European
COSI.ed Model

Co-created approach to supporting inclusive strategies in working with young people at risk of social exclusion

Output 4.4

About the project

Educational institutions from Norway, Denmark, Poland, Spain, and Portugal have collaborated in the Erasmus+ KAIII project *Co-created Education through Social Inclusion* (COSI.ed) 2020-2024. The main goals have been two-fold 1) to upscale a comprehensive European model for social inclusion of young people at risk and 2) a policy recommendation on social inclusion of children and youth. The partners have built on the proven good practice of the Erasmus+ project KAII Marginalisation and Co-created Education[1] and tested out the MaCE model of social inclusion in five countries and six different contexts. Throughout the project, all the partners have collaborated and co-created regionally as well as internationally upscaling the regional experiences to a sustainable European COSI.ed model and policy recommendations.

All the work in the project is based on the understanding and belief that professionals and young people co-create as part of a community of practice[2]. Here experts (professionals like teachers, other school professionals, and researchers) and beginners (young people) work side by side, learning together and jointly developing knowledge and competence. This co-creating process entails giving voice to vulnerable young people to understand their life and educational story and through this process identify aspects of the young disadvantaged persons' situation that may hinder or support further learning. Through the project, the young people learn about themselves and how to excel, while the professionals develop skills and understanding to socially include young people. The hypothesis is that co-created education and training in which disadvantaged young people, professionals, stakeholders, and policymakers take part, will contribute to the educational and social inclusion of groups that have traditionally been marginalised.

What you are about to read, is one of the deliveries in the project. If you need a quick more practical overview of the project, take a look at this video.

Porsgrunn 4th of April 2024

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[1] The Erasmus+ project; Marginalisation and Co-created Education (MaCE)
[2] Bunting.et.al (2021)

Project information

Project Title	CO-created Education through Social Inclusion
Project Acronym	COSI.ed
Project Number	621365-EPP-1-2020-1-NO-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN
Project Coordinator	Mette Bunting
Coordinating partner	University of South-Eastern Norway

Partnership

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P4	FGU NORDVEST (FGU)	Denmark
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P6	Warsaw Centre for Socio-Educational Innovation and Training (WCIES)	Poland
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Warsaw, April 2024

Document information

Work Package	WP4: Developing The European COSI.ed Model
Responsible partner	University of Warsaw
Date of Delivery	26.04.2024
Status Version	Please write: Version 1 (26.04.2024)
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Abstract (for dissemination)	This report documents the procedures, process, and results of the analysis of regional models, implemented in the five project *Co-created Education through Social Inclusion (COSI.ed)* countries, leading to the development of a transferable European model. It draws upon the findings and insights presented in the reports from each participating country. In addition to this publication, you can find more information and resources on our website: https://cosied.eu/

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1. The rationale behind creating the universal European model for social inclusion

Current educational policies regarding inclusive approaches have a huge impact on cognitive, emotional, and social development, as well as on the social integration of young people at risk of exclusion (Gordon-Gould & Hornby, 2023). Our work aims to illuminate the emerging need for collaborative work to implement models for a more inclusive perspective on education and social inclusion policy for this group. This is due to the ongoing changes and processes of social diversification and varied educational challenges, reinforced by the divergent needs of young people and educators and the transformation of cooperation methodologies in the field of education.

We demonstrate a conceptual, scientific model, as well as the process of its development, illustrating useful practice in working with young people at risk of social exclusion, created and implemented in five European countries within the *Co-created Education through Social Inclusion* (COSI.ed) project. At the national level, each team from a partner country worked on the concept of a regional model. Based on the presentation, discussion, and analysis of all the models, the concept of the final versatile European model was created.

Among the various ways of acquiring knowledge, models and scientific modelling activities are particularly important (Potochnik, 2017). A scientific model aims to represent empirical objects, physical phenomena, and processes logically and objectively. They "attempt to reduce the world to a fundamental set of elements and laws and on this basis, they hope to better understand and predict key aspects of the world" (Borner et al. 2012, 3). Model is not only a reflection of reality, but also grounds for action, or a stimulus for discussion. Model design usually involves the formulation of a scientific hypothesis or the identification of a particular structure or dynamic. Often the hypothesis is grounded in an analysis of empirical data (Borner et al., 2012). Harré (2004) notes that models can complement theories by providing mechanisms for processes that are left unspecified even though they are responsible for bringing about the described phenomenon.

Models play a key role in what practitioners do, both in their planned activities and when realising their practical goals. They might support the reflection on their didactic choices, both in the strategic development of curriculum and in everyday teaching practices. Models are also important for researchers and practice studies, especially when trying to find new, transformative solutions in education about youth from vulnerable contexts (youth at risk).

2. Development and application of the model to the practice in diverse contexts

COSI.ed project was aimed at upscaling the proven good practice from the Erasmus+ project; *Marginalisation and Co-created Education* (MaCE) in five different countries (11 partners) and educational contexts representing Southern (Portugal and Spain), Central-Eastern (Poland) and Northern Europe (Norway and Denmark). Upscaling, in this case, involves both the issues of extending the use of the model by including new partners and educational institutions, but also adapting the model to other contexts - different target groups, educational systems and institutional arrangements.

In effect, the COSI.ed model shares the same theoretical and methodological assumptions with the original MaCE model but differs in ways of implementing and adapting the practice to highly diverse local/regional/national realities.

The following two graphics (no. 1 and 2) show respectively the upscaling process, i.e. the transition from the MaCE model to the COSI.ed model (which will be described and discussed in more detail later in the report) and the original MaCE model, which was the reference for the development of regional/national models in the COSI.ed project by all the national teams and ultimately the creation of the European COSI.ed model.

Graph 1. The relationship between the original MaCE model
and the model created in the COSI.ed project.

Graph 2. The original MaCE Model.

From a theoretical view, the MaCE Model was based on **four pillars** or **cornerstones** (Gravesen et al, 2021):

- Co-constructed and Socio-Cultural component – in the COSI.ed Model it was renamed to Co-creation;
- Indirect Approach (IA) (see: Moshuus & Eide, 2016);
- Equality Literacy framework/tool (EQL) which is in the COSI.ed Model referred to as Equality Literacy or Equality Literacy Framework (see: Stuart et al., 2020);
- Importance of Context – in the COSI.ed Model referred to as Context[3].

Those cornerstones formed both its methodological underpinnings and translated into practical applications in work and research. This model was built on the assumption that educational staff and students co-create as part of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) working side by side, learning together, and developing knowledge and competence. The knowledge created in this process was intended to counteract the marginalisation of young people at risk of dropping out of school.

The effectiveness of the MaCE model and its relevance to the challenges of supporting the social and educational inclusion of marginalised young people, proven by the research, has given rise to reflection on the possibility of upscaling it in a subsequent project. As highlighted in the grant application, the COSI.ed project aligns with European Union priorities by upscaling the proven MaCE model into a new and improved model applicable across local, regional, and European contexts. This enhanced COSI.ed model focuses on implementing an effective methodology to address social disadvantage, Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET), facilitate smoother youth transitions, and reintegrate young people with drop-out experience back into the educational system (Co-created Education through Social Inclusion (COSI.ed). Detailed Description of the Project, 2020, p. 54).
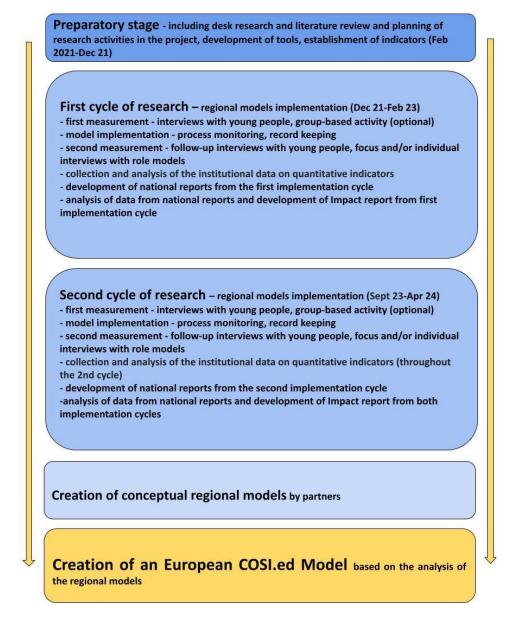
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[3] More information on the MaCE model's cornerstones can be found in: Gravesen, D. T., Stuart, K., Bunting, M., Mikkelsen, S. H., & Frostholm, P. H. (Eds.). (2021). *Combatting marginalisation by co-creating education: methods, theories and practices from the perspectives of young people*. Emerald Group Publishing.

2.1 Methodological context of the COSI.ed project

The European COSI.ed model presented in this report is one of the final outcomes of the 2021-2024 action research[4] carried out as part of the research activities of the COSI.ed project. The research process which led to the creation of the European COSI.ed Model consisted of several stages shown in the graph no. 2.

Preparatory stage - including desk research and literature review and planning of research activities in the project, development of tools, establishment of indicators (Feb 2021-Dec 21)

First cycle of research – regional models implementation (Dec 21-Feb 23)
- first measurement - interviews with young people, group-based activity (optional)
- model implementation - process monitoring, record keeping
- second measurement - follow-up interviews with young people, focus and/or individual interviews with role models
- collection and analysis of the institutional data on quantitative indicators
- development of national reports from the first implementation cycle
- analysis of data from national reports and development of Impact report from first implementation cycle

Second cycle of research – regional models implementation (Sept 23-Apr 24)
- first measurement - interviews with young people, group-based activity (optional)
- model implementation - process monitoring, record keeping
- second measurement - follow-up interviews with young people, focus and/or individual interviews with role models
- collection and analysis of the institutional data on quantitative indicators (throughout the 2nd cycle)
- development of national reports from the second implementation cycle
-analysis of data from national reports and development of Impact report from both implementation cycles

Creation of conceptual regional models by partners

Creation of an European COSI.ed Model based on the analysis of the regional models

Graph 2. Research process which led to the creation of the European COSI.ed Model.

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[4] The broader methodological context of the project is described in the Output 4.3 Impact report available at: https://cosied.eu/.

The research covered project participants from the two main target groups:

- **Role models** which were teachers, educators, university students and/or other educational staff (taking into account the diversity of contexts and systems in the project partner countries);

- **Young people at risk of social exclusion** – learners from various educational institutions.

The institutions where the COSI.ed project was implemented vary due to the different structures of the education and social system in the partner countries. In most countries the project was delivered in schools (e.g. public primary schools in Poland, second chance school in Portugal, vocational upper secondary school in Norway, and Preparatory Basic Education and Training institution in Denmark) organised within or outside the conventional education system (e.g. institutions run by non-governmental organisations in Spain). Regardless, the project targeted institutions that work with groups of children and young people at risk of dropping out of the education system.
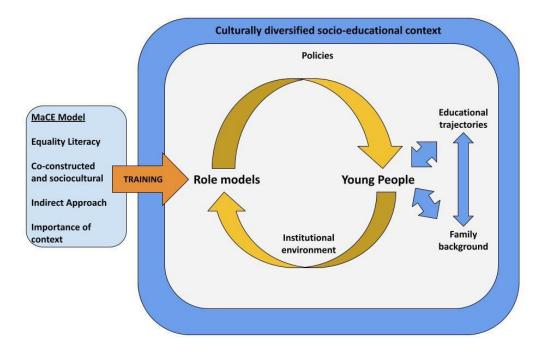
The project used a combination of data collection methods and tools, with a predominance of qualitative methods (i.e. qualitative individual and group interviews), but other techniques such as surveying and observation, desk research, analysis of existing data were also utilised.

Research activities in every country were based on the dynamics of the research work correlated with the opportunities conditioned by the diverse factors of the places and environments in which the research was conducted.

The graph below illustrates how the implementation process in all the institutions was constructed considering the elements of this process and their interrelationships. At the same time, this diagram omits the research layer, focusing on the implementation and upscaling of the working model.

Graph 3. Implementation of the regional working models in national contexts within COSI.ed project.

2.2. The methodological assumptions of the report

The concept of the report is derived from strong collaboration with practitioners and relates to research for practice and social change. For this reason, we can refer to it as action research.
Our inquiry-based model development process was based on the following questions[5] and assumptions:

- Analyse: "What we have as a basis…."
- Ask questions: "We think…."
- Research: "We search, investigate..."
- Hypothesis/thesis: "We predict..."
- Verification: "We try, do..."
- Research-oriented process in the practice: "We observe, we check..."
- Explanation: "We explain, tell..."
- Ask new questions: "We wonder..."

Models have always played an important role in science and practice and are still used to test and predict, for example, a process, situation, outcome, or collection of information. Usually, the models are quite general and not accurate or precise. This is also what our COSI.ed Model is, because, with generic elements, each country can adapt the model to its own context and challenges due to differences in practice. It is important

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[5] Based on example from: https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/creating-your-own-science-process-model-example

that, based on this model, practitioners test their actions and are ready to refine them as new data and new challenges emerge.

Our design COSI.ed Model provides a visual way of linking theory and practice. The elements of the model, being simplified representations of reality, make it possible to develop action concepts and then implement the steps to realise them through practice.

Our model plays a key role in the knowledge-building process and shows how the knowledge generated in the COSI.ed project can be useful for practice. A COSI.ed Model is a representation of the ideas and processes used to describe and explain the phenomena that occur in a relationship directed towards the cooperation of educators (role models) and young people in specific places and times.

The COSI.ed Model is qualitative, and inductive and uses verbal and graphical description to represent the findings from the bottom-up approach. This starts from observations followed by the identification of patterns and factors, which leads to the generation of conclusions (Borner et al., 2012).

The COSI.ed Model is characterised by a continuity of theoretical and methodological approaches. Despite it was built on the common assumptions and concepts from the MaCE project, in the process of its implementation in different and highly heterogeneous contexts, common assumptions have been subjected to different processes - changes in perception, understanding, re-signification, repositioning of elements and redefining interrelationship. This resulted in five regional working models from which a European COSI.ed Model was developed. Drawing on desk research, data and national models' analysis, and interviews with practitioners and young people, we refine the co-creation process by embedding it in the tenets of humanising methodology (Reyes et al. 2021).

3. The process of creating the European COSI.ed Model

Theoretical-practical grounding of the process of creating the European transversal model focuses on its components in order to find points, elements, and areas that can be autonomously configured and adapted to different contexts and situations. Given the diversity of national models and country contexts, as well as the need to design a universal model, and to pay attention to its applicability to practice in diverse contexts, conditions, and situations, we describe the development of this process below.

The process of creating a universal model was based on several stages that reflect communication and collaboration with practitioners, students and at some level politicians, analysis of thematic literature, discussion in national teams, and creation of regional models with a description of the concept.

The following steps have been taken (at the national partner level) to enable the preparation of the transversal European COSI.ed Model:

(1) National teams conducted analyses on how the MaCE model was applied within their regional and institutional settings. This led to the adaptation and creation of modifications, leading to the development of five regional COSI.ed models.

(2) At the consortium meeting of the project, held in November 2023, visual representations of the regional models (drafts) were showcased and deliberated upon. It was suggested that the models be further discussed with national Collaborative Competence Groups.

(3) The Polish team has provided a Regional Model Template. This template encompasses a comprehensive description of the model creation process, details about the target audience, operational definitions of key terms, elucidation of interrelationships among terms, potential applications of the model within national contexts, as well as insightful comments, suggestions and final graphic version of the model.

(4) Each national team has submitted their regional models along with their corresponding descriptions, encapsulated in the Regional Model Template, to the designated team overseeing this aspect of the project. The culmination of their analysis is manifested in the form of a package of five regional reports, which comprehensively analyse the regional COSI.ed models. These reports have been published separately as Output 4.1 available at: https://cosied.eu/.

The Polish team responsible for this work package, analysed the regional models (both graphic and verbal descriptions) as a matrix for creating a framework for a universal, international model concept. With meticulous attention to detail, the diverse contexts, and categories evident within each national model were explored. Analysis delved deeply into the intricacies of these models, aiming to grasp the nuanced representations of various factors. The European COSI.ed Model was then sent for reflection and discussion to the national teams, who sent their feedback. The model was also discussed at the International CCG in April 2024.

Below, a comprehensive overview of the categories that have been identified in graphic versions of regional models is presented in Table 1.

CATEGORIES	REGIONAL MODELS				
	Norwegian Model	Danish Model	Polish Model	Portuguese Model	Spanish model
Young person	+ referred as youth/child	+ referred as student	+ referred as young person	+ referred as youth	+ referred as youth
Equality Literacy	+	+	+	+	+
Indirect Approach	+	+	+	+	+
Co-creation	+	+	+	+	+
Context	+	+ includes: family situation, individual challenges, educational trajectory, cultural, educational-systemic contexts and socio-economic background	+	+ includes: actor's context, policies, practices, education and social	+
Policies	-	+	-	+	-
Relations/Quality relationship	-	+	+	-	-
Specific country-related categories	-	Place, Culture, Community	Collaboration, Participation, Quality relationship, Role model, Assets approach, Climate of institution	Practices, Education, Social, Training, Collaborative Competence Groups, Interviews/Conversation, Reflection, Design, Opportunity, Dialogue, Voice, Listening, Storytelling, Redesign, Action, Participation, Parity, Synergy, Communication, Belonging, Mutual understanding	Emotional engagement

Table 1. Matrix of categories included in the graphic versions of regional models.

The Polish team embarked on a two-pronged approach:

1) extraction of the key components, those identified by a majority of themes (mainly in line with the cornerstones of the original MaCE model);

2) identification and introduction of new components embedded within the context and process.

The analysis of categories identified the repeated components that were common to all regional models. These components were considered baseline and at the same time universal, context-proof elements and were therefore straightforwardly incorporated into the European COSI.ed Model.

Moreover, the additional components were introduced to the European COSI.ed Model. These were either taken from the regional models or added from outside this repertoire, as components that better convey the meaning of the model - capturing the relationships between its elements or the important features contained in the verbal layer of the regional models' descriptions based on the content analysis. Special attention was paid to youth-adult relations understood in the process of communication and cooperation, the role model concept, and assets-based methods of work.

Following the extraction and identification phases, the draft model underwent a thorough discussion. The arguments for its success were analysed, as well as the shortcomings and challenges that working with the model in practice might entail.

To visualise the importance of the centrality of the youth-adult relationship in this model and to nullify relations of power, hierarchy, and adultism, a component was added in a central place: Youth-Adults Relations in Context. This element, in the COSI.ed project refers particularly to the relationship between young people and role models.
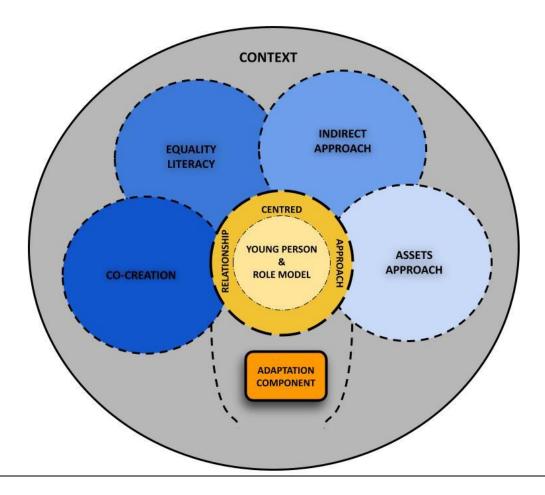
Following an internal discussion and conceptual refinement of the draft model within the Polish team, the proposed draft model was further developed. This process culminated in the version presented below, which was subsequently disseminated alongside this report to project country teams for their feedback.
In the section below you will find the final European COSI.ed Model as amended and supplemented, as well as descriptions of its components.

4. Presentation and explanation of the European COSI.ed Model

4.1. European COSI.ed Model. Graphic version

Graph 4. European COSI.ed model. Graphic version.

4.2. Description of the concepts and interrelations

The European COSI.ed model (Graph 4) is made up of components that can be shifted, modified, and modelled, depending on the context. It consists of movable elements that can overlap and intermingle, and their positioning is determined by the context, situation, and other factors of local, regional, and national nature. One of the components is empty (unnamed, called: Adaptation Component (marked with an orange button) gives the possibility to include in the model additional element(s) that seem to be essential in each context.

The dotted line surrounding the circles signifies a symbiotic or relational link, implying the absence of rigid boundaries while acknowledging certain constraints on specific phenomena or domains. The model's

components exhibit an interwoven nature, as evidenced by our research, which highlights their synergistic effects. For instance, when the Assets Approach is implemented in conjunction with the Indirect Approach, in that the presence of non-directive, equality-based communication facilitates the identification and amplification of strengths. Concurrently, these two components can function independently, and the presence of one is not a prerequisite for the existence of the remaining elements within the model.

The COSI.ed Model is based on the concept of the MaCE model, as it incorporates its 4 pillars:

1) **Context** (in the MaCE model named as Importance of Context)
2) **Co-Creation** (in the MaCE model referred to as Co-constructed and Socio-Cultural component),
3) **Equality Literacy (Framework) (EQL)** and
4) **Indirect Approach (IA)**.

At the same time, it brings in 3 further pillars, which complement and complete the thinking and acting directed towards social inclusion:

5) **Assets Approach (AA)**,
6) (Youth-Adults) **Relationship-Centred Approach (RCA)** located in the centre of the model and labelled as (Young Person & Role Model), and,
7) **Adaptation Component** – empty (unnamed) piece.

The blue quasi-petals contain three concepts taken from the MaCE model which illustrates a conceptual foundation and continuation of the philosophy of thinking about practice. One additional light blue petal (Assets Approach) complements the methodology of building the rapport between youth and adults located in the centre of the model represented by a yellow circle.

The entire European COSI.ed model is embedded in the context (socio-cultural, educational, political, situational, etc.). The understanding of the different components of the model, both at the level of its regional applications and at a commonalised level, shared by all partners, is presented below.

1. CONTEXT[6] describes the elements that make up the variety of circumstances and factors in which the model is implemented. These elements have been listed as important determinants of the model implementation process, but their configuration and relevance depend on the local/regional/national context, as well as on the particular characteristics of the institutions, systems, communities and actors involved.

Building on Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model, these factors encompass the micro level, including individual challenges, educational trajectory, and family situation. Additionally, they extend to the meso and macro levels, encompassing socio-economic background, cultural context, and the systemic-educational context. In this way, they show the process of building relationships and/or rapport in the context of an institution operating within a broad social framework.

Although the term context appears in all regional models, the emphasis in defining this concept is distributed differently.

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[6] In regional models described through terms such as: socio-economic background, cultural context and systemic-educational context, time, space, place, actor's context, policies in youth and education sectors.

A content analysis of the descriptions of the regional models shows that the context might be understood as: 1) the broad social context: policies, socio-economic situation, cultural, regional, and historical conditions; 2) the young person's local circumstances e.g. community, school, family, or social welfare system contexts; 3) individual situation and context of each young person in question.

Thus, the Norwegian model emphasises the multifaceted nature of the context. In it, we deal with both the context understood as a broad socio-political background and the student's individual context. The context brought by each young person is no less important than the external circumstances and needs to be understood and taken into consideration in all professional activities undertaken. Whereas, in the Danish model the importance of considering the socio-economic, family, educational, and health situation of the young person is emphasised. In contrast, in the Portuguese model, the context is divided into "actors' contexts" (youth, families, teachers, decision-makers) and "context of socio-educational practice" (methods, strategies, expected results). The Spanish model places the young person at the centre of the intervention. Their individual situation is analysed based on the EQL concept — both macro, meso, and micro factors influencing their functioning are taken into account. Finally, the Polish team refers to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1977) and includes factors at the micro level (individual challenges, educational path, family situation), meso level (socio-economic background) and macro level (cultural context, educational system).

Considering these various approaches, **the transversal European COSI.ed Model underscores the critical role of context in interventions with youth facing adversity. Young people engage in a dynamic interplay with their environment, actively extracting resources that facilitate their development.** Consequently, a thorough understanding of the contextual landscape is paramount for the design and implementation of any effective working models aimed at supporting youth at risk.

2. CO-CREATION plays a key role in all regional models, but its interpretation and application vary according to the specific educational contexts and desired outcomes. Understanding the differences and similarities is crucial for the effective implementation of co-creation within the universal European model.

While all models emphasise collaboration and shared knowledge construction, key differences emerge in the specific roles of stakeholders and the intended outcomes.

The models differ in the extent of co-creation envisioned. The Danish model focuses on the co-creation of teaching methods within schools, while the Norwegian model emphasises the co-creation of knowledge within communities of practice. There are also variations in the primary objectives of co-creation. The Spanish model emphasises the construction of new knowledge through transdisciplinary collaboration, while the Polish model highlights fostering equal partnerships and bridging contextual factors with intervention approaches. The Portuguese model underlines co-creation potential to strengthen positive relationships and promote more balanced power dynamics between young people and adults.

Based on the assumptions common to the understanding of co-creation, in the European COSI.ed Model **the importance of social interaction and context in this process of co-creating are highlighted. Knowledge is seen as constructed through social interactions, with young people actively contributing their experiences and perspectives**. Consequently, the European COSI.ed Model **advocates for a shift from traditional hierarchical structures. Young people** are viewed as **active participants in decision-making and**

solution-finding. Co-creation is not merely theoretical. It is intended to be applied in practice to improve educational experiences and support young people.

3. EQUALITY LITERACY (EQL) serves as a cornerstone for understanding the experiences and opportunities of young people in all the regional models examined. However, each model emphasised different aspects of the framework to address the specific needs of their youth populations.

A common thread across the models is **the focus on understanding the interplay between individual and social factors that shape educational opportunities**. The EQL framework acknowledges the influence of context (family, culture, socioeconomic background), personal experiences, and societal structures on young people's educational trajectories. This understanding allows professionals to **move beyond individual blame for educational struggles and identify systemic issues that contribute to marginalisation**.

However, the regional models highlight the various application aspects of the EQL framework. It can be seen as a way of:

1) promoting inclusive education: the Danish model utilises EQL as a tool for analysing student experiences and developing inclusive pedagogical practices;
2) empowering youth voices: the Portuguese model emphasises using EQL to facilitate dialogue with young people, ensuring their voices are heard and inform the design of educational activities;
3) combating stereotypes: the Spanish model highlights EQL's role in dismantling stereotypes and prejudices that hinder young people at risk or facing social exclusion;
4) unveiling mechanisms of marginalisation: the Polish model draws on Bernstein's work to utilise EQL in identifying and dismantling mechanisms that reproduce social inequalities within educational institutions.
5) contributing to social justice: the Norwegian model underlines EQL's potential to enhance the awareness, choice and agency of students, teachers, school leaders, and education authorities, which empowers them to contribute to social equity in the classrooms and the school system. Overall, the EQL framework serves as **a powerful tool for promoting social justice in education** and therefore it is an indispensable component of the European COSI.ed Model. By fostering critical reflection on power dynamics, context, and individual agency, the framework **empowers professionals to design interventions that address the root causes of educational disadvantage and promote more equitable learning experiences for all young people**.

4. INDIRECT APPROACH (IA) is understood in the European COSI.ed model **as a way of building trust and understanding in the context of the relationship between youth and role models**.
All models highlight the importance of effective communication in the Indirect Approach. It's not simply about gathering information, but about creating a space where young people feel comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives without imposing ideas or leading conversation. This focus on communication is central to building trust and rapport, a supportive environment where young people feel empowered to tell their own stories.

The concept of the Indirect Approach, while present in all the national models examined, takes on slightly different interpretations and applications.

The Norwegian and Portuguese models see it as a broader communication style that can be used in various interactions, while the Spanish model views it as a specific interviewing method. Similarly, the Danish model

uses it to build confidence and keep students engaged, while the Spanish model emphasises understanding the young person's social context.

The models also suggest different techniques for implementing the Indirect Approach. The Polish model emphasises "happenstance" (Moshuus & Eide, 2016, p. 1) – unplanned moments that allow for deeper connection and discovery of the young person's meanings. Conversely, the Spanish model focuses on active listening and avoiding leading questions to ensure the young person guides the conversation and narrates their own story.

Despite these variations, all models recognise the value of the Indirect Approach in fostering trust and communication with young people. By **giving young people control over the conversation and encouraging them to tell their own stories, the indirect approach empowers them and validates their voices**.

Understanding the specific nuances of the approach within each national context is crucial for maximising its effectiveness in youth support programmes. This allows practitioners to use the Indirect Approach to not only build relationships but also tailor their interventions to address the specific needs and experiences of the young people they serve.

5. ASSETS APPROACH (AA) moves beyond a deficit-focused lens, instead **emphasising co-creation, collaboration, and exploration of an individual's entire capabilities and the holistic context** of their lives. Similar to RCA, AA emphasises context and prioritises gathering a comprehensive picture of the young person's life. This includes their skills, talents, strengths, experiences, and the environment they navigate. It highlights the importance of a quality relationship as a way to discover assets and values of multidimensional co-creation. It emphasises the importance of not only working with young people but also with their families, and other relevant actors, which in turn fosters a sense of empowerment and shared ownership of the development assets-based process. It introduces co-creation in activities undertaken with and for young people.

AA aligns with the RCA concept of synergy, where collaboration between young people and adults leads to a more impactful outcome than individual efforts. Its focus on respecting young people's rights **translates directly to the AA's emphasis on voice and participation**. **Young people are encouraged to actively participate in identifying their strengths, setting goals, and shaping their development**. It allows for a clear understanding of the young person's context, strengths, and aspirations, manifested in self-objective-setting.

Identified components, such as **Synergy, Relations, Voices, Participation, and Communication** are likely reflected in national models because they represent **core principles for fostering positive youth development**. Furthermore, the AA recognises the influence of culture, practices, policies, and the community, mirroring RCA's focus on the context.

By integrating AA with RCA and other components of the European COSI.ed Model, practitioners can create a powerful framework for empowering young people, fostering positive youth development, and achieving the goal of preventing disengagement from the education system or others.

6. RELATIONSHIP-CENTRED APPROACH (RCA) foregrounds the centrality of the relationship between young people and adults (role models) (Jones, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2006). This approach transcends the mere existence of a connection, emphasising the quality of the interaction as a critical factor.

The model proposes that the relationship between youth and adults is influenced by various contextual factors, including individual, institutional, community, cultural, and political factors, which influence the interrelationships or dynamics of the relationship and contribute to its overall effectiveness.

The COSI.ed Model **underscores the significance of a high-quality relationship between young people and adults**. Beyond simply having a connection, it emphasises fostering a relationship characterised by co-creation and collaboration. This focus aligns with the importance of respecting young people's rights and ensuring ethical interactions.

Within the COSI.ed project we managed to distinguish between two key dimensions that contribute to the quality of the youth-adult relationship:

- Processual dimension: This dimension refers to the day-to-day interactions that form the foundation of the relationship. It encompasses elements such as emotional support, responsiveness to the young person's needs and perspectives and fostering their autonomy. Positive interactions within this dimension contribute to a healthy and supportive relationship.

- Structural dimension: This dimension focuses on the broader environment surrounding the interactions. Factors such as working conditions for adults, physical infrastructure, and formal requirements (e.g., class size, and staff qualifications) all fall within the structural dimension. While these factors may not be readily modifiable, the model acknowledges their influence on the relationship and encourages consideration of their impact.

The RCA, **underscores the importance of maintaining professionalism and honouring boundaries,** with a goal of maximising the effectiveness of interactions. Cultivating and nurturing positive relationships over time equips educators and mentors to profoundly influence the development of young people. **Prioritising the cultivation of constructive interpersonal dynamics offers a crucial framework for professionals working with youth.**

7. ADAPTATION COMPONENT is an element that can be **important in the context of local, national, and regional conditions**. It is an element that makes it possible to work with this model in a way that is appropriate to the context of relationships, work, action, and communication, depending on the specific socio-cultural, linguistic, and other contexts. This element allows the model to be **effectively adapted to the situation, time, and place** of the activities to be carried out.

Two features of this component might be distinguished. Firstly, **contextual flexibility and sensitivity** which refer to the assumption that the COSI.ed Model allows for its adaptation to specific socio-cultural, linguistic, and other factors relevant to local, national, and regional settings. In essence, this flexibility enables practitioners to tailor the model to the specificities of relationships, work environment, activities, and communication culture of each institutional setting where the model is being implemented. Thus, it is possible through this component to draw attention to what seems important, and crucial for the implementation of the model and the effectiveness of the cooperation of all the participating parties.

Secondly, the COSI.ed model's strength lies in its **adaptability to specific needs,** ensuring its effectiveness in diverse situations. By acknowledging the importance of specific circumstances, practitioners can identify the most crucial aspects for successful implementation within their unique setting. For example, one institution working with young people might prioritise model aspects focusing on peer learning, while another might

emphasise mentorship. This fosters effective cooperation based on the model's core principles while acknowledging the nuances of each environment.

All components of the European COSI.ed Model, translate into concrete attitudes and behaviours that condition the building of a quality relationship between young people and staff in educational institutions. They provide clear guidance for those working with young people, as well as for policymakers, whose decisions create the context within which given processes become possible.

The core message of the model is that to counteract the educational and social exclusion of young people, we must aim at building an equal relationship (IA, EQL), understanding the world of marginalised groups (IA, EQL), providing them with a voice (EQL, IA), giving them agency (EQL), weakening structural mechanisms of marginalisation (EQL), building on and enhancing youth's strengths (AA), and building an institutional climate conducive to equality and social justice understood here as professional skills gathered around (Youth-Adults) Relationship-Centred Approach (RCA).

Important in this model is a relationship-centric approach (Jones, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2006), focused on the young person and role model, as well as an approach focused on their relationships in context.
All the elements in the model are relevant to understanding the process of relationship building, based on communication and participation leading to Co-Creation.
Hence process means: creating bonds, a climate of mutual respect, communication, and participation rituals so that everyone in the school/educational environment has a sense of community.
All elements of the model are interconnected, and intertwining, outlining important relationships and at the same time explaining the situation in which the role model and the young person communicate and cooperate.
What is universal in this model is the possibility to find connections between the elements that are coherent, and relevant to the process of co-creation and collaboration. The process is what is important here and so time, place, and space, as well as situationality and therefore context, play an important role in decoding and understanding this process.

The European COSI.ed Model is relevant because of its holistic approach considering educational trajectory, family situation, individual challenges, systemic-educational context, cultural context, and socio-economic background. At its core is the process of Youth-Adults Relationship.

5. European COSI.ed model's rationale, practical implications and limitations

Rationale & practical implications

The European COSI.ed Model's message has a universal dimension, but the model itself is aimed at policymakers and professionals, especially those working with and for young people at risk of social and educational exclusion.

It can be applied to all situations and actions supporting communication and work of young people with role models. It can be integrated into educational activities as a means of co-created education.
The model extends beyond mere theoretical constructs, offering pathways for action and transformative change within educational systems and youth support networks. It can serve to:

- **improve collaboration through participation and co-creation** – by embracing principles of participation and co-creation embedded within the model, stakeholders can foster a collaborative ethos characterised by mutual respect, shared decision-making, and collective problem-solving. This collaborative approach not only enhances the effectiveness of interventions but also cultivates a sense of ownership and empowerment among all participants, driving persistent outcomes;
- **address educational inequalities through relationship building and co-creation** – the model provides a framework for identifying and addressing root causes of educational inequalities through proactive relationship-building and inclusive co-creation processes. By involving diverse stakeholders, including marginalised youth, in the design and implementation of educational initiatives, practitioners can tailor solutions that are responsive to the unique needs and contexts of those they aim to serve;
- **engage young people** – central to the model's ethos is the active involvement of young people in collaborative endeavours aimed at improving their own well-being and educational outcomes, using their assets. By empowering young individuals as equal partners in decision-making processes, practitioners can amplify their voices, agency, and sense of belonging, fostering a culture of youth-led innovation and advocacy;
- **enhance young people's sense of participation, agency, and self-esteem** – through intentional engagement strategies informed by the model, practitioners can nurture young people's sense of participation, agency, and self-esteem. By validating their lived experiences, strengths, and aspirations, practitioners create opportunities for young individuals to actively shape their educational journeys, bolstering their confidence and resilience in the face of adversity;
- **strengthen interpersonal relationships between young people and practitioners (role models)** – the model emphasises the importance of nurturing supportive and trusting relationships between young people and practitioners acting as role models. By fostering authentic connections characterised by empathy, respect, and reciprocity, practitioners can serve as positive influences in young individuals' lives, guiding them toward personal growth and success;
- **foster the reduction and transcendence of pre-existing social inequalities** – through its emphasis on equity and social justice, the model serves as a catalyst for dismantling entrenched social inequalities within educational institutions. By confronting systemic barriers and biases, practitioners can create inclusive environments that honour the diverse identities and experiences of all learners, thereby promoting equitable opportunities for academic and personal development;

- **allow for discussion** between researchers, practitioners, young people and other actors, and stakeholders – to communicate their ideas, concepts, and even doubts, in order to gain a deeper understanding of cooperation and co-creation processes leading to drop-out reduction;
- **contribute to the development of educational practice and policies** – by operationalising the model's principles within the educational practice and policy-making processes, stakeholders can drive systemic reforms aligned with principles of equality and social justice. By advocating for inclusive policies, allocating resources equitably, and promoting culturally responsive pedagogies, practitioners can effectuate lasting change that benefits all members of the educational community.

In essence, the model serves fostering collaborative partnerships, empowering marginalised youth, and advancing equity and social justice within educational systems. By harnessing its transformative potential, stakeholders can work collectively towards building inclusive environments where every young person has the opportunity to thrive and fulfil their potential.

We recommend using the COSI.ed Model because it can become a bridge between researchers, practitioners and young people, and it can also support collaboration and make it effective in the following areas:

- visualising and imagining what is difficult to see without the matrix, as the model can help to imagine certain contextual and relational aspects,
- developing young people's creativity, agency, and capacity (Bolger et al. 2021),
- acting as a framework to support different groups in communication and collaboration based on common analytical categories,
- acting as a tool to make sense of collaboration,
- acting as a tool that can be flexibly adapted to specific tasks and activities (Pasmore et al., 2009).

Limitations

One of the primary limitations pertains to the constrained time frame available for comprehensive testing of the model across diverse environments within our partner countries, partially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The essence of our proposed European COSI.ed Model lies in its ability to establish an environment where the young person takes centre stage, supported by a robust role model framework, fostering their development, and ensuring a sense of safety and belonging. However, the challenge arises in foreseeing how effectively the model will facilitate communication and collaboration between the young person and the designated role model.

Despite our best efforts, predicting the COSI.ed Model's efficacy in meeting these crucial needs remains elusive at this stage of development. It is imperative to acknowledge the inherent complexity and fluidity of human interaction dynamics, which can vary significantly depending on contextual factors such as cultural nuances, individual personalities, and situational dynamics.

However, if (which is difficult to predict at this stage) the COSI.ed Model does not meet the needs for effective communication and collaboration between the young person and the role model, adjustments and modifications will need to be applied according to the context.
The presented COSI.ed Model addresses existing contextual differences that allow its adaptations. However, these adaptations must be finely attuned to the specific contextual intricacies encountered within each partner country/institution, ensuring that the model remains responsive to the evolving needs and dynamics of the young individuals and their role models, working co-creatively in a concrete institutional

environment. Reaction time and thus the efficiency of the impact depends on the awareness and mindfulness of the actors: role models, young people, and others.

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List of graphs and tables

Graph 1. The relationship between the original MaCE model and the model to be created in the COSI.ed project.

Graph 3. Implementation of the regional working models in national contexts within COSI.ed project.

Graph 2. The original MaCE Model.

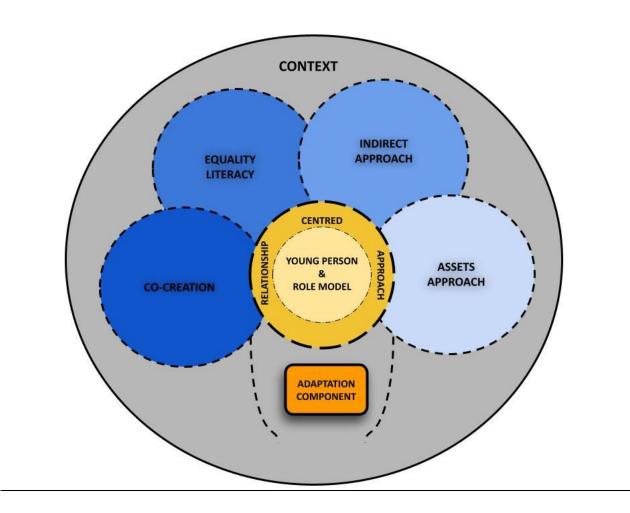**Graph 4.** European COSI.ed model. Graphic version.

Table 1. Matrix of categories included in the graphic versions of regional models.

ANNEX

European COSI.ed Model