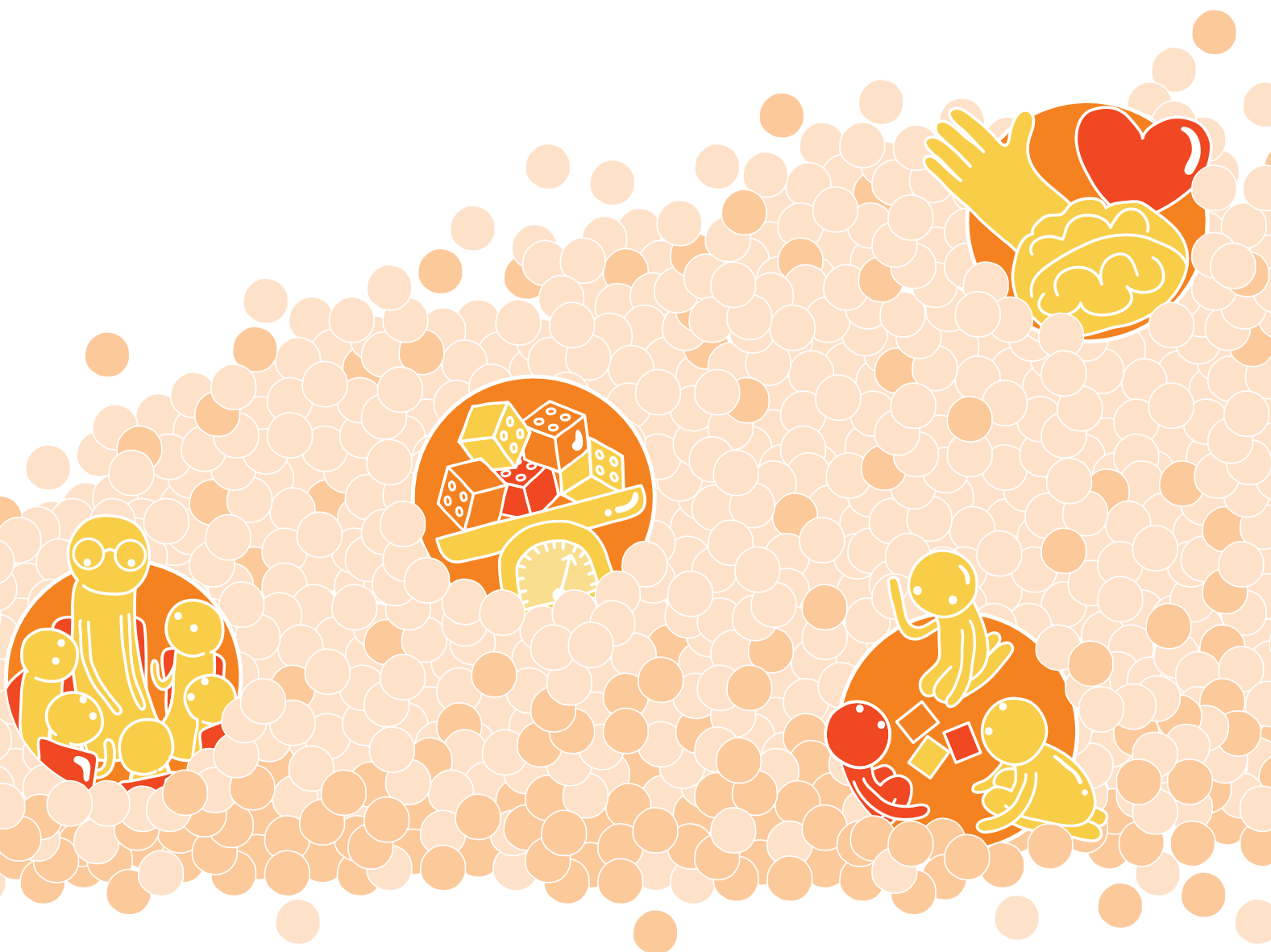


LEARNING TO BE:

Making Social and Emotional Learning Visible

Project Report & Policy Recommendations to Promote Social
and Emotional Learning in Schools



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Key messages from the Learning to Be project



Students' learning outcomes can benefit from social and emotional learning practices.

Positive tendencies in relation to student behaviour and learning as well as teachers' professional development have been captured after short-term systematic SEL interventions which took place in schools across five European countries.

However, in order to ensure sustainable learning gains, SEL-supportive culture should be embraced by schools.

The development of such learning culture (school environment) is a long-term learning journey that requires preparation, dedication and coordinated effort of the whole school community.

To this end, the values that are at the heart of SEL-supportive culture have to be translated into explicit learning objectives and become visible in daily teaching, learning and assessment practices.

The alignment of school vision and goals, learning objectives, teaching, learning and assessment practices is essential to achieve sustainable learning outcomes.



About the project

“Learning to Be: Development of Practices and Methodologies for Assessing Social, Emotional and Health Skills within Education Systems” was an experimental project implemented under the Erasmus+ Key Action 3: European Policy Experimentations programme of the European Union. The project brought together education authorities, teaching practitioners and researchers from 7 European countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Finland) with an aim to strengthen social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools across Europe.

The Learning to Be initiative was developed from the belief that assessment of learning outcomes in schools should go beyond accountability testing and favour assessment for learning as a means to support the development of students’ social, emotional, cognitive and metacognitive skills. Research indicates (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak & Weissberg, 2017; Sklad, Diekstra, De Ritter, & Ben, 2012) that SEL has a positive impact on student behaviour, relations among students and teachers, classroom environments and improved learning outcomes. As long-term benefits, increased levels of trust, respect and life satisfaction among the members of society are reported (OECD, 2015; Payton, Weissberg, Durlak, Dymnicki, & Pachan, 2008; Weare & Nind, 2011).

On one hand, national curriculum frameworks all over Europe underline the importance of social and emotional skills in education. For more than a decade, many countries have been introducing competence-based curricula that build on the existing frameworks for the 21st century skills, e.g.: “Key competences for life-long learning and other transversal skills” (references). On the other hand, schools often miss evidence-based professional guidance, practical resources and tools that would facilitate daily classroom practices and support their attempts to develop and assess students’ competences.

To address these important issues the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania together with two other partners, Lithuanian Children and Youth Centre and Social and Emotional Learning Institute, developed a project idea and invited international partners to join in. Two other ministries from Latvia and Slovenia expressed their interest to join as well as a number of academic partners from Italy, Spain, Portugal and Finland. At the end of 2016, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission selected the project for financing and the funding of €1,576,810 was granted to implement the planned activities. The project was coordinated by the Lithuanian Children and Youth Centre. Project activities started in February 2017 and continued until January 2020. During the course of the project the following actions were undertaken:

- A toolkit to support classroom teaching, learning and assessment of social and emotional skills was developed.
- During the school year 2018-2019, a 6-month-long experimental intervention study was carried out in schools in the 5 project countries. During the course of the intervention, experimental group schools were visited on a regular basis, providing training and guidance to school staff and community on implementing sustainable SEL policies. A total of 200 schools participated in the study.
- The research design involved a PRE- and POST-intervention survey of teachers’ and students’ (aged 9-10 and 13-14) social and emotional skills, beliefs and relationships and other SEL indicators in both experimental and control-group

schools. The surveys in schools were carried out in September-October 2018 and May-June 2019.

- Policy recommendations addressing teaching, learning and assessment of social and emotional skills have been prepared based on the study results and the experience of project team members as other main outcomes of the project.
- The Toolkit and other learning materials developed by the project are publicly available on an E-learning resources module on the project website:

www.learningtobe.net

In this report, we present the main project outcomes and policy recommendations for improving school and classroom practices to better support healthy social and emotional development in education systems.

Social and emotional competences

The project focused on 5 areas of social and emotional skills, introducing ways to support their development and assessment in schools.

Figure 1: Social and emotional competences (CASEL, 2019)

Self-awareness

The ability to recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, strengths and limitations, understand how they influence behaviours, develop optimism, self-confidence and a growth mindset. It includes:

- Identifying emotions
- Accurate self-perception
- Recognizing strengths
- Self-confidence
- Self-efficacy

Self-management

The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts and behaviors, manage negative emotions, strengthen motivation, set achievable personal and academic goals. It includes:

- Impulse control
- Stress management
- Self-discipline
- Self-motivation
- Goal-setting
- Organizational skills

Responsible Decision Making

The ability to make positive choices based on ethical and moral values and evaluate the consequences of various actions considering the well-being of others. It includes:

- Identifying problems
- Analyzing situations
- Solving problems
- Evaluating
- Reflecting
- Ethical responsibility



Relationship Skills

The ability to establish and maintain positive relationships, to communicate, listen, cooperate, manage conflicts, seek and offer help if needed and resist social pressure. It includes:

- Communication
- Social engagement
- Relationship-building
- Teamwork

Social Awareness

The ability to recognize other person's point of view, develop empathy and understand social and ethical norms in different settings. It includes:

- Perspective-taking
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others

What is it all about?

Before embarking on this three-year project journey, the project team identified 5 main messages which served as an inspiration for the project and guided its actions. They are as follows:



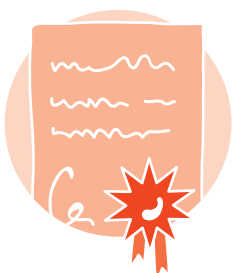
SEL is crucial for well-being and success

Consistent development of children's social and emotional skills at school has multiple benefits for individuals and society. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has been shown to contribute to better mental and physical health, higher academic achievement, well-being and healthy social progress (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017; Sklad, Diekstra, De Ritter, & Ben, 2012; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004; OECD, 2015; Belfield et al., 2015).



Making SEL visible

The project attempted to make SEL more visible to students, teachers and the whole school. This was done by means of adopting social and emotional learning objectives and embedding them into everyday classroom activities through: the use of relevant teaching strategies, providing students with opportunities to develop rich learning experiences, monitoring and assessment of student learning and results (Denham, 2015; Marzano, 2015).



Assessment beyond testing

Assessment is essential to learning, however, accountability testing has little potential to improve student social and emotional skills. The formative assessment strategies that focus on the need to dedicate time and space to student self-assessment, to feedback that moves learning forward, to peer learning and support and evoking evidence of learning in order to support further learning are of great value to students' learning (Wiliam 2011). Formative assessment is regarded in this project as "a pedagogical curriculum approach that has some process aspects of assessment" (Brown, 2019) helping students and teachers to understand their learning needs, to recognise the progress made and to guide them in developing important skills for life.



Practical and simple tools

The project proposed a practical framework for teaching and assessing social and emotional skills and easy-to-use instruments for daily classrooms. It provided tools for developing a relationship-centered environment, improving teaching methods in class and helping students assess their own SEL progress. These practices can be universally applied in all classes, by all teachers without distinction of the subjects they teach, also, by educa-

tors in non-formal learning, afterschool activities and other education settings.



Whole school involvement is important!

The whole school community is important in fostering social and emotional learning. Therefore, the project aim was to bring together school communities to discuss the value of SEL and issues related to its implementation as well as to support school administration in organising consistent SEL practices in schools.

Aims of the project

- Firstly, the project pursued a goal to create a set of learning and assessment tools for the development of social and emotional skills for primary and lower-secondary education schools.
- Secondly, the project aimed to explore the impact of these SEL practices on both students' and teachers' social and emotional learning, relationships and well-being at school.
- Finally, the project aimed to examine how SEL practices could be better supported in schools, curricula and educational systems in general and to prepare a set of policy recommendations for the future.

Focus of the project: 3 main topics

The intervention of the Learning to Be project in schools focused on 3 main topics:



1. Developing a safe & caring social environment for SEL.

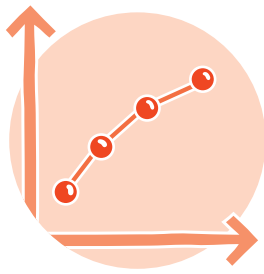
To benefit from social and emotional learning in schools it is essential to create an environment that is based on positive relationships, respect, trust, and is inclusive for every single member of school community. It requires to reflect upon school values, and in everyday undertakings to follow the agreed rules that constitute the nature of SEL-supportive school culture.



2. Promoting learning methods to support SEL in class.

Another important step in developing SEL practice is to promote daily classroom practices which provide opportunities for students to make use of their social and emotional skills. The project attempted to strengthen 11 types of learning and teaching methods that enable social interaction, build positive relationships, promote meta-cognition (thinking, reflection), help students get engaged, concentrate and improve their attentiveness. Namely, these methods were: *learning goal setting, think-pair-share, wait time, group work strategies, accountable talk, modelling/demonstration, learning via play, kinesthetic activities, reflection activities, visual organ-*

isers and feedback activities. These instructional practices can be used in all classes, regardless of the subject area, and have no age limitations.



3. Applying formative assessment strategies to develop SEL.

Formative assessment practices have been shown to significantly improve students' learning outcomes, regardless of the subject (William, 2011). The Learning to Be project attempted to link the 5 formative assessment strategies proposed by Dylan Wiliam (2011) with the main learning goals of Social and Emotional Learning, as defined by CASEL (2019). Some practical guidance on how to assess social and emotional skills was proposed to teachers.

Main outcomes of the project

The project aimed to support both students and teachers in their **learning to be** in this world with themselves and others better. The following project outcomes have been reached:

1. A model of SEL assessment for schools based on 5 formative assessment strategies, evidence-based teaching strategies and SEL learning outcomes (following the example SEL standards developed by the state of Illinois, USA). The model can support schools in developing their school vision, general goals and learning objectives for social and emotional competences. Effective assessment practices at schools should fit into daily classroom routines, provide effective feedback on how to support student learning and overall development without creating timely administrative burden on teachers. The effective assessment systems include: **1)** clear learning goals and rubrics, **2)** rich learning experiences along with support to teachers, **3)** progress monitoring and result assessment (Denham, 2015; Marzano, 2015). The current project addressed, to some extent, all three constituents.

Learning goals. In the project, it was planned to select a SEL framework from the available ones that is the most relevant for the project needs. Having analysed different SEL frameworks, the experts made a decision to use the Illinois **SEL standards** based on social and emotional competences – five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioural competencies defined by CASEL (2019), namely: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. These SEL standards describe what students should typically know, understand and be able to do in order to achieve their SEL learning goals. The consent to use the Framework for the project was received from the Illinois State Board of Education, USA.

To provide *rich learning experiences and the necessary support for teachers*, a set of teaching materials for strengthening **SEL in Class** was developed. These materials were introduced to school communities and accompanied by targeted training and continuous guidance of project schools during the intervention period. Such learning

and teaching practices for SEL can be promoted at school on three different levels: Level 1: Relationship-centered learning environment and teaching methods, Level 2: Evidence-based SEL programmes, and Level 3: Embedding SEL in subject curriculum.

Full integration of these three levels can help achieve maximum results of social and emotional learning. However, Level 1 forms the basis for creating a safe and caring, well-organised, relationship-based learning environment (culture), and for laying the foundation for successful SEL implementation at Level 2 and Level 3.

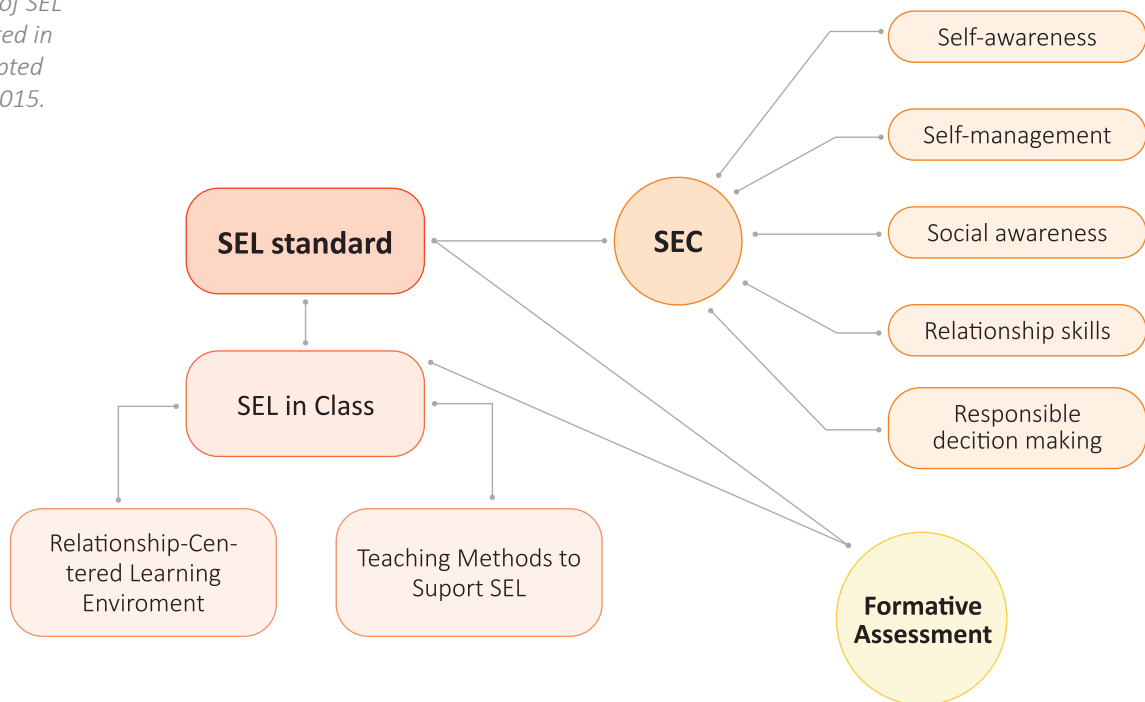
The activities of the Learning to Be project focused primarily on strengthening Level 1 practices in school.

Monitoring and assessment of student progress and results. The project team, conscious of the negative effects of high stakes summative assessments and the potential risks that assessment of social and emotional skills may pose if conducted in an unprofessional way and in unprepared environments, has deliberately prioritised formative assessment rather than the summative one.

The main elements of the model are presented in the figure below.

Assessment Model for Social and Emotional Learning

Figure 2: Model of SEL assessment piloted in the project. Adapted from Denham, 2015.



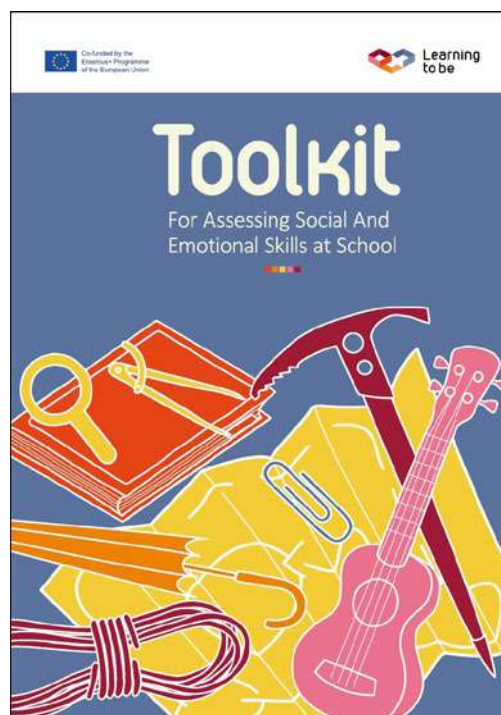
During the implementation of the project, it became evident that education systems (starting from school level) often lack a more systematic view of organising SEL, relying on occasional or scattered practices of active learning, mandatory prevention requirements (programmes), initiatives of irregular self-assessment without necessarily having a clear view of the underlying purpose and goals of such practices. Therefore, the Learning to Be project aimed to promote a more systematic approach to establishing social and emotional learning which can serve as reference for developing both local and national curricula and other policies for a more sustainable SEL.

2. Toolkit for Assessing Social and Emotional Skills at School. The Toolkit is a joint effort of all project partners. It is a practical guidebook for school teachers and school managers on strengthening SEL in schools: creating the necessary conditions for SEL, improving teaching and learning strategies in the classroom to support SEL and providing some tools for assessing social and emotional competences at the individual (student, teacher, administrative staff), classroom and the whole school (institutional) level.

The Toolkit does not replace comprehensive SEL programmes that some schools choose to implement throughout all stages of formal education, it is rather used as an introductory course, the first steps that schools need to consider if they wish to embed SEL into their classroom practices and promote the development of social and emotional skills. Although this guidebook is primarily targeted at schoolteachers, it can also be used by other educators in non-formal education, including youth workers, sports coaches, art teachers and others. We believe that it is important for all educators involved with children and the youth to share a common understanding about the nature of social and emotional learning and the guiding principles for its effective implementation.

The Toolkit served as the main instrument of practical project intervention in schools, providing educators with the basics of SEL (some theory and research data, practical tips for teaching and tools for fostering SEL and assessing student learning).

All Toolkit resources are available in English, Lithuanian, Latvian, Slovenian, Italian and Spanish languages at www.learningto-be.net/resources.



3. A set of recommendations for developing education policies to support SEL in schools. The recommendations are based on the findings of an experimental study carried out in more than 200 schools across 5 European countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Italy and Spain). The recommendations consist of two parts:

Country-specific recommendations. SEL goals are universal, however, the education systems and local contexts differ from country to country. Therefore, project partners in each of the project countries compiled a set of recommendations that address the local needs of the project member countries.

General policy recommendations. This part covers common policies to ensure sustainable SEL in schools and can be implemented in any country. These recommendations address different levels of education systems, from local classrooms to national and European dimensions.

These recommendations are presented at the end of this report.

SEL in project countries

The following pages describe the current situation, existing practices and recent policy developments related to SEL in the five trial countries where the project activities took place.

LITHUANIA

The Lithuanian national education strategy for 2013-2022 identifies goals and actions for developing social and emotional competences and contributing to solving social problems with the help of education. The third priority expresses the need *to enrich learning environments, improve prevention of harmful behaviours, ensure psychological safety of school communities, promote the development of general and professional competences, foster social, emotional, sexual and intercultural education of students, promote citizenship and reduce school dropout.*

In 2015, a concept paper called The Good School Concept was approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. The Good School Concept provides universal guidelines for school quality improvement, underlining the main features of quality education that are desirable in a contemporary school. It underlines the important aspects which are valued in a good school: personality development, self-expression in school life, teaching and learning based on dialogue and exploration, school community as a learning organisation, teachers as diverse personalities, empowering leadership and management, open and dynamic learning environment. The Good School Concept includes the fundamental requirements of SEL by emphasizing the importance of positive relationships based on empathy, care, respect and trust, ensuring students' physical and mental well-being, development of important competences for life, versatile teaching and learning and active community involvement. These ideas serve as important guiding principles in school evaluation and other policy developments.

Since 2008, the national curriculum for primary and secondary schools has outlined 7 general (transversal) competences to be learned at school. These are: *cultural competence, communication, learning to learn, initiative and creativity, cognitive competence, social and civic competence, and personal competence.* Most of these areas included some aspects of SEL, such as "understanding one's strengths and limitations", "cooperation skills" or "understanding social diversity", however, these elements of social and emotional development are scattered throughout different competences lacking developmentally appropriate learning goals for specific ages of learners. Moreover, the competence learning has been considered an "integrated learning" part of the curriculum, which means these general competences have been expected to be integrated into various subject classes or delivered through separate integrated lessons and/or programmes. In reality, however, there has been a lack of explicit learning practices focusing on these competences and educators lacked clearer understanding of what they are supposed to do and when and how they are supposed to teach them.

Moreover, there is no mandatory assessment of SEL skill learning for students and teachers. Although schools are expected to organise assessment of students' personal learning progress, these practices are considered informal and less important than standardised subject knowledge testing.

Since 2012, a number of prevention programmes focusing on social and emotional learning have been accredited for use in schools. These are mostly internationally recognised programmes such as Lions Quest, Second Step, Zippy's Friends, Un-plugged, Olweus Programme for Bullying Prevention, etc.

In 2017, a number of important changes were introduced by the state in order to strengthen child protection and improve violence prevention in Lithuanian schools. An amendment to the Law of Education (active from 1 September 2017) has made it mandatory for *every school to ensure opportunities for each student to take part in at least one long-term prevention programme aimed at developing social and emotional competences*. Besides, all pedagogical staff in schools are required by Law to *improve their professional competences in the area of social and emotional learning at least every four years*. These changes have urged schools across the country to start implementing various SEL programmes, take part in professional development courses and strengthen their prevention efforts.

Currently, Lithuania is in the process of reforming its national school curriculum. In November 2019, general requirements for renewing school programmes were approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports. Six new competence areas were identified for the renewed school curriculum, one of them is called Social, Emotional and Healthy Lifestyle competence, which is defined as a persons' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making and care for one's physical and mental health. This new learning area fully accords with the view of SEL promoted by the Learning to Be project. The competences will be embedded into the curriculum framework and their relations with subject curriculum will be identified to support the development of student competences.

LATVIA

Although Latvian legislation and regulations of education do not contain explicit reference to students' social and emotional learning, social and emotional skills are mentioned for the purposes of the Education Law. The aim of the Education Law is to ensure that every resident of Latvia has the opportunity to develop his or her mental and physical potential in order to become an independent and a fully-developed individual, a member of the democratic state and society of Latvia. Every child and youth has to be provided with an opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and experience in building healthy relationships.

The General Education Law, which is hierarchically subordinate to the Education Law, states that the pre-school educational programme shall ensure the preparation of a student for the acquisition of basic education, comprising several areas that also include intellectual, physical and social development.

Other regulations that are directly related to education state that it is essential to foster students' emotional intelligence and self-regulation.

Although students' social and emotional learning has not been explicitly emphasized in Latvian education system so far, several important initiatives have been taken in this area to improve students' social and emotional skills. In Latvia, the national social and emotional learning programme has been developed and implemented since 2012 (Martinsone & Niedre, 2013). The programme is aimed at directing teaching of social and emotional skills in the classroom in grades 1 through 12.

Since 2016, a new competency-based national education curriculum has been under development. The aim of the new curriculum is to develop, approve, and implement both content and approach of general education that will enable students to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes they need nowadays. In the new curriculum, supported by the regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers, the emphasis on both academic and social-emotional development of students is placed. The new curriculum is developed to enable students to acquire knowledge, skills and value-based habits. The concept of values is closely related to social and emotional skills such as responsibility, diligence, courage, honesty, wisdom, kindness, compassion, temperance, restraint, solidarity, justice, and tolerance.

The new curriculum will come into force in several phases starting with the school year 2019 in pre-schools, followed by grades 1, 4, 7 and 10 in school year 2020, grades 2, 5, 8 and 11 in school year 2021, and by the school year 2022, it will be implemented at every school level, including grades 3, 6, 9 and 12.

The understanding about the importance of SEL has been raised; therefore, educators still need knowledge and information on how to implement SEL in everyday teaching practices.



SLOVENIA

The Primary School Act of the Republic of Slovenia (2006) refers primarily to the objectives of social learning in stating the following learning goals for primary schools:

- Promoting the harmonious physical, cognitive, emotional, moral, spiritual and social development of the individual by respecting the developmental principles;
- Integrating students' personal development in accordance with their abilities and interests, and development of their positive self-image;
- Gaining the capacity for continuing education in their professional life with a focus on lifelong learning;
- Education for sustainable development and active inclusion in a democratic society, which enables deeper knowledge and responsible attitude towards oneself, health, other people, one's own and other cultures, nature in social life, future generations;
- Fostering respect and cooperation, accepting differences and tolerance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- The development of awareness of the complexity and the interdependence of phenomena and the critical powers of judgment.

Key agents in school environment (principles, administrative staff and teachers) are aware of the importance of SEL and its benefits but lack the knowledge and guidelines on how to do it in practice. It is up to the teachers to carry out activities, which involve these skills. Often these are isolated, non-systematic workshops and/or activities and often these are not evaluated in terms of outcomes and effectiveness. On one hand, there are initiatives on national level that promote reducing health and well-being inequalities, but on the other hand, different environments (schools, families and local communities) deal with these issues on the basis of their knowledge, skills and experience that often result in different outcomes and are increasing the differences in inequalities.

Schools are also the environment where different programmes are implemented. There are some specifically focusing on SEL (PATHS, Friends, etc.) and those targeting substance use and other risk behaviours (but include SEL components). The problem we are facing regarding the implementation of prevention programmes is similar to those in other EU countries and covers different levels of factors (individual – e.g. teachers lack skills, knowledge and tools; micro level – principles as important stakeholders also lack skills and tools; macro level – “no place in curriculum”, lack of evaluation, challenges with upscaling the programmes, etc.).

ITALY

In Italy, the national school curriculum lacks SEL embedding, so far. The Ministry of Education, Universities and Research has identified some learning goals for grades K-12 that concern social and emotional skills (e.g., listening to others, developing critical and moral thinking, cooperating, etc.), but SEL is never explicitly mentioned (see MIUR, 2012). An important turning point occurred in 2017 when a ministerial decree disciplining the certification of key competences for lifelong learning (see European Parliament and the Council, 2006) came into force. The decree promoted a new assessment culture, based on both summative and formative assessment as well as on the evaluation of competences. Among these competences, citizenship and constitution has some weak connections with SEL but its contents are designed by individual schools through projects developed locally. Furthermore, both pre-service and in-service teachers are not sufficiently trained in social and emotional skills. Indeed, courses concerning SEL are not mandatory, so they are usually attended by those who are already sensitive to the topic. This again, attests a lack of shared national education policies on SEL in the Italian context.

SPAIN

The LOE (Organic Law 2/2006 of Education) made a special emphasis on social and emotional education and learning. Specifically, article 71 states that “educational administrations shall provide the necessary means for all students to achieve maximum personal, intellectual, social and emotional development, as well as the objectives established in general terms in this Law.”

Regarding primary education (students aged 6-12), the current legislative framework that regulates the curriculum at this level is the Royal Decree 126/2014 of 28 February, establishing the basic curriculum of primary education based on the enhancement of key competences for learning. These key competences are a combination of practical skills, knowledge, motivation, ethical values, attitudes, emotions, and other social and behavioural components that are mobilised together for effective action. In addition to this general reference, some references are made to social and emotional learning as elements directly included in the curriculum of various subjects, such as Natural Sciences, Art Education or Social and Civic Values (either as contents, evaluation criteria or as learning standards).

With regard to compulsory and post-compulsory secondary education (students aged 12-16 and 16-18), the legislative framework is the Royal Decree 1105/2014 of 26 December, which establishes the basic curriculum of compulsory secondary

education and the Baccalaureate. Numerous references are made to the field of emotions or emotional learning, as elements directly included in the curriculum of various subjects, such as Performing Arts, Philosophy, Fundamentals of Art, Spanish Language and Literature or Physical Education (either as contents, evaluation criteria or as learning standards).

Although the present Law of Education recognises and includes SEL in its formulation, these competences are not well developed in the different education curricula. The integration level of SEL in compulsory education is quite basic and lacks specific training and support for the educational community. Different specific programmes are being implemented, but generally as particular initiatives coming directly from schools or at a municipal level.

Study method

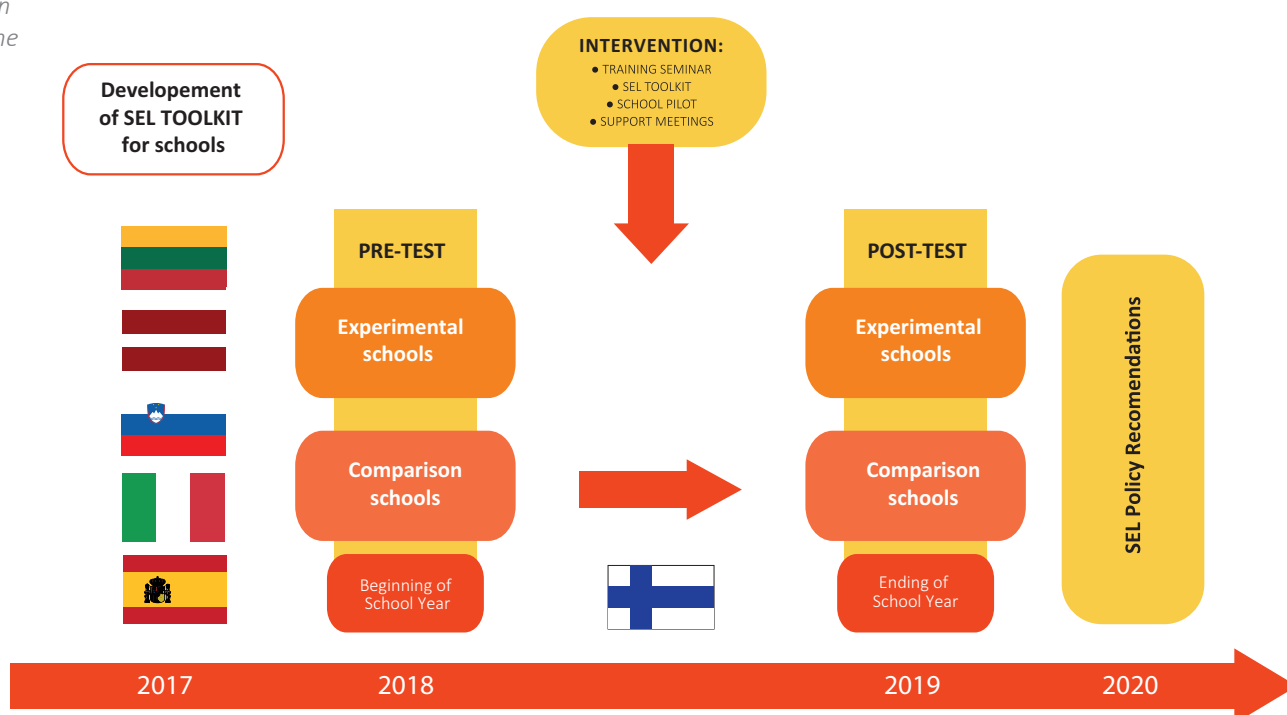
Main activities of the project

During the school year 2018-2019, the partners in five trial countries – Lithuania, Latvia, Italy, Spain, and Slovenia – conducted a quasi-experimental research study in schools that included three phases: pre-test, intervention, and post-test. The pre-test and post-test occurred, respectively, at the beginning and end of the school year, whereas the practical intervention took place during the school year only in half of the schools assigned to the experimental group.

Each country adhered to a common study protocol, following the same procedures for school training and support intervention, data collection and ethical requirements.

The study was supervised by the research coordinators' team from the University of Helsinki.

Figure 3. Main activities of the project



Intervention

The project intervention in schools was based on the material prepared in *the Toolkit for Developing and Assessing Social and Emotional Learning in Schools*. It focused on the 3 main topics of the project (see above) and provided practical guidelines for organising sustainable SEL in the whole school.

The intervention for experimental schools consisted of the following parts:

1) Training for school administrators (16 hrs).

School principals, their deputies and other members of school administration (management) play a crucial role in developing SEL and leading their staff. Therefore, school managers' group was offered introductory training on "Developing Sustainable Social and Emotional Learning at School". The training addressed the following topics: *Defining SEL and SE Competences, Steps for Integrating SEL Practices at School, Sustainability Factors for SEL, Distribution of Resources to Support SEL, Introducing the Toolkit and Project Actions*.

2) Training for teachers and the whole school community (16 hrs).

A training workshop was offered to teachers and community in each of the experimental schools. The two-day training programme was based on an experiential SEL methodology, modelling (practicing) the same methods for classroom learning, community involvement and assessment of SE skills that teachers were expected to transfer to their school life. The first part of the workshop (6 hrs) focused on understanding SEL and discussing its implementation at school. The next 10-hour programme was aimed at teachers and focused on the practical parts of the Toolkit: *learning methods to support SEL, strategies for creating a supportive social environment at school and formative assessment of SE skills*.

3) School pilot period

After the training, the experimental schools piloted the Toolkit in the classroom. The agreed duration of the pilot (intervention) continued for 5 months in each experimental school (since the end of teacher training to post-test surveys in spring 2019).

4) Support and monitoring meetings (9 hrs in each school)

During the course of the intervention, each of the experimental schools met with the project consultants three times in support and monitoring meetings. These meetings had a double purpose: on one hand, they were primarily dedicated to providing support to the schools on the implementation of the Toolkit pilot (answering practical questions, discussing problematic cases, providing additional instruction on the use of proposed tools). On the other hand, they allowed the project team to observe SEL practice, collecting qualitative data about specific aspects of implementation. Interviews with teachers and school managers conducted during these school visits also provided important qualitative insights into school SEL practices.

Study participants

SCHOOLS

In spring 2018, a number of schools in each country were invited to take part in the study based on several required sample characteristics:

- Having elementary and/or lower-secondary age classes;
- No previous experience of systematic long-term SEL programmes;
- Demographical characteristics (city, town and rural areas, ethnic minority and other typical communities in each country for representation).

Schools that matched these requirements and voluntarily agreed to take part in the study were randomly divided into two groups,: experimental (intervention) and comparison, for their role in the experiment.

The schools in the comparison group were offered the same training after the post-test phase. This research design was maintained across all five countries that carried out the field trial.

TEACHERS

Intervention group. The total research sample of *educators* consists of randomised intervention groups (see *N* in Table 1 below) in each country. Participants for the intervention group were selected by the national research coordinator from the educators (see *N* in Table 1 below) participating in the SEL intervention.

Participants met the following criteria: participate in the intervention, work in either elementary or secondary school (or another national equivalent). Educators may be schoolteachers and other personnel directly involved in educational work with children in the school community, e.g., social workers/educators, school psychologists, educators of non-formal learning programmes (art/sports groups, community & youth organisations, etc.).

Comparison group. The total research sample of *educators* consists of comparison groups (*n* = see Table 1). In order to be eligible for participation in the evaluation part of the project, participants will have to meet the following criteria: not to participate in the intervention and to work in either elementary or secondary school. The comparison groups should be as similar as possible to the intervention groups.

Table 1. Study participants: Teachers

	Italy		Latvia		Lithuania		Slovenia		Spain		TOTAL	
	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.
Training	220	*	304	*	270	*	108	*	136	*	103	*
Pre-test	153	85	166	83	104	101	103	47	144	82	670	398
Post-test	45	39	61	31	68	37	33	11	43	41	250	159

*Comparison group schools received training only after participating in the post-test.

STUDENTS

Intervention group. The total research sample of *students* consisted of intervention groups (see N in Table 2 below) in each country. In order to be eligible for participation in the evaluation part of the project, participants had to meet the following criteria: be aged between 8 and 11/12 and 15, and be taught by an educator who received SEL training. However, there are some students who report to be 8 or 12 years old, but are accepted to the target group on account of their upcoming birthday at the time of the pre-test.

These age groups were selected based on the fact that generally education is compulsory until the age of 16, thus placing these age groups at dropout risk.

Comparison group. The total research sample of *students* consists of comparison groups (see N in Table 2 below) in each country. In order to be eligible for participation in the evaluation part of the project, the participants will have to meet the following criteria: be aged between 8 and 11/12 and 15, study in one of the comparison group schools and be taught by an educator who did not receive SEL training.

Table 2. Study participants: Students

Students aged 8-11												
	Italy		Latvia		Lithuania		Slovenia		Spain		TOTAL	
	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.
Involved	1000	**	1000	**	1000	**	1000	**	1000	**	5000	**
Pre-test	584	320	501	435	269	345	193	172	409	283	1956	1555
Post-test	467	271	372	230	175	194	158	53	163	154	1335	902
Students aged 8-11												
	Italy		Latvia		Lithuania		Slovenia		Spain		TOTAL	
	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.	Int.	Comp.
Involved	1000	**	1000	**	1000	**	1000	**	1000	**	5000	**
Pre-test	604	318	198	193	293	309	103	99	376	311	1574	1230
Post-test	519	264	530	455	204	176	45	40	117	86	1052	1021

**Students in comparison group schools were not involved in the intervention, they only participated in pre- & post-test surveys.

Study ethics

All study procedures were reviewed and approved by the Ethics Board of the University of Helsinki. The following are some of the most important ethical considerations:

Informed consent

All adult participants were informed about the purposes and conditions of the study and gave consent for voluntary participation. All underage participants (students) and their families were also fully informed about the study and provided their consent to participate in the study. They also had a chance to refuse participation at any time. Moreover, children could only take part in the survey with the prior written consent of their parents (guardians).

Anonymity and data protection

All study participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. Their participation was voluntary. Before the survey, every participant had to create a unique 6-digit identification code. Later, these codes were further replaced in Helsinki by the data analysis team. To make it even more secure, all data that might potentially enable identification of individual participants (e.g. id codes, school names) was further recoded keeping it secure by the team in Helsinki.

Research instruments and data collection

Students and teachers responded to a set of questions and scales before and after the intervention. In both cases, scales were selected considering various issues: scales assessed social and emotional competences and other associated variables; scales demonstrated adequate psychometric properties in previous studies; and scales were available at least in one of the official languages of the project partners. Original versions were adapted, when needed, to the rest of the languages by following a back-translation process (Harkness & Schoua-Glusberg, 1998). In addition to selected scales, the evaluation included some demographic questions about personal variables such as gender, age, place of birth and family economic situation. Data was collected between April and November 2018. Table 3 describes some details about scales administered to students and teachers including the scale name, the construct assessed, the number of items composing the scale. More information about the scales and their characteristics can be found in a separate more detailed [Research Report](#) (link to [learningtobe.net](#)).

Table 3. Scales administered to students

Topics in student questionnaire	Number of questions/items
School engagement and motivation	14
Bullying	3
Physical and psychological well-being	18
Substance abuse	6
Self-esteem	5
Social and emotional competences	25
Background information (including socio-economical background)	7

Table 4. Scales administered to teachers

Topics in teacher questionnaire	Number of questions/items
Epistemic beliefs concerning motivation, work engagement and burnout	30
Health and well-being	29
Satisfaction with life	5
Social and emotional competences	34
Readiness to implement SEL	19
Background	4

Data collection:

Questionnaires were delivered using the online platform Survey Gizmo (<https://www.surveygizmo.com/>) and administered during regular school hours. The study was conducted in school computer rooms or in the classrooms with personal tablets. National researchers were present in schools during data collection to ensure the study protocol and assist the participants in filling-in the questionnaires.

Data analysis:

Both the statistical differences in the post-test scores between the groups and the statistical differences between the scores of the pre-test and the post-test were examined with repeated measures ANOVA (GLM). SPSS 25 was used in the analyses. The internal consistency of the students' SEL scales varied between .721- .835 (Cronbach's alpha) showing moderate to good internal consistency. The results reported are based on the sum scores of the post-test.

Study hypotheses

The study hypothesised that the school intervention on SEL assessment practices (described above) will have a positive impact on:

- 1) Teachers' experienced importance and competence to implement SEL
As well as
- 2) Students' experienced social and emotional competence;
- 3) Students' reported problem behaviour.

These hypotheses were tested by analysing the data from quantitative surveys of teachers and students.

Results of the study

Results of the quantitative PRE-/POST-research in schools

(Shortened research report prepared by: Minna Berg, Dr. Markus Talvio, Dr. Lauri Hietajärvi, Juho Makkonen, and Prof. Kirsti Lonka. University of Helsinki, Finland)

Results country by country

Research question 1: Did the SEL competence assessment practice intervention have a positive impact on teachers' perceived readiness to implement SEL learning?

Table 5. Teachers' perceived importance and competence in SEL

		Intervention				Comparison						
		Pre		Post		Pre		Post				
		n	M(SD)	n	M(SD)	n	M(SD)	n	M(SD)	F (df)	p	Partial Eta Sq
Italy	Im	38	6,6(0,37)	38	6,6(0,45)	37	6,3(0,52)	37	6,3(0,67)	.187(1,75)	.67	.003
	Co	38	5,3(0,91)	38	5,5(0,74)	37	5,3(0,74)	37	5,3(0,76)	1.09(1,74)	.30	.15
Latvia	Im	62	6,2(0,65)	62	6,0(0,65)	30	6,0(0,59)	30	6,0(0,46)	1.96(1,91)	.17	.021
	Co	62	5,3(0,62)	62	5,3(0,62)	30	5,4(0,9)	30	5,3(0,50)	.23(1,91)	.63	.003
Lithuania	Im	66	6,1(0,60)	66	6,3(0,49)	35	6,0(0,79)	35	6,1(0,74)	.93(1,100)	.34	.009
	Co	66	5,5(0,56)	66	5,6(0,56)	35	5,6(0,78)	35	5,5(0,70)	.95(1,100)	.33	.010
Slovenia	Im	41	6,3(0,67)	41	6,2(0,78)	41	6,3(0,48)	41	6,2(0,65)	2.05(1,43)	.16	.046
	Co	41	5,4(0,79)	41	5,6(0,87)	41	5,3(0,78)	41	5,4(0,84)	1.21(1,42)	.28	.029
Spain	Im	33	6,4(0,45)	33	6,6(0,49)	11	6,5(0,6)	11	6,4(0,85)	.21(1,810)	.65	.003
	Co	33	4,7(0,9)	33	4,5(0,8)	10	5,7(0,90)	10	6,0(0,66)	.43(1,81)	.51	.005

Note: Im = perceived importance, Co = perceived competence

As Table 5 shows, intervention group teachers rated their perceived importance of social and emotional learning between 6.1-6.6 on a Likert scale of 1-7 in the pre-test, showing relatively high perceived importance concerning SEL. The lowest mean value was in Lithuania and the highest was in Italy. As to their perceived SEL competence, the intervention group teachers rated it between 5.3-5.5 on a Likert scale of 1-7 in the pre-test. The lowest mean value was in Latvia and the highest in Lithuania. Repeated measures ANOVA (GLM) was used to test the gain scores between and within (pre- and post-test) groups examining the effect of the intervention with regard to mean change over time across the groups. The analyses were conducted separately

for each country and for all countries combined. The examination of the data revealed that no statistically significant changes were found in the analysis concerning teachers' SEL competencies.

Research question 2: Did the SEL competence assessment practice intervention have a positive impact on students' perceived SEL?

First, we studied the possible change in the five core components of SEL within the intervention and comparison groups as well as between these two groups in both age groups between pre- and post-tests in each of the participating countries. In the second phase we studied the possible change in the five elements of SEL as well as the possible change in problem behaviour within intervention and comparison groups as well as within both age groups between pre- and post-tests and between the intervention and the comparison groups with all the participants from all countries combined.

Table 6 describes the number of participants, mean values, standard deviations in pre- and post-tests in both intervention and comparison groups. Interaction effects of all variables of SEL are provided here country by country. The scores are presented for both age groups individually. As can be seen, significant and almost significant changes took place only after taking the variance between the age groups within both intervention and comparison groups and between measurement points (pre-test and post-test) into account. Only the interaction between intervention and comparison groups was almost significant among younger age group in social awareness in Latvia and in self-management in Lithuania.

Table 6. Number of participants, mean values, standard deviations and interaction effects of all variables of SEL country by country in alphabetical order.

Country	Age group	Variable	INTERVENTION				COMPARISON				T x IntCom			T x IntCom x Age		
			Pre		Post		Pre		Post							
			n	M(SD)	n	M(SD)	n	M(SD)	n	M(SD)	F (df)	p	d	F (df)	p	d
Italy	8-11	S1	584	4,08(0.7)	449	4,6(0.6)	320	4,7(0.7)	310	4,7(0.6)	1,578(1.1350)	.21	.001	1,165(1.1350)	.20	.001
		S2	584	4,1(0.9)	449	3,9(0.8)	320	4,0(1.0)	310	4,1(0.8)	0,011(1.1351)	.91	0	4,087(1.1351)	.04*	.003
		S3	584	3,8(1.1)	449	3,4(1.0)	320	3,7(1.1)	310	3,4(1.0)	2,227(1.1349)	.14	.002	0,165(1.1349)	.69	0
		R1	583	4,7(0.9)	449	4,5(0.8)	319	4,5(0.9)	310	4,5(0.8)	0,127(1.1346)	.72	0	0,333(1.1346)	.56	0
	12-15	R2	583	4,8(0.9)	449	4,5(0.8)	318	4,7(0.9)	309	4,5(0.7)	1,121(1.1345)	.27	.001	3,241(1.1345)	.07	.002
		S1	465	4,8(0.7)	370	4,7(0.6)	263	4,8(0.7)	262	4,7(0.6)						
		S2	465	4,0(1.0)	370	4,0(0.8)	263	4,1(1.0)	262	4,0(0.8)						
		S3	465	3,7(1.1)	370	3,4(1.1)	263	3,8(1.1)	261	3,5(1.0)						
		R1	464	4,7(0.8)	370	4,5(0.8)	262	4,7(0.8)	261	4,4(0.8)						
		R2	465	4,7(0.9)	370	4,5(0.8)	262	4,7(0.8)	261	4,5(0.8)						
Latvia	8-11	S1	501	4,5(1.0)	530	4,4(0.9)	335	4,6(1.0)	434	4,6(0.7)	0,534(1.1187)	.47	0	0,153(1.1187)	.70	0
		S2	498	3,8(1.1)	524	3,7(0.9)	333	3,8(1.1)	431	3,9(0.9)	3,395(1.1178)	.07	.003	0,299(1.1178)	.58	0
		S3	493	3,9(1.0)	523	3,7(1.0)	328	4,1(1.0)	431	3,9(0.9)	2,145(1.1168)	.43	.001	1,981(1.1168)	.16	.002
		R1	494	4,5(1.0)	515	4,3(0.9)	328	4,6(1.0)	428	4,5(0.8)	0,626(1.1170)	.43	0	0,402(1.1170)	.53	0
	12-15	R2	496	4,5(0.9)	515	4,1(0.9)	327	4,6(1.0)	425	4,3(0.9)	0,041(1.1165)	.84	0	0,015(1.1165)	.9	0
		S1	370	4,5(0.1)	330	4,5(0.8)	230	4,7(0.8)	263	4,6(0.8)						
		S2	367	3,9(1.1)	327	3,9(0.9)	230	3,9(0.9)	263	4,0(0.9)						

Country	Age group	Variable	INTERVENTION				COMPARISON				T x IntCom			T x IntCom x Age		
			Pre		Post		Pre		Post							
			<i>n</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>F (df)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>F (df)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Latvia	12-15	S3	367	4,0(1.0)	325	3,8(1.0)	230	4,1(1.0)	261	3,9(1.0)						
		R1	368	4,5(0.9)	327	4,4(0.8)	229	4,7(0.9)	262	4,4(0.8)						
		R2	367	4,4(1.0)	325	4,2(0.8)	230	4,6(1.0)	262	4,3(0.9)						
		S1	269	4,6(1.2)	293	4,8(0.9)	346	4,7(1.0)	309	4,9(0.8)	1,549(1.735)	.21	.002	3,682(1.735)	.06	.005
		S2	268	4,2(1.3)	293	4,3(1.1)	346	4,4(1.0)	308	4,2(1.0)	0,098(1.733)	.75	.002	1,977(1.733)	.16	.003
	9-11	S3	265	4,0(1.3)	294	4,3(1.0)	343	4,3(1.1)	305	4,0(0.9)	3,13(1.726)	.08	.004	0,424(1.726)	.51	.001
		R1	268	4,4(1.2)	294	4,9(.09)	344	4,8(0.9)	309	4,6(0.8)	0,134(1.730)	.71	0	1,868(1.730)	.17	.003
		R2	268	4,59(1.1)	294	4,8(.09)	344	4,6(1.1)	308	4,5(0.9)	0,109(1.731)	.74	0	2,294(1.731)	.13	.003
		S1	173	4,7(0.1)	203	5,0(0.8)	191	4,7(1.0)	173	4,8(0.8)						
		S2	173	4,3(1.1)	203	4,5(1.0)	189	4,2(1.2)	173	4,3(1.0)						
Lithuania	12-15	S3	172	4,0(1.2)	203	4,5(1.0)	186	4,0(1.2)	173	4,0(1.0)						
		R1	171	4,5(1.1)	202	5,0(0.9)	188	4,7(1.1)	173	4,7(0.8)						
		R2	172	4,4(1.2)	203	4,8(0.9)	188	4,5(1.1)	172	4,6(0.9)						
		S1	193	4,9(0.8)	126	5,0(0.8)	168	5,0(0.8)	98	5,0(0.7)	0,002(1.287)	1.0	0	0,009(1.287)	.9	0
		S2	193	4,2(1.1)	126	4,3(0.8)	166	4,1(1.2)	98	4,1(0.8)	1,846(1.285)	.18	.006	6,781(1.285)	.01*	.023
	8-11	S3	193	4,3(0.8)	126	4,2(1.0)	163	4,3(1.0)	96	4,1(0.9)	0,286(1.282)	.59	.001	0,703(1.282)	.40	.002
		R1	193	4,9(0.8)	126	4,9(0.7)	171	4,6(1.0)	98	4,9(0.7)	0,314(1.289)	.58	.001	1,361(1.289)	.24	.005
		R2	193	4,8(0.8)	124	4,7(0.8)	171	4,5(1.0)	98	4,7(0.7)	0,005(1.289)	.95	0	0,086(1.289)	.77	0
		S1	158	5,2(0.8)	45	4,9(0.9)	53	5,0(0.7)	40	5,0(0.8)						
		S2	157	4,3(1.1)	45	4,4(1.0)	53	4,1(1.0)	40	4,4(0.9)						
Slovenia	12-15	S3	157	4,3(1.2)	45	4,1(1.1)	53	4,4(1.0)	40	4,0(1.0)						
		R1	157	5,0(0.8)	45	4,8(0.8)	53	5,0(0.8)	39	5,1(0.8)						
		R2	157	4,9(0.9)	45	4,5(0.9)	53	4,7(0.9)	39	4,6(1.0)						
		S1	409	5,2(0.8)	346	5,0(0.7)	282	5,1(0.7)	416	5,0(0.7)	0,349(1.576)	.56	.001	11,549(1.576)	.001*	.02
		S2	406	4,4(1.1)	345	4,2(0.9)	280	4,1(1.1)	415	4,3(0.9)	0,878(1.570)	.34	.003	0,009(1.570)	.91	0
	8-11	S3	404	4,5(1.1)	341	4,1(1.0)	279	4,2(1.1)	412	4,1(1.1)	2,422(1.564)	.12	.004	0,142(1.564)	.70	0
		R1	405	5,1(0.8)	341	4,9(0.8)	279	5,1(0.9)	415	4,9(0.8)	0,467(1.56)	.50	.001	3,039(1.566)	.08	.005
		R2	403	5,1(0.9)	343	4,7(0.9)	278	4,9(0.9)	413	4,8(0.9)	2,117(1.563)	.15	.004	5,114(1.563)	.02*	.009
		S1	162	5,4(0.7)	84	4,7(0.9)	152	5,1(0.9)	182	4,9(0.8)						
		S2	162	4,5(1.2)	84	4,1(0.8)	151	4,2(1.0)	180	4,4(0.8)						
Spain	12-15	S3	159	4,5(1.2)	84	3,7(1.0)	151	4,3(1.1)	179	4,0(1.1)						
		R1	157	5,3(0.7)	84	4,6(0.8)	152	5,2(0.8)	179	4,8(0.9)						
		R2	157	5,3(0.7)	84	4,4(1.0)	152	5,0(0.8)	177	4,7(0.9)						

Note: *= $p < .05$. S1=Self-awareness, S2=Social awareness, S3=Self-management, R1=Relationship management, R2=responsible desition making

As Table 6 shows, when examining students' SEL country by country there were almost significant ($p = 0.07 - 0.08$) trends in some of the variables studied: Social awareness improved in the Latvian student sample in both age groups as well as in Slovenian sample of students aged 8-11. There was also a positive change in the Lithuanian 8-11-year-old student sample in both self-awareness and self-management as well as in self-awareness and relationship skills in the 8-11-year-old Spanish student

sample. Responsible decision making improved in the group of students aged 12-15 in the Italian sample, whereas there was a negative change in the same variables in the Italian sample of students aged 8-11.

Some of these changes were negative indicating that the change in question was not desirable: Italian students aged 8-11 slightly decreased in their experienced social awareness and responsible decision making. Spanish 12-15-year-old students slightly decreased in their self-awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making during the intervention. There was also a slightly negative development in the social awareness of Slovenian students aged 12-15.

The mean sum scores were taken from the multi-item measures and used as variables in further analyses. Repeated measures ANOVA tested the 'time*group' and 'time*group*age group' interaction effect examining the effect of the intervention with regard to mean change over time across groups in the variables. The analyses were conducted separately for each country and for all countries combined.

Furthermore, the difference between genders was tested as well as the possible change between pre- and post-tests between and within the age groups and it was statistically controlled for different age groups in evaluating the effect of the intervention. The possible effect of students' age and gender as background variables were thus considered.

Statistical analysis revealed that no statistically significant differences between these measurements were found when the countries were considered separately.

Results after combining the countries

During the second phase, the perceived SEL was studied across all five core components of SEL as well as problem behaviour within all the countries together. Table 7 shows the summary of the combined results.

Table 7. SEL and problem behaviour in both age groups separately in pre- and post-tests and in intervention and comparison groups. S1 = Self-awareness, S2 = Self-management, S3 = Social awareness, R1 = Relationship skills, R2 = Responsible decision making

Variable	Age group	INTERVENTION				COMPARISON			
		Pre		Post		Pre		Post	
		n	M(SD)	n	M(SD)	n	M(SD)	n	M(SD)
S1	8-11	1386	4.87(0.81)	1386	4.94(0.81)	915	4.83(0.83)	915	4.87(0.82)
	12-15	1051	4.69(0.76)	1051	4.66(0.76)	938	4.78(0.74)	938	4.74(0.77)
S2	8-11	1379	4.10(1.06)	1379	4.18(1.05)	911	4.03(0.99)	911	4.09(0.00)
	12-15	1046	3.99(0.87)	1046	4.06(0.87)	935	4.13(0.90)	935	4.15(0.88)
S3	8-11	1371	4.13(1.10)	1371	4.11(1.11)	898	4.04(1.05)	898	4.06(1.08)
	12-15	1044	3.71(0.99)	1044	3.69(1.04)	928	3.84(1.02)	928	3.79(1.06)
R1	8-11	1371	4.84(0.88)	1371	4.86(0.86)	907	4.76(0.88)	907	4.80(0.86)
	12-15	1043	4.57(0.82)	1043	4.51(0.83)	931	4.61(0.85)	931	4.59(0.87)
R2	8-11	1373	4.80(0.92)	1373	4.76(0.93)	905	4.69(0.93)	905	4.69(0.91)
	12-15	1043	4.45(0.86)	1043	4.41(0.85)	926	4.44(0.85)	926	4.52(0.91)
Problem behavior ¹	8-11	1033	-0.95(3.68)	1033	-1.34(3.32)	748	-0.99(3.34)	748	-1.24(3.82)
	12-15	877	0.61(5.05)	877	1.29(5.91)	758	0.19(4.85)	758	0.63(5.85)

Note: 1 calculated from the z-scores

AGE GROUP 1 (AGES 8-11)

Table 7 shows that the results of repeated measures GLM regarding *Self-awareness* (S1) in younger age group (ages 8-11) indicated no significant change across both groups [$F(1.2299) = 7.552$, $p = .12$, partial $\eta^2 = .028$]. In addition, no statistically significant interaction between the training (i.e., pre- and post-test) and the group [$F(1.2299) = 0.523$, $p = .47$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$] could be found. However, when examining the intervention group and comparison group separately it was found that the change was significant in the intervention group [$F(1.2299) = 7.58$, $p = .006$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$], but not in the comparison group [$F(1.2299) = 1.702$, $p = .192$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$] (see Table 7).

In *Self-management* (S2) a significant positive change could be found across intervention and comparison groups [$F(1.2288) = 8.992$, $p = .006$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$]. However, the interaction between the training and the group was not significant [$F(1.2288) = 0.136$, $p = .712$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$]. When examining the intervention group and the comparison group separately, it was found that the change was significant in the intervention group [$F(1.2288) = 7.13$, $p = .008$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$], but not in the comparison group [$F(1.2299) = 2.871$, $p = .09$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$].

In *Social awareness* (S3) no differences across the groups [$F(1.2267) = 0.004$, $p = .951$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$] or between the training and the group [$F(1.2267) = 0.324$, $p = .569$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$] were found. No significant changes between the measuring points were found in the intervention group [$F(1.2267) = 0.162$, $p = .687$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$] or in the comparison group [$F(1.2267) = 0.165$, $p = .685$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$].

The results regarding *Relationship skills* (R1) showed no changes across both groups [$F(1.2276) = 1.70$, $p = .193$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$] or between the training and the group [$F(1.2276) = 0.330$, $p = .566$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$]. Changes between pre- and post-test in both the intervention group [$F(1.2276) = 0.333$, $p = .566$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$] and the comparison group [$F(1.2276) = 1.464$, $p = .226$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$] were not significant.

No significant changes [$F(1.2276) = 0.805$, $p = .370$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$] were found across both groups in *Responsible decision making* (R2). In addition, no change was found between the training and the group [$F(1.2276) = 0.946$, $p = .331$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$]. Furthermore, the changes between the measuring points remained non-significant in both the intervention group [$F(1.2276) = 2.200$, $p = .138$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$] and the comparison group [$F(1.2276) = 0.002$, $p = .124$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$].

AGE GROUP 2 (AGES 12-15)

According to the results of the repeated measures GLM, *Self-awareness* (S1) among older students (ages 12-15) no significant change was found across the groups [$F(1.1987) = 3.737$, $p = .053$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$]. In addition, the change between the training and the group remained non-significant [$F(1.1987) = .001$, $p = .971$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$] as well as the changes between the measuring points in both the intervention group [$F(1.1987) = 2.055$, $p = .152$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$] and the comparison group [$F(1.1987) = 1.703$, $p = .192$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$] (see Table 7).

In *Self-management* (S2) the difference across groups was significant [$F(1.1979) = 5.364$ $p = .021$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$]. However, the change between the measuring point and the group [$F(1.1979) = 1.605$ $p = .205$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$] was non-significant. Further examination revealed positive significant change in the intervention group [$F(1.1979) = 6.800$ $p = .009$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$], but not in the comparison group [$F(1.1979) = 0.521$ $p = .470$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$].

No significant changes were found in the differences of *Social management* (S3) (S across groups [$F(1.1970) = 1.894$ $p = .169$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$] or between the training and the group [$F(1.1970) = 0.673$ $p = .412$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$]. No significant changes between measuring points in the intervention group [$F(1.1970) = 0.164$ $p = .685$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$] or the comparison group [$F(1.1979) = 2.278$ $p = .131$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$].

The results regarding *Relationship skills* (R1) showed a significant change across groups [$F(1.1972) = 4.532$ $p = .033$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$]. However, the interaction between the training and the group was non-significant [$F(1.1972) = 0.862$ $p = .353$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$]. The significant negative development of the intervention group was found between the measuring point [$F(1.1972) = 4.954$ $p = .026$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$], whereas no development was found in the comparison group [$F(1.1972) = 0.682$ $p = .409$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$].

The results of repeated measures GLM regarding *Responsible decision making* (R2) indicated a significant change across both groups [$F(1.1967) = 1.972$, $p = .16$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$]. However, no statistically significant interaction between the training (i.e., pre- and post-test) and the group [$F(1.1967) = 0.499$, $p = .48$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$] could be found. However, when examining the intervention group and the comparison group separately it was found that there were no significant differences between measurements in the intervention group [$F(1.1967) = 2.368$, $p = .124$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$] or the comparison group [$F(1.1967) = 0.230$, $p = .632$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$].

PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR

In the group of younger students the results of repeated measures GLM revealed a significant change across the intervention and the comparison groups [$F(1.1779) = 11.819$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .007$] in problem behaviour. However, the interaction between the training and the group was not found to be significant [$F(1.1779) = 0.620$, $p = .431$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$]. When investigating the differences between measurements in intervention and comparison group separately there was a statistical positive development in the intervention group [$F(1.1779) = 10.628$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .006$], but not in the comparison group [$F(1.1779) = 3.028$, $p = .0082$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$].

The results of the older students in problem behaviour showed that there was a significant change across groups over time [$F(1.1663) = 19.151$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .012$], whereas the interaction between the training and the group was non-significant [$F(1.1663) = 0.937$, $p < .333$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$]. The significant negative development between measuring points was found both in the intervention group [$F(1.1663) = 15.401$, $p < .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .009$] and in the comparison group [$F(1.1663) = 5.404$, $p < .020$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$].

To conclude, the interactions of the time (pre and post) and group (intervention and

comparison) were not significant showing that the effect of the intervention was vague. Pairwise comparisons showed some statistical positive and negative changes in the intervention group, even when the changes in the comparison group remained non-significant (i.e., younger students' Self-awareness, Self-management and Problem behaviour and older students' Self-management and Relationship skills).

Table 8. Change in a sum variable, called problem behaviour, that combined items concerning bullying, substance abuse and skipping school.

	INTERVENTION			COMPARISON			INTCOM		
	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>F(df)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>
Problem behavior ¹	1963	.04	.28	1548	.04	.29	.54(1.1350)	.46	0

Due to the sensitive nature of the sum variable, all the participating countries were tested as one group. Univariate analyses of Variance were used to study the possible effect of the intervention. No statistically significant change was found.

Discussion

The present study investigated the effectiveness of the toolkit designed for assessing social and emotional skills in school. The main results showed that there was no statistically significant change in the answers given by teachers in pre- and post-test phases. No significant changes were found for students when looking at the results country by country.

When we combined the countries, it appeared that there was a favourable development in the intervention in terms of the experienced self-awareness and self-management of the younger age group (8-11). In the older age group (12-15), only the experienced self-awareness increased over time in the intervention group, but not in the comparison group. In this age group, the relationship skills even decreased in the intervention group. It appeared that the intervention had some added value especially among the younger participants that could not be explained based on the development during the six months. However, considering that the interactions were not significant, we cannot conclude that the intervention was the reason for the changes among the students.

Because the intervention was about assessing the SEL skills, it is possible that it only raised the self-awareness of the students but did not quite reach the level of improving their skills. Puberty may have influenced the teenager group, it may have made it difficult for them to manage themselves, and becoming aware of their self-management problems may have made the experience of their relation skills even lower than before the intervention. Looking at these results makes sense: starting to assess and reflect on one's SEL skills is the first step towards developing such skills. It is possible that teachers and their students learned from the intervention as students started to be aware of their own behaviour. This is a good start for future learning of these skills, and it is worth to further continue the efforts in teaching SEL more specifically.

The research methods should also be reflected on. The analysis method, including the questionnaire, simply did not capture the participants' learning in this case. Despite the satisfactory psychometric properties of the questionnaire, the instrument may have been too long and in some respect inappropriate for the targeted age groups of the students. It may also be that, despite the back-translation process, the questionnaire did not benefit different cultures due to translation difficulties associated with cultural expressions. As far as the teachers are concerned, the problem most likely did not lie in the measurement instruments, as the same measures previously captured teachers' development of SEL in different countries. These previous studies were on well-established and well-structured instructional procedures such as Lions Quest (Talvio, Berg, Litmanen, & Lonka 2016; Talvio, Hietajärvi, Matichek-Jauk, & Lonka 2019). Such programmes do not only aim to assess SEL but also provide specific tools for developing related skills. Because there could be as many as six months between the pre- and post-tests, there may have been other developments in the life of the students that could not be differentiated from the effects of the intervention.

Collecting post-data right before the end of the school year might have affected the answers of both the teachers and their students. For teachers, the measurement point may have been too wide apart and the content possibly learned during the intervention was forgotten due to the heterogeneous nature of the teachers' workload. Teachers can also be busy with evaluation processes as well as different school activities concerning the end of the school year. At the same time, students can be disengaged and focused on the upcoming summer holiday. Therefore, it is possible that teachers and their students learned more than what the post-test showed.

Of course, it is also possible that the interventions were not effective in the short term. They were newly developed and the time for their testing and their further development might have been too short. Indeed, many established SEL trainings have been available for over 30 years, during which time they have been continuously developed based on the feedback of teachers and their students. Accordingly, the development of SEL interventions may require more time and continuous interaction between the programme developers, practitioners and policy makers. In addition, the studies of expertise take time to transform knowledge into skills (e.g., Ericsson, 2007). From this point of view, it is possible that the measuring points were too close to each other for the teachers to become experts in teaching SEL, and, accordingly, for the students to gain knowledge (from the teachers) that would have then transformed into skills with sufficient amount of practice.

It was important, however, that the research partner was independent of those who carried out the interventions. This applies especially in the case like this, where the results are not quite desirable. Nevertheless, we think that this is also an important research result: there were no obvious changes in the actual relationship skills by using this kind of intervention design. More work is needed to develop the interventions further, from assessing the SEL skills to systematically training them during a longer period of time. It would also be important to test the actual skills in different contexts with more fine-grained research instruments.

More detailed contextual information about specific schools would have been enriching, but the current ethical and GDPR regulations of the EU did not allow us to

risk the anonymity of the participants. Some schools were so small that there were only two teachers. Revealing the school name would have also revealed their identity. Large-scale studies have their benefits but may hide some important contextual variation. However, participating countries are preparing additional analysis regarding the data content concerning exclusively the teachers and students of their own country. In addition, the qualitative research based on the monitoring procedures of the intervention is being conducted at the University of Latvia by Dr. Baiba Martinsone (in progress) and it may reveal more about the contextual aspects of the interventions. We shall also see whether some starting points of the teachers and students would have resulted in the so-called ATI (aptitude-treatment interactions). Such questions were not included in the research problems of the project goals, but we shall be able to use the data in order to test some new hypotheses. Overall, the project produced important added value of the complexity of SEL issues and inspired many new research questions.

Conclusions

Even the most popular SEL approaches used at school do not always present strong evidence of effectiveness in learning SEL (Corcoran et al. 2018), even though many intervention studies with quasi-experimental design carried out by using pre-validated questionnaires have been practical in assessing well-known established SEL interventions. We found out that starting to focus on the assessment of SEL alone appeared to change the participants' self-awareness, regardless of the age group. The younger participants even learned some self-management skills that were more difficult for the teenagers. Assessing SEL was an important starting point for this may indicate that interventions should be started before the stormy phase of puberty. However, regarding new SEL interventions more detailed contextual and qualitative approach in investigations would probably give more understanding of how the interventions could be further developed.

The full Research Report from the Learning to Be project can be accessed on the project website: www.learningtobe.net

Results of the qualitative study

INDICATORS OF SELF-REPORTED BENEFITS OF LEARNING TO BE PROJECT INTERVENTION: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF MONITORING DATA

(Report prepared by Dr. Baiba Martinsone, University of Latvia)

In order to adapt teaching practices to students' needs and intentionally implement SEL in classrooms, teachers must be able to evaluate the development of their students' social and emotional skills. Teachers reflected on their understanding of evidence of students' social and emotional growth two times. First, the experimental group teachers expressed their opinions directly after the initial teachers' training (see Table 9).

Table 9. Categories and themes with example quotations of teachers' answers to the question: Which signs will make your students' SEL development visible? after the initial teachers' training.

CATEGORY	THEMES	EXAMPLE QUOTATIONS
Skills from the domains of SEL	Self-awareness Self-management Social awareness Relationship skills Responsible decisions	"Understanding of themselves" "Will be able to control their emotions and behaviour" "Better relationship" "The decision-making skills will improve"
General statements without measurable indicators	Class and school climate Improvement of working atmosphere in lessons Emotional well-being	"Feeling better at school" "Responsible work during lessons" "More interest in personal growth" "Better health" "More autonomy" "Understanding of their own place in the system of education"
Observable and measurable indicators	Improvement in academic performance Evidence of improvement in self-reflection (ability to reflect verbally and in a written form) Signs of active participation	"Higher grades" "Will demonstrate initiative by asking relevant questions" "After a lesson, will be able to say what have learned, what still remains unclear" "After problematic situations, students will be able to analyse their own behaviour and that of others; will be able to define causes and consequences of a situation" "Improvement of quality of notes in self-assessment cards" "Students who were previously afraid to express their views are doing so now" "Will decrease school nonattendance"

It was obvious that teachers were expecting a positive improvement in their students' social and emotional skills; therefore, they mentioned mostly general statements and skills from the five SEL domains (that relationships will be better, students will be more motivated, kids will be happier, etc.). Only a small part of respondents was able to indicate specific and measurable indicators of their students' social and emotional development such as "will be able to mention at least three emotions" or "will be able to say what they have learned." This finding arose Learning to Be experts' awareness that during the supervisions, attention must be paid in order to clarify to participants how SEL can be conceptualised and made measurable. Next, teachers' opinions were collected by school consultants during regular supervisions. These responses were analysed thematically, and the results demonstrated that teachers' ability to identify indicators of their students' social and emotional development was significantly improved (see Table 10).



Table 10. Categories and themes with example quotations of teachers' reflections during supervisions with regard to evidence of their students' social-emotional growth.

CATEGORY	THEMES	EXAMPLE QUOTATIONS
General statements	SEL skills Involvement Evaluation of Toolkit	<p>"They are more autonomous", "They are more self-aware of their emotions", "Relationships between students became better"</p> <p>"They are also more motivated to do their best"</p> <p>"Students are attentive to these activities because they are new and seen as a game, and they all participate very attentively"</p> <p>"The self-assessment booklet for students was very useful"</p>
Observable and measurable indicators	Safer learning environment Improvement of relationships Changes in academic performance and involvement Discipline issues Social competence Problem solving Self-reflection Emotional awareness	<p>"Kids no longer hurry to go home. School has become a place where they feel good. Kids socialise, do their homework or just rest in these "islands" (new socialising areas at school)"</p> <p>"In a pair, a girl and a boy were not friends and didn't like each other. Now they talk, are kind and nice to each other (in the canteen he caressed her cheek)"; "In a group, students took turns to support a boy with difficulties"</p> <p>"From lesson to lesson, they remember what we said", "During narratives, my colleague read, and I observed the class. I see they follow the reading and are focused"</p> <p>"They correct each other when they see inadequate behaviours", "Children are not allowing each other to cheat, silence those who misbehave"</p> <p>"Those children who used to be quiet now become involved", "The shyest are more open and the most exuberant are calmer", "Children started paying more attention to one another, react more to each other's words, calm each other down, notice when somebody is absent"</p> <p>"Children started to negotiate and cooperate in order to deal with different situations", "Students talk more to each other and to us to find solutions to their problems"</p> <p>"After group work, they completed their self-assessment. They confirmed they prefer learning this way"</p> <p>"Children have started using phrases like "I'm anxious", "I'm angry, because..."", "Children... identify their feelings, emotions, are able to tell (describe) the situation"</p>

The answers mostly included observable and measurable indicators of improved social and emotional skills of students. In comparison with the results before the intervention, teachers became more capable to define clear evidence of SEL with regard to both individual and whole class/school level. Only a small part of quotations were general statements or included external evaluation of Toolkit.

I. CONCLUSIONS:

I. a. During the monitored Learning to Be intervention, teachers in all trial countries developed their ability to identify evidence of their students' social and emotional growth. Instead of naming general statements, teachers became more capable to find SEL-specific, explicit and measurable indicators of improvement of

their students' skills. Intentional observation and assessment of non-academic skills is a key competence in order to adapt teaching practices and provide effective SEL in school.

I. b. Teachers reported their students' skill improvement in all domains of SEL

skills: self-awareness and management, social understanding and relationship skills, as well as problem solving and decision making.

Monitoring data also provided an insight into teachers' own gains from participation in the Learning to Be intervention. Approximately 4 months after the start of the intervention, national conferences were held in each participating country. During these conferences, teachers were asked to reflect on their own gains from participation in the Learning to Be project. Thematic analysis of written answers from LV and SLO was performed (see Table 11).

Table 11. Categories and themes with example quotations of teachers' answers to the question: What have you gained after the 4-month active implementation of the SEL Toolkit?

CATEGORY	THEMES	EXAMPLE QUOTATIONS
Personal growth	Emotional expression Self-confidence Self-management Personal-behavioural Personal-communicative	"I am empathetic and increasingly patient" "I know how to stop and breathe" "I started to communicate with my students more emotionally, so our relationship became more in-depth" "I have become more socially responsible and also help strangers" "The project inspired me to change my attitude towards parents as partners"
Professional	Devoting time to SEL Professional collaboration Using new methods	"I started to focus more on HOW to teach, not WHAT to teach" "To set SEL as priority" "Now, I cooperate well with colleagues" "In my daily routine, I implemented such methods as Wait Time and Traffic Lights" "Now, I provide feedback more intentionally"
General statements		"With simple approach, we are able to make big changes" "There is still room for improvement" "I am on the right track" "It is better not to stick onto things that cannot be resolved"

These responses mostly covered personal and professional gains of the teachers. Only few answers were formal. Awareness of the importance of the teacher's own social and emotional competence is crucial in successful teaching, assessment and implementation of SEL in their classrooms.

II. CONCLUSION:

II. a. Teachers appreciate their participation in the Learning to Be project. They re-

port on personal and professional gains. The main self-reported personal gains were associated with improved expression of emotions, boosted self-confidence, better self-management and different gains on behavioural and communicative levels. Professional gains are established or developed through collaboration with colleagues, competence in applying new teaching methods (provided by the Toolkit), as well as intentional allocation of time to SEL.

With regard to the project outcomes in other areas, teachers and school administrators identified such aspects as active implementation of the Toolkit and extension of methods within other situations; establishing new or strengthening existing practices (regular meetings of educators that include discussions, planning, methodological and emotional support); collaboration with school consultants; establishing SEL school network across the country; strengthening the school as a learning community (all participants learn – administration, teachers, students, sometimes technical staff and also parents); research data provides insights into necessary future improvements throughout the school, etc.

III. CONCLUSION:

III. a. Participants (teachers and administrators) reported on a wide range of improvements at the whole school level. Among them was the development of a whole-school approach to SEL, incorporation of L2Be intervention in other well-developed systems (providing link with other projects that schools were running; opening space for SEL planning and assessment of non-academic skills; making data-based decisions with regard to students' social and emotional development, etc.)

Recommendations for SEL policy development

The primary purpose of the project was to support the development of education policies to promote a more sustainable social and emotional learning in schools. During the implementation of the project, it has become evident that education systems and social contexts (culture, society) in all partner countries differ; therefore, the policies of social and emotional learning need to be addressed separately tailoring them for each local/national context. Nevertheless, some common aspects of policy to promote social and emotional learning in schools have also been identified and recommended.

The following pages present some of the recommendations for policy development created by the project team. The recommendations are based on:

- Existing literature and education policy review;
- Findings of the experimental study conducted during the project;
- Results of the qualitative interviews conducted during support and monitoring visits to project schools;

Insights from the discussions with education community stakeholders in all partner countries (local and national authorities, school managers, teachers, students and parents, education experts and researchers).

Country-specific policy recommendations

The following section introduces some country-specific recommendations for SEL policy development prepared by project partners in each country.



LITHUANIA

- **To embed social and emotional skills into the national curriculum.** Learning objectives that are focused on the development of social and emotional skills are to be included into the national curriculum and linked to the subject curriculum to ensure a holistic, consistent, and inclusive approach to the development of social and emotional skills.
- **To allocate teaching and learning time to SEL.** To reconsider the allocation of teaching and learning hours to subjects in the national legislation to ensure effective SEL implementation, taking into consideration the following proposals: 1) At least one hour a week for implementation of SEL, 2) to free up time in teachers' schedules for self-analysis, reflection and necessary improvements in teaching, 3) to allocate additional time to a student with special educational needs.
- **To reconsider assessment policies and practices.** It is necessary to reconsider assessment policies on the national level by recognising teacher-led assessment results in the final summative assessments of student achievement; the examples that can be facilitated include personal progress portfolios, learning journals/logs, learning badges, etc.
- **To support teacher assessment literacy.** Teacher assessment literacy has to be

improved by helping all teachers across the country to acquire skills necessary for effective implementation of formative assessment strategies, conducting sound and fair summative assessments and use of assessment evidence to improve student learning.

- **To ensure consistent, long-term, and evidence-based teacher training on SEL.**

Teacher training programmes should focus on 1) teachers' capacity to effectively develop students' social and emotional skills, 2) improving teachers' own social and emotional skills: perfecting emotional awareness, self-management and relationship skills, personal wellness (these are important for better teaching quality and well-being of both teachers and learners; the possible examples include supervision groups, peer counselling, training seminars), 3) SEL courses for pre-service teacher training in universities and colleges.

- **Building SEL-supportive school culture.** The administrative staff is crucial in promoting SEL in schools. Internal and external quality assurance systems need to be in place to ensure adequate support for school administration in promoting SEL-supportive and inclusive culture in schools.

LATVIA

- The curriculum should set SEL as one of the competences that students must learn.
- To provide successful SEL implementation, it must start from an early age. The younger student perceives SEL better and thus benefits more.
- SEL culture has to be implemented at school level (at least) and not individually. All school members have to contribute to SEL implementation and training.
- School leaders have a vital effect on SEL implementation quality. They have to take full responsibility and duties to coordinate successful SEL implementation in school. School management must be responsible (or at least involved) and lead the SEL process, because it has a vital effect on SEL implementation.
- It is important to communicate to school (and education) representatives that change begins with them.
- SEL assessment should be carried out on a regular basis on our national level. We propose that SEL assessment be set as one of the indicators of school accreditation.

SLOVENIA

National level:

- To ensure continuous education and training for teachers and other school staff (also in teacher preparation programmes and schools (training programmes) for principles).
- To promote the importance of SEL in society (taking into account existing/established networks that could help in promotion, e.g., Healthy Schools Network).
- To improve school policy in terms of greater emphasis on the importance of SEL and systematic integration of SEL skills into the curriculum.
- To establish an inter-sectoral group that would formulate criteria for quality and evaluated programmes.

- To use European funds for dissemination of quality programmes and initiatives – upscaling.

School level

- To ensure continuous education for school management.
- To develop written guidelines and recommendations for school principles (e.g., what is effective, assessment, registry of evidence-based practices, how to work with/engage parents).

Teachers

- To provide continuous education of teachers (importance of SEL, development of teachers' own SEL skills).
- To assure the quality of workplace (less administrative work, support from the school principle).
- To provide time for good planning of SEL vision, activities, assessment tools, feedback and team meetings during the year.

ITALY

So far, in Italy, the initiatives related to SEL come from single schools or comprehensive institutes. Hence, policy recommendations should target the state level in particular. This is a list of country-specific policy recommendations:

- **Mentioning explicitly the SEL model (CASEL) in the next National Guidelines for the Curriculum of the Pre-primary School and the First Cycle of School Education.** In fact, the new Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (Council of the European Union, 2018) explicitly cited the SEL model, so the national guidelines should also include it coherently. Overall, both academic and social-emotional aspects should be included in national curricula. However, attention should be paid less to the quantity of academic topics and more to the quality of teaching, e.g., dedicating enough time to integrating SEL into curricula since it takes time to carry out these activities; leaving time for circle time and free discussions among students and teachers to enhance their relationships. Moreover, the national document should *clearly identify national standards of students' SEL that can be assessed and reported in a shared national grid* – it is currently developed by every single school and parameters of assessment may vary.

- **Introducing national training on SEL and SEL assessment for teachers, both newly hired (who must spend a certain number of hours in courses before being in service) and in service.** At the moment, the Ministry of Education offers some courses for teachers' professional development within different areas: they are mostly subject-related and only one area may be more related to social and emotional aspects. It is called "Class Cohesion and Management" and the specific contents of the courses within this area are not clearly specified by the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, it is important that SEL is not explicitly mentioned. Hence, SEL should be included in the "Class Cohesion and Management" area as a module in the mandatory teachers' professional development. The trainers in these courses should be experts in SEL and hired by the Ministry of Education.

- **Introducing a national course on SEL and SEL assessment for pre-service teachers and educators in universities.** At the moment, they are offered in some

departments, but they are not compulsory for students.

- **Introducing national training on SEL and SEL assessment for school principals, offered regionally or provincially.** Currently, school principals meet periodically only to be updated or to discuss administrative and management issues, and no courses are offered nationally. It is important that they are aware of bureaucracy as well as of SEL at school.

- **Identifying one or more SEL representatives in each school, officially recognised by the Institute and the Ministry as promoters of SEL initiatives.** For instance, they are in charge of periodical monitoring of changes in SEL, promotion of global approach, and collaboration with families. With regard to families, SEL representatives can organise formative/informative meetings every year, e.g., at the beginning and end of the school year, to explicitly communicate to parents the SEL mission, raise awareness of the importance of SEL, and give an update on initiatives and changes. SEL representatives can be appropriately trained teachers (the “Champion” of the school, who is enthusiastic about SEL initiatives and has specific knowledge and competences) and/or psychologists specialised in SEL (they should have multiple tasks, such as monitoring, supervision, psychological support, student and teacher guidance; they should also be in charge of a compulsory screening of social and emotional competences of in-service and newly hired teachers, e.g., through psychological counselling and psychological/attitudinal tests).

- **Increasing nationally the hours of co-planning and co-teaching for every grade,** in order to promote shared planning and implementation of SEL activities at school. This way, teachers will have the opportunity to realise SEL activities, observe and assess students together with another colleague in the same situation in the classroom.



SPAIN

- School policies and programmes should emphasise the importance of SEL knowledge in students from the beginning of school curriculum. Among other activities, teachers and other professionals working with students should help them understand their social and emotional skills by showing the importance of identifying, recognising and managing basic emotions.

- Once the importance of SEL is recognised, it is important to create habits for working with them. It can be done by developing programmes, resources and tools focused on adapting the work with SEL to the great diversity of contexts that take place in different schools, as our Toolkit does.

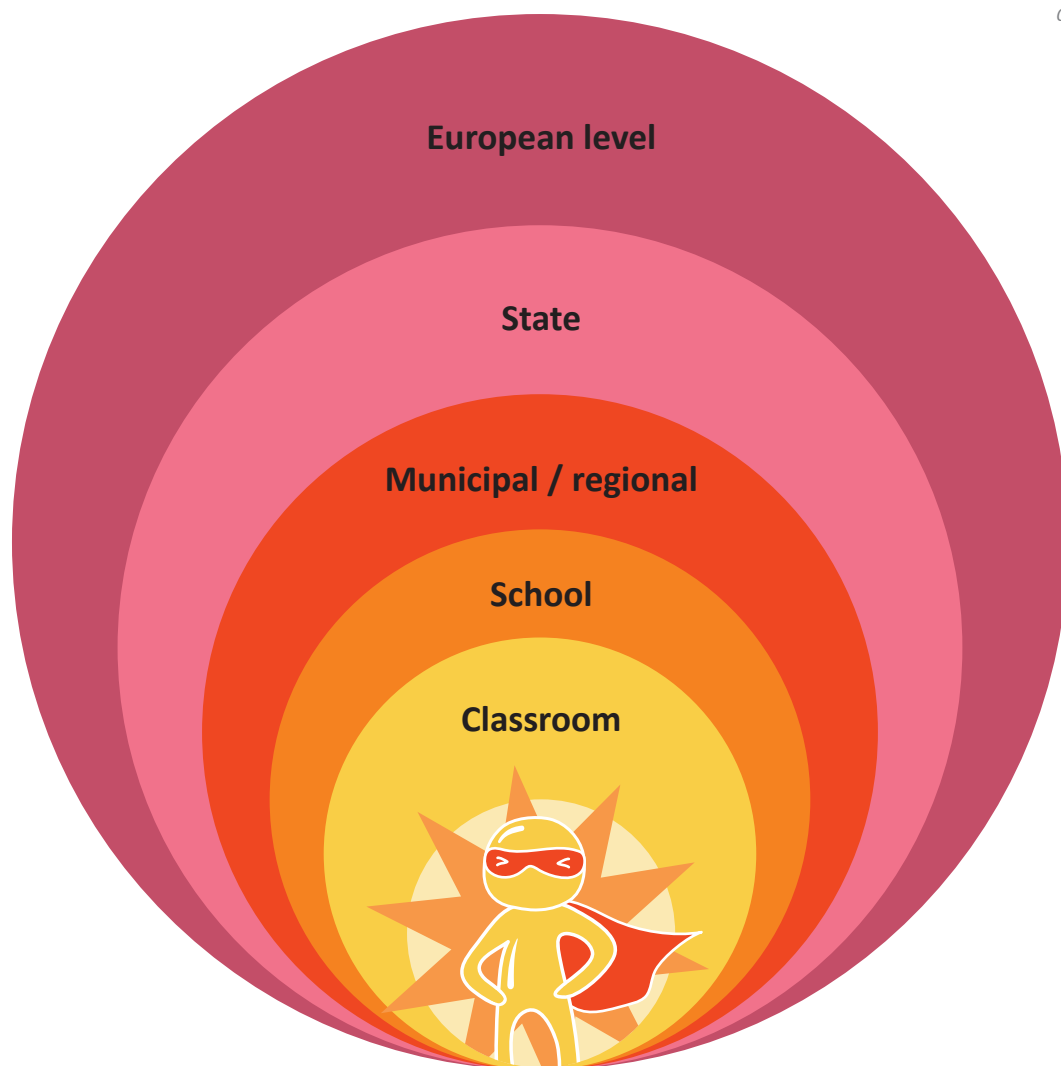
- Considering specific results in Spain, new programmes should focus on the abilities where students score lower. Specifically, a great deal of effort is needed in working with self-management and social awareness.

- Our SEL, other related variables should be considered an important part of development in the student’s daily life. Among them, special attention should be paid to self-esteem, as it declines significantly after the age of 12.

General policy recommendations for promoting sustainable SEL in schools

Here is a set of common policy recommendations that have stemmed from the project actions. These recommendations address different levels of education systems, from the local classroom all the way up to the international European level. At their centre, there is a young person – a student whose learning, positive development and well-being are the main objectives of SEL.

Figure 4. Levels of SEL and related policy areas



CLASSROOM LEVEL:

Rich learning experiences in safe and inclusive learning environments

HOW TO CREATE A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT?

To develop shared classroom rules and behaviour expectations

Shared classroom rules contribute to positive behaviours, respectful communication and effective collaboration. They also help set examples of positive behaviour norms and expected academic conduct. Engaging students in the development of these rules can ensure their participation in the democratic process of the classroom, community and societal life. All instances of bullying, harassment and other forms of violence should be explicitly addressed and stopped immediately. Positive behaviours and positive change should always be noticed and encouraged.

To embrace an inclusive approach

Every child needs to benefit from SEL. While acknowledging the diversity of students' needs, the appropriate forms of student engagement in classroom activities should become available to each and every student. Teachers should be sensitive to students' individual and special needs. All levels of participation should be welcome.

HOW TO PROVIDE RICH LEARNING EXPERIENCES?

To align learning goals with teaching, learning and assessment practices

In order to develop students' social and emotional competences, learning goals need to translate into effective teaching practices that provide students with rich learning experiences and opportunities to self-assess their progress. These learning practices activate students' social and emotional skills.

To prioritise formative assessment over summative assessment in daily classrooms

Effective classroom assessment focuses on encouraging students to set learning goals, enabling them to reveal their potential in different learning settings, providing them with feedback that "moves learning forward", including opportunities for self-assessment, peer assessment and classroom assessment (William, 2011).

See the Learning to Be Toolkit ([link](#)) for more practical tips and tools on creating caring environments and providing rich learning practices in the classroom.



SCHOOL LEVEL:

Developing and nurturing SEL-supportive culture in schools

HOW CAN SCHOOLS DEVELOP A CULTURE OF SUPPORT AND APPRECIATION TO SEL?

To promote values that endorse social and emotional growth of the young and the adults

School vision and values should explicitly refer to social and emotional attributes. Head teachers are the ones to communicate their vision to the community and to make sure that everyone understands it appropriately.

To enact school vision

By making school vision and values “visible” in daily school life and placing high value on the activities that foster students’ social and emotional growth schools are likely to achieve success. The following actions are important:

- Setting clear behavioural expectations for both students and staff. Reviewing and agreeing on a common code of conduct among all community members (including students’ parents, technical staff and partners).
- School principal recognising and articulating the importance of SEL to the community.
- Involving the whole school community in SEL development. Forming school-family partnerships, making clear agreements on family participation in the learning; involving students and the school community in decision making.
- Providing opportunities for students to practice their SEL skills through daily classroom activities, long-term specific SEL programmes, school events, project assignments, community service learning, participation in school decision making, after-school/non-formal learning, assessment and reflection practices, etc.
- Effective SEL programmes and practices should follow the SAFE model: be Sequenced (connected with each other), use Active forms of learning, be Focused on social and emotional development, and Explicit in targeting specific learning SEL objectives (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, & Taylor, 2011; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017.)
- Coordinating SEL actions and staff responsibilities at school. Assigning responsible persons, agreeing on clear responsibilities, forming a SEL development team.
- Developing staff competences in coordination and delivery of SEL.

To reflect on daily practices

Schools should become self-improving systems that identify their challenges and provide immediate response by facilitating professional debate about the ways which can serve the social and emotional growth of students, teachers and other community members. Practices such as teachers watching each other teach, self-reflection groups, “learning buddies”, school climate surveys, etc. could be helpful.

To communicate and celebrate success

No matter how small the win is, celebration of every success builds community self-belief, motivation and inspires others to improve. Communicating your SEL success in the local community and beyond can also help involve students’ families better and form new meaningful partnerships. Ongoing communication through a variety of means helps to build support and maintain enthusiasm.



MUNICIPAL / REGIONAL LEVEL:

Monitoring and support for SEL initiatives

HOW COULD REGIONAL AUTHORITIES SUPPORT SEL IN THEIR SCHOOLS?

To coordinate and support school efforts to implement SEL

Facilitating teacher training, providing financial support for schools to implement SEL in formal education as well as in afterschool initiatives, making psychological services available to children and adults, promoting school networks and cooperation between schools, encouraging cooperation with other partners and stakeholders are the few examples of how regional authorities could contribute to promoting and sustaining SEL.

To monitor implementation of SEL to improve the quality of learning

By collecting and monitoring data on school climate, bullying, student engagement and motivation, etc. the regional authorities can enable schools to improve SEL policies and practices.

Promoting local multi-sectoral cooperation for SEL

Encouraging cooperation between local schools, health institutions, social services, law enforcement services, NGOs, private and other sectors in order to increase SEL impact. Coordinating local actions for the benefit of children and young people's social and emotional development.

NATIONAL LEVEL:

Embed social and emotional competences into national curriculum and set requirements related to teachers' social and emotional competences

HOW CAN NATIONAL AUTHORITIES CONTRIBUTE TO SEL?

To make SEL visible in the national legislation

- Explicit reference to social and emotional competences in the national curriculum and subject syllabus is a strong message to educational community that gives prominence to SEL in formal education.
- To redesign the current assessment system in order to embrace assessment for learning culture that is based on student self-assessment and progress monitoring, teacher appraisal to perform their role effectively, and coherent external and internal evaluation of school performance.

To protect classroom assessment from the negative effects of student testing and school ranking.

To ensure policies aimed at teachers' professional growth

- Introducing SEL into pre-service teacher training programmes in universities;
- Setting specific qualification requirements for teachers' and head teachers' professional development to address social and emotional competences.

To monitor state level implementation of SEL

In order to plan effective educational policies, the monitoring of SEL related factors such as student achievement, bullying, physical and emotional health, life satisfaction, etc. should be undertaken at the national level.

To encourage national multi-sectoral cooperation to promote SEL

To promote the added value of SEL on the national level it is necessary to establish partnerships among different stakeholders: schools, universities, health and social services, law enforcement, NGOs and others. Making use of their expertise can contribute to the quality and sustainability of SEL in schools.

EUROPEAN LEVEL:

Promoting LifeComp framework, strengthening networks and supporting cooperation

To promote social and emotional competences on the European agenda:

- Integration of LifeComp framework for the Personal, Social & Learning to Learn Key Competence by EU member states.
- Encouraging member states to develop and monitor indicators of SEL;
- Cooperating with the organizing bodies of PISA, ICCS, HBSC and other international surveys for better understanding of SEL and its assessment.
- Forming European expert workgroups to improve SEL policies and practices.

To support international cooperation and sharing of good SEL practices in Europe (Erasmus+, etc.):

- International research and study projects;
- Cooperation and development projects;
- Support for school policy reforms in member states;
- Support international networks working on SEL.

Proposals for future actions

The Learning to Be project was a learning journey that helped project partners to promote SEL and strengthen SEL-supportive teaching and learning practices in their countries' schools. Based on this experience, several proposals for potential future actions can be identified:

ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY OF SEL IMPLEMENTATION

Additional effort is required in order to ensure sustainability of SEL practices in schools. This could involve actions on different levels aimed at improving the conditions for SEL (developing national curricula, school requirements, guidelines and other legislation), fostering SEL-supportive school culture and improving professional skills of teachers and school leaders. School leaders (school principals and their teams) play a crucial role in the implementation of SEL practices. Therefore, further actions should focus on developing their competences in coordinating SEL, managing their school teams, fostering school and community partnerships and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning practices at school.

INCLUDING SEL INTO SCHOOL CURRICULA

A crucial step in ensuring SEL sustainability is integrating SEL into national school curricula.

In order to ensure the continuity of social and emotional development, school curricula should include explicit and developmentally appropriate learning goals for students of all ages. They should also set the necessary requirements for the number of study hours, learning methods, assessment policies and other guidelines for organising SEL in schools.

ADULT SEL

It goes without saying that teachers cannot be expected to teach something they haven't studied (learned) themselves. Therefore, it is essential to create more opportunities and design new ways for adult educators to develop their own social and emotional competences. Such adult SEL programmes could focus on both teachers' professional effectiveness and their well-being at work, thus contributing to fostering of SEL-supportive culture in schools.

EXPANDING RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES: COMBINING QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

A simple short-term PRE-/POST-self-report survey design is limited to capturing the important outcomes of social and emotional learning in schools, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the impact of SEL. Extended research, with different types of methods, developing and testing SEL programmes focused on teachers, students and administrators should be reinforced.

DEVELOPING SYSTEMS OF SEL MONITORING

Additional actions could be undertaken in order to design and implement assessment systems for monitoring SEL indicators at municipal/regional and national levels. These might include developing school evaluation procedure, designing assessment instruments to monitor the implementation of SEL.

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