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

European COSI.ed Model

The project *Co-created Education through Social Inclusion* (COSI.ed) aims to upscale successful practices from the MaCE - *Marginalisation and Co-created Education* project in response to youth unemployment and early school leaving rates in the EU. The COSI.ed project was implemented, between 2020-2024, in different institutions, including preparatory basic education and training institutions in Denmark, vocational upper secondary schools in Norway, public primary schools within youth educational centres in Poland, second chance schools in Portugal, and non-governmental organisations in Spain.
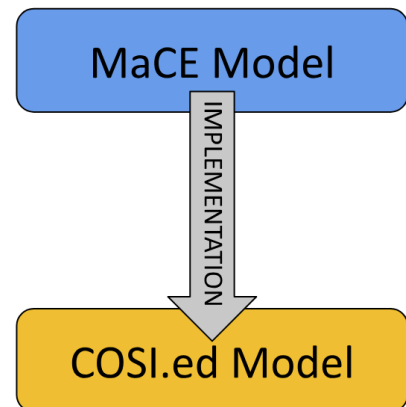
Upscaling of the MaCE model into COSI.ed model.
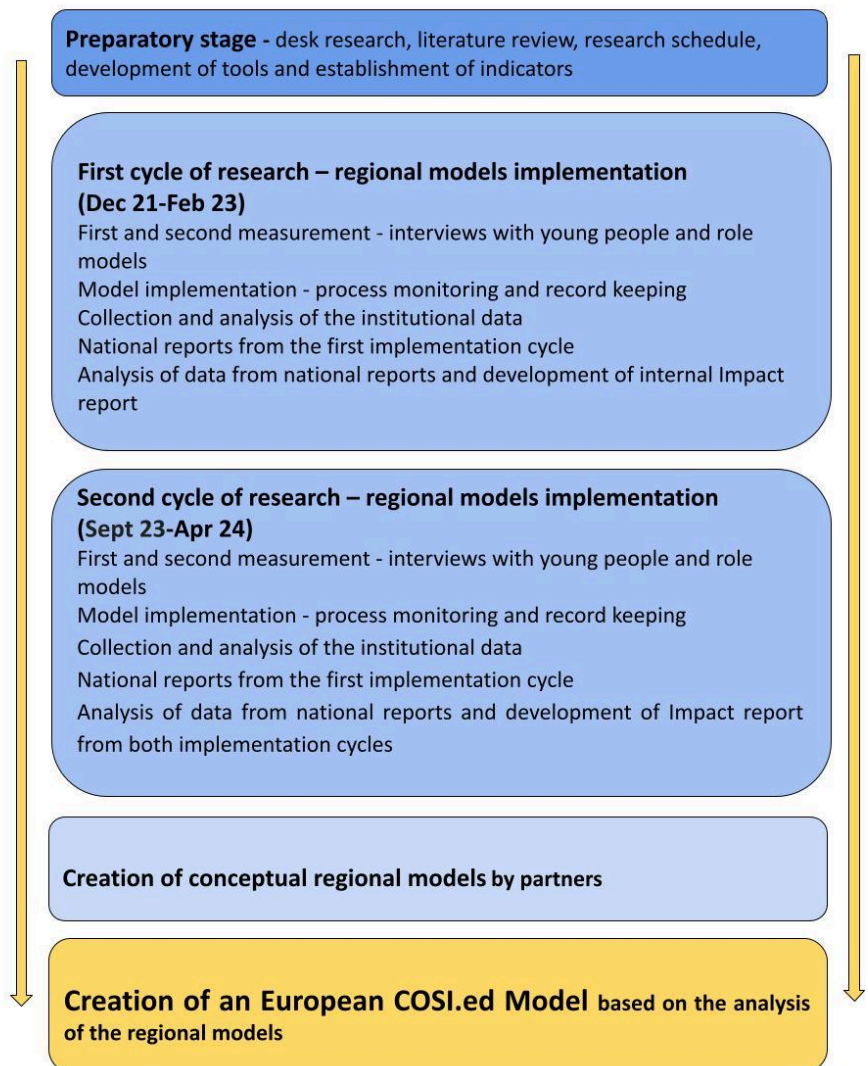
WHAT'S AT STAKE?

This enhanced and universal COSI.ed Model focuses on implementing an effective methodology to address social disadvantage, including Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET), facilitate smoother youth transitions, and reintegrate young people at risk of ELET or with drop-out experience back into the educational system. 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.

KEY MESSAGE

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

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.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

Preparatory stage - desk research, literature review, research schedule, development of tools and establishment of indicators

First cycle of research – regional models implementation (Dec 21-Feb 23)
First and second measurement - interviews with young people and role models
Model implementation - process monitoring and record keeping
Collection and analysis of the institutional data
National reports from the first implementation cycle
Analysis of data from national reports and development of internal Impact report

Second cycle of research – regional models implementation (Sept 23-Apr 24)
First and second measurement - interviews with young people and role models
Model implementation - process monitoring and record keeping
Collection and analysis of the institutional data
National reports from the first 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

Research process in COSI.ed project.

OUR GOALS

COSI.ed Model can serve to:

1. **Improve collaboration through participation** fostering an ethos characterised by mutual respect, shared decision-making, and collective problem-solving. This not only enhances the effectiveness of interventions but also cultivates a sense of ownership and empowerment among all participants;

2. **Address educational inequalities** providing a framework for identifying and addressing root causes of inequalities so that practitioners can tailor solutions that are responsive to the unique needs and contexts of those they aim to serve;

3. **Engage young people** – active involvement of young people in collaborative endeavours aimed at improving their own well-being and educational outcomes, using their assets;

4. **Enhance young people's sense of participation**, agency, and self-esteem through intentional engagement strategies informed by the model;

5. **Strengthen interpersonal relationships** between young people and practitioners (role models);

6. **Foster the reduction and transcendence of pre-existing social inequalities;**

7. **Allow for discussion** between researchers, practitioners, young people and other actors, and stakeholders to communicate their ideas, concepts and to gain a deeper understanding of cooperation and co-creation processes leading to drop-out reduction;

8. **Contribute to the development of educational practice and policies by advocating for inclusive policies,** allocating resources equitably, and promoting culturally responsive pedagogies, practitioners and policymakers can effectuate lasting change that benefits all members of the educational community.

ABOUT THE MODEL

The model outlines the new dimensions of working with youth at risk of social exclusion, emphasizing indirect communication, equality, co-creation, and focus on assets empowerment. The implementation process has demonstrated that this approach fosters relationships, which are a crucial element for effectively supporting young people facing adversity in challenging circumstances. The concept is derived from strong collaboration with practitioners and relates to research for practice and social change.
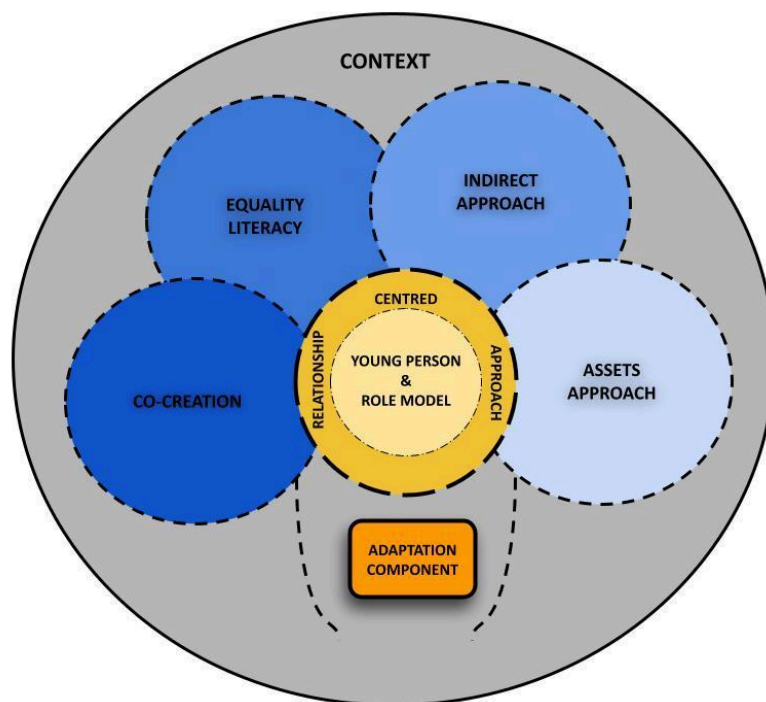
European COSI.ed Model. Graphic version.

COMPONENTS

Context

The COSI.ed project acknowledges that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work for assisting young people who are struggling in school. The key lies in understanding the context, which encompasses the unique set of circumstances surrounding each situation. COSI.ed recognizes that young people and role models are constantly interacting with their environment which influences their interactions. Deep understanding of this context is crucial for designing effective interventions. By considering all these underlying factors, COSI.ed aims to provide the best possible support for young people facing challenges, as well as the conditions for its implementation.

Adaptation component

facilitates its flexible application across diverse socio-cultural contexts, enabling tailored approaches to relationship-building, work, action, and communication. It offers clear guidance for professionals and policymakers, ensuring that interventions are effectively adapted to specific situations, times, and places within educational settings.

Co-creation

is a collaborative process based on shared knowledge construction, where the active participation of youth in decision-making and solution-finding is advocated, aiming to enhance educational experiences and provide effective support. It strengthens positive relationships and promotes more balanced power dynamics between young people and adults.

Equality Literacy (EQL)

serves as a foundational framework for understanding the diverse experiences and opportunities of young people. At its core, EQL focuses on comprehending the intersection of individual and social factors influencing educational opportunities, acknowledging contexts like family, culture, and socioeconomic backgrounds. It serves as a tool for promoting inclusive education, amplifying youth voices, combating stereotypes, unveiling mechanisms of marginalization, and empowering stakeholders to contribute to social justice within educational settings. Overall, EQL is integral to the COSI.ed Model, enabling professionals to design interventions that tackle systemic barriers and promote equitable learning experiences for all young people.

Indirect Approach (IA)

prioritises building trust and understanding between youth and role models through effective communication. It creates a supportive environment where young people feel empowered to share their experiences without imposed ideas, thus validating their voices and fostering deeper connections. While interpretations and applications vary among national models, the common goal is to empower young people by giving them control over the conversation and tailoring interventions to their specific needs and experiences.

Assets Approach (AA)

shifts focus from deficits to strengths, emphasizing collaboration and exploration of individuals' capabilities within their holistic life context. It prioritizes understanding young people's skills, talents, and environment, fostering empowerment through quality relationships with both young people and their families. Offers a comprehensive framework for positive youth development.

Relationship Centred Approach (RCA)

highlights the significance of the quality of interactions between young people and role models (adults), beyond mere connection. It acknowledges that various contextual factors influence the dynamics of this relationship, emphasizing the importance of co-creation, collaboration, and ethical interactions to foster a supportive environment. The COSI.ed project delineates two key dimensions, the processual and structural, which contribute to the quality of the youth-adult relationship, underscoring the importance of professionalism and suitable conditions for effective working with youth.