worker has the right to pedagogical guidance from a pedagogical coach. Although no concrete guideline has been developed until now on how to actually realize all this, this decree shows the beginning of a change.
- 2) The 'change' is also supported also by the fact that in 2011, a new Bachelor degree for pedagogical coaching (Pedagogisch Coach – 'Pedagogy of the Young Child') was established in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent³, and the first students graduated in 2014. These graduates take up a post as Pedagogical Coach or adviser, designing the pedagogical policy of the childcare centre with the practitioners. Some of these newly qualified professionals work as part of the management staff in childcare centres, and it is envisaged that they will gradually replace the nurses and social workers currently working in childcare centres.
- 3) A large scale research project (MEMOQ - Measuring and Monitoring the Pedagogical Quality of Childcare) developed a Pedagogical Framework for the 0-3 sector and investigated the pedagogical quality of the current Flemish childcare centres. Starting from these results, instruments for self-evaluation and inspection are now being developed and aligned with one another.

Staff qualifications

The division between 'care' and 'education' is reflected also in the different qualifications required to work in the childcare or education sector. Core practitioners in pre-primary education have a Bachelor level, alongside teachers in schools. Practitioners in childcare sector are mostly infant care workers (secondary vocational level). Management staff are medical nurses, social workers or pedagogical coaches (Bachelor level).

CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

Considering CPD: 1) for the childcare sector, the new decree of 2014 states that pedagogical support is needed, but there are no clear guidelines on how to realize it; 2) for the education sector, each

³ In Ghent this Bachelor is provided by the Artevelde University College, partner in this PLA.

pre-primary and primary school has to develop a training plan for the teachers. However, schools decide autonomously how to organise the plan. Consequently no minimum CPD hours are specified for the pre-primary teachers or auxiliary workers (Vlaamse Regering, 2009). Only one collective pedagogical training day for all the teachers is obligatory.

Childfree hours

Concerning 'childfree hours': 1) for the childcare sector, in some Flemish cities there is a regulation of paid childfree hours, but no general national regulations exist; 2) in pre-primary education, teachers have labour contracts of 26 hours. They need to teach at least 1,200 minutes per week (24 'lesson hours' of 50 minutes). That means they have 360 minutes left or approx. six hours per week for non-contact (child free) time. The school decides how this time will be spent. Generally speaking there is no established tradition of group reflection in the ECEC sector during this time.

This means that, especially for the childcare sector, it is very difficult to offer support and organize reflection on practice on a regular basis, because the structural conditions are lacking (time), and because no clear guidelines are given on how to offer pedagogical guidance on a structural way. Some exceptions exist, for example Ghent, which is a city that invested in creating structural conditions to support reflection with ECEC staff. The case study on Ghent included in the CoRe research (2011; 2016) shows that when pedagogical guidance is provided, child-free hours are scheduled and reflection paths are supported, the quality of the services increases with a direct effect on the wellbeing of children and families.

The Wanda path in Belgium (FL)

In 2010, Artevelde University College and VBJK (Centre for Innovation in the Early Years) started a transnational ESF (European Social Fund) project to develop a new method for the childcare sector in the Flemish Community of Belgium, starting from 12 organisations and 7 training centres. The method was called WANDA (which is a Dutch acronym for Appreciate, Analyse and Deeds), and was originally created for teachers, practitioners and students working in the childcare sector (0-3 years old). At the beginning, staff from VBJK, VCOK (Training Center, Ghent) and Artevelde University College facilitated Wanda sessions in the services. In the meantime they organized trainings and supervision moments for Wanda facilitators. Slowly pedagogical coaches and/or the directors of the services themselves took the role of Wanda facilitators. Artevelde/VBJK/VCOK gradually stopped giving trainings and supervision moments on Wanda.

At the same time the University Colleges in Ghent (Artevelde), Antwerp (Karel de Grote) and in Brussels (Erasmus) started using Wanda in a structural way with their students: Wanda paths (facilitated by the teachers of the University Colleges) are organized with students in order to regularly reflect on their internship in the services, and link theory with practice. The transversal aim is also that the same students would learn to become Wanda facilitators and eventually use Wanda with ECEC teams once they will become pedagogical coaches.

Aims and method of the survey

Through the survey of the Wanda PLA, we aimed at getting an overview of what happened with Wanda in Flanders in these last years, since no analysis or research has been carried on until now on this. We also aimed at understanding the needs of the sector concerning this method and its possible further development.

We sent the questionnaire to 80 contacts (facilitators, people that followed the Wanda training, responsables of services/organizations that used Wanda). We received 39 answers back (15 facilitators with students and 24 facilitators with professionals). To deepen the results, we carried on 10 telephone-interviews with a selected group of respondents. The interviews have been focused on better understanding the strengths and critical points of Wanda, also thinking about its further development.

Results and analysis of the data

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the setting where the respondents to the questionnaire work and their function.

1. Which setting/organization

| TYPE | n. | % |
|--|----|------|
| Childcare (Kinderdagverblijf) | 12 | 31% |
| Family childcare (dienst for onthaalouders) | 3 | 8% |
| Out of School care (Buitenschoolse opvang) | 1 | 3% |
| Kindergarten & primary school (Basisonderwijs) | 0 | 0% |
| Secondary school (Secundair onderwijs) | 1 | 3% |
| Adult Education (Volwassenenonderwijs) | 2 | 5% |
| Higher Education (Hoger onderwijs) | 12 | 31% |
| Other (combination of settings) | 8 | 21% |
| TOT | 39 | 100% |

As we can see, 15 respondents are facilitators using Wanda with students (Higher education + Adult education + Secondary School), and 24 are facilitators using Wanda with professionals (childcare + family childcare + out of school).

2. Function of the respondents

| TYPE | n. | % |
|----------------------------|----|------|
| Coordinator/Responsible | 15 | 39% |
| Pedagogical coach | 8 | 21% |
| Director | 0 | 0% |
| Teacher (Higher Education) | 12 | 31% |
| Other | 4 | 9% |
| TOT | 39 | 100% |

Table n. 3 investigates the intention to use Wanda or not in the following year.

3. Use of Wanda

| | Intention to use Wanda next year? | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|----|
| | YES | NO |
| Never used Wanda (4) | 1 | 3 |

| | | |
|---|----|---|
| | | |
| Ever used Wanda, but not during previous year (6) | 3 | 3 |
| Used Wanda during previous year (29) | 29 | 0 |

As we can see, the majority of the respondents that are using Wanda now, have the intention to use it also next year. It has to be noted that 15 respondents use Wanda with students and they all replied that they have the intention to use Wanda next year. This means that the ones that don't have the intention to use it next year belong to the services/schools. This is probably because in University Colleges Wanda is implemented within the curriculum in a structural way, while services need to choose it as a priority and find time to realize it.

The reasons indicated for not using Wanda anymore are indicated in paragraph n. 6.

4. Frequency and organization Wanda sessions

| Frequency | n. | % |
|---|----|------|
| 1 or 2 times with one group | 6 | 17% |
| 1 or 2 times with multiple groups | 9 | 26% |
| On a regular basis with one group | 11 | 31% |
| On a regular basis with multiple groups | 9 | 26% |
| TOT | 35 | 100% |

In this table we have a variety of answers. To read them, we have to take into account that no difference has been noted amongst settings/types of participants, but a strong difference has been noted amongst facilitators with students and with professionals: Wanda is mostly used on a regular basis with students, and it is often used just once or twice when working with ECEC professionals. This is probably again the result of the fact that Higher Education Institutions (f.e. University Colleges) have the structural conditions to integrate Wanda on a regular basis in their curriculum. These conditions, together with the awareness of the key function of reflection on practice, makes it possible for Higher Education Institutions to implement Wanda in a continuous and structural way. The challenge for ECEC services consists in: 1) having time (childfree hours); 2) being aware of the fact that reflection on practice is a key element of quality in ECEC centers. Competent systems (CoRe, 2011; 2016) are needed in order to combine these two elements and implement them on a structural level.

5. Strengths and impact of Wanda

This list goes from the most given to the less given answers and it summarizes the answers to the questionnaire with the ones received through the interviews:

- Acknowledging different perspectives – better understanding of differences
- Strength of learning from each other
- Building a 'group feeling'
- Personal growth in daily practice
- Less judgements ('there are no difficult parents and children')

- Bringing reflection in everyday life in ECEC centers
- 'It is practical and clear' – accessible to use
- For students: connecting practice, theory and policy
- Method that works in strengthening the reflective competences of staff
- Positive thinking
- Connection with colleagues working with the same target group but in different services (for example when a group made is by practitioners working in different family childcare centers).

6. Challenges in organizing and using Wanda

This list goes from the most given to the less given answers and it summarizes the answers to the questionnaire with the ones received through the interviews:

On a structural level:

- Time (lack of childfree hours)
- Organization (replacing staff that has to be with the children while doing the Wanda session; staff turnover)
- Convincing directors to start with Wanda (because it asks time)
- 'Directors leave and Wanda leaves' (if a director that was very engaged with Wanda changes job or leaves, very often the service stops using Wanda too)
- 'Difficult to use Wanda when we already have other reflective methods in our service/school'
- Need to choose what to invest in ('we cannot do everything') – choosing priorities
- Need to be supported in implementing Wanda on a regular basis (as services and as facilitators)

On a content level:

- Strength of 'going deep', but difficulties in always do it in a proper way
- Sometimes difficulties in 'staying in the Wanda phases'
- Finding a 'good case'
- Challenge in focusing also on the group process, and not just on the case
- Stimulating active participation of all
- Challenge of creating a 'safe/challenging climate'

Conclusions and ideas for Belgium (FL)

Through the survey, we can conclude that reflection on practice is recognized as a need in the ECEC sector, and Wanda is generally seen as a successful good method to realize it.

It is interesting that many answers underline the added value of focusing on 'different perspectives' (valuing diversity) which is indeed one of the main goals of Wanda. Wanda seems to be seen as a clear method that supports the peer-learning of staff in a positive/constructive way. It stimulates professionals in linking ideas and practice (also for students) and in transforming daily life in ECEC settings.

While in Higher Education Institutions, Wanda seems used on a regular basis, the challenge is mainly connected to make all this continuous on a structural level in the services: time is lacking, especially when childfree hours are not officially recognized; staff turnover makes continuity more difficult; often the engagement towards the method is linked to the individual motivation of the director of the service/school, while there should be a 'structural' engagement at different levels and a strong recognition of the importance of reflection on practice in order to improve ECEC quality. This means that we need competent systems (CoRe, 2011; 2016) able to invest in the different levels of the system, in order to guarantee reflection on practice on a structural level.

At the same time support for facilitators seems to be needed as well (for example supervision moments, peer-learning activities etc.). Through this support, the critical points underlined on a content level could also be addressed.

We can conclude that there is a need to re-launch and support Wanda in Flanders, and there is a need to make it continuous, since a real change in practice can be realized through a path developed in time and realized on a regular basis (transforming practice with one or two Wanda sessions is not possible).

This is in line with the indications of the Flemish decree of 2014, which states that pedagogical guidance should be provided in all ECEC services.

Considering all this, the **needs** connected to Wanda in Flanders are the following ones :

- Need to support reflection on practice **on a regular basis** in ECEC services
- Need for further **research** on the impact of Wanda on the professional development of staff and on the 'mind shift' and competences of students
- Need to influence **policy makers** on the importance of reflection in ECEC services, and on the need of creating structural conditions for it

Concrete **ideas** on possible development of Wanda in Flanders:

1. Wanda could be connected with the **Pedagogical Framework** for the 0-3 sector developed through the MeMoQ project: Wanda could support the reflection of staff on their daily practice, with a focus on how the concepts of the Pedagogical Framework are/are not present in this practice. In this way staff can be accompanied in a bottom up way in critically reflecting on its practice and on its connection with the intentions expressed in the Pedagogical Framework.
2. There is also need for **further research** on Wanda in Flanders. We could realize 1) a research on the impact of Wanda on different levels related to the services (individual practitioners, team, organization); 2) a research on the impact of Wanda on students' (of Higher Education Institutions) competences and their 'mind shift'. The results should be disseminated to organizations/services and policy makers.
3. Wanda should also be **further disseminated**, maybe not only in ECEC services, but also with teachers in primary schools. If used in kindergarten (2,5 – 6 sector), we can think about using it with teachers and assistants, in order to involve also assistants in a CPD path (working within an *educare* perspective).
4. Considering that the decree of 2014 established that ECEC staff should hold a qualification (before 2024), there is a need to organize **qualifications paths for already employed staff**. These paths should strongly focus on the link theory/practice, by valuing the work experience of students and stimulating reflection on practice. Wanda could have an important role in this planning.
5. Some (2,5-6 years old) work with **assistants** (which help core teachers in certain moments of the day, or they have a bridging role especially towards families with a vulnerable background). Normally assistants work directly with children and parents but they are not involved in CPD paths together with core teachers. Wanda could be an interesting method to implement CPD paths that involve assistants and teachers together in jointly reflect on their common practice.

Sources:

Peeters, J., Sharmahd, N., & Budginaitė I. (2016). *Professionalisation of childcare assistants in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): Pathways towards qualification. NESET II report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

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e. Estonia

ECEC system

Estonia has a partially integrated system of ECEC, under the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research. Governance and system management are distributed between the national and regional levels, reflecting a multilevel governance model with responsibility shared between the Ministry of Education and Research for the integrated ECEC institutions for children aged 1½ year to 7 years. Local education and social affairs authorities are responsible for ECEC provision and management.

Staff qualifications

There are three main categories of staff (Teacher, Assistant and Nurse) and two categories of setting leaders (Director and Head Teacher). Assistants and Nurses are required to have an ISCED Level 4 qualification. Teachers, Directors and Head Teachers should have an ISCED Level 6, 7 or Level 8 (Master teacher).

CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

Professional development is optional for teachers and assistants and required for center directors and head teachers.

Childfree hours

There are no official childfree hours in the ECEC institutions in Estonia. Working hours are 35 hours per week and during this time, teachers work directly with the children. Children sleep after lunch and teachers can use this time for short meetings/documentation.

The Wanda path in Estonia (how did it start, projects etc.)

NGO Hea Algus started in Estonia with the Wanda method through an ISSA Peer Learning Activity (PLA) in 2016.

Hea Algus has a strong network of teachers/educational leaders and specialists in Estonia (10 regions). We have worked with them during 24 years on professional development. The interest of Hea Algus in participating in the Wanda program was due to the will of developing as organization and give possibilities for professional development to our network, trainers, partners and teachers. Through the Wanda training we hoped to help them to be better specialists in group reflection. It has been also a chance for lower qualified staff (assistant teachers) to develop and belong to the team of their institution.

As Hea Algus has long term (21 years) experience in counselling work with different specialists and with groups of young parents at risk, we believed that the Wanda method could help them to work

more effectively with partners and families. We involved different specialist/partners/experts from the socio-educational and medical system.

Participants from 15 different institutions took part to the training: 6 kindergartens, 1 school, 3 NGOs, 3 Advisory Centres.

During the project a group of trained Wanda facilitators was created, 19 people in total: 15 people with educational background, 2 social socio-pedagogy, 2 social workers. All of them graduated in the level of master degree. At the moment 16 people work in the same position, 3 of them have changed institution or leaved from the system.

Aims and method of the survey

The most important aim of the survey was to get an overview about the process and results of Wanda in Estonia and also about the future steps.

16 people took part to the survey - all of them participated in the PLA. The survey was done in July-September 2018. Each of the 16 people got the questionnaire. After that we collected the answers and interviews with 13 people were held. After that the answers were analysed and an overview of the results was prepared.

Results and analysis of the data

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the setting where the respondents to the questionnaire work and their function.

1. Which setting/organization

| TYPE | n. | % |
|------------------------------------|----|-----|
| Kindergarten | 4 | 36 |
| Primary and Secondary school | 2 | 19 |
| Adult Education (Training Centers) | 4 | 36 |
| Other (combination of settings) | 1 | 9 |
| TOT | 11 | 100 |

2. Function of the respondents

| TYPE | n. | % |
|-------------------------|----|-----|
| Coordinator/Responsible | 4 | 27 |
| Pedagogical coach | 4 | 27 |
| Director | 3 | 20 |
| Teacher / | 1 | 6 |
| Other/trainer | 3 | 20 |
| TOT | 15 | 100 |

3. Use of Wanda

| | Intention to use Wanda next year? | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|
| | YES | NO |
| Never used Wanda (1) | 1 | 0 |
| Ever used Wanda, but not during previous year (2) | 2 | 0 |
| Used Wanda during previous year (13) | 12 | 0 |

As we can see, the majority of the respondents that are using Wanda now, have the intention to use it also next year.

Frequency and organization Wanda sessions

| Frequency | n. | % |
|---|----|-----|
| 1 or 2 times with one group | 4 | 27 |
| 1 or 2 times with multiple groups | 2 | 13 |
| On a regular basis with one group | 8 | 53 |
| On a regular basis with multiple groups | 1 | 7 |
| TOT | 15 | 100 |

As we can see, most of facilitators work with one group regularly. One of them once per month.

4. Strengths and impact of Wanda

- participants can reach out to each other and talk about the problems in their group, think more widely about other perspectives
- participants can rely on each other and help them find good ideas how to solve different group problems; very positive and solving- centred discussions between team members
- participants can help each other in very complicated situations
- Wanda helps to analyse practical experiences in the light of theoretical frameworks.
- learning with a group is an important method of growing up as team
- participants can share their pedagogical experiences- possibility to develop for all group members
- good start to solve/discuss about problems which are important for the development of the whole organization
- real change in behaviour and views of people
- increase well-being and the feeling of belonging to a team
- participants grow up in their professions as individuals and as a group.
- teachers can understand each other better in real situations
- possibility to support and give help in different situations

- way to strengthen the team of organization
- development of out of border thinking
- feeling and possibility to grow up as network of specialists/ experts
- learning and growing as team together, potential for deeper teamwork in the organisation
- supporting of good relations in the team of organization, participants know better each other
- more effective cooperation with parents

5. Challenges in organizing and using Wanda

- it was hard for teacher to actively participate (some of them did not understand what Wanda is about)
- sometimes the problems were so big that even Wanda session couldn't help
- sometimes it was hard to find the right time to do a Wanda session
- time-time-time: find and use effectively
- usually it is difficult to stay in the limited time line
- sometimes is difficult to change the attitude or thinking of 'difficult' person
- to stay in the role of facilitator
- to stay in the framework of Wanda model
- to find good case and reach to the end of the process
- to see things in different perspectives
- to follow the rules and phases of Wanda
- needs to develop listening skills of participants and facilitators
- to coop with own emotions

Conclusions and ideas for Estonia

Needs of participants for the future:

- to communicate with other facilitators and share experiences; reflect and get feedback
- more positive/working examples
- meet with the other group facilitators, share experiences about leading and working with Wanda
- more information from the other countries using Wanda
- to develop the network of Wanda teams and meet with them regularly
- training 'How to motivate group members to participate'

There were many good ideas about using Wanda and about the importance of it. It seems, that the Wanda method is seriously in use and participants consider it as an important framework for their work. From the data analysis we can see that there are lots of important reasons to use Wanda at the organizational level in the future. For better results it is important to support the organizations and motivate leaders.

Sources:

Veisson, M. 2017. "Estonia - ECEC Workforce Profile." In Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer.
www.seeepro.eu/Country_Reports

e. Slovenia

ECEC system

In Slovenia ECEC provision is organized as an integrated system. Since 1993, the age-integrated ECEC institutions for children aged 11 months up to statutory schooling, generally at age 6, come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Slovenia was the first of the post-communist countries to transfer responsibility for ECEC from the then Ministry of Health, Family and Social Security to the then Ministry of Education and Sport.

The government's responsibilities include issuing relevant legislation and providing an ECEC curriculum. Municipalities have a duty to provide sufficient places and to ensure that the national curricular framework is implemented.

Staff qualifications

Staff in ECEC institutions are core practitioners and assistants. The latter help core practitioners in specific tasks, often related to care. In specific areas Roma assistants are employed, in order to facilitate the relationship with families with Roma origins.

CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

Slovenia has a highly structured system of credit point acquisition for CPD and career advancement. This enables both Early Childhood Teachers and ECEC centre directors to acquire different levels of recognized expertise and posts of responsibility.

The CPD framework for ECEC staff is guided by general national regulations regarding in-service training for all educational professionals.

In many cases CPD is provided for core practitioners and assistants at the same time, and it has to be 5 days per year (or 15 in 3 years).

Non qualified co-workers (f.e. Roma Assistants) may participate in all forms of CPD activities.

However, attendance certificates are not formally recognised in terms of career development in their case.

Childfree hours

The full time working obligation both for Early Childhood Teachers and Assistants is 40 hours per week. Legally, the teacher's work with children should not exceed 30 hours per week, and the assistants' work 35 hours per week. Teachers have 7.5 hours/week non-contact time (childfree), and assistants have 2.5 hours/week.

The Wanda path in Slovenia (how did it start, projects etc.)

In 2014 Wanda was introduced through the Project 'When Wanda meets ISSA'. In this context a training of trainers was implemented. 8 WANDA facilitators were trained, 5 were members of the Centre for quality in education, 3 were professionals from preschools. In 2015 the Wanda method was introduced to the leaders of professional learning communities (coordinators) in the Network of preschools and primary schools for changing quality Step by Step. In the same year (2015) two Wanda trainers (from 1st generation of trainers) started their Wanda groups in their preschools. In 2016 the Centre introduced a call for for **a)** training for leaders of Wanda groups and **b)** providing leading Wanda (as service) in preschool/primary schools. Due to the high fee (higher than usual

trainings due to small number of participants), the training was not implemented. In 2017 the training for Wanda facilitators was implemented for the first time. 9 preschool teachers, preschool counselors from 5 preschools participated. The training was conducted by 2 '1st generation' trainers. The program of the training was developed together with our Centre. In 2018 a support group for the leaders of Wanda groups was established.

Aims and method of the survey

Through the survey we aimed at getting an overview of what happened with Wanda in Slovenia from 2014 till now. We also wanted to learn more about how facilitators perceive strong points and areas of improvement.

We sent the questionnaire to 18 contacts (facilitators, people that followed the Wanda training). We received 13 answers back. To deepen the results, we sent additional questions to the last generation of facilitators and also conducted 3 telephone-interviews with a selected group of respondents. The interviews have been focused on better understanding the strengths and critical points of Wanda, also thinking about its further development.

Results and analysis of the data

1. Which setting/organization

| TYPE | n. | % |
|-------------------------------|----|-----|
| Childcare | | |
| Family childcare | | |
| Out of School care | | |
| Kindergarten (vrtec 0-3, 3-6) | 13 | 100 |
| Primary school | | |
| Secondary school | | |
| Adult Education | | |
| Higher Education | | |
| Other | | |
| TOT | 13 | 100 |

As we can see all 13 respondents come from preschool environment and are facilitating Wanda with ECEC professionals.

2. Function of the respondents

| TYPE | n. | % |
|-------------------|----|-----|
| Preschool teacher | 6 | 46 |
| Counsellor | 5 | 39 |
| Deputy director | 2 | 15 |
| Other | | |
| TOT | 13 | 100 |

Table n. 3 investigates the intention to use Wanda or not in the following year.

3. Use of Wanda

| | Intention to use Wanda next year? | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|
| | YES | NO |
| Never used Wanda (0) | 0 | 0 |
| Ever used Wanda, but not during previous year (2) | 2 | 0 |
| Used Wanda during previous year (11) | 10 | 1 |

As we can see, the majority of the respondents (10 out of 11) that are using Wanda now, have the intention to use it also next year. Two of the respondents did not use Wanda in the previous year, but also intend to use it next year. Only one of the respondents do not intend to use Wanda next year (due to expiry of the employment contract).

4. Frequency and organization Wanda sessions

| Frequency | n. | % |
|---|----|-----|
| 1 or 2 times with one group | 0 | 0 |
| 1 or 2 times with multiple groups | 0 | 0 |
| On a regular basis with one group | 9 | 69 |
| On a regular basis with multiple groups | 4 | 31 |
| TOT | 13 | 100 |

As seen above, all the facilitators succeeded in implementing Wanda in a continuous way. Regular meetings of Wanda groups were possible due to the awareness that reflection on practice is a key element of quality in ECEC centers, on the level of professionals as well as on the managerial level, and also due to having time (childfree hours). Some of the preschools incorporated Wanda in their official meetings making them more meaningful and also more sustainable.

5. Strengths and impact of Wanda

This list includes answers collected from the questionnaire from the interviews and emails.

- Impact of Wanda on developing a positive atmosphere in preschool- atmosphere of trust and mutual support;
- Professional development of teachers involved- impact on reflecting on their daily practice;
- Impact on „solving“ problem situations, before they escalate;

- exchange of practice, ideas among professionals;
- Wanda gives insight into practitioners' needs;
- developing common understanding of quality among ECEC practitioners;
- a form of 'official' professional meetings (focus on reflection instead on 'organizational' themes);
- Sensibilization towards needs of parents, children- better understanding of others (parents, children colleagues), better communication with parents, children, colleagues, - better understanding of different perspectives;
- change in participant's practices;
- greater self-confidence, professionalism, empowerment;
- instead of searching for "instant" solutions→ the ability to reflect with an insight that raises the level of professionalism.

6. Challenges in organizing and using Wanda

This list includes answers collected from the questionnaire from the interviews and emails.

- **Organizational level:**
 - sometimes it is difficult to set the date of the meeting because of a busy schedule.
- **Leading the process:**
 - guiding the process during the initial meetings;
 - leading the group through the process (time and structure- positive learning question, dealing with perspectives);
 - Questions: do I support the group good enough, how much to interfere with the process as a leader;
 - encouraging people to speak and establishing the trust within the group ;
 - when the participants knew each other very well (which felt as an obstacle sometimes);
 - my expectations about the course of the meeting and then the actual course of the meeting;
 - the dilemma when to stop people who very much like to talk;
 - understanding different perspectives, defining the issue and presenting it to the others
 - choosing a case - urgency and relevance, time - optimizing focused listening to each other,
 - following the phases of Wanda process and shaping the positive learning questions, we've often dealt with many perspectives, which needed to be narrowed in order to finish the process in time;
 - different expectations.
- **"content":**
 - topics which cannot be addressed with this method (for example conflicts among coworkers);
 - the Wanda-ISSA connection: how to make it "visible";
 - the set of examples and possible solutions was sometimes too broad. Problems connecting with ISSA pedagogical areas of work
 - not enough time;
 - choosing an unsuitable case.

Conclusions and ideas for Slovenia

Our aim is:

- establishing some sort of supporting system/network for facilitators;
- introducing Wanda to more preschools/primary schools → getting preschool's and primary schools directors on board. We need more positive evidence of Wanda's impact → we strongly advocate for joint projects.

Sources

Vonta, T. and J. Jager. 2017. "Slovenia – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer.
www.seeepro.eu/English/Country_Reports.htm

7. Common conclusions: strengths, challenges, ideas

Considering the surveys done in all 6 countries, we can summarize the following common strengths and challenges of the Wanda method:

Strengths:

- Strength of using different perspectives, which means taking diversity into account
- Building a less judgmental attitude ('there are no difficult parents and children. It is about changing perspective')
- Focusing on positive thinking (not seeing a situation as a 'problem' but as a learning opportunity)
- Strength of learning from each other (peer learning)
- Creating a sense of 'belonging', by growing within the group
- Improving the reflective competences of staff and bringing reflection in everyday practice
- Supporting staff in dealing with everyday issues together, which means feeling less lonely. This transversally means also preventing burnout
- The method is 'practical and clear' – accessible to use
- For students: connecting practice, theory and policy

Challenges:

On a structural level:

- Time: lack of childfree hours + lack in investing time in reflection on practice as a priority
- Investing in awareness concerning the importance of reflecting on practice (on a policy level and on the level of the organizations/services)
- Disseminating reflective methods (like Wanda) to a broader range of services
- Supporting facilitators (network of facilitators; supervision moments...)
- Convincing directors of the importance of reflecting on practice (because it asks time)
- Choosing what to invest in ('we cannot do everything') – choosing priorities

On a content level:

- Building mutual trust between participants;
- Valuing the process (and not just the session)
- Motivating participants when they didn't choose to take part voluntarily to the sessions
- Creating a 'safe/challenging climate'
- 'Stay in the Wanda phases'
- Finding a 'good case' and stimulating participants when they say they don't have a case
- Formulating a positive learning question
- Stimulating participants in making a difference between description and interpretation
- Having more visualization techniques
- Having more 'examples' of Wanda sessions to discuss with facilitators (f.e. videos)
- Avoiding stereotypes when vulnerable groups are included in the case;
- Challenging the need of participants for fast problem solving solutions

Where to invest: common needs and ideas

From the common strengths and critical points, the following conclusions and ideas for further development came out during our meeting in Budapest:

- **Time** is always mentioned as an issue, but the lack of time alone cannot be considered as the only issue: often even in contexts in which child-free hours are officially recognized, practitioners seem to have 'no time' to reflect. This comes probably from the fact that, when there are childfree hours, but there is no tradition in reflecting on practice, or no structural support to regularly reflect, then often those hours are used for other things (usually organizational/practical issues) instead then for reflection.

This means that we need to invest in 2 directions at the same time:

- 1) **Recognizing childfree hours** (paid hours without children in which staff can meet, plan, document, reflect).
- 2) **Investing in the awareness of the importance of reflection on daily practice**, which also means investing in a structure of pedagogical coaching working on a regular basis. This is also crucial when thinking that Wanda doesn't bring change in practice with one or two sessions. We need to build a path (how long this path needs to be depends on the context, but we usually saw that a group needs at least 1 year of Wanda sessions to start changing practice).

This is in line with what stated in the CoRe research (2011; 2016), which underlines the necessity of investing in a competent system, working on different levels at the same time, as underlined also by the European Quality Framework (2014).

- In order to invest in **awareness concerning the importance of reflection on practice**, we need to '**proof**' the effect and impact of reflecting methods like **Wanda**. In this way we can sensibilize professionals and policy makers on this theme. That is why we should invest in research on the 'effects' of Wanda. More specifically we can invest on:
 - 3) **Research on the effects of Wanda on different levels related to the services/schools:** on the level of the individuals (professional development of staff in ECEC centers - how does participating in a Wanda path influence the perspective of practioners, their 'mind shift', their way to look at families and children, their practice etc.?), on the level of the team, on the level of the organization.
 - 4) **Research on the effect of Wanda on the learning process of students** (in Higher Education Institutions, f.e. University Colleges): how does Wanda influence the 'mind shift' of students, their capability to link theory and practice, their way to look at services, families, children, their way to see diversity⁴? And does it change also the level of the organization (the Institution)?
- This last point leads to another need/idea that came out from our meeting, which is the need of **disseminating Wanda to a broader range of services/schools**. This need goes together with the need of making reflection stronger on a structural level and on a regular basis. More specifically we can:
 - 1) Investing in Wanda in **other orgaizations/ECEC services**, also by involving new facilitators through new trainings.
 - 2) Using Wanda also in **primary schools** (group reflection moments with primary school teachers).
 - 3) Investing in Wanda not only in services/schools, but also in **pre-service teacher training programs (f.e. Universities or University Colleges)**. More specifically this would mean using Wanda to reflect with students in group on their internship. In this way students are supported in linking theory and practice and in reflecting on their own assumptions in a critical way. This is already done for example in Belgium by the Artevelde University

⁴ In the Artevelde University College this can also be linked to the capability of students to become 'world citizens', a competence on which the whole institution is working, which is linked to the capability to value diversity.

College in Ghent (and by other Universities Colleges in Antwerp and Brussels), and it has been experimented in Czech Republic. The other partner organizations would be interested in experimenting it in their contexts.

- 4) Involving **new partner organizations within the ISSA network**, that can start Wanda paths in their contexts.
- All countries involved have '**assistants**' (support staff with lower or no qualification that help core practitioners in certain moments of the day) employed in their ECEC services. These assistants are often not involved in CPD paths together with core practitioners (with the exception of Slovenia), although they work with the same children and families dealing with important tasks, which are often related to 'care' (eating, napping, playing outside). Sometimes (like in the case of Roma assistants), assistants have also a 'bridging' role towards families with a vulnerable/migrant background. The role of assistants and the need to work on their professionalization has been recently explored through a NESET II report realized for the European Commission (Peeters, Sharmahd, Budginaitè, 2016). Wanda could be an interesting method to implement CPD paths that involve also assistants (also considering the *educare* perspective).
 - In order to invest in all these previous points, we also need to create a strong **support** for facilitators. Not only trainings, but also creating of a network of facilitators, supervision moments etc.
 - Support can be realized also by providing **extra resources, materials, examples** related to Wanda. More specifically what could help is realizing **videos** on Wanda sessions. These videos can be used during the trainings or supervision moments with the facilitators in order to reflect on their role, on how to support participants etc. In doing so, the challenges will be: 1) paying attention to not offering 'the good Wanda session', as if there would be just one way of doing Wanda. Each facilitator needs to find his/her own way; 2) finding agreements with the group, since normally 'what is said in Wanda stays in Wanda'.

On the basis of these needs and ideas, we are looking for possibilities to realize international projects in which Wanda can be further developed.

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