

REFLECT

- **Programa:** Erasmus +
- **Acción:** KA2 Strategic Partnership
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- **Coordinación:** TopUnt Gent (Bélgica)
- **Socios:** Universidade de Evora (Portugal), Universidad de Granada (España), Social Cooperative Enterprise Of Cyclades (Grecia), Skolutvecklarne Sverige Ab (Suecia), Imagine If Partnership Ltd (Reino Unido).

- **Descripción:**

A key challenge for 21st century schools involves teaching culturally diverse pupils with varied abilities and motivation for learning. Teachers need tools to help them deal with this diversity and offer all pupils high-quality inclusive learning. Schools play an important role by fostering not only the cognitive development of pupils but also their social and emotional development. Yet, experience shows that schools still struggle when dealing with pupils who lack social and emotional skills and executive functioning (EF).

Pupils who have poor EF are often missing out or leaving school early and at risk for developing emotional and behavioural problems. Research indicates that interventions on social and emotional learning (SEL) and executive functioning in schools have a positive impact on social-emotional skills, connection to school, positive social behaviour, academic achievement, social inclusion and reduce conduct problems and emotional distress. We know that children, specifically those with special educational needs, benefit from effective evidence-based teaching strategies to maximize their learning capacities. According to research, training SEL and EF is more effective when empowering the context of pupils (teachers, parents) to integrate these actions into their daily routine. However, these programs often focus on specific aspects of SEL or EF and are given by specialists (often in a therapeutic setting). As a consequence the lasting effect – once the program comes to an end– is minimal. Therefore, there is a need for developing strategies for teachers and parents to promote the SEL and EF of children that can be easily incorporated into the daily practice.

In the REFLECT-project we aim to promote children's social, emotional and academic engagement and growth by offering evidence-based strategies to enhance SEL and EF in the daily practice. Ultimately we aim to decrease the risk of social exclusion and improve pupil's academic performance by enhancing the awareness of the importance of SEL and EF and empowering pupils and their context. We will do this by targeting teachers, parents and pupils. The age range of 8 to 12 years will be our focus because that age is crucial for interventions on SEL and EF. We will develop a list of cross-cultural criteria that are essential for an evidence-based intervention on SEL and EF. Based on literature review we will create a compendium of essential evidence-based components for enhancing SEL and EF. This compendium will be translated into a cross-national course for teachers (and their support system staff). The same teacher course will be implemented in all the countries with at least five school teams participating per country. The impact of the course will be evaluated through self-report questionnaires. Furthermore, we want to empower pupils, teachers and parents by creating an app with tips and tricks about SEL and EF.

The result will be an easy to implement evidence-based toolbox to promote SEL and EF at different levels, that will be cross-cultural and easy transferable to other users (teachers, parents, pupils) and other countries. The activities will have a direct impact on all the participating educational professionals (teachers and their support team). We expect an impact on knowledge, attitude and behaviour, because the training course will make them more aware of the importance of SEL and EF in school success and social inclusion, make them feel more competent in how to enhance SEL and EF of their pupils and make them practice it in class (which will encourage transfer of what has been learnt). The long-term goal for schools is more inclusion in the classroom and better equipped teachers to deal with diversity. Furthermore, parents will be more aware about the importance of SEL and EF and will have basic tools to feel empowered and to promote those skills at home. Subsequently, promoting those skills both in the classroom and at home will result in pupils with better SEL and EF, more involvement in school, better academic performance and who are more equipped for the labour market.

It is crucial to foster European cooperation when it comes to finding the best ways of enhancing SEL and EF for all pupils at school. Culturally diverse classrooms call for cross-cultural approaches. Equity and inclusion in education are a crucial priority in the overall context of European policies in the field of education. Therefore, the core of this project is to raise awareness and empower pupils, teachers and parents. We want to bridge the gap between theory and practise by implementing evidence-based theory in different classrooms across Europe, to achieve real inclusion at school.