

EMBRACING DIFFERENCES

QUALITY  
RELATIONSHIPS

NSHIP

VOLUNTEERING

MANUAL

# START THE CHANGE!

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE WORLD OF DIVERSITY:  
HANDBOOK FOR SCHOOLS

COMMUNICATION

EMPHATY

EMBRACING DIFFERENCES

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

VOLUNTEERING

EQUALITY

SOCIAL INCLUSION

EMBRACING DIFFERENCES

UNDERSTANDING

RESPECT



# START THE CHANGE!

**YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE WORLD OF DIVERSITY:  
HANDBOOK FOR SCHOOLS**

## TITLE

Start the Change! - Young people in the world of diversity: handbook for schools

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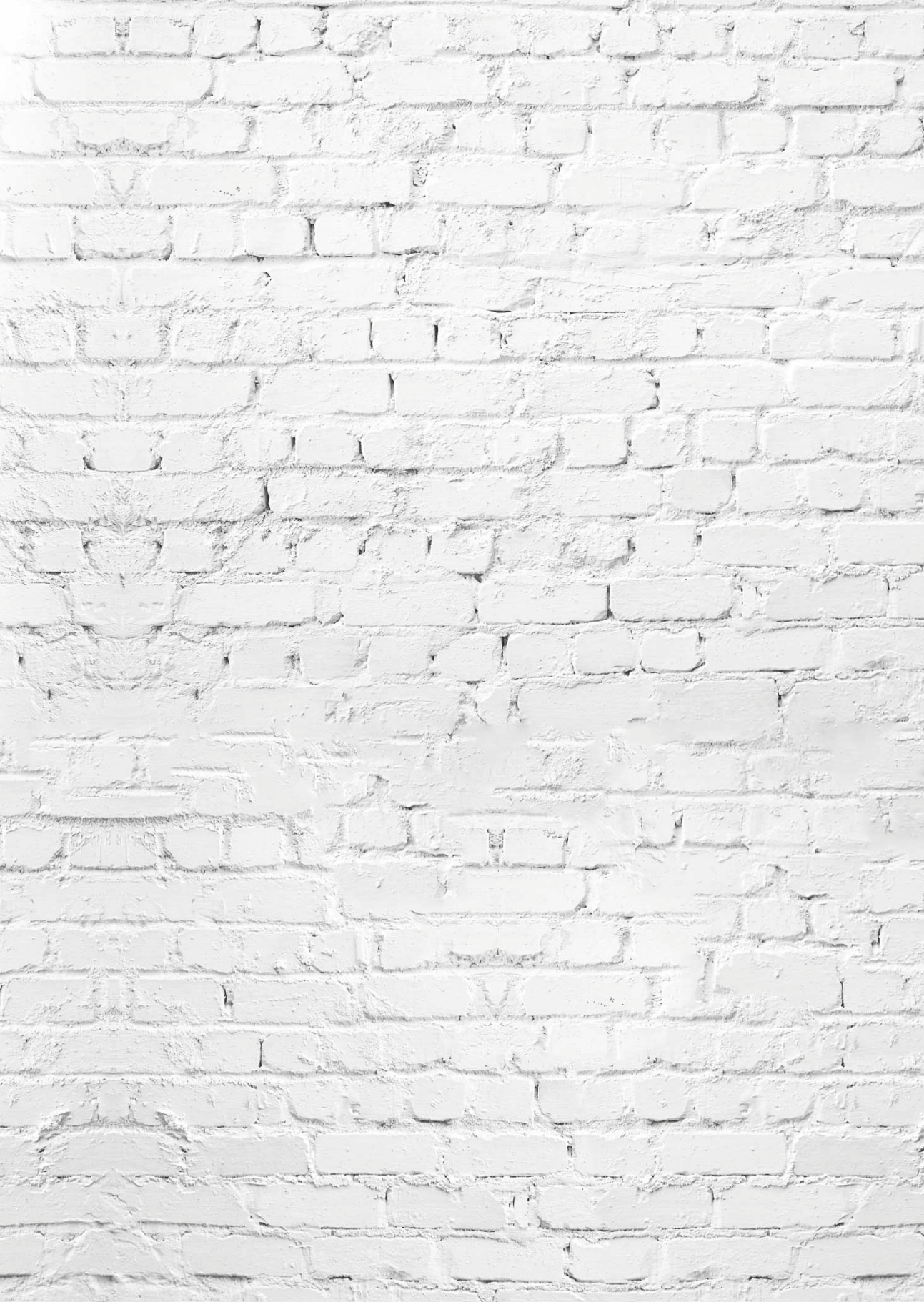
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*Special gratitude for Eli Pijaca Plavšić and Domagoj Morić, Forum's experts in the field of civic education and media literacy, for their contribution to the Chapter Three.*

*"In my opinion, one of the main problems of youth today is low self-esteem, they tend to lose a lot of opportunities in life and have the tendency to live just for the day without building projects for the future" (a student, Italy)*

*"Splitting people into groups causes disagreement. Living together means people can get on. They can learn and prevent violence."  
(a student, Great Britain)*

*"I think that extracurricular activities are really important for high school because I don't know yet where I am going to enrol. I want to experience as many things as I can, that is why I am in the school theatre and school radio. /.../ I like to see new things and then decide what I like the most, so I can decide on a profession I am going to love." (a student, Slovenia)*

*"I agree that we have to start from ourselves. But we should also encourage positive change in others. The whole society needs to be changed so that we treat each other better, that we respect each other more, that we communicate more." (a student, Croatia)*

# INTRODUCTION

We often hear that our world and our society are becoming increasingly divided, that economic and social inequality is on the rise and that technological advancements, along with their many positive aspects, also have many drawbacks. As a result of that, we are faced with some new challenges that we sometimes fail to respond to as adults. In all this, the role of the educational system is also not entirely clear, leaving the teachers unprepared to respond to these challenges and keep up with a changing society and environment.

The media portray a picture of the world in which fear, anxiety, and danger are the predominant forces involved in determining policies towards different social groups, especially those vulnerable ones, which raises the question of how to include such issues and topics in the educational process. In the face of that, children and young people can be particularly vulnerable and develop simplified, even radical ideas and attitudes which they can maintain throughout their lives.

The 'Start the Change!' Manual was created within the project 'Start the Change! - Embracing Diversity through Intercultural Education and Volunteering', which aims to empower teachers, young people and their parents in understanding and recognising the complexities and challenges of modern society and strengthen their personal, social and civic competences. Four thematic areas of the manual provide teachers and other experts working with young people with varied and rich content to empower their students and support their development into happy, mature and responsible individuals.

Part one of the manual brings a detailed description of the 'Start the Change Project!', which is carried out by the Forum for Freedom in Education from Croatia in partnership with Think Global from the UK, the Youth Centre of Dravinja Valley from Slovenia and the Centre for Creative Development "Danilo Dolci" from Italy. The description of the purpose, objectives, and activities of the project is aimed at sharing examples of good practice with schools determined to strengthen personal and social competences of their students and promote intercultural understanding and active involvement of the young people in their society. Part two of the Manual brings some interesting results of the research carried out among young people in the four partner countries allowing the reader to get acquainted with attitudes, opinions, and values of the youth regarding the challenges they, as well as their respective societies, are facing. The research mentioned above represents the basis for the 'Start the Change!' training programme described in Part three of the Manual. The programme is intended for educational staff, offering them content that empowers them to support young people in developing their self-resilience, positive self-image, capacity for self-actualisation, quality communication and building relationships with those that are different from them. This section also highlights the importance of working with young people in areas of democracy, human rights, interculturality, stereotypes and prejudices, media literacy and encouraging their creativity. The fourth and fifth chapters of the manual provide concrete tools and examples of good practice in working with young people to encourage readers to plan and implement projects in their local communities.



The manual is called 'Start the Change!' because it aims to support young people and all those working with them in taking informed action and creating an environment they would like to live in, while simultaneously promoting the values of freedom, non-discrimination, respect for diversity and the development of all the competences necessary for a project of social change to be initiated and implemented.

But above all, 'Start the Change!' is about the change we can initiate in ourselves; it addresses our potential, our capacities and our motivation and inspiration in working with children and young people, all in order to support them in initiating changes within themselves so that they are aware that by participating in their community today they can have an impact and be important members of society.

# PART ONE

ABOUT THE  
'START THE  
CHANGE!'  
PROJECT

**The encounter with the other and the different may enrich us, teach us and change us, but it might also cause us to feel caution, fear, anxiety, and anger, even hatred and discrimination. In that case, the encounter and dialogue with the other might become challenging and our sense of justice, acceptance and self-acceptance might be put to the test. The greatest challenge of being different is to remain yourself, special and unique, but also connected to your environment, actively pursuing your goals and objectives, building quality relationships with others and promoting a more just society.**

## SUMMARY

The **'Start the Change – Embracing differences through intercultural education and volunteering'** is a European project carried out in 2017 and 2018 by the Forum for Freedom in Education from Croatia, together with partners from Italy, Slovenia and Great Britain, and with the support of the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). The project represents an international expansion of the 'Start the Change! Youth volunteering to build a culture of peace' project, which was carried out by the Forum in Croatia from 2013 – 2015.

**The objective of the project** is preventing radicalisation of young people in the society and promoting democratic values, fundamental rights, intercultural understanding and active citizenship in four European countries.

The project is aimed at empowering teachers, young people and their parents to better understand and recognise complex challenges of contemporary society by strengthening their personal, social and civic competences.

Project activities include:

- **research on youth attitudes** (interests, needs, problems, solutions) through focus groups with young people in the four countries
- **program of professional development for teachers** and experts for youth in the area of personal growth and development, active citizenship and volunteering
- **creating a set of publications on intercultural education** and good practice in schools
- **supporting the schools involved** in launching projects promoting dialogue, respect for diversity, personal growth, and youth development.



- **creative contest Colour the World** in all four countries – which will allow young people to express creatively their ideas about promoting understanding and the value of embracing differences
- **an online ‘library’** – with useful materials in four languages which can be applied while working with young people.

The project is carried out by the **Forum for Freedom in Education** from Croatia in partnership with **Think Global** from Great Britain, the **Youth Centre of Dravinja Valley** from Slovenia and the **Centre for Creative Development “Danilo Dolci”** from Italy. The organization **Network of Education Policy Centres** is an associate partner on the project.

## PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The project was intended to respond to the very specific requirements of the EACEA's Call for Proposals launched in 2016 and triggered by data on the increased tensions between different cultures and communities, following the increasing flow of immigrants, as well as terrorist attacks in Europe. The three requirements it specifically focused on were:

- *Improving the acquisition of social and civic competences, fostering knowledge, understanding, and ownership of democratic values and fundamental rights*
- *Supporting teachers and educators in handling conflicts and dealing with diversity;*
- *Encouraging youth participation in social and civic life and developing inclusion and outreach practices to reach young people*

The research points to a growing tension between cultures and communities and, even in the educational context, increasingly pronounced intolerant attitudes and behaviours, as well as violence motivated by hatred towards various communities and groups. The schools taking part in the project will be empowered to constructively tackle these challenges: 40 schools in the four countries together with the local NGOs will implement several intercultural projects and projects to prevent violence and build peace among youth.

An interesting feature of the project is the coordination between four international partners with extensive experience in direct work with children, youth, and teachers in their countries. All four partner organisations are set to work together to achieve the overall objective of the project: *preventing radicalisation of youth by promoting democratic values, human rights, intercultural understanding and active citizenship.*

More than 2000 young people in the partner countries are participating in the school projects designed by them and overseen by their teachers, mentors and school volunteers.

During the implementation, a total of 110 teachers and volunteers will be trained, and their capacities strengthened in the area of raising awareness of diversity. The relevant public institutions have been involved and informed about the implementation of the project and schools have got concrete tools for working with young people on issues of difference and diversity.

*There are many differences in our school. However, the most outstanding ones are the growing socioeconomic differences. There are also religious differences, which come to the fore whenever students separate to attend religious education and ethics classes. There are also cultural and ideological differences. Our school is attended by students whose families moved from Bosnia and Hercegovina during the war, but there are also Roma, Albanian and Czech students. There are also many students who live in foster families, those who live in difficult material circumstances and those whose parents are divorced, poor or addicted to alcohol. (a teacher, Croatia)*

## EUROPEAN CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

The European population is becoming more diverse, not only because of job-related migration and migration due to family reasons, education and economic circumstances but also because of the influx of refugees and military conflicts in the wider region. Apart from enriching and linking cultures, these processes can, unfortunately, also result in tensions between the majority and different minorities, as well as in violence and radicalisation on both sides.

- **The majority population** may thus develop prejudices, fear, rejection, contempt, radical attitudes and behaviour, even hatred towards a minority.
- **A minority population** may become exclusive, radicalised, segregated and also full of prejudice and rejection of the majority culture.

Over the past decades, Europe has been witnessing worrying forms of violence linked to radicalisation, often of young people, the EU citizens. In the 2007 and 2014 EU Terrorism Report, violent radicalisation is associated with religious terrorism, ethnonationalism and separatist nationalism, left-wing and anarchist, as well as right-wing terrorism.

Although violent radicalisation itself is a rare occurrence (and with terrible consequences), what can be seen more often in young people is the following:

- **extreme attitudes**
- **intolerance**
- **prejudices**
- **discrimination** towards the weaker, the vulnerable and the different
- **withdrawal in isolated groups** etc.

## What is the Paris Declaration of 2015?

On the initiative of the French Minister of Education Najat Vallaud-Belkacem and the Chair of the European Commission for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor Navracsic, the Paris Declaration was adopted at the meeting of European Ministers of Education in Paris, on March 17, 2015. Primarily motivated by terrorist attacks, but also by a vision for Europe for the future, they decided to take a clear stand and encourage initiatives with following priorities:

- Ensure that young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences by promoting democratic values, fundamental rights, inclusion, non-discrimination and active citizenship
- Strengthen the competences of critical thinking and media literacy, especially in the use of social networks
- Encourage education of disadvantaged children and align education processes with their needs
- Promote intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning in cooperation with all important decision makers and institutions

Starting from the fact that education and upbringing are key factors for empowering the social capital of the community, we conclude that the educational system plays a crucial role in development of a child or a young person into an educated and democratic citizen. Along with upbringing, education can contribute to greater awareness, insight, knowledge, and understanding of self and the other, as well as personal and socioeconomic progress, acting together with the political environment, to contribute to equality and social justice.

**Social, civic and intercultural competences** of citizens, as well as related values such as democracy, human rights, inclusiveness, non-discrimination and responsible and active citizenship, are the basis for prevention of prejudice and discrimination. An important role here is attributed to promoting mutual ties and intercultural dialogue at all levels, in cooperation with institutions and decision-makers.

One of the most important goals of the project is directed to teachers: they need to be empowered and trained to be able to confront discrimination, to respect the needs of students of diverse origins and safeguard common fundamental rights based on mutual respect and acceptance of diversities.



*"Extreme views are bound to happen with a thousand people (in the school). ...Extremism may come from the point of ignorance, but they are willing to change their opinions. "*  
*(a teacher, London)*

*Our students of lower socioeconomic status are often exposed to intolerant attitudes and behaviour of their peers. Being Roma is also an obstacle we encounter on a daily basis. Being in the same class with Roma children causes fear, caution, and distrust. A large number of cases of peer violence is motivated by hatred towards members of other ethnic or religious groups. (a teacher, Croatia)*

*I think it brings challenges in the fact that a number of our pupils don't see the world outside of (this town). ...They're very kind of set on what they hear, what they're told, with regards to extremism and the things that happened in London recently, (i.e. the Westminster Bridge terror attack). There are quite a few of them that will just have that whole idea of 'well, every Muslim is a terrorist' because they just haven't lived amongst Muslims and they haven't lived amongst other nationalities so it is hard to make them see that there is a bigger world out there." (a teacher, Northern England)*

## **WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT RADICALISATION?**

Though radicalisation of a young person is the extreme outcome of a process, and throughout this young person's education teachers will probably notice only some parts of that process, it is important that each teacher recognise its basic elements. Learning about radicalisation, we may find out a lot about ourselves and others, the society we live in, and also, how it is possible that there is still so much violence, intolerance, and mutual misunderstanding.

The radicalisation process itself does not have a generally accepted common definition, but most of the existing definitions point out that it is a process by which *an individual or a group embraces ever more extreme social, political or religious attitudes, i.e. ideology that calls for a significant change in the society* (Borum 2011). The path to the realisation of such a change may be either violent or non-violent.

It is important to bear in mind that non-violent radical attitudes and movements, such as Gandhi's Indian independence movement, may have a positive impact on the society.

However, using violence as a way to achieve social change, even 'positive' change, can be destructive or at least controversial, potentially resulting in a series of tragic consequences and leaving victims, which can represent a risk for further perpetration of violence.

Some authors point to the fact that there are **factors of individual, group, and even mass radicalisation** (McCauley and Mosalenko 2009). Knowing and understanding these factors may contribute significantly to the prevention of violence and discrimination.

**Individual level** of radicalisation and the violence related to it is exemplified by the following processes: *personal revenge, identification with a disadvantaged group, gradually getting used to ever more radical acts and self-justification of violent behaviour, dependence on the approval of a person or a group inciting radical attitudes, desire for acquiring status and privilege, isolation from the wider group, etc.* Poverty and mental disorders are considered to play a much less significant role than it is commonly believed, but the authors agree that economic and social inequality, as well as psychological factors, represent important "fuel" for these processes.

**Group level** - groups become radical through the process of internal polarisation (a kind of coercion to loyalty to a faction), *through exposure to only one isolated "truth", or, for example, through collective effort to achieve victory or prestige.*

**Mass radicalisation** occurs when media and mass propaganda are used to manipulate the feelings of victimisation and hate to represent the 'enemy' as 'inhuman' to the extent that he is no longer perceived as a human being.

**It is interesting to observe how much these processes are present in the society around us, but we are rarely aware how they affect our attitudes and the attitudes of the people around us.**

Younger population (adolescents and young people from 15 to 30) seem to be more vulnerable to these processes, and there are even trends indicating that radicalisation nowadays occurs at even younger age than before (Buijs et al. 2006; Sageman 2008; Sloodman and Tillie 2006). In the process of forming an developing their identity, young people, regardless of their social status, level of education or ethnic origin, might perceive the world around them as confusing or even threatening (Kepel, Khosrokhavar and Roy 2005). Furthermore, their personal, social and political identity is also in the process of development, they re-define their links with the family, friends and their environment and initiate a whole series of new relationships with the world, and all that makes them impressionable and vulnerable. Thanks to their increased ability for abstract reasoning, combined with insufficient experience, they often develop strong attitudes, idealised, black and white view of the world, demanding deep changes and criticising the existing systems (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010).

This in itself, of course, is not bad **because it is precisely the young people who have so many times succeeded in changing the world for the better with their revolutionary ideas**, but 'radical' ideas are often based on simplified, stereotypical and insufficient data and, if supported by calls for violence and exclusion, can be destructive and potentially dangerous.

The project thus relates to the goals integrated into the educational context, in which the process of radicalisation of youth may (sometimes) be apparent, but where **prejudices and discrimination** are often more visible.

*Our school is located in a rural area, and about half of the students are of Roma ethnic origin. They all come from a secluded Roma settlement and speak Bayash Romanian language. All our cultural differences are brought to the fore in everyday interaction with these students. (a teacher, Croatia)*

*It's comments that you hear off-the-cuff that people don't realise are offensive. Certain words that they use and you think 'well you can't say that, that is a racist term.' 'Well why, why is it racist?'... It's not necessarily that the students have extremist views it's that they're unaware that those views are unacceptable... I think if you're open to discussing it here with the students they are open to discuss it with you. (a teacher, northern England)*

*Statistically, the school is very diverse. But in terms of students views and parents' views, there's quite a large Muslim group so there comes a block when it comes to discussing issues that Islam finds challenging: so, with kids the response is 'my religion says this can't happen' so there isn't the scope for discussion. There are also issues that come up that come from other communities. If you think about diversity in terms of respect and allowing different viewpoints, there's a lot of work to do. (a teacher, London)*

## THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Teachers who know how to teach democratic values, but who also live values such as acceptance and respect, equality and human rights, strongly contribute, not only to the prevention of radicalisation (Davies 2009; Webber 2011; Pels and de Ruyter 2012) but to other difficulties their students may face.

If we consider the challenges posed to the education system today, the question arises as to whether teachers are **prepared and trained enough to deal with issues of diversity, violence and even potential youth radicalisation**. There is a lot of relevant research (Buijs et al. 2006; Sageman 2008; Sloomman and Tillie 2006; Kepel, Khosrokhavar and Roy 2005) describing young people's vulnerability to prejudice, discrimination and radical attitudes and behaviours, as well as their teachers' insufficient skills in recognising these problems and dealing with them (van San, Sieckelinck and de Winter 2014). There is a high risk, therefore, that there will not be a proper response within the school system when it comes to a certain type of risk behaviour of the young people today.

*Even though it is known that civic education prepares and encourages young people to engage constructively in social and political life (Eurydice 2005; 2012), in most cases teachers report they do not feel competent to teach it, and for several reasons. One of them is that in order to teach human rights, active civic engagement and intercultural and inclusive practices, a teacher needs to possess extensive knowledge of various social and natural sciences, but also excellent communication skills in analysing, conducting discussions and teaching such controversial and sensitive topics.*

*(Guerin, van der Ploeg i Sins 2013).*

Oulton et al. (2004) showed that only 12% of teachers feel ready to talk about and **teach controversial topics**, mainly because of the lack of clear pedagogical guidelines and standards. They agreed they should use interactive pedagogical strategies, but did not feel prepared to use them. That's why such complex issues are often approached rather superficially and one-dimensionally.

*"Staff aren't prepared for the possibility. The vast majority of staff don't want to teach PSHE and don't know how to respond when kids say something provocative or unexpected. Besides saying 'this is against the school rules,' which doesn't actually challenge what the child believes, they feel they can't say anything. So, the kids carry on with the same view. (a teacher, London)*

Further analysis, such as TALIS (2013) and SWD (2015:161), show that teachers often feel inadequately prepared to **teach in a multicultural environment**. The root of the problem lies in the inadequate initial academic education of future teachers. In a Europe that is growing in population and becoming increasingly diverse, the education of future teachers and educators needs to be approached seriously, because teachers can do a lot to prevent potential radicalisation in the school environment

This can be achieved by promoting **inclusive practices in the education system**, such as building community and involvement, introducing volunteer programs, but also by showing respect for every student, high-quality communication and conflict prevention and resolution skills.



It is also necessary for **active participation and citizenship** to be included in the school curriculum. It turned out that students learning about active citizenship through direct participation in local volunteer activities develop a set of interrelated knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the area of civic education, as well as in personal and social development.

However, the role of educators, teachers, and parents is of crucial importance. If they don't challenge their own stereotypes and prejudice, or if they have radical and violent attitudes towards particular social groups, more often than not, they will transfer them to the young people they are responsible for.

On the other hand, a school can provide them with a democratic environment where young people have the chance to come into contact with different approaches and develop well-founded opinions and healthy attitudes (after arguing the facts and getting familiarised with different approaches and attitudes). Here we are talking about personal and social competence and about civic education. If we want to educate children and young people as responsible citizens who are acquainted with their rights and laws and policies, and who respect the rights and beliefs of others (Davies 2009, Webber 2011), it is important to provide them with such education, which will make them resistant to extremism and radicalism (Pels and de Ruyter 2012), but also to other negative impacts.

Both the content and the way it is taught are of equal importance. The style of education and teaching is positively associated with the development of democratic attitudes.

If adults:

- are open for discussion
- explain their views and decisions
- allow children to negotiate (which does not mean that they can do whatever they want, but they do have the right to their views and opinions) then they contribute to developing a democratic attitude.

A school where inclusiveness is encouraged, especially if there are ethnic and other differences among its students will also be more successful in reducing the likelihood of discrimination-related violence (Pels and de Ruyter 2012). How? By:

- nurturing sense of community
- cooperation
- fairness (Hansen 2001; Westheimer and Kahne 2004) instead of emphasising assimilation and control.

An additional challenge is represented by the fact that most teachers and school staffs do not feel sufficiently secure and competent to react and respond to questions raised by young people, nor to discuss sensitive issues. That's why schools often react too late, or not at all (out of San, Sieckelink and de Winter 2014).

*The question is what kind of pedagogical and educational support young people need so that this type of violence could be prevented, and what kind of programmes and projects should schools develop with this goal in mind?*

During the 'Start the Change!' project, a specific programme and a system of cooperation between teachers, volunteers and students has been created trying to provide an answer to this question and offer concrete solutions.

## GOOD PRACTICE EMBEDDED IN THE PROJECT

For the overall project to have a far-reaching impact and offer a comprehensive response to the challenges posed, well-established good practice and activities are used that have been proven effective in previous evaluations. We can group them into several categories:

**Inclusive approach** - Respect for all students and their diversity, as well as the use of conflict prevention skills and communication skills by the school staff in dealing with intercultural conflicts. But successful education on human rights, active participation in society and active citizenship also requires an integrated curriculum linked to well-planned cross-curricular activities (Guerin, van der Ploeg and Sins 2013).

**It is important to take into account young people's needs and their way of thinking** – the first phase of the project is a qualitative research aimed at identifying the obstacles faced by children and young people, the problems they encounter in their schools and local communities, and their vision of solutions. The research results are detailed in the next chapter. The results presented were a starting point for adaptation of the existing training to meet the needs of the young people in all four countries and all students of the schools participating in the project.

**Investing in the competences of teachers, educator and principals** - the 'Start the Change!' training programme develops a wide range of competences in the areas of personal and social development and civic education. Additional help is provided by the 'Start the Change!' publication, a collection of lesson plans designed to be used in the class or in workshops with young people; the 'Start the Change!' manual which, among other things, provides tools for designing and conducting volunteer projects with young people, and 'The Book of Good Ideas', which presents good school practice and projects, serving as a guide and inspiration for schools trying to design their own projects.

**Teaching young people about volunteering** as civic engagement at the community level, as well as participation in socially useful learning programmes, result in a series of outcomes that reflect positively on students, both at school and at the local community level.

**Initiatives and local volunteer projects of children, youth, and teachers** - strengthen personal, social and civic competences and have a far-reaching impact on their development, as well as on the development of the whole community. The projects are designed by young people themselves, who thus become leaders in their local communities, expressing their values and beliefs, but also showing active engagement in providing support (especially to vulnerable groups and their peers).

**The voice of youth and their creativity are an invaluable contribution to the goals you want to achieve.** Schools participate in the **'Colour the World!'** contest by providing students with mentors who, by using different art mediums, help them reflect on issues of acceptance and respect for diversity. While painting, composing, recording, writing, taking photographs, students express their feelings and ideas about diversity and assert their wishes for their generation. The works are sent to the address of the local coordinator - a civil society organisation responsible for forming an expert committee that will select the best works and promote them at a special event organised for award-winning students.

**Sharing good practices and evaluations offers countless opportunities for assessment of the lessons learned and for planning new initiatives.** While implementing projects in schools, school coordinators meet and share experiences and gain additional support from their partner organisation coordinators in the form of additional lectures, workshops, and tips. During the implementation and after the completion of individual units, these experiences are recorded, promoted and collected, and special attention is paid to the quality of the implementation, as well as to the assessment of the lessons learned, and the benefits of the activities for all involved.

*In our school, we're trying to get our students to understand that irrational hatred and suspicion of a particular group eventually contributes to discriminatory behaviour towards that group and in its extreme version may result in the abolition of its human rights or unfair advantage of the other group. We are trying to teach them that these obstacles can be overcome through communication between different cultures and ethnic groups, through mutual interaction, understanding, and assistance. It is important to teach them that mental inertia leads to generalisation and perception of the world as black and white. Believing in stereotypes suggests that a person has given up on their intelligence and perceptive ability and chose the path of least resistance." (a teacher, Croatia)*

# 'START THE CHANGE!'

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES



### **Step 1. Selection and school networking**

Schools selected for participation in the projects are generally those experienced in diversity and willing to get additional support and training. Focus groups are implemented to find out their perspectives on issues like discrimination and exclusion – results of the research published in the report "If I was someone..."



### **Step 2. 'Start the Change!' training programme: building capacities**

A 40-hour programme develops competences for democratic culture that include attitudes, values, skills, knowledge and critical thinking, both of the teachers and the students they work with. It is attended by a selected group of teachers and volunteers from the schools involved in the project. Areas of training: personal and social development, creativity and communication tools in education for diversity, conflict resolution and transformation; civic education and human rights, media literacy and conducting volunteer programmes with youth.



### **Step 3. Thousands of young people**

The young people in the four countries participate actively and independently in creating launching and implementation of initiatives and projects. Their projects address issues of interculturality and diversity, drawing attention to the problems they consider important. That is the point of the project - to empower young people who often feel abandoned and invisible and show them that their opinion is important. Besides designing and managing their own local initiatives, young people participate in the "Colour the World" contest with their original artwork.



### **Step 4. Let's colour the world with diversity**

The results and good practices have been collected and published, they are available on the Internet in four languages and actively promoted in the "Book of Good Ideas for Peace". An online library with educational material in four languages is available to all interested institutions and the general public, as well as a documentary film with the results of the project. The lessons learned have been compiled and the main conclusions drawn, which can be useful for a further implementation and dissemination of the programme, as well in the form of recommendations for public policies in the area of intercultural education.



# BENEFITS OF THE 'START THE CHANGE!' PROJECT

A comprehensive approach ensures a multi-level impact:

1. **Teachers and volunteers** working with young people gain a broader and deeper understanding of diversity issues and are prepared to handle sensitive issues through dialogue skills and conducting projects with youth. This enables them to improve their approach and teaching methods and thus provide the space in which young people's voices can be heard, especially as far as diversity is concerned. A deeper understanding of the intercultural education they acquire enables them to provide better support to minorities and other potentially vulnerable groups of young people they work with.
2. **The schools** involved in the project are encouraged to explore and discuss, through training and mentoring programmes, their specific environments and trained to enable the conditions in which each young person is accepted and respected.
3. **The young people** involved in the project deepen their critical reflection and understanding of the issues of diversity and the value of human rights, freedom, and mutual respect.
4. **Civil society organisations** in partner countries, who are experienced in working with teachers and young people, develop further their capacities, especially in the area of supporting schools in the prevention of radicalisation and other related forms of violence.
5. **Partner organisations** learn to evaluate more effectively and then respond to specific issues in dealing with differences at the national and local levels, with an additional, European perspective and the perspective of the international educational community. The organisation - a partner in each country - continues to work at the level of public education policies, focusing in the long term on devising its response to the threat of radicalisation of youth, but also on the respect of diversity in the society in general.
6. **National agencies and institutions** that adopt public education policies are acquainted with the outcomes and findings of the project, including the ways schools deal with differences in the countries involved, and what tools and programmes could help them in the process. They get the latest recommendations based on the concrete results of the project and can thus influence future public policies and adequately respond to issues relating to diversity and prevention of violence and radicalisation.

# PART TWO

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVE

# INTRODUCTION

The research 'Start the Change - Interests, needs, problems and solutions to students' everyday challenges' was carried out with the aim of clarifying the interests, needs, problems and solutions to the current and everyday challenges of students in four European countries. Separate teams of researchers from partner organisations in Slovenia, Italy and the UK have conducted the research and written individual reports on its results. The Forum for Freedom in Education in Croatia has conducted two research studies aimed at understanding the interests, needs, problems and solutions of the current problems of Croatian high school students and their results will be presented in this text as well.

The research was divided into four areas. The first took into account students' general interests, the way they chose and were getting involved in various activities, and the level of satisfaction that these activities provided. The goal was to try to establish, from students' perspective, whether the capacities of schools and the local community were sufficient to satisfy their interests. The second major area covered by the research was the students' everyday problems, with the emphasis on identifying their personal and generational problems at the school and local level. An additional emphasis was placed on examining students' experiences of discrimination, prejudice, stereotypes, and respect for diversity. Thus, focus groups discussed the importance of respecting other opinions and attitudes, participating in the decision-making process, and feeling secure at school and in the local community.



The third research area was aimed at suggesting solutions to the existing problems. It involved gaining insight into the application of ideas and activities that would change the existing unsatisfactory situation. The fourth area contained an understanding of the concept of volunteering and identification of the opportunities for volunteering at school and in the local community.



The results of this research have been used to develop a teacher training programme, so that teachers could better recognise the needs of their students and help them face their many challenges. Therefore, the focus group as a qualitative research methodology was an appropriate solution for gathering depth information on specific topics. The research questions were created by the Forum for Freedom in Education and then forwarded to the partners for comments and modifications. During the focus group implementation, each researcher could cover an additional specific topic, contributing thus to a deeper understanding of the students' needs.

A team of researchers from each partner country has conducted a focus group with school students who agreed to participate in the project. It was originally intended only for secondary school students. However, due to practical restrictions, the Slovenian partners have conducted ten focus groups with students from three secondary and seven primary schools. These schools are located in six different municipalities in the rural areas of Slovenia. 109 students have participated in the research, of which 32 were male and 57 female.

The Italian partners have conducted ten focus groups with students from nine schools located in the Province of Palermo. The schools involved in the project differed according to their characteristics. There was only one elementary school involved, and there were secondary vocational schools and secondary schools with artistic, technical, economic, scientific and general education programmes. All schools were public, except one, which was private. Some are located outside the city of Palermo, others are on its peripheral parts and in the city centre. The focus groups were attended by 115 students, out of which 62 were male and 53 female.

Think Global from Great Britain has conducted research at London and northern England secondary schools. Five London-based schools with a high degree of racial, religious and ethnic diversity have been included, along with three northern England schools, situated in rural areas, and with predominantly white British pupils. Therefore, eight schools in total have participated in the project in the UK.

Ten focus groups have been conducted, with 87 students, out of which 46 were male and 35 female. Other focus group participants did not include gender in the official forms required to conduct research in British schools. The UK partners have also interviewed the teachers to further deepen their content, and they have also conducted an online survey with students from eight secondary schools, which provided them with additional information on the topics studied.

Each partner has made an analysis and report based on a pre-arranged form. On the basis of these reports, the Forum for Freedom in Education has produced a comparison of the focus group results for each individual country.

This chapter describes the topics covered by the focus groups and explained from the perspective of each partner country in order to see the similarities and differences between them. The results of the two Croatian researches are also presented here: 'If I were someone - research on the attitudes of children and youth in Croatia: interests,



needs, problems, solutions', from 2014, and 'If I were someone - research on the attitudes of students of vocational schools about volunteering and active citizenship' from 2016. During both surveys, focus groups with 12 schools (four primary schools and eight high schools, different orientations) from six different counties were conducted.

Taking into consideration different national, ethnic, cultural and educational contexts of the partner countries, it was necessary to describe specific topics for each country. All the conclusions are corroborated by the participants' statements and, at the end, a summary of the results from all four countries is presented

## STUDENTS' INTERESTS

The interests of the students were the first topic examined by the focus groups. The main research question was: What are the main interests of the children / young people of your age?, with the following sub-questions: *What interests you in life? What interests your peers? How do you select which activity you will take up? Do you have everything you need to be able to do this activity? List some interesting activities or projects in your school and local community. How does your school encourage you to engage in these activities?*

The interests of **Slovenian** students are related to the activities in and outside the school. Playing sports is the most frequent extracurricular activity. And following immediately after, there are various activities related to music, such as playing an instrument, singing in a choir or playing in a band. In their leisure time, students are less interested in reading books, socialising and going out, as well as in outdoor activities, computer programming, playing games and robotics. Lastly there is interest (but also mentioning of) in poetry, acting, puppetry and drawing.

The quality of extracurricular activities depends on the school budget, the cooperation of schools with institutions, associations and individuals from the local community. At the beginning of each school year, schools put up a list of extracurricular activities that students choose according to their interests. They decide to take them up with someone they know, and stay in them as long as they have fun or as long as their timetable suits them. The largest number of students is involved in sport and music activities, followed by arts, creative workshops and participation in school competitions.

Some extracurricular activities are not carried out due to insufficient numbers of students involved, while in some schools students have to choose from a limited supply of extracurricular activities. Teachers encourage students to take up some activity if they notice that they have potential for it. Otherwise the activities are opened for all. The following quote testifies to the importance that students assign themselves to extracurricular activities:

*I think that extracurricular activities are really important for high school, because I don't know yet where I am going to enrol. I want to experience as many things as I can, that is why I am in the school theatre and school radio. /.../ I like to see new things and then decide what I like the most, so I can decide on a profession I am going to love.*

The prevalent interests of **Italian** students are related to sport, music or some form of artistic expression (dance, theatre, and drawing). Hanging out with friends and going out are their second most preferred activities, while spending time with family follows immediately after that. Students attach great importance to interpersonal relationships, but devote relatively little attention to social networks. Italian students separate work from fun, believing that school work should not prevail over other aspects of life.

High school students are aware of the importance of acquiring qualifications and finding work, while at the same time they do not lose sight of career and goals. However, a small number of responses indicate that the students are specifically devoted to the achievement of professional goals. An example may be the following:

*I care a lot about finishing my studies here and finding a job relevant to our study course.*

Although volunteering allows students to acquire different experiences, they do not feel it relevant to expanding their views. They rarely volunteer, and describe their experiences as follows:

*I often go to one centre that takes care of disadvantaged children. It is a nice experience because you expected to give a lot but in the end you are the one who receives a lot.*

In all the Italian schools involved in the research, there are extracurricular activities and projects differing in content and features. Secondary vocational schools carry out activities related to job search, technical camps or sports activities, possibly due to the stereotype that their predominantly male students would be interested in such activities. Secondary schools with general programs carry out various social projects and activities in cooperation with cultural and educational institutions from the local community.

**British** students have similar interests as Slovenian and Italian students. Sports activities that "contribute to stress reduction" prevail. Other interests are concerned with music, whether it is playing an instrument, composing their own music or just listening to music. Various creative activities with artistic features, such as writing or photography, occupy a significant place among students' interests. Playing computer games and socialising with friends are also some of the interests mentioned. The

following quote shows us how important sport is in the everyday life of students:

***When I'm having a hard time, I just go for a run and it helps me sort things out.***

In the **Croatian** research 'If I were someone - attitudes of students of vocational schools about volunteering and active citizenship (2016)' conducted with 39 students of four secondary vocational schools (21 male and 18 female), students' interests coincide with the interests of students from three other partner countries. Male students are predominantly interested in sports, while female students are interested in socialising and fulfilling their school obligations. All students are very active on social networks, where they spend a lot of time.

Sport extra-curricular activities are most represented in the school offer, while there is a limited supply of non-sports activities. The existing activities, such as volunteering or environmental activism, receive a limited number of students, so not everyone interested can get involved. The local community makes it possible to engage in the volunteer fire department or Caritas, which are often the only such organisations in a particular environment, so the choice is narrowed.

Students from rural areas cannot be involved in many activities due to poor traffic connections. Juggling school work with extracurricular activities is an additional challenge. Students' passivity and lack of interest in active leisure time activities, as well as the time spent on social networks, are additional reasons why young people are not active enough in and outside school. The next quote addresses the reasons for the insufficient engagement of young people in some activities.

***I think there are opportunities, but the problem is that all these activities are centralised, everything takes place in the city centre ... She would like to play volleyball, but that's impossible because the only place where she can train is there. So maybe they could organise volleyball practices somewhere near, I think a lot more people would get involved. They could rent a hall or something. From the firefighters, maybe. That could work.***

## **PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

This part of the text describes the problems faced by students in and outside school. The main research question addressed to the participants of focus groups was: *What are the main problems of the students your age?* It was followed by the following sub-questions: *What are your peers concerned about, what are the problems typical for your school and outside it? Do you feel safe at school and outside it? Have you experienced or witnessed violence? Have you experienced or witnessed any injustice around you or in your local community? Do you feel excluded at school or in your local community? Do you feel that other students or teachers exclude you? What happens*

*if someone is different? How do adults relate to someone who is different? Are you involved in solving problems at school and your local community and how? What do you need to solve these problems and who can you contact for help or advice? How do you see your future and how optimistic are you about it?*

The challenges **Slovenian** students are concerned about are mostly related to school work and obligations. To ensure the continuation of schooling, students strive for good grades and academic success. An additional challenge is the lack of time to attend extra-curricular activities due to work overload. On the other hand, some students are engaged in a lot or are very devoted to extra-curricular activities that they barely have enough time for their regular school work.

Students consider it as important challenge to maintain a positive image, so they compare and compete with others. They want to be popular and liked by others. They want to be accepted by other groups, but they also fear they will lose friends, and they lack the time to socialise with other people. A lot of students are unconcerned about their future, which is illustrated by the following quote:

***I am optimistic about my future. I have good grades, good environment ... I live in the countryside so everything is within my reach.***

Physical and psychological violence is the main problem of **Italian** students, even major than alcohol and drugs. Victims of the violence often differ from the dominant group by physical appearance, ethnicity, and language barriers or external characteristics such as clothing. The following quote illustrates this:

***It happened to my classmate. He is Romanian and doesn't speak very well Italian, and my classmates excluded him.***

Other problems are conforming to the peer pressure and achieving a desirable image about oneself. Students believe that they will not be accepted and that they will be excluded from the group if they do not meet certain standards. Given the special role that family plays in the lives of Italian students, the source of their problems may be family relationships, the death of a family member or the divorce of parents. Such unfavourable family circumstances may cause students to become victims of violence and discrimination.

In the **Croatian** research, one of the main problems is the lack of time for leisure activities. Sometimes work overload may lead to a drop in intrinsic motivation for school. The example is as follows:

***I, personally, for example, need more time for rest because we are at school all day: in the morning and in the afternoon. And when I come home in the evening, I'm supposed to study, but by that time, I have lost all my motivation. I'd like to have more rest and more time in general, and to get more sleep to be able to better achieve my goals.***



The main problems of Croatian students are related to school and peer acceptance. According to the majority of students, their classes are taught "in a dry and uninteresting way, with too little practical work", which is essential for students of vocational schools. Teachers tend to favour some students over the others, and students do not have the feeling that their opinion is important. This is illustrated by the following quote:

*The prevalent opinion in this century is that kids are terrible. I mean, we're not perfect, because we can sometimes really drive some teachers mad. But that is not the reason to be treated in the way that our rights are disrespected. The teachers are also not infallible; sometimes they can also be wrong.*

Croatian students consider their peers' opinion extremely important. Being different from most of their peers means to be excluded from the group. This can take the form of exclusion from different social groups, gossiping, mockery, or violence. Peer exclusion may be caused by different looks, clothing, rural or urban origins, and attitudes to certain topics. In schools attended by members of a national minority, the exclusion is based on a national and religious diversity. To fit in with colleagues, students accept different risk behaviours such as smoking or drinking. An example of this is:

*A lot of friends started smoking or drinking just to be accepted, or even taking drugs.*

## SENSE OF SECURITY

**Slovenian** schools and local communities give students a sense of security. Violence at school is forbidden by school rules and teachers in school prevent it. Students are aware that there are deviant individuals and groups in local communities, but they avoid them and move in the social circles of their friends. Their attitude to getting into dangerous situations is reflected by the following quote:

*I have no reason to be a part of any dangerous situation. I simply keep company with people I love and know that they will not hurt me.*

**Italian** high school students feel safe at school and outside of it. However, the sense of security in the local community varies depending on the circles in which the students are moving. Students experience Palermo as a typical big city where bad things happen occasionally. At the time of the research, students were not afraid of potential terrorist attacks.

The sense of security in **Croatian** high schools is related to the violence that takes place in

them. In some schools there is an extremely pronounced physical violence, so students defend by using force. The relationship between minorities and the majority also contributes to the feeling of insecurity. In schools attended by members of national minorities, students belonging to the majority feel insecure about the behaviour of the minorities. Many pupils of vocational schools live in dormitories where there is a high prevalence of violence causing them to feel less safe. The following quote illustrates this:

*In primary school I walked about without concern, I knew nothing would happen, and here that's not the case, I'm always ready to be attacked by somebody.*

Students in the British research did not explicitly discuss school safety; instead, they brought up the subject of the school as a safe place to discuss extreme positions and sensitive topics.

The research also covered the opinions of British teachers who described the school as a safe place for students to discuss sensitive issues and extreme attitudes. However, only about half of the students feel the school is a safe place to discuss sensitive subjects. Students from northern England do not consider it a safe place to debate, and only a small number of students argue the opposite. There is a distinct difference in the perception of school security between teachers and students. While students experience it as a moderately safe place to discuss sensitive topics, teachers have the opposite view. Here is the quote illustrating this:

*(Pupils) know they can go to their tutor, their year leader, we've also got the anti-bullying ambassadors...*

## WITNESSING VIOLENCE AT SCHOOL

**Slovenian** students have witnessed various forms of violence at school and outside of it. Some students spoke of friendly physical fights between friends and brothers, not considering them as a form of violence. Many Slovenian students have been victims and even more, witnesses of verbal violence, although some students do not consider verbal violence as a form of violence. The presence of violence on social networks has also been recognised, with negative consequences for the victim. After witnessing the violence, students turn to adults, teachers, parents or social workers.

**Italian** students have also witnessed violence at school, which is one of the biggest problems they face. Unlike their Slovenian peers, Italian students do not turn to teachers for support, but rather rely on parents or brothers and sisters. The following quote illustrates how students cope with the experience of violent behaviour:

*I don't remain friends with anybody from my secondary school, it was such a bad experience that I want to forget.*

Croatian **students** are surrounded by various forms of violence on a daily basis. Apart from the physical violence prevalent among boys, emotional abuse, such as insults, mockery, and making up false stories, is also represented. There is violence widespread on the internet and social networks.

Students deal with conflicts by talking to someone they trust, like close friends and family. They rarely choose to talk to teachers about a problem related to violence. Even if they do, they are very reserved because they feel they cannot say what they think. Students have developed their own mechanisms of dealing with violence at school. They emphasize the importance of resourcefulness, making good decisions, and the choice of friends they can talk to. The following quote shows the way students approach solving problems:

*When I have a problem, I solve it in any way, first I try it in a calm way, and if it doesn't work, then in any other way.*

The cases of extremism in **British** schools are rare. They are manifested in the form of participation in anti-Muslim protests, as a serious violence or as expressing extreme views. Violent incidents are linked to expressing racism, calling others terrorists, religiously-based insults, sexist comments, bodily abuse, mocking based on ethnic origins. Despite such incidents, most of the students have not witnessed the expression of extreme views at school, and there are no indications of their radicalisation. The following quote describes some of these events:

*Things have come up. For example, some kid brought up the 'je suis Charlie' poster. Some Muslim children were upset.*

British students feel they can turn to their teachers to discuss sensitive topics such as racism, sexism or extreme political or religious worldviews.

## INJUSTICE

**Slovenian** students relate injustice with the education system, school context and biased teachers who don't grade students "equally". They consider that the student's financial status, gender, popularity or some other personal circumstance and the current mood of the teacher are factors that influence teachers' assessment practices. The feeling of injustice among students arises also due to mutual false accusation or when a teacher incorrectly accuses one of something one has not done. In such situations, conflict often arises.

Provocations without a clear reason are common among Slovenian students, and those in the position of power are more likely to start them. Some factors such as nationality,

special needs, social or economic status may be an incentive to be provoked or verbally attacked. An additional source of injustice is the unequal sanctioning of students for the same behaviour. Pupils recognise injustice and consider it bad. If they witness injustice, they help the victim by talking to them or ask for help from adults.

The following quotation illustrates a pupil's opinion of why injustice comes about:

***Injustice in school is happening within the grading process within which I think that teachers evaluate pupils differently. At that time I usually say something and I have already achieved something with this. There's no sin to try that. It also happened to me that it was not the best outcome when I spoke up and that it would be better to be quiet.***

**Italian** students perceive injustice mostly in the form of the teachers' biased grading and behaviour towards the students. Teachers sometimes neglect the violence experienced by students of lower socioeconomic status or those who differ from the majority, which students find unfair.

Students perceive social injustice in the domain of work or the public sector, which can be supported by the following quote:

***...injustice in the healthcare field, people tend not to trust anymore the public health services but the private ones because the public system is not efficient...***

**British** students object to the other students' behaviour during breaks and lunch breaks. Students are unhappy because other students often jump the queue, they would like more diverse food and more different activities during the break. Additional facilities for young people, activities aimed at combating discrimination and building social understanding are some of the things the British students would like to see in their local community. Students consider their schools provide them with enough support to solve potential problems either at school or in the local community, but they feel that they need additional support to deal better with the fear of failure, physical violence in school and the fear of being judged, which represent some of the major problems for British students.

On the other hand, British teachers have a different view of the main problems in school. They find that parental support and involvement in the education of their children are insufficient, including subsequent problems caused by students' activity on the social networks. Emotional challenges such as anger management, pressure for achievement and reduced self-esteem are other problems identified by British school teachers. Here is what they say about it:

***Our biggest challenge is educating parents to support boys to aspire.***

# DISCRIMINATION

About half of the interviewed **Slovenian** students have been victims of discrimination, while most of the students have witnessed it at some point. The most common reasons for discrimination are gender, nationality, or physical and / or psychological developmental difficulties. Discrimination may also be based on by health, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or personal interests.

About half of the students have helped their discriminated peers by turning to the school staff; some have turned to their parents, and some to their brothers and sisters. Only few students have spoken directly with their discriminated peers, as well as with those who have discriminated against them. Others have included the discriminated students in group activities to get them acquainted with their friends.

**Slovenian** students had different views on how to deal with people involved in a discriminatory relationship. They would organise workshops with victims of discrimination in which they would share their feelings and stories, as well as workshops that would provide the support for dealing with the consequences of discrimination. They suggested the workshops where students would put themselves in different roles and thus experience the discrimination their peers had to experience. They consider that it is necessary to have an insight into both positions in a discriminatory relationship:

*It's hard to judge the situation if you don't know the arguments from both sides.*

**Italian** students claim that they generally get on well with each other. However, some students feel excluded because of the hobbies or interests they don't share with others:

*I feel excluded ideologically in the first place, because it turns out that my thoughts are too articulate and if there is somebody that doesn't share them, I don't feel understood.*

Some students exclude themselves by their own choice, because they do not want to belong to a particular group, which is supported by the following quote:

*Rather than being excluded I prefer to exclude myself because I don't find myself at ease with my peers, I feel better with older people.*

Others do it because they don't approve of their peers' behaviour. For example:



*I see within my circle of friends horrible situations, people that from the outside seem nice but have problems related to alcohol and drugs, smoking, and I prefer to stay away.*

Students of a lower socioeconomic status may sometimes exclude those of a better socioeconomic status. This case shows that discrimination and exclusion can be directed from any group to any member of any other group and it is illustrated by this quote:

*This year I played in a [football] team with older boys and many of them come from low social context and at the beginning we were excluded (contrary to what usually happens). From one part they made fun of us because we were younger and for our economic conditions, but from other side it looked like they were a bit intimidated, and with the envy, after one year's staying together such things passed away.*

In **Croatian** schools students discriminated against are all those students different from the majority, regardless of the type of their diversity. Croatian students emphasise the role of education and workshops on tolerance and acceptance of diversity. They believe that there should be some common space for different groups to get to know each other better. Bullies are experienced as people who need support, whose problems are manifested through violence. This is illustrated by the following quote:

*Since we were kids, we've been listening to our parents, to our environment, trying to make our way through life. But they're not necessarily right. As we're learning, we can see that they're wrong. Our parents, our grandparents, they all make mistakes, their thoughts and opinions are not necessarily perfect. That's why you should build yourself as a person, be positive and stick to some moral standards.*

**British** students feel excluded because they are disempowered in the decision making processes at the school level, which is usually justified by their age. Their peers exclude them by not inviting them to social network chats, based on external features such as hairstyle or clothing. Sometimes exclusion is based on the difference in interests or hobbies. An example of disempowerment in the decision making process is illustrated by this quote:

*It's kind of worrying when there are decisions that are being made for you that you haven't got control over.*

# FUTURE

In terms of the future, **Slovenian** students have perceived clearly their goals, completing the school, finding the job and starting the family. In contrast, **Croatian** students strongly express concern over future after finishing the school. They think their future is unsecure. **Italian** and **British** researchers did not focus on the future prospects of students as they researched other contextually relevant topics.

# VOLUNTEERING

**Slovenian** students describe volunteers as people who like helping others, use their initiative to offer help, feel an urge to be useful, are not paid and do not expect anything in return. **Slovenian** pupils have volunteered for charitable purposes, mostly by collecting or selling items; they have volunteered in social, environmental, educational or health projects, and the least in the field of culture.

Slovenian schools have regular voluntary actions aimed at collecting certain materials, such as bottle caps, old paper, empty batteries, toners, toys and school supplies. Students also participate in clean-up campaigns, learning support, helping students with special needs, and assisting in various school projects and events.

Outside the school, pupils can volunteer in a volunteer firefighters association, fundraising for animal welfare organisations, local community activities, churches, nurseries or homes for the elderly.

However, there is a conceptual ambiguity about the nature of volunteering because the students confuse volunteering with voluntary blood donation or giving money donations to poor people. Some have mentioned that doing household chores is also volunteering, as well as membership in extracurricular activities like scouts. The following quote illustrates well what being a volunteer represents for them:

*Being a volunteer is life-changing and makes both parties involved feel good.*

**Italian** researchers have devoted relatively little time to the subject of volunteering during the focus group implementation, so it was not possible to get a complete picture of volunteering in Italian schools. Only a small number of Italian students have directly been involved in volunteering. Some have volunteered in scouts; some students have been involved in the immigration reception centre in Palermo, while most of them have never volunteered.

**Croatian** students have experienced volunteering as a voluntary pro-social activity for which they do not receive financial compensation. Their definitions of volunteering include only helping others, with an emphasis on the social dimension of volunteering. However, there is a disparity between the choice of volunteering activities offered by schools and the students' perceptions of volunteering. While students experience volunteering as an activity aimed at helping others, schools promote the collection of financial resources for humanitarian purposes as volunteering. The following quote is an example of the way students understand volunteering:

*I think that volunteering is, in essence, encouraging people to do good things, not for money, but simply because they want someone else to benefit from it.*

Students are involved in volunteering in various ways. They are active either in a school volunteer club, or in their local community, e. g. in their parish, in the Red Cross or in the volunteer fire brigade. Some are not involved in volunteering due to distance or poor traffic connections, others due to sports activities or school responsibilities.

Direct volunteer experiences of Croatian students are related to volunteering with other people, but the students have observed that the school as an institution does not provide sufficient support for volunteering. They also believe that there is a lack of people who could initiate mass volunteer activities. The reasons why students mostly volunteer are personal fulfilment and satisfaction, socialising with others, and seeing the direct consequences of their work.

## **ADDITIONAL TOPICS AND PROBLEMS COVERED**

Individual national teams of researchers have also addressed specific topics through their focus groups to clarify the research questions. **Italian** researchers have studied the relationship between school violence and terrorism.

### **THE LINK BETWEEN SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM IN ITALY**

Pupils have identified several common features in school bullies and terrorists. Both have developed hatred towards everyone around them because of personal bad experiences. They want to feel strong and be in the centre of attention, so they use physical strength, violence or humiliate others. They have a 'closed mentality', they are manifestly conservative, and they do not like diversity. School bullies and terrorists justify their actions on the basis of certain motives.

The following quote exemplifies the opinion that terrorists must have had bad personal experiences:

*I think that [members of] ISIS were normal people that have a bad past and violent life episodes and seeing that kind of behaviour they wanted to strike back.*

The students' opinions on who is likely to become a terrorist diverge in two directions. Some believe that school bullies may become terrorists, while most students feel it is the victims of violence who are mostly targeted by the radicals. This is their reaction to an early exposure to violence, which causes a growing sense of suffering, which is, in turn, manifested as terrorism.

*Their rage grows day after day and creates frustrations that lash out.*

## **OVERVIEW OF SPECIFIC THEMES COVERED BY BRITISH RESEARCH**

Several terrorist attacks occurred before and during the implementation of the focus groups in the United Kingdom. The first was in March 2017 at Westminster Bridge in London. In May 2017 there was a terrorist attack in Manchester, and in June that same year there was yet another attack, this time at Borough Market, also in London. These circumstances have partially determined the content of focus groups and opened up a space for discussion on certain topics. They are related to the students' identity, the concept of diversity, immigration, and understanding of extremism and the contextualisation of identity, diversity and extremism.

British students associate their identity mostly with the activities in which they are involved. A smaller number of students identified with their ethnic, religious or cultural group, and little attention was paid to gender identity. Considering the fact they don't tend to associate much with these identities, they pay relatively little attention to them, even though it is precisely these identities that represent a basis for discrimination.

Pupils experience diversity as a dynamic social force that can connect and separate people. Variety is good because it allows people to learn about different cultures, but at the same time, they also may be exposed to racism, discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes. London schools, mixed on ethnic, religious and other grounds, believe that the degree of integration of outsiders into their local community is relatively high. Understanding the negative consequences of separating people is illustrated by the following quote:

***Splitting people into groups causes disagreement. Living together means people can get on. They can learn and prevent violence.***

In the north-eastern part of England where there aren't so many new immigrants, the degree of integration is not so high. It is interesting that students from northern England express a bit more concern about integration in relation to London students. Pupils from both groups, regardless of the degree of diversity of their local communities, feel that integration is good.

Students do not link the concepts of immigration and diversity because they perceive differently the benefits and disadvantages of these two phenomena. When they talked about immigration, they mentioned the importance of allowing others to enter the country for humanitarian reasons. Still, they are sceptical of immigration because they are afraid of the country's overcrowding, the lack of space and jobs. Here's what they say about it:

***I am only a little concerned about immigration because I feel like jobs will be limited because of people coming from other countries.***

The focus group participants are satisfied with the degree of integration of diverse pupils in their schools. This applies to the schools with a large number of students from different ethnic, religious or linguistic groups. Schools in Northern England are attended mostly by the white British population, and there are few pupils belonging to other ethnic groups. Students say that integration is a bit less successful there.

But the students in northern England schools are seldom in contact with different cultures and members of other ethnic groups. Sometimes they express themselves in a discriminatory way without a complete understanding of what they are doing. On the contrary, pupils belonging to different minority ethnic groups in London schools usually contact with members of their own group and have little contact with the British population outside the school. Teachers therefore face several challenges. One of them is that British students in northern England have little contact with ethnic minorities, and the ethnic minorities in London have little contact with the British majority outside the school.

## **UNDERSTANDING EXTREMISM**

Students perceive extremism as a historical phenomenon, and they have corroborated this opinion by some examples from the past. They associate extremism with violence, hatred, religion, or racism, followed by xenophobia and a lack of tolerance to other people's views. The students did not directly associate extremism and terrorism, nor did they mention specific terrorist attacks that could be associated with extremism. As an example of extremism, only the Islamic state has been quoted, and as an illustration of their awareness of the interconnectedness of xenophobia and racism, this quote can be used:



***Racism, xenophobia, extremism – they're all linked.***

Students interpret extremism in a wider historical geopolitical context, rather than through current political and international tensions, as possible triggers of terrorist attacks in the UK. Some research participants linked extremism and politics. Although the students were acquainted with extreme worldviews, political groupings, geopolitical events, and events, they did not link them with extremism.

## **PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA**

Relationships among students on social networks are a major problem for teachers. They spend a lot of time solving conflicts among students originating from social networks and escalating at school. They observe that pupils' self-esteem has eroded because of their activities on social networks, and their parents have no idea what their children are doing there. Also, students sometimes lack the capacity to evaluate relevant and credible data on social networks.

This represents a significant source of problems for the emotional development and psychological well-being of students, as well as for their critical thinking skills. Teachers have to cope with these developmental difficulties, and they describe the harmful effects of social networks as follows:

***Abuse of social media is the biggest problem. Heads of years spend all their time dealing with fights that spark from social networks.***

## **CONCLUSION**

Pupils of Slovenian, Italian, British and Croatian schools show most interest for sport and music activities (which are also the most accessible ones). The activities organised at school depend on the school curriculum, the type of school, and the activities outside the school depend on the characteristics of the local community. The quality of their implementation depends on the school, the capacities of the teacher, the interest of the students and various other logistical factors.

Students' problems are linked with their academic success, the relationship between teachers and students, acceptance in friendship groups, a satisfying physical appearance and self-image. There are very strong collective norms (Bettenhausen and Murnighan 1985), such as physical appearance or some risk behaviours. It appears that conforming to certain risk behaviours or bodily appearance on the basis of normative social influence (Aronson, Wilson and Akert 2005) is necessary for peer acceptance.

The feeling of injustice is related to the problems that students experience. Biased grading or unequal sanctioning of students for their behavior causes a strong feeling of injustice. Pupils believe that injustice is caused by their belonging to different groups, which is why some have preferential treatment. It is obvious that social categorisation (Tajfel 1982) can serve as an adequate explanation for the students' sense of injustice.

Discrimination among students begins by labelling others based on the principles of social categorisation (Tajfel 1982) and by formation of their social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Students are often discriminated against on the grounds of sex, gender, nationality, ethnic or religious affiliation. These features are present in all surveyed students and can be grounds for discrimination irrespective of the country or type of school.

Students describe volunteering as a voluntary activity of helping others without financial compensation. This view is in line with existing research perspectives (Wilson 2000) of volunteering as a pro-social behaviour. Pupils say they like working directly with people because they see the immediate consequences of their work. Despite the desire to engage in volunteering activities, they are sometimes unable to do it because their school and local community are under-resourced and because of other logistic problems.

Some attention is drawn by the link between school violence and terrorism. Students' explanations that both bullies and victims can become terrorists are theoretically justified. Doosje, Moghaddam, Kruglanski, de Wolf, Mann and Feddes (2016) explain that radical and extremist groups adopt a certain ideology that helps them rationalise the violence caused to the members of the group which initially caused their suffering.

Identity is related to the tendency towards radicalisation because marginal members of a group of undefined identity are subject to the influence of radical groups that provide a clear framework of action (Hogg, Kruglanski and Ven den Bos 2013).

It is interesting that students are more likely to identify with the activities that are important to them and less emphasise the ethnic, religious or linguistic dimensions of their identity. It is possible that their aim is to reduce the possibility of inter-group discrimination, which is a form of protection from other groups.

Contact among members of different groups helps reduce prejudice and increase positive attitudes among members of different groups (Pettigrew 1998). Direct contact among members of different groups can lead to perception of the benefits of immigration and social diversity for the development of the society. Students who have more contact with students from other ethnic or religious groups feel that diversity is good. However, students experience immigration as a realistic threat to natural and material resources, which is explained by the integrated threat theory (Stephan and Stephan 2000).

The results of this research suggest that teachers are faced with a great challenge. They have to work with students belonging to different ethnic, religious or linguistic groups. In such a multicultural environment it is necessary to understand the processes of identity

development, intergroup dynamics, conformity to norms and working in multicultural environments. The immersion of youth in various internet platforms their teachers are not well acquainted with is an additional challenge. In this area, it is necessary to work on strengthening students' critical attitudes towards different media content and encourage them to put different phenomena into a wider geopolitical context to gain a wider perspective of what's going on in the world.

Therefore, it is recommended for teachers to encourage their students to express their attitudes and opinions. Teachers' openness for discussion and explaining their own views and decisions contributes to the development of the students' democratic attitudes. If a school nurtures a sense of community, co-operation and justice, it will be more successful in reducing the violence related to discrimination. It is recommended that teachers develop pupils' critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of the social context. Providing support to students in finding personal satisfaction, respect, acceptance, and feeling of engagement is something that teachers need to strive for in their work.

The results of this research have been used to develop a training programme for teachers that will help them shape happy, mature and responsible individuals. The topics covered in the programme will enable teachers to better support the strengthening of the personal and social competences of young people to encourage them to take responsibility and shape the world around them. The content of the training programme is described in detail in the next chapter.



# PART THREE

**'START THE CHANGE!'  
TRAINING PROGRAMME  
- STRENGTHENING OF PERSONAL,  
SOCIAL AND CIVIL COMPETENCES**

*"I sometimes feel excluded from my friends because from time to time I feel a bit different from them". (a student, Italy)*

# THE HIGHEST RESULT OF EDUCATION IS TOLERANCE (HELEN KELLER)

## STARTING POINT

While exploring concepts and the content for the basis of the training programme and the entire project, a need for further research arose on the causes or factors contributing to the development of radical violent behaviour in youth.

In addition to the well-known developmental risk factors occurring within the family, school and community and the youth's predisposition to vulnerability, we wondered if there were any specific determinants preceding violent or even radical attitudes towards certain social groups.

In his article "Five Paths to Radicalization" from 2015, Javid Ahmad describes the five risk factors. Briefly, these are:

1. *personal dissatisfaction, grievances, indignation, the conviction they are not being treated justly, which inspires to action so that this injustice might be corrected*
2. *the tendency to seek clear and simple answers to their doubts, questions, and problems in religion or an ideological belief system*
3. *Strong focus on their social network, dependence on someone who is influential and charismatic, as well as susceptibility to following a group, e.g. of peers, etc.*
4. *strong desire to make an impact, to achieve a social or political change, willingness to do "anything" for a cause*
5. *poverty and unemployment of the youth, especially young men, lack of opportunities, services, ideas, isolation from the society.*



Wondering about what could be an antidote to the above mentioned, one might conclude that the answer lies in:

1. *Finding personal satisfaction, respect, acceptance, and feeling of positive engagement that inspires action for a constructive goal*
2. *Developing critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the world we live in.*
3. *Building connectedness, assertiveness, strong and positive relationships and a support network*
4. *The desire to make positive changes realistically and constructively (such as active citizenship)*
5. *Education and job opportunities for the young people; services and ideas that connect them.*

Another thing we found important was to design a training programme based on the perspective of young people. We covered their thoughts and insights about the main problems of their generation as well as suggestions for their resolution that were obtained through the work of focus groups (described in the previous chapter). The results show that young people have experience of discrimination, injustice, feelings of insecurity, social exclusion, radicalism, and extremism, as well as concerns about the future of the societies they live in. The experience of the researchers who talked with young people is that they have a lot to say about these topics and that it was important for them to talk about it.

*"I feel optimistic because we're actually raising these issues. You know, if you ignore it then it's never going to go away, but if you talk about it then that's at least a step in the right direction.. (a student, Great Britain)*

The content of the training programme is, therefore, based on the young people's needs recognised in the research and it provides tools and guidelines that can help us support their growth and development into happy, mature and responsible individuals. The programme uses different topics to highlight the importance of developing 'self-resilience' in young people, as well as a positive self-image, capacity for self-actualisation, quality communication skills and positive relationships with others. A major focus throughout the whole project is also given to providing young people with the support to take an active part in their society. They learn to recognise and deal with problems of the society through active participation, thus giving their community the shape they would like it to have.

*"I agree that we have to start from ourselves. But we should also encourage positive change in others. The whole society needs to be changed so that we treat each other better, that we respect each other more, that we communicate more." (a student, Croatia)*

# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

## 'START THE CHANGE'

**The main goal** of the training programme is to strengthen and develop the competences of teachers, and principals in a range of areas, such as: *communication and relationships, dialogue* (with emphasis on sensitive topics such as stereotypes, prejudices and intercultural differences), *democratic processes, media literacy, conflict resolution and violence prevention*.

Teachers, counsellors, and principals are also encouraged and empowered to involve young people in local actions, and volunteering programmes, peer support, as well as in support of youth initiatives focused on prosocial behaviour, empathy, respect for differences and mutual understanding.

**Social and emotional learning**, which is developed during these activities, becomes the basis for lifelong lessons that young people can take with them in life and adulthood.

Pupils will be involved in specific activities that will develop their competences such as empathy, understanding, and willingness to help and constructively resolve conflicts and demanding situations – the competences that will remain ingrained during their upbringing.

Since violence and radicalisation often occur during the process of identity development and in the context of deprivation (not necessarily economic, but also psychological or social), and might be additionally motivated by personal problems and the desire for vengeance, this programme nurtures values and capacities for:

- **psychological well-being and personal development**
- **emotional literacy**
- **civic competences**
- **connecting with others**
- **positive attitudes towards diversity**
- **multi-perspectivity**
- **a deeper understanding of the world.**

In the light of all the above, we have developed contents and activities that create opportunities for cooperation between different groups (minority and majority), and that can enrich that contact and cooperation with innovative ideas in the field of volunteering, mutual support, respect and understanding, and creativity.

Various theories and concepts have been used, such as:

- **nonviolent communications and peace education**
- **conflict transformation**
- **high quality and positive relationships**
- **self-determination**
- **human rights and interculturality**
- **prejudice and stereotypes, discrimination**
- **empathy.**

Since perception of social injustice is another important factor of radicalisation, the content is enriched with numerous topics from the areas of **civic education and active inclusion of young people** within the democratic framework of society.

The programme develops competences for democratic culture (Barret et al. 2016), which include values, attitudes, and skills, as well as knowledge and critical thinking. The values of human rights, dignity, cultural diversity, democracy, justice, equality and the rule of law are emphasised.

The programme also examines and supports the attitude of openness to diversity and different beliefs, customs and attitudes, as well as attitudes of respect, personal responsibility, self-efficacy and critical reflection.

Five areas (modules) include topics such as:

- 1. Identity and happiness**
- 2. Relationships, communication, and cooperation**
- 3. Self-actualisation and creativity**
- 4. Active citizenship and media literacy**
- 5. Youth volunteer projects.**

The five-day training model can be visually presented like this:



As far as personal and social skills are concerned, the programme's goal is to develop skills in the areas of relationships, empathy, critical thinking, communication, collaboration and conflict resolution. The aim is to help the participants learn more about themselves, their stereotypes, prejudices, beliefs, and fears, but also to acquire a basic knowledge of human rights, democracy, active citizenship and media literacy.

An important part of the programme consists of materials such as this manual and the Start the Change! collection of lesson plans which allows for more than 30 different workshops to be used in class or while working with groups of young people in other contexts.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE 'START THE CHANGE!' TRAINING PROGRAMME**

The programme is a combination of individual (psychological) and sociological approach to the issue of prevention. Its goal is to develop personal strength, but also a deeper understanding of concepts such as civic awareness and civic engagement.

In a theoretical sense, the programme relies on a wide range of theories and concepts. One of them is the theory of psychological needs or self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan 2000), with an emphasis on the development in adolescence and specific needs for connectivity, autonomy, and competence. Under the influence of this model, the underlying assumption is that most of the emotional problems and problems affecting teenagers' behaviour are caused by unfulfilled psychological needs (for which there may be a number of reasons).

In the part of the training that deals with relationships and communication, we have used theories and humanistic models such as non-violent communication by Marshall Rosenberg (2003), personal language by T. Gordon (2008) and quality school by W. Glasser (1999). Erikson's Identity development model also represents a valuable foundation for understanding adolescence crisis (Erikson 1968), as well as Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979) that enriches the previous models with a sociological perspective, taking into account diverse contextual factors contributing to development (such as family, school, neighbourhood, community, etc.).

The part of the training dedicated to civic education which covers topics such as democracy, human rights, interculturality, stereotypes and prejudices and media literacy, also relies on many documents and theories. The documents include the Paris Declaration (March 17, 2015), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Council of Europe Charter on Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, and the publication of the Competences for Democratic Culture (Council of Europe, 2016). These documents form the basis for understanding how to treat the other and the different; they empower young people in the fight against prejudice and prepare them for life in a democratic society, both nationally and globally.

The topics of media and media literacy relate to a number of theoretical concepts by authors such as Walter Lipmann, Dennis McQuail, James W. Potter, but also strategic documents such as the Grunwald Declaration on Media Literacy (UNESCO 1982) or the Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Age UNESCO (2014). The theory of media literacy is dealt with through the definition of the European Commission (2013), which defines it as an intersection of three important areas: the use of skills, critical understanding and communication skills.

After participating in the training programme, teachers, other school staff and young volunteers have been empowered to understand and handle differences, and have developed additional personal, social and civic competencies that enable them to create a sustainable educational context with a variety of educational settings.

**TABLE. Which competences should be developed by teachers and other school staff and which should be developed by students?**

Learning outcomes for the programme trainees They will be able to	Learning outcomes for youth They will be able to
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand and evaluate the identity formation process of youth</li> <li>- define risk and protective factors in the development</li> <li>- understand the basic nature of the adolescent identity crisis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand and accept their own identity and uniqueness</li> <li>- recognise the influence of culture, environment and other influences that shape them</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- apply knowledge of psychological needs in adolescent development to their work with young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- define their goals and recognise their own and other people's needs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- acquire additional knowledge about self-actualisation of young people in school and through hobbies and other activities</li> <li>- provide support and encouragement to young people to realise their potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identify opportunities in the environment and recognise their potential for achieving goals</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use creative tools in their work with young people</li> <li>- apply skills for creativity in teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strengthen their competences for creative thinking and expression</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use art forms in the area of peace education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use creativity and art forms as a tool for emotional expression and discussion of sensitive topics</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the importance of expressing and managing emotions in communication with students</li> <li>- listen actively and empower young people in communication with them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- develop their emotional literacy and expression</li> <li>- develop respect for diversity and individual differences</li> <li>- use assertive communication</li> <li>- strengthen their ability for empathy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- analyse conflicts</li> <li>- apply restorative conflict resolution methods</li> <li>- understand intercultural factors in conflicts and their importance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- better understand their own conflicts and conflicts of their peers</li> <li>- apply the basics of conflict resolution and creative problem solving</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- explain the role of respect for human rights in the school context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the concept of democracy</li> <li>- compare democracy with other forms of socio-political organisations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- apply democratic principles in the everyday life of the school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the concept of democracy</li> <li>- compare the democracy with other forms of community order</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- apply practical skills in creating school projects on sensitive topics dealing with diversity, majority and minority issues, stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination</li> <li>- motivate students to recognise, accept and respect diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the topic of minority and majority</li> <li>- define positive discrimination</li> <li>- have a discussion on migration crises based on well-founded arguments</li> <li>- learn to distinguish between integration, assimilation, multiculturalism, and interculturalism and form their views on them</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conduct a dialogue with students on stereotypes and preju</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- define the role of prejudice and stereotypes in inter-relations, deprivation, and radicalisation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teach the basics of media literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the role of the media in contemporary society and the concepts of fake news, populism and "post-truth" society</li> <li>- identify manipulation of information and news creation processes</li> <li>- become aware of the ways the media create and support prejudices and stereotypes about certain social groups</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- apply the principles of quality management of youth volunteering projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- describe and apply research tools to the needs of the school and local community</li> <li>- create project ideas that respond to the established needs and which include the volunteers' motivation and their skills</li> </ul>

## KEY TOPICS

In the 'Start the Change!' programme a great emphasis is placed on empowering the personal and social competences of young people. By their teenage years, they have already built their personality; they have grown in a certain social context, with a specific identity, and have been brought up in a family environment that has to some extent determined who they are.

Some of them may have:

- acquired a bad image of themselves, their origins, their abilities
- adopted certain stereotypes and prejudices
- developed certain emotional difficulties or
- behavioural problems

Perhaps they were faced with:

- developmental difficulties
- diseases or illnesses
- family problems
- growing up in an insecure and violent environment

Which exposes them to a greater risk of:

- demonstrating intolerant behaviour towards others or
- becoming themselves subject to rejection or aggressive behaviour.

"Some of our peers feel different from physical or family point of view, someone has a family problem, and so they find themselves different." (a student, Italy)

Belonging to any minority, even in a "developed" society, still represents a significant developmental burden and brings into play a complex process of accepting oneself (and others). In addition to being vulnerable to all the listed risk factors, this period of development is itself turbulent because there are numerous cognitive, physiological and emotional changes that require a lot of inner work.

The role of schools and various youth organisations and professional support services, therefore, becomes even more important, even crucial in encouraging and, if necessary, guiding the course of the development of a young person.

In this programme we are interested in "resilience", that is, all those factors that contribute to the development of a young person, regardless of their starting position and possible problems, into a healthy, self-confident, satisfied and tolerant person who builds quality relationships, develops their abilities and is actively and positively engaged in their community.

**Resilience** here refers to resistance to:

- risks
- bad influences
- manipulation
- extreme attitudes
- relationships and attitudes that are appealing but are harmful in the long-term
- negative decisions and their consequences.

Well, first we must believe in ourselves and only then can we achieve whatever we want to. We need to have self-confidence, set our goals and determine the way to get them. We need to know our. (a student, Croatia)

In the manual, we focus on the **three components of resilience** that the 'Start the Change!' programme deals intensively with. These are:

1. **strong and positive identity**
2. **self-actualisation and development of our abilities**
3. **building quality relationships with others..**

These topics are dealt with in this part of the manual, while the fourth component (active participation of young people) is specifically dealt with in the fourth chapter because it is based on the methodological (practical) part of the programme.

## IDENTITY AND SELF-EXPERIENCE

We start from the assumption that a **clear, comprehensive and positive** experience of oneself is a **prerequisite for the successful development of a young person** and also a preventive factor for exclusion, isolation, aggressiveness, emotional difficulties and problematic relationships with others and wider environment. This type of self-experience can be particularly challenging if a young person is growing up in an environment that in any way may lead them to believe that they are not worthy or good enough because of some personal trait, minority affiliation, developmental difficulty or problem they might be facing at the moment. This type of message might come from the media, from the wider community, from peers and even from teachers and other adults that the young person encounters daily. The programme actively explores the question of identity, its construction, and the creation of an environment in which people of different identities may freely work and live together.

## RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

The second, extremely important component of this part of the programme is the topic of relationships and communication. Standing up for oneself in a constructive way is an extremely important topic for many young people, as well as building **good and close relationships**. Relationships are the way young people express themselves; it is through them they find out who they are and what they want, searching for role-models in important people, and learning to express their emotions and needs. On the other hand, they often have to deal with problems stemming from insecurity, shutting-off and isolation, resentment and rejection, and even aggression – which might be either verbal, online (on social networks, which is becoming increasingly prevalent), or, in extreme cases, even physical. In this part of the programme, we discuss topics such as emotional literacy, assertiveness, anger and conflict management and acceptance of others.

## REALISATION OF POTENTIAL AND CREATIVITY

Our third assumption is that opportunities for self-realisation, meaningful and active involvement in the 'outside world' will also be a powerful factor affecting the young person positively and allowing them to get to know themselves, connect with others and realise their creative potential. School is an important factor here because it systematically exposes a young person to a series of methods and disciplines and gives them opportunities to experience success, but on the other hand, it can also be a factor of stress and pressure due to perceived 'meaningless' activities having little to do with practical life and lacking creative activities. Throughout the programme and the training, we are focusing on the ways we can provide opportunities for the young people to recognise their talents and realise them, taking advantage of their natural creativity and capacity for innovation.

*My biggest problem is that I always think about how the other person must be feeling. (Student, Slovenia)*

## IDENTITY AND SELF-EXPERIENCE

*Uh... I would encourage people to ask themselves who they are! (Student, Croatia)*

Identity is the way we see ourselves and our personality; it's an individual experience of oneself (Tomić-Koludrović and Knežević 2004). Growing up, young people develop their self-image, primarily through relationships with others. Self-image includes different dimensions:

- how I see myself
- who I am
- what am I like
- my self-experience
- the way I think others see me
- the feeling of self-worth

Through the internalisation process, our identity is directly influenced by relationships with others. This process begins in a family where children learn how their parents and other family members of the family see them and, growing up, this circle expands to peers, teachers, friends, colleagues, bosses, partners. Internalisation is a process that takes place through communication, and with it, the knowledge and information we get from others about our identity become an integral part of who we are and how we see ourselves.

Through communication and relationships with others, we get positive or negative messages about who we are and what our behaviour is. The extent to which the child will internalise this information depends on the closeness of the relationship and its importance. Positive and clear messages stimulate self-esteem, positive perception of one's values, and act as a support for different positive behaviours, such as assertiveness and empathy. If these messages are negative, the child's self-esteem and self-worth may collapse, causing negative, unacceptable and sometimes even radical behaviour.

Along with immediate relationships, the entire society, and certainly the media, also play an important role in the formation of child's self-image. A child, and particularly an adolescent (who is naturally prone to second-guessing him/herself), can be led to believe by the society that some aspect of their personality is not acceptable or valued (appearance, character trait, ability, affiliation to any social minority). This too may have devastating effects on self-esteem, especially if a young person has not previously built a solid and positive self-experience. In that case, the key support should come from the family, but the school and the community also have responsibility in helping young people to dismiss any limited and imposed images originating from social networks, the media and other forms of public communication, often through (spoken and unspoken) messages spreading from their wider environment.

The children and young people able to count on adults (parents, family, and teachers) who support them, who relish in their achievements while at the same time not condemning their failures or mistakes, feel safe, satisfied and valuable, and adults thus encourage their positive self-image. However, in addition to reinforcing their self-image, adults also need to considerately point out to their mistakes and help them correct them. In the process mentioned above, the most important thing for children and young people is to feel that adults believe in them because that way they're helping children to believe in themselves.

Identity is built throughout the whole life, especially in adolescence, and it is always built by previous experiences. Erik Erikson (according to Jozić, 2009), a psychoanalyst known for the psychosocial development theory and for introducing the term *identity crisis*, considers identity as a major achievement in the development of personality in adolescence and a crucial step towards becoming a productive, happy and mature person. Successful and quality social relationships and emotional competences play an important role in building an identity.

For children to create a positive image of themselves and others, it is essential to encourage and develop their socio-emotional competences from the earliest age and to show them by example how to build quality relationships and accept themselves and others. It is also important to provide them with opportunities and encourage them to explore the world around them and to find what they enjoy and what they are good at.



# EMOTIONAL LEARNING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Recently, in our generations, starting from the secondary school or even sooner, many of my peers get depressed, but we don't know how even to bring it up, how to tell our parents. Many kids from my school, even from my gang, have that problem. The way I see it, it can be caused by stress at school, changes during puberty, quarrels at home. If you're hypersensitive, then even the slightest thing will bother you, and you keep all that bottled up. (a student, Croatia)

As they explore their identity, find their "voice" and learn how to stand up for themselves in various intimate and public situations, young people learn to deal with powerful and increasingly complex emotions. They often suppress them, deny them or even "explode". Learning how to express their emotions and build quality relationships are perhaps the most valuable skills they will develop in that stage of life.

When they feel insecure, vulnerable and injured, they may begin to act aggressively toward their peers and the environment, isolate their peers, spread rumours about them, tease them, cyber bully them, which has become a frequent form of violence among youth, and even resort to physical violence. They may choose someone they see as vulnerable - like members of any minority - or someone they resent and then encourage others to act violently towards that person.

Other young people will turn their aggression inwardly - towards themselves, and become depressed, suffer, isolate and hurt themselves, and become self-destructive in a variety of other ways. If they have not developed emotional literacy, at that point, they do not yet see how this is all related to their problems, uncertainties, and their inability to realise themselves creatively and positively.

As teachers and educators, we have a variety of tools and opportunities at our disposal to develop emotional literacy and strengthen their emotional health. Except by giving our own example and by always being sincere and straightforward with them (which perhaps is the most powerful way of supporting them), we can also encourage them to open up in a conversation, show them our unreserved support and empathy, and strive to always be there for them, especially when we are aware they are going through a rough patch.

Emotionally warm and positive approach to youth in teaching leads to their constructive behaviour (Education Development Centre 2011). Because they spend much of their day in school, their social-emotional competencies will be supported only by a quality relationship with their teachers and peers. Also, it is important to achieve effective classroom management and transfer of knowledge and skills, including creating opportunities for young people to independently practice and apply socio-emotional competences (Denham et al., 2010).

Socio-emotional learning is the process of acquiring knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to the recognition and management of emotions, getting by in the social world, establishing and maintaining relationships with others, and making effective decisions. In other words, social-emotional learning is the process of developing basic social and emotional competences in children and youth.

In 2005, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, (CASEL) identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioural competences:

- **Self-awareness** - being aware and recognising one's emotions, recognising one's strengths and virtues, feeling of self-worth and self-confidence.
- **Self-management** - good impulse control, coping with stress, goal setting, motivation.
- **Responsible decision-making** - the ability for evaluation and reflection; personal responsibility and ethics.
- **Social awareness** - empathy, respect for others, perspective-taking.
- **Relationship skills** - cooperation, asking and providing support, communication

**Emotional intelligence** in youth can be developed through preventive programmes (there is evidence that they have a positive impact on the social, emotional and academic success of children and adolescents), based on social and emotional learning, with the aim of increasing emotional competences.

**Preventive programmes** are aimed at making young people more resistant to various psychopathological problems such as depression, delinquency, violence, drug abuse, etc., by encouraging them to recognise emotions within themselves and others and effectively manage them, to control their reactions, to show empathy and pro-social behaviour.

**Social and emotional learning programmes** build children's skills of recognising and managing their emotions, establishing positive goals, making responsible decisions, and building effective interpersonal relationships, as well as affecting their academic development by creating a positive and stimulating school environment.

## EXERCISE: MY INNER DIALOGUE

What do I need  
right now?

Support?

Safety?

What is going  
through my mind right  
now - what am I telling  
myself?

Respect?

And how  
do I feel?

Acknowledgement?

With this exercise (source: Hopkins, 2011), students are guided step by step through competences in the development of emotional intelligence, personal values, and personal responsibility. The exercise can be done with the whole class, but also, if necessary, individually, each time that you want to reflect on a certain personal or group situation and raise awareness of participants.

Certainly, the cooperation of parents, teachers and other school staff is of utmost importance. Also, we can choose to implement a school project (e.g. the "Happiness" project that is described in more detail in the section on examples of good practice) which might include a series of workshops and other ideas for socio-emotional development. Such workshops will include topics such as self-awareness, recognition of feelings, verbal and non-verbal expression, empathy, problem-solving, motivation, self-control, as well as making decisions and choices. It is also useful to put a special focus on emotions such as anger, rage, hate and their causes and consequences. In this way, we will teach students that they have a range of options to express emotions in a relationship: expressing verbally or non-verbally, self-regulation, perspective-taking, assertiveness, action and many others.

The **"Start the Change!"** collection of lesson plans provides a number of examples and workshops that can be used in the classroom.

## QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN SCHOOL

The school plays a major role in the context of the socio-emotional development of youth (especially for young people with risk factors). Will the school be a protective force to support young people to develop their competences, learn how to manage emotions, get to know themselves, build self-confidence and self-esteem, personal

responsibility, learn to communicate assertively, express and realise themselves creatively? Or will it be a factor of risk – the place where children and young people are isolated, discriminated, where they develop new and additional behavioural problems, behave aggressively, or withdraw and become passive and depressed?

William Glasser (1999) states that the basis for quality relationships, trust, and friendship are found in the relationship developed between the student and the teacher (but also between the teacher - the student - the school administration - the parent). It is important for the students to get to know their teacher as a person. We will respect much more and better cooperate with those we care about (the need for love and affiliation), those we respect and those who respect us (the need for respect, integrity), those we laugh with (the need for entertainment) and those who allow us to think and act for ourselves (the need for freedom and right to choice). When students get to know their teacher, they discover more about themselves. It is possible to achieve all that: by working on the relationships (by placing relationships as equally important or even more important than obligations, tasks, plans, and programmes), by showing patience and taking into account the fact that everybody is different, and, finally, with clear, open and transparent communication.

Transparent communication includes:

- personal language, standing up for our opinions and needs
- conducting a dialogue
- understanding needs and interests (both our own and other people's)
- active listening
- clear communication of rules, agreements, consequences, etc.

In other words, school is a place that should enable children and young people to develop skills that will help them adapt to new situations, create a positive self-image and succeed despite the difficulties standing in their way.

### **Protective factors in school**

- positive relations, cooperation, and connectivity
- clear-cut and consistent boundaries, rules and standards
- positive discipline and quality life skills learning
- care and support about students
- high and clear expectations
- meaningful involvement in the activities
- involvement of parents, family and wider community

### **Risk factors in school**

- bad relations, no sense of community
- unclear borders and authorities
- exclusive orientation to academic success
- lack of opportunities for growth and inclusion of children and young people in school activities
- authoritarian discipline · lack of clear expectations
- conscious or unconscious discrimination of particular groups

When it comes to the **quality of the relationship**, i.e. the quality and the positive discipline of the school environment itself, it is worth highlighting certain **competences** that would be desirable for educational staff to develop:

- Active listening and basic communication skills
- Empathy
- Giving feedback
- Encourage internal motivation and self-evaluation of students
- Solving problems and conflicts in a non-violent manner and empowering students to take an active role in solving them
- Leadership and guidance
- Encouraging team work and the active role of each student in classroom and school activities
- Encouraging students to be creative and stimulating creative thinking
- Understanding that any behaviour is a reflection of a satisfied or unsatisfied need
- Understanding and encouraging the development of emotional intelligence

With teachers who possess these competences and know how to achieve a quality relationship, students will:

- be able to express their feelings
- feel safe, respected and appreciated
- Learn to listen, negotiate, align with each other and accept others
- know how to support and empathise with others
- develop trust in others
- feel equality, fellowship, affiliation, and equality
- seek solutions to problems
- be focused on the positive
- meet their development needs.

Since the teacher is a model of behaviour, the students will easily adopt the behaviours mentioned. This creates a democratic and supportive school environment, which includes many protective factors, and helps children and young people develop emotional and social competences that will help them grow into healthy and mature people.

The main outcome you will achieve with this approach is the development of communication, social and emotional competences among young people, but such an environment will also display a great influence on **their identity and self-image**. The child and young person we approach in this way (respectfully, authentically and encouragingly) will think positively about themselves and others and will learn to accept and appreciate their specialness and diversity as well as the diversity of people around them.



# GROWN-UPS AS MODELS IN CREATING QUALITY RELATIONSHIP

He's an interesting teacher; he takes interest in us, in our opinions.  
(Student, Croatia)

Jasper Juul and Helle Jensen (2010) state that parents and educators often lack the ability and willingness to talk to children and young people in a way that would be spurred by their interest in who the child is and how she or he experiences life and the world. On the contrary, the more common way adults address children and young people is by questioning their behaviour, criticizing them, demanding something, teaching, reproaching and explaining, creating distance and causing additional blockages and resistance. It seems that educators sometimes lack openness, interest, and empathy to the extent that they are willing to categorize child's behaviour as 'difficult', problematic or 'bad' (pp. 204).

On the other hand, one of the most valuable abilities of adults in communication with children and young people is the ability to consider the current quality of relationship as more valuable than an intent or purpose they might have, and the communication process itself more valuable than the content. Communication as a "tool" should be used precisely for children and young people to learn social, emotional and life skills:

- personal responsibility,
- standing up for oneself and one's needs and interests,
- emotional management,
- the development of empathy,
- understanding and acceptance of oneself and others,
- the development of creative and critical thinking, and
- building personal integrity.

Adults play a key role in the development of children and young people and their responsibility lies in creating positive and supportive conditions for their healthy growth. Adult guidance will depend on the child's age. As they grow up, discover themselves and the world around them, assume responsibility and become more independent, adults need to redefine their guidance - from a strong leadership in the early age, it increasingly moves towards a guardian and advisory role encouraging children's independence. Adult guidance (Juul and Jensen 2010) consists of several important dimensions.

**AUTHENTICITY** – to what extent are you able and willing to express and show your thoughts, emotions, observations, values, goals, and boundaries?

**SINCERE INTEREST IN THE YOUNG PERSON** - how much are you interested in who the young person is?

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** - Do you know how to praise and acknowledge the behaviour of a young person?

**INCLUDING THEIR NEEDS, DESIRES, DREAMS AND OBJECTIVES** - Do you consider the views of young people as equally relevant and are you interested in involving them in joint research and decision-making?

**RELINQUISHING RESPONSIBILITY** - Can you, when appropriate, allow young people to make decisions important to them?

**EMPOWERING THROUGH CONFLICT** - Do you truly acknowledge that conflict as an important dimension of a relationship and do you have the basic skills to resolve conflicts?

One of the most important areas where adults can show their guidance is the transfer of knowledge and skills related to non-violent conflict resolution.

## CONFLICTS WITH AN INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION AND THEIR RESOLUTION

*Discrimination or "bullying" can happen because of cultural or physical differences.  
(students, Italy)*

Conflicts are indispensable for quality relationships. Children and young people do not engage in conflicts because they are disobedient or because they want to undermine adult authority, but because this is the way for them to stand up for their needs and desires – which is a sign of health and an absolute necessity in all present and future relationships (Juil and Jensen 2010).

When a young person engages in a conflict, and their need or desire is not met, they will experience a sense of loss. It is important to allow children and young people enough time to experience their loss and dissatisfaction in order to come back to balance.

In this way, they will preserve their dignity and make decisions based on cooperation and compromise and eventually create new joint solutions (Juul and Jensen 2010).

It would be ideal for teachers or activity leaders starting up new projects in school, to have previous understanding of concepts such as the basis of mediation, conflict resolution, and restorative practice. Long-term unresolved or poorly resolved conflicts can damage and destroy every community, including a school. On the other hand, a timely, deliberate and fair conflict resolution sends a very powerful message to everyone about the community we want to build and about what is acceptable and what is not. Faced with conflicts among young people which include an intercultural dimension, such as stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination, it would be good for adults to have a wider knowledge of the context of such conflicts. Resolving such conflicts on an individual level will not lead to an appropriate solution. Teachers need to understand the deeper dynamics of the conflict, visible and invisible sides of the conflict, questions of power and disenfranchisement, interests and common interests, needs, etc.

It is often necessary that:

- all the participants of such conflicts **be made aware of their deep-rooted prejudices**
- all groups, even the whole class or school **be involved in the prevention**
- **everyone learn about understanding and diversity.**

*I think a lot of people in the school are xenophobic... because it's just that like pre-set idea that just because they are Muslim, dark-skinned, whatever; they're not me and therefore I dislike them... and therefore I'm going to be discriminatory towards them because I don't understand them. I think if there was education on, you know, Islam is a peaceful religion. then there'd be a lot more support.*

(a student, Great Britain)

It is also extremely important for young people to possess some basic competences of understanding and conflict management: to learn to recognise their responsibility, their own and other people's needs, desires and motivation, and to keep an open and constructive attitude towards problems. **School documents and strategies**, and school management processes and policies can offer excellent decision models and mechanisms to resolve conflicts humanely and fairly, with the respect of all involved parties.

## IGNITING THE SPARK

A significant factor that often contributes to hate speech, conflicts, peer violence or the discrimination of others is the inability of a young person to find their significance

and purpose through some motivating activity. Whether they become perpetrators or victims, such young people have difficulty developing their talents and interests. Even belonging to a violent group may sometimes become their greatest source of pride and dignity.

On the other hand, finding what they love and what they are good at, whether it be a sport, art, skill, academic success in general or some other competence, will greatly benefit them, their positive self-image and the way they connect with others. However, adults often have very narrow and limited ideas about the ways young people should be successful (e.g. they judge their success exclusively by academic standards or by success at competitions, etc.), but at the same time, they do not see all that these young people could become.

No matter how important it is to be good at something and be able to develop your skills, it is equally important for those skills and talents to be recognised and acknowledged. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that the role of teachers and educators should be to provide realistic opportunities for competence development, but also to recognise and provide feedback to learners in areas they are recognised or acknowledged.

William Damon is a professor and a director of the Stanford Centre on Adolescence and has been researching the area of human development for more than 30 years. Among other things, he has focused his research on why young people find it difficult to find their purpose in life. According to Damon (2008), young people recognise and respect the guidance of adults who they feel close to and who they think know more about life than they do. But in order for young people to accept adult guidance and to benefit from it, adults need to target their highest aspirations. That does not mean they have to comply with their unrealistic romantic dreams of conquering the universe. Young people do not want to be protected from the gravity of reality but want to learn to realise their dreams while facing reality. Education in the best sense of this word, according to Damon, means informing young people about the real steps they need to take to be able to achieve their highest aspirations.

## CREATIVITY IN SCHOOL

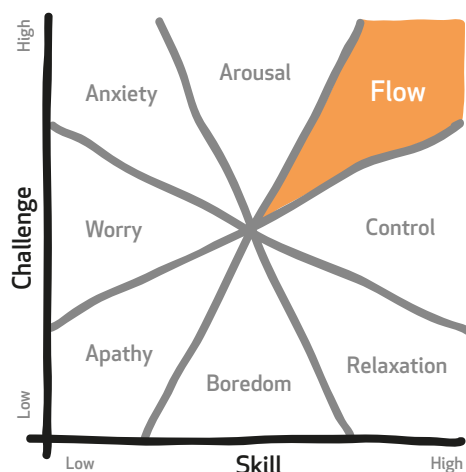
Creativity is an inherent trait of every human being, and it can be helpful in any area of learning. It is related to knowledge and expertise, but it also has to do with self-confidence and freedom of expression. It is also a dynamic and fun way of communicating with others, very natural to young people. There is always a question as to why many children and young people at school do not have a lot of opportunities to independently try to create something new, acquire practical skills and be creative.

As one of the goals of the "Start the Change!" project is to empower a young person to build a positive identity and realise their potential, it is important to emphasise the close link

between self-confidence and creativity (Serotkin 2010). In her research on the relationship between self-actualization and creativity, Serotkin points out that many people who have studied creativity emphasise the deep link between these two concepts. Serotkin points out that Carl Rogers (1961) views creativity as a key factor in mental health and growth, Abraham Maslow (1968) goes on even further in claiming that self-actualization and creativity are the same thing, while Young (1985) claims that being creative implies an open and spontaneous attitude towards life and equates creativity with good mental health (Serotkin 2010). All this shows us how important it is to consider creativity as part of the process of self-actualization and learning.

Creative methods allow us not only to learn but also to realise how much we know and what we have learned. That is why it is important for all teachers to be in touch with their creativity and find ways to make their work more creative. It is equally important to connect the field of creativity with the needs of young people and create as many opportunities as possible for their creativity.

For a young person to be creative, it is necessary to create and support an environment in which creativity can flourish. A creative environment is an environment where young people have the ability to explore, actively participate, take risks and make mistakes, where teachers and other adults involve them in setting goals and expectations related to the implementation of activities, where they accept differences between them, try to understand them, believe in them, co-operate, share knowledge and provide feedback on their work and participation. All this can make the school a less stressful place, a place where students like to learn, and teachers like to teach.



Source: Adapted from Csikszentmihalyi, 1990.

In his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990), psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihaly discusses how to release one's creativity, affirming that we experience pleasure in a certain activity because of the FLOW – the state of complete involvement in activity, state of creativity and enjoyment, when a person is completely immersed in what they are doing (Csikszentmihaly 1990). The "Start the Change!" programme is based on the same assumption – our goal is to empower teachers and adults in providing support to young people in achieving their "optimal experience" and the state of "flow" through strengthening their identity, helping them achieve their potential and encouraging them to build quality relationships with others in a society in which they too could become active citizens.



# COLOUR THE WORLD: ART IN THE SERVICE OF BUILDING PEACE AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Young people have always easily found inspiration and comfort in art: music, literature, film, painting, acting, dance, and graffiti. Experiences of previous projects with young people have shown how much they love and appreciate exploring sensitive topics through art, especially if they have the support of a motivated mentor.

A good example of that is the **Color the World!** contest where young people are invited to express their attitudes and emotions about acceptance and mutual respect, communion, the problems they face and their resolution. They are encouraged by their mentors to use a variety of art forms to talk about these topics, but also to find their voice in creative expression. You can read more about the contest in the Examples of Good Practice section.

This is what some of the young people from Croatia said during the award ceremony for the "Colour the World!" contest in 2015 and 2016:

The message we want to send with this work is that we would not like to live in a world where fences and walls between people are put up, but in the one where they are being torn down. We want the world where people are not judged by the colour of their skin or their faith, but by their humanity. We want everyone to be – first and foremost – A HUMAN BEING. (students of "Grigor Vitez" primary school, Sveti Ivan Žabno)

Can we allow ourselves to show indifference towards people who are going through the horrors of war? How can we claim that we are good people, that we are always willing to help, and when that moment comes, just turn our heads away and leave? We must awaken humanity in ourselves. Being able to help someone at least for a moment, to provide them with a sense of security, even if only briefly, represents a great spiritual asset for me. (a 7th-grade student of "Milan Brozović" elementary school, Kastav)

We've decided to manifest our opposition to the construction of walls, installing of barbed wire, selfishness, and intolerance. Instead of the wall, we've decided to build houses and a new life. Our vision of the solution to the problem is based on accepting responsibility, solidarity, and respect for human dignity. We want to live in Europe united in diversity. (a group of students, authors of the video The Wall, "Hrvatski kralj Zvonimir" grammar school, Krk)

# DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERCULTURALITY

There is no right way to teach democracy unless we also practice it. (Eric Hoffer)

It is difficult to learn about democracy in a purely theoretical way, that's why it is important always to question it, to practice it and to find "hot" topics for discussion. Or in Eric Hoffer's words: "There is no right way to teach democracy unless we also practice it". This is especially relevant today, in the era of political populism, the omnipresence of the media, when the examples of apparent democracy and violations of human rights abound: migration crises, extreme right-wing governments, terrorist attacks, and radicalization.

For most people, the concept of citizenship is related to the law enforcement and voting in the elections. In recent years, however, a series of phenomena and changes have taken place across Europe, but also globally, putting into question such a model of citizenship. We have been faced with (source: the Council of Europe):

- ethnic conflicts and nationalism
- global threats and uncertainties
- development of new information and communication technologies
- population movement
- the appearance of the new forms of previously suppressed collective identities
- the weakening of the social cohesion and interpersonal solidarity
- the need for greater personal autonomy and new forms of equality
- the problem of environmental protection

In the light of these emerging challenges, it is evident that a new kind of citizen is required – the one who is not merely informed about their formal civic responsibilities, but who also actively and independently participates in the life of their communities in ways that reflect their civic competences and help solve social problems (Gollob, Krapf and Weidinger 2017).

Numerous studies have shown that young people in the countries that have introduced civic education and where democracy and human rights are taught as a part of the school curriculum are active in social and political processes, show more respect for diversity, are more willing to politically engage and actively participate in the development of local and public policies, and are more responsible citizens in general. Civic education is one of the cornerstones of a democratic society. The absence of this important element of social development puts democracy and its principles into question. Introducing human rights and active participation of citizens within the

framework of the education system contributes to a creation of a pluralistic, active, inclusive and open society, and helps its citizens become responsible members of the community, able to make informed decisions on important issues for the society in which they live and work. The inclusion of civic education and education at all levels of education system directly affects the level of participation of young people in the society and their participation in the decision-making processes, thus representing one of the most important prerequisites for encouraging social engagement of youth (GOOD Initiative. In schools <http://goo.hr/good-inicijativa/polazista/> (accessed August 1, 2017).

Trying to "protect" the youth and avoiding the issues we do not feel comfortable and safe talking about, we actually aggravate the situation and sweep the problems under the carpet. Besides that, this way not only do we send them a message that we are not able to deal with the issues that we are all exposed to on a daily basis, but also demonstrate that we do not believe in their ideas, thoughts, and actions. But young people witness to these issues everyday and do not know how to interpret them or adequately respond to them, which may create a fertile ground for discrimination, radicalization, and violence.

Donald Trump has lots of anger. He's racist, but not always.  
(a student, Great Britain)

I think immigration is a good thing because it gives people new chances and opportunities, but the country is also getting very full. (a student, Great Britain)

I think that as a national minority they have too many rights compared to others.  
(a student, Croatia)

Roma and Serbs are the main groups that are being discriminated against, while no one is ever turning against people from Germany or Austria or Europe. No one has ever said "He is from Germany and he is bad"; for them everybody always says they are good and someone else is bad. They are just turning people against each other.  
(a student, Croatia)

Some adults take discrimination more seriously than youngsters and have more power to solve it and some adults discriminate more than the youngsters do.  
(a student, Slovenia)

It's kind of worrying when there are decisions that are being made for you that you haven't got control over. So like, in the government, they can make decisions but they're looking from a political point of view but you can kind of see things from a community point of view. (a student, Great Britain)

It is necessary to introduce social problems and challenges to the school curriculum and thus give students an opportunity to talk about these topics openly, freely, forming arguments and counter-arguments. This is also a powerful learning tool, because the facts that students adopt while being actively involved in an interesting activity or discussion are much better retained and understood, and consequently, their behaviour-changing potential is a lot stronger.

It is important for the school to be perceived as a community and an environment of a shared, authentic experience where young people can participate in the process of democratic decision-making, while understanding and living the concepts of democracy, human rights, and interculturality. In this way, they can take personal and civic responsibility from the earliest period of life (Gollob and Weidinger 2017) through the development of the following important dimensions of civic education:

1. **SOCIAL** – which develops social and communication skills important for dealing with other people as well as nonviolent conflict resolution skills.
2. **HUMAN RIGHTS** through which students learn about their rights and responsibilities and how to protect their and other people's rights.
3. **POLITICAL** through which students learn about the process of making decisions, laws and other regulations in the society, about who is involved in this process and what we can do to participate in it, and about the structure of government on the national and local level.
4. **CULTURAL** through which students become familiar with their culture, recognise the contributions of different cultural influences to the community, learn about other cultures and develop respect for them.
5. **ECONOMIC** dimension encourages a discussion about work, financial management, and everything else related to economy and money.
6. **ECOLOGICAL** focuses on the importance of sustainable development and conservation of natural resources.

By creating and developing democratic schools, we give young people the opportunity for active, experiential learning and for exercising democracy, and prepare them for active participation in the society.

## WHAT IS A DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL?

*It is a school in which every individual is involved in the school life and participates in the decision-making process; a school based on respect for diversity, interculturalism, inclusion, human rights and the formation of active citizens.*

*It is a school in which the following principles of learning and teaching are used (Gollob and Weidinger 2017):*

**Active learning** - learning through experience and independent solving of problems.

**Tasks-oriented activities** - or learning through doing, using life problems and challenges.

**Teamwork** - supports students in understanding their experiences, opinions, and problems they face, thus increasing their ability to handle them. Besides that, teamwork is important as a counterbalance to a solitary class experience.

**Interactive methods** - guided debates, discussions that help students argue their points, and, on the other hand, enable teachers to be active participants in their lesson.

**Critical Thinking** - encouraging students to think critically about issues of democracy, human rights and interculturalism rather than being given the right answers. In this way, students learn to think for themselves, and they are empowered to take responsibility for their lives.

**Participation** – pupils are allowed to contribute to the learning process. It is important to encourage them to be active in their learning, not just passive recipients of the facts. This helps students learn how to actively participate in their lives in and outside of school.

## STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES

*...We need to get to know each other. Because, when we see someone, we have prejudices based on a hair-colour or anything else. (a student, Croatia)*

In order to understand stereotypes and prejudices, as well as their often devastating consequences, it is important to know what they represent and which mechanisms we have at our disposal to successfully prevent them. In this context, it is worth recalling the topic of personal identity as a starting point for understanding how young people perceive themselves and others, and the topic of social identity development, that is, affiliation to a particular group which can often be the basis for forming prejudices and stereotypes about others.



As it was already said, people define their **identity** (see: *Identity and self-experience*) through relationships and communication with others as they ask themselves: WHO AM I? But also, it is through relationships and communication that they define social identities of others by asking themselves: WHO ARE THEY?

Tajfel and Turner (1982) have developed the notion of social identity which they define as *the portion of an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group or groups, together with the value and emotional importance attached to these groups* (Tajfel 1982, according to Jelić 2009). The way we see ourselves and/or how we see others in relation to ourselves may be different, and this very diversity from us (of our family, different groups and societies) leads to simplification and a one-dimensionality of the perception of others, often creating stereotypes and prejudices that lead to misunderstanding, conflicts, radicalization, and even violence, especially if we see others only through the prism of a social identity (e.g. sexual affiliation, ethical affiliation, religious affiliation, etc.).

Prejudice is a negative evaluation of a social group or a negative evaluation of an individual that is significantly based on the individual's group membership (Crandall, Eshleman and O'Brien 2002, according to Marinčič 2009).

Sociologist and therapist Anne Wilson Schaef (2006) contends that each of us passes through several levels of "truth" while releasing a prejudice or stereotype. As we acquire life experience and get various insights, enter into relationships and communicate with other people, we become more and more aware about how limited our viewpoint is. That awareness helps us communicate more effectively with others and be free from preemptive assumptions. At the lowest level of consciousness, we are not aware of any difference, and then at the next level, we often take a very negative attitude full of fear, shyness or aggression (it's all about "them"). Sometimes we pass on the next level, that is extremely liberal and full of "conscious" acceptance, but it can also be superficial and exclusive, for example, towards the people at the previous level. At the penultimate, fourth level, we are truly open and flexible, but only at the fifth level are we truly free and can we see a person as a unique human being.

By enabling young people to get acquainted with interesting and interactive ways of discussing stereotypes and prejudices, we help them get rid of the superficial attitudes they have taken over without thinking, and to build their worldview and share it with others in a tolerant and constructive way. The "Start the Change!" collection of lesson plans has several great workshops that you can use to start a conversation with your students about prejudices and stereotypes.

You can open a conversation about this topic with your students by watching the talk (**TED talk** platform) of the well-known writer Chimamanda Adichie in which she talks about how she found an authentic voice within her culture and in which she warns us that,

if we listen to a story from just one perspective, we risk a great misunderstanding. You can watch her talk on the **You Tube** channel (**The danger of a single story**, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie).

## MEDIA LITERACY

*The news is not news if it is not bad. When we go on Facebook, the only thing there is crime news. There is nothing good anywhere. (a student, Croatia)*

*There is too much negative information that stands out - all bad news, political quarrels and wars; politicians arguing with each other, TV- channels are subordinated to the parties (a student, Croatia)*

Media literacy includes *all the technical, cognitive, civic and creative abilities and skills that enable us to use, critically understand and interact with traditional and new forms of media*. According to the Directive of the European Parliament (2010/10 / EU) and of the Council on Audio-visual Media Services - AVMS Directive, media literacy refers to competences that enable consumers to use media effectively and safely. It is closely linked to inclusion and democracy, active citizenship, independent and critical thinking, and thereby also with the strengthening of the young people's resistance to exposure to extreme attitudes and disinformation.

The topic of media literacy is important because of various indicators and studies that tell us that the level of critical thinking about media is extremely low, whereas the content creation skills are very high. More precisely, young people possess technical skills to use the media but do not have a critical awareness of them (Gospodnetić and Morić 2014).

*Social media and fake news is a challenge; children trying to filter what's real and what's not. Israel-Palestine, Donald Trump - whatever is in the media comes up in school. They're not watching the news. I don't know exactly where they're getting it from, but it's from the internet. (a teacher, Great Britain)*

The subject of media literacy is closely related to the competences important for active participation in the society, a digital, social and civic competence, also including stereotypes, prejudices, power, and understanding of different angles in the same story. Media literacy is, therefore, one of the key skills that can help prevent radicalization. The fact that 90% of households in the European Union have Internet access tells us that the vast majority of young people can access information without any hindrance,

and the practice so far has shown that social networks can lead to intolerant actions and psychological consequences (European Commission - ET 2020 Working Groups 2016 ).Furthermore, the importance of the topic of media literacy and radicalization is further emphasized by the fact that a special group established by the European Commission concluded that the topics of media literacy and critical thinking should be introduced in the school curriculum, with particular emphasis on innovative teaching approaches that are relevant for all students (European Commission -ET 2020 Working Groups 2016).

In addition to contributing to the development of critical thinking, media literacy also helps students connect the material they learned in the class with real-world examples, which brings real life into the classroom. It is important to note that students should work on examples involving different media (e.g., film, music, series), as this will help them to connect what they have learned with their own experience. And finally - it's important to ask them questions that will encourage them to reflect on media texts because in this way we develop media awareness and the awareness of the mediatic impact on our behaviour, attitudes, and values

## IMPLEMENTATION IN SCHOOLS

We conclude that the underlying goal of the training programme is to develop the competences of participants to build the young people's **resilience** and their **empowerment**. Thus, after concluding the programme, the participants will be more competent in:

- providing support to young people in finding and accepting their identity, beliefs, and abilities
- evaluating their needs and goals
- developing empathic behaviour in young people
- motivating young people for active inclusion
- enabling a wider understanding of the society and the world.

In addition to the goal of **preventing behavioural and emotional problems**, another important goal is **to enrich and develop personal, social, and civic skills and competences**. The tools and knowledge gained, along with the implementation of school projects, strengthen the teachers' opportunities in their work with the youth.

After the training, each school continues to work with a mentor from an expert team that will stay in contact with them for a year and follows the implementation of their projects. Each school develops its project based on the ideas of youth, which enables linking the school with the local community and brings about initiatives important for connecting young people. By actively participating in the project, from the development of their ideas to the project implementation itself, young people are provided with an experience through which they can develop the different competences mentioned in this chapter.

In the next part of the manual, you will find a description of concrete tools and steps in the exploration of potential project ideas, of the planning process itself and of the project implementation, as well as examples of various projects that stimulate the strengthening of personal, social and civic competences of young people through their active participation.

The schools also participate in the **"Color the World!" creative contest** which encourages creativity and youth activism, and during which young people produce original art and literary works about accepting and respecting diversity. At the end of the project, partner organizations collect all the local projects implemented by the school publication "A Book of Good Ideas", which will be readily available for download along with other results of the project.

### **SUGGESTED STEPS FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION IN YOUR SCHOOL**

It is important that during the project every school find its themes and challenges spurred by students' ideas. Each school determines its priorities and the way it wants to deal with them so that it might include them in the curriculum and thus create its strategy and impact the students in the long run.

If you decide to implement the "Start the Change!" project at your school, we suggest the following steps (which, of course, you may adapt to your ideas and needs):

- 1. Selection of a core team of** motivated employees, the project holders.
- 2. Employee capacity building:** Ideally, consider the "Start the Change" training or any other combination of trainings that develop close competences (areas: Civic Education, Mediation, Interculturality and Inclusion, Personal and Social Development, etc.), acquire the relevant literature and the Collection of lesson plans.
- 3. Recommendation: Involve external volunteers** in the project.
- 4. Research** on how children and young people see the key school issues, particularly in the field of stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, diversity, inclusion: use a focus group or some other methodology.
- 5. Build teams of children and youth** who want to be directly involved as carriers of school projects and initiatives.
- 6. Apply the workshops** for children and youth from the „Start the Change!“ collection of lesson plans.
- 7. Recommendation: Involve your students in the „Colour the World!“ creative contest.**
- 8. Mentor youth teams** leading their projects in the school.
- 9. Promotion and sharing of** results and gains

Whether you choose to implement a project independently or in cooperation with a civil society organization, it would be good for you to connect with a number of external organizations and institutions that can serve you as "bridges" to the local community and support you with resources, ideas and provide interesting and inspirational experiences for the youth. And of course, keep in mind the interconnection of the project activities with the school curriculum.



# PART FOUR

## SCHOOL PROJECTS -ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTH

...I don't know, many people just talk a lot, and do little.  
Also, I mean, there are eight of us here... that means,  
already eight. Not that there isn't anybody. So it means  
we can already get something started.

(a student, Croatia)

# IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Active involvement of students in the life of the school community through school projects makes it possible for the youth to contribute to it in a way that is meaningful for them, which will certainly have a positive impact both on them and on the school. Personal and social competences, as well as the values of active and responsible citizens, mentioned in the previous chapter, are most likely to be acquired by students through a direct experience of researching the topics they are most interested in, by engaging the local community and actively contributing to the problem solving through concrete projects. Students can be involved and participate in the projects in a way that they find suitable, and to the level, they are accustomed to. For some students, such a form of participation may be minimal, but the mere possibility to get engaged may have a great significance.

We are aware of the fact that the voice of young people is often not taken seriously, that it is sometimes ignored, and that young people are sometimes approached with a patronising attitude, which can be rather frustrating for them or simply lead to their exclusion from school activities. On the other hand, pupils will be supported when it becomes apparent that they can contribute to school life or to solving social problems in the school. It is therefore important to highlight the positive effects of active inclusion of young people on them, on the school and the entire community

Active involvement of children and youth has a positive impact on:

Students	School	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• increases self-confidence</li><li>• increases the sense of responsibility</li><li>• enhances communication and organizational competences</li><li>• increases the feeling of happiness</li><li>• contributes to the sense of belonging to the school</li><li>• empowers them in the belief that they can initiate a change</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• becomes a safer and happier place</li><li>• better communication between students, teachers, and adults</li><li>• the needs of all members of the school community are recognised</li><li>• diversity is respected and accepted</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Young people are supported for a more significant role in the society they live in</li><li>• contributes to the strengthening of a democratic society</li><li>• contributes to the development of society in every respect - cultural, social, economic...</li></ul>

...a lot of us would like to do something, but we need a leader, a teacher. To come and tell us – let's do it. (a student, Croatia)



Young people who want to get involved in school and community work cannot do it all alone, they need support, and we should provide it for them. School projects that give them the opportunity to develop the skills and competences necessary for their further education and life could be an ideal opportunity for them to get involved. That's why it is important to run projects in a way that the young people are their active carriers, not just consumers, in which case, the effects will be much more positive and far-reaching. While encouraging young people's desire to influence positive changes around themselves, we may have to cope with some factors that influence radicalization (Ahmad 2015).

Through this chapter, we will guide you from the idea to the realisation of the project: from the initial research to its implementation and, finally, to the presentation through which it becomes visible to the wider community.



Different work methodologies can be used in school projects enabling students to learn, develop and grow. Independently of the issue, engaging in the project will provide young people with the opportunity to develop various competences, but what mentors and teachers need to take into account are the levels of their involvement and the distribution of responsibility among the members of a group. If we gradually increase the responsibility young people have in carrying out the tasks and working with the group, there is a greater chance that at the end of the project they will develop the competences needed for the independent implementation of particular tasks, as well as for the project management.

Volunteering means to help children or some other people voluntarily, but without any money ... also homeless people, because everyone deserves a home. So do animals, of course, but first, let's improve our kind, and then the animal. (a student, Croatia)

John Huskins (1996) discusses the development model of working with youth in relation to their progress at the level of participation and the decision-making process.

### **TOOL 1: THE DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT (JOHN HUSKINS 1995)**

**Objective:** Identify the phases through which young people go when involved in a project, in relation to their progress at the level of participation and the decision-making process.

**Description:** The work on each project with young people begins with initial meetings where young people are getting acquainted with each other, while the leader is consciously building a sense of confidence and trust in the group (they are encouraged to express their opinions and ideas freely, test them and seek opinions of others and listen to them as a group). At this stage, the project idea usually comes to the surface, as well as goals and activities that will serve as means to achieve these goals. Also, the roles of individual group members are beginning to crystallise, as well as their skills, needs, and desires. A greater involvement of the young people in the implementation of activities and their assuming responsibility begins only when a sense of group security is built, in other words, when relations between members of the group have been established, and their potential for greater autonomy is felt. At this stage, the group leader starts relinquishing more and more tasks to the young people, so that over time they may assume the full responsibility for the project.

Very good examples of young people taking lead in implementing the project activities are school volunteering clubs, in which young people at the beginning stage participate but with every new project, gradually take over bigger chunks of the work and finally end up becoming volunteering club leaders.

## DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL FOR YOUTH INCLUSION

### LEVELS OF ACTIVITY

The role of leadership or peer education taken over.  
Intense group work initiated by young people.  
Spaces organized and run by young people.

#### STEP 7: Lead

Young people take full responsibility and control over their actions.  
Independence achieved.

Taking responsibility for planning, ongoing activities and programs.  
Group work led by young people.  
Explore the problems in detail.

#### STEP 6: Organise

Young people begin to demand their share in the process and take responsibility

Active participation in planning, ongoing activities and programmes.  
Young people set a daily agenda.  
Questions and answers.

#### STEP 5: Be involved

Young people begin to help in taking action and responsibility.

Participation in activities developed on the basis of interests and needs.  
Present the involvement.

#### STEP 4: Take part

The program is designed to meet the expressed and established needs.

A regular discussion based on trust. Some activities and recommendations.

#### STEP 3: Socialise

Young people begin to express their opinions, explore ideas, and seek answers

Regular meeting of teams

#### STEP 2: Meet again

People working with young people and young people get in touch, engaging with each other. Sharing trust begins

Initial Contact

#### STEP 1: Contact

Young people have access to information and opportunities.  
The relationship level is low. Young people are not self-reliant (dependent on others).

Progressive model of inclusion of people working with youth  
(According to Gloucestershire youth and community service)

© John Huskins 1995

# HOW TO EMBARK ON A YOUTH PROJECT?

## – INITIAL PLANNING

In my opinion, one of the main problems of youth today is low self-esteem, they tend to miss a lot of opportunities in life and have the tendency to live just for the day without building projects for the future. (a student, Italy)

Initial planning defines the entire approach to the project and activities that will be undertaken to realize the project, so it is good to dedicate enough time to it in the very beginning.

After we have invited young people to get involved in a project or an action and have formed the group, at the very beginning it is recommended that initial planning is carried out in which we need to select the idea and the theme of the project. The youth should agree with the idea, or ideally, it should be initiated by the youth.

...I believe that many of us, I can start from myself, are thinking about what we can do for the world to be a better place. But when you put all these thoughts on the paper, you realize that there are simply too many problems in the world...  
(a student, Croatia)

The youth should be involved in the project from the very outset and be given opportunity to recognise and explore problems and issues in their community. At the next stage, they suggest activities that will respond to the problems they have identified (e.g. visiting asylum seekers at the reception centre, organising workshops aimed at preventing peer violence or a training for peer mediators). If they have the opportunity to participate in the process of choosing ideas and designing an action from the very beginning, it is more likely that they will experience the project as their own. In this way, they will be empowered to engage in the life of the local community, in the volunteering programs and youth initiatives, and believe that they can become **the driving force for change** they want to see in their environment. That is how they can get personal satisfaction, respect, acceptance and a sense of positive engagement that inspires the realisation of a constructive goal, which can all contribute to factors of protection from radical behaviour in young people.

You can explore the ideas of young people in various ways. Using techniques such as Brainstorming and Rolstorming (Tool 2), you can ask them to create a list of issues they are aware of in their community and would like to respond to. Then you can analyse these ideas with them and try to choose the idea that they like most and that is, at the same time, also sustainable.

## **If I Were Someone "- a survey of the attitudes of children and youth in Croatia: interests, needs, problems, solutions, 2014 Croatia)**

### **Is your opinion valued at school?**

„I can't do anything because nobody will understand me seriously, because ... kids aren't understood as seriously as adults... kids are small, they don't understand, this, they don't understand that. They won't take us seriously. They think we are still not mature enough to decide about something and express our opinions. "

„I don't think the students are involved in making decisions about school; they don't require very much of our opinion, I don't even remember when we ... when something was decided upon, and the students were asked for their proposals and opinions, I can't remember that. "

### **What would you like to change about yourself, your school or your local community?**

„... I would change ... that all people are equal and that there is no prejudice. That we all have the right to vote and that there is no ... to have everything. "

„... I would prefer that people think more about others, because selfishness is a big problem in the world, and if we thought more about other things, then we would have a better world.

„... to be heard, we need to do something, so they hear about us." „We need to change and accept anyone as they are, not to join those who are more popular and to be on their side."

„I would change the society in general, more tolerance, more trust."

„I would change the society because I was also a target in the primary school. They should stop with this popularity thing and they should stop criticising. "

„I would change the behaviour towards the elderly, ... help them when we see them, and not turn our heads on the street and so ..."

„... delete borders of the countries ..."

„... I would buy everyone a bike ... so ... I'd reduce the number of cars."

„... I would send people to the mountains for a week. And then ... deny them everything they have now ... no Internet, no television, no mobile phones ... send them somewhere there is nothing to do, and after a week there, they'd be grateful for every sun ray ... "

### **In the initial phase, accept all the ideas of youth**

Encourage young people to offer as many ideas as possible and make a list of them. During that phase, do not evaluate or reject them, even the unrealistic ideas can later be of value. You can combine similar ideas or upgrade the existing ones, so the students gradually get a sense that it is their project.

### **Focus groups**

You can also use the focus group to include young people in project planning from the very beginning. In small groups, through a structured discussion conducted by a trained leader, you can get their opinions and a large amount of information in a relatively short time, and this information can guide you in your further planning.

Local community mapping (Tool 3) can be implemented within the framework of initial planning, enabling young people to assess and define who and what is in their environment, what the needs of the community are, and what resources they have at their disposal. By creating a visual image of space, that is, a map, we can get information about where something is and locate our school or organization in relation to other relevant subjects, both physically and socially.

## TOOL 2: BRAINSTORMING

**Objective:** Encourage young people to list as many ideas they can think of, but by assuming other identities, putting themselves in other people's shoes to find a creative solution to the problem.

**Tool description:** *Rolestorming* is a technique based on **brainstorming**, where group members are encouraged to try to come up with as many ideas as they can from another point of view, by assuming another identity, such as of a school principal, volunteers at an asylum seekers centre, school cooks, city councillors or astronauts. This reduces the inhibition of sharing your ideas with a group and helps people to come up with the ideas that in other situations they might not take into account. The assumption is that young people are more likely to come up with solutions and think more creatively if they put themselves in someone else's shoes.

**Procedure:** Choose a topic or a question you want to discuss with your team members. Give your students the opportunity to participate in that selection and then follow the steps below:

1. Identify the roles to be assigned to the team members. The team members can suggest any role, but they should not include the members of the team. Encourage them to propose roles that are not seemingly related to the idea of the project.
2. You can assign the selected roles by typing them on the cards that the team members will then draw, or the participants might choose the role they like.
3. Once the roles have been distributed, give the participants enough time to get into them by asking them the following questions:

***What kind of person is it, what does it look like, where and who does s/he live with and what is s/he like? What are the values of that person?***

***How would this person solve the problem?***

4. Select a person who will write the ideas on a poster or a place visible to all members of the group.
5. Encourage participants to come up with as many ideas as possible, even those they consider meaningless. Make it clear to them that all the suggestions are welcome and that the goal is to collect as many ideas as possible.
6. Instruct the group members to refrain from criticising and evaluating either their own or other people's ideas.
7. Ensure that each participant can speak and that they speak from their role.
8. When you're done, the participants can switch the roles, and you can repeat the process.



### TOOL 3: LOCAL COMMUNITY MAPPING

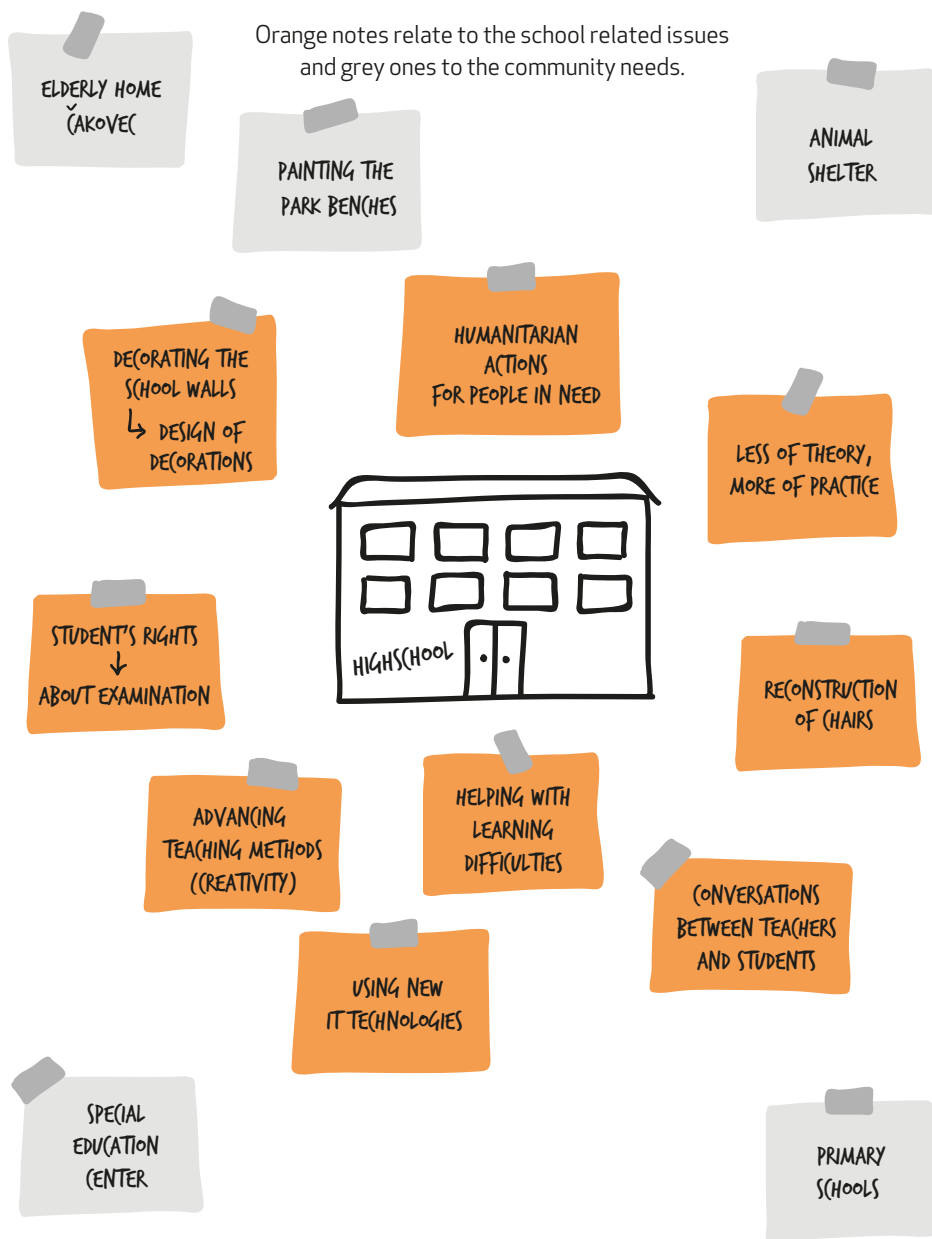
**Objective:** Identify important parts of your local community, identify issues and problems that community members encounter and propose solutions to the identified problems.

**Tool description:** Local community mapping is designed to help young people become more aware of who and what can be found in their environment, to identify local issues and problems and to teach them to find and offer solutions to these problems. The idea is for the participants to learn as much as possible about their environment and how much it affects their lives.

**Procedure:** The group leader presents the concept of local community mapping to the youth and guides them through the following steps:

1. Take a large paper/poster and in its centre draw up your school/organization and the main streets around it. Your map does not have to correspond completely to reality.
2. On a separate piece of paper make a list of schools, associations, institutions or other organizations nearby and highlight their relevance to the local community. Put the selected organizations on the map.
3. If appropriate, encourage young people to go out of school/organization, walk around and photograph the environment. Focus their attention on any problems they might see (for example, a run-down park, broken glass, an illegal rubbish dump, any place they consider insecure), and later add these places to the map.
4. Encourage a discussion on what young people have discovered about their environment and on the problems that have been identified.
5. Organise a brainstorming activity through which your students will offer ideas on how to deal with the identified problems.

**The use of this tool is described in detail in the lesson plan "From the needs to the project ideas" in the "Start the Change!" collection of lesson plans.**



### Question that may help you in the selection of a project idea:

- What is it that you, personally and as a group, want to achieve by implementing this project idea?
- Who might be interested in the implementaion of the project?
- Who are the members of the project team and what is their role?
- Who are the project partners and what is the target group?
- Where will the project be implemented?
- How long will the project last?
- What impact does this project have on the local community?

# WHAT DO WE WANT TO KNOW? - RESEARCHING PROJECT IDEA

Once you have chosen a project idea with your students and want to continue with the project planning, you should conduct a research and gather all the necessary information. Only when you have understood all the details and identified questions you want to be answered can you go to the next phase, which is the project design.

Together with the youth, find out what information you need to design and implement the project. You can instruct them to conduct a small field research related to the project idea based on a previously prepared research plan. They can be split into smaller teams according to their interests.

Such a research might help you define the most important elements - goals, partners, activities, on the basis of which you can then create an action plan, assign tasks, and create a timeline and a budget.

...we should get to know each other. 'Cause when we see someone, we get prejudiced, based on their hair-colour, or something. (a student, Croatia)

An example of a research plan - action to support asylum seekers and immigrants.

Research prior to action:	Visit an organization that provides accommodation for immigrants and asylum seekers.
What do you need to find out to organise this action?	Find out the contact of the Chair of the Board, find out who the contact person is.
	What are the needs of the beneficiaries - asylum seekers? Are they interested in a day of socialising, what do they need, what would make them happy? How many are there, how many women and children? Which would be the best day for a visit, what would cheer them up (gifts, performances of a school choir, socialising, reading newspapers etc.)?
	How many students would be interested in this kind of action?
Where can you get this information?	From the Internet, a telephone call to the organization, a meeting with the head of the organization; checking directly with your peers etc. Consider whether someone is already involved in such activities and has experience of visits to a similar organization.

Think about what you'll ask	<p>For example, you can ask the Chair of the Board:</p> <p>How many beneficiaries are there? How many children are there and of what age? What are their needs? What might make them happy? When is the best time to visit, what time of day? How many students can come to visit? And so on.</p>
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This step is important in order to find out the context of the certain community need. For example, maybe this organization is already being visited by other youth group or they already have wide network of volunteers' support so they would want to focus somewhere where their support is more needed. Also, by doing the research, young people get familiar with the issues of the vulnerable groups that want to support. For example, they can learn about the issues of asylum seeking procedures, about the exclusionary practices they face, etc. Also, they can learn by implementing themselves small steps of the project planning like having an interview with the organization's coordinator. By implementing small scale tasks they can build their self-confidence and gain new knowledge and skills.

## How to empower young people for the project idea research?

### Practicing communication skills

Prepare young people for a visit to different institutions and talking to strangers. Young people are often reluctant to talk to strangers and persons who in their eyes represent authority and role-playing can help them get rid of that fear. For example, you can use role play to encourage them to practice a meeting with an official person, a phone call, or a direct conversation with a beneficiary. Teachers often say that young people lack the ability to express themselves – and by rehearsing just one conversation, young people can considerably improve their communication skills.

### Encouraging discussion and critical thinking

Plan some time during every session when members of smaller teams will be able to report to the whole group about what they have learned. After that, it is important to discuss with the whole group about the potential challenges they may have encountered and about what they might have done differently so that they might use that information in their further steps. These discussions may be brief in the beginning, but it is important that the group leader invite young people to participate and give their opinions. This way we are communicating to them that their opinion matters.

### Encouraging creative thinking

It is important that projects be designed in such a way that creativity is encouraged from the start. Think about how you can stimulate creativity, talk to your students about possible ways to increase the visibility of vulnerable groups and the difficulties they face. Think about creative ways of expressing emotions, values, and the purpose of the project. Young people need action, but also creativity. They can express themselves through comics, drawings, photographs, videos, stories, poems and so on. A lot is going on: a lot of emotions, overwhelming information that they are exposed to on social networks, a lot of feelings of injustice. Creative expression can help turn everything they are experiencing into a tangible result that contains the message they want to convey to the world.

### Development of group dynamics

Joint participation in the research of the project idea can certainly contribute to team building and group dynamics development. In the beginning of the work with the group be directive, ask a lot of questions, give feedback and acknowledge each positive step of your students (e.g. when they present ideas, support each other, etc.). Start each session with a game ("icebreaker") to give them the opportunity to get to know each other in a fun way and discover mutual similarities and differences. At the end of each session check if any questions have remained unanswered and ask your students for a brief evaluation of the session.

And to have more conversations and us talking together more than spending time on mobiles. (a student, Croatia)

At school we don't talk enough about gang violence. (a student, Great Britain)

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT DIRECTION – DEFINING THE GOAL

Clearly set goals lead to greater success in the project. If you take enough time to plan and set your goals properly, the activities leading to the achievement of these goals are easy to accomplish.

Once you have explored and defined the project idea with young people, you can proceed to set up the objective that should answer the question: *What do we want to achieve?*

Make sure that all team members agree on the goals set and determine how they will measure the success of their achievement (performance standards). Setting goals is a dynamic process whereby changing priorities might also mean that your goals will have to change as well. The more clearly you set goals at the beginning, the less likely you will need to reorganise later.

Well-planned projects require well-established goals, thus ensuring a clear structure and direction in which the project is moving. You can teach your students to use the **SMART method**, which is the acronym of English words: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, **T**ime-based. In order for the goals to be well-set, all SMART requirements need to be met.

<b>S</b> <b>Specific</b>	Be clear and specific about what you want to achieve and in what way.	Organise a social gathering between volunteer club members with youth (14 - 18 years) at the asylum seekers centre
<b>M</b> <b>Measurable</b>	Try to define how you'll measure success in achieving the goal. Try to convert it into a number that you'll be able to use as a reference.	Students will visit the beneficiaries of the shelter three times in this school year.
<b>A</b> <b>Achievable</b>	Set goals that are within your realistic capabilities, so you do not give up on them. Think about the knowledge, skills, and capabilities your team members have.	In cooperation with the volunteers working in the centre, students will organise two-hour social gatherings with the beneficiaries with the aim of getting to know them.
<b>R</b> <b>Relevant</b>	Try to answer the question why this goal is important to you and what change you expect to achieve through its realisation in the life of the beneficiaries, the school, and the local community.	Put young immigrants into contact with the local community and help them get acquainted with the young people in the country they are seeking asylum. On the other hand, your students will have the opportunity to interact with peers of another culture and thus develop respect for diversity and strengthen their empathy.
<b>T</b> <b>Time-based</b>	Set a realistic time frame, present it to the whole team, and stick to it.	The students will organise their gatherings at the reception centre once in the first term and twice in the second term, by May 10th.



What may help you set the goals is a process of raising awareness of your strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, by which you can determine what you can realistically achieve. For this purpose, **SWOT analysis** (Tool 4) can be used, which is an acronym for the English words **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, **T**hreats.

The SWOT analysis can be used as a basis for identifying strategies that primarily seek to:

1. Turn weaknesses into strengths.
2. Use strengths to seize opportunities.
3. Try to turn threats into opportunities.

## **TOOL 4: SWOT ANALYSIS**

**Objective:** explore and take into consideration the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of an individual or entire organization when planning a project.

**Tool description:** The method is used to recognise the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that an individual, group or organization may face during a project or youth initiative. With this tool, we can help young people focus on activities in the areas where they are strong and where their greatest opportunities lie. It is also important to examine the internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) conditions to identify factors that may affect the project. This analysis is useful for systematizing the goals and actions of the whole group so that we can delegate assignments, responsibilities, and tasks to the group we are leading and mentoring.

**Procedure:** The leader of the group presents the SWOT method to the students and leads them through the following steps:

1. On a large poster, make a 2x2 table and write down the following terms: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS.
2. Ask the students to first think about the written terms individually.
3. Specify a person who will write down the answers where they will be visible to all participants.
4. Invite all team members to fill out the table by answering questions related to the terms.

### STRENGTHS

What do you do well? What are your best skills? Which relevant resources do you have access to in your community? What are your strengths in comparison with other organizations in the same community? What do others perceive as your unique strength??

### WEAKNESSES

What do you do badly? What can you improve? What resources do you lack in your community? What are your weaknesses in comparison with other organizations in the same community? What do others perceive as your biggest limitation?

### OPPORTUNITIES

Where could be the good opportunities? What are some interesting youth activities in your community?

### THREATS

What obstacles do you encounter in your organization? What are the risks and limitations? Will time be a factor that could jeopardise the success of a project? Are all team members available to equally contribute to the project? Do the members of the team agree with the project idea? Do you want to achieve the same goals? Do you have the money needed to set up a project? Can any of your weaknesses seriously jeopardise the project?

## HOW TO SET UP THE GOOD FOUNDATION? – PLANNING AND PREPARATION OF THE PROJECT

Young people are more attracted to getting involved into project activities than to planning them, so it is important also to make them aware of the importance of this step. Try to do it as creatively you can, asking questions that can spur their curiosity. It would be good if the project were elaborated in such a way that it has clearly defined goals and subgoals, monitoring mechanisms, partners, activities, and budget - all those elements that you have mentioned in the previous steps, even if it is a relatively small project and the activity itself involves fewer participants.

During this step, try to encourage young people to ask as many questions as possible about factors that could affect the project. Try to go even beyond that, try to plan for unplanned circumstances that might occur (potential challenges).

After you have collected the necessary answers, think about them in the light of the project goal that you have selected, which will help you devise the action plan and the project budget.

Most of the stuff we talk about is related to what's happening at school. We could talk more about important issues, about the wider community. (a student, Great Britain)

Here are some questions that can help you during project planning and preparation:



## EXAMPLE OF PROJECT DESCRIPTION (DRAFT)

KEY QUESTIONS	PROJECT DRAFT – Let's respect diversity in our class
<b>What?</b> Project activities and description	Preparing workshops on communication, nonviolent conflict resolution, and mediation; The implementation of workshops with the younger classes; Marking important dates in the history of human rights and tolerance; Participation in the "Color the World!" creative context, creating creative works, etc.
<b>Why?</b> Needs that are addressed by the project, motivation	Understand the importance of respecting diversity in classrooms by conducting workshops on subjects such as tolerance, communication, nonviolent conflict resolution and peer mediation and marking the International Day of Tolerance (November 16). Respond to more frequent reports of peer violence.
<b>For whom?</b> Target groups	5. – 8. grades
<b>Who?</b> Project group, partners	Project Leader Project team members School Professional Service Partners
<b>What with?</b> Resources, budget	Human resources Art material
<b>How?</b> Methods	Five workshops (Communication, conflicts, tolerance, diversity, mediation) Two workshops (creative works for the contest)
<b>Where?</b> Venue	School (Library)
<b>When?</b> Timetable	7 <sup>th</sup> period, every Friday

The action plan, i.e. the work plan, should contain detailed information on the activities you will implement, the timetable for their implementation and the person responsible for each activity. This way you will have an overview of all the tasks you need to complete, with all the deadlines and responsible persons.

Once you have developed a detailed description of the project, you should identify the resources, i.e. list the things and persons needed to implement the plan. A local community project is an excellent way to empower associating in your community.

For example:

- Think about the resources needed to realise the project. The resources may relate to different kinds of supplies, money resources, expert knowledge or volunteers.
- Identify potential community partners that could contribute to the realisation of the project.
- Contact potential partners with the goal of joint involvement in solving problems in the local community. Be clear about the benefits that they might have from such a partnership.
- Explore potential obstacles to the project implementation.

Once you have identified the necessary resources, you should determine accurately the financial resources needed to implement the plan.

- Write a list of revenue sources for your project.
- Make a detailed overview of costs and categorise each of them.
- Check your calculations. Your total revenue should match your costs.

## Budget

Revenues	
Total revenue:	
Costs:	
Total costs:	

You should carefully elaborate the budget at this stage of the project so that you don't have financial problems later on. Even if it's about a small amount of money, make the budget with your students, because it's a good way to practice competencies that they do not often have the opportunity to develop.

When looking for potential donors for the resources you need, try to remember all potential donors, from parents, the local community, and a utility company to the nearby stores. If you are looking for smaller amounts of money or just a few seedlings or a few litres of juice, they will be more likely to be willing to support the project. You can also point out to them that the visibility of the project and those who supported it will be ensured through local media and school web pages.

## TOOL 5: ACTION PLAN

**Objective:** Make a list of all the tasks that the team must execute within the given time frame to successfully complete the project.

**Tool description:** The action plan can be a very effective tool for tracking and achieving the goals you've set. It's useful because it provides a framework for everything you need to do to carry out the project or any particular action without missing any of the key steps.

**Procedure:** The main steps in creating an action plan are as follows:

1. Start from the end, decide what you want to achieve with the project and what goals you want to achieve.
2. Use the **Brainstorming** Technique to define which activities need to be taken to achieve your goals and what is the first activity you will start with.
3. Set up the project time frame and the deadlines for each activity. You can also create a daily plan of activities. Consider what realistic time for the implementation of certain activities is.
4. Select the persons who will be responsible for performing certain tasks.
5. Encourage discussion among group members about the obstacles you might encounter during project implementation. What do you think could go wrong in the process of achieving the goals?
6. Evaluate your action plan by setting clear criteria that will show you how successful you have been in the implementation of each goal.
7. When you have completed all the previous steps, follow your action plan.
8. Finally, think about how you'll celebrate the completion of the project.

## HOW ARE WE DOING SO FAR?

Being a volunteer can change your life, besides, both sides feel good.  
(a student, Slovenia)

Until this stage, your project plan has already been elaborated and the direction of its development determined. This is the part the youth most look forward to, and this is the reason they get involved in the projects. It will give them an opportunity to develop a positive self-image, to continue on their path towards self-actualization, practice communicative skills, enhance competencies such as empathy, understanding and conflict resolution, and build relationships with others. However, they will still need support from adults in that process. On the other hand, teachers have the opportunity to teach them democratic values, acceptance of diversity, human rights, respect, and equality, which strongly contributes to the prevention of radicalization and other difficulties that students have to deal with. Young people thus learn about active citizenship through direct participation



in volunteering actions or other school projects. Social and emotional competences they develop as a result of that will represent the basis for lifelong learning that will continue into their adulthood. For project implementation to be successful, pay attention to:

- participation of team members
- financial monitoring
- public relations.

Make sure that all young people are involved in the implementation, that their duties are assigned according to their competences and interests, divide them into teams, and regularly check with them how they are doing.

Try keeping track of the resources spent during the implementation of each particular action, keep track of and collect all invoices, revenue from donations, etc. (you can devise your method of keeping records and share this assignment with several other group members). Before the implementation, decide where you want the project to be publicised (school, city, a partner site, facebook pages, local TV and radio stations). Then, write a short text announcing the project and send it to the media.

## **„SIX THINKING HATS" TECHNIQUE"**

You must have caught yourself trying to deal with different problems in the same way and make decisions always based on the same model of thinking. If you have a team work experience, after a certain time you have surely been able to anticipate the reactions of certain team members when they find themselves in a similar situation.

"Six Thinking Hats" is a technique that can help you look at important decisions from different points of view. You can ask young people to look at the project from different points of view: PROCESS (blue hat), FACTS (white hat), GUT FEELING (red hat) CREATIVITY (green hat), BENEFIT (yellow hat), CAUTION (black hat).

### **TOOL 6: „SIX HATS" TECHNIQUE**

**Objective:** Realise the importance of making decisions from different points of view.

**Tool description:** It helps stimulate creativity, avoid group thinking in team work, but it can also get you to start thinking outside the box. The technique was designed by Edward de Bono, and each hat symbolises a different style of thinking.

**Procedure:** The leader of the group presents the "Six thinking hats" technique to the students and leads them through the following steps:

1. Divide the students into six groups and assign them the colour of the hat through which they will be directed to the project implementation.
2. The leader teaches the students how they will record their observations.
3. At regular meetings, the groups present their observations and how they see

the Implementation of the project from their point of view.

4. The whole team gives their impressions on the observations of all six group.

**White Hat:** it focuses on data, facts, and available information. A person assigned this colour should ignore suggestions and arguments and think only about what information is necessary and available, and how to get it.

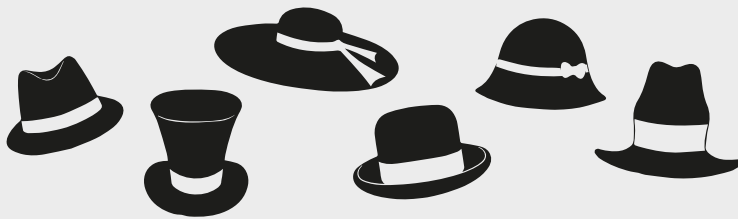
**Red Hat:** the people you assign this hat should focus on their gut feelings when they think about the problem and communicate them to the team without much thought.

**Black Hat:** cautiously reflects on the risks and possible negative consequences, advocates caution and emphasises everything he thinks cannot be resolved.

**Yellow Hat:** an optimist who thinks of the best possible (realistic) results and as a counterweight to the Black Hat, it sees positive sides of the solution to problems or opportunities. It's not as intuitive as the Red Hat, but its optimism is based on logical grounds.

**Green Hat:** thinks creatively about possible growth or development; his ideas may arise one from another, always asks: "Can this be done in any other way?"

**Blue Hat:** whenever you see something blue, let this remind you of the blue sky, and the distance there is between us and the sky, so try to review any situation from a distance. A person wearing a Blue Hat is focused on the process of thinking and controls the meeting/work of a group or department.



## LET'S CHECK HOW GOOD WE ARE – PROJECT EVALUATION

In order to check whether the project you have implemented with young people was successful, one of the steps you need to anticipate in its implementation is evaluation. Project evaluation should be defined in advance, and one of the crucial answers it can give us is whether the project goals have been achieved. Thus, when evaluating the "Start the Change" project, we can check whether young people, who have either directly or indirectly been involved as the end-users of the project activities, are empowered in understanding and accepting their own identity, whether they have had the opportunity to strengthen or improve their competences and which ones, whether they have had the opportunity to strengthen their empathetic abilities and assertive communication; whether they have become acquainted with the concept of human rights, the concept of democracy and the basics of conflict resolution; whether

they understand the role of media in modern society and whether they have had an opportunity to get involved in one of the volunteer actions in their school. It is best to immediately define the information that can help you evaluate whether they have achieved their goals. You will do this best by looking at your project description, the work plan, and the budget again and determine what would be useful to learn from these project elements.

Evaluation helps us find out what was effective in our project and what wasn't and use these results in future projects and their planning.

I think that volunteering actually means making other people happy...  
(a student, Croatia)

### How will you know whether your project has made a difference?

Evaluation questions that can help gather information related to the volunteer action to visit immigrants and asylum seekers:

1. How many visits have been made? How many students participated? How many beneficiaries? How many children and youth in total?
2. Did the young people who participated in the visits learn anything about the asylum seekers' problems? (Interview the participants). How many volunteers were involved?
3. Organise an interview with the Chair of the Board and verify their satisfaction with your cooperation.
4. Make sure students are satisfied with the results achieved and with what they have learnt by participating in the project.

Some of the common methods of evaluation:

- **surveys and questionnaires** - useful for testing a large number of people, can be conducted face-to-face or by email, and special attention should be paid to compiling questions so that they can be understood by the participants
- **interview** – may include fewer people, and is conducted by a trained interviewer, face-to-face, or by phone by asking pre-prepared questions
- **focus group** – similar to an interview, includes a carefully selected group of people lead through a structured conversation
- **project log** – used to record achievements, tracks the entire process from the very beginning, through all the individual activities, and even the decision-making process can be monitored
- **group activities**

### **Possible questions for a focus group of volunteers who went to the shelter:**

1. How much have you been actively involved in the project? What were you most involved into?
2. What did you learn new? What is your opinion on the impact of this project on you and your peers? What skills, attitudes, and knowledge have you developed?
3. What is your opinion about the impact of this project on the school?
4. What do you think, have the project activities been useful for asylum seekers? If so, in what ways?
5. Share your impressions and thoughts about the development of this and similar activities

## **LET US SHARE OUR STORY – SPREADING GOOD PRACTICE**

This segment of project management is very important, but we often don't set aside enough time for it. We may design and implement a brilliant project with youth (e.g. a local NGO project promoting peace education or a peer mediator education project), but often nobody else hears about it except for the people in our school, or our organization, and possibly the user who was involved in the project, and here the story ends. However, the extending of the project's impact should be seen as an inevitable part of the project's story: the more people learn about the project, the greater is the chance that the positive project outcomes will spread and eventually we might even accomplish more than we initially planned.

**There are different ways to extend the impact of the project after completion. Depending on what you want to achieve, you can use different tools. For example:**

- **Project visibility** (when you want to notify the public about the project) - Use tools such as the school's or organization's web site or a Facebook page, the relevant stakeholders' (partner's, local government's, etc.) website. It is important that, along with a short text about the goals and results of the project, you also include the visuals (school and project logo, photographs). Do not forget to send out **press releases** before taking any action. In your press release always answer the questions: *Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?*
- **Sharing results** (when you want to share your example with others) – spread the project results via mailing lists or hold a presentation about the project to other schools and organizations (peers).
- **Use of results** – the entire project can be tailored to a similar or completely new project; it can be used to train others (peers) for the implementation of a similar project or to share experiences.
- **Continuation of the project** – Create a long-term program (for new users, for new participants) because continuous work on a single topic brings longer-term results.

- **Policies** – your project deals with important public policy issues (youth, health, social welfare). Find out who the main stakeholders are and send the relevant bodies your recommendations for public policies with the national impact.

Whatever tool you use, let your goal be to extend the impact of your project outside of your group and school. By expanding the good story of your project, you can achieve the following:

- motivate children and young people to continue e.g. volunteering and working on new projects
- ensure the financing of future projects by gaining public attention
- increase the visibility and reputation of your school or organization
- increase the possibility of project results lasting longer
- inspire others to do same and/or similar projects..

## NEWS ON THE "START THE CHANGE!" PROJECT, 2014

**The Forum for Freedom in Education has launched the "Start the Change!" project, and the recently conducted survey "If I were Somebody" has shown positive results.**

*...there are eight of us here ... that means, already eight. Not that there isn't anybody. So it means we can already get something started ... Well, we needn't, I do not know, do wonders, but let's say we encourage the school to organise collecting old clothes and let's say we take it to an orphanage or a similar institution, or to some children in need...*

This is a message from a high school student who expressed her opinion about volunteering within the framework of the research "If I Were Somebody", which was conducted as part of the "Start the Change!" project, carried out by the Forum for Freedom in Education.

The publication by the same name ("If I Were Somebody") was released at the end of January, and Višnja Pavlović, the "Start the Change!" project coordinator, points out that children and young people from elementary and high schools (participants in the research) have shown interest and motivation to try to solve the problems they recognise by volunteering, or by their active engagement in the community..

*The research has clearly shown that they want to change the world around them positively, e.g. improve the atmosphere among students in the classroom, create better school conditions, support vulnerable groups in their communities, provide better services for citizens in the local communities, but, at the same time, they say they need adult support for such initiatives. They were particularly interested in activities such as helping vulnerable groups, children with special needs, children with disabilities, elderly people, homeless people, abandoned animals, and some of them even want to become "doctors without borders". There is a great potential*

**for involving children and young people in volunteer activities, projects that would help them change the world around them, but they also need adult support for this** - emphasizes Pavlovic and announces that exploring the attitudes of children and young people about the problems in their everyday life and their ideas about how to solve them will be followed by a training for teachers and educators.

**The training is dedicated to teachers, school counsellors and volunteers of various associations and it will deal with different ways and different topics they can organise with children and young people to achieve a positive change in society. The participants in the training will then, together with children and young people, organise actions and projects in their schools and/or local communities that will express the wish of the youth to influence the world around them positively. In addition to these projects, children and young people will be invited to participate in the "Color the World!" creative contest by sending their creative art work on topics of tolerance, respect for diversity and non-violent communication. The best examples of local projects and creative works will be collected in a joint publication entitled "The Book of Good Ideas", which will be distributed in schools throughout Croatia,** says Višnja Pavlović, adding that the training will also include two five day workshops for experts and volunteers working with children and young people on topics of nonviolent communication, mediation, human rights and other topics from civic education.



## TOOL 7: PRESS RELEASE

**Objective:** Present your project or action to the general public through the media.

**Tool description:** The press release is one of the basic tools of communication with media representatives. It provides the media with the necessary information about the project you have organised. Start the press release with the most important pieces of information that give answers to the following questions: **Who? What? Where? When? Why and How?** It can also be written in the form of a reaction to a social problem.

**Procedure:** The group leader selects a person who will write a press release. Each press release should have the following components:

1. The date and time of the press release
2. Type of release - reaction, statement, call to the media, press release
3. Title and Subtitle
4. Answers the Questions: **Who? What? Where? When? Why and How?**
5. The text of the release
6. Conclusion
7. Contact information - name of the person, position, email address, contact phone
8. Additional information about your school or organization
9. You can also add a statement by a person you consider important for the topic of the release - the principal, the project leader, or one of the students.

For more ideas on how to expand the impact of your project, with practical guidelines, visit the following Web site: <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1408/MakingWaves.pdf>.

# PART FIVE

EXAMPLES OF  
GOOD PRACTICE

*It'd be nice if our voice was heard more... (a student, Croatia)*

Below you will find an overview of good practice projects implemented by schools in Croatia, Italy, Slovenia and the UK. Before that, we will present three thematic areas within which the Forum for Freedom in Education has implemented projects with schools in Croatia. All these projects promote the building of a culture of peace, acceptance of diversity and active citizenship.

## MEDIATION PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS

School mediation helps in conflict resolution in schools, but above all, it is an extremely successful **preventive programme** that develops empathy and **social and emotional skills** in children and young people, and thus creating a new culture of interpersonal relationships and tolerance.

Mediation is also a process of peaceful conflict resolution in which an impartial, professional and confidential person helps the sides in the conflict to build quality communication that will eventually help them solve the problem.

By learning about mediation, children and young people learn about **communication, relationships, dialogue, mutual respect and conflict resolution**. Mediation programmes in schools have primarily preventive function, so in many schools, they are either an integral part of the curriculum or an extracurricular activity.

As part of the Forum's Mediation programme, more than 1,200 educators and other professionals have gained basic and/or advanced mediation skills, and after the training, many of them have designed their programs and school projects and implemented mediation in the school curricula in a variety of ways.



*One Heart,  
Nora Orlić, 17, Croatia*

After the completion of the mediation training in the school, various activities are initiated for pupils and their parents through:

- **Establishment of extracurricular groups for mediation** involving students attending workshops from various fields such as communication skills, conflict resolution, causes of conflict, prejudice, and stereotypes, and so on.
- **A cross-curricular approach** by applying topics, messages, and ideas for mediation and nonviolent conflict resolution in different teaching units and subjects
- **Launching of school mediation centres and clubs** (especially schools where both the teaching staff and professional service have been trained)
- **Implementation of various projects** arising from mediation and democratic, nonviolent communication.

By participating in these activities:

- **Students acquire critical life skills** - social, emotional, communicative, presentation and management
- **The atmosphere and relationships** in the classroom and throughout the school become better and more positive
- **Important decisions** that involve more opposing sides are made more easily
- **Employees acquire** a tool for preventing and resolving conflicts with parents, among students, among themselves
- **Greater crises and violence are prevented** because problems and conflicts are resolved on time and in such a way that students undergoing this process get more mature, so they can solve future conflicts more independently

## COLOUR THE WORLD IN COLOURS OF TOLERANCE – CREATIVE WORKS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The United Nations General Assembly called upon all UN members in 1996 to mark **November 16 as the International Day of Tolerance**, a day that reminds us of **respect and acceptance of diversity** in accordance with the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance.

In 2016 a record number of works was received, 880 of them. More than 1900 students from 19 counties from Croatia, 206 schools and 272 mentors were involved in the competition.

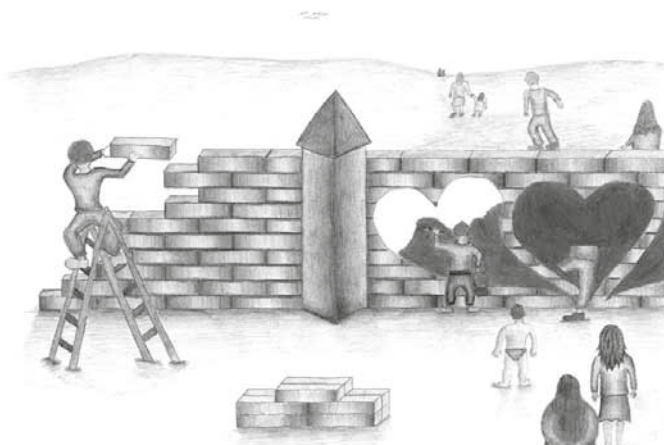


Since 2010, the Forum for Freedom in Education has been marking the International Day of Tolerance by awarding prizes to students of elementary and high schools from all over Croatia who have submitted their ideas about tolerance, human rights, acceptance of diversity and nonviolent communication, as well as their vision of the key problems of today's generation of young people and their future, to the "The Color World!" contest.

It is important to promote creativity and innovation of children and young people starting from kindergarten and school, and such projects develop their social skills and active involvement in building a better society. Every year we ask children and young people - What is for you (non) tolerance? What is respect?

Schools introduce this competition in their work with students in different ways. They organise a series of workshops on nonviolence, tolerance, and acceptance of diversity, and after the workshops, students follow their inspiration on the subject and create their work with their mentor's support. Sometimes these are individual works, sometimes group work; individuals express themselves through story, song, comic strip, drawing, and students' group work can sometimes turn into real school projects (such as recording films about the differences students want to talk about, an initiative of a group of students in the local community or promoting values of tolerance through various activities).

Every year students actions have shown that they are aware of the world we live in, that they know how to identify the current problems of today's society (e.g. the refugee crisis in 2015) and are largely influenced by social and political developments, both in Croatia and globally. Through their works, students offer creative solutions, show that it is important to listen to their voice, but also more importantly – they show they are ready to contribute to making the world a more beautiful place. Their works also show criticism of adults who, unfortunately, do not show by their example that the world can be a nicer and better place to live.



*Heart at the border,  
Ivan Zidarić, 8th grade,  
Mentor: Tibor Martan,  
"Visoko" elementary  
school, Croatia*

Young people are trying to convey a message with their works, and these messages are just as important as the works themselves.

Sometimes it is easier to focus on things that are black and white, things that separate us, or even, emphasise the distance between people. But perhaps the world would be a nicer place if we paid more attention to the palette that exists and makes us people a part of something bigger and more colourful. (Students of the Italian Elementary School, Scuola elementare Italiana, Novigrad, Croatia)

Consider how you can foster youth creativity. Children and young people experience a lot of emotions and feelings of injustice, often feeling overwhelmed by information from the media and through social networks. Creative expression is one of the best ways to express everything that torments them and transforms everything that they experience into a creative, tangible result that contains a message they want to convey to the world around them.





# "HAPPY SCHOOLS" PROJECT

I think we should set aside at least one period a week when teachers and students would tell good things one to another  
(a student, Croatia)

## ABOUT HAPPINESS

If we compare all that psychology, philosophy, and spirituality have to say on the subject, we may conclude that happiness is not just the absence of unhappiness or even just a pleasant emotion. Happiness refers to the overall well-being, a dignified life in which a person can grow, realise their full potential and fulfil their needs. A series of studies have shown that happiness is positively associated with empathy, quality relationships, academic and business success, and physical health.



*"Josip Pupačić" elementary school, Omiš*

In 2011, the UN General Assembly recognised happiness as one of the fundamental human rights and declared March 20th as the International Day of Happiness. Within the Global Sustainable Development Goals, the welfare of humanity is set as one of the fundamental goals.

## HAPPY STUDENT

*The World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al., 2015) has shown that those schools which prioritize student well-being have the potential to become more effective, resulting in better educational and life achievements for students.*

*The Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 29) states that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (United Nations 1949).*



*"Braće Radić" elementary school, Bračević*

We can learn to be happy, but we can also be happy while we're learning!

### **"HAPPINESS" PROJECT"**

During 2017, forty schools in Croatia have joined the "Happy School" project by the Forum for Freedom in Education. In *happy schools*, there are teams of teachers and experts who during the school year create a series of related activities aimed at the psychological well-being of students. All of these teachers have undergone a three-day "Happy Child" training programme to enhance their competences in the field of improving the psychological well-being of their students, as well as their own.

These projects of happiness can be classified into several categories of activities:

- Workshops of happiness and psychological well-being for students and teachers
- Creating environment and learning conditions and methodologies of teaching that contribute to the optimal learning of students
- Providing conditions for full participation and a high student motivation
- Leaving the initiative to students who design workshops and projects of happiness for their peers



*"Don Lovro Katić" elementary school, Solin*



*"A.M. Reljković" elementary school, Bebrina*

### **HAPPY SCHOOL**

According to the UNESCO model, the factors for a happy school are:

- 1. Friendships and relationships within the school community**
- 2. Warm and friendly learning environment**
- 3. Learner freedom, creativity, and engagement by teachers and students**
- 4. Teamwork and group activities such as sports, etc.**
- 5. Positive teachers attitudes and attributes**

Of course, there is also a "recipe" for an unhappy school that would include: 1. *peer violence*, 2. *high workload and student stress*, 3. *negative working environment and school atmosphere*, 4. *poor teaching methods and conditions*, 5. *negative teachers' attitudes towards the students and the school*. These are the problems that any school that wants to be happy should recognise and deal with them in a timely and deliberate way.

# DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL VOLUNTEER PROGRAMMES

Volunteer programmes for students are invaluable for their development. By volunteering, students develop self-esteem, acquire new knowledge and skills, and new acquaintances, feel useful and spend their leisure time in a useful way, some of them volunteering to gain their first professional experience. Volunteering is an important value in building a democratic society and is recognised as such in Croatia by the Volunteering Act (OG 58/07, 22/13), which obliges educational institutions to foster the development of volunteering and the feeling of solidarity among pupils. On the other hand, the benefits of introducing a volunteer programme into school curriculums are new values and skills (especially in the context of civic education and education), increased quality of work and better relationships between teachers and students. School volunteering can be developed in multiple ways, from promoting and informing pupils about volunteering and volunteering opportunities to independent volunteering of students in the local community (for high school students). Volunteering within the school can be developed in different ways, depending on the age of the student and the needs of the school and the local community in which the school is located.

Over the last four years, the Forum for Freedom in Education has supported primary and secondary schools in launching volunteer programmes through various projects such as "School volunteers". Within their volunteer programmes, schools have organised activities in a variety of forms: a shorter **volunteer actions** addressing specific problems (such as environmental planning, adopting abandoned animals or collecting humanitarian aid), as well as longer **volunteer projects** representing a long-term volunteer work with volunteer users (such as peer assistance in studying or socializing with beneficiaries of the local elderly people home).

Other persons may participate in the school volunteering activities, such as parents, young people (university students), and other members of the local community who can support their school and its community work with their knowledge and skills.

**A volunteer club or a volunteer group** - one of the ways to develop volunteer work at school is certainly the establishment of a volunteer club or group whose members plan and organise volunteer activities for themselves, or invite the whole school to participate. This way pupils are directly involved in the planning and development of volunteering projects in school.

**Volunteering of students outside the school** - in accordance with the Volunteering Act, secondary school students can independently participate in volunteering programmes of other institutions and associations. In such a case, these institutions and associations assume responsibility as volunteer organisers and conclude agreements

with volunteers defining their rights and obligations. Students go volunteering either alone or as members of a school volunteer club and often participate in activities with users.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL PROJECTS

**Below we provide some of the examples, briefly illustrating their good practice in implementing projects that promote tolerance and nondiscrimination in the school life:**

### **„LITTLE MEDIATORS“**

#### **LUKA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ZAGREB, CROATIA**

Peer mediation enables children and young people to work together by solving a common problem actively and responsibly and by learning new skills. Improving students' skills through peer mediation (social skills, active listening, cooperation, impulse control and collaborative problem solving) is more than developing practices of effective conflict resolution because it also develops the practice of preventing violent conflict response and future similar conflicts, and it improves the relationships between students, teachers, and parents.

Luka elementary school developed a comprehensive programme of 70 school hours in mediation, and it successfully implemented it in the 1st and 5th grades. A mediation programme through workshops and presentations has been presented to the teaching staff, but also to students and parents.

Extracurricular activities "Little Mediators" and "Young Mediators" are an integral part of the school curriculum, but throughout the year the mediation workshops are conducted during the homeroom class.

The objective of the programme is the development of students' knowledge and skills for non-violent conflict resolution through peer mediation and workshops for the 1st-4th-grade students as well as working with preschool children's.



*Each day, students express their feelings through colours and shapes and thus learn about the importance of emotions in life and relationships*

### **„MEDIATOR CLUB“ MATIJE GUPCA" ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ZAGREB, CROATIA**

The school's professional service has been conducting student training for mediation for many years to provide students with a valuable experience of becoming mediators in peer conflict resolution without the help of teachers and other adults.

The project is implemented in three key steps.

- 1) Selection and shortlist of sixth-grade students by a specially designed sociometric questionnaire.
- 2) Selected students pass the cycle of "sensitisation" workshops that strengthen them and develop a sense of community and cooperation, and direct them towards the use of nonviolent methods of conflict resolution in everyday life.
- 3) After that, a cycle of "formative" workshops takes place in which students, prospective mediators, have the opportunity to acquire important communication skills in negotiation, listening, understanding and solving problems and conflicts.

During the project, special emphasis is placed on the preparation and training of the entire school staff. A seminar on mediation was organised for teachers, where they were informed about the formation of the school mediation club. In 2013, peer mediators also recorded a programme on their club at the school radio station (available on [https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=UUP55tnyhTqVTF4mzbZP7h5Q&v=\\_fNG6l9ejmU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=UUP55tnyhTqVTF4mzbZP7h5Q&v=_fNG6l9ejmU)).

### **FACEBOOK INITIATIVE „THE YOUTH WRITES, DRAWS AND SCREAMS AGAINST VIOLENCE“ AMBROZA HARAČIĆA" SECONDARY SCHOOL, MALI LOŠINJ, CROATIA**

**The Facebook initiative „The youth writes draws and screams against violence“** gave rise to a travelling exhibition starting from Mali Lošinj. It is related to the prevention of peer violence, and it marks the International Day of Tolerance. Several schools in towns across the island have been involved in the project inviting young people, parents, teachers, and educators to spend a certain time on that day discussing the issue of violence and its dangers, whereas children have been invited to draw or write something on that topic and send in their thoughts, verses, and drawings. After that, an exhibition is organised, usually with a workshop for children. At the workshop, pre-school children, (but also children of other ages), along with their parents and anyone who might be interested, create new works that are then sent to the next town along with the existing ones. Their works travel until the final exhibition in Zagreb at the Luka Ritz Counseling Centre. The idea of the exhibition is to spread the spirit of community and togetherness, the idea of tolerance and nonviolence.



**„Brooding big shots“** is one of the key projects for which the school has been awarded. It is a project of prevention and suppression of violence among children and young people that has been going on for two years. Its carriers are secondary school students and the “Our Children” association from Mali Losinj. Each year they prepare a cycle of educational-creative workshops for elementary school children, such as a forum theatre, a debate club, a poster workshop. At the end of each school year, there are three public, large workshops where children collect puzzles based on the principle - one workshop – one “puzzle”. When they have collected three “puzzles”, they get a free ticket for a concert by a singer or a band promoting nonviolence which is held on the eve of the anniversary of Luke Ritz's death. This kind of cooperation has proven to be a great incentive and has been widely accepted among the youth.

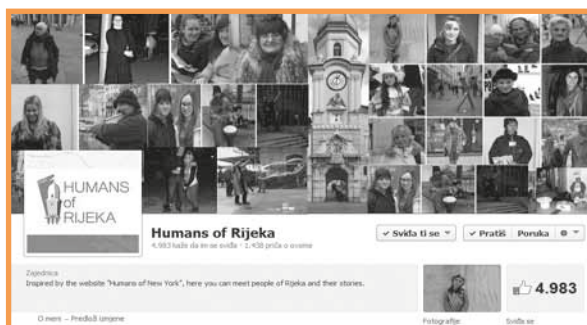
### **„INTERNET SECURITY“ LUKA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SESVETE, ZAGREB, CROATIA**

The school counsellor and a group of seven graders have launched a project aimed at educating students about acceptable behaviour on the internet. Students have developed a game called “Playing towards Internet security”, which consists of message and task cards, a board, pawns and a die. The seven graders have presented the game to the fourth-grade students. A poster with tips on dealing with the Internet violence was designed, and the students held informative lectures to the sixth-grade students and encouraged their younger peers to participate in the activities.



### **„HUMANS OF RIJEKA“ , CROATIA SCHOOL: FIRST CROATIAN CROATIAN GRAMMAR SCHOOL, RIJEKA AUTHOR: ROMA ĐURIĆ; 4<sup>th</sup> GRADE**

**Humans of Rijeka** is a facebook page modelled according to similar pages around the world (Humans of New York), on which street portraits and interviews are collected on the streets of Rijeka. The author of the site is an eighteen-year-old girl, a student of the 4th grade of the First Croatian Croatian Grammar School. Unlike most of her peers, Roma has often asked herself: how many different people do we meet on the streets every day without even thinking about who they are, what untold stories are hiding behind their suits; how many hidden, beautiful, and less beautiful truths are hidden in their heads? In just





over half a year, Roma has gathered about **9,000 fans**, published many short stories about the people of her city, and photographed many famous and less familiar faces on the streets of Rijeka. As she says, she could never imagine that she would collect more than 5,000 likes in the first week. However, she gets constantly surprised by new human stories and each of them has a lesson, each of them shows how different we are and how beautiful we are in our diversity. Her primary purpose is to promote tolerance among people, and primarily among young people.

### "TOLERANCE" NEWSPAPER FIRST ECONOMICS SCHOOL, ZAGREB, CROATIA

A group of students has created a newspaper containing news that other media often miss, positive life-stories based on tolerance. The black and white background of the newspaper represents the present world, still full of wishes. Messages appearing on that background are letters from the world showing different ways of discrimination, to which the authors respond by expressing their disapproval of it. These letters are often what the crime page of regular newspapers would report about. On the other hand, other pieces of news, in different colours, represent an ideal world, a tolerant world. An additional feature to the newspaper is an entertainment section featuring a comic strip showing how conflicts can be resolved peacefully. The message is: **We do not tolerate discrimination!**



### VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME „JOŠKO NEEDS YOU.” “JOSIPA ZORIČA”, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, DUGO SELO, CROATIA

"Little volunteers" group - organization and implementation of various volunteering workshops for little volunteers and implementation of voluntary action "Small things for big smiles" (creative workshops, the fair, and fundraising for the support of their peers living in difficult material circumstances).

"Let's recognise diversity in classrooms" - Implementation of workshops on communication, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

"Let's value diversity in the local community" - the student visit to the "Stančić" Day centre, the Residential community of the "Stančić" rehabilitation centre and the Residential community of the rehabilitation centre in Zagreb.

Support for the integration of students with special needs - school volunteers have provided individual learning aid to students with learning disabilities.

## PROMOTING RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY AND TOLERANCE THROUGH VIDEO ART "HRVATSKI KRALJ ZVONIMIR" GRAMMAR SCHOOL, KRK, CROATIA

A group of students supported by their mentor reflected on the violence, diversity, and tolerance they witness in the media, in their communities and at school. Based on their ideas, they created messages, and the creative content of the video below sums up their message to the world.



**The Wall** - as a reaction to the refugee crisis (the winner of the "Colour the World" contest, 2015)

The students' message:

We've decided to manifest our opposition to the construction of walls, installing of barbed wire, selfishness, and intolerance. Instead of the wall, we've decided to build houses and a new life. Our vision of the solution to the problem is based on accepting responsibility, solidarity, and respect for human dignity. We want to live in Europe united in diversity.

( Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZAIDI8ahP4>)

**Tolerance Cake** – a story about the importance of tolerance through the preparation of a cake in the colours of the rainbow that is eventually eaten by all students in the school lobby. The central thought of the video work "Tolerance cake" is: Sharing tolerance is a piece of cake!

Imaginative and diligent second-grade grammar school students have baked a cake made of special ingredients - positivity, happiness, love, understanding, individuality and other secretive ingredients. The cake's frosting is whipped cream, which means that that which is essential is invisible to the eye, or, in other words, that beauty is inside.

The cake was distributed to the students during the break, provoking amazement, curiosity, joy, and enthusiasm.

(Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgtGAsJhOLOQ>)

**MY COUNTRY, MY VOICE, UNITED KINGDOM**  
**BATLEY GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL, BATLEY**  
**WESTBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL, DEWSBURY**  
**MOOR END ACADEMY, HUDDERSFIELD**

The project "My Country, My Voice" gathered young people from local high schools who launched campaigns about local, national and international problems, supporting the elections in which hundreds of students have participated. The project encouraged passionate and committed participation of young people, with young Muslim girls in the forefront. It promotes community connectivity between and within schools and demonstrates the power of democratic participation of young people.



The students involved in the project had a unique opportunity to hold their campaigns in schools related to various problems. These issues included opportunities for better working experience, fundraising for youth services, raising the average minimum wage in the state to a sustainable level for normal living, right to euthanasia and a tuition fund for young people between 16 and 19.

(Available at: <https://mycountrymyvote.wordpress.com/>)

**THE POWER OF POSITIVE**  
**DUGOPOLJE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, DUGOPOLJE, CROATIA**

The school has implemented a series of workshops for the fourth-grade students covering the themes of emotions and their expression, the power of positive thoughts,



teamwork, creativity and finding their talents and skills. The evaluation points out that many children have **become more aware of anger, especially anger directed at themselves due to inadequate learning** and the fact that they should not **be blaming other people for that**. Other children have realised that in **difficult moments people need to be allowed to have space and time to independently resolve their inner conflict** and get back on track themselves using the power of positive thoughts. They tease each other less; instead, they learned to become aware of the problem, and they even learned how to solve it. They say **the method is exceptionally good, effective, and should be passed on to all children because it helps everyone in everyday situations**.

## **HAPPY KIDS**

### **RETFALA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, OSIJEK, CROATIA**

The school has formed the Quality Team and developed a SWOT analysis of happiness at school as a prerequisite for strategic planning of the activities in the school year. The team has considered all the activities at the school level and encouraged all teachers to think, plan and propose their ideas to improve mutual relationships and communication and to introduce these changes to the school curriculum. The emphasis was placed on the changes that would create a better quality of interrelationship among students in the classrooms, and the task of each teacher is to tailor their teaching methods to their needs.

Then a series of activities and small school projects were organised, such as **Pupils'abilities and talents, Gifting pupils who leave school with a special gift, Classroom meetings with sharing, arrangements for common school projects**. Workshops were held for students on following topics: **positive self-image, my needs and the needs of others; communications foundations, conflict resolution, risky behaviour, etc.**

## **OTHERNESS PROJECT / ITALY**

### **I.I.S. BENEDETTO CROCE**

### **I.I.S.S NAUTICO GIOENI TRABIA**

### **EDUCANDATO STATALE „MARIA ADELAIDE”**

The OTHERNESS project handles transversal skills important for social and civic competences, raising cultural awareness and expressing it. Students are trained on the subjects of tolerance, understanding of different perspectives, expressing and negotiating security, and mutual empathy. The aim of the project is to support the development of students to become responsible citizens who respect diversity and respect the quality of the other and the different. The goal is to empower them to overcome prejudice and be dedicated to building a world based on cooperation, assertiveness, and integrity.



As part of the project, a digital tool will be created for teachers composed of various media channels, documentaries, video lectures and other relevant electronic content. It will be complementary to the "Teacher's Manual" emphasizing the integration of digital material during learning.

The OTHERNESS project is a three-year project (2015-2018) funded under the Erasmus + program, Key Activity 2: Innovation Cooperation and Exchange of Good Practice - A Strategic Partnership for School Education. You can find more about the project at the following address: <http://othernessproject.eu/en/home/>.

### **Project activities:**

- Research on how differences are portrayed in school textbooks and teaching materials, and students' attitudes towards diversity.
- "Teachers' Manual" composed of 48 activities applicable in the classroom will include human rights, diversity, ethnic, gender, intergenerational and social issues. The aim of the manual is to promote awareness of the role of active and conscious participation in the community life, respect for the environment and other people.
- International Teacher Training: High School Teachers from four countries have participated in the training program organised by Centro Sviluppo Creativo "Danilo Dolci" where they learned informal methods of education applicable to teaching students about diversity, human rights, active citizenship. Some of them include theatre of the oppressed, role-playing and simulation, teamwork, a storm of ideas, guided debate, theatre, case studies, and reciprocal madness approach developed at Danilo Dolci.
- Development of a curriculum to raise students' awareness of diversity.
- A pilot programme during the school year 2016/2017.
- Final implementation of the programme during the school year 2017/2018

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# FINAL WORD: HAPPY, QUALITY AND DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL

## Happy, quality and democratic school

Prevention of radicalization, unacceptable behavior and various socio-emotional difficulties; ability to respond to the demands and expectations of modern society, building students' integrity and identity, building self-awareness and intercultural awareness; the deconstruction of prejudice; critical thinking, all the above can be achieved by education and the strengthening of the community so it can become a protective factor and an intercultural "producer" of active and responsible citizens.

The school, as one of the elements of the community, plays an important role in providing healthy and quality development of children and young people to become educated, open, intercultural and democratic persons. We could say that the school is an intercultural, democratic community in miniature, where young people are raised, educated and prepared for active participation in the society, while at the same time a school that promotes democratic education, becomes (and remains) a happier, more creative and successful institution (Bäckman and Trafford 2007).

But how do we make sure that our students develop their full potential and that schools become (and remain) happy, quality and democratic institutions?

The first important factor is that young people are no longer seen as objects, but as active subjects in creating their own lives. Adults have the responsibility to guide and create the conditions for the development of their full potential and to understand that relationships are one of the most important preconditions for fulfilled and quality life, as well as for the democratic processes.

Furthermore, it is important for teachers to bear in mind that the teaching of civic education does not put so much emphasis on theories, concepts or principles of democracy, but rather that a greater emphasis is placed on the practice itself! So, in answer to the question: "How do we prepare young people to become adults, democratically oriented participants in society?" The answer reads: "By providing them with an experiential experience of democracy, well-being and quality in every segment and every level of the school life" (Bäckman and Trafford 2007).

The last important factor is the education and training of students to contribute to an intercultural school community based on acceptance of diversity, respect, equality, justice, solidarity, responsibility, cooperation and participation. In other words - building trust in school members (community) and developing responsibility towards oneself and other stakeholders (Sablić 2014).

The World happiness report from 2015 (Helliwell et al., 2015) has shown that those schools that prioritise students' well-being have the potential to become more effective with much better academic success and better overall achievements of their students.



Happiness, well-being, and the involvement of children and young people depend largely on leadership, support, and understanding of adults. In the context of school, it is precisely democratic management based on respect for diversity, interculturality, human rights, empowerment and participation of students, staff and other participants in making important decisions in schools, that creates the foundation for quality work that is oriented towards the well-being of each individual (not only students, but also educators, parents, and consequently the local community).

It is useless to talk about democracy, well-being, and quality within the school if we don't live by the values mentioned above.

A happy, quality and democratic school is oriented towards people, processes, and environment (Happy Schools, UNESCO, 2016):

#### **People:**

- Friendship and interpersonal relationships at the school level
- Teacher's positive attitudes
- Respect for and appreciation of diversity
- Positive values
- Collaborative practices
- Teachers' skills and competences

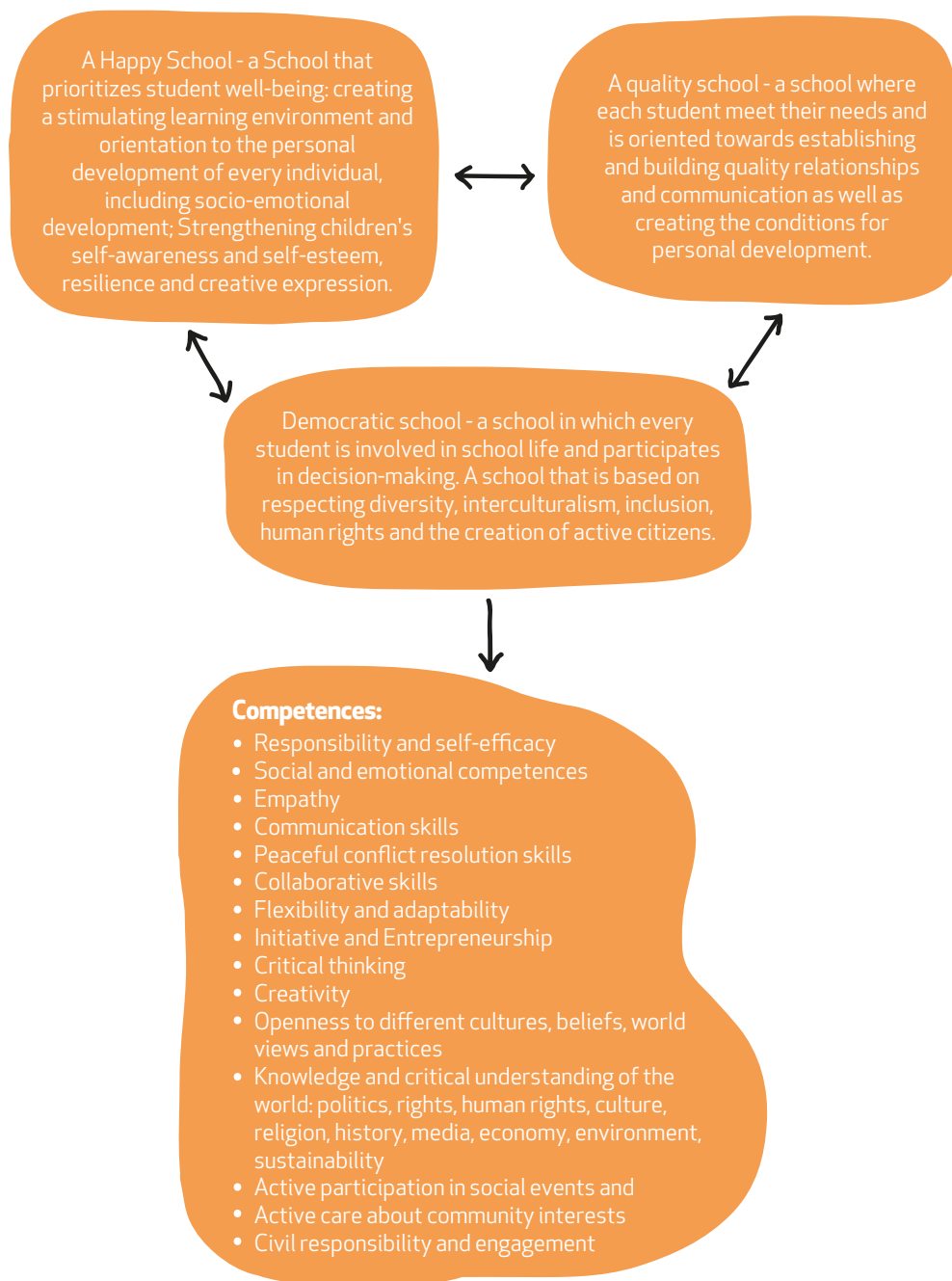
#### **Processes:**

- Reasonable work load
- Teamwork and collaborative learning
- Learning through entertainment
- Creativity, inclusiveness and freedom
- Sense of achieving results and advancement
- Wide range of extracurricular activities
- Relevant curriculum
- Focus on the well-being of each individual
- Stress management

#### **Environment:**

- Friendly and confidential
- Safe environment where you feel protected from bullying
- A commonly defined school vision
- Competent management
- Positive discipline
- Democratic school management

Through all this, the school becomes a place of continuous learning, coexistence, cooperation, equality, trust, support and encouragement, in which students actively participate together with educators, parents and the local community.



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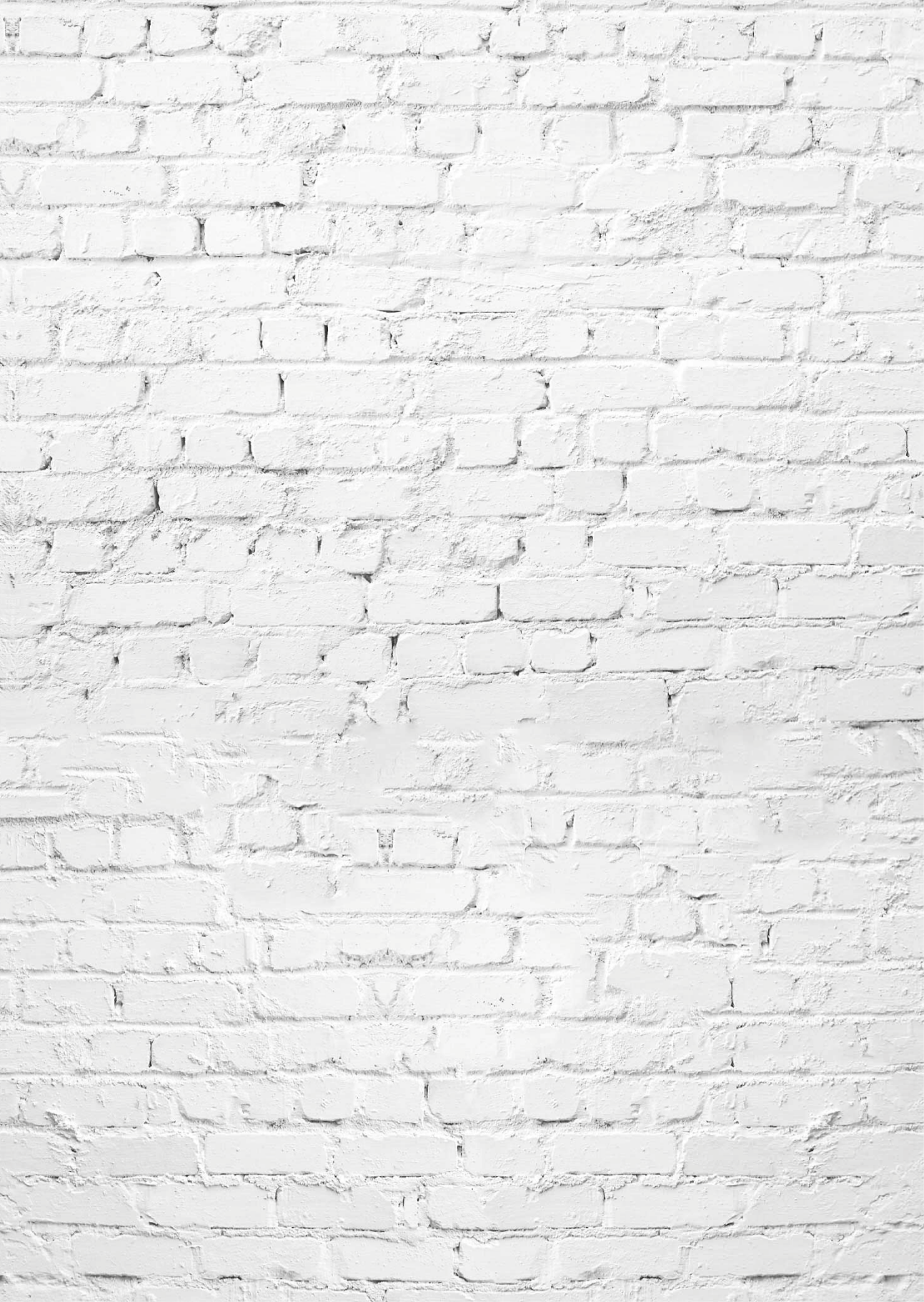
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