

## TRANSNATIONAL REPORT ON SOCIO-EMOTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN PARTNERS COUNTRIES<sup>1</sup>

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from the information gathered from National Reports*

The importance of dealing with socio-emotional development in educational and community contexts is widely recognized and becoming more and more important. Recent literature on social and emotional skills describes the nature and structure of these skills, their development, factors that influence them and their relevance for a wide range of educational, economic, health, and psychosocial wellbeing. Similarly, evidence-based interventions have become an area of increasing interest for both research, policy makers and professionals involved in education.

After providing some definitions and frameworks of reference, the report will describe the main aspects characterizing current situation in PSmile project's<sup>2</sup> partners'<sup>3</sup> countries, the direction of actions undertaken and related to socio-emotional capacity building in primary education. Finally, suggestions for subsequent steps supporting a successful implementation of the project will be proposed.

### 1 Introduction: Key terms, competences and domains

A broad definition of **Social and Emotional Skills** describes them as *'the kind of skills involved in achieving goals, working with others and managing emotions'* (OECD, 2015). Another commonly used term is 'life skills' and defines them as *'the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life'* (WHO, 1997). These represent the psycho-social skills that influence behaviour, reflective skills such as problem solving and critical thinking, personal skills such as self-awareness, and interpersonal skills such as sociability and tolerance. Already in 1997, with 'personal and social education/development' researchers refer to areas such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, communication skills, decision-making, social responsibility, character development, family life, as well as social issues such as gender, equity, and human rights (WHO, 1997).

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***Social-emotional Learning (SEL)*** refers instead to *"the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions"* (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning; CASEL, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> Lithuania, Italy, Bulgaria, Spain, Greece

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<sup>3</sup> VšĮ „eMundus“ (LT), Università degli studi di Padova (IT), Foundation for development of the cultural and business potential of civil society (BG), VšĮ Mano šeimos akademija (LT), Associação para a recuperação de cidadãos inadaptados da Lousã A.R.C.I.L (PT), Astiki mi kerdoskopiki etaireia Four elements (GR)



**Five interacting fields are identified as underlying SEL:**

- 1) **self-awareness** (the ability to understand one’s own emotions, personal goals and values),
- 2) **self-management** (the ability to regulate affect and calming oneself down),
- 3) **social awareness** (the ability to understand others and take the perspective of those with different backgrounds and cultures, and to act with empathy and compassion),
- 4) **relationship skills** (the ability to communicate clearly, to negotiate and to seek help, when needed) and the ability to
- 5) **take responsible decisions** (Durlak et al. 2015).

Developing social-emotional competence requires to focus on skills within each of the domains identified by CASEL, to develop positive relationships with others, communicate actions and feelings, as well as recognize and regulate emotions and actions in social settings and interactions. In addition, social-emotional competence and adjustment change over time (Campbell, et al., 2016). Addressing SE have after all important reference to and implications for educational policy and practice.

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*The term ‘social and emotional education’ (SEE) refers, in fact, to the educational process by which an individual develops social and emotional competence for personal, social and academic growth and development through curricular, embedded, relational and contextual approaches.*

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The definition implies developing and applying the attitudes, knowledge and skills required to understand oneself and others, to express and regulate emotions, to develop healthy and caring relationships, to make good, responsible and ethical decisions, and to make use of one’s own strengths and overcome difficulties in social and academic tasks’ (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014). Choosing the term ‘education’ more emphasis is placed on the conditions and processes that contribute to the development of social and emotional competence, including a curricular- and cross-curricular-based approach and an embedded classroom and whole-school climate perspective (Cefai & Cooper, 2009). Socio Emotional Education also assumes a broader perspective on teaching and learning, inclusive of classroom climate, whole-school ecology, parental involvement, and teachers’ own social and emotional competences.

More specifically, **in this project Social and Emotional education is viewed as a Capacity Building process and related specific strategies.** The emphasis in this case is on designing programs and services that support building capacity for individuals, especially those from low-income, underrepresented backgrounds, and high-risk populations. If successful, these efforts will expand the range of one’s life goal options. This positive paradigm develops along some key steps: (a) designing efforts that strive to increase the individual’s ability to navigate the world in different life contexts and time, thus increasing self-awareness and management skills; (b) providing access to learning and developmental activities that expand the range of options as well as expanding the human capital needed to learn about and pursue their goals; (c) increasing access to learning



opportunities by engaging the community in providing opportunities for experience and practice (Solberg & Ali, 2017).

Additionally, recent studies view these competencies as interrelated, synergistic, and integral to the growth and development of positive identities. Positive identities, in turn, are relevant to agency, another important facet of self-management (Nagaoka et al., 2015). Informed and engaged citizenship is considered vital to individual wellbeing (Hart et al., 2014) as well as to the health of societies (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). If we consider Social and Emotional capacity building as a key component of the civic development process, we can describe the actions in terms of efforts supporting an individual in becoming personally responsible, participatory, and transformative/justice oriented (Jost & Kay, 2010). Citizenship education, along with related areas, are considered as key elements in the traditional European vision of Social and Emotional Development, and in various Member States, SEE is considered a matter of citizenship education.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that these core competencies can be taught and supported in different ways, both in school settings through explicit instruction, teacher instructional practices, integration with academic curriculum areas, organizational strategies, as well as in family and community contexts.

## 2. Socioemotional Capacity Building in partner countries

This section will provide information on the commitment in Social Emotional Capacity Building (SE\_CaB), on main actions and procedures currently available in partner countries.

### 2.1 Value of SE capacity Building for national institutions

In general, in all countries there is an investment in SE development by national ministry, mainly educational or health ministries.

As regards the objectives of the interventions, two different perspectives can be identified that are in synergy. One refers to the meaning of SE development and relevance of related actions as regards health and then SEL projects take on a preventive value of risk reduction. In this analysis the medical model emerges more frequently than to the more recent and internationally suggested biopsychosocial model of health (WHO, 2001). This is first shown by the language used that is mentioning mental health instead of biopsychosocial health or wellbeing. Moving along with the second perspective, projects that have an educational goal, mainly referring to the educational ministries, adopt points of view that emphasize the improvement and the acquisition of skills and competences for life. More specifically:

- In *Portugal* the Ministry of Health is committed with SE development as a way to improve mental health and reduce risk behaviors in children and young people while the Ministry of Education relates to the issue of SE development as a way to increase self-regulation of learning and, therefore, enhance academic success
- *Greece and Lithuania* seem to emphasize the preventive and mental health aspects more. In Greece special emphasis has been placed on the development of school-based preventive intervention programs for socio-emotional learning aimed at promoting students' psychosocial health. In Lithuania many efforts have been devoted by the government to reduce violence toward and among children, preventing bullying and substance abuse, assuring good mental health and wellbeing.



- In *Bulgaria and Italy* SEL skills are considered part of the competences students should acquire even if they are not formally included in the curriculum. In Bulgaria the Ministry of Education and Science is committed to achieving inclusive education for all children and providing every child equal opportunities to succeed. In Italy the most recent suggestions of the Ministry of Education emphasize the need to achieve the goal 4 of the UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development titled Quality education. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

## 2.2 Key elements in current situation

The interest in SE\_CaB is evidenced by programmatic indications already provided in different countries that seek to promote its implementation and integration into school curricula. The different national specificities show a certain heterogeneity in the declination and specification of the contents, methods and practices, and in the professionals involved and in their training.

### A) Goals and Visions

- In *Portugal* good practices manuals have been provided by the Ministry of Health together with the definition of the desired profile of Portuguese students when they finish compulsory education and supporting documents (by the Ministry of Education). This made it possible to develop school curricula on skills student should possess at the end of the years or school cycles. These curricula often include themes that, even if not explicitly, refer to SE competences. It comes out, for example, that students should show (i) the knowledge of oneself, developing attitudes of self-esteem and self-confidence; (ii) the ability to value their identity and roots, respecting the territory and its order, other peoples and other cultures, recognizing diversity as a source of learning for all; and (iii) the competence to assume attitudes and values that promote civic participation in a responsible, solidary and critical manner, among other fundamental skills.
- In *Greece* the invitation to commit to SE are rather general in national indications. Indeed, it is stated that the aim of primary education in relation to SE development is to help students 'build up mechanisms helping them to assimilate knowledge, develop physically, and improve their physical and mental help.' Additionally, they are to help students 'familiarize themselves with moral, religious, national, humanitarian and other values and organize them into a system of values'.
- In *Bulgaria* the national strategy is recognized to be dynamic, progressing and requiring annual updating. Accordingly, SE is in the background of the actual implementation of inclusive education for an inclusive society. Young people should in fact be trained for a full and active life in a democratic society, in which a person's fulfilment includes one's taking responsibility for the current and future life of the nation and mankind in general, and where discrimination are not tolerated.
- Adherence to a preventive perspective clearly emerges in *Lithuania* whereby law every student is recognized the right to "development of consistent and long-term social and emotional competencies at school" and must "participate in a consistent and long-term prevention program ". School then are asked to create conditions for the development of social and emotional competence, and it is compulsory for students to participate. However,



the law does not oblige schools to follow a specific program or specific methodology in their actions. Teaching SE skills takes place freely in accordance with the general curricula issued by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

- In *Italy* the national guidelines on the school curriculum provide some general indications to build children's capacities that to increase their self-knowledge, to recognize their potential and resources, to plan the realization of significant experiences and to verify the results achieved in relation to expectations. Schools are required to promote activities and learning opportunities in which every pupil can take an active role in his/her learning, develop his/her talents and preferences, express curiosity, recognize and intervene on difficulties acquire more and more self-awareness, start building his or her own life plan.

### **B) Educational programs in school**

National policies on SE development initiatives tend to recognize schools the autonomy in their decisions and therefore schools are entrusted with the task of intercepting and responding to the specific needs of students. This clearly generates high heterogeneity in the proposals and does not guarantee a systematic investment. Sometimes the acquisition of these skills is approached across the different subjects, other times it is understood or suggested that it is pertinent to some subjects of the curriculum associated with civic education or free study moments. In particular:

- *In Portugal* colleagues underline that the curriculum in fact includes a flexible zone that is mainly used for fill gaps and a study of the context that is devoted to environment and citizenship.
- *In Greece* curricula in Primary Schools are designed by the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), which delivers opinions and recommendations regarding textbooks and teaching material. The curriculum includes flexible zone and Civil education that seem more open to SE education. Programs are optional, under the health education program and located in the flexible zone.
- *In Bulgaria* the national policy is strictly following the European indications of The Education and Training 2020 framework for European cooperation in education and training. There is a higher emphasis on promoting social inclusion, equal opportunities to all children and active citizenship in agreement so that in general SE development is embedded in civic education.
- *In Lithuania* schools make their own decisions on ways of implementing the preventive program by integrating it into the curriculum of the subject, implementing it through non-formal children's education activities, devoting separate time to the implementation of the program or etc. The school may use lessons designed to meet the student's educational needs and provide learning support to implement the preventive program.
- *In Italy* the national indication includes socio-emotional education in the general goal of education and are embedded in each subject. Teachers are in fact requested to develop teaching activities through two paths: that of basic knowledge and that of citizenship which include the complex set of social and interpersonal skills. Development of socioemotional skills is the results of a positive learning environment and a complex set of teachers' competences that include valuing knowledge and experiences of each students, promoting positive attitudes toward diversity, exploration and curiosity, collaboration, self-regulation and self-awareness of learning.



### **C) Professionals involved in SE educational actions**

Partner countries differ in the professionals who are expected to provide socio-emotional education. Not always partner countries are aligned on who should teach these skills within the school. When teachers are in charge, there is the need to provide them with specific training activities.

- *In Portugal* psychologists and social workers have a key role in providing psychosocial support for children in the school environment. If on the one hand this could lead to collaboration between professionals from different areas of expertise, that is education and health, on the other hand there is a degree of heterogeneity in the way in which the different countries have addressed the issue of training.
- *In Greece* the role of psychologists and social workers in teaching SE is emphasized. A pivot role in developing and coordinating SE intervention programs in the country is played by University School of Psychology. Innovatively, social and emotional learning was added in the university curriculum as an incorporated essential training skill for future child psychologists and primary and secondary school teachers. However, despite the university investment, there are no specific guidelines for the implementation of actions for SE learning at school.
- *In Bulgaria* SE education is considered a teachers' duty. The Ministry of Education and Science, already in 2013 started teachers training on social skills and emotional intelligence. Actual teachers curricula provide knowledge on mental and emotional intelligence and managing emotions as well as on how to teach SE to students and to understand the emotions of students, parents and colleagues with whom they interact.
- *In Lithuania* accredited long-term prevention programs are available. The school may choose which preventive program to pursue based on the school's overall situation, needs and capabilities. Most of these programs are carried out by the school's supervisors or professionals, both social educators and psychologists, during or after class.
- *In Italy* schools and teachers are attributed the responsibility to plan and implement SE education based on their preferences or students' needs. Also, psychologists and other experts could provide SE education in school especially when specific competences are needed. In some cases, they work together with teachers accomplishing their role as educators. No specific courses are included in the national courses provided to teachers in training. Many courses for teachers are however available at more local level provided by numerous public and private agencies.

### **D) Training professionals involved in SE development**

The need of providing training to professionals involved in school and expected to be involved in building socioemotional skills is recognized in all countries. Currently the training provided differ in length, depth, formal recognition and content addressed. Some specific choices emerge in partners' countries.

- *In Portugal* professionals receive training when involved in research programs and in specific projects. Duration of programs implemented at national level ranges from at least 14 session to 21 sessions and up to a three years program. However, a lack of supports or incentives for practitioners are reported.



- *In Greece* on mandate from the Ministry of Education, psychologists and social workers are assigned the task of promoting students' psycho-emotional, social and cognitive development. Curricula and guides as well as approach tools are available for professionals. No formal educational actions have been developed and are mandatory for implementing curricula in school.
- *In Bulgaria*, actions are linked to the recently annual innovation projects initiatives where training and materials are all available for teachers, parents and other professionals, with an impact on the level of knowledge of professionals involved in innovative projects dealing with SE.
- *In Lithuania* professionals involved in current programs are trained in a two-day introductory seminar (12 -24 academic hours). After completing the methodological counseling seminars and providing a 24 hours program to a group of children, they are certified for their qualification. Additionally, a training approved by the Ministry of Education also offers pedagogical specialists knowledge of mental and emotional intelligence, to help them develop their skills for use of personal resources.
- *In Italy* numerous local initiatives can be traced on social media referring to activities promoted in schools across the whole country and related to SE development. It is worth referring here to annual post graduate courses proposed to teachers and educators (see Digital competences for the development of socio emotional skills for inclusion, held at the University of Perugia).

### **E) Good practices**

Several examples of good practices have been identified in partners' countries. To a different degree and extent, they refer to accurate methodological choices (see for instance, duration of training proposed to students, teaching strategies), theoretical reference models as well as to innovative methodologies or to efficacy assessment of programs carried out. Key points emerged are the following:

- *In Portugal* several programs described cover most of the dimensions expected to be under the SEL proposal. As noted by the partner few SEL programs and *curricula* address specific needs of individuals with disability or developmental issues, which may limit the potential impact on the development of Inclusive Education systems.
- *In Greece* in most of the implemented actions, SEL is addressed with reading literature strategy. The modern literature products are selected according to CASEL guidelines that outline the general features that Social-Emotional Learning programs must have, and the effectiveness demonstrated. Activities proposed are open to alternative way of learning; they are not confined to immediate goals but transcend the whole learning and schooling process.
- *In Bulgaria* school is making strides in this domain and there is a clear interest both in exchanging good practices and integrating innovative approaches, such as the use of games and tools developed outside the school framework.
- *In Lithuania* several local initiatives have been undertaken with attention to theoretical and methodological aspects, as well as to innovative methods. Some of these initiatives develop across several years and are still active. However, many of them are focused on specific dimension of SE and on the impact on wellbeing, see for instance bullying.



- In *Italy* national programs addressing several dimensions of SEL are available as well as projects aimed at developing and providing resources, assessment tools and activity guides. Post graduate courses proposed to teachers and educators have high potentials in guaranteeing good practices (see for instance other e-learning and e-courses, or courses on digital competences for the development of socio emotional skills for inclusion).

### ***F) European projects involving partners' countries***

Resources from international programs are available and currently used in partners' countries for research and practice. Besides the widely used and well known CASEL, it is worth mentioning here the Erasmus+ project Hopes. It is an innovative educational program based on the theoretical framework of positive psychology and character education. The aim of the training programme is to increase teachers' job satisfaction, self-esteem, resilience and happiness, contribute to their self-regulation ability, and to positively influence their schools and communities. Tools provided to students help them become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and to increase their self-esteem, develop critical-thinking and decision-making skills.

Additionally, there are several international projects in which partners' countries have been directly involved (See Table 1).

<i>Projects</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>PSsmile Partners involved</i>					<i>Details</i>		
		<b>PT</b>	<b>GR</b>	<b>BL</b>	<b>LT</b>	<b>IT</b>	<b>Target groups</b>	<b>Resources developed</b>	<b>Children age</b>
<b>RESCUR</b> <a href="http://www.rescur.eu">www.rescur.eu</a>	Malta, Croatia, Sweden	+				+	Children Parents Teachers	Guidelines, curricula, methodical materials	Primary school
<b>EAP_SEL</b> <a href="http://www.eap-sel.eu">www.eap-sel.eu</a>	Switzerland, Sweden, Slovenia, Croatia					+	Children Teachers	Assessment protocol Training materials	From primary school
<b>EBE-EUSMOSI</b> <a href="http://www.inclusive-education.net">www.inclusive-education.net</a>	Spain, Netherland, Slovenia, Croatia					+	Children Parents Teachers School managers	Curriculum materials	6 to 16
<b>CULPEER</b> <a href="http://www.culpeer.eu">www.culpeer.eu</a>	Germany, Slovenia		+	+		+	Children Teachers	Good practice Guidelines	School level



<p><b>We care program</b>  <a href="http://connecting4caring.gr">http://connecting4caring.gr</a></p>	<p>Belgium            Nederland,            Cipro, Sweden,            Germany, Swiss,            Ireland, Norway</p>		+				<p>Children            Teachers</p>	<p>Assessment            tools            Online            game</p>	<p>4<sup>th</sup> and            5<sup>th</sup>            grade</p>
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Table 1. Recent EU projects in which partners countries are involved and details on specific choices and characteristics.

**Three main projects among the others emerge for some choices and resources developed as relevant for the project.**

**RESCUR Surfing the Waves** (LLP Comenius project; 2012-2015) is a curriculum based on resilience a proposed for early years and primary school. The choice of the SAFE approach characterizes the project that is a sequenced step-by-step approach, making use of experiential and participative learning, focusing on skills development, and having explicit learning goals. It is a school-based, universal programme aimed at developing children’s competence in building healthy relationships, developing a growth mindset, developing self-determination, building on strengths, and turning challenges into opportunities. Activities are delivered by classroom teachers for all students, but the programme is particularly focused on developing the resilience skills of vulnerable and marginalized children. Four manuals specific according to children age, teachers and learners checklists, implementation index, examples, learners’ portfolio, posters of themes are available. Parental involvement is facilitated through take home tasks and materials together with a Parents’ Guide. It seeks to address the needs of vulnerable children within an assets-based, developmental, inclusive and culturally responsive approach, thus avoiding potential labelling and stigmatizing.

The **EAP\_SEL (European Assessment Protocol for children’s SEL Skills)** is a Comenius Multilateral Project (2013-2017) where target groups are students and teachers from primary schools. Theoretical foundations can be identified in CASEL and in a foreseen European model of SEL. An evidence-based education (EBE) is the approach undertaken. A corpus of scientific knowledge about educational, intervention approaches have been tested using a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT). The main purposes are the development of a standardized assessment protocol and offer evaluation guidelines for social and emotional skills in children in order to guarantee high quality of social emotional learning (SEL) interventions on European level. Milestones of the project are a teacher training, a curriculum containing materials to be used in the classroom and the use of ICT (even the mobile ones).

A third project is **EBE-EUSMOSI (Evidence Based Education: European Strategic Model for School Inclusion) Strategic Partnership for Schools**; 2014-2017. Target groups are children aged 6 to 16 years old and staff. Education policy makers, schools managers, teachers, pupils, pupils’ parents, as well as universities and research centers are also active partners. The project combined evidence-based education (EBE) and school inclusion of students with ‘special educational needs’. Activities proposed are based on 9 criteria aimed at providing a qualitative and evidence based inclusive education implementation. The universal design for learning and teaching methods appropriate for different learning styles characterize this project choices. The PROSEL (Prosociality and Social Emotional Learning) curriculum was tailored to reach Inclusive goals in primary school.



### G) Recent research efforts and main ongoing EU actions

Several studies have been carried out and mainly conducted in the fields of Psychology and Educational Sciences to implement and research different one-off SEL programs in school settings, many of them focusing on Primary and further Basic Education. Municipalities, Non-Governmental Organizations and enterprises are usually involved in publications about SEL and implementation of activities related to SEL, thus supplementing the lack of resources and activities delivered in the public schools. Some of these projects addressed efficacy and have shown positive impact for the beneficiaries, parents, teachers and students.

Representative scientific articles and books describing programs highlight the emphasis on learning assessment. The findings, though showing overall positive trends, underline the need for further studies, need for contextual adjustment and choice of adequate assessment tools as well as the need to integrate technology in social and emotional learning programs. Moreover, a limited number of students is usually involved in these research-intervention studies which often are focused on emotional competence or leave the other domains in the background. In all partners' countries, although with a different emphasis, ICT and other innovative methods have been introduced.

Currently, some partners' countries are involved in ongoing international projects aimed at the development of practices and methodologies. For instance, Italy, Spain, and Portugal are involved in the Erasmus+ KA3 programme *Learning to Be*, where the main target groups are teachers, students and other school community members in primary and secondary schools; Local and national education authorities in project trial countries; Educators in non-formal learning. Exploring different methods and approaches to each groups learning, the project, as in many others, will focus on students in primary education of a specific age range, and in this case starting from age 9. Target groups are teachers and school managers and CASEL provides the theoretical foundations.

## 3. Summary and suggestions for further steps

The analysis carried out identifies lights and shadows of current situation in partners' countries.

We can recognize **strengths** in current situation that are represented by the awareness of the relevance of SE and commitment of national institutions, both governmental and ministerial ones, private and non-profit, in supporting SE capacity building. There are numerous active efforts put in place in the attempt to provide guidelines, curricula and other resources. The need to provide specific training to the professionals working in educational settings and to implement far-reaching actions is recognized.

Although there is a different degree of participation of partner countries, Eu projects provided the **opportunities** for networking people and institutions interested in SE development, to develop resources of different types that take into account different cultural contexts and are potentially available to a large number of institutions and individuals;

A first and crucial weakness that seem to characterize current situation is a fragmentation that is expressed at least on two levels. A *fragmentation in the implementation* often characterize programs, underlined by the presence of multiple diverse initiatives which often have a local character; are offered to a limited number of schools; only specific age groups (for example to children aged between 9 and 11 years) and not to all children within the primary education educational path participate. A *fragmentation in the contents* addressed is evidenced by the numerous proposals focus on labeling, recognizing and regulating emotions, leaving out of the



activities the social component and/or excluding the cognitive component. Additionally, several initiatives are far from assuming a whole theoretical approach/model.

Taking into account variability and characteristics of the EU cultural contexts, more recent studies strongly suggest the relevance of assuming a community capacity building approach and involving significant persons from different contexts of life. Family is, however, often excluded from these programs and the training proposed to significant adults (educators and parents) is mainly aimed at developing knowledge about programs or curricula, giving a very limited space to the building SE capacities in the educational figures themselves.

Moreover, it is well-known that the complexities of current times represent **threats** to well-being and participation and requires the assumption and integration of multiple visions, of wider components as well as the involvement of people in life contexts (Fernandez, 2020). In the curricula and activities described, however, the attention is still strongly oriented to the management of current life while a limited attention is given to future, to direct SE capacities towards the construction of future, to face the challenges that children will almost certainly encounter.

### 3.1. Key Elements in the road map of the project

The analysis carried out underlines the relevance of making some choices at different levels in developing both the activities, the methodical materials and the innovative resources.

#### I. **Procedural choices:**

- Focus on both Social as well as on Emotional skills with a similar emphasis
- Focus not only on awareness development but also on management on everyday life situations in school and other life contexts
- Devote a specific attention to diversities, vulnerabilities and learning difficulties
- Use a language in line with recent theoretical approaches and enhancing strengths and uniqueness
- Adopt an ecologically relevant approach together with innovative methodologies, with attention to their flexible and personalized use
- Devote space to development of SE skills in teachers and parents
- Train the trainers in order to make teachers involvement more effective
- Consider resources already developed and in line with the choices of the *psSmile* project

#### II. **Theoretical and methodological choices**

- *Assuming person centered approach.* This means that in the reflection processes activated with the activities proposed we will focus first on people (me, the others) than on skills in themselves and on the agentic role that a person (child or adult) can undertake in their life contexts.
- *Adopting a double lenses approach.* This means that as suggested by recent approaches we will devote our attention to a positive development of the individual and at the same time to



a positive and sustainable community development (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Hart et al., 2014).

- a. *Orientation towards current and future life.* This means that we will orient the activities proposed toward both current everyday life, as well as to medium and long-term future time intervals (personal, work and social future goals).
- b. *A self-community binary.* This means that we will consider that an informed and engaged citizen is vital to both the individual positive development and wellbeing as well as to the health of societies

### III. Domains and Contents to address

The analysis carried out also supports some theoretical choices that moved the partners from the early beginning of psSMILE project, that is organizing SE Capability Building and develop activities in the program according to 4 Domains taking into account both self and others, both awareness and management and placing a decision making component associated with the management domains.

The picture of potential domains and capacities to address arising from the analysis can be summarized as follows (Figure 1)



Figure 1. A schematic representation of SEL domains and the overarching component.

In more details, for each domain we can identify goals and focus in the activities:

**AWARENESS -SELF : SMILE TO MYSELF**

*Goals of Didactical activities:* to promote knowledge of characteristics and strengths of each child as physical aspects, preferences, interests, dreams, hope, optimism, courage that are included in a positive mindset and the role they play in people life.

*Focus:* Exploring and developing multiple ideas and perception of multidimensional (social and emotional) components of Selves and focusing on possible consequences and paths for self-development as well as contextual resources as parents, teachers, friends.

**MANAGEMENT -SELF: SMILE TO MY PRESENT AND MY FUTURE**

*Goals of Didactical activities:* to promote the development of social and emotional strategies each child could use to presents himself/herself and to describe positive aspects to others.

*Focus:* learning of strategies on how to find new ways of thinking and feeling about themselves; planning strategies for achieving goals and decision making that improve personal growing and capabilities.

**AWARENESS -SOCIETY: SMILE TO SOCIETY 4.0**

*Goal of Didactical activities:* to promote a higher knowledge of both social and emotional aspects in current contexts and environments children attend to and that could be relevant in their adult life.

*Focus:* knowing multiple aspects, both emotional and cognitive, that contribute to define people in the context and environments and how all this influence thinking and feelings; identifying changes and opportunities that our global times consider as relevant to become citizen of the world.

**MANAGEMENT OTHERS : SMILE to others**

*Goal of Didactical activities:* to develop social and emotional skills to promote positive relations with others in multiple contexts in order to actively participate in current and future inclusive communities; developing knowledge on sustainable goals.

*Focus:* exploring and developing reciprocity of ways of thinking, feeling and interacting, finding productive strategies to be in and to actively contributing growing of diverse contexts.

In this schema, decision making is an overarching component, involved both in the development of awareness as well as in management of everyday life situation, both self and other domain and related to current and future perspectives. Finally, both the emotional and the social component are considered in each domain.

In conclusion, the analysis pointed out the gaps that can be fulfilled by SMILE. It confirms the relevance of contents, innovative choices and goals guiding PSsmile project proposal. In order to develop methodical materials, effective in building SE capacities, it seems in fact relevant to address some instances, and first and foremost, the individual and social complexities of current living contexts and the relevance of opening the view to future construction of next generations.

