



Erasmus+



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Innovation Toolkit

**To develop and support innovation in social work with
multi challenged families – Intellectual Output 4**

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1. Background to the Innovation Toolkit

The aim of the LIFE project is to develop new skills, competencies, training products and methodologies to enable social workers and related professionals to innovate and adopt more effective interventions in working with multi-challenged families. In the LIFE project the partners worked together to produce five Intellectual Outputs, namely: a Competency Framework (IOP 1), the Knowledge Triangle (IOP 2), development of a Training program (IOP 3), the Innovation toolkit (IOP 4) and a Final report (IOP 5).

The Innovation toolkit (IOP 4), which is presented in this report, aims at describing a range of skills and competencies that can be deployed in social work in services for multi-challenged families as well as a possible design and content of a training program for social workers. The rationale for this element in LIFE is that social workers (and indeed many other professionals) are not taught innovation practices in their basic training. They are often exposed to top-down innovation strategies designed to enhance managerial control, ration services, or even discriminate against users of service, and have by virtue of their training little skill and insight that might support innovations that would actually offer some benefit to users.

1.1 What do we mean by a multi-challenged family?

In the Baseline Study, a number of themes that have significance for the LIFE project are presented, including national structures and cultural differences, professional training at basic and more advanced levels, and changes in social conditions and recent policy changes that affect work with multi-challenged families. In the Baseline study a definition based on previous research of what characterizes a multi-challenged family is presented, that the parties apply in the project (e.g. Clifford et al, 2015; Bredmar et al, 2014; Davidsson, 2017; Mešl, 2018). A multi-challenged family can be characterized by a combination of a number of challenges:

1. Parents are often unemployed or have at best insecure, part-time work.
2. There are many one-parent families, usually single mothers.
3. Low income.
4. A significant number of parents have been traumatized by abuse or neglect suffered when they were children, or by maltreatment and dysfunctional relationships with partners in early adulthood, or have suffered both these deprivations.
5. Relations between parents, even when they live apart, are often strained.
6. Low education.
7. Poor health.
8. Substance abuse and/or alcohol problems
9. Poor network.

Based on earlier research (Clifford et al, 2015; Bredmar et al, 2014) it can be concluded that social work with multi-challenged families make severe demands upon professional helping services. Services for families that struggle quite often do not provide adequate help. The more disorganized and difficult the circumstances a family have to contend with, the less adequate the help provided. This seems to occur partly because services are specialized and have their own agendas, and do not necessarily cooperate well. But quite a lot of parents from multi-challenged families say that professionals do not listen properly. In addition families often have great difficulty in coping on a daily basis, and this makes it very difficult for family members to work toward the changes that professionals would like to see. The research also revealed serious deficits in follow-up. Some families were left to fend for themselves after an initial

assessment had indicated serious concern but no direct emergency. Another issue is that professionals seem often resigned to operating within the system with all its limitations. The problems encountered in helping multi-challenged families are so complex that professionals often do not feel able to challenge the status quo.

1.2 Social Work with multi-challenged families

Based on the Baseline Study the partners agreed on the core skill components and principles that training should embody:

1. An approach that deals with the problems encountered by the family as a whole.
2. Understanding that service structures and ways of working do not necessarily serve the best interests of multi-challenged families.
3. Working in cooperation with the family, respecting and working on the basis of their experience and viewpoint.
4. Paying attention to communication skills.
5. Understanding the nature of disadvantage and disempowerment.
6. The importance of teamwork skills.
7. Working towards a dialogue with the owners of services and their management.

Based on these conclusions the key elements of the Competency Framework for social work with multi-challenged families should include the following:

- A holistic approach to working with the family.
- Co-creation of solutions with the family, valuing their perceptions. This contrasts with much current practice which tends to assume the families are fundamentally dysfunctional and that their perceptions are therefore of little value.
- The need for a multi-disciplinary approach to address the fragmented nature of multiple professional interventions.
- Case Management as part of this and understanding the challenge that this represents to professional and management hierarchies.
- Understanding innovation in social work in a family environment.
- Identifying areas with potential for change in the family situation and prioritizing interventions accordingly (being proactive rather than reactive).
- Practical Skills and Solutions required to implement innovation - Generic Skills e.g. analyzing needs of families, reflection on theory and practice, problem solving, teamwork, communication.

1.3 The Knowledge Triangle

The work with the knowledge triangle focuses on the interaction between: 1) practice based knowledge, 2) knowledge in training and education, and 3) research-based knowledge and is a fundamental issue in the LIFE project.

In the baseline study focusing on the training programs for social workers in the different countries, despite national traditions, structures or cultural differences, a reasonable conclusion is that there are few directly relevant training programs at either basic training or advanced levels. (The striking exception is the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Ljubljana.) These “gaps” are important because the core of the LIFE project will be a trial of a training approach set up to foster practice innovation at local levels.

Given the background description of research on work with multi-challenged families and how the education systems are organized in the different countries, which is presented in the LIFE baseline study, we know broadly how the situation is regarding points 2 and 3. The challenge in the design of the knowledge triangle is to integrate this knowledge with results and experiences from LIFE training program that focus more on practice based knowledge.

In order to do this the findings from the partner’s experiences from the LIFE training program were analyzed and interpreted and integrated in the knowledge triangle. This involved

analyzing experience of the work of the Stakeholder forums and the support and interaction they provided to social workers participating in the training program including work on micro innovations with multi challenged families. Based on this experience we can formulate implications for both knowledge in training and education, for example in higher education and continuing education, as well as for research on social work with multi-challenged families. This will help to establish an innovative learning model designed to foster innovation skills among social workers/professionals working with families with complex needs.

2. Innovation Skills Development Program

In this section we will focus on the Skills Development Program in the LIFE project. The main activity in this part of LIFE is the development and testing of a pilot training program for social workers in the work with multi-challenged families. This pilot program, which is IOP 3 in LIFE, is based in the Competency Framework (IOP 1) and the Knowledge Triangle (IOP 2). Taken together IOP 1, 2 and 3 will form IOP 4, the Innovation Toolkit.

2.1 Skills in social work with multi-challenged families

When we use the term *skill*, we refer to what we must be able to do to work toward a goal or support a task (Billett, Dymock, & Choy, 2016). Skills are not abstract, intellectual entities that organizational psychologists have dreamt up. Skills are operational, what one needs to be able to do the job. Some tasks require several skills from their executor, to be deployed simultaneously or in rapid flux, which is obviously complicated. Skills are usually thought of as individual capabilities and this most often seems reasonable. Even when working with others on a complex task, there will usually be some skill requirements that individuals have to satisfy.

Competencies are essentially jobs described in terms of the skills required as well as the professional background and theoretical knowledge deemed most appropriate. Many social workers, like other professional employees, are expected to be adaptable and in large measure self-regulating, and these two requirements are part of what are defined as competencies.

In the LIFE project the starting point has to be different. *The organization of social work and ways of doing things are often part of the problem multi-challenged families have to deal with.* We want to develop *innovation skills*. To accomplish this, we have to be prepared to redefine tasks so that they relate better to a family's needs, and we have to be critical about the assumptions built into prevailing practices that do not help us to deal with the needs and difficulties a family experiences. This may require *reframing*, that is revising the assumptions involved in assessing the problems that affect a family and the ways in which we set out to help them.

Innovation skills are practically the types of skills that allow individuals to become innovative in what they do. These are usually a combination of cognitive skills (e.g. the ability to think creatively and critically), behavioural skills (e.g. the ability to solve problems, to manage risk), functional skills (e.g. basic skills such as writing, reading and numeracy), and technical skills (such as research or organizing and analyzing information).

The question that arises from this is whether there are generic innovation skills that can be identified when partners drawn from very different professional settings, in different national contexts with pronounced cultural differences, work to define aims and the skills required to deal with varying legal systems and levels of resource constraint. LIFE is obviously set up to enable a severe test of what might be domain-specific, and what could be seen as generic. So this will be one of the questions relevant to the content of the toolkit.

A social innovation is a new solution or an approach to a social problem. This can mean changes in patterns in a field at micro, national, or global level, making use of the self-organizing power in society and how to use this power of individuals and communities. E.g. social work with multi-challenged families, education, health, etc. The European Commission describe social innovation as “about new ideas that work to address unmet needs. We simply describe it as innovations that are both social in their ends and in their means”.

The focus in LIFE is upon low-level innovations that will improve help for families where good ideas can be realized using available resources. The discipline this requires is to be able to think beyond what each agency sets out to provide, and this can of course be demanding. The concern is about the necessity of re-thinking work with the families. This involves a fresh approach to learning in which the traditional didactic models based upon deductive and inductive strategies would have to be abandoned. Instead the focus is on abductive learning that would draw on the experience of group participants and dialogue. The emphasis is also on avoiding top-down innovation strategies that often have been unsuccessful in reducing the burdens, privations and discrimination suffered by multi-challenged families. In order to help social workers to focus on and engage in low-level innovation, as well as addressing family members perceptions of their own situation embedded in their social and cultural environment, we tailored an assessment tool for innovation work with FMC in cross-cultural context. The assessment tool was offered as a recourse, and participants were free to choose the utilization.

The assessment tool follows a three-step model at work with low-level innovation; (a) get aware, (b) design a strategy and (c) communicate with environment. The first step of the assessment offers some questions that are supposed to trigger social workers` reflection and analyzing skills in order to promote awareness in the innovation process. The focus is the context of the MCF. The second step is designed to enhance social workers analyzing, planning and organizing skills in order to design a strategy plan for the innovation. The third step is designed to enhance social workers presentation and communication skills in order to be able to adequately communicate the new solution to the management and other important stakeholders. (assessment tool for innovation work, see attachment)

2.2 The Pilot Training Program

The innovation skills development program (Intellectual Output 3) is based on Intellectual Outputs 1 (Competency framework) and 2 (Knowledge triangle). Those three intellectual Outputs will be tested through a pilot training program which is implemented over a 12 month period. In the Baseline study 13 learning goals was formulated for the pilot training program:

(1) Skills

- Initiating and carrying through innovation processes
- Meeting standards for argument and presentation
- Cooperation with partners in innovation processes
- Identifying areas of work where innovation is needed
- Understanding preconditions for inter-professional cooperation and communication

(2) Knowledge

- Knowledge of innovation and innovation processes
- Understanding of what can promote or hinder innovation
- Better understanding of child welfare work with families in difficulty
- Innovation as a perspective in child welfare
- Innovation in learning organizations
- Knowledge of different types of innovation strategy
- Learning to see own practice and experience in the light of theory and societal issues

(3) General Competencies

- To be able to reflect upon users' situation and needs
- To reflect on the interplay of organization, structure and culture influencing what help users can obtain
- To acquire an inter-professional and interagency mentality
- To acquire ethical insight and standards for practice.

One central element in the training program is the focus upon practical innovations in social work with families with multiple challenges. The participants are chosen because their everyday work include tasks related to such families. The explicit aim of the training program is to devise new ways of organizing social work that can offer improvements for children and parents.

The training program sets out to provide participants with a “free space” within which they can discuss and develop practical approaches to problems that they encounter in their everyday practice with multi-challenged families based on *abductive reasoning and learning*. In contrast with the two more common learning approaches termed *deductive* and *inductive*, *abductive reasoning and learning* is based on inference from observation and experience in developing new ideas and hypotheses, *without undue reliance upon or reference to* prevailing doctrines and theories. Inference in this connection means a summarization and weighing of observation and experience to find likely or plausible explanations for a phenomenon or problem. *Educated guesswork* is the everyday English expression that comes closest. But abductive learning involves more than this, rather a process in which inferences are challenged, and their practical applications discussed in terms of feasibility, and ultimately tested out by using new approaches and devices based upon them in practice. Abductive reasoning may lead to incorrect inferences, but it is still creative and productive in that a range of avenues toward better practice can be opened.

A question that arises is whether abductive reasoning and learning and *critical reflection* as practiced in social work (and many other professional settings) are in effect much the same. Brookfield (1990) explains that critical reflection involves three phases:

1. Identifying the assumptions (“those taken-for-granted ideas, commonsense beliefs, and self-evident rules of thumb”) that underlie our thoughts and actions;
2. Assessing and scrutinizing the validity of these assumptions in terms of how they relate to our ‘real-life’ experiences and our present context(s);
3. Transforming these assumptions to become more inclusive and integrative, and using this newly - formed knowledge to more appropriately inform our future actions and practices.

It is obvious that there are some strong similarities between critical reflection and an abductive learning approach, but our focus in the LIFE training program is upon setting up a learning environment for the participant groups. On the whole, it seems that much use of critical reflection is directed at *individual* awareness. In the LIFE courses, we want to encourage participants to look at the aims, approaches, and constraints agencies of various kinds apply in helping multi-challenged families *in the light* of families' needs. In effect a somewhat “cooler” approach that devotes less attention to the individual social workers' relations with families. It has to be admitted that this distinction cannot be very hard and fast, and perhaps only is to be regarded as a nuance. And it would be undesirable to prohibit use of a critical reflection approach if course leaders have substantial experience of using it. The limitations of time available will restrict very thorough use of critical reflection as an approach in the LIFE training program.

2.3 Content and basic components of the Pilot Training Program

The content of the training program is related to the knowledge base and approach outlined in the baseline study, knowledge base papers, and Intellectual Outputs 1 and 2.

Participants are expected to develop innovative approaches and devices in their work with *the individual families*. Partner organisations and field agencies will have to give their consent to participants' following the training program, but they will not have direct influence on any of the working methods and approaches proposed by participants. It should be noted that the focus in LIFE is upon low-level innovations that can benefit particular families; the intention is not to work toward sweeping changes and reorganisations, though changes and organisational issues will inevitably be part of the discussions that emerge. Working toward low-level innovations that are useful for families involves the following principles:

The training program consists of four different components:

1. An introduction to innovation theory and practice (Learning, Learning organizations, Knowledge production, expertise and reflection, the relation between scientific/ knowledge based structuring and reflection, social workers background and competence lifeworld, citizens voice and monitoring practices).
2. Reflection in groups.
3. Individual work with practice-based innovations.
4. A written presentation from each participant/country group.

The training program is organized in two international meetings, one at the beginning and one at the end of the training program, in which participants from all the five partner countries will work together, and interim national activities. The activities covers a total of 160 hours of work for each participant divided in 60 hours for the transnational meetings and 100 hours of work in each country.

2.4 The training program – transnational and national activities

In this section the transnational and the different national training programs are presented in condensed form.

The transnational part of the training program were organized in two occasions, one week at the start of the program and one in the end. National project teams and participants where participating at both events. The first week started with a presentation of the program, and practical issues, as well as theoretical themes and lectures, as research on multi-challenged families and Social Work, innovations and evaluation. The week also comprised group work and round table discussions. Learning materials consisted of articles, reports and power point presentations.

The second transnational week, i.e. after the activities in each country, where more focused on presentations and discussions of experiences from the national training programs and innovations in Social Work with multi-challenged families. Topics covered the organization and experiences of the national training programs, innovations, the role of the social worker, skills, support, organizational policies and practices and implications for training and education. Participants from each country presented their experiences and much of the time was organized in round table discussions.

Transnational part of the training program

First transnational training week, early 2018 , Project teams and participators from the different countries	
Introduction	Practical arrangements, presentation, introduction
Themes	<p>Theme: Innovating with multi-challenged families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the practice experiences/actual challenges of multi-challenged families' situation in the partner countries/organizations? • What does research tell us about the situation for families with multiple challenges? The importance of an everyday life perspective, what do we mean by this? • National groups discuss the challenges families face. Do existing approaches and methods help? What are the gaps in knowledge and in services for the families about? <p>Theme: Innovating with multi-challenged families</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation: what competence and skills are required for work with multi-challenged families? What do we mean by innovation? • Practice knowledge and Research knowledge in work with multi-challenged families. <p>Theme: Innovation approaches and challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation research and challenges in partner countries. <p>Theme: Evaluation and Research</p>
Activities	<p>Lectures</p> <p>Group work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups discuss the challenges families face. • Do existing approaches and methods help? • What are the gaps in knowledge about, and gaps in services for the families? • National groups discuss need for new approaches to multi-challenged families. <p>Round table discussions</p> <p>Presentations</p>
Materials	Presentations based on templates from participating partners. Articles, power point presentations etc.

Final transnational training week, late 2018, Project teams and participators from the different countries	
Introduction	Practical arrangements, presentation, introduction
Themes	<p>Themes focusing on experiences from the national training programs and micro innovations in social work with MCF</p> <p><i>National training programs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organization of the training program • theoretical input and study materials • meetings and exchange with others • support • supervision • learning and outcomes <p><i>Social work with MCF</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges in social work with MCF • Competencies and skills needed <p><i>Micro innovations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to identify micro innovations to work with • Challenges to work with micro innovations • The role of social worker in relation to work with MCF and micro innovations <p>Themes focusing on the conditions for working with micro innovations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors that facilitate and hinder the work with micro innovations. • What support and skills is needed in the work with MCF and micro innovations? • Work with micro innovations in relation to organizational policies and practices • Implications for training and education.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports by the individual partners on national training programs, learning and micro innovations in social work with MCF based on the participators reports (template). • Round table presentations and discussions focusing on experiences from the national training programs and learning. Mixed seminary groups from participating countries. • In group sum up from round table discussions focusing on experiences from the national training programs, learning and micro innovations in social work with MCF. Mixed seminary groups from participating countries. • Round table presentations and discussions focusing on skills, training, organizational factors and policy in social work with MCF. Small mixed groups from participating countries. • Conclusions in the light of the theoretical starting points: MCF, innovation, the knowledge triangle and abductive learning etc. • Reflections and evaluation of the training program.
Materials	Presentations based on templates from participating partners.

Regarding the national training programs, there are great similarities but also some differences. The similarities include training on putting the families' situation in focus and being able to develop innovations in order to give better support to the clients. In this context, theory, tools and various methods are applied, as well as dialogue, reflection and feedback from the project teams. What differs is the number of meetings and if the focus is on individual families, team work or on the organization of social work. Also the number of researchers who participated and what role they have had varied to some extent.

National parts of the training programs – February to October 2018

	Italy	Norway	Portugal	Slovenia	Sweden
Local curriculum aims/goals	Acquire tools (Triangle, Ecomaps, micro-planning grid) and methodologies able to support work with MCF.	Develop family centered innovations for child protection users	Improve working model centered on the clients/family through intervention in multidisciplinary teams, to involve, strengthen and empower MCF.	Support SWs who collaborate with MCF for reflexive use and development of knowledge and self-confidence. Implement innovations for SWs working with MCF.	Develop skills for innovations in social work with MCF.
Content / themes	Methods and tools to analyze and design interventions with families. Theoretical and methodological tools connect to the Italian national program P.I.P.P.I.	Protection. The quality of SW. SW and the approach to the families is the key issue. Re-framing. How to communicate with and involve families and to design help for them.	Innovation theory and practice. Theory of resilience, communication, literacy in inter professional practice, action-research, and co-construction. Relational skills, the attitude of the intervener.	Support, reflection and implementation of innovative SW with MCF. Working relationship of co-creation. Solution focused approach with families/children in community/at home. Narrative approach. Gestalt approach in working with children.	Research on SW with MCF, Learning and innovations in working life, case management, systemic perspective. Interpretation of collected material. Implications and applications.
Course design: lectures, group exercises, discussion, reflection	Lecture on tools for innovation. Discussions. Monitoring and reflection on work with MCF. Exercises. Preparation for TN meeting.	Reflection in group, support from project staff, ongoing support from two dedicated staff	Meetings with project team. Feedback. Sessions with Stakeholders and professors from Universities. Supervision.	Short lectures, discussions, experiential workshops, reflections about each project SWs projects. Homework after each meeting.	Lectures, group discussions, presentations and reflection on application of tasks in work with innovations. Work with TN report.
Participation of teachers, facilitators and supervisors	1 researcher from Padua University, project team.	Support from project team, stakeholders and guest lecturers.	Reflection Group, Social Workers, MCF.	2 researchers from Faculty of Social Work, project team.	1 professor from Linköping University, project team.
Number of meetings	7 days	2 events, 3-day sessions.	5 Sessions with Stakeholders. 36 meetings with SW.	10 half-day meetings.	7 half-day meetings.
Instructions and tasks for participants	How to use tools with clients. Analysis of situations, resources, needs and to define objectives and actions.	Group developed own dialogue, interchange and infrastructure.	Learning through reflection on practices with MCF, peers and stakeholders, abductive thinking, reflexivity, innovation in daily work.	Homework after each meeting, reading texts and recording meetings with families with pre-prepared forms.	Instructions for tasks, homework and critical reflection for each theme in the local training program.
Learning materials and tools	Selection of chapters in the handbook of the P.I.P.P.I. program.	Intellectual products, background study and selected literature	Articles, theses. Evaluation tools, template report.	Articles, book, power point presentations, demonstrations of new approaches.	Texts, power point presentations.
Abductive learning and work with micro innovations	Tools were used for inference from observation and experience during the interaction with families in creation of meaning and understanding of situations.	Strict abductive approach, minimal input from project staff. Encourage contact and dialogue with users-	Micro innovations, holistic, understanding of complex systems. Cooperating with stakeholders, building alliances and networks. Putting the family in the center for long term solutions.	Reflexive learning as starting point for the training program and each meeting.	Participants defined their own cases for innovation. Application of theory for learning, innovation and social work. Analysis of factors for change.
Feedback to participants e.g. regarding	Periodically researchers and participants met in order to discuss,	Periodically researchers and participants met in order to discuss,	Templates to help participants to work and (re)think. Important to invest in	Continuous support from project team. Professors from FSW read and gave	Written feedback on texts/templates from project team,

tasks and individual templates	reflect and support the innovations and the relation between practice and theories.	reflect and support the innovations and the relation between practice and theories.	training concepts and reference theories before the development of micro innovations.	written feedback for participants. Feedback on each meeting and final assignments.	discussions in group.
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2.5 The practice-based innovations implemented by the partners in the training program

In this section we will present a condensed presentation of the innovations carried out by the different partners in the training program based on templates prepared by the partners at the end of the training program. For analytical reasons, we have tried to differentiate the different levels even if social work involves linking activities at different levels. The levels are: Clients/families, Social workers and Group/team.

Given the cultural and structural differences that exist for the partners in LIFE, it is still possible to see some aspects regarding innovations at the client/family level that are common.

Innovations in relation to the Client/family level

- To consider the family as a whole.
- Focusing on relationships in the family.
- Not to have preconceived notions about what problems the family has or what help is needed.
- The ambition to involve families in solutions and to strive to empower families.
- Dialogue with and involving family in the planning of support and help.
- To use different tools, such as assessment tools.
- Strengthening the family's network and reducing the number of contacts with professionals.

Innovations in relation to the role of Social Worker

- To embrace a learning perspective.
- To have an open mind, to be critical and creative, and to think outside the box.
- To test new ways to work specifically in the family context.
- Involve the professional system.
- To know and be able to apply theoretical perspectives to social work.

Innovations in relation to the Group/team level

- To work with multidisciplinary/-professional teams around the families.
- To have a dialogue with colleagues about the work with the families and to share experiences.
- To reflect on support and implementation and being able to work with common instruments for assessment.

The similarities found in the material can be explained in different ways. One possible explanation is that the challenges and demands social workers face in meeting multi-challenged families are relatively invariant, despite the fact that cultural and structural differences exist. Another similarity is that multi-professional teams is emphasized in social work with multi-challenged families and the requirement this places on management and the organization. If this is true, it supports the interpretation that there would be generic competences involved in working with innovations with multi-challenged families. An alternative interpretation may be that the LIFE training program and the forms of collaboration that have been applied in LIFE in some way align the participants and their interpretations of the target group and how to work with them. However, it is our opinion that what is presented in the templates are characterized by more similarities than differences.

Investing in empowerment of clients means to find strengths in capabilities and potentialities, reducing costs in social support services and health and gaining benefits. This requires that all actors involved should be open to new ideas and sensitivity and responsiveness and to maintain

transparency in the process of collaboration with families in order to empower the extended family system/private network. The social workers need a flexible working environment, acquiring new skills, self-reflection and feedback.

2.6 Key skills among practitioners and managers for developing innovations with multi-challenged families

Based on the presentation of practice based innovations above, some preliminary characteristics regarding key skills for developing innovations with multi-challenged families can be formulated.

Social workers need to be able to communicate with clients in such a way that they can acquire in-depth knowledge about the families' situation in general, understand the families' situation and needs, to value the families' perceptions and combine this with good system competence. Furthermore, social workers need to understand innovation in social work in a family environment and identifying areas with potential for change in the family situation and prioritizing interventions accordingly by being proactive rather than reactive. Generic skills include reflection on theory and practice, problem solving, teamwork and communication. Being able to work in a multi-professional team is also an asset.

Based on this knowledge social workers need to be able to design the best support for the family based on the current situation and to support empowerment and strengthen the clients' natural networks. This means having good communication skills, being creative, critical thinking, theoretical knowledge and the ability to reflect and an abductive approach.

Managers need to be able to support the work and give room for action to social workers, to support reflection and learning and to facilitate collaboration with other organizations that the family and social workers encounter.

Service is not to be based on taken for granted assumptions or how social work is traditionally conducted and the social worker should be able to combine practical help with coordination and work with network and other professions.

2.7 Promoting and impeding factors in work with practice-based innovations

In this section we will present some conclusions on promoting and impeding factors for work with practice-based innovations in LIFE based on the perceptions of the participants.

Promoting and impeding factors in work with practice-based innovations

	Promoting factors	Impeding factors
Professional level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal engagement and motivation of SWs, openness for learning, orientation for co-creative ways of collaborating with families. • Promotion of a culture of innovation. • Availability of adequate time. • Construction of a less formal setting that favors more dialogue and listening. • Availability of tools to give voice to clients. • Thematic areas to be explored during interviews/dialog. • To develop a more in-depth knowledge of the family situation. • To agree with the family on tasks and responsibilities. • To support the relationship among services and families. • To have a shared guide among operators for the assessment of the situation. • Possibility for the tools to be used by different operators (e.g. social worker, educator, psychologist, health care). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low professional self-confidence of SW. • SW are overburdened. • The need to intervene in emergency situations. • SWs do not record meetings with families in a proper way. • The Knowledge Triangle is not properly powered and supported.
Organizational and Structural level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A culture of innovation. • Support from management to SWs. • Regular meetings where SWs could reflect on the processes of collaboration with families. • Feedback to SWs on the innovation process. • Structure of meetings. • Cross-sectorial collaboration and networking, exchange of ideas and triggering of collaboration potentials. • Support structures such as continuous training and workshops. • A good network of institutional and private partners, opportunities for exchange and dissemination of practices. • A small town provides close contact between SWs and management, making it easy to implement effective and innovative practices. • Clear goals and structure of the program. • Linking innovations to national guidelines. • Interim and final evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureaucracy. • Standards, norms and routines that hinder innovation. • Management does not support innovation. • Split up of social work, e.g. child interviews is prohibited for SWs. • SWs and other professionals use different approaches when collaborating with families (co-creative vs. authoritarian approach). This place only the single person at the center of the project and not the whole family. • Other organizations, in particular in the healthcare field, often has objectives that are different from the Social Services'. • Reorganization which bring more pressure and more procedural work within for SWs.
Transnational development program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of tools and methodologies that were useful in order to integrate with families. • Use protocols of collaboration. • Collaboration for guidance of the process and to sustain interaction. • Support to management to create a culture of innovation. • Guidance of theories and critical discussions. • To involve the stakeholders from the beginning of the project. • Stakeholders and management can reduce organizational obstacles, make sure that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear idea on the international level about what to implement on national level. • A clearer common structure and model is needed for implementing the international program. • To involve stakeholders and management in planning and developing new practices and structural changes you have to have support in research and how the new way of working is better from others and what financial consequences it will bring. • Stakeholders and management need to understand the aims, design and theoretical starting points for

	participants have sufficient time and resources, help in building networks and link different professions and sectors.	the project and to be able to support the participants and the national project team.
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If we try to interpret the outcome of the practice-based innovations in LIFE in order to describe promoting and impeding factors, some general conclusions can be drawn.

As far as the social workers are concerned, it is necessary that they are able to reflect and critically examine their professional role and how to perceive social problems, that they are able to see the whole in a family or clients' situation and to take the family/client's point of view and to be able to test unique solutions. In this context, a professional identity that limits the possibilities for this is an impeding factor.

Managers need to be able to support an innovative way of working, offer room for maneuver, support reflection and provide the opportunity to work in multi-professional teams. If leadership fails to do this it is an impeding factor.

At organizational and structural level, all factors that limits innovative work or lead to fragmentation of support are barriers. Especially when social workers and managers who meet multi-challenged families are confronted with other organizations with other objectives but who still affect the lives of the families, this can constitute an obstacle. Cooperation between professionals can make the support system more effective. One aim for the professional systems should be to reduce the number of professional contacts that the families have. The fact that the educational systems generally do not train future social workers to work with innovations or with the special challenges that the meeting with multi-challenged families entails this also constitutes an obstacle.

3. Management Guidelines

Based on the presentation of experiences and results from the LIFE project, we want to conclude with some key recommendations for managers and social workers who want to work with innovations for development of social work with multi-challenged families. These recommendations are presented in four parts, namely: To organize for innovations in social work, The interaction between research, practice and education (the knowledge triangle), To develop and implement training/education programs for innovations in social work and Tools and materials for developing social work with multi-challenged families.

To organize for innovations and development in social work with multi-challenged families

- Involve management and stakeholders from the start of the project.
- Stakeholders and management can reduce organizational obstacles, make sure that participants have sufficient time and resources, help in building networks and link to different professions and sectors.
- If possible link innovations to national guidelines.
- Create a network of partners for exchange and dissemination.
- Organize cross-sectorial collaboration and networking, exchange of ideas and triggering of collaboration potentials.
- Map and describe other activities or organizations who are involved in the intervention system for multi-challenged families. Consider that other organizations often has objectives that differ from the social services'.
- Map "bureaucratic" obstacles and factors that hinder the development and testing of innovations.
- Create a culture of innovation.

- Have a long-term perspective on implementation of innovations so that good results are utilized after the project.
- Design management support for development and testing of innovations.
- Design support also for managers of the project.
- Support continuous learning and reflection i.e. in training programs, workshops, seminars, web-based platforms etc.
- Adoption of a case management approach with management responsibility being devolved to case managers.
- Creation of a multi-disciplinary approach in which individual professionals work together under the direction of the case manager.
- Creation of space and time within caseloads for professionals concerned to intervene effectively and intensively with the families.

Interaction between research, practice and education (the knowledge triangle)

- Share research-based knowledge of multi-challenged families' needs and living conditions and social interventions aimed at the target group.
- Relate the research-based knowledge to local conditions regarding: a) practice, b) practice based knowledge and c) knowledge in training and education. Are there specific conditions in your organization, context and educational system that you must take into account?
- Use the conclusions from above as a starting point in your Training program. Analyze how you work with multi-challenged families at present and why? What are the gaps between the current situation and a desirable state? Which skills, competencies and innovations is needed to fill the gap?

To develop and implement training / education programs for innovation in social work multi-challenged families

- Formulate clear goals for the training program and anchor it at all levels of the organization.
- Define responsibilities for those who are to lead and participate in the training program.
- Organize management and design of the program so that it is optimal for the local context.
- Select a group of social workers with high motivation and relevant experiences.
- Free up time for management and social workers' to participate in the program.
- Create a local curricula for the training program specifying: goals, content and themes.
- Organize theoretical input and tools for assessment and follow-up of innovations.
- Design course activities so that there is a good balance between lectures, group work, exercises, reflection, collection of information, analysis, formulating and testing of innovations.
- Organize instructions and tasks for participants, learning materials and tools.
- Create a local project team of teachers, facilitators and supervisors.
- Organize for interim and final evaluation of the program.

Suggested tools and materials for developing social work with multi-challenged families

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Attachment

Assessment tool for innovation work with multi challenged families																																																					
Step I Get aware!																																																					
Introduction	<p>Analyzing the everyday life of multi challenged family as the family and various professionals working with them perceive it, and reflection on one`s own practice is the first step into the innovation process. It is therefore very important to adopt users` perspectives in order to co create new solutions. That will enhance your awareness about the innovation you want to achieve, and it will be a preparation for a detailed strategy plan for development and implementation of the new solution (Part II).</p> <p>We kindly ask you to answer following questions! You can freely chose only some of the items, or own items if you deem them as appropriate in your cultural context!</p>																																																				
Questions	<p>1. Identify the various issues which lead you to see the family as ‘multi challenged’?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Child care and protection issues <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health issues <input type="checkbox"/> Low income <input type="checkbox"/> Low level of educational attainment <input type="checkbox"/> Learning/physical disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Marital conflict <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please elaborate) <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Please elaborate on your answer!</p> <p>2. Identify the impact the various issues you mentioned above have on the family situation (set a cross)?</p> <table style="margin-left: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">Low impact</th> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">High impact</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">1</th> <th style="text-align: center;">2</th> <th style="text-align: center;">3</th> <th style="text-align: center;">4</th> <th style="text-align: center;">5</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Child care and protection issues</td> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Mental health issues</td> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Low income</td> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Low level of educational attainment</td> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Learning/physical disabilities</td> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Marital conflict</td> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">Other (Please elaborate)</td> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Please elaborate on your answer!</p> <p>3. Identify other professionals and disciplines that are working with the family!</p> <p>4. Reflect on the extent to which there is a holistic (i.e. joint planning of strategy and interventions of the different disciplines) or case management approach (i.e. cross disciplinary management of the case)!</p> <p>5. Exactly which area with potential for change have you identified in collaboration with multi challenged family? (description of a challenge/unmet need you want to address)</p> <p>6. Exactly which solution do you and multi challenged family suggest in order to meet the challenge you describe? (description of the product/method/new organization/service etc.)</p> <p>7. Why do you think you will be able to implement the innovation and why are you doing that? (Competence, motivation, network,... etc.)</p> <p>Perhaps you can`t answer all questions? Don`t worry! Few can fully answer all questions. The important thing is to reflect on and be aware of aspects you need to work with, as well as how you can continue to work with them. You are in a good path if you do that. We advise you to make some additional questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why can`t I answer? What do I need to do in order to answer the question? Talk with your friends, colleagues, other resource individuals! Get some advice! Think more, collect more information! 		Low impact		High impact		1	2	3	4	5	Child care and protection issues	_____					Mental health issues	_____					Low income	_____					Low level of educational attainment	_____					Learning/physical disabilities	_____					Marital conflict	_____					Other (Please elaborate)	_____				
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Step II Design a strategy!																																																					

<p>Introduction</p>	<p>Having an innovative idea is only a start. There is a lot of work to be done in order to implement a new solution. A new solution is an innovation when multi challenged family use it to cope with their everyday life. The chances of success are higher if you work with a detailed strategy plan. You can use different frames of strategy plan. We will now present a frame that can help you structure your strategy plan. Before you study the frame remember: a good strategy plan is a living plan, it changes underway as the environment changes. We kindly ask you to be as detailed as possible in describing following items:</p>
<p>Questions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summary Give a brief and precise description of the new idea and the strategy for implementation! <i>In your journey towards implementation of the new solution, you will need to inspire, get support and help from many people. Your summary with help you to catch their attention. So, this is important</i> 2. Who is/are the driving force (entrepreneur(s))? <i>Others need to have faith on the new solution but also at the people that will do the work. Share with them competencies you think make you and your partners a good team.</i> 3. Social innovation Describe the new idea you in collaboration with the family have designed! <i>What is the background for the new idea? What is it? Does it have potential for development? How does it fit in the technical, social and cultural context of multi challenged family?</i> 4. Users Exactly who are the users of your solution? <i>Whole family? Children? Parents? Service providers? Why would they use your new solution, how they will be able to use it (costs, availability, distribution, etc.)</i> 5. Product Give a detailed description of the product/method/new organization/service you want to implement? 6. Multi disciplinary approach How do you plan to ensure a holistic approach? Exactly which competence do you need to bring to your team in order to implement the new solution? How do you plan to engage people with necessary competence on board? Identify how the management of the various professionals involved can be brought on board with a multi-disciplinary approach. 7. Organizing Describe how do you plan to organize your innovation process and introduce it in practice? Case management? Describe functions different members of your team will have! Who has the main responsibility? Identify roles for the management of the various professionals involved! 8. Competing solutions Exactly which existing solutions will compete with yours, or you want to replace? Describe parallel or similar solutions that already exist! <i>What do they do? Private or state run? What are their strengths and weaknesses?</i> 9. Implementation Exactly how do you plan to implement the new solution? <i>Describe the strategy for implementation! What kind of space for opportunity do you need and what obstacles may you have to overcome? How do you think your innovation might be introduced in practice?</i> 10. Resources (if you deem it necessary in order to get accept for your innovation) <i>What are the costs? Who will pay? How do you plan to make this work?</i> 11. Sustainability Why and how will your new solution/innovation be used in the longer term? <i>User centered and satisfaction? Quality? Price?</i>
<p>Step III Communicate with the environment!</p>	
<p>Introduction</p>	<p>In your journey towards implementation of the new solution, you will need to inspire, get support and help from many people that hold key resources and decisions. You as a social worker and entrepreneur should be aware of and prepared on how you will communicate your new idea and the strategy plan to different audiences for the proposed innovation (e.g. other professionals, the social worker's own management structure, and the management of the other professional disciplines involved). Your presentation with help you to catch their attention. So, this step is also important!</p>
<p>Questions</p>	<p>In order to make a good presentation you need to reflect on several questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent you are planning to engage the family in devising the innovative solution? - What is important for the stakeholder? - Is the new idea and solution clear enough? - Why would the stakeholder support it? - Is the strategy plan for implementation clear and detailed enough? - Do we as a team have enough competences needed in implementation process? - Who will present and how (Verbal, non-verbal language, method, etc.)