Intellectual Output 1: Comparative Research Report

Project n° 2015-1-IT02-KA201-015383

2017

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union
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Appendix (to be downloaded):

1. EUMOSCHOOL Guidelines for Output 1
2. EUMOSCHOOL – Results of the common international research
3. Desk Researches, questionnaire and analysis per country
   a. Italy
   b. Austria
   c. Hungary
   d. Turkey
   e. Romania
INTRODUCTION

The current Comparative Research Report has been developed as the first Intellectual Output on the framework of the project “EUMOSCHOOL – Emotional Education for Early School Leaving Prevention”, a project funded by the Programme Erasmus Plus – Key Action 2: Strategic Partnership in the field of education (Project n° 2015-1-IT02-KA201-015383).

This output presents an overview on the educational context and systems of the countries involved in the project and a more detailed focus on the schools and teachers’ needs regarding the prevention of Early School Leaving (ESL) and the implementation of emotional education.

Nowadays, the attention towards the inner world of human beings and specifically of our pupils, children and teenagers has been constantly increasing, due to its importance for their life, wellbeing and generally the society of the future. This highlights the relevance of the results of this research, especially in the case of the need of addressing more complex issues by education institutions at every level, giving more opportunity to emotional education in the learning path of each individual.

This Comparative Research Report seeks to clarify the definition of emotional intelligence and emotional education at international level and, in some cases, at the national level of the participating countries (Italy, Romania, Hungary, Turkey and Austria), exploring possible links between the two concepts and their relation towards the early school leaving phenomenon. Analysis of possible existing practices and initiatives focused on emotional intelligence and emotional education are included. The report then focuses on the emotional education in schools of the involved partner countries, analyzing also the needs of the school sector and educational professionals, regarding early school leaving and the promotion of emotional education in schools.
THE PROJECT AND ITS OBJECTIVES

EUMOSCHOOL strongly relates to the European Commission’s, education and vocational training (ET) 2020 key benchmarks for education which includes the headline target to reduce the rate of ESL to less than 10% by 2020. Council recommendations on policies to reduce ESL (European Commission, 2011) and other country specific recommendations identify ESL as a policy priority area for specific Member States, additionally highlighting an urgency to take immediate action.

ESL is closely intertwined with other educational and social issues. Early intervention should also focus on emotional dimensions to ESL such as; mental health, bullying, school climate, family support outreach, substance abuse prevention, and fear of failure/success (European Commission, 2014). EUMOSCHOOL recognizes Member States should promote holistic collaborative practices among teachers as a powerful tool for change, introducing new practices in the school systems (European Commission2012). Furthermore, teachers should have sufficient opportunities to acquire a broad spectrum of teaching practices which correspond to the latest pedagogical research (Barrera-Pedemonte, 2016).

Therefore the most relevant priorities and topics addressed by EUMOSCHOOL are to support; schools to tackle ESL and disadvantage, students of all abilities and strengthen the profile of the teaching professions. This is to be achieved through the development of new innovative curricula, educational methods and the development of training courses which, in the case of EUMOSCHOOL, will be completed through an online resource.

To address these priorities, EUMOSCHOOL is based on the adaptation at European Union (EU) level of the Italian methodology “Didattica delle Emozioni”© (Didactic of Emotions, DoE), developed from 16 years experience and investigation into emotional education. The methodology has been successfully implemented with 3000 teachers, students, parents/tutors in order to improve the wellbeing and transversal key competencies of pupils thus reducing ESL whilst upgrading professional competencies of teachers and staff. EUMOSCHOOL will aim to spread the adapted methodology to a wide range of students, teachers and staff within schools through the piloting and application of emotional education into school curricula.

The 4 specific EUMOSCHOOL objectives are:

- Contribute to effective ESL strategies through the integration of emotional education intervention methodology in school curricula for all students, impacting on the reduction of early school leaving.
- Through emotional education, foster development and assessment of transversal skills and competences among students to favour wellness and diminish emotional discomfort and associated risks.
- Increase professional skills of teachers by equipping them with an accessible ESL intervention methodology utilised through an Online Educational Resource (OER) combined with practical techniques and assessment tools, adapted for classroom learning at any level.
- Support holistic collaborative approaches to teaching through networking and events to promote dialogue with stakeholders in school education across Europe and foster the exchange of good practices to address and support children and young people at risk of ESL and disadvantage.
THE METHODOLOGY APPLIED

The research has been coordinated by Doga Schools (Turkey), which has guided the partnership on the development of the current output.

Following specific guidelines developed by the Output Coordinator (annex 1), the research has been carried out in; Italy, Austria, Hungary, Turkey and Romania and divided into 2 stages:

**a) Desk Research:** partners carried out desk research on the local educational context and system, focusing on the following project topics:

1. *a) Definition of emotional education and emotional intelligence; b) Links between emotional intelligence and emotional education. c) Definition of the terms “ESL” and “school drop-out”.*
2. Identification of links in literature and research between emotional education and ESL.
3. Identification of existing initiatives and practices supporting emotional education in schools (taking into consideration policies or projects already in existence).
4. Information on ESL figures in each country.
5. Summary of any research which explores the possible explanations for ESL.
6. Identifying links between emotional wellbeing and better outcomes in educational performance, (supported by 3 to 5 publications on this issue).
7. Relevant bibliography on ESL and emotional education.

**b) Primary Research:** schools and teachers’ needs analysis regarding the prevention of ESL and emotional education.

In order to develop the tools used to carry out the primary research, the partnership identified 4 main questions;

1. How do teachers conceptualize emotional education?
2. To what extent do teachers think that emotional education is part of their teaching role?
3. How do teachers think they can support children's emotional education?
4. What emotional factors do teachers feel contribute to ESL?

From these 4 main questions, the partnership developed:
- An online questionnaire of 20 questions to be distributed to at least 100 teachers and 6 schools per country.
- Interviews on the main project themes (through either; personal interview, focus groups, VOIP, telephone, or mail exchange) to; teachers, stakeholders, headmasters and professionals on the field of the education (max. 10 per country).

The online questionnaire reached 503 teachers, distributed across the partnership countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N° of teachers reached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total teachers reached online</strong></td>
<td><strong>503</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The questionnaire aimed to define the teachers:

a) understanding and experience of emotional education;
b) implementation and use of emotional education within the classroom;
c) perspective of ESL and the main factors contributing to school drop-out;
d) perspective on the link between ESL and emotional education.

The answers were collected through a Google Form (a summary of all the answers can be seen on the annex of this report).

Partner countries have interviewed a total of 50 professionals working in the field of education, dealing with issues relating to emotional education and ESL:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N° of professionals reached</th>
<th>Profile of the professionals interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Headmasters and school inspectors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teacher of a high school focused on languages and supporting the headmaster for projects of inclusion; Psychologist and coordinator of the Observatory on prevention of ESL of the Regional Education Office in Sicily; Teacher of a VET institution and responsible for the prevention of ESL; Teacher in a kindergarten implementing activities related to emotional education; Vice-president of a third sector association following projects on ESL; Psychotherapist involved in projects on the prevention of ESL; Teachers of high schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Pedagogy-students, school-psychologists, Teachers of several schools (from kindergarten to university), Education/corrective pedagogy assistant (working with disabled children), Head of an association for alternative schools, Teacher trainer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Psychologists / counsellor, teachers of social studies/deputy principals; university professors who train future teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>School department managers, school principals, academics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of professionals reached</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews have been carried out variously through; personal interview, focus groups, VOIP, telephone or e-mail and partners have kept transcripts.
Interview data has been analysed by the partner countries to identify the main themes and sub-themes within the topics of the conducted interviews. The table could be freely adapted according to the outcomes of the interviews, for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN THEME</th>
<th>SUB THEME</th>
<th>WORD/PHRASE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY (see example below)</th>
<th>Quote from the interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMOTIONAL EDUCATION</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Recognizing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(ex.: “It is an ability to recognize, understand and manage our own emotions.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Managing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Education</td>
<td>See if the answers fit the already listed outcomes of the online questionnaire.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roles of the institutions</td>
<td>Give social awareness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(ex. “Schools can play a pivotal role in providing students with the opportunity to gain greater social and emotional awareness and to practice interpersonal skills as they learn and grow.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Give emotional awareness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No role</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“Schools has no roles.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING</td>
<td>Main Factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link between Early School Leaving &amp; Emotional Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data was collated by Doga Schools, to produce a final version of this output integrating the information provided by the partners.
The research structure has followed well-defined steps. Due to the difficulty in finding specific national literature on emotional intelligence and emotional education (the availability of the sources is different according to the country), the partnership decided to work together on international literature related to the two main concepts specified above.

A general overview is provided to give clarity on the definitions of the terms at the core of the project, exploring possible links within literature to ESL and student performance, collected through the desk research. Following this introduction, the Comparative Research Report has been divided into two topics:

1) Emotional education in schools: existing practices

2) ESL: an overview of the phenomenon

Both sections utilise data from the desk and primary research, to enable comparisons between the countries involved.

### Comparative Research Report structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the Session</th>
<th>General Overview: definition of terms, key studies and practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main topics/ questions from Desk research used for this part of the Comparative report</td>
<td>A) Define emotional education and emotional intelligence; B) Explore links between emotional intelligence and emotional education. C) Define the terms “ESL” and “School Drop-out”. Identify any links in literature/research between emotional education and ESL Links between emotional wellbeing and better outcomes in educational performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the Session</th>
<th>Emotional Education in Schools: existing practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main topics/ questions of Desk/ Primary research used to analyze the data collected</td>
<td>What already exists to support emotional education in schools (taking into consideration policies or project already in existence)? How do teachers conceptualize emotional education? To what extent do teachers think that emotional education is part of their teaching role? How do teachers think they can support children's emotional education?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the Session</th>
<th>Early School Leaving: an overview of the phenomenon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main topics / questions of Desk/ Primary research used to analyze the data collected</td>
<td>Information on ESL figures in each country. Summaries of research which explore possible explanations for ESL. What emotional factors do teachers feel contribute to ESL?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A. Definition of emotional intelligence and emotional education

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a term with wide-ranging meaning. The essence of it can be summarised in ‘the ability to observe the emotions of oneself and others while utilising these observations in the direction of one's behaviour and thinking’ (Salovey & Mayer, 1989). The term refers to non-cognitive skills, which contrasts the typically assessed cognitive skills such as literacy and numeracy. Non-cognitive skills can be thought of as a set of attitudes and behaviours that enable individuals to successfully navigate through academic and professional situations, such as; motivation, perseverance, self-control and collaboration skills. The Economic Policy Institute includes; critical thinking, problem solving, emotional health, social skills, work ethic and community responsibility (García, 2014). It is worth noting that the Partnership for 21st Century Learning considers critical thinking and collaboration as two key skills needed to thrive in today’s world (2007). Goleman’s contribution to the definition of EI includes five fundamental competences and qualities; self-awareness: knowledge and comprehension of own emotions, self-regulation: ability to deal with own emotions, motivation: commitment, initiative, etc, empathy: capacity to understand others’ emotions; 5) social skills1.

EI poses different, localised interpretation in the stakeholders’ countries. In Hungary, there is a definite focus on self-awareness and self-confidence, both aspects identified as central to enable the re-integration of early school leavers into the school system. This seems to be aligned with the new compulsory curriculum on Ethics (National Curriculum-Hungary, 2010) which includes aspects of EI such as values, morals, connection to others, ethical choices. Programmes focusing on gifted children also include aspects of EI, though there are no indications as to which specific aspects they are targeting.

A more definite approach to EI is provided by the Rudolf Steiner/Waldorf schools (Wegweiser Anthroposophie – Allgemeine Anthroposophische Gesellschaft – Landesgesellschaft in Österreich, 2016) in Austria, and around the globe. This pedagogy focuses very much on the holistic development of the person, and therefore aspects of EI and emotional education are intrinsic. The philosophy is to develop knowledge, skills but also feelings, as well as creative and artistic skills. The state system is particularly interested in EI for preventative healthcare. With a focus on health promotion and the improvement of self-esteem, the aim is to reduce school dropout. Well-being involves the development of self-esteem, the ability to contribute positively and healthy social relationships.

The Turkish point of view looks at elements of various approaches to EI, which tend to complement each other. Salover and Mayer consider EI as the including skills contributing to the recognition and expression of emotions, handling of emotions and use of emotions (1989). EI can also be seen as a set of skills and abilities enabling individuals to deal with daily needs, an essential component of human personal and social lives. (Bar-on et al, 2005). The research undertaken within Turkey shows that approaches of Salover, Mayer (1989) and Goleman (1996) contain references to positive approaches, mindfulness, resilience, inclusion and caring communities. These approaches then lead to skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (similar to the ethical choices mentioned above). In addition, terms such as self-awareness and self-management resonate well, along the line of the approach taken in Hungary.

The approach taken in Romania appears to address physical violence, expressed as actual or perceived violence, bullying and humiliation (e.g. children excluding peers from play). The implicit understanding is that such situations have a negative impact on children, and that teachers should not only be made aware of it, they should also be in a position to prevent and address it.

1 Another reference is possible to add to this term is what D. Servan-Schreiber has affirmed: a person’s social success is not determined as much by intellect, but rather by the ability to communicate with others, to value the social and emotional situations, to control own emotions, to not be driven by anger, etc. The set of these capacities is called “emotional intelligence” (cited in Varani, A. 2000, Emozioni, Apprendimento e Ipermedialità, Psicologia e Scuola n. 98).
In Italy, EI is interpreted based on the definitions from international research, and is similar to other partnership countries. Although there does not seem to be a full agreement on the definition of EI, there is no real disagreement either. Rather than opposing definitions, EI seems to elicit input in varying degrees, as the following concentric circle shows:

**Figure 1:** Illustrates the common terms and labels used within EI across partnership countries. The greater the frequency of the terms being used the closer to the centre. Skills are seen as contributing towards positive attitudes (green) and as preventing negative attitudes (red). Although the definition for EI varies, there is a common core understanding around self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence.

Based on the above, and assuming that the definition for EI, although dependent on context and situation is nonetheless based on a common set of complementary denominators, a more precise picture emerges for the definition of **Emotional Education** (EE). This can be identified as a transformative and evidence-based educational process to deliver competencies such as recognising and managing emotions, developing caring attitudes for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and behaving constructively and ethically. These competencies allow children to manage their emotions, develop and maintain friendships. In addition, EE helps to prevent bullying and violence and, in later life, to prevent drug and alcohol addiction (Social Emotional Learning Alliance for Massachusetts, 2016).

The concept of EE is also termed “social-emotional learning”, the most common term used in scientific literature. Social emotional learning is defined as the “process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (Collaboration for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2010).

EE gives children the tools and instruments to identify and manage emotions, so that they are able to recognise where their emotions come from and what impact they may have on themselves and on others, and to promote empathy. This includes the ability to recognise physical symptoms caused by specific emotions (e.g. butterflies in the stomach, tense shoulders, etc.). The significance of this concept summarised as; “learning how to read ourselves and the reactions of others, is as important as learning how to read words and numbers” (Cohen, 2001).
Terms closely related to EE and related skills:

The concept of EE is referred to alongside other terms that can provide additional perspectives. Specifically, there are many references in literature about terms and concepts related to the skills that EE should provide. This provides a well-defined list of competencies and skills connected to EE:

1. **Social Emotional Learning and related skills:** The competencies attained by effective social-emotional learning programming include:
   - recognizing and managing our emotions
   - developing caring and concern for others
   - establishing positive relationships
   - making responsible decisions
   - handling challenging situations constructively and ethically

   (Horizons K-8 School, 2015)

   These competencies allow “children to calm themselves when angry, make long-lasting friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices” (Social Emotional Learning Alliance for Massachusetts, 2016). This makes students “learn better in a positive and safe school” (Ibidem, 2016).

2. **Non-cognitive skills:** they are “patterns of thought, feelings and behavior” (Borghans et al. 2008) of individuals that may continue to develop throughout their lives (Bloom, 1964), and that play some role in the education process” [...]. "These skills encompass those traits that are not directly represented by cognitive skills or by formal conceptual understanding, but instead by socio-emotional or behavioral characteristics that are not fixed traits of the personality, and that are linked to the educational process, either by being nurtured in the school years or by contributing to the development of cognitive skills in those years (or both)” (Garcia, 2014).

   Among the non-cognitive skills that Rothstein, Jacobsen, & Wilder (2008) have listed, there are: work ethic, community responsibility, problem solving/social/critical thinking skills, emotional health, combined with public education objectives. Pianta and colleagues’ contribution (Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early, 2005) identified further items involved in the development of personal relationships relating to pupils and teachers such as open communication, affection, closeness, self-control, and regulation. In addition, Garcia (2014) suggests the importance of persistence, academic confidence, teamwork, organizational skills, creativity, and communication skills. She titles this list ‘the education policy list of noncognitive skills’ ². A holistic perspective highlights that learning is a continuous interaction between cognitive and other skills and competences, and changes are unlikely to happen without this interaction (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000).

3. The 16 “habits of mind” described by Costa and Kallick (Artcostacentre.com 2016) as defining the disposition toward “behaving intelligently when confronted with problems, the answers to which are not immediately known” include, among others:
   - Persisting
   - Managing impulsivity
   - Listening with understanding and empathy
   - Taking responsible risks
   - Finding humor

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² Further information about noncognitive skills is given by Gutman & Schoon: “The term ‘non-cognitive skills’ refers to a set of attitudes, behaviours, and strategies that are thought to underpin success in school and at work, such as motivation, perseverance, and self-control. They are usually contrasted with the ‘hard skills’ of cognitive ability in areas such as literacy and numeracy, which are measured by academic tests. Non-cognitive skills are increasingly considered to be as important as—or even more important than—cognitive skills or IQ in determining academic and employment outcomes”(Gutman & Schoon, 2013, The impact of non-cognitive skills on outcomes for young people, Institute of Education, p. 3).
4. **Soft skills** are cross-cutting and relate to personal competences (confidence, discipline, self-management) and social competences (teamwork, communication, emotional intelligence) (European Commission, 2015), here EI is considered a social competence.

5. **Rational emotive education** seems to be informed more by therapists' work (Costa & Kallick, 2000).

**Links between Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Education**

The guiding question behind the establishment of a link between EI and education is: how can pupils learn more effectively? This question matters for ethical, deontological and pragmatic reasons. Children are being educated with the aim of developing responsible, contributing citizens. Based on the understanding that supporting social and emotional development improves educational performance; this should be a high priority for the educational mission of schools. Emotional education is also linked to non-academic outcomes and preventative measures, such as drug prevention, violence prevention or citizenship.

As emotions can improve or hinder the learning process, in **Austria** there are recommendations to include emotional education in the national curriculum as a compulsory subject (Bildungsbereiche im Kindergarten | Gesundheitsportal, 2016). The aim is to learn how to recognise, express and manage emotions, how to distinguish between good and bad and ethical and unethical choices, how to take good decisions, how to behave responsibly and how to develop positive relationships. In order to achieve this, the need to train teachers and instructors has been recognised and approached, but not addressed. In fact, local research recommends that kindergartens should start teaching a curriculum on emotional and social education, for children to learn to take responsibility for their own well-being, to recognise their feelings and needs, and to handle their feelings and their bodies. It is believed that this will increase resilience and well-being which, as previously mentioned, is at the basis of academic success.

The **Turkish** approach appears to be more distributed; several projects are being deployed, looking at the integrative and multidisciplinary process of allowing pupils to develop inner (i.e. self-esteem) and interpersonal skills in social, emotional and academic domains. The Ministry of Education (Mamak MEB Gov, 2013) supports the emotional and social development of children, defining it as the process in which skills, attitudes and values are learned, in order to gain social and emotional competencies.

A recent study found no relationship between emotional learning and academic results in university students, although there was a definite relationship found in studies with pre-university pupils (Akcaalan 2016). Starting with the importance of the teacher role, the studies focused on five variables: attitudes toward school, sense of belonging, self-efficacy in mathematics, motivation for mathematics, attitudes towards learning outcomes and learning activities. The goal was to allow children to enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behaving to achieve important life tasks.

Several other projects have been run in **Turkey**, both by the Ministry of Education and by local authorities. Interestingly, similar to findings in Austria, the Ministry of Education is also involved in a project focusing on 3-4 year old children (Mamak MEB Gov, 2013). The specific curriculum covers emotional, cognitive, language and social developments.

As part of a common vision around EI and EE, several localised projects (1) Scuola secondaria di primo grado “C. Nivola” Capoterra, Progetto “Educare all'affettività”, 2015/2016; 2) I.C.S., Villasimius (CA) Disegnare le emozioni. Progetto di educazione all' affettività, 2005/06; 3) Scuola primaria “I. Calvino” in Vignola (MO), “Vogliamoci bene!”. 4) I.C.S. “ C. Tura” – Pontelagoscuro (FE), Scuola d'infanzia Statale “ Villaggio Ina”, Progetto: le emozioni; 5) Gentile 2010) have been deployed in **Italy**. As a common denominator, they all aim to develop those skills necessary for children to develop self-awareness and manage relationships with others. At an emotional level, this involves the ability to motivate themselves, to deal with stress and other emotions, to recognise ethical issues, to be able to relate to others and collaborate. At a meta-cognitive level, this involves the ability to identify difficult situations, to be able to observe strategies and to create their own strategies in order to successfully address specific situations e.g. when and how to get support. At the basis of these skills, importance is placed on an open and direct communication channel with teachers, as well as the promotion of
self-esteem and self-awareness.

Although specific links between EE and EI are not commonly listed in Hungary, they implicitly evolve around the key issue of ESL. Programmes are aimed at tackling the causes for ESL; lack of motivation, learning difficulties, bad behaviour, and cultural context. This is predominantly delivered through after-school programmes, which are individually structured and organised. Similarly, in Romania teachers prefer programmes aimed at improving their classroom practices, in order to improve academic outcomes.

Based on the above, a picture emerges in which a multi-disciplinary approach to support EE through pedagogical and methodological approaches, as opposed to a separate curricular unit, enables issues to be addressed across the school curriculum, both at emotional but also at a meta-cognitive level. This approach prompts a re-think of common school practices, starting from teacher training to the assessment of the learning outcomes.
DEFINITION OF THE TERMS “EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING” AND “SCHOOL DROP-OUT”

There are various internationally used terms and definitions around Early School Leavers (ESL) and School Drop-outs (SDO). Even within the European Union, member states define ESL differently: leaving education and training before the end of compulsory schooling, before reaching a minimum qualification or before completing upper secondary education.

One of the more recent definitions is that early school leavers “are defined as persons aged 18 to 24 fulfilling the following two conditions: (1) the highest level of education or training attained is ISCED 0, 1, 2 or 3c short, (2) no education or training has been received in the four weeks preceding the survey.” (European Commission, 2013).

A useful overview and distinction is given by Jónasson and Blöndal (2005):

- School leavers (leave school with basic graduation only)
- Dropout (leave school with no graduation)
- Stop-out (leave school and come back later)
- Non-starters (never start school)

For the purpose of this comparative research, despite small variations across the surveyed countries, the commonly accepted definition for ESL aligns with that agreed by EU Education Ministers in 2003, and which is at the basis of the EC document in 2013 (European Commission, 2013): early school leavers are people aged 18-24 who have completed only lower secondary education or less and are no longer in education or training (European Commission, 2011).

In Hungary, ESL numbers increase within ethnic groups, but gender and social class also play an important role. Across the 28 EU member states, 12.4% of males and 9.5% of females were recorded as ESL. However, in some nations this gender difference is the opposite, e.g. Turkey recorded 35% of male ESL, and 37.6 % of female ESL (Eurostat, 2016).

There are differences across countries regarding the age for compulsory education, as shown in table 1, below. Technically this presents a statistical challenge, as young people leaving compulsory education will not be included in ESL figures. Based on the table below, the time passing between finishing compulsory education and being included in ESL figures is some sort of ‘statistical limbo’, and ranges from 4 years in Turkey to 0 years in Romania.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ages for compulsory education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>6-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>6-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(down from 18 after the Education Law 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>6-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>6-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>6-18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: A comparison of compulsory education age across the surveyed countries; young people who have completed basic education but are not 18 are not considered ESL, despite the fact that they may have discontinued education.

Although no actual definition for ‘school dropout’ has been provided in the surveyed countries, the term clearly refers to children in compulsory education age not attending school. One suggestion is given by the definition...
developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): “those students who leave the specified level in the educational system without obtaining a first qualification” (2002).

The difficulty here is to establish the difference between ‘stop out’ e.g. the child does not turn up for school for a prolonged but limited time, or actual ‘drop out’ i.e. a permanent move, the child does not turn up for school until they have reached the age after which it is no longer a legal requirement to do so. In Italy, students who have not obtained a secondary school diploma and are aged between 16 and 18, are considered at risk of drop-out, even though they have completed their compulsory education. However, statistically they are not recorded, as their age group does not cover either categories; they are, therefore, a ‘statistical anomaly’ and this could impact on the reality of devising plans of action to target young people at risk of ESL.

Another challenge is the need to provide accurate and consistent data. For instance, while in Turkey ESL is considered as one of the most serious problems of the education system, it is not clearly defined. Instead, it is considered as absenteeism and record-keeping is inadequate in providing reliable statistics. Long-term absentees are not recorded as ESL.

Finally, one important issue on the definition of the terms related to ESL is highlighted in the OECD document (2002): in fact, defining the phenomenon plays a crucial role in the development of policies to prevent or reduce it. While focusing on school drop-out emphasises the need to prevent drop-out from occurring and to intervene as early as possible, concentrating on the number of young people who have not completed upper secondary education may shift attention to measures helping them to re-enter education and training systems and to complete their education. The European definition of ESL supports the latter perspective, as it refers to young people beyond compulsory schooling age who have not completed upper secondary education. However, most of them may have discontinued their education years before. European-level data is not available in relation to the number of students or young people who have dropped out of education.

Links in literature/research between Emotional Education (EE) and Early School Leaving (ESL)

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) relates the core competencies of EI to academic resilience and engagement, which lead to successful educational outcomes and which, in turn, positively affects ESL (2010).

Generally, the competences identified in the previous paragraphs provide a general framework linking EE and ESL:

Figure 2: (Pritchard, Shafi & Templeton, 2016)

Whilst CASEL provides a useful framework on which to build, its focus on educational outcomes may be somewhat too narrow for the scope of this comparative research. The desk research yielded varied results in identifying documented links between EE and ESL.

A. In Hungary, where the emphasis is placed on school attendance, the links between ESL and economic development were clearly highlighted. In addition, the studies quoted (Kertesi & Kezdi 2009, Martonfi 2014) illustrate reasons behind ESL and, by doing so, highlight the lack of specific skills covered by EI. This suggests a lack of EE and therefore, albeit indirectly, a link between EE and ESL is established. At the same time, existing programmes aim to increase self-awareness and self-confidence and to teach ethics as a means to prevent ESL. Of particular interest are the mentoring programmes for gifted children, some of whom are also at risk of ESL. The mentors are trained to develop the EI of the students. This is the only programme encountered (Romaeducationfund.hu, 2016) in the research which has a very specifically tailored target group.
In Austria, the strong links between EI and educational outcomes showed in the desk research are looked at in detail, but no impact on ESL is explicitly mentioned. However, EI is also seen to contribute towards a positive handling of negative attitudes such as; lack of commitment, disaffection, lack of discipline, alienation, frustration, tension and stress; as these negative attitudes are often factors attributed to ESL, and as programmes concerned with EE address these attitudes, an implicit link between EE and ESL can be inferred.

The EE landscape in Austria has been shaped by the Rudolf Steiner schools and kindergartens (also known as Waldorf Schools); those institutions promote a holistic approach to education in general, including EE. The realisation of human development is the basic tenet of the Rudolf Steiner schools (waldorfschule.de, 2016), which promote the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional development of the child. The overall concept of the Waldorf education system combines curriculum subjects to develop feelings, knowledge and skills, as well as creative skills and artistic activities.

A specific Austrian example of EE are the ‘Fonds Gesundes Österreich’ (Funds for a Healthy Austria) fgoe.org | derStandard.at, 2016), which support regional projects for preventive healthcare, including health promotion in schools and the improvement of students’ self-esteem, addressing ESL. A particular issue highlighted is the increasing number of children and adolescents left alone with their existential problems, because of the increasing pressure of the economy and of the labour market.

The Turkish desk research refers to the policy of the Ministry of Education (2013) to reduce ESL which, considering the high percentage of people aged 15 or younger (places Turkey near the top of the specific table of OECD nations), takes on an additional significance. Overall, seven large scale projects, either at national or local level, have been highlighted; they deploy EE with the aim to strengthen young people’s ability to thrive in today’s and tomorrow’s world and, by doing so, positively impacting on ESL. Perhaps the most interesting of them is the project called “We worth it”, organised by the Ministry of Education (2013), which focuses on young children aged 3 or 4. The project involves a curriculum for emotional, cognitive, language and social development; the aim is to prepare them for life by developing consistent behaviours (Biz Degeriz Project 2013). The project is of particular interest as it is the only one targeting pre-school children and focused on early intervention.

However, the desk research from Turkey also shows that there are issues beyond the reach of EE, such as poverty or early and forced marriage, which still impact on ESL even at primary school level, and which particularly affect girls. There is concern that the 2012 restructuring of the schooling system may make it easier for girls to drop out of school. Another challenge beyond the reach of EE is the quality and equity of education, as well as the unequal income distribution between regions and between urban and rural areas. The potential of e-school has been mentioned, but no further detail as to how it could contribute to reducing ESL has been listed (T.C. Kalkınma Bakanlığı,2013).

Research from Italy focuses on emotional development and pupil’s well-being at school, which has an impact on educational outcomes which, in turn, are linked to ESL. Aspects covered by EI, such as motivation or integration, contribute to the pupil’s well-being and, therefore, a successful delivery of EE can develop a learning environment in which young people can grow academically, as well as individuals who can contribute to both school and society. The studies quoted (fondazione Centro di Orientamento, n.d.) refer to self-esteem and self-awareness, two of the afore-mentioned core items of EI, as being key for a successful academic outcome. The importance of emotions is highlighted by the reference to the attribution theory of Heider (1958), Kelley (1967) and Weiner (1992). Research and projects quoted (Fondazione Centro di Orientamento, n.d.; Lucangeli 2011; Gentile 1999, 2010; Codiglioni 2007; Project “Educare all’affettività” 2015) identify the importance for children to learn how to deal with their emotions. EE is explicitly included in the curriculum, this allows pupils to be better equipped to deal with difficult situations, to integrate and to allow others to integrate in the school setting, to maintain a constructive dialogue with teachers and to relate to their own academic context.

An example is the EE project deployed in the academic year 2015/16 in a secondary school in Sardinia, called Educare all'affettività (I.C.S. “C. Tura”, 2015/16), ‘Teaching emotions’. The project was followed by two psychologists, who supported the work of the teachers; the outcomes and evaluation are still outstanding at the time of writing.
Based on the idea that the ability to make good choices also depends on levels of self-esteem, the project aimed to:

- support students’ learning process by facilitating relationships in the classroom;
- promote self-knowledge and self-acceptance;
- implement the emotional competences at an individual and group level;
- develop students’ abilities to make decisions, by developing their self-knowledge and confidence.

The above objectives covered four main areas:

- emotional and cognitive dimension, to support students in discovering and being aware of their emotions;
- relational and affective dimension, to stimulate reflections on the different ways to express feelings and to relate with others;
- school and professional guidance, to support students in developing their interests and attitudes, and to be more aware of them;
- training courses for teachers, to give them tools and skills to manage the dynamics of the relationships within the class.

E. In Romania, the Romanian Secondary Education Project (ROSE) (Ministerul Educației Naționale și Cercetării Științifice, 2016) aims to increase academic attainment and to reduce ESL, activities covering EE also qualify for grants. The project was launched in December 2015 and, at the time of writing, there were no figures or results available.

A further study conducted by the Babes-Bolyai University (unpublished) looked at pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about emotional and behavioural issues. The study found some interesting data:

- children in pre-school and school age, who are considered at risk of developing emotional and/or behavioural problems amount to 5-15% of the total school age population;
- teachers are aware of the problem, and accept that they need to actively intervene in order to start early prevention;
- approximately 70% of the teachers support the idea that training programmes would have a positive impact on their classroom practice.

Links between emotional wellbeing and better outcomes in educational performance, as documented in scientific publication:

From an international perspective, the scientific literature offers examples of links between the emotional wellbeing of students and their academic performance. These include:

  “Summarises that academic performance, as measured by grades or test scores, reflects not only knowledge of academic contents but also other important student attributes or non-cognitive factors, such as a “range of academic behaviors, attitudes, and strategies that are critical for success in school and in later life.” Farrington and colleagues’ list includes; study skills, attendance, work habits, time management, help-seeking behaviors, metacognitive strategies, and social and academic problem-solving (some of which, as noted above, may be considered in part a cognitive skill). In the authors’ conceptual framework, non-cognitive skills operate in a three-level environment, determined by; student background, school and classroom context, and socio-cultural context, which may, in turn, shape their specific impact on achievement”(Garcia, 2014)

- Durlak, J.A. et al (2011) The impact of enhancing students’ social and emotional learning:
  “Completed a meta-analysis of over 200 interventions aimed at increasing the social and emotional learning of children from kindergarten through to high school (ages 5–18). This study is one of the
most extensive reviews of such interventions, and it relies on empirical evidence that included control groups for the analyzed interventions. Their conclusions suggest that participants benefited from the interventions, and, specifically, that their social and behavioral skills improved. On average, participating students also exhibited higher academic achievement, with an associated gain in performance estimated to be equivalent to 11 percentile points, approximately constant across grades” (Garcia 2014)


“Highlight that non-cognitive skills are increasingly considered to be as important as, or even more important than, cognitive skills or IQ in explaining academic and employment outcomes. There is growing attention from policymakers on how soft skills can be developed in children. However, despite growing interest in this topic, the causal relationship between non-cognitive skills and later outcomes is not well established. This literature review is intended to summarise the existing evidence on how ‘non-cognitive skills’ can be defined and measured; assess the evidence that such skills have a causal impact on later outcomes; and the role of select interventions that aim to improve non-cognitive skills in children and young people.”(Garcia 2014)

With regard to the countries involved in this research, scientific publications have been identified illustrating the link between emotional wellbeing and students’ performance:

- Holzhausen (2006) City of Vienna; Bildungsplan I Wiener Kindergärten; makes recommendations about the physical and mental well-being of children within the pre-school curriculum based on the concept that social and emotional education involves teaching children to be self-aware, socially cognizant, able to make responsible decisions and competent in self-management and relationship-management skills. This highlights how Kindergartens should teach children to take responsibility of their own well-being, by learning how to recognise their feelings and needs and how to express them. They should also learn to deal with their own bodies and feelings and to treat others with respect. By experiencing and developing their own problem-solving strategies, they will not only improve their own well-being, they will also become more resilient for future situations. Individual well-being is the starting point to improved academic results, as well as for other learning processes.

- Akcaalan, M. (2015) Investigation of The Relationships Between Lifelong Learning And Social Emotional Learning; International Journal of Educational Research Review; investigates the relationship between lifelong learning and social emotional learning, using a study group of 590 university students. The research showed a strong correlation between lifelong learning and social emotional learning. A positive relationship between lifelong learning and some sub categories of social emotional learning was demonstrated. According to these findings, it can be argued that lifelong learning is related to social and emotional learning and can be influenced by a number of different variables.

- Akgül, G. et al (2016) Predictors of Teacher Support; Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, Issue 63, 2016, 115-132; looked at areas of teacher support that typically remain unexamined (attendance, wellbeing, drop-out), and to investigate predictors of perceived teacher support of 15-year-old students. The findings show that a sense of belonging at school, instrumental motivation for mathematics, mathematics self-efficacy, and attitudes toward school in terms of learning outcomes and learning activities are predictors of teacher support.

- Codighi, F. (2007) Dispersione scolastica. Sapere, saper fare e saper essere nella dimensione scolastica: verso nuove “comunità di ricerca”: comments that school drop-out by secondary school students is strong evidence of the discomfort experienced by many students at a time they transition to adolescence, which coincides with the transition from elementary to secondary school. School drop-out cannot and should not be considered as a mere fact of life, but as a negative experience that will impact the students’ life long after their adolescence has passed. It is therefore important that students themselves understand the meaning of it, and
that they become actively engaged and motivated in tackling the issue. Educators will need to help students understand that they are promoters of their own mental and physical health. This will in turn bring them closer to teachers, contributing to a positive climate, where learning can be a powerful experience that transcends the school buildings. Such a contribution will inevitably impact the learning outcomes. Having fun at school is the first antidote to the desire of dropping out. Students who find the school to be warm and welcoming are not going through frustrations and disappointments that often lead their peers to dropping-out of school.

- Gentile, M. (2010) La difficile costruzione dell’Identità in un gruppo di adolescenti in situazione di disagio scolastico; in Novelli Curi, Mirella (ed.); Lavorare con il gruppo specializzato; Franco Angeli Edizioni, Milano, pp. 165-182; 2010: research focuses on group sessions carried out in a secondary school, with the aim to facilitate the students’ abilities to think and to form their own identity. Teachers worked with a psychologist before the group sessions started, to analyse common characteristics among the students (e.g. restlessness, ADHD, aggressive/deviant behaviours, etc). All participating students had experienced different levels of deprivation, either at emotional or cognitive level. The negative experiences prevented them in developing their ability to turn their emotions and feelings into thoughts and learning. During the group sessions, the students had the opportunity to share their emotions, feelings, fears and hopes. At the beginning, students were reluctant to share their thoughts and feelings with the group, however after many sessions, the students felt able to share their emotions and were able to interpret them.

- Cefai, C. and Cavioni, V. Social and Emotional Education in Primary School; London, Springer, (Cefai & Valeria, 2014): comment that EE is an integrative and multidisciplinary approach, covering six different perspectives about children’s well-being and health: social and emotional learning, positive education, mindfulness, resilience, inclusive education and caring communities. Concepts and best practice includes planning, implementing and evaluating EE programmes, going beyond the traditional school walls, in order to involve the whole school, families and communities. Successful programmes lead to increased children’s well-being, and to an increased interest in the learning experience.
EMOTIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS: EXISTING PRACTICES

Although EE is not widespread in the Austrian education system, there is an acceptance that it needs to be introduced in the national curriculum. The Austrian Federal Ministry for Health openly recommends the introduction of emotional and social education, in order to contribute to healthy development and to the well-being of children which, in turn, will lead to improved academic results. Some of the practices and projects around EE developed in Austria are centred on the holistic approach of the Waldorf and Rudolf Steiner schools. At a regional level, the federally funded “Healthy Austria” project (derStandard.at, 2001) aims to promote health education and self-esteem, and to reduce school drop-out.

On a national scale, Hungary has introduced ethics as a compulsory subject in schools. The subject covers some EE standards, such as; values, morality, connection to others, differentiation between good and bad. Other existing programmes in Hungary are particularly focused on EE as a prevention of ESL, which is clearly perceived as being a major issue for the national education system. According to a 2014 research (Mártonfi, 2014), Hungary was the only EU country with an ESL rate that was not declining. The “Bridge” programme (Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma, 2014) is aimed at pupils who completed primary school but were not accepted by any secondary schools, or who have turned 15 without completing primary school. The programme contains elements to increase the self-awareness and self-confidence of pupils in order to facilitate their re-entry into mainstream education. In parallel to the Bridge, the “Tanoda” (Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma, 2014) afterschool programme provides support lessons to children from an economically deprived background. Tanodas do not follow a common curriculum, which means that not all of them include elements of EE. Mentoring programmes for gifted children in Hungary are increasing in number, and they also cover aspects of EE.

In Italy, the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education in 2012 refer to the need for primary school pupils to develop their cognitive, social, emotional and ethical dimensions. As a result, EE is included in the national curriculum as a cross-subject topic. For instance, music education should foster emotional intelligence by developing an ability to symbolically express emotions. Resulting from the aforementioned guidelines are a number of local projects. Educare all’affettività (Emotional Education) (Scuola secondaria di primo grado “C. Nivola”, 2015) is based on the idea that EE is an integral part of our identity, so it is fundamental in the overall education of the individual. An effective EE promotes an open dialogue among teachers and students, and so an interactive learning methodology has been used, including brainstorming, debates, group works, questionnaires and role-playing.

“Vogliamoci bene!” (Let’s love each other!) (Boni & Cammeda 2010) is a primary school project aiming to support students in accepting and respecting themselves and others for their views and who they are. Especially important for young people, it is easier to relate to the world if they are able to relate to themselves. Progetto: le emozioni (Project: emotions): implemented in early childhood classes, is based on the assumption that the EE is an integral part of an individual's education. School should therefore stimulate students at an emotional and motivational level, not only on the cognitive level. The project has been conceived as a path in which children can discover and recognise their emotions. To begin with, children learn to perceive their emotions through their body, their voice and music. Afterwards, they start to associate their emotions to images, colours and words (Istituto Comprensivo 6 “Cosmé Tura”, 2011/2012).

Like Hungary, ESL is a high priority in Romania, and therefore EE is looked at primarily from the viewpoint of how to reduce school dropout. The Romanian National Strategy for the Prevention of ESL, published in 2015, acknowledges the correlation between ESL and personal problems, health or emotional issues (www.edu.ro - STRATEGIA PRIVIND REDUCEREA PĂRĂSIRII TIMPURII A ȘCOLIIL ÎN ROMÂNIA, 2016). The National Strategy calls for school wide and individualised measures to develop students’ resistance to ESL, which is determined by social, cognitive and emotional difficulties. In the national project called ‘Romanian Secondary Education Project’ (ROSE), the eligible funded activities include measures to develop students’ social-emotional skills.
Acting Against Drop-Outs In Vocational Education (Europeansharedtreasure.eu, 2011) is a European-wide programme designed to promote the motivation and readiness for lifelong learning among young Europeans. As the title suggests, this targets vocational studies and, in that sense, is perhaps unique in that EE courses seem to focus on early school age. Co-funded by the EU and by the national Ministry of Education, the programme is also run in Turkey, alongside many other projects which are aimed at the prevention of ESL. The phenomenon takes on specific traits in Turkey, as it is often caused by economic difficulties and seems to affect girls more than boys, which is why the programmes tackle different aspects of EE.

How do teachers conceptualise Emotional Education?

From the questionnaires

Overall, the majority of the surveyed teachers recognised both the general meaning and importance of EE. Most teachers also feel confident that they are providing their students with the necessary practice to learn EE specific competences. However, the fact that the majority of them have not been exposed to formal EE training, neither in their initial teacher training nor in their professional development courses, does have an impact on how EE is conceptualised.

Even though teachers across all countries seem to agree that EE should be part of the traditional family setting, they also agree that teachers, head teachers and formal education in general has an important role to play. Although not expressed, the concept of in locus parentis for the role of schools does come to the fore. The vast majority of teachers surveyed agree that they are already providing EE, and that EE does have a beneficial impact on students learning and emotional well-being (and, by contrast, that emotional distress can have a negative impact and must therefore be prevented through EE). Connected to this, they also believe that schools do have a duty to provide education conducive to emotional well-being for all school grades starting from kindergarten (although emphasised less in further education), for both teachers and school leaders, despite the family nucleus being identified as mainly responsible to provide EE.

In the distributed online questionnaire, teachers have been asked to select which one of the following items can be part of EI:

- Recognising emotions in self and others
- Approaching others and building positive relationships
- Recognising own strengths and areas of need
- Listening actively
- Communicating accurately and clearly
- Taking others’ perspectives and sensing their emotions
- Respecting others and self and appreciating differences
- Setting positive and realistic goals
- Cooperating
- Regulating and managing strong emotions (unpleasant and pleasant)
- Managing conflict non-violently
- Working effectively in groups
- Help-seeking and help-giving
- Showing ethical and social responsibility

All competences were considered to be part of EI by the vast majority of teachers surveyed. The acceptance was stronger for competences that included descriptors of emotions and feelings e.g. ‘taking others’ perspectives and sensing their emotions’, than for competences that did not include such descriptors e.g. ‘listening actively’. This highlights at least two aspects: firstly, , EI is a term with a wide-ranging meaning and therefore lacking a universally accepted, standard definition. Secondly, the majority of respondents were not exposed to EE during
their teacher training. It is therefore desirable that efforts are to be made to standardise the definition and concepts relating to EE in school settings.

**From the interviews**

Overall, all respondents seemed to agree on the importance of, and core concepts included within EE. This is consistent with the data gathered from the questionnaires, as previously illustrated (see Figure 1). Therefore, the concepts of; awareness, confidence, esteem, empathy and managing emotions appear on responses from all participating countries. The differences arise in the concepts and ideas expressed on how to address EE, and this is related to the different roles played by the interviewees (head teachers, classroom teachers from primary, secondary and vocational schools; but also teacher trainers, inspectors, psychoanalysts, etc.). The approaches included can be summarised in two categories: learning to recognise emotions and learning to manage emotions. Questions have also be raised as to whether it is correct to say that emotions can be learned i.e. can be an outcome of a cognitive process, or whether emotions can be recognised and managed.

The Austrian interviewees highlighted the importance of learning to recognise emotions and to deal with them. It is expected that this will lead to an improvement of students’ health and motivation. In such circumstances, learning becomes more sustainable. This is consistent with the expected outcomes listed, where motivation and well-being of the students are emphasised.

Interestingly enough, the school inspector who was interviewed stated that he had received no training about EE. Although this sample is far from being representative, it does raise the question as to how EE fits within wider assessment policy and practices.

In Hungary, the stakeholders appear to focus more on the ‘doing’, rather than the ‘feeling’. Thus, EE is seen as a programme aimed at making young people aware of emotions and to help them behave in a consistent way. EE is also seen as a useful instrument to support the grieving process. Hence, the interviewees also want to focus on practising aspects of EE, such as empathy. They also want to make sure children learn to recognise and formulate their emotions, in order to learn how to manage frustrations but also physical sensations, probably connected to puberty. An eagerness for techniques to support children to help themselves in emotionally difficult situations, and the need to create a stable, safe and welcoming environment were recognised. A link to economic background is also established, with one respondent suggesting that there should be an understanding of the emotional consequences from living in poverty.

The respondents from Italy also highlight the importance for children to be able to recognise physical and emotional stages, both their own and those of others around them. This can lead to harmony in groups, which is another definition for prevention of stress and violent conduct, etc. Children who have been exposed to EE are aware of diversity, and therefore take a completely transparent view. For them, there is a common space with games, where they are all equal. This attitude is less pronounced in children who have not been exposed to EE. It is also worth remembering that the benefits continue outside the school environment. One of the interviewees, a psychotherapist, also clarified that emotions cannot be part of education as such, as they cannot be taught; nonetheless, work should be carried out on recognising and managing them.

Whilst the Romanian responses contain numerous aspects raised in other countries, they also slightly differ in a focus on methodologies and techniques to deliver to children, to empower them to acquire important social skills, and to recognise their emotions and those of people around them. Even though the focus is on practical, hands-on aspects, the expected outcomes include soft skills that may be very difficult to assess, such as acceptance of diversity, social skills, emotional skills, self-esteem and healthy lifestyles. Alarmingly, however, one respondent indicated that whilst some conversations about EE are held in school, there is nothing done in practice. Again, this seems to highlight the need to have a formalised approach to EE, not only in terms of training teachers but also in terms of assessing and tracking outcomes.

Responses from Turkey also reflect feedback given from other countries. Turkish respondents also placed particular emphasis on the children’s ability not only to recognise, but also to express feelings and to reflect
on them, especially the unpleasant feelings. Here too, the ability to recognise and manage physical impulses, not only emotional aspects, is considered to be part of EE. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of societal aspects, e.g. the potential for families to create supportive environments and the need for society to have emotional bonds in order to create cohesion. A headmaster also considered the actual possibility of teaching emotions, similarly to the psychoanalyst in Italy: emotions can be acquired, but not really learned. However, this does not detract from emotions being recognised at a cognitive level and are therefore part of EE programmes.

To what extent do teachers think that Emotional Education is part of their teaching role?

From the questionnaires

Largely, teachers believe that EE is an integral part of their role, and a majority of them can also identify direct links and standards to the national curriculum (a direct correlation between teachers who believe that EE is part of their role and those who can identify EE in the national curriculum is not available). Teachers reflected a commitment to their students’ well-being; this is also confirmed by the fact that most teachers agree that EE has a positive impact on students, and that therefore they would be interested in taking professional development courses to cover the subject, thereby filling a gap left by their initial teacher training. They also recognise the need to continuously improve in this area.

The context of EE provides a more complex picture. Since the majority of teachers agree that EE should be taught in the family, they identify EE as being part of informal education. However, they also agree that school has an important role to play in delivering EE, and therefore they have to re-think its place within formal education. This is consistent with the finding teachers strongly disagree that EE should be delivered as after school activities. Even though the questionnaire did not make reference to assessment, there are aspects of assessing EE in a formal context that teachers have to take into account. However, the role of assessment is too great to be considered within the scope of this study.

From the interviews

There appears to be widespread agreement that school has an important role to play in the provision of EE, and that school cannot perform the role on its own, without the support of families. The value that schools can bring goes beyond the core fundamentals of EE; it also covers the concept of providing a safe haven and a positive role model, against the backdrop of significant change within family structures. Growing migratory movements, the individualisation of society and other factors contribute to a trend observed by respondents in various participating countries, in which families are increasingly less able to provide the necessary educational support to their children. With this in mind, the respondents explored more specific factors, based on their immediate context.

Even though Austrian respondents concur on the need to include EE in formal education, they also point out that EE must start at home, and that in fact the whole community has a role to play. The consensus is that school has a significant role to play, but that it cannot be left on its own to address it. Starting EE at school would be too little, too late, especially within society where families appear less able to provide educational support.

The Hungarian counterparts also subscribe to this, but highlight specific roles that school must play, such as providing a safe environment, establishing a link to involve parents and, more importantly, provide positive role models. The value of letting children play and perform in drama or choirs in such a safe environment is also highlighted, whilst specific requests include having a child psychologist employed in every school.

The responses from Italy are mainly focused on proposals for systemic changes. Learning should be designed around the needs of the students, and in this sense EE should be at the core. However, as expressed by peers from other collaborating countries, Italian respondents are clear in saying that the school cannot meet this challenge without the support from the families. Schools should, therefore, ensure there is an open, collaborative channel with the children’s families – even though it is accepted that families are not always able to provide EE or
support, as highlighted by the Austrian interviewees.

Similarly, the Romanian respondents stress the high importance school has in EE, especially in cases where parents are absent and children are left in the care of relatives or friends. Migration seems to be a significant cause behind absenteeism and, given the current migratory movements within the EU, it can be assumed that the number of children left in the care of relatives are reasonably high. This would reinforce the notion that school does have a very important role to play in EE. As part of this role, the school can work to provide cohesion within society (as previously indicated, this is a theme picked up by Turkish respondents too); this is of particular value against the background of societal changes (family structure, migratory movements, individualism, also spurred by the spread of technology). Some responses go as far as suggesting that the school is actually failing in this role, alleging that it is unable to support the emotional development of children.

The Turkish interviewees also agree that school has an important role to play in the emotional development of healthy individuals, albeit complementary to the family role. The role of the school in EE should however start early, ideally in pre-school years. A triangle is used to represent the relationships formed by the student, family and school to illustrate the significance of these relationships and role models. The reach of the triangle should include the community, in order to be effective. Another specific role assigned to the school is the conveying of social rules, as well as EE. In this sense, EE is seen as a holistic approach to the personal development of the students.

How do teachers think they can support children’s Emotional Education?

From the questionnaires

Across the participating countries, the absence of a formalised and consistent approach to EE in the initial teacher training, as well as in the professional development of the interviewees, cannot go unnoticed. There is a correlation between the lack of professional development and the experience and years of service of the surveyed teachers (the more experienced the teachers, the less likely they are to have covered EE in their initial teacher training). There appears to be a strong desire to develop knowledge, understanding and skills within EE, therefore a robust case for the delivery and creation of such courses can be put forward. For instance, as previously mentioned, 80% of Italian interviewees have not completed an EE course, but would welcome the opportunity to do so.

From the survey, it becomes apparent that the vast majority of teachers believe they can support EE, either by delivering against one or more related standards defined in their national curriculum, or by delivering what they perceive EE should be. This is the case for instance in Hungary where, as seen above, teachers may devise their own standards. In Turkey too, as previously mentioned, teachers may not recognise EE standards mentioned in the curriculum, but are still keen to ensure EE is delivered to their students. A pattern that emerges is that at least a third of respondents are unable to identify EE related standards in their own national curriculum. This, coupled with the lack of formal and consistent training on EE, leads to a situation where teachers are willing to promote EE, but often lack the necessary tools and instruments to do so.

Two thirds of the Austrian teachers do not identify any EE related standards in the national curriculum. Even so, they recognise the need for EE and focus their efforts mainly on inter-personal skills, such as co-operation, respecting and appreciating differences etc. The development of the child’s personality is an intra-personal skill that is also highlighted.

Hungarian teachers put the emphasis of their contribution on inter-personal skills. Managing conflicts and recognising emotions is also high on the agenda. The issue they perceive is that whilst EE is meant to cover both, inter-personal and intra-personal skills, the national curriculum only covers the former, and only partially.

The vast majority of Italian teachers (80%) point to the lack of professional development courses on EE in their career, which hampers the promotion of EE beyond the standards contained in the national curriculum.
The replies from Romanian teachers are similar in that they too point to the standards contained in the national curriculum, and see their contribution limited to the achievement of those standards. Turkish teachers seem to be further detached, the majority of them are unable to identify EE standards in the national curriculum; this is mainly due to different terminologies used to describe the same standards. However, a small group of respondents also report a focus on mainly inter-personal skills, with the addition of recognising emotions in self.

From the interviews

Whilst the interviews explore the role of institutions rather than a focus on the role of the individual teachers, some specific examples of how schools and teachers are supporting EE were made. For instance, Hungarian respondents point to a drama-pedagogy as a basic method for successful EE. They also stress the importance of playing, which is felt to be the only space that provides the freedom for emotions to be safely explored. Other examples include discussion circles at the beginning of the school day, a non-violence programme, relaxation sessions and a token method. All the examples have one core aim in common: to get to know the students as individuals. Of particular interest is the ‘Happiness Programme’ (Jobb Veled a Világ Alapítvány, 2016) run with two classes in a particular school, based on positive psychology and aimed at the personal development of students.
Overall, in the participating countries, the ESL phenomenon is either stabilising or decreasing in number, the respondents share the view that ESL has a negative impact on society at large, and that they can contribute in overcoming it by delivering EE. Most countries have their own uniqueness to take into account, based for instance on; ethnic groups, geographical divisions, gender bias, etc.

**Figure 2:** ESL in EU-27, 2008 (source: Observatory of Inequalities); EU average is 14.9%

**Figure 3:** ESL in EU-27, 2013 (source: Cedefop); EU average is 17%
In Austria, the focus on prevention of ESL is constantly increasing. With the help of European Social Funds, many successful projects were implemented with good statistical results (derStandard.at, 2016). Not only has the ESL rate for Austria consistently been below the EU average, over the past six years it has progressively decreased. However, the drop-out rate from high school remains too high. The risk of ESL is significantly higher for specific at-risk groups (e.g. economically disadvantaged, migrants). The National Strategy recognises the increased risk within socio-economically vulnerable groups, and suggested measures include specific coaching and mentoring programmes for at-risk target groups. Socio-economic features are the predictors of ESL as they are connected to equal opportunities in education. Ethnic background also plays an important role, but research demonstrates that socio-economic background can explain the effect of ethnicity on ESL. In Austria, there is no significant gender gap in the ESL figures, with numbers for male drop-outs being slightly higher. Push and pull factors have also been attributed to ESL, such as, boredom and the attraction of the labour market. It was also felt that smaller groups in classrooms and social workers are needed to support pupils to develop their emotional awareness.

Austria also reflected the view that schools debate the structural and organisational issues, ignoring the link between ESL and EE. The debate should include teachers’ knowledge of psychological aspects and experience with behavioural issues, although there are moves in the right direction. The main theme of the Austrian Head teachers Conference in 2015 was Emotional Leadership, with the aim to increase awareness of EE. The overall opinion is that schools can and should take action on ESL, most respondents also recognise the need for professional development in the emotional sphere.

In Hungary, a legacy left by the communist regime is the very low rate of illiteracy, with about 98% of all pupils finishing primary school. However, there is an ambivalence in relation to ESL. The rate of ESL was 11.4% in 2014, a small decrease from the previous year (11.8%). The figures place Hungary around the EU average, but in the last third of EU members. Beyond the actual figures, there is a trend, which is cause for concern, while overall in the EU, ESL is linearly decreasing, in Hungary the rate is maintained, with indications of an increase. It has been shown elsewhere that ESL trends are linked to educational policies. The educational policy in Hungary dramatically changed in 2010 (Mártonfi, 2014), with a significant budgetary reduction (both in real terms and in GDP ratio).

Figure 4: ESL in EU-27, 2015 (source: European Commission); EU average is 11%
In Hungary, ESL does not only show a gender divide, but also disparities between regions. The central region around Budapest achieves the lowest level of ESL (around 7%), while in Northern Hungary the rate reaches 18.8% (for male students, the rate is >20%). The regional differences show a close correlation with the economic development of the regions. According to a study by the Hungarian Government, the most important factor for ESL is economic background. Within ethnic groups, the divide is even more visible. The most affected minority are the Roma, of whom 77.7% have completed primary education compared with a national average of 94.6%. Less than 1% of Roma people have a diploma, compared with a national average of 18.4% (European Commission, 2015). Roma people are considered as the most economically deprived social group in the country. Economic deprivation and the very low level of education of parents is inherited through generations. The largest common factor behind ESL for all ethnic groups is the lack of appeal of education; those who drop out of school do not feel education has anything to offer. However, within the Roma community a much higher number of young people, mainly women, leave school in order to start a family. While the national rate for ESL is much higher for male than female students, within the Roma community female students are at a much higher risk of ESL.

In 2011, compulsory education was lowered from 18 to 16 years of age (Martonfi 2014). While there are no published research reports available, according to ministerial data there are 36,000 so called ‘public workers’ aged between 18-24, most of whom are likely to be Roma without completed education (public workers perform low skilled, low paid jobs for councils instead of receiving benefits). There are reports suggesting that a high number of Roma children are taken out of school at the age of 16 to do public work, in order to earn money to support their impoverished families.

In Italy, compulsory education lasts for 10 years, with the aim to provide a secondary school diploma or a three-year vocational qualification by the age of 18. This means that education is compulsory for children aged 6 to 16, and that students who have not obtained a secondary school diploma and are aged between 16 and 18 are considered to be at risk of school dropout. According to the national institute for statistics Istituto Nazionale di Statistica - ISTAT (2016), young people aged between 18 and 24 who have neither completed compulsory education nor are attending any professional or training courses, are also considered to be ESL. This lead to a national ESL rate of 15% in 2014 (the rate was 17.7% for young males and 12.2% for females; 12% in the North, 12.4% in the Centre and 19.4% in the South of the country). The national rate is below the 16% target contained in the EU 2020 strategy. However, if all the young people between the age of 15 and 30 who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) are included, the rate soars to 25.7%, which is a cause for concern.

Figures 2-4 above show that the ESL rate in Romania is well above the EU average. However, the trend is decreasing and Romania still aims to reduce its ESL rate to 11.3% by 2020. A study in rural Romania identified numerous factors that contribute to ESL (Jurcan, 2011). The majority of the factors identified were of a socio-economic nature, though the report also concluded that since parents and teachers have the biggest impact on children, their engagement has the biggest impact on reducing absenteeism and ESL. The report specified the need to provide attractive school activities to entice students and to enable them to enjoy their time in school. To counteract ESL, a National Strategy for the Prevention of Early School Leaving has been launched in 2015 (Guvernul României, 2016). Among the strategies to prevent ESL, measures have been defined at school level or as individualised solutions to strengthen students’ resilience to ESL.

ESL is a challenge in Turkey too. In 2013, the rate was 38%, in contrast to only 12% in the EU-28 (Eurostat, 2016). According to OECD data, only 7% of 3-year-olds and 36% of 4-year-olds were enrolled in early childhood education in 2013. Enrolment rates of 4-year-olds increased by more than 30 percentage points between 2005 and 2013 (OECD, 2016). According to the “Strategic Plan of the Ministry of National Education Turkey” (2015-2019), in 2014 the average time spent in school was 7.6 years, while ESL was at 38.2%. (Ministry of National Education Turkey, 2015). Turkey is working to improve the participation of children in the education system, even though participation rates remain low compared to the OECD average. Government policies, private initiatives and internationally funded projects are contributing towards ESL strategies. The importance of decreasing ESL takes an additional dimension when considering that Turkey has a very
young population, with an average age of below 15, it is very important to ensure that young people complete their education and are well prepared for the labour market and further education (Oecd.org, 2016). Specific projects and programmes have been launched, to reach out especially to disadvantaged groups like; Roma, children with disabilities or from low-income families. In the upper grades of primary education, some girls still drop out of school because of a combination of poverty and conservative social norms, low expectations and domestic responsibilities.

The Ministry of National Education (2015) has developed a programme, obliging schools to identify at-risk students and to monitor and respond to absenteeism. Provincial education officials are also expected to act on the data collected. The commitment to implement this programme is a precondition to tackle ESL. Meanwhile, there is anecdotal evidence that some children are not enrolled in school, and do not appear in the statistics altogether, due to a lack of birth registrations.

The new education law in 2012 extended compulsory education from 8 to 12 years and statistically, this will have an impact on ESL. ‘Compulsory Education for 12 years’ came into force on 11 April 2012, known as the ‘4+4+4 education system’ (Official Gazette, 2012). This system has increased the compulsory education from 8 to 12 years. Critics (Eğitim İzleme Raporu, 2012) say that the subdivision in three phases of 4 years each could make it easier for students to drop out, especially girls. The reduction of the school starting age is likely to affect the figures for access to education, particularly as there was already a problem with pupils starting late. Early and forced marriage is still a problem for girls in Turkey, the girls affected are likely to be excluded from education and to miss opportunities.

From the interviews:

Austrian respondents point to the lack of support coming from the family environment. Failings and shortcomings, such as a lack of; positive role models, support and an emotional bond at home all transpire in the school environment. Moreover, the standing of education in society is not seen as being positive. In such an environment, young people learn with difficulty, to accept responsibility for their own actions.

Similarly, in Hungary the interviewees point out the importance of parents in providing emotional and academic support, as well as being positive role models. Difficult family backgrounds have an impact too, e.g. if students have to take care of younger siblings. Motivation, connected to a welcoming environment is also seen as a key contributor. The complexity of ESL in ethnic minorities like the Roma is also pointed out, in particular when it comes to early pregnancy or marriage for girls. In one case, prostitution was also mentioned as a cause for ESL.

The answers from the Italian interviewees can be broadly summarised into four categories. There is an agreement that the needs of the students are not catered for, that the current methodologies are not coherent with the students’ needs, and therefore the programmes should be designed with their needs in mind. Socio-economic factors are a concern for ESL mainly in primary education. Discomfort in school, not necessarily linked to the actual institution (e.g. start of adolescence), is also felt to have a negative impact. It is also considered that the current education system fails to connect to the job market and this demotivates students.

The responses coming from Romania do reiterate what has been expressed elsewhere, but they do also emphasise a specific aspect. For instance, verbal and physical violence and bullying are perceived as being a larger contributing factor than elsewhere. There are talks of systemic discrimination, whereby the least performing teachers are sent to disadvantaged areas, the curriculum is ethnocentric, there is no integration of students from different socio-economic backgrounds and institutions do not seem genuinely concerned. There is also a realisation that school discipline is too focused on punishment, and that evaluation methods are inadequate. And finally, the importance of the family environment is highlighted but unfortunately, in many cases the parents are overwhelmed and unable to provide adequate support.

The responses from Turkey point strongly at economic reasons behind ESL, where children of families with low or no income are forced to drop out in order to find work and supplement the family income. In some
cases, delinquency also becomes a risk. A poor economic background can also have effect on the students’ motivation, and it can be an indication of low or no parental education, interest or awareness. Systemic issues are also highlighted, such as; unattractive school environments, a boring education structure and uneducated trainers. Instead, it was felt that schools should strive to provide learning environments that increase motivation in their students.

**What emotional factors do teachers feel contribute to ESL?**

**From the questionnaires**

In **Austria**, psychologists point to the lack of emotional development of children. Parents tend to be too busy with work activities, are under stress and feel overwhelmed. The pressure is then felt by children, who are unable to adapt to other people and new situations. Within this context, the conditions for healthy emotional development are absent. Increasingly it was felt that children are not ready for school, they do not recognise teacher for what they are, they display little empathy and have difficulty distinguishing between right and wrong. Children have difficulty learning from conflicts as they do not see the connection between their behaviour and the resulting consequences.

Among the **Hungarian** respondents, there was little agreement on the factors behind ESL. There was no one statement that found at least half of the respondents in agreement. This response can probably be interpreted in different ways: teachers may not face this problem and therefore are unaware of its causes, or the situation is simply much more complex and therefore opinions are widely split. Either way, this suggests the need for further work on this issue. The answers provided indicate that teachers generally assume that the reasons behind ESL are more personal than objective e.g. unsupportive stakeholders, unwilling to make an effort etc. as opposed to not being able to afford education. As for the emotional factors, there was no clear agreement either even though the questionnaire results show that most teachers agreed with all three statements that connected EE with ESL and academic performance. This is most likely an indication that ESL is not a straightforward issue and therefore teachers are not in agreement as to what causes it. They do though tend to think that the causes behind ESL are more on a personal level, and therefore loosely connected to the emotional state of the students.

The vast majority of **Italian** respondents (84%) agreed or strongly agreed that emotions and EE have a role to play in preventing ESL. Among the factors contributing to ESL, having an unsupportive family background appears to be perceived as having the biggest impact. Other intrinsic causes are also observed, such as unhappiness when in school, lack of motivation to make an effort and lack of feeling welcome in school. This observation is well aligned with research in 2015 (Noi-italia.istat.it, 2016) that showed how ESL can be also linked to the discomfort felt by students at secondary schools in Italy. The decision to drop out is often taken when students no longer see a connection between their school experience and their needs and aspirations (Codiglioni, 2007).

In **Romania**, respondents mainly identified an unsupportive family background as the main factor contributing to ESL (67%). Further down the list are students’ inability or unwillingness to keep up with school requirements (57%) and students’ unwillingness to make an effort (52%). While being able to afford education, is not viewed as a factor by 43%, it must be said that respondents represent mainly large city schools, where poverty is less of an issue, and where access to schools is easier than in most rural areas of Romania.

There is less agreement among the respondents when it comes to emotional factors. For instance, on the topic of students’ unhappiness in school, 39% agree that this is a factor contributing to ESL, whilst 34% disagree. The same split occurs around the question of whether schools fail to provide students with the support needed to succeed (which may also include emotional support). There is also a significant share (over 50%) of respondents who disagree with the statement that the school provision is irrelevant for the students’ or their families’ interests. This, in effect, means that the respondents do not tend to blame the nature and quality of educational provision for ESL. There is however a very large agreement on the role of EE to prevent ESL (94%) and to improve learning outcomes (99%).
There is also a strong consensus that emotional distress can cause learning difficulties (95%), which could also be a potential factor leading to ESL. In Turkey, the respondents felt that the parents’ income and educational background and the absence of parent support are the most important factors, influencing ESL. Negative emotions towards education and levels of academic success were defined as reasons contributing to school dropout. Apart from these, teachers’ competences and students’ health problems were defined as additional causal factors. The respondents also pointed out that there is a connection between ESL and EE, identifying that emotional problems can cause learning difficulties and EE can be a solution, as it supports the academic performance of pupils.

From the interviews:

In Austria, to a certain degree all respondents see a connection between ESL and EE, but they do not necessarily think that EE would prevent students from dropping out of school. Rather, that a lack of EE might be seen as a contributing factor when other situations pre-exist (e.g. lack of emotional support at home). A special emphasis was placed on resilience, an important emotional skill which can help against ESL.

Hungarian respondents put the emphasis on motivation; which in turn is fuelled by positive emotions; feeling welcomed and belonging. The ability to handle frustration and other emotional skills are seen as key factors, although the responses also point out that emotional well-being needs to start at home, and that school cannot influence this.

Almost all of the interviewees in Italy saw a link between EE and ESL, and highlighted the importance of supporting students with dealing with their own emotions, as a way to overcome discomfort. The requests to create a welcoming environment, to take students’ needs into consideration and to start EE as early as possible in compulsory education are also expressed.

The Romanian interviewees also point out the connection between EE and ESL. There is a close relationship between poor emotional health and ESL but, as one respondent identified, teachers and parents should receive training first. The concept of resilience is also analysed; a lack of emotional skills is seen as a trigger for a vicious cycle impacting holistically, affecting academic performance and therefore motivation, which in turn will affect personal life, making adjustments in school more challenging.

The Turkey interviews yielded similar results from the other participating countries. EE can help to prevent failures in dealing with feelings, especially negative feelings. Students can become aware that such negative feelings are normal, but that there are ways to deal with them. Happiness at school and in the school environment are also listed as an important factor, that can be positive not only for the students, but for parents as well. However, some perspective is given by the fact that education is like a large, brick wall and that emotions are but one brick – by taking one brick away, the wall will not crumble. This seems well aligned with the view from Austria, where lack of EE is seen as a contributing factor to pre-existing problematic situations (see above).
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research provides a useful insight into the current context of EE and ESL in the participating countries, and highlights the needs of teachers and educators when dealing with the prevention of ESL and the promotion of EE. From a theoretical point of view, at an international level there are shared concepts regarding EI, EE and ESL, studies covering the subject, include insights into collateral concepts which cover similar areas (e.g. social-emotional learning). On a national level however, participating countries reveal that specific literature, experience and good practice may be lacking. As an example, in Italy there are many instances within the field of emotional education and of educational institutions promoting initiatives on this topic while in other countries, such as in Romania, there is no national strategy, which makes it difficult to implement such initiatives. The situation is similar for ESL, which has a definition that is shared and recognised at international level, though slight differences have been detected when analysing it at a national level.

Based on this general overview, there are two main recommendations that can be directed to the national educational institutions: 1) to promote an exchange of international studies and best practices at a national level, thus generating a dialogue among interested stakeholders in order to achieve a better understanding of the topics; 2) to devise as many approaches as needed to address the specific subjects. For EE, the approach should be designed to suit the varying different contexts and school practices, and be included in the initial teacher training, to also enable an assessment of the learning outcomes. In the case of ESL, the international definitions provide a clear perspective that can be applied to the different national concepts, helping to clearly frame the phenomenon in order to support effective interventions.

Using the findings of the primary research, it is possible to identify three levels of intervention, each containing specific needs to be addressed:

1) Professional level - the majority of the interviewed teachers have not received any formal EE training, either during their initial teacher training or through continuing professional development. This lack of formal training, coupled with the scarcity of national literature about the subject, has a clear impact on the conceptualisation of EE. At least a third of the respondents were not able to identify EE related standards in their own national curriculum. Whilst there is an absence of identifiable support for the professional growth of teachers in the field of EE, the majority of teachers are willing to promote EE and develop their skills in this area. This is coupled with the desire to standardise the delivery of EE in schools, as the current context indicates a lack of tools or instruments provided by their educational system. More specifically, teachers highlight the difficulty in assessing and tracking the non-cognitive competencies and skills related to EE.

2) Learning level - the respondents raised the question: if we talk about EE, does it imply that emotions can be taught? Despite some discussion or uncertainty around the topic, the majority of the respondents asserted that emotions are not taught, but they can nonetheless be recognised and managed. With this in mind, “social-emotional learning” appears to be more widely accepted term. The family is seen as playing a crucial role for the pupil in supporting their social and emotional development. Despite attributing this important role to the family, teachers acknowledged the impact that the school can provide. In fact, their responses strongly suggest the need for a collaborative and holistic approach between families and teachers, which can involve a number of supporting methods. More specifically, some respondents identified a role for the school to help with the assessment of emotions, with the support from the families.

3) School system level – views presented, conveyed a need for systemic change. A preference was indicated for educational systems to be designed around the needs of the students, not only from an educational point of view but also from a social and emotional perspective. The multiple causes of ESL, which differ in emphasis within each country, need to be addressed by promoting new approaches and interventions at multiple levels.
To summarise, the following are the main recommendations resulting from the research that will support the future development of the project:

- to increase the participation and dialogue with all interested stakeholders in the topics of ESL and EE, specifically teachers, as they are in constant touch with pupils.
- to offer professional development courses in EE and to include EE in initial teacher training, with tools to embed EE in their teaching activities.
- to increase the value attached to non-cognitive skills and to provide tools for the assessment of these skills, in order to track the emotional, social and academic progress of a pupil, and thereby ensuring the development of a responsible citizen.
- to adopt a holistic approach that involves the family as a key factor for the healthy emotional development of pupils, with the support of school.
- to focus the learning process more on the needs of the pupil, not only from an academic but also social and emotional perspective, highlighting the concept of individualised needs assessment.
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