COSi.ed CO-created Education through Social Inclusion

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

The Impact of Co-Created Education on Social Inclusion of At-Risk Youth

Deliverable 04.3

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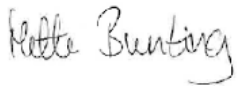
About the project

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)

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Project information

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Partnership

P1	University of South-Eastern Norway (USN)	Norway
P2	Vestfold and Telemark Fylkeskommune (TVFK)	Norway
P3	VIA University College (VIA)	Denmark
P4	FGU NORDVEST (FGU)	Denmark
P5	University of Warsaw (UW)	Poland
P6	Warsaw Centre for Socio-Educational Innovation and Training (WCIES)	Poland
P7	University of Porto- Centre for Research and Intervention in Education (CIIE)	Portugal
P8	AE20-Associaçao para a Educaçao de Segunda Oportunidade (AE20)	Portugal
P9	University of the Balearic Islands (UIB)	Spain
P10	EAPN-European Anti-Poverty Network Illes Balears (EAPN-Naüm)	Spain
P11	Sociedad Cooperativa de Iniciativa Social y Formación-JOVENT (JOVENT)	Spain

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Abstract (for dissemination)	This report is a deliverable (O4.3) produced under Work Package 4, titled "Developing the European COSI.edu Model." Its primary goal is to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the COSI.edu model on participants, including disadvantaged youth and educational staff, across seven implementing institutions in five European countries. The report encompasses a detailed analysis of the data gathered during the two cycles of the COSI.edu model's implementation.

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1. About the report

This report is an output (O4.3) created as part of work package 4 'Developing the European COSI.ed MODEL'. Its aim is to present a measurement of the impact and effectiveness of the application of the COSI.ed model on participants (youth, disadvantaged learners, educational staff) in 6 implementing institutions from 5 countries. It includes the analysis of the data collected in the two implementation cycles of the COSI.ed model, which took place: from December 21-February 22 to June-September 22 - the first cycle, and the second cycle - starting from October 2022 to November 2023. Publication is based on data collected by the national partners, using standardised tools, taking into account predefined procedures and indicators agreed. All common tools and procedures have been compiled and published as output O4.2 - *Toolkit COSI.ed. Set of instruments for data collection and the impact measurement available at: https://cosied.eu/documents.*

The following steps were taken to enable the impact analysis:
(1) A proposal for indicators to measure the effectiveness of the COSI.ed model in the implementing institutions was created - this was sent to all partners. Based on the feedback, common indicators collected by all partners and those indicators that will be collected only in some institutions were established[3].
(2) A data collection toolkit was developed (O4.2) including: guidelines for the interviews with young people, guidelines for group-based activity, guidelines for follow-up interviews with young people, guidelines for interviews with role models and a template for reporting indicators. In addition, the partners could collect other data from the existing datasets and administrative data as well as develop additional tools, e.g. an observation diary for data collection by role models (in Poland) or a survey with youth (Portugal) if necessary.
(3) Each partner (country team) collected data using the developed tools, according to an agreed procedure. However, due to unforeseen circumstances (pandemic, delays in the start of project activities, different organisation of the school year), it was not possible to implement activities in the same way in all countries, especially during the first implementation cycle.
(4) All partners have sent their national reports twice - separately after each cycle - to the team responsible for this output. Their compilation and analysis of the data gathered is presented in this report.
Our assumptions about the possible impact of the COSI.ed model on participants are based on academic knowledge based on research regarding: the process and mechanisms leading to early leaving from education and training (ELET), the risks and causes of school leaving (dropout) and the concept of school disengagement.
The literature review found that early school leaving among young people is a long-term complex process (Murray, 2006) linked to circumstances in their lives that increase the risk of their social exclusion. These circumstances consist of various risk factors occurring at individual (personal characteristics), environmental (family, immediate social environment), institutional (e.g. school climate) or systemic level (Clycq, Nouwen, & Timmerman, 2014; Dale, 2010). This process should

[3] For example, some of the implementing institutions did not have data on learners' educational achievements in the form of school grades (one of the proposed indicators). Instead of grades, it was decided to measure in these institutions how young people achieved their educational, training or work-related goals. In relation to young people attending mainstream schools, changes in attendance or school grades were measured, wherever possible.

therefore be considered from the perspective of the individual which means reconstructing the experiences that created the unique educational path of each learner. Hence, in the COSI.ed project the key assumption was to get to know the story of each learner from his or her perspective using the methodology (Indirect Approach and Equality Literacy) which gives the voice to those usually "unheard" and marginalised.

At the same time, the ELET process has been linked to the concept of school engagement, which indicates that higher levels of engagement reduce the risk of leaving school. School engagement is an attitude composed of three types of components: behavioural, emotional and cognitive (Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, F. C., & Paris, 2004). Thus, a student who can be described as engaged not only attends school regularly (behaviour), but also feels good about school (emotional aspect) and is convinced of the importance of participating in education (cognitive aspect). Conversely, a lack of school engagement will translate into behaviours such as high absenteeism, poor educational results, truancy, not doing homework. In the emotional aspect, the association of school, learning, teachers with negative feelings and experiences e.g. disliking school/teachers/schoolmates, feeling unsafe or excluded in school, feeling unsatisfied with learning. Cognitive aspects, in turn, may be associated among disengaged students with beliefs about the lack of meaningfulness of going to school or considering the knowledge acquired at school as useless. These beliefs contribute to lowered expectations towards school and educational and career aspirations.

We assume that due to the experiences with the COSI.ed model we are able to capture positive changes in the opinions, awareness, perceptions of young learners from our target groups about the education, school, teachers etc. We also hope to observe some behavioural changes indicative of increased school engagement, i.e. improved grades, reduced absenteeism. Although the latter may be difficult to conclusively prove as a direct effect of the COSI.ed model.

Based on the desk research and project objectives, the indicators regarding the impact of the COSI.ed model on participants – young people at risk of social and educational exclusion - are:

1) young people's perception of their relationship with teachers/educators and other educational staff;
2) educational and career aspirations of youth;
3) youth's perception of school/institution atmosphere and context;
4) (perception of) school performance and "doing in school", or achievement of educational/vocational goals in case of institutions outside the mainstream education.

With regard to the role models - educational staff - the indicators would be:

1) a sense of increased awareness and effectiveness of their own actions in relation to working with youth at risk of social exclusion;
2) getting to know and being able to apply in their daily work the new working model with its methods and tools;
3) changing attitudes, eliminating prejudices concerning the marginalised young people towards cultivating relationships built on equality, non-directivity, co-creation, better understanding of the student's perspective and context.

The report is structured as follows. Above, in Section 1, the COSI.ed project and the assumptions of the presented report were described. Section 2 is devoted to presenting the methodology, as well as the ethical issues and limitations associated with the research conducted. Section 3 presents the contextual conditions related to educational systems, as well as the relationship between educational exclusion, the ELET indicator and the characteristics of these systems. Sections 4 and 5 describe, in turn, the institutions where the working model was implemented and the target groups worked with during the first implementation cycle. Finally, section 6 presents the results of the analysis of the data collected, relating to: young people's perceptions of the institutional climate and context, their perception of changes in relationships and school performance as well as changes in their educational

and career aspirations. These perceptions are confronted with data on actual changes in educational performance, school attendance and the attainment of educational, training and work-related goals. The report ends with conclusions and recommendations. More detailed recommendations for education systems and institutions are contained in the publications (policy briefs) produced under Output 5.4. *POLICY BRIEF-Transformative Power of Inclusive Education to Prevent Early Leaving from Education and Training.*

2. Methodology, ethical issues and limitations

2.1. Purpose, object and scope

The research was conducted to present a measurement of the impact and effectiveness of the application of the COSI.ed model on participants (youth and educational staff) in 7 implementing institutions from 5 countries.
The aim of this research process is:

1. to see the implementation of COSI.ed project, discuss challenges that arise and help work out strategies to overcome these challenges;
2. to support partners in important joint efforts in implementing the model (via collaboration);
3. to analyse the learners' and teachers' opinions and to include their perspectives in recommendations.

This report is based on data collected by the national partners during two implementation cycles, using standardised tools (output O4.2), taking into account predefined procedures and indicators agreed (in collaborative approach).
The analytical work included in the scope of the research was carried out taking into account the following criteria:

1. effectiveness of conducted activities - as the degree to which the assumed objectives were achieved,
2. adequacy - understood as compliance of activities with the needs of participants and recipients, and adaptation of the form of work to the situation of Covid-19 (reduced mobility, remote working) and after Covid-19,
3. effectiveness - understood as the ratio of the expenses incurred to the results obtained.

The research covered project participants from the following groups of objects: teachers, learners, and other educational staff (taking into account the diversity of contexts and systems in the project partner countries) as well as products and data constituting project documentation and desk research. This report builds on available literature review in English and national languages of the partner countries). Field and desk research in the partner countries of the project implementation took place in different settings and with different time frames. The research process consisted of several stages, the same for both implementation cycles, with the exception of the preparatory phase, which only preceded the first cycle. The dates given are approximate, as the organisation of the cycles and the research process stages varied due to diversity of institutional settings, i.e. the organisation of the school/academic year, the calendars of the various institutions and staff involved, internal arrangements, etc.
First implementation cycle:

- ➔ 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 measurement - interviews with young people, group-based activity (optional) (Dec 21-Feb 22)
- ➔ Model implementation - process monitoring, record keeping (Dec 21/Feb22 - June 22/Sep 22)
- ➔ Second measurement - follow-up interviews with young people, focus and/or individual interviews with role models (May 22-September 22)
- ➔ Development of national reports from the first implementation cycle (June 22-November 22)
- ➔ Analysis of data from national reports and development of Impact report from first implementation cycle (Dec 22-Feb 23).

Second cycle of implementation:

- ➔ First measurement - interviews with young people, group-based activity (optional) (Oct 22-Feb 23)

- ➔ Model implementation - process monitoring, record keeping (Oct 22/Feb23 - June 23/Nov 23)
- ➔ Second measurement - follow-up interviews with young people, focus and/or individual interviews with role models (May 23-November 23)
- ➔ Development of national reports from the second implementation cycle (Oct 23-Dec 23)
- ➔ Analysis of data from national reports and development of Impact report from two implementation cycles (Jan 24-June 24).

The dates given in brackets are indicative, as the research activities may have differed from those given due to the diversity of institutional settings.
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 (4 out of 5) the project was delivered in schools, organised within (in Poland and Norway) or outside (in Denmark, Spain and Portugal) the conventional education system. Regardless, the project targeted institutions that work with groups of children and young people at risk of dropping out of the education system. The names and contact details of all the implementing institutions can be found in the Annex.

2.2. Strategies, methods and tools

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 also surveying and observation.
The following methods and research tools were designed for research purposes:

1. desk research,
2. materials analysis (pictures, template for role models work documenting and other materials related to the topics covered by the research),
3. focus group interviews (with role models),
4. individual interviews (with role models and learners),
5. group based activity with learners (with their approval, as introduction to the interview).

Field work and desk research in every country 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 tools (their content) became the starting point for discussions at meetings in the international COSI.ed team. The Polish team was responsible for the preparation of the tools and the concept of implementation based on a collaborative approach in working on the final concept with all partners. *COSI.ed indicators selection form* has been used to identify and select indicators that can be used in all country contexts. Final results were posted in the project folders in the common workspace (Teams).
The tools listed in the earlier stages of the report can be described as follows:

1. Guidelines for the interviews with young people
2. Guidelines for the follow up interviews with young people

The aim of the guidelines was to ensure that during the interviews with young people we will gather sufficient data on indicators to monitor changes in the opinions, awareness, perceptions of young learners from our target groups that occur before and after working with the COSI.ed model. It has been pointed out that it is very important that the issues emerge during the interviews with young people **i**n all countries twice, i.e. at the beginning of the work using the COSI.ed model and after the intervention. This was supposed to make it possible to capture the change(s), analyse the collected material and use it later on for triangulation and ultimately to build the European COSI.ed model. Based on the desk research and project objectives, the indicators we want to focus on are:
1) young people's perception of their relationship with teachers and other school staff;
2) educational and career aspirations of youth;
3) youth's perception of school atmosphere and context.

3. Guidelines for group-based activity

It has been proposed to collect the data on the perception of school atmosphere, during the group-based activity - creating of a poster-collage "My school" - with an accompanying group interview (focus group). In this way, we wanted to introduce elements of co-creation and counterstory[4] methodology to the data collection, which would allow the youngsters in the course of the co-created activity. It creates a unique opportunity of listening to “their stories” and of learning from young people's voices and perspectives - authentic counter messages - focusing on their knowledge, power and agency. The guidelines also provided suggestions for questions and methodological hints.

4. Guidelines for focus interviews with role models

The purpose of the focus group interview (FGI) is to gather information on the experiences and opinions of role models on the implementation of the COSI.ed model in working with vulnerable youth. The Guidelines included tips for moderators as well as the script proposal covering the main issues covered by the study.

5. Template for documenting role models work with young people/Log for role models, documenting work with young people concerning the Indirect Approach

This form was used to document individual educators' work with young people. The first version of the tool (*Template for documenting role models work with young people*) was optional and most countries did not use it in the first implementation cycle. The second version (*Log for role models, documenting work with young people concerning the Indirect Approach*) was a mandatory element of data collection in all countries.

The first part of the document contained basic information about the participant (age, gender, educational level, other important indicators) concerning the educational trajectory. The second part of the document, The Activities and observation log, was used to document individual consultations, meetings and activities undertaken by the educators in their work with individual students. In the logbook, the educator recorded meetings with the participants and briefly described them according to the categories proposed such as: Objectives/ Content of the talk, Entrance of the talk (as indirect approach), Happenstances in the talk (the young people share information about themselves that you did not know), Changes in relation to the young person compared with the meeting before and Comments.Separate records of meetings were to be kept for selected 3-5participants from the samples in each country.

6. Template for reporting indicators

This template was used to report data on indicators collected during the COSI.ed model implementation through interviews with young people and by obtaining data from other sources (e.g. administrative data, other data collected by the institutions). The template consists five parts:

1. The first part concerns the contextual information on education and school system in a given country and/or region;
2. The second is to include a description of the target group including the basic data on each participants of COSI.ed project;

[4] For more information on counterstory see: Fox, M., & Fine, M. (2013). Accountable to whom? A critical science counter-story about a city that stopped caring for its young. *Children & Society*, *27*(4), 321-335; Cuevas, P. A. (2016). The journey from de-culturalization to community cultural wealth: The power of a counter story-telling curriculum and how educational leaders can transform schools. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, *10*(3), 47-67.; Macias, D., Shramko, M., Pech, A., Romero, A., & Encinias, V. (2021). Counterstory methodology in a university-high school collaboration to center and humanize Latina/o voices. *Journal of Community Psychology; Dyke, E. L., El Sabbagh, J., & Dyke, K. (2020). “Counterstory Mapping Our City”: Teachers Reckoning with Latinx Students’ Knowledges, Cultures, and Communities. International Journal of Multicultural Education, 22(2), 30-45.;*.Bertrand, M., Brooks, M. D., & Domínguez, A. D. (2020). Challenging adultism: Centering youth as educational decision makers. *Urban Education*, 0042085920959135.

3. The third is the characteristic of the working area that is the institutions where the COSI.ed model is implemented;
4. The fourth is to report the changes in "soft" (qualitative, subjective) indicators that is perceptions of the young people concerning their relationships with teachers and staff, school atmosphere and context, attitude towards school and education as well as their educational and career aspirations;
5. The fifth is to report the changes in indicators based on institutional and/or administrative data. In this case, there are some common indicators that apply to all the institutions. However, then two options were introduced - for mainstream schools with data on standard education-related indicators such as grades or grade retention. The second option is for alternative institutions (e.g. second chance schools) based on an assessment of the achievement of individual educational and vocational objectives, as well as other objectives that adequately capture the effects of the COSI.ed model work at the institutional level. These latter indicators are to be proposed by the country teams that know best the institutional context.

The tools presented above may have been adapted to best suit the national research contexts.

2.3. Ethical issues

Challenges and dilemmas in research work with and on young people in different contexts is a key topic for any reflective researcher. The report addresses selected problems, challenges and dilemmas that arise in research about and with young people at risk, insofar as it is conducted by adults residing in diverse contexts of European countries.
The authors identify some reasons for these problems and ask to what extent and in which way ethical principles, research approaches can be of help in dealing with and overcoming these challenges. They also point to the variety of approaches to research with such a vulnerable group as the young people at risk.
Each country team paid special attention to ethical issues in the implementation of the research and took into account children's (youth) rights, a non-discriminatory approach and the protection of personal data. All partners shared a collective responsibility for ensuring that research was carried out to the highest possible ethical standards. In each country involved in the COSI.ed project, the respective national teams (NTs) were responsible for upholding ethical standards and principles during working with young people and also for preparation of role models to stick to those agreed standards. The project did not stipulate obtaining the opinions of the partner universities' Ethics Committees, but the researchers rely on the ethics guidelines of the university staff and employees of the various departments and centres co-implementing the project.

2.4. Limitations

In the process of preparing for and implementing the research we encountered a number of dilemmas arising from the natural, epistemological environment of the researchers, from the contexts, from the implementation of the concept of the research process in 5 countries.
The COSI.ed project revealed challenges and problems that require more detailed research and attention to contextual considerations and resources in each country.
During the design process of the research procedure and analysing the data already obtained we have experienced many challenges resulting from very differentiated research contexts. Those difficulties include:

1. Difficulty in establishing universal indicators in such diverse national contexts (different institutions, participants, etc.)
2. Difficulty in capturing change in a fluid and multifaceted educational reality

3. Difficulty in capturing change in relatively short period of time
4. Difficulties due to institutional resistance to change
5. Different expectations and research experiences of the project partners
6. A multifaceted and difficult to measure research project - the multiplicity of concepts, threads, methods and other elements that condition the research process.

Such dilemmas show why collaborative research needs to be continuously developed, as well as how it can be achieved.

Limitations are also due to the different experiences in this type of research of those implementing these activities. As recognised, working in partnerships in so many cultural contexts and diverse institutions highlights the differences in approaches not only in the research context, but also in terms of purpose and understanding methodology. This implies attempts to bring together communities of practitioners and researchers to set up an adequate research framework, worked out despite the differences in perception or goals, as a compromise.

Another aspect in this issue was the challenge of research with and about young people in different contexts with its methodological assumptions and ethical dilemmas. Therefore, selected problems, challenges and dilemmas that arise in research about and with young people at risk, insofar as it is conducted by adults (with different experiences) residing in diverse contexts of various European countries.

We identify humanising research methodology as a useful approach in this type of international research in and in such diverse contexts. The point of reference for research is the humanising methodology (Reyes et al. 2021). It is based on relationships and transformational approaches in and via education (Martens 2021). Transformation is possible when, through collaborative research, we reflect and, in relationships, take action for change (Freire, 1970).

3. Overview of the education and school systems in implementing countries

European school systems remain highly differentiated in terms of their structure, administration, governance, funding, legal status etc. However, they differ not only in terms of their organisation and structure, but also of their historical, social, cultural, linguistic, demographic, economic determinants. "As a rule, the adopted models of organisation and functioning of school systems are a consequence of the previously adopted directions of the state's educational policy, and these are often the result of many years of legislative work, a consequence of the activity of many governmental and self-governmental entities" (Dziewulak, 2020). Moreover, the diversity of the education systems is reflected in different curricula and syllabi, school calendars, time-tables, grading/examination systems and the ways in which instruction is organised (Mitter, 2006).

Countries and their education systems are tackling the issue of educational inequalities with different levels of effectiveness (Borgna & Contini, 2014; Gross, Meyer, & Hadjar, 2016; Zapfe & Gross, 2021). For instance, analyses show that inequalities based on pupils' socio-economic status are lower in northern European countries and higher in eastern European countries (Lavrijsen & Nicaise, 2015; Zapfe & Gross, 2021). However, at the same time for more than a decade some central European countries (e.g. Slovenia, Croatia, Poland, Czechia, Lithuania) have the lowest rates of early leavers from education and training in Europe (Eurostat, 2021).

Research demonstrates that there is a link between structural features of education systems and educational inequalities and consequently also inequalities in life chances, i.e. income, health, social and political participation (Gross, Meyer & Hadjar, 2016; Bol & Van de Werfhorst, 2016; Downes, Nairz-Wirth & Rusinaite, 2017).

Among the macro-structural characteristics that contribute to reinforcing, or at least reproducing, inequalities between students based on their social origin, gender or migration background are: high stratification also referred to as early tracking of students into separate educational pathways based on their previous educational achievements (Zapfe & Gross, 2021), the weak link between the education system and the labour market, the low degree of standardisation of the education system which translates to high variability in the quality of education between schools and regions, the lack of flexible educational pathways allowing transfer between different programmes or educational pathways (Bol & Van de Werfhorst, 2016;), the shorter duration of compulsory education/schooling (Cabus & De Witte, 2011), as well as grade repetition and the use of punitive practices such as suspension, expulsion from school (Downes, Nairz-Wirth &Rusinaite, 2017).

As can be expected, features of educational systems opposite to those mentioned are providing fertile ground for inclusiveness. In addition, issues such as prioritising egalitarian values, social equality and integration (Zapfe & Gross, 2021), creating active measures against discrimination, especially in relation to ethnic minorities, directing additional incentives and financial support to priority areas with greater poverty and social exclusion are emphasised (Downes, Nairz-Wirth & Rusinaite, 2017).

Below we present some selected indicators describing the education systems of the five countries participating in the COSI.ed project.

Table 1. Selected characteristics of education systems in COSI.ed countries.

Selected data on the education system	Country				
	NOR	DK	PL	ES	PT
Years of compulsory school education (ISCED 1[5] onwards)	10	10+1*	8**+ 3/4***	10	12
Age of entry into compulsory school education	6	6	7	6	6
Compulsory education leaving age	16	16	15**- 18/19***	16	18
Age of tracking	16	16	15	16	15

*) Non-compulsory optional year (grade 10)
**) Full time compulsory education/training
***) Part-time compulsory education/training

The starting age of school education is 6 or 7 years, while the number of years of compulsory education is more diverse. Portugal has as many as 12 years of compulsory schooling, while Denmark provides 10 In Denmark they *do not have any particular data on how* years. Poland is the only country in this comparison to distinguish between full-time and part-time compulsory education/training, but, as in Portugal, it assumes that a young person must be in education or training until the age of 18. In three countries (Norway, Denmark and Spain), the age at which compulsory education ends is 16 and this is also when tracking occurs. A year earlier, young people in Poland and Portugal decide on their further educational pathway.

The analysis of selected structural features of the national systems allows initial hypotheses to be formulated, but does not allow for a clear assessment of which system is more inclusive and better suited to tackling inequalities. Some of the indicators have, in line with the studies presented above regarding the structural characteristics of the systems linked to exclusion, opposite impacts, e.g. longer compulsory education combined with earlier than in other countries tracking in Portugal. Moreover, none of these elements are suspended in a vacuum, but form a unique entity together with other determinants.

For a fuller understanding, it is therefore necessary to give a more detailed account of each country's education systems. What follows are their brief characteristics, which we will then use to analyse the phenomenon of early leaving from education or training.

[5] The International Standard Classification of Education adopted by UNESCO (2012) as a standard framework used to categorise and report cross-nationally comparable education statistics (ISCED-2012). The different levels are: ISCED 0 (Early Childhood Education); ISCED 1 (Primary Education), ISCED 2 (Lower Secondary Education), ISCED 3 (Upper Secondary Education), ISCED 4 (Post-secondary non-tertiary education); ISCED 5 (Short cycle tertiary education): ISCED 6 (Bachelor); ISCED 7 (Master) and ISCED 8 (Doctoral).

NORWAY

The Norwegian school system is free of charge and grade repetition is not practised. The compulsory education in Norway is 10 years, the teacher-to-child ratio (due to increased funding and teacher density) has fallen in recent years, especially in the lower year groups.
Upper secondary education (videregående opplæring) is not mandatory, but young people who have completed primary and lower secondary education, or the equivalent, have the right to complete upper secondary education and training within a flexible period as implemented by the recent White paper 21 (2020-2021) (Fullføringsreformen). Most young people do enter Upper secondary school, only a small minority either do not apply or have a gap year. 98 per cent of pupils who finished lower secondary school in 2021 went on directly to upper secondary school (Statistics Norway, 2023).
The students compete which school and strand they will start on based on their grades from lower secondary school for a place in the study program of their choice. The total number of available study programs in upper secondary school is fifteen: 5 general programs leading to higher education and 10 vocational programs. Vocational education and training usually consist of two years in school and one year in-service training. In some programs, students can also instead of the apprenticeship system complete a general academic course, extending their schooling to a third year and enabling them to access higher education upon completion.
There is a common national curriculum for secondary education, within this framework the municipal and county authorities, schools and teachers can influence the implementation of education and training. The counties are responsible for upper secondary education and training whereas the national Government is responsible for other higher education. The local needs from the craftsmanship and industry have a certain influence on the development of the organisation of vocational training.

DENMARK[6]

The Danish education system aims to ensure that all people acquire knowledge and competencies that qualify them to take an active part in society and contribute to its further development. Education is therefore open to all and generally free of charge (Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet, 2022).
A few characteristics (principles) of the Danish education system include:

- High standards
- Relevance
- Lifelong learning
- Active participation
- Project work

(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2022; Ministry of Higher Education And Science, 2022).

The Danish education system consists of integrated primary and lower secondary education, upper secondary education and higher education, as well as a system of adult and continuing education (Ministry of Higher Education and Science 2, 2022).
In Denmark, primary education consists of integrated primary and lower secondary education – and the educational institutions at which primary and lower secondary education takes place are called primary and lower secondary schools (in Danish: Folkeskole). Primary education is compulsory between the age of five/six and 16 and consists of one pre-school year (grade 0) and nine school years (grades 1-9). It's possible to prolong the compulsory education with an optional year (grade 10) (Eurydice, 2022; Ministry Of Higher Education and Science 2, 2022). According to The Folkeskole Act (Folkeskoleloven (Børne- Og Undervisningsministeriet 4, 2021), schools must provide pupils with subject-specific qualifications and prepare them for further education – and for their role as citizens in

[6] For more information go to The Danish Education System (ufm.dk)

a democratic society. The Folkeskole Act builds on a principle of differentiated teaching, and should be organized to strengthen and stimulate interests and qualifications, while catering for the needs of the individual pupil (The Inclusion Act (Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet 5, 2022). As a part of the 2014 reform of the public primary and lower secondary schools, the schools must also lower the significance of social background on academic results. In primary and lower secondary school pupils are continuously evaluated (national tests) – and in grade 9 pupils must complete both written and oral exams in mathematics, Danish etc. (Uddannelses-og Forskningsministeriet, 2022).

Following the primary and lower secondary education, students are free to choose the educational path they wish. The choice is between academically oriented general upper secondary education programmes (in Danish: gymnasiale uddannelser) and secondary vocational education programmes (in Danish: gymnasiale erhvervsuddannelser). The general upper secondary school aims to prepare students for higher education, and vocational upper secondary education and training programmes primarily prepare students for a career in a specific trade og industry. There are four academically-oriented upper secondary programmes: stx (3-year higher general examination programme), hhx (3-year higher commercial examination programme), htx (3-year higher technical examination programme) and hf (2-year higher preparatory examination programme). The vocational education and training (VET) programmes include more than 100 main study programmes leading to almost 300 different qualifications (at levels 3 to 5 in the Danish national qualifications framework). The four main subject areas are: care, health and educational theory; administration, commerce and business service; technology, construction and transport; and food, agriculture and leisure industry (Eurydice, 2022; Uddannelses-og Forskningsministeriet, 2022).

There are a few other programmes STU (specially planned youth education) and FGU (preparatory basic education and training). STU (3-year programme) targets young people up to the age of 25 with special needs, who are unable to complete ordinary education due to different physical, mental or developmental disabilities or disorders (Uddannelses-og Forskningsministeriet, 2022). FGU targets young people below the age of 25, who haven't completed upper secondary education or vocational training – and who are unemployed or are not enrolled in any education programmes – and might not meet the qualifications for admission. FGU aims to help students acquire educational, personal and social skills that enable them to attend upper secondary or vocational education and training or the labour market. FGU consists of three educational programmes: general basic education (AGU) – education in basic subjects such as Danish, mathematics, English and natural sciences; basic production education (PGU) – workshop-based education with a high level of practical learning for students who wish to proceed to vocational training or labour market; and basic vocational education (EGU) – 2/3 traineeship/ 1/3 school based education for students who will benefit from workplace environment – and become qualified to enter labour market. The programmes are individually determined depending on the students' needs (it may last for up to two years) (Uddannelses-og Forskningsministeriet, 2022; Undervisningsministeriet, 2018).

FGU replaced a number of preparatory educations in August 2019. The ambition of the majority of the Danish Parliament is that at least 90% of 25-year olds should complete a general or vocational upper secondary education, and the percentage of youths who are not in association to either education or labour market should be reduced by half by 2030 (Børne- Og Undervisningsministeriet 2, 2022). SFI (The Danish National Centre for Social Research) concluded back in 2016 that the present preparatory education didn't have a positive effect in terms of getting young people into upper secondary education. Therefore, the government set up an expert committee, which should make recommendations on how the preparatory education could be improved. Based on the committee's recommendations, a political agreement was concluded in 2017 on the establishment of FGU ('The Agreement on better ways to education and jobs' (Børne-OgUndervisningsministeriet, 2017)). FGU was supposed to replace production schools, combined youth education (KUU), vocational primary school education (EGU), parts of general adult education (AVU), parts of dyslexia education for adults (OBU) and parts of preparatory adult education (FVU) (EMU-redaktionen, 2020). FGU was specified by

four laws unanimously adopted in the Danish Parliament in 2018 (EMU-redaktionen, 2020) – and in 2019 confirmed in the current 'The Act on Preparatory Basic Education' (Lov om forberedende grunduddannelse (Børne- Og Undervisningsministeriet 3, 2019).

POLAND

The shape of the current structure of the school system in Poland is a result of the recent education reform from the 2017–18 school year (Journal of Laws, 2017 item 59). The school education system for children and young people in Poland consists of two levels - an eight-grade primary school and a secondary school. Primary schooling is divided into two educational stages - in grades 1-3 teaching is carried out by a single class teacher and is integrated, while in grades 4-8 subject teaching begins. Primary school ends with the eighth-grade exam. This is a compulsory exam, but there is no specified minimum score that a pupil should obtain, so the eighth-grade exam cannot be failed. However, the points obtained in the exam are important for enrolment in the selected secondary school, where the grades obtained in the certificate and additional achievements, e.g. participation in subject competitions, are also taken into account. Therefore, the transition from primary to secondary school is the selection threshold for students.
After completing primary school, students can choose between several types of secondary school (education is compulsory until the age of 18):

- 4 year general secondary school (*liceum ogólnokształcące)*,
- 5 year technical secondary school (*technikum)*,
- 3 year special school preparing for employment (*szkoła specjalna przysposabiająca do pracy*),
- 3 year stage I sectoral vocational schools (*branżowa szkoła I stopnia*),
- 2 year stage II sectoral vocational schools (*branżowa szkoła II stopnia)*.

After finishing secondary school students can take the maturity exam (*matura*) which gives young people access to higher education. They can also attend post-secondary schools (*szkoły policealne*).
In the context of pupils' educational attainment or the ELET rate, the Polish education system is mentioned as one of the best performing in the European Union. However, still parents' socio-economic status exhibits a strong influence on children's educational achievement and primary education does not sufficiently overcome inequalities based on students' backgrounds. A 2018 Pisa study showed that pupils with at least one parent with a tertiary education score on average more than 40 points higher than pupils of parents with a secondary education in each PISA subject area. There is also an observed correlation of performance with the size of the pupil's place of residence with urban learners achieving better results than their rural peers (Bulkowski, Dobosz-Leszczyńska & Kaźmierczak, 2018).
Consequently, SES also determines young people's educational choices. Students from families with lower socio-economic status are more likely to attend secondary vocational schools which contributes to the further reproduction of existing social divisions by the education system (Szafraniec & Boni 2011). Vocational school students are also at the greater risk of early school leaving (Mikiewicz 2011). Until recently, the problem of working with ethnically or culturally diverse students was marginal in our country, as Polish schools were almost entirely mono-ethnic and mono-religious (Świtała 2020). At present, we are faced with the unprecedented situation of an inflow of very large numbers of forced migrants into our country in a very short space of time due to Russia's attack on neighbouring Ukraine. Ukrainian children and young people, while residing in Poland, have the right to free education, which is guaranteed by Article 70 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Dz.U. of 1997 No. 78, item 483 as amended after: Młynarczuk-Sokołowska, A. & Szostak-Król, 2022). They are potentially another group of students who need additional support to ensure their educational and social inclusion.

SPAIN[7]

Compulsory secondary education (6 to 16 years), once completed, pupils can decide to follow the academic pathway (baccalaureate with a duration of two years) which allows access to university or the professional pathway. The Spanish VET system is organised into three levels: basic VET (BVET), intermediate VET (IVET), and higher VET (HVET) (all levels with a duration of two academic years). BVET was established in Spain in 2014–2015 and is geared toward students who have not completed compulsory secondary education (ISCED 2) and are at risk of leaving education as a vocational option to reduce ELET and ensure youth permanence in the educational system. Those who attend BVET start this training at the age of 14 and, in the end, receive a VET Level 1 credential which enables students to continue in IVET. However, IVET begins after the end of compulsory education (at the age of 16) and, once completed, allows access to higher VET.

The Spanish education system is characterised by high ELET rates and the polarisation of the educational level of the population. In relation to ELET, although this indicator has fallen significantly in recent years and, specifically since the outbreak of the pandemic, Spain continues to show the highest rates in comparison with the average for European Union countries, standing at 16% in 2020 compared to 9.9% for the EU average (Eurostat, 2021a). In turn, this indicator shows a high interregional variation, with the Balearic Islands (the region where this study is carried out) being one of the Spanish regions with the highest ELET rates, standing at 21.3% (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2021), far from the 9% set by the European strategic framework for education and training 2030 (European Union Council, 2021).

In addition, the educational level of the Spanish population is strongly polarised, characterised by a higher number of people with a low level of education (ISCED 0-2: 37.1% compared to 17.1% in the EU), a lower number of individuals with intermediate studies (ISCED 3-4: 23.2% compared to 46% in the EU) and a relatively high number of people with a high level of education (ISCED 5-8: 39.7% compared to 37.6% in the EU) (OECD, 2021). Educational attainment has a huge impact on youth school-to-work transitions and on the characteristics of their future labour and personal pathways. More specifically, young people with low levels of education show higher levels of unemployment and poorer working conditions. In this sense, in 2020 the youth unemployment rate stands at 29.2% and 40.4% for those with a low level of education (Eurostat, 2021b). Moreover, a recent study carried out in Spain on youth education and training transitions concludes that 58.1% of dropout students have a salary of fewer than 1.000 euros, 67.7% work in low-skilled occupations and 48.4% have temporary jobs (Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 2020).

PORTUGAL

In Portugal, the basis for the education and school system were first regulated by the Education Act - Law no. 46/8 in the post-dictatorship.

Nowadays, compulsory education lasts 12 years (Law 85/2009), between the age of 6 and 18 or until the conclusion of upper secondary education. Public education is free and universal from the age of 4, including the final years of pre-school.

The education system is comprehensive in structure involving long Basic Education (ISCED 1 and ISCED 2, ages 6 to 15) with course choices at the beginning of Upper Secondary Education (ISCED 3, from age 15).

[7] Two graphs illustrating the structure of the Spanish education system are in annex.

Basic Education provides pupils with a common general education, with the learning necessary to continue studies at upper secondary level. There is also a set of values, principles and competence areas considered fundamental for pupils' learning during the 12 years of compulsory education, established in the Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling (República Portuguesa, 2017), and widely used nowadays in schools. Most reference legislation currently in effect regarding educational provision, curriculum, pedagogy and inclusive education stems from the values and principles established in this Profile.

Upper secondary education courses are 3-year fixed study programmes with an educational tracking between science-humanities, artistic and vocational education and training (VET) courses to be attended from the 10th to the 12th year of schooling. The science-humanities and artistic courses are the more academic courses being predominantly oriented for accessing Higher Education. There are four options of science-humanities courses – Sciences and Technologies; Languages and Humanities; Socioeconomic Sciences; Visual Arts – which are usually the most popular, and several specialized artistic and VET options with different distributions between schools, according to local and regional cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

In which concerns the types of institutions, general Basic Education and specialised artistic courses are taught in: a) public schools (non-clustered or school clusters); b) private and cooperative schools. Whereas VET courses can run in: a) private and cooperative schools; b) public school clusters and non-clustered schools; c) public or private professional schools; d) private and cooperative schools.

In Portugal, there is a strong network of public schools with most organized in school clusters. These school clusters provide from pre-school to the end of Basic Education. Some school clusters also include upper secondary education. Students usually have to change between school establishments mainly from the 4th year of schooling (1st cycle of Basic Education) to the 5th year of schooling (2nd cycle of Basic Education), and often when they move on to upper secondary education. A consequence of the enlargement of compulsory schooling up to the 12th year of schooling (age of 18) was that most public schools and school clusters began diversifying their educational offers between more academic and more vocational courses. Nowadays, almost every public upper secondary school offers at least one VET course. Moreover, there is a strong national net of professional public and private schools that expanded since the 1990s decade.

In recent decades, Portugal has made great efforts to improve the population's level of qualifications, resulting in substantial progress in education*: i)* providing universal access; *ii)* reducing the number of school dropouts; *iii)* achieving the goals set by the EU, and *iv)* significantly improving Portuguese students' performance in international comparative tests. The country continues to face challenges, such as high retention rates stemming from underprivileged socio-economic settings and a structural skills deficit of the adult population.

As such, some schools still offer VET courses to students aged plus 15 and unable to conclude Basic Education due to repeated retention. These courses are aimed at preparing young people to continue upper secondary level studies and future qualified status in the job market geared towards concluding compulsory schooling and access to working life.

More recently, a successful pilot-project for a Second Chance school in Matosinhos (outskirts or Porto) opening in 2008 resulted in an expansion of second chance initiatives throughout the country in a set of efforts aligned with the National Strategy to Reduce Early Leaving (from education and training). Meanwhile, these initiatives have been legally integrated in the national education system through a dispatch published in 2019 (Dispatch 6954/2019).

At last, we must highlight a recent policy to promote the access of students that finish compulsory education with VET courses certification to Tertiary Education. Tertiary education is provided by universities and polytechnics. Preconditions to enter tertiary education include successful completion of an upper secondary programme or a similar qualification at the same level, admission exams and specific requirements for each study field. Since 2020, besides the general conditions for access to tertiary education, specific access conditions (Decree-Law no. 11/2020) were introduced for upper

secondary VET graduates. They take into account the score of VET graduates in the final evaluation and aptitude tests, as well as specific tests carried out by each institution to assess if candidates have the necessary knowledge and competences to undertake a particular tertiary education programme. Higher education institutions can also determine a special quota for VET graduates.

Comparative perspective

It is worth noting some elements that have emerged in the above notes, which give some indication of which systems have greater potential for inclusivity. These include: the lack of grade retention, a low teacher-to-pupil ratio, a rich programme of vocational education, including pathways for continuing to higher education, a comprehensive system with a long common cycle of general education and a common national curriculum, a long period of compulsory schooling, separate institutions/pathways for pupils who wish to re-enter education. In addition to these formal aspects, it is worth noting the cooperation of schools with the social environment or the reference in the curricula to the values of inclusiveness, equity and social inclusion. In view of the increasing diversity of the student population, the readiness of the system to respond to the needs arising from this diversity is becoming increasingly important.

3.1. Early leaving from education and training as the main indicator of educational exclusion

As one of the main objectives of the project is to improve youth educational and employment pathways through the efforts to reduce early leaving from education and training and contribute to the increase of the percentage of students who complete/stay in education, this section of the report will analyse the ELET rate as an indicator of educational exclusion in the COSI.ed project countries.
Early leavers from education and training is a statistical indicator created for international comparative statistics and refers to the proportion of young people aged 18-24 who have left education at ISCED 2 or below and are not continuing education or training (Eurostat, 2021).
Reducing the ELET rate within the European Union was an objective of the Lisbon strategy and the Europe 2020 strategy, and this has also been maintained in the current Europe 2030 strategy for sustainable development. “The EU Member States have set themselves a target to *reduce* the rates of *early* school *leavers* to below 9% at the EU level by 2030” (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20220523-1).
As the table below shows, two of the five project countries, namely Poland and Portugal, have already achieved this objective. However, they have reached it in a completely different way which is going to be discussed further below. Norway is also close to achieving this goal. The biggest change is expected in Spain, which is set to improve this indicator by more than four percentage points. Also in the case of the latter, the selected region, the Balearic Islands, is the one that clearly lags behind the others on an within-country level as well. For the others, the ELET rate in the regions where the COSI project will be implemented is lower than the national average.

Table 2. ELET rate in COSI.ed project countries and regions where the project is being implemented.

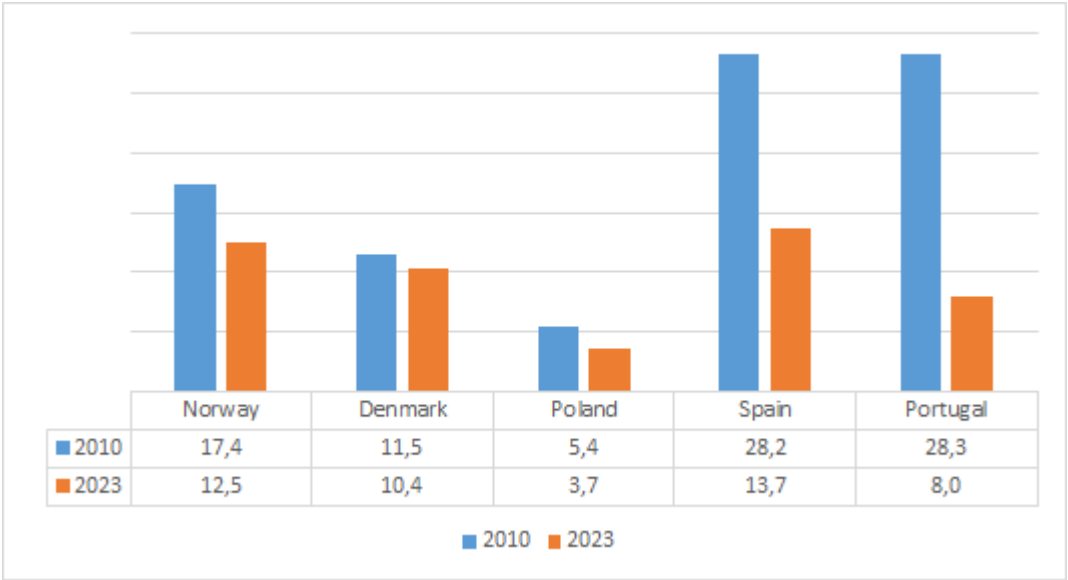
Name of the indicator	**Rate in percentage in years 2021-2022 (or the newest available)**				
	NOR	**DK**	**PL**	**ES**	**PT**
ESL/ELET rate at national level	12.3% (2021) 13,3 % (2022/23)	9,8% (2021) 10,0% (2022)	5,9% (2021) 4,8% (2022)	13,3% (2021) 13.9% (2022)*	6,7% (2021) 6,5% (2022)

	NOR Telemark	DK Morsø Kommune: 1 Skive kommune: 2	PL Mazovian Voivodeship	ES Balearic Islands	PT Northern Region of Portugal
ESL/ELET rate at regional/local level	2013-2019 – 9,8% 2014-2020 – 10,8% 3,4 % (2022/23) including: 6,4 % in general study courses:(2021/22) 2,0 % in university preparatory courses (2021/22)	Ad) 1: 12% (2021) Ad) 2: 8 % (2021)	5,4% (2021) 4,3% (2022)	15,4% (2021) 18,2% (2022)	4,1% (2021)** 5,6% (2022)

* Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2023). Early School Leaving. https://www.ine.es/jaxi/Datos.htm?path=/t00/ICV/dim4/l0/&file=41401.px
** Statistics Portugal (INE, 2023).
Important note: The values given in this table may differ from those published on the Eurostat website, as they are derived from national statistics.

However, it is worth noting that from the very beginning, i.e. since the goal of lowering the ELET rate became part of EU policy, the baseline level of this indicator and the dynamics of its change varied enormously at both inter- and intra-country levels. The next graph shows that in 2010 in Denmark the level of the ELET indicator was very similar to the current one. While in Portugal, the percentage decreased more than fourfold during the analysed period and this improvement is the greatest among all project countries.

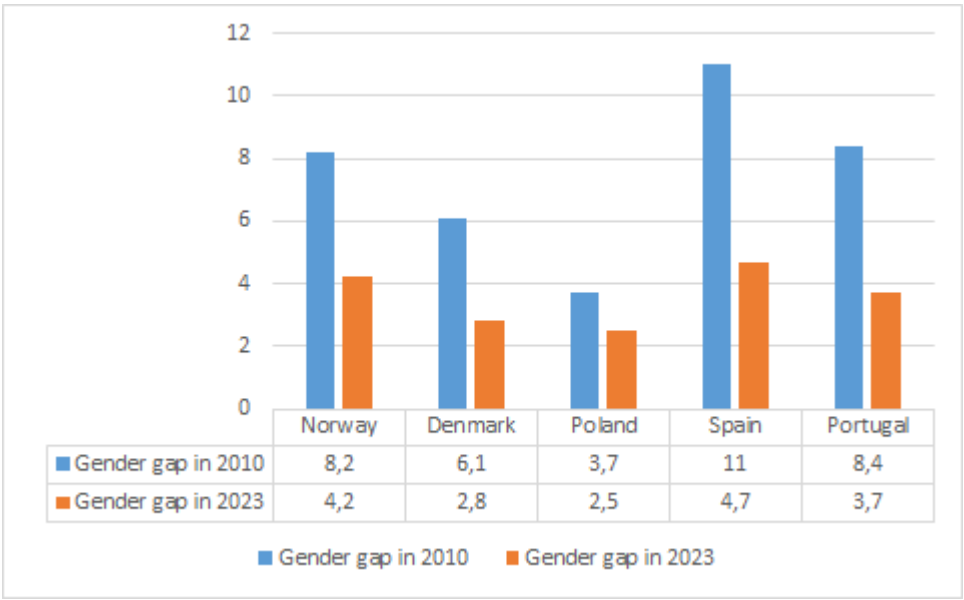
Graph 1. The differences of ELET rates in five project countries between 2010 and 2023 (%).



Source: Eurostat, 2024: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/85efb19b-de49-46a0-aec0-819e08d4f049?lang=en.

As the data shows (Graph 1), in 2023 compared to 2010 there was also a huge improvement in Spain (14.5 pp.), a significant improvement in Norway (4.9 pp.) and a small improvement in Denmark (1.1 pp.) and in Poland (1.7 pp.). So far, the greatest progress in terms of reducing the number of ELETs was recorded in those countries with the highest baseline.
Another important dimension of the ELET indicator is its gender differentiation, with males more likely to leave the education or training system early in all European countries except Romania and Serbia according to data from 2023 (Eurostat, 2024).

Graph 2. Gender gap of ELET rate in five project countries in 2010 and 2023 (pp.).



Source: Eurostat, 2024:https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/5156ee4c-8962-4b65-930a-1119d666055f?lang=en

As can be seen, the gender gap has decreased over the period analysed in all project countries. The largest decreases in the gap between 2020 and 2023 were observed in Spain (by 6.3 pp.) and Portugal (by 4.7 pp.) followed by Norway (4 pp.).
Below are brief country insights that offer explanations behind the data on the ELET and other indicators related to social inclusion/exclusion such as: unemployment, NEET, school completion - its changes and differentiation in relation to national, regional or local contexts.

NORWAY

The proportion of those learners who complete or quit education can be measured in different ways. Either by counting everyone who is in school, or only those who are in school with a non-ordinary education. In this case, introductory classes are not counted (for immigrants/refugees, for example.)
At the national level, in 2019, an estimated 18% of pupils in compulsory school come from an immigrant family. Just more than half of these children were born in Norway (Statistics Norway). Since 2004, this percentage has more than doubled. Pupils from immigrant backgrounds obtain slightly lower grades in lower secondary school and are less likely to complete upper secondary (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). However, if one takes the socio-economic background into account, the dropout rate is explained by this, not gender, nor ethnicity.
Telemark has a high unemployment rate in a Norwegian context. Most of the region has challenges with a relatively high level of poverty, a high degree of young people that are on permanent welfare

due to health, mental health issues and low socio-economic background. Unemployment is particularly prevalent among young people and immigrants. The region has the highest population of child poverty in Norway, many of these families are immigrants, but not all.

In Telemark more than 9% of the population between 16-25 are NEET (not in education, employment or training). Almost all of these young people have dropped out of upper secondary school. The schools in especially in the old Telemark County struggled with the completion rates for many years, receiving students from lower secondary school with low marks and foremost choosing the vocational strand in upper secondary school.

In Telemark there are hardly any unskilled jobs on the market, which means that the NEET youth cannot easily find jobs. In Finnmark, on the other hand, the fishing industry has a lot of unskilled jobs available, which means that the youth in the NEET category find work, also well paid jobs.

DENMARK

In 2021, 6.3 percent of the 15-24-year-olds were without education or employment. This corresponds to 42,515 people. The proportion has fallen by 0.7 percentage points since 2018.

37 percent of the young people who were without education or employment in 2021 were also not employed or in education in 2019 and 2020.

About a third of the young people who were without education or employment in 2021 have previously been involved in education, but have dropped out. Approx. 60 percent of them have dropped out within 6 months of starting the programme.

There are large differences in the proportion of young people without education or employment across the municipalities. In the municipality with the lowest proportion, it is only around 4 percent of the 15-24-year-olds who are without education or employment, and in the municipality with the highest proportion, it is almost 12 percent.

Part of the municipal variation can be explained by differences in the municipalities' economics, social-economic composition etc. However, there are also differences between the municipalities' share of young people without education or employment when this is taken into account. For example; the 10 municipalities that perform best have, on average, 1.1 percentage points fewer young people without education or employment than what could be expected based on the municipalities' social-economic composition etc.. Conversely, the 10 municipalities that perform the worst have, on average, 2.2 percentage points more young people without education or employment compared to what might be expected.

POLAND

It is recognised that, in addition to pupils from low SES families, from backgrounds marked by poverty and from rural areas, groups of children and young people particularly at risk of social exclusion include pupils with special educational needs due to: disabilities, specific learning difficulties or competence deficits, impaired communication skills, behavioural or emotional disorders, mental health problems etc. Finally, the last group is made up of pupils with adaptation difficulties due to their cultural, linguistic or religious diversity (Tomaszewska-Pękała, Marchlik & Zubala 2022). However, no single factor in isolation clearly explains the exclusion mechanism. Instead, research shows that a specific accumulation of multiple risk factors, located at different levels, with a simultaneous absence of protective factors that could have a compensatory role, is responsible (Tomaszewska-Pękała, Marchlik & Wrona, 2017).

At the same time, there is a relatively low percentage of children and young people outside the education system, as well as those who leave further education after the age of 18. The formalised education system, based on the enforcement of compulsory education/schooling, works effectively. This is related to legal and social pressure - parents fined, labelled as inefficient, referred to court or

social services, children institutionalised in centres for those at risk of exclusion, where they are subject to constant control and educational or therapeutic interventions. Conversely, society's high educational aspirations, the belief in upward social mobility through education, foster high parental expectations towards their children's academic achievement. In addition, the lack of a tradition of lifelong learning and an inflexible education system mean that linear, typical educational pathways are strongly imposed as the only "right" ones.
This does not mean that the phenomenon of educational exclusion does not occur in the Polish education system, but that it is a continuous process, and at the same time "subcutaneous" and not reflected in statistical indicators. Excluded learners reveal their difficulties at an emotional and psychological level, e.g. in surveys concerning the school climate, quality of relations with teachers, etc., in which Polish learners have "infamously" been in the lead for years, with the highest indicators of dissatisfaction, lack of motivation, dislike of school (see: Przewłocka, 2015).

SPAIN

ELET problem is severe in the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands, which has an ELET rate of 15.4% (2021) and 18,2% in 2022 (Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 2023). In this region, the economy is focused primarily on tourism with a labour market traditionally characterised by the easy recruitment of young people without qualifications, acting as an attraction for the young population and specifically for those disengaged from the educational system (Adame & Salvà, 2010). Paradoxically, in the long-term, youth with a low level of education face the highest rates of unemployment.
Profile of ELET students: male, immigrant context, social disadvantaged
Determinants:
- Non comprehensive and rigid educational system
- Lack of academic and professional guidance in the educational system
- Labour market acts as an attraction for those experiencing more difficulties at school.
Mechanisms and practices hidden:
The European strategic framework for education and training 2030 sets a target of reducing the ELET to 9% (European Union Council, 2021). Currently, the Spanish strategy to achieve this objective is based on the reform of the education system with the approval of a new education law (Organic Law 3/2020) which aims to reduce economic, social, cultural and territorial inequalities in education, to improve student's competencies and to develop school guidance and educational support programmes. At the same time, policies are being designed for the development and transformation of vocational training, offering a wider range of training courses adapted to the actual demands of the labour market and the approval of a new vocational education and training law (Organic Law 3/2022) whose main objective is to improve the quality of this stage in order to reduce dropout rates and improve the employability of young people.

PORTUGAL

According to young adults, among the various reasons to dropout school, the "desire to start working" is the main reason, followed by "not liking to study", "wanting to take another course that did not exist at school", "lack of economic resources" and "not liking school" (Doroftei, 2021). In another perspective, according to Santos et. al (2020) there are several critical moments in the young adults' educational trajectories that appeared to motivate them to leave school. Those critical moments are related to bullying and violence, educational transitions and the difficulty of adapting to new schools, lack of socio-emotional support and caring relationships, and no link between education and the 'real

world'.
Portugal has made a great progress in improving the data of the European statistical indicator ELET (Early Leavers from Education and Training), which in 2000 stood at 43.7%, in 2010 at 28.3% and, in 2020 had a rate of 8.9%, below the European target of 10% set for the year 2020. Some measures may have had an effect on this reduction in the rate of ELET such as the extension of compulsory schooling for 18 years of age, or 12 school years implemented in 2009, the implementation of the project of autonomy and curricular flexibility of lower and upper secondary education, as well as the profile of students on the dropout of compulsory schooling (Doroftei, 2021).
In 2022, Portugal had a rate of 6%, which represents a reduction of approximately 3% compared to 2020, already exceeding the European target of 9% set for 2030. In 2021, 83% of young adults, between 25 and 34 years old, had completed secondary education, which in 2011 had a rate of 56%. This increase might be explained by the introduction of more options on secondary vocational education, which was particularly noticeable from 2005 onwards, when it was generalised to public schools, and was reinforced in the following years with the aim of school failure and dropout rates.
But if we look more deeply into Portugal's reality, we realise there is a disparity between regions. For example, in Azores, in 2021, the ELET rate was at 23.2%, that his four-time higher rate than the national average. The highest rates, in comparison to national average, were in 2019 (more recent data), in the Algarve and the Alentejo regions, with 19.9% and 12.7% rates, respectively. The lowest rate, in 2021, right after the Centre Region, the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, and the Northern Region, was 10.6% in Madeira Islands.
In the context of second-chance education, the students more affected with the risk of ELET have been identified (Mesquita, & Hardalova, 2019; Fundação José Neves, 2023), as being mostly students (1) with disadvantaged economic backgrounds, (2) living in deprived regions (e.g. Algarve and Azores), (3) in families with reduced educational qualifications, (4) having experienced repeated retention, academic failure or problematic educational transitions, (5) having experienced bullying, violence, learning difficulties, psychological disturbances or problematic socioemotional self-regulation.

Comparative perspective

As the above descriptions of the mechanisms explaining ELET issues in different countries/regions show, the phenomenon is very complex and entangled at many levels. Disentangling the web of interdependencies is not as simple as it might seem. For example, early school leavers are seen as the potential unemployed or at least as people who may have certain difficulties in entering the labour market. This is in contrast with the results of research, which show that the most common reason for abandoning the school education is taking up a job accompanied by the inability to reconcile work and study (see: Doll, Eslami & Walters, 2013; Doroftei, 2021; Tomaszewska-Pękała, Marchlik & Wrona, 2015).
The problem in this case turns out to be that the career choices of young people who do not complete school replicate social inequalities. Without education and relevant qualifications, these young people mainly take on low-skilled, blue-collar jobs that seem attractive and lucrative at the time. However, in the long run, they bring lower incomes and are fraught with other disadvantages and risks which further expose them to a higher risk of unemployment, dependence on the welfare system in the future (Boylan & Renzulli, 2017). On the other hand, it shows the deficiencies of the education systems - the lack of adequate career guidance and flexible learning paths to combine study and work, but also the lack of holistic support for disadvantaged families, which imposes the need for young people to undertake work in order to improve the economic situation of their household.

Furthermore, a separate exclusion mechanism worth noting, is the lack of adequate and sufficient emotional, psychological support and monitoring of pupils' well-being. This results in students who experience violence, peer bullying, or otherness (e.g. LGBT+ students, or ethnic minority students) being pushed out of schools.

4. Description of the working areas (implementing 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 (4 out of 5) the project was delivered in schools, organised within or outside the conventional education system. Regardless, the project targeted institutions that work with groups of children and young people at risk of dropping out of the education system. Below there are short descrptions of the institutions which implemented the COSI.ed model in five participating European countries.

NORWAY

In Norway, the project was implemented at Kragerø Upper Secondary School, a local vocational upper secondary school located in a rural area of the South-Eastern part of the country. The school employs approximately 40 teachers and 30 other staff members and is situated in one of Norway's most picturesque coastal regions. The geographic location presents challenges for some students, particularly those residing on surrounding islands who must travel long distances and take ferries to attend school. Additionally, the local economy relies heavily on seasonal work, predominantly during the summer months, which adds complexity to the job market. At Kragerø Upper Secondary School, students are divided into seven specialized subjects, encompassing both university-preparatory and vocational tracks. Vocational studies, including technology and industry, construction, and health, offer students the opportunity to obtain a trade certificate after two years at school and two years in an apprenticeship (company). There is also a dedicated class focused on "Work and Everyday Life Training." The project is centered around the specialized subject of "technology and industry" (TEK). The school serves a region characterized by high social diversity, with refugee, affluent, and low-income groups residing within the area. The choice of school often depends heavily on the ability to commute and the feasibility of living outside one's permanent place of residence due to significant distances to cover. Kragerø Upper Secondary School may not always be the first-choice institution for its students due to these factors, resulting in a low application rate and challenges in academic performance. Consequently, the school faces greater difficulties in including and motivating students for learning compared to others.

DENMARK

FGU NORDVEST, where the project was implemented, is a Preparatory Basic Education and Training[8] institution, a novel addition to Denmark's education system. Each FGU institution operates across multiple municipalities, with FGU NORDVEST serving the Morsø, Thisted, and Jammerbugt municipalities in Jutland. With a staff of 55 and approximately 230 young people/students, its mission is to enhance the vocational, personal, and social skills of individuals under 25 years old. The ultimate aim is to facilitate their entry into the education system or workforce as swiftly as possible. FGU places a strong emphasis on creating a meaningful teaching and learning environment for its students. This approach is founded on a holistic didactic framework, wherein learning occurs within specific contexts, often involving authentic tasks tailored by teachers for their students. The institution's pedagogical philosophy prioritizes the integration of real-world experiences and local contexts into the learning process, fostering a deeper and more relevant educational experience for its students.

[8] See more: https://eng.uvm.dk/upper-secondary-education/preparatory-basic-education-and-training--fgu-

POLAND

The "Dom przy Rynku" Special Educational Centre (SOW), formerly known as the Youth Sociotherapy Centre, in Warsaw, where the project was implemented within the 1st cycle, is not a school but a public municipal facility providing care and education for students who are receiving education outside their permanent place of residence. "Dom przy Rynku" is organized as a co-educational facility providing care during the school year (from September to June) for 40 residential students, typically aged 13-18, from primary and secondary schools. Although the facility does not have a school on its premises, it offers education to its residents in district public schools in the city of Warsaw. When necessary, it arranges placements in vocational training schools and special education schools. During school days, young people reside at the center, where they have their meals and transportation to and from school. They receive 24-hour care, meals, educational, and therapeutic support. They return home on weekends. Participants may live in the Specjalny Ośrodek Wychowawczy „Dom przy Rynku" for several weeks to several years.

During the second cycle, the project was implemented at The Youth Sociotherapy Centre No. 4. Originally established for boys and since school year 2023/24 also for girls, aged 13-24, who experience learning difficulties and are at risk of social maladjustment due to family or environmental challenges, this public institution provides sociotherapeutic and therapeutic support. The center's mission is to address the root causes of behavioral disorders and equip its alumni for independent living, empowering them to make informed decisions about their educational and professional paths. At the center, various interventions are employed, including cognitive-behavioral training, sociotherapy, and participation in interest groups, fostering personal development opportunities for its residents. Additionally, Primary School No. 347 operates within the premises, offering students the chance to catch up on missed school work and pursue extracurricular interests through pedagogical therapy, remedial classes, and interest groups. The establishment also boasts CXLI Secondary School, further enhancing educational opportunities for its residents. Collaboration with families is a cornerstone of the center's approach, aiming to create a supportive environment conducive to positive behavioral and academic outcomes for its residents. Facilities include all-day meals, conducive learning environments, accommodation in 4-bedded living rooms for 60 individuals, recreational spaces such as a common room, library, computer room, gym, TV room, and laundry facilities. Furthermore, the center offers vocational courses leading to qualifications, enhancing residents' prospects for future employment and independent living. Through a comprehensive array of services and support mechanisms, The Youth Sociotherapy Centre No. 4 strives to empower its residents to overcome challenges and achieve their full potential.

The primary goal of both facilities is to prepare and integrate young individuals into society, rebuild family ties, and reintegrate children into their families. They offer educational and therapeutic support aimed at improving academic and social skills. Educational efforts focus on developing fundamental psychosocial skills, self-control, adaptive behavior, and emotional regulation techniques, tailored to individual needs and abilities. These activities are carried out by educators and specialists. Additionally, the centers promote pupil development through extracurricular activities, fostering their interests. They collaborate with families to enhance parenting skills. Both institutions have a team of educators specialized in re-socialization, a sociotherapist, a psychologist, and an addiction therapist. Staff members are experienced in working with children and young people at risk of social exclusion.

These institutions are not depicted in the diagram illustrating the structure of the education system in Poland. They function as support and care centers for learners attending primary (ISCED 1 and 2) and secondary (ISCED 3) schools of all types. Admission to both institutions is contingent upon a specialized assessment of the risk of social maladjustment. A pupil is placed in the SOW/MOS upon the request of the child's parent(s)/legal guardian(s). The Education Department of the Capital City of Warsaw oversees the establishments, while pedagogical supervision is under the Mazovian Educational

Superintendent. Both centers operate as budgetary units of the Capital City of Warsaw.

PORTUGAL

AE20 - Associação para a Educação de Segunda Oportunidade, a partner in the project, is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that operates a second-chance school - Escola de Segunda Oportunidade de Matosinhos. Second-chance schools are designed to address a specific issue: young people leaving school without acquiring the minimum qualifications necessary for employment or further training opportunities.
The primary challenge of Escola de Segunda Oportunidade de Matosinhos is to provide young people with the necessary support to either enter the job market or continue their educational journey, while also fostering their social inclusion. Each year, the school offers up to 70 young individuals a new chance at quality training tailored to their needs and interests.
The school collaborates with elementary (2nd cycle), lower, and upper secondary education institutions, as well as vocational training providers. Referrals come from various sources, including court support teams for young offenders, social services, mainstream schools, and peer networks. Certified by the national agency DGERT as an accredited training provider, Escola de Segunda Oportunidade de Matosinhos follows a holistic pedagogical approach, promoting dynamic connections between subjects. Students develop their Individual Training Plans, which encompass vocational, artistic, academic, personal, and social skills. Personal and social education is integrated across various media to address issues within group, individual, or family settings.
E2OM serves as a critical second-chance education platform, directly tackling the issue of early school leaving among young people lacking essential qualifications for employment or further education. Many of these individuals lack key skills vital for successful social and occupational integration. The institution focuses on three key areas: providing tailored educational programs to help young people acquire essential qualifications, emphasizing skill development in social and vocational domains crucial for integration into society and the workforce, and offering comprehensive guidance and support to ensure holistic development.
The main challenge faced by Escola de Segunda Oportunidade de Matosinhos is multifaceted, involving not only equipping young individuals with qualifications and skills for employment or further education but also ensuring their social inclusion. This requires a holistic, individualized approach deeply connected to the needs of young people, addressing educational gaps and fostering the development of crucial life skills.

SPAIN

Sociedad Cooperativa Jovent is a non-profit organization dedicated to addressing the social and educational needs of young people and other vulnerable groups. The Jovent Center, where the project is implemented, offers programs outside the formal education system. These services are funded by the Employment Service of the Balearic Islands, meaning that young people who come to Jovent may or may not have completed their formal education successfully. To address various needs, Jovent has developed a support program with key elements including providing information, developing personal and work skills, assisting in job searches, offering vocational training courses for employment, and providing dual training opportunities. Since it operates parallel to the formal education system, it offers the possibility of validating professional certificates. The Youth Center creates several courses annually for young people aged 16 to 29. Each course is staffed by two professionals (a technical trainer and an educator) for every 16 students, and all courses are free. Professional certificates offer the opportunity for immediate entry into the job market with qualified training, regardless of whether regulated studies have been completed.
During the 2nd cycle, the project was also implemented in Naüm. The initial vocational qualification training programs (PCPI) offered by Naüm are equivalent to Basic Vocational Training and enable

students to obtain a compulsory secondary education diploma as well as a level 1 certificate of professionalism. These programs are part of the regular education system and can be conducted in Secondary Education Institutes or in social entities supported by the Ministry of Education or regional education administrations. Naüm's socio-educational project aims to promote the social inclusion and holistic development of children, adolescents, young people, and their families. To achieve this, Naüm employs a proactive and participatory methodology to fully integrate these groups into various social, educational, cultural, health, and psychosocial aspects of the community, addressing their vulnerability and social exclusion with a critical, empowering, and encouraging approach. Naüm offers a range of services to children, preschool children, youth, and families, including training services, job training and guidance, social care, and community development and networking services. The COSI.ed model is applied in Naüm to initial vocational qualification training programs, enabling students to obtain a compulsory secondary education diploma along with a level 1 certificate of professionalism.

4.1. Description of the Role Models

There are both immediate and indirect target groups for the project. The immediate target groups in COSI.ed are disadvantaged learners in transition, who are at risk of not completing their educational pathway and educational staff working with the disadvantaged learners being role models. The role model is someone the young people look up to and learn from, either professional teachers or students. Someone whose story can inspire young people in need of guidance. A good role model motivates students to pursue their inner potentials, inspires them (European Union, 2018; Gladstone & Cimpian, 2021). Within this project the role model figure is a trained and well prepared adult, who experienced the MaCE model and is well-equipped to use it with the young people in his/her local context after the training. The role models differ from country to country and are suited for the target group they work with. Their task is to follow up and work with the target groups to uncover beneficiaries deficits, needs and potential for development.

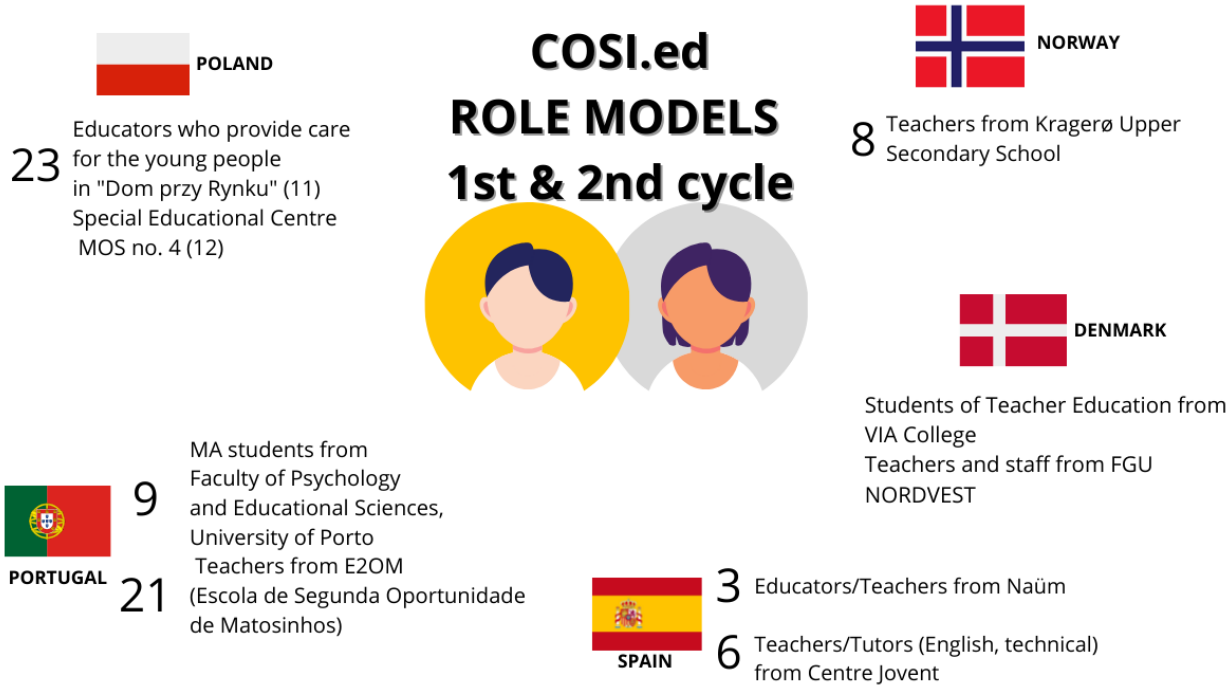
4.1.1 Tailored Role Models: A Core Component of the COSI.ed Project

As intended, the selection of role models for project work was dependent on the context of the partner country. In 2 countries (Denmark and Portugal) university/college students of education were involved to work with young people as role models. In 4 countries where the COSI.ed project was implemented in schools, teachers were engaged. Additionally, in some implementing institutions there were two different groups of adults from which the role models came (e.g teachers and university students). In Poland, educators mentioned are mostly people with a pedagogical degree in re-socialisation pedagogy or with pedagogical preparation and courses for postgraduate studies in re-socialisation pedagogy, social prevention, care and social education.

The selection of role models for the COSI.ed project was intentionally tailored to fit the unique contexts and needs of each implementing institution involved in the project. This approach ensured that the role models were not only relatable to the young people they were working with but also possessed the relevant skills and backgrounds to effectively support and inspire them.

By selecting role models that fit the specific educational and social contexts of each country, the COSI.ed project maximized its relevance and effectiveness. Whether through university students in Denmark and Portugal, teachers in various schools, or specialized educators in Poland, the tailored approach ensured that young people received the most appropriate and impactful guidance and support. This strategic selection process was instrumental in fostering positive educational outcomes and promoting the overall success of the project across diverse settings.

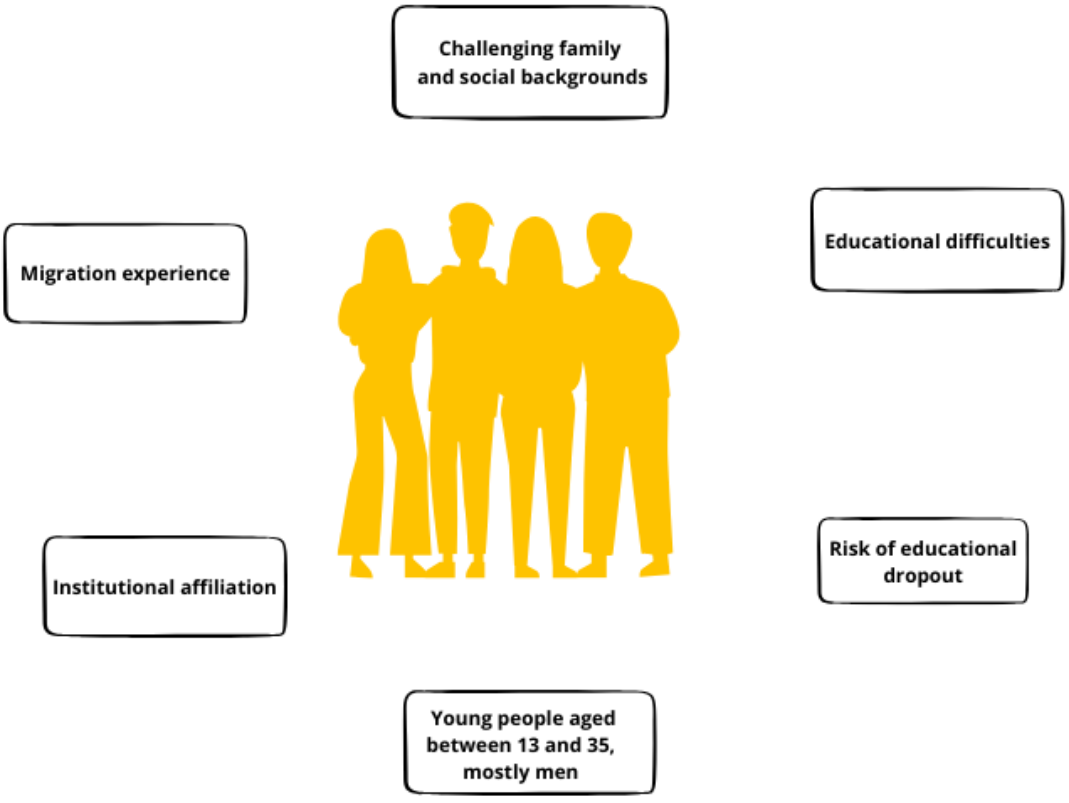
Graph 3. COSI.ed Role Models - 1st & 2nd cycle.



5. Description of the target groups

In the context of the COSI.ed project, the direct target group has been **carefully defined to encompass a broad spectrum of diversity across various institutional settings.** Each participating country has chosen distinct groups, allowing the project to engage with different forms of diversity and tailor its approach to meet the specific needs of these groups.
Generally, the direct target group within the COSI.ed project can be characterized by the attributes presented in the graph below.

Graph 4. COSI.ed target group - Young People - 1st & 2nd cycle.



- **Age range and gender**

The target group is predominantly male, likely reflecting the specific demographics and needs of the young people involved. Young people aged between 13 and 35.

- **Family and social backgrounds**

Many of these individuals come from complex and often challenging family and social environments, which can significantly impact their educational and personal development.

- **Migration experience**

A notable segment of the target group includes young people with migration backgrounds. These individuals may face unique challenges related to integration, language barriers, and cultural adaptation.

- **Educational difficulties**

Individuals facing challenges in their educational journeys, which may include academic struggles, learning disabilities, or previous educational disengagement.

- **Risk of educational dropout**

The project focuses on youth who are at risk of dropping out of the education system. This includes those who have already disengaged but have subsequently re-engaged in education or training through the project's interventions.

- **Institutional affiliation**

Youth who are part of the institutions selected for the COSI.ed project. These institutions play a crucial role in supporting and engaging young people facing difficulties.

This inclusive and diverse characterization ensures that the COSI.ed project can address a wide range of needs and provide tailored support to young people who face significant barriers to educational and social success.

NORWAY

In Norway the target group consists of students of vocational Kragerø Upper Secondary School, aged 17-35, mostly those enrolled in the first and second years (VG1 and VG2; age 16-17) of the vocational program in technology and industrial subjects, faces a variety of challenges influenced by both their educational backgrounds and the socio-economic conditions of their community.
Many of these students have struggled academically since primary school, encountering a demanding educational environment with little tailored support to meet their individual needs. A significant number of them have diagnoses that affect their ability to concentrate, making it difficult to meet established learning outcomes. These challenges are compounded for students who are unable to fully engage with either the standard educational framework or specialized programs designed for those requiring additional support. Moreover, theoretical subjects, perceived as disconnected from practical applications and their chosen vocational paths, pose additional hurdles for many students. Kragerø is a rural area characterized by a low socio-economic status and high unemployment rates. The municipality faces considerable socio-economic challenges, including unemployment, poverty, and a high dependency on state benefits. This context significantly influences the students' educational experiences and future opportunities. Many families in the area have a background in skilled crafts, particularly boat building, which traditionally does not prioritize higher education. Consequently, the community has a relatively low average level of education, and limited local job opportunities often necessitate commuting. The typical demographic of the vocational program students is predominantly male, and a notable portion are first-generation immigrants, making them particularly vulnerable. These students generally enter with lower grades than their peers at other vocational schools, reflecting the broader challenges of the area. The socio-economic and cultural dynamics in Kragerø also affect young people's sense of integration and participation in various societal structures, influencing their living conditions, educational engagement, and overall sense of belonging.

DENMARK

Young people in Denmark are students of FGU NORDVEST, aged 15-25 years old. They are young people who face educational challenges and who need to develop either professional skills and/or social skills, before they are ready to attend further ordinary education or employment. The target group is diverse in terms of socio-economic background, interests, resources and expectations for their

own future. A part of the target group finds the normal school system inadequate ("too bookish"), that is why they need other school environments to stay in the educational system.

POLAND

In Poland, COSI.ed project focuses on a specific group of students at a crucial transition point in their educational journey. This target group includes students from 7th and 8th grades: These are young adolescents aged between 13/14 and 15/16 years old who are transitioning from primary to secondary education, who are beneficiaries of Specjalny Ośrodek Wychowawczy „Dom przy Rynku" orMOS No. 4. These institutions serve students who concurrently benefit from specialized support programs aimed at addressing their unique needs.
Both the Specjalny Ośrodek Wychowawczy „Dom przy Rynku" and MOS No. 4 have extensive experience working with young people who face a variety of challenges, including behavioral issues and difficulties in their natural environments. These centers are dedicated to supporting pupils who are at risk of social exclusion due to a combination of developmental disorders, learning difficulties, and challenges in social functioning.
The students often exhibit behavioral problems both at school and in their home environments. These behaviors may disrupt their learning processes and social interactions. Many of these young people have developmental disorders and learning difficulties that impede their academic progress and social integration. The target group frequently struggles with forming and maintaining healthy relationships with peers and adults, further complicating their educational and social development. A significant number come from disadvantaged backgrounds where their families are unable or ill-equipped to provide the necessary support to overcome their problems. This lack of proper family support often contributes to their academic failures and social difficulties.
The Specjalny Ośrodek Wychowawczy „Dom przy Rynku" and MOS No. 4 play a pivotal role in providing tailored educational interventions to help students overcome academic challenges and achieve success in their studies as well as helping students develop better social skills and healthier ways of interacting with their peers and adults.

PORTUGAL

The target group for both cycles of the COSI.ed project in E2OM comprises young individuals who have dropped out of traditional educational pathways and are enrolled in programs aimed at providing them with a second chance at education. These individuals, primarily residing in Matosinhos and surrounding municipalities within the Greater Porto area, are typically between the ages of 15 and 25 years old. Identified by local childhood and youth services, they have discontinued their schooling before completing compulsory education, possess limited qualifications, and face risks of social exclusion. Despite various interventions, they have yet to find success in general academic or vocational education and training (VET) programs.
Most participants in both implementation cycles are male, with an average age of 17 years. Their formal attendance at their respective second chance schools has been relatively brief, averaging around 1 year and 3 months. This demographic profile underscores the pressing need for targeted interventions and support to address the educational and social challenges faced by this vulnerable group of young people.

SPAIN

The target group in Palma de Mallorca consists of young people enrolled in two Vocational and Training Centres (Jovent and Naüm), aged between 15 and 29 years old, representing six different nationalities. The majority are Spanish, with the remainder hailing from Guinea, Ecuador, Senegal, Colombia, and

Bulgaria. Notably, two Spanish youths reside in juvenile facilities, and one has a recognized mental disability. Additionally, three young people from Guinea and one from Senegal are unaccompanied foreign minors living in juvenile facilities. The context varies, particularly for migrants, who have firsthand experience with such challenges.
These individuals come from diverse educational backgrounds, with some having dropped out of compulsory education while others possess higher education qualifications. Generally, they exhibit low motivation for academic training and prioritize gaining practical skills for employment. Remuneration is a significant factor for them, as they often work in addition to receiving training. The group is predominantly male, with only one female participant. Some have prior work experience, while others are entering the workforce for the first time. They come from families with varied structures and socio-economic backgrounds, with many originating from different countries.

5.1. Research samples

According to the application, the target group in each country is about 10-30 young disadvantaged learners. This amounts to at least about 130 young people in the immediate target groups within the whole project (2 cycles).
Only during the 1st cycle of COSI.ed project implementation, role models have managed to work with over 100 young people, some of whom form the research sample. While the role models worked with a significant group of young people, it was not always possible to collect data or to interview all project beneficiaries, often for organisational reasons, due to their mobility, change of institution or other life circumstances. **The general sample was dependent and limited by data availability.**
The research sample from the 1st cycle alone consists of 91 young people, aged 13-32, 69 of whom were male. Some of them already had the experience of school disengagement. The youngest and least age-diverse participants included in the research sample were from Poland and their educational trajectories were not that turbulent which is probably due to their being the youngest among participants. According to available data, the most experienced in the context of being outside the education system is the Portuguese sample, followed by the Danish one.
Below are the overall summary data from two implementation cycles of the project. This summary provides an overview of the project's scope, the abbreviated demographics of the target group regarding school experiences and also pictures challenges encountered during data collection. Many participants faced issues related to mobility and changes in their institutional contexts, which affected the ability to maintain consistent data collection.

Table 3. General description of the research sample 1st and 2nd cycle.

	COUNTRY					TOTAL
	NORWAY	**DENMARK**	**POLAND**	**PORTUGAL**	**SPAIN**	
sample size	37	40	33	36	36	182
age span	16-32	15-25	13-16	15-18+	15-29	13-32
average age	16,7	18,5	15	N/A	20,6	17,1 in NOR, DK, PL, ES
male/ female/ nonbinary	34/3/0	21/19/0	28/5/0	24/11/1	35/1/0	142/39/1

years of schooling completed - average	10,25	10	6,4	6,4	9,8	8,6
ESL/ELET or dropout from compulsory education YES/NO	N/A	10/30	0/33	36/0	17/19	N/A in NOR 63/82 in DK, PL, PT, ES

The COSI.ed project successfully reached and worked with a broad group of disadvantaged learners across different countries. Despite challenges in data collection due to the dynamic nature of the participants' lives, the project provided valuable insights into the experiences and needs of young people at risk of educational disengagement. The findings underscore the importance of tailored support and intervention strategies to address the unique challenges faced by these learners in different national contexts.

6. Results on the impact of the COSI.ed project

6.1. School atmosphere and relationships

6.1.1. School atmosphere

Introduction

Institutional climate has recently become a prominent topic for both academic reflection and discussions among specialists and practitioners. It refers to how teachers and students perceive their working and learning environment, and how this perception influences their behavior. Early educational reformers, such as Dewey (1916) and Durkheim (1961), recognized that the distinctive culture of a school affects the lives and learning experiences of its students. Subsequent scholars have also highlighted the significance of school culture/climate, noting that factors such as group size, students' relationships with teachers, and their perceptions of these relationships are crucial for students' development (Block, 2011).
Cohen (2009) further emphasizes the role of institutional climate in shaping student behavior and academic performance. He asserts that it is instrumental in fostering the growth and learning necessary for youth to thrive and contribute meaningfully to a democratic society. A positive institutional climate includes norms, values, and expectations that prioritize the well-being of individuals, ensuring they feel socially, emotionally, and physically secure within the school community. In such an environment, everyone is actively engaged and valued, promoting a sense of respect and belonging among all members.
In our project, we explored students' and role models' perceptions of changes in implementing institutional climate, which we understand as a crucial indicator of the quality of relationships within institutions and a prerequisite for positive change and development.

NORWAY

The majority of students reported a noticeable improvement in the school atmosphere over time, with various factors contributing to this positive change. This enhancement was especially evident in Norway, where students expressed a significant increase in their sense of comfort. Despite still finding academic subjects challenging and less relevant compared to vocational ones, students now enjoy school in a new way, appreciating the inclusive and respectful environment.
Key factors influencing the improved atmosphere included workshops focused on professional well-being, progress in learning, and a sense of accomplishment. Students valued their supportive relationships with teachers and peers, and the school's efforts to tailor activities to their abilities and developmental pace. Enjoyable aspects of school life, such as outdoor barbecues, festive decorations, and treats, also played a role.
Kristoffer, a student, rated the school atmosphere 9 out of 10, highlighting the excellent relationships with teachers and fellow students. Many students noted that relationships with teachers had strengthened, with teachers becoming more relationally competent and attentive. Johan pointed out that familiarity with teachers had improved classroom dynamics, while Bent appreciated the personal interest teachers took in students' lives beyond academics. Mona felt particularly supported by her teachers on difficult days, acknowledging their sensitivity to students' emotional states.
In Norway, the vocational workshops were particularly appreciated. Students enjoyed the practical subjects and the hands-on learning experiences they provided. They emphasized the school's efforts to adapt activities to their abilities and pace of development, fostering an inclusive and supportive atmosphere. This adaptation not only improved the teacher-student relationship but also promoted a collaborative environment among students.

For instance, one student expressed enthusiasm for the workshop, saying: “What I think is good about the workshop is working there and learning new things and getting good at it. The most fun is using the lathe, making nice things, and learning new things. It could be useful when I now have to work at (the company). You can also work a little freely then and such... you can choose more yourself, what you want to work on, and things like that.”
Bent also highlighted the value of engaging in more challenging and advanced tasks in the workshop, saying: “The best thing now is that we get to do something new, something advanced in the workshop. So you have to think and figure it out. Don’t just do such easy things over and over again. I like it when I learn something new in the workshop.”
Conversely, two students did not perceive an improvement in the school atmosphere, largely due to personal challenges and school-related issues. However, a third student, who initially shared similar difficulties, acknowledged significant improvement thanks to support from health professionals, teachers, and parents.
Overall, the improved school atmosphere is attributed to stronger teacher-student relationships, engaging and adaptive activities, and a supportive and responsive environment. The interviews and images collected during the project underscore these findings, showing how the sense of community and belonging has been enhanced for most students.

DENMARK

At FGU, students have experienced a secure and supportive environment characterized by more balanced and meaningful interactions with their teachers. This nurturing atmosphere has led to a significant increase in their sense of comfort and confidence. Many students appreciate that the activities are tailored to meet their individual needs, which enhances their sense of capability. This personalized approach, coupled with a more informal teaching style, has positively transformed young people's perceptions of education and the institution itself.
The majority of students believe that the atmosphere at FGU is positive, largely due to the strong relationships between teachers and students. These connections foster a sense of familiarity and closeness, contributing to a strong sense of community. As one participant shared, “I think everything is good; the sense of community, the way we communicate with each other.” Another echoed this sentiment, noting, “Everyone can talk to each other, and no one feels left out. There is room for all individuals.”
However, there are areas for improvement. Some students feel frustrated when their voices are not taken seriously by teachers, with one expressing, “When the teacher doesn't take what I say seriously or doesn't respect what I say.” Additionally, while FGU is generally regarded as a good place, the presence of many people can sometimes lead to irritation, as another student pointed out, “I think FGU is a good place, but there are many people here, and it can easily irritate me.”
Overall, FGU's commitment to a personalized and inclusive educational approach has created a positive and engaging environment for its students.

POLAND

When asked about the image and climate of the facility, respondents indicated a significant relationship with some adults. They spoke of a good general relationship with the educators, although they did not appear in their final spontaneous description of the facility. However, when asked if the educators are important - the statement is clear - yes, they are. In a free conversation, students' complaints were focused on the points system[9] - used in one of the institutions, which was not clear

[9] In order to standardise behavioural assessments and make them more objective, a points-based system for young peoples’ behaviour evaluation has been introduced in one of the institutions. For positive and negative

and fair for the respondents.
What is more, the participants are all sure that staying at the centre is beneficial because of the tutors' help with learning. However, some social divisions were repeatedly mentioned by young people, including inter-group conflicts with violence or abuse symptoms. During the initial group activity, young people also pointed out the problem of substance abuse and alcohol as quite common in the facility. They state that there should be some changes in personnel, because not every educator is connecting well with the youngsters. Improving living conditions as well as increasing the range of after-school activities available would be desirable.
According to the staff, the working atmosphere at the facility was good and they formed a close-knit team. They could count on mutual support within the team. However, when asked about the climate, they do not make much reference to the students. Nevertheless, when asked directly about the effects of the project, they indicate its effectiveness reflected in improvement of the contact with young people they have worked with. Both sides emphasised the huge importance of students one-on-one time with role models, based on the project's methodological guidelines.

PORTUGAL

The follow-up questionnaires and conversations with both young people and staff at E2OM reveal a complex picture of the school's environment. Many young people express a strong appreciation for their relationships with teachers. Thirteen respondents specifically highlighted this as a significant positive aspect. Staff observations echo this sentiment, noting that interactions between students and teachers have become more emotional, less suspicious, and marked by greater cordiality and reduced animosity. This positive dynamic contributes to a supportive and engaging learning atmosphere.
The school environment itself is another positive aspect, appreciated by young people. They also value the freedom they experience at E2OM and the diverse opportunities the school provides. The support from professionals at the school is another commonly praised element, fostering a sense of community and belonging among students. Furthermore, certain disciplinary areas, such as Arts and History, are particularly favored by the students, indicating strong interest or perhaps exceptional teaching in these subjects.
However, the negative aspects are significant and cannot be overlooked. The most pressing issue is the poor physical condition of the E2OM building. This concern is pervasive across various feedback sources. Three young people in the initial questionnaires explicitly stated their desire for better building conditions, with specific complaints about water infiltration. During a recent Consultation and Coordination Group session, a young participant suggested the need for a new building. Conversations with both students and staff have underscored the discomfort caused by the building's structural problems and inadequate conditions for studying, learning, and working. People reportedly have to wear coats indoors due to the cold, highlighting the urgent need for improvements. Additionally, the ongoing delay in securing municipal approval for rebuilding or renovation adds to the frustration.
Another significant issue is the lack of an upper secondary level at E2OM, which was a source of dissatisfaction for nine young people. This limitation might restrict their educational progression within the institution. Issues with peer respect were also reported by four young people, suggesting challenges in the social dynamics among the student body. Additionally, both students and staff have commented on the outdated equipment and resources, which are part of the broader dissatisfaction with the school's physical learning environment. Despite the positive relationships and supportive opportunities, addressing these critical areas is essential to improve the overall experience at E2OM for both students and staff.

actions points are being awarded or removed. Privileges (e.g. free time in the afternoon) or their loss are determined by the points accumulated by the student.

SPAIN

Participants initially describe their experience in school as challenging and isolating, often feeling like an impersonal and distant space where they struggled to fit in. They perceive school as:

- unproductive or useless,
- an obligatory burden,
- uncomfortable and hostile.

In stark contrast, their experience at Jovent and Naüm - centres applying the COSI methodology - represents a significant shift. The participants now view these centres as:

- sources of productive learning,
- opportunities for personal and professional growth,
- safe and welcoming spaces.

This change in perception is especially profound for young individuals with a background of school dropout. Their initial negative outlook on formal education has been transformed into a constructive and hopeful perspective. Jovent and Naüm are now seen as free and voluntary choices that align with their future goals.

The participants describe the atmosphere at these centres as safe and liberating, rooted in the trust and respect provided by the teachers. These educators are no longer seen as authoritarian figures but as approachable role models who listen, help, and guide through direct and personalized involvement. This close, trust-based relationship with teachers is fundamental to the participants' positive experiences at Jovent and Naüm.

As a result, the centres have become pleasant environments where students can establish and strengthen relationships with both classmates and teachers. This nurturing atmosphere is vital, with 15 of the 22 participants in follow-up interviews highlighting its importance in their success, self-esteem, and future opportunities. The integration of practical and theoretical learning at Jovent and Naüm further enhances their enjoyment and engagement in the educational process.

Ultimately, this transformation underscores a significant healing of their prior destructive view of formal learning. The supportive and personalized approach at Jovent and Naüm has not only improved their educational aspirations but also expanded their real options to better their social situation in the future.

Comparative perspective

Across five European settings, young people have expressed their perspectives on the climate of educational institutions, particularly focusing on several key areas of improvement. These insights are crucial for understanding how to create more supportive and effective learning environments.

Students emphasize the importance of a strong, trusting relationship with teachers. This bond is seen as crucial for their academic success and personal growth.

With the introduction of the COSI.ed methodology, students reported a significant improvement in how they relate to their teachers. They perceive their educators not just as instructors but as mentors and allies who are invested in their success. This shift has fostered a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Young people value the opportunity to form individual connections within the educational setting. Personalized attention and the ability to build unique relationships with both peers and teachers are seen as essential for their development. The COSI.ed approach has facilitated the creation of these individual relationships by emphasizing tailored interactions and personal involvement. This has helped students feel more connected and supported on a personal level, enhancing their overall educational experience.

There is a strong desire among students for institutions to foster and expand their creative abilities. They believe that creativity is a crucial component of their education that can be enhanced through

innovative teaching methods and opportunities for self-expression. The COSI.ed project has made strides in promoting creativity by integrating practical and theoretical learning and encouraging innovative thinking. This approach has allowed students to explore and develop their creative potential in ways that traditional educational methods may not have supported.
Students call for improved physical and social conditions within their schools. They highlight the need for comfortable, well-equipped, and aesthetically pleasing environments that are conducive to learning. While the COSI.ed methodology has positively influenced the overall atmosphere of the institutions, there are ongoing challenges in ensuring that all physical conditions meet students' expectations. Continued efforts are needed to enhance the learning environment fully.
Young people stress the need for institutions to provide relevant educational offerings, effective training methodologies, and accessible counselling services. These elements are seen as vital for their academic and personal development. The implementation of COSI.ed has improved the alignment of educational offerings and methodologies with students' needs. However, there remains a necessity to continually adapt and refine these services to ensure they remain appropriate and effective.
Students acknowledge the importance of proactive measures to address and prevent risky behaviours. They advocate for programs and policies that promote safety and well-being. The COSI.ed methodology has contributed to creating a safer and more responsive environment by incorporating preventive strategies into the educational framework. Nevertheless, ongoing vigilance and improvement in these areas are necessary to address emerging challenges.
A safe and positive atmosphere is paramount for students, along with the cultivation of strong peer relationships. They believe that a supportive social environment is essential for their overall well-being and success. The introduction of COSI.ed has significantly enhanced the sense of safety and community within the institutions. Students report a more welcoming and positive atmosphere, where peer relationships are encouraged and nurtured.

Conclusion

In general, the climate of institutions implementing the COSI.ed methodology is perceived positively by students. They appreciate the efforts to create a supportive, engaging, and enriching educational environment. This positive shift is often highlighted in contrast to their experiences in more traditional educational settings, which they view as less supportive and more impersonal. However, some weaknesses and areas for improvement remain. For instance, while relational dynamics and creative opportunities have improved, physical conditions and the need for continual adaptation in educational offerings and preventive measures require ongoing attention.
The voices of young people highlight the significant impact of the COSI.ed methodology in transforming the educational climate. Their insights underscore the importance of nurturing strong teacher-student relationships, fostering creativity, and ensuring a safe and supportive environment. While there are areas that still need to be addressed, the overall positive reception of the COSI.ed project suggests that it has been a substantial step forward in creating more effective and engaging educational settings across Europe.

6.1.2. Changes in young people's perception of their relationship with peers

Establishing a healthy relationship with the environment in an educational setting encompasses more than just improving interactions with teachers and staff. It also involves fostering positive coexistence within the peer group. As Long, Zucca, and Sweeting (2021) emphasize, this holistic approach to the educational environment acknowledges the significance of the relationships students have with their peers in classrooms, common areas, and shared activities.
Understanding the impact of initiatives like the COSI.ed project requires examining not only changes in teacher-student dynamics but also shifts in peer interactions. By asking young people about their

experiences and perceptions regarding peer contacts, researchers and educators can gain valuable insights into the broader social dynamics within educational institutions.
By exploring changes in peer relationships, researchers can assess whether initiatives like COSI.ed are effectively fostering an environment where students feel supported, respected, and included. Positive changes in peer interactions may indicate that the project is not only improving academic outcomes but also enhancing the overall social and emotional well-being of students.

Graph 5. Changes in perception of peer relationships - interesting findings.

NORWAY: Several of the student's state that, for the first time in their lives, they experience everyday school life without exclusion, bullying and harassment from fellow pupils and teachers.

POLAND: The relations with peers seem to be improved, although they were well appreciated right from the start.
During the first interview, most participants rated it 7 points or more.
In the end, the relations were perceived as even better. Some conflicts have been resolved and friendships made.

DENMARK: the COSI.ed project has significantly contributed to the positive development of student relationships.
Throughout the project, students not only formed new bonds but also strengthened existing ones.

SPAIN: Most participants state that peer-to-peer relationships are quite good, emphasising having friends in the institution.

PORTUGAL: The relationship with others has become more affective, less suspicious, with less animosity, with greater cordiality, they accept themselves and others better. Most participants state that peer-to-peer relationships are quite good, emphasising having friends in the institution.

Comparative perspective

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically reshaped the experiences of young people, creating significant challenges that affected their mental health and peer relationships. When the first cycle of the COSI.ed project commenced, it was clear that the pandemic had intensified difficulties for many, particularly due to school closures and the emotional hardships that ensued. These disruptions often led to profound changes in the mental states and interpersonal dynamics of students. The abrupt shift to remote learning and the sudden absence of face-to-face interactions left many students feeling isolated and uncertain. Schools, which normally provide structure and a social environment, were suddenly off-limits, and this lack of physical presence created a void that many found difficult to fill. Young people reported experiencing increased levels of anxiety, stress, and depression, driven by the uncertainty and disruption of their daily lives. This emotional toll varied among students, often influenced by their home situations and individual resilience (Baumann, 2021; Tomaszewska-Pękała,

Marchlik & Zubala, 2022).

In addition to the emotional impact, the pandemic profoundly disrupted peer relationships. Adolescence is a critical time for social development, and for many, school serves as the primary setting for forging and maintaining friendships. The enforced physical separation due to lockdowns translated into a social distance that strained existing friendships and made it challenging to form new ones. These peer relationships, essential for emotional support and identity development, were severely tested by the constraints of the pandemic (Campione-Barr et al., 2021; Magis-Weinberg et al., 2024).

Despite these significant challenges, the COSI.ed project revealed some positive outcomes. Participants in the COSI.ed project often noted significant improvements in their relationships within the project's framework. The COSI.ed project played a crucial role in fostering these improved peer relations across the five countries where it was implemented. The project provided a structured environment that promoted safe and supportive interactions among participants. By facilitating opportunities for structured engagement and collaboration, COSI.ed helped students reconnect and engage with their peers in meaningful ways.

The project also emphasized the importance of emotional and social support. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences and offer mutual support, creating a community that helped mitigate feelings of isolation. This environment of shared understanding and encouragement was vital in helping young people feel connected during a period of widespread separation.

Moreover, the focus on positive peer dynamics within the COSI.ed framework helped to cultivate a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect. This atmosphere likely contributed to the reported improvement in relationships and the flourishing of peer connections during the project's implementation. Participants often described their interactions within the project as exceptionally positive compared to their previous experiences, highlighting the project's impact on their social lives.

The experience of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical importance of fostering resilience and providing supportive environments for young people. While the pandemic brought significant emotional and social challenges, it also presented opportunities for personal growth and the strengthening of peer relationships. The COSI.ed project demonstrated the value of structured, community-based initiatives in enhancing social connections and promoting emotional well-being. As we move forward, the insights gained from projects like COSI.ed will be essential in shaping future educational and social support systems to better serve the needs of young people in times of crisis and beyond.

6.1.3. Changes in young people's perception of their relationship with role models, teachers and other (school) staff

Introduction

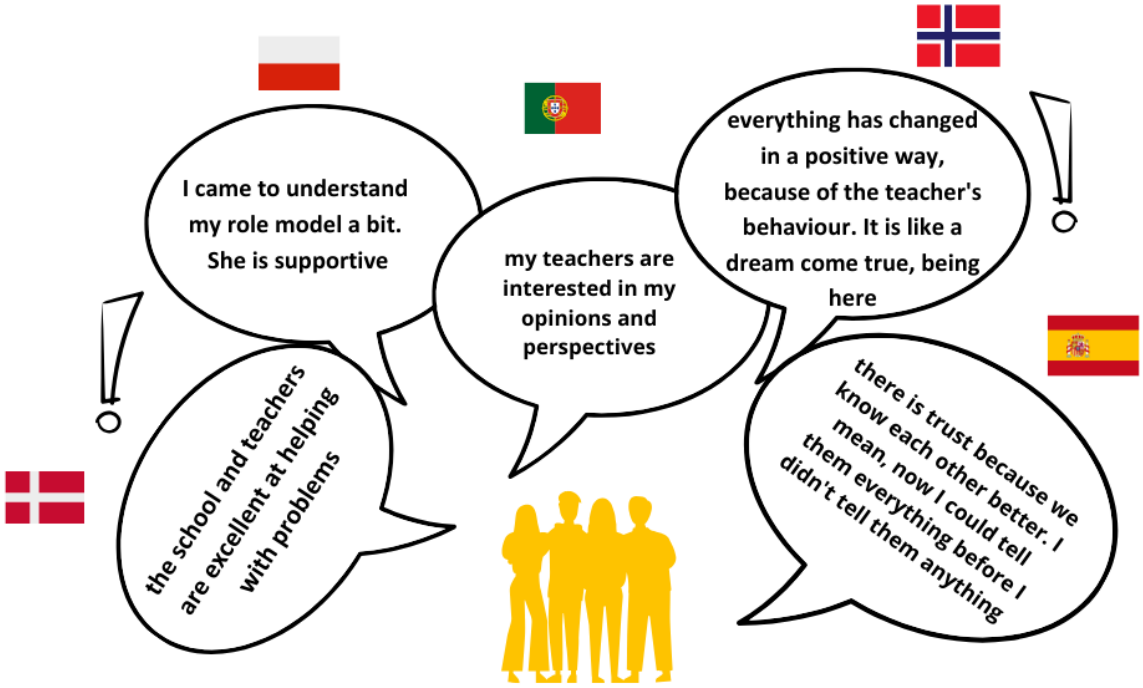
We find strong evidence that positive aspects of a meaningful and right teacher-student relationship are related to performance and well-being. For example, students who find their teachers caring, pay more attention in their classes (Wentzel, 1997). More supportive and caring teachers have more motivated students, as measured by the effort and self-efficacy (Goodenow, 1993; Murdock and Miller, 2003). Considering that, the change of young people's perception of their relationship with role models, teachers and other (school) staff is a significant indicator of COSI.ed projects' effectiveness.

Comparative perspective

The COSI.ed project aimed to enhance the educational experiences of students across various countries, including fostering better relationships between students and teaching staff. However, capturing the nuances of this change proved to be a complex task. The primary challenge stemmed from the project's relatively short implementation period, which was further constrained by the

ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. These circumstances limited the opportunity to observe long-term effects and required a rapid adaptation to new modes of interaction and learning.
Despite these obstacles, a clear pattern emerged across all participating countries: there was a notable improvement in the relationship between students and their teaching staff. This positive development was reflected in the feedback from national teams involved in the project. Each country provided unique insights into how these relationships evolved during the implementation period, highlighting both the universal aspects and specific dynamics within their educational contexts.

Graph 6. Examples of changes in perception of the relationships of young people with role models, teachers and other (school) staff.



NORWAY

Material contained in the report presented by the Norwegian team indicates a high evaluation regarding relations with teachers. As mentioned, when it comes to the students' perception of interactions with the teachers and other school staff, there are particular teachers that they highlight. The data provided by the team on the change in perception of the relationship relate to transition from primary school to upper secondary school. One of the participants described his early school experiences in this way: “I have had a school-life with a lot of negative experiences. Every school day, since I was 7 years old, has been almost nothing but bullshit, negative remarks and noise. Written up for bad behaviour and being scolded. Up and down to the principal. Lots of alternative training in the school-kitchen and together with the caretaker. The teachers Tone and Per were my salvation at that time. They saw me as a child with all my needs. When being a student at what I call <my school> [Kragerø school] everything has changed in a positive way, because of the teacher's behaviour. It is like a dream come true, being here”.
All the students articulate the good contact with the role model, as the following example shows: "I have good relations, especially with the contact teacher. He has regular contact with mum and dad.

Dad is very ill, and mum is so overprotective. I feel the teachers support me anyway and especially because of this situation. They sort things out if something bad happens or misunderstandings. I have confidence in them and trust them."
As described the interactions have increased, the students feel more seen/understood.

DENMARK

In 2021, a survey on student well-being revealed that students at the school exhibited exceptionally high levels of contentment. This positive outcome is largely attributed to the institution's efforts in fostering a safe and supportive environment, both in terms of interactions among students and between students and teachers. This nurturing atmosphere has led to a notable dynamic where students feel comfortable confiding in their teachers about personal as well as academic matters.
Nevertheless, the participants in the COSI.ed project have particularly benefited from regular, in-depth conversations with their contact teachers, who serve as role models and mentors. These interactions have deepened the students' connections with their teachers, leading to a more personalized and effective form of guidance. This personal rapport is crucial in making students feel understood and supported, significantly enhancing their overall school experience.
Here are some statements from the participants that highlight these positive dynamics:
"The school and teachers are excellent at helping with problems. There's no homework; all work is done at school. Having fewer students fosters a better sense of community among both students and teachers."
"The teachers are just as eager to learn from the students as they are to teach them in the classroom."
These reflections underscore the reciprocal and supportive relationship cultivated between students and teachers, contributing to the high levels of well-being observed at the school.

POLAND

During the initial interviews, most participants spoke highly of their relationships with educators. They acknowledged that while there were some educators they didn't connect with as well, there were also those whom they deeply valued and considered very important in their lives. One respondent shared, “I can talk about problems; they always help me. I am fine here, they help me with my learning. At home, I had no one to help me.” Another participant appreciated the effort educators made to understand him, saying, “[The educators] understand when I am pissed off.”
A notable shift was observed in one boy who initially rated his educators lower (score: 5-6). During a follow-up conversation, he expressed a change in perspective: “Now I understand that they help me,” and he subsequently gave a higher rating of 9. This indicates that relationships with leading educators are crucial for many respondents.
When discussing other staff members, participants generally described their relationships with therapists and counselors as good but not as significant as those with educators. They also mentioned positive interactions with service workers, especially the kitchen staff, whom they affectionately referred to as “aunties.” Additionally, a psychologist was highlighted as an important figure for some participants, as noted: “The psychologist will always help me; we have very good contact, and I can always come and talk to him.” Unfortunately, this psychologist was on sick leave during the project, which may have affected his availability.
Follow-up interviews revealed changes in some participants' attitudes. One respondent noted, “I started to talk more often with educators and dear Ms. A.; this is due to a change in my attitude.” This suggests that for most participants, their leading educators served as role models. Although these individual relationships were likely established before the project, positive changes were observed during its course.
One significant change was in the method of working with young people. Individual contact with

educators proved to be crucial for both role models and students. The opportunity to take time and speak freely with important adults brought about positive changes in some relationships. As one participant described, “I trusted her [role model] more; she has a cool energy, understands, can advise; the only person who motivates me to change.”
Additional reflection from participants encapsulate these dynamics well: “The project educator (pedagogue) was not well known initially. This person is important and supportive. Although not a role model in the traditional sense, there is a relationship where I can approach them if needed. However, there isn’t a strong personal connection (‘no chemistry’).” This statement reflects the evolving and nuanced relationships between students and educators during the project's implementation, highlighting both the challenges and the significant positive impacts.

PORTUGAL

The results presented here are based on the questionnaires applied to young people, the interviews with the master’s students in Educational Sciences (role models) and the fieldnotes that they wrote during their observation. Regarding the perceptions of the participants about the E2OM’s teachers and staff, in general, the results showed the good relationship that they have with their teachers and staff. From the E2OM staff point of view, the relationship between young people and the teachers, in general, have become more affective, less suspicious, with less animosity, with greater cordiality, they accept themselves and others better. Initially, the young people felt suspicious about their presence. Later, the master students started to get involved in the E2OM activities (namely, 'Life Road' and the 'Burning Judas’ activities) and as the youngsters started to get more confident around them, they realised that the master students were more like their colleagues in a joint mission, rather than people that were on the school to analyse them. Afterwards, the master students started to engage in conversations with youngsters, to get to know them, but in a very informal and natural way. This change was progressive, but the master students reported that even themselves felt more opened after a few weeks in E2OM, and that was the moment when they started to ask youngsters questions to really deepen their educational situation and trajectories.

SPAIN

In line with the outcomes from the initial report, the present analysis delves into the evolving perceptions of young participants in implementing institutions regarding their interactions with teachers and role models. Participants frequently describe their role models using terms such as "friends," "referents," "best teachers ever," and "good people." This language underscores their view of role models as supportive figures, akin to close companions who offer guidance and knowledge. The narratives shared by the participants reveal a significant transformation in how they perceive their educators. Initially viewed through a traditional lens, these figures are now seen as much more than just teachers; they have become integral role models and sources of support. This shift is illustrated by the participants' growing emotional closeness to their educators, who they describe as more than just instructors but as beloved and influential figures in their lives:"They are magnificent with us. They also tell you, they say, 'we are teachers, but we are also friends,' and it's true, that's the feeling it gives. They explain, they talk to you, they smile at you, they laugh with you. It’s very cool.""They are great. For me, they are a reference, someone to follow in life, you know? Everything is great. We have a very good vibe. And there is always respect and affection." These statements highlight a profound change in how students perceive their educators, now viewing them as trusted allies rather than mere authority figures. This evolution has significantly impacted the students' behaviors and attitudes. During the initial interviews, nearly all participants reserved their deepest confidences for a close circle of friends, significant others, and family members. This reticence stemmed from past negative experiences and a lack of trust in educational authorities.

However, in follow-up interviews, students began to engage in open, unguarded dialogues with their role models, sharing their accomplishments and future aspirations. This newfound openness reflects a deep-seated trust and a stronger, more supportive relationship with their educators: "There is trust because we know each other better. I mean, now I could tell them everything before I didn't tell them anything. I think it is something that has changed for all of us. I have even talked about it with my colleagues, you know? They respect us, and now it is easier to open up and be honest with them. Everything is easier..." Initially some participants mentioned problems with their school teachers, which contributed to their negative experiences and decisions to drop out of school. However, in follow-up interviews, these issues were no longer reported. Remarkably, most participants in the follow-up interviews rated the Jovent teachers with the highest scores, attributing the success and positive environment at Jovent to their educators. They described their teachers as friends or even family members who genuinely cared for them and consistently did their best to support them. Seven participants specifically praised the "patience" of Jovent teachers and the personalized attention they received.

Conclusion

In many cases, the students have undergone a profound change in their perceptions and interactions with their role models. This shift from suspicion to trust and from distance to closeness has been a critical factor in the success of the project. By fostering an environment of mutual respect and support, educators at all implementing institutions have not only enhanced the educational experience but have also played a pivotal role in the personal growth and confidence of their students. This case studies from fine european settings exemplified the transformative power of positive student-teacher relationships and the lasting impact they can have on young people's lives.

6.2 School performance in the perception of young people and according to data from other sources

6.2.1. Changes in young people's perception of the school performance

Young people's perception of school performance is undergoing a shift. While traditionally seen as a key indicator of success, it's increasingly viewed in relation to personal growth, skill development, and future aspirations (Bandura, 2006). This changing perception can impact both school engagement and early school leaving. When students feel their academic performance doesn't reflect their potential or align with their goals, they may become disengaged and unmotivated) (Eccles, Roeser, 2015). This disengagement, in turn, can lead to a decreased sense of purpose and a higher likelihood of dropping out early (Montero-Sieburth & Turcatti, 2022). To address this, educational institutions need to move beyond a singular focus on grades and create learning environments that foster intrinsic motivation and cater to diverse pathways of success.

On the other hand, as discussed below, according to various research, academic performance measured by grades and attendance can also be warning signs for early school leaving. Students with consistently low grades or frequent absences may be disengaged or struggling, potentially putting them at risk of dropping out (Allison et al., 2019; De Witte, Cabus, Thyssen, Groot & Van Den Brink, 2013; McDermott, Donlan & Zaff, 2018; Rocque, Jennings, Piquero, Ozkan & Farrington, 2017).

By approaching the issue of school disengagement as an attitude comprising cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects, our research attempted to capture the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon, both by asking young people about their perceptions of school achievement and as well as by trying to collect data on this issue from other sources, such as school records.

To capture the perception of young people on their school performance, the project beneficiaries were asked how they were generally “doing at school” but it has also been considered in a more specific context of both: school achievement and attendance. These issues also emerged in the statements of

the role models and the data resulting from the document analysis relating to the role models' meetings with young people.
The following are selected findings from the analysis of perceptions of young people of school performance from each country.

NORWAY

Student interviews reveal a positive trend in school performance and engagement throughout the year. This is reflected in both academic achievement and a stronger sense of accomplishment in social life. High attendance and participation rates further solidify this improvement.
A key factor driving this change seems to be increased student participation. The importance of actively being able to influence one's learning environment comes into play, as Bent expresses it:
"*We can make suggestions for tasks and the like. They (teachers) understand us a bit better and so on. They change it (the assignments and the scheme) if it doesn't suit us and so on."*
Mona supplies:
"What has changed since the first interview is probably some of what has to do with student participation... here it's sort of like we discuss it a bit, either we meet in the middle, or we get our way because, yes, they (the teachers) understand. If there are enough people who want it that way, then it can happen".
Students feel they have a greater influence on shaping their learning environment, as evidenced by their ability to discuss and even influence assignments with teachers. This is fostered by a closer relationship with teachers, who are seen as supportive and willing to adapt learning approaches based on student needs. This contact with teachers has improved from initial to follow up interviews in a way that has helped the students to dare asking for more adapted learning options. In this way, students get to improve their education situation and at the same time students feel that they are responsible for their progression, as reflected in these quotes:
"when you're going to write an assignment, (teacher/role models) they try to pull out what I know the most. They say: see what you do best and write about it" [Geir]
"We have been working with the boat engines and stuff. Yes, I'm just asking (my teacher) just in case. How do you want me to do it? Then he (the teacher) said to me: Do it as you would do it yourself, but I am sure, you can do it!" [Geir].
However, the focus on practical subjects appears to be leading to a disparity in student engagement. While practical subjects see a strong emphasis on student participation, the same level isn't always present in other areas. This highlights the growing awareness among students of the importance of their own decision-making processes, which are crucial for future careers. Interestingly, students appreciate the co-creation aspect with teachers in designing a positive learning environment.
The social dimension of school life has also gained importance for students, acting as a strong motivator for attendance even with challenges like long commutes. While there's a sense of accomplishment, some students do express stress related to grades and a lack of dedicated time for personal exploration outside of academics. This suggests a need for a better balance between academic pressure and opportunities for students to develop their identities beyond being just students. This struggles is best expressed by this quote:
"It can be difficult to find yourself ... (stutters and struggles to find the right words) ... Because we have to constantly work and do homework and all that, so we don't have time to find out who we are and stuff. Right?... There's no such thing as personal self-study ... Like you kind of have time to find yourself and stuff and. I think that's kind of the main problem with school, since you have some students` who ... They don't know who they are ... Or where they belong ... They kind of go into a crisis kind of sometimes? Also ... It's just work kind of ... School work, maths, science, all that. Then there is no class that they can sit down and take a break, and think about themselves a little bit. And we can't even take a sort of break... it's like . ..No, offfff ... (breathes) ... No, you get absences like that ... The more like you're gone ... How can I say it then ... Since we have the absence limit and all that ... I manage to stay

sort of ... under the absence limit ... So I ... Have done pretty well. Uffff …(breathes out)...but now it is...better". [Geir]
Overall, the interviews with Norwegian young people paint a picture of a school environment where performance and engagement are on the rise due to the participation in COSI.ed project and implementation of the new working model by teachers and other school staff.

DENMARK

The findings reveal a positive trend in student performance, engagement, and overall well-being. As the role models underline: *"We see a general trend of students taking the exam and passing. If we compare to earlier times, we can see that they are more determined to pass the exam than before".* This change might contribute to enhanced motivation and self-efficacy.
According to the survey implemented in FGU during the second implementation cycle, a significant portion of participants (47.1%) reported feeling they are now doing better in school. This improvement can be attributed to several factors, including a shift in student attitudes. One student exemplifies this change by stating that they discovered a new understanding of mathematics through alternative teaching methods: *"I learned that I wasn't bad at mathematics, but that I just needed help understanding it in a different way. I feel equal to the others and have successful experiences by being involved in the teaching and being allowed to implement my own ideas in the lessons."*
This highlights the importance of differentiated instruction in fostering student confidence and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the ability to participate actively in lessons and contribute ideas appears to be a key motivator, leading to a feeling of equality and successful learning experiences.
The results also show the positive impact of the COSI.ed project on students' perceptions of academic subjects. A large majority (64.7%) reported a change in their likes and dislikes regarding school subjects when compared to previous school courses. The young people assess this shift in their academic performance with an overwhelmingly positive sentiment (93.3%). Notably, 17.6% of participants directly linked this positive change to the teaching methods employed at FGU. This suggests that innovative pedagogical approaches can significantly impact student engagement and enjoyment of learning.
The data underscores the positive influence of FGU on student career aspirations and improvement of career prospects. A significant portion of participants (70.6%) reported feeling the course contributes to their ability to progress in further education or employment. This enhanced sense of direction likely stems from the improved academic performance and newfound confidence observed in the participants.
The report from the first implementation cycle further strengthens its case through individual student success stories. Helle, for example, exhibits increased social interaction and a more positive attitude towards both peers and teachers. Similarly, Andreas demonstrates a significant boost in confidence and self-belief. Jane highlights the role of FGU in promoting regular attendance and improved social comfort. These success stories showcase the tangible impact FGU has on individual students. This can be also linked to the overall increase in student engagement and motivation observed across the study.

POLAND

In Poland, in both cycles, the majority of young people rated their performance at school positively. In the first cycle, moderately positive indications prevailed - participants rated their overall school performance ("doing in school") at an average of 5-6 out of 10, and in the second cycle the most frequent responses were 8-9, which indicates the declared feeling of generally doing well in school. The indications from the follow up interviews are also generally higher than those from the first interview, although in the case of the young people from the second institution (MOS no.4), they have worsened for three pupils due to failing grades and not being promoted to the next grade.
Students also make their performance at school dependent on whether or not it relates to their grades

in particular school subjects - for example, one respondent indicates that: *„he is doing well overall at 5, but that he is not doing well in physics, English and social studies - 2 here, and the rest at 7, computer science at 10"*. As one student mentioned, his school performance is getting better *"because they [educators working in Dom przy Rynku] are watching over me now. My parents haven't"*. One can assume that, in some cases, the change in the school performance in general - as well as with other indicators - may be influenced by the change of the living environment itself, especially in case of those participants who have moved to dormitory facilities operating within both establishments.

When asked separately to rate how they were doing academically, young people also rated their educational performance positively, the most common answer being on a scale of 0 to 10 between 7 and 10 . Pupils do well in some subjects, e.g. languages, less well in sciences. Some pupils have no failings in the subjects, which they consider their success. At the same time, a significant number of pupils report learning challenges, rating their grades at 5-6 on a ten-point scale. There are pupils who believe they have problems in all subjects. The results indicate a wide variety in students' perceptions of their academic performance.

Finally, when asked how they cope with going to school regularly, the young people's assessment of this aspect is also overwhelmingly positive. The reason for this, however, is either the fact that they live in a dormitory and that in such a situation there is no way to escape from lessons. One of the participants, who travels to school from home, claims not to be truant, but to be late because of the commute (and other circumstances - queues in shops). On the other hand, the supervision of the court worker makes him have to watch his attendance.

Participants rated their attendance during the second interview a bit worse than during the first one. It turns out that the evaluation of attendance is affected by a moment in the school year. As one participant mentioned *"I'm a little truant at the end of the year"* when the grades are already set. On the other hand, one participant noticed an improvement in his attendance, because it is the end of the school year and he *"doesn't have to do much"*.

Some participants also mention avoiding lessons that might be difficult. This happens especially at the end of the year, because of the possibility of failures and higher requirements (exams, paperworks etc. needed to give a final grade).

The results show that the issue of absences is a complex one, as high absenteeism is the most common reason for placing young people in youth sociotherapy centres in Poland. Non-attendance at school is equivalent to non-compliance with the school obligation and may have certain consequences for the child and his/her family, also of a legal nature. Moreover, the insistence on going to school, even if perceived as difficult or unmotivated, is a key issue for many respondents, as it protects them from court-ordered placement.

To sum up, there is no significant improvement in the perception of the academic performance and attendance although a few participants speak of some individual successes (e.g. improvement of grades in specific subjects or a small number of potential failing grades).

From a different point of view, the educational situation of all the participants has been assessed by the role models as improving. As one of the respondents mentioned while describing one student's situation: *"I believe that this program has had an impact on increasing his motivation to learn. As a result, there was no risk of a failing grade - probably for the first time in his school career."*

SPAIN

Analyzing the impact of the COSI methodology on the perception of student performance and motivation at Jovent and Naüm, the findings from two cycles reveal a remarkable positive shift in student experiences compared to their previous schooling.

A significant improvement in academic performance and boost of confidence was observed across the whole sample. All participants passed their courses and are on track to obtain their vocational certificates. This success is attributed to the COSI methodology, which emphasizes practical learning

alongside theoretical instruction. Students highlighted how combining theory and practice enhanced their understanding and enjoyment of the material. This is exemplified by quotes from Jonatan and Jorge who explain how the practical component made learning faster, more effective, and directly applicable to the exams.

> Jonatan (Jovent, follow-up interview): *Here [in Jovent], you, with your brain and your arms, already have the properties to follow. And then, with your brain, you were getting the project, let's say, right? And then... you also did well in the exam, didn't you? They explained it to you, they gave you the practice, and then you took the exam with the practice and what they had explained, well, more or less. At least, that's how I did it. A little bit of practice and a little bit of theory.*
>
> Jorge (Naüm, follow-up interview): *We do maintenance. You also learn the theory or history, and it's fine. In high school, it was different... There is just theory, cram, exam, theory, cram, exam, theory, cram, exam, theory, cram, exam... and that without stopping... here you learn because you understand, you apply theory to practice, and when you get to the exam you know everything because you understand it.*

Furthermore, the shift from a purely theoretical focus to practical application boosted student motivation and self-esteem. Participants who initially expressed negative views on education reported feeling more confident and closer to the instructors. This positive transformation is evident in Francisco's contrasting statements before and after the program. Initially hesitant and unsure, he finished the program with increased self-confidence and a clear career path, as illustrated by the quotes from the first and follow-up interview:

> Francisco (Jovent, first interview): *Well, I don't know... we'll see if I like it, you know? Maybe I won't pass, and I'll leave it because I don't know if I'll like it... But well, my motivation, it will sound absurd, it will sound absurd, but I really like the sea, so that's why I chose it... [smiles]. And then to learn about boats, to be able to learn about the sea. I've always been motivated by boats, and I've always wanted to sail, and it's a step, but you'll see, you know?*
>
> Francisco (Jovent, follow-up interview): *It has been perfect academically and socially because when I leave here, I leave with good friends, I have had good classmates, and I have enjoyed it very much. I liked it very much. It has been a great learning experience. I have been very interested in boats, wood, fibre, mechanics, everything. It has opened doors to a world I didn't know much about. So I would say that it has been very good at all levels, that is, I did not expect something like this, and it has been perfect. Now I see things in a different way... I even have more self-confidence, I don't know how to say it, but that's how it is...*

The COSI methodology also fostered a significant change in student clarity regarding their interests and aspirations. Initially, 18 out of 22 participants lacked a clear direction. However, upon program completion, all participants displayed a newfound understanding of their interests and future goals. This is illustrated by Antonio's reflection on his transformation, where he went from having no clear direction to securing an internship with the potential for a permanent position in his desired field.

> Antonio (Jovent, follow-up interview): *Everything has changed so much... now I have everything clear when I started, I had nothing clear, now when I finish in Jovent, I have a contract to continue working in the company where I am doing my internship. I plan to stay there for the whole season. And then, if everything goes well and they want me to stay there, they will make me permanent. And already, as a result of all, I also want to get the PER, the license, and go evolving in the nautical world. Since I'm starting and I like it, I want to dedicate myself to it fully.*

Attendance levels also saw a dramatic improvement. Seven participants who previously struggled with attendance (some with zero attendance) reported a perfect attendance record at the training centers. Others who previously attended out of obligation stated they were now motivated and engaged in their learning. Mariano exemplifies this shift, going from feeling bored and obligated in high school to

feeling motivated to learn at Naüm.

> Mariano (follow-up interview, Naüm): *Now I always come because here [in Naüm], I feel motivated to learn, and in high school, I was bored, I went out of obligation, and it was useless to me.*

The report highlights a stark contrast between the participants' experiences at Jovent and Naüm compared to their previous schooling. The traditional system was characterized by a heavy emphasis on theory, rote memorization, and a disconnect from practical application. This approach led to frustration, disengagement, and ultimately, dropping out of school. This negative view of education is evident in statements from Manuel and Antonio who found traditional schooling useless and overwhelming.

> Manuel (Naüm, first interview): *What does that mean? In high school, I didn't study or anything. Everything was a disaster. I went to class out of obligation, and whenever I could, I ran away (...) Nothing they explain in high school is useful to me in life, so why go? Studying is useless.*
>
> Antonio (Jovent, first interview: *In high school, I had lots and lots and lots of homework, but if you don't have time to study, how are you going to do your homework? I was overwhelmed.*

However, the COSI methodology offered a more engaging and effective learning environment. Students felt the content was relevant and fostered a positive association with education. While four participants remained hesitant about further education due to economic constraints, their perspective on the value of education shifted from being a "waste of time" to recognizing the challenges within the current system.

The COSI methodology implemented at Jovent and Naüm has demonstrably improved student motivation, perception of academic performance, and self-esteem. By transitioning from a theoretical focus to practical application, the project fostered a more engaging learning environment that aligned with student interests and career aspirations.

PORTUGAL

This analysis of the impact of the COSI.ed model on student perception of academic performance at E2OM, highlights a positive shift in student attitudes and engagement compared to their previous schooling.

Students consistently emphasized the positive and supportive environment at E2OM. They contrasted this with their prior experiences in mainstream schools, which were often marked by discomfort, lack of support, and strained relationships with teachers. The COSI.ed approach, with its emphasis on communication and indirect teaching methods, seems to have fostered a more positive and trusting atmosphere. This is evident in the quotes from the young people who mentioned feeling more hopeful and supported by the staff at E2OM.

According to school staff, students appeared to have let go of past struggles, focusing more on the present and future opportunities. They became more attentive and engaged in their surroundings. This newfound sense of hope and purpose is evident in staff observations about students "*looking at other things they did not previously look at*" and "*stopped surviving and started living.*"

While the report lacks data on specific changes in the perception of young people of their grades or attendance, it does suggest an overall improvement in student motivation and engagement. The young people reported feeling more motivated to attend school and participate in class. This positive shift in attitude is likely to have a positive impact on academic outcomes in the long run.

Survey results using a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) revealed a statistically significant increase in positive responses for several key areas. Students reported feeling more supported in achieving better results, learning valuable skills for their future, and having a positive relationship with teachers and staff. These findings indicate that the COSI.ed model fostered a more positive and supportive learning environment that boosted student confidence and well-being.

While grades are not the sole measure of student success, E2OM does track academic progress through student portfolios. These portfolios document the development of individual learning plans and showcase student work. An analysis of grades from the first implementation cycle showed an average improvement of 3 percentage points for eight students between the first (before COSI.ed) and the second semester. Additionally, twelve students received course certifications, eight students progressed to the next year, and one student did not achieve certification.
Attendance rates also showed a positive trend during the first cycle of COSI.ed implementation. There was an overall average increase of 0.7% between the first semester (before COSI.ed) and the second semester. While this increase may seem small, it suggests a positive shift in student motivation and commitment to their education.
The consistency of positive responses from students in both the initial and follow-up questionnaires is noteworthy. This suggests that the positive impact of the COSI.ed model is sustained over time. Students continue to feel comfortable, supported, and engaged in their learning at E2OM.

Comparative perspective

The overall perception of young people of their academic performance and „doing in school" in all countries was positive, however, some differences and challenges were noted regarding proposed indicators, due to specific national contexts as shown in the summary in the table below.

Table 4. Changes in young people's perception of their school performance in participating countries.

Norway	Students reported a positive trend in performance and engagement due to increased participation in shaping their learning environment. They felt a stronger sense of accomplishment. Students believed they had more influence on their learning and expressed a closer relationship with teachers. However, a need for a better balance between academic pressure and exploration of personal identity was highlighted. High attendance rates were observed, further solidifying the positive impact on student engagement.
Denmark	A significant portion of participants reported feeling they were doing better in school. This appears to be linked to enhanced motivation, self-efficacy, and differentiated instruction that fosters confidence and belonging. Students appreciated the co-creation aspect with teachers and the focus on alternative teaching methods that helped them discover a new understanding of challenging subjects. There's no specific data on attendance changes, but improved motivation suggests a potential positive impact.
Poland	While some young people reported individual successes like improvement in specific subjects, there was no significant overall improvement in perceived academic performance. However, role models observed an improvement in the educational situation of participants, suggesting potential benefits beyond self-reported measures. Attendance also showed mixed results, with some students reporting improvement, while others struggled with pressure to attend or skipped difficult lessons. Some students reported feeling more positive about school due to factors like improved living conditions or closer supervision.
Spain	Students at Jovent and Naüm experienced a remarkable improvement in academic performance and a boost in confidence. The practical learning approach fostered understanding and enjoyment of the material, leading to higher motivation and positive academic outcomes. The COSI methodology fostered a significant change in student clarity regarding their interests and aspirations. Initially unsure students developed a newfound understanding of their goals. Attendance levels according to students' reports also improved dramatically.

Portugal	While data on specific grade changes is limited, there's evidence of improved student motivation and engagement at E2OM. Students reported feeling more supported and reported a positive shift in their learning environment. Student portfolios showed an average improvement of 3 percentage points for eight students and increased course certifications and student progression to the next year. Attendance rates also showed a positive trend with a slight increase during the first cycle of implementation. Students at E2OM reported feeling more hopeful and supported by the staff compared to their negative experiences in mainstream schools. They described a more positive and trusting atmosphere fostered by the COSI.ed approach.

The analysis of young people's changes in perceptions on academic performance and attendance during the implementation of COSI.ed project, demonstrates the power of transforming student attitudes towards education. By tailoring educational approaches to individual needs and fostering a supportive learning environment, the project has demonstrably enhanced student engagement and achievement.
However, the findings also highlight the importance of a holistic approach. While academic performance is crucial, COSI.ed suggests a need to address personal development alongside it.
Overall, the project underscores the positive impact of innovative teaching methods on student motivation and perception of academic performance. The focus on differentiated instruction, student participation, and a supportive environment appears key to fostering positive student experiences and outcomes.

6.2.2 School performance and achievement of educational, training and work-related goals by young people

The research shows that there are some indicators that allow us to predict the risk of ESL better than others. They consist primarily of the academic performance indicators and the school engagement indicators such as student attendance or grades (Jasińska-Maciążek, Tomaszewska-Pękała, 2017). They are often used in so-called early-warning systems, where their monitoring at individual pupil level makes it possible to identify those particularly at risk of dropping out and requiring additional support to stay in education (Ibid.). It was therefore assumed that changes in these indicators during project implementation could be a proof of the impact of the model at the level of individual participants as well as entire target groups.
The link between dropping out of school and truancy has been well researched and proven. Unexcused absences from school are one of the main and strongest predictors of school dropout and ELET (Allison et al., 2019; Beekhoven & Dekkers, 2005; Cabus, De Witte, 2014, 2015; Rocque, Jennings, Piquero, Ozkan & Farrington, 2017). Conversely, high attendance, indicative of school engagement, is characteristic of learners who stay and continue their education or training. Another important indicator, with a high degree of accuracy in predicting which students are at greater risk of dropout, is deteriorating and failing grades (Bowers, Sprott & Taff, 2012; De Witte, Cabus, Thyssen, Groot & Van Den Brink, 2013; McDermott, Donlan & Zaff, 2018).
Based on the queries sent to the project partners from each country, it was determined that the relevant indicators for our project would be: truancy and/or attendance rates, grade point averages and/or completion rates. However, the appropriate selection of indicators was a huge challenge in the COSI.ed project as not all the institutions have access or gather data regarding student performance. It was also necessary to take into account different indicators for mainstream schools and different indicators for alternative institutions. The data analyzed below come from different sources such as: administrative data, registers, institutional records, data from educators, notes of role models etc.
The indicators collected and analysed at the individual level were related, wherever possible, to the institutional level to see how the performance of project participants compares with their peers from

the same institution who did not participate in the project. The data at the institutional level were collected for Norway, Poland and Portugal.
Finally, for participants of the alternative institutions in Denmark and Spain, where education-related indicators are not relevant, it was decided that, instead of grades or number of failing courses, achievement of goals, related to education and/or professional development, will be our indicator. We asked to list up to three objectives for each participant and then assess whether at the end of the implementation cycle the participant succeeded in achieving them or not.
Despite many efforts, the data collected are not as complete as planned. Various external and institutional conditions (pandemic, hampered monitoring, changing regulations, staff and student turnover, difficulty in obtaining parental consents, dynamically changing life situations of students, etc.) have contributed to data gaps. In turn, the different ways of defining, counting, collecting data on the indicators make it impossible to make straightforward comparisons between countries. For this reason, they will be presented in an exemplary way, pointing to some important aspects of how we can analyse the relationship between school performance and the risk of educational exclusion.

NORWAY

In the case of the Norwegian sample, during the first cycle of implementation of the COSI.ed project the data on truancy and attendance was not collected as the new law was amended to not track attendance rate due to the pandemic emergency.
During the second implementation cycle, it was possible to collect data on 16 participants of COSI.ed project on their attendance rates - 12 learners from the first year and 6 learners from the second year. With a maximum of 190 school days per year, the participants had a very high attendance rate, which averaged 184.6666667 (N=12) for year 1 of upper secondary school and 188 (N=6) for year 2 of upper secondary school respectively. Based on this calculation, the truancy rate (2.807%) for COSI.ed participants can be compared to the rate for parallel first grades in the same school, for which the truancy rate in 2022 was 3.2%, and therefore slightly higher than in the COSI.ed project group. Similarly, for the group of six second graders - the truancy rate for COSI.ed project participants was only 1.05%, while for students in parallel classes in the same school it was 4.2% in 2022 respectively. However, we do not have data from previous years or semesters to compare these values and observe possible improvement.
With reference to the academic results based on the provided data, we can state that there was an improvement in grades for both groups of students from the first and second grades participating in the COSI.ed project. The average point average for the group of twelve first-graders at the beginning of the year was 3.35[10] (grades at the end of the last grade of lower secondary school), and at the end of the year 3.87 for 13 students, with only one student's grade point average worsening. The rest improved it slightly or significantly. In the case of the group of six second-graders, the improvement in the grade point average was slightly smaller (increase from 3.37 at the beginning to 3.83 at the end of the school year). Similarly, one student also had their grades worsen from 3,17 to 1,71.
To sum up, we can conclude that there has been a slight improvement in the educational outcomes of the students since the start of the implementation of the COSI model. Another positive sign are the

[10] Numerical grades are given on a scale of 1 - 6 in the subjects. The basis for grading in upper secondary education is an assessment of the student's competences based on the learning outcomes set in the curriculum for the individual subject. The numerical characters expresses:
The grade 1: very low competence in the subject.
The grade 2: low competence in the subject.
The grade 3: fairly good competence in the subject.
The grade 4: good competence in the subject.
The grade 5: very good competence in the subject.
The grade 6: outstanding competence in the subject.

results for the completion rate, which, according to the data provided during the first implementation cycle, was 100% for the class participating in COSI.ed project, while for the school as a whole it was 86.1%.

DENMARK

In Denmark, data collected during Cycle 1 focused on the academic performance of three learners from FGU. Initially, these students had positive grades, and their primary goal was not to enhance educational performance but to transition into the labor market. Despite the limited scope, some improvements were noted: two students successfully entered the labor market, and one significantly improved their mathematics grade from 00 to 7. In terms of school attendance, two students showed improvement, while one remained consistent.

The second aspect of the analysis focused on the achievement of educational, training, work-related, and personal goals set by the students. Each student set three goals, totaling nine objectives. These included academic goals, such as determining the presence of dyscalculia, assessing suitability for higher-level math, and improving grades in Danish and math. Non-academic goals included enhancing social skills, regular attendance, and identifying educational directions. Out of these nine goals, two were fully achieved, three were partially achieved, one was not achieved, and there was no data for three goals.

The COSI.ed project has shown success in identifying learning difficulties and enhancing academic performance in Danish and math for certain participants. Additionally, participants notably benefited from the program in terms of social skills development.

In the second imolementation cycle, 17 students were included in the dataset, and general improvements were noted, with 47.1% of participants performing better at school. Compared to previous courses, 64.7% of participants experienced positive changes, indicating a positive shift in their academic engagement. Participants benefitted from regular interactions with their teachers, who served as role models. This relationship fostered better guidance and personal connections, leading to improvements in both academic performance and social competencies.

Many students experienced changes in their career or educational goals during their time at FGU; 70.6% of students changed their educational or career plans during the implementation of COSI.ed.

Future efforts should focus on ensuring smooth transitions for students into jobs and further education. Involvement from a broader context, including students' families and leisure activities, is also essential. Sustaining the momentum of this cultural and educational change and potentially extending the model to encompass broader aspects are critical considerations for continued success.

While the COSI.ed project has demonstrated positive impacts on both academic performance and personal development for some participants, further data and analysis are needed to fully understand and enhance its effectiveness.

POLAND

In Poland, the truancy rate is not counted, only the number of hours a pupil is absent. These can be whole days as well as single hours. We therefore analyzed the change (deterioration or improvement) in relation to the number of hours of unexcused absences. The data is available for twelve learners from two implementation cycles - in the remaining cases data from the first measurement is missing because the learners joined the centre during the school year or no data was provided. There was a decrease for four of the twelve learners and an increase for seven of them in the number of absences, the data on one was missing the value for the end of the school year. Based on the administrative data provided to us, we can therefore summarize that the truancy rate for the Polish sample has increased. This is not entirely consistent with the perception of their school attendance presented by students and staff during the interviews.

However, according to the data from interviews and observation logs from educators, changes in attendance in the first institution (SOW „Dom przy Rynku") might be associated with a change of school, whereas in the second one (MOS no.4) it was mainly due to the complicated life circumstances of the participants such as being placed at psychiatric hospital, health issues, lack of promotion to the next grade, escape etc.
The data on truancy is not consistent with the information obtained from the SOW principal, who estimated that for all 7th and 8th graders in the 2022/23 school year the truancy rate was 20%. The figures obtained for the participants of COSI.ed project from SOW were significantly lower - based on our own calculations, the truancy rate was on average approx. 4.3% for the first, and approx. 3.8% for the second measurement.
At the end of the school year, the average grades of seven out of the twelve students improved, four students' grades worsened, and one student's grades remained unchanged. Notably, all students from the first institution (SOW) improved their grade point averages between the measurements (from 2,87[11]in the beginning to 3,05 at the end of the 2nd semester), while in the second institution (MOS no. 4), four out of seven students' grades worsened and the average dropped from 3,20 to 2,94 in the corresponding period. These results are consistent with the information about their deteriorating attendance. These were students with significant challenges (disorders, mental illnesses, court cases) who did not pass to the next grade.
While the COSI.ed project appears to have benefited some students' grades, the impact wasn't universal. Students in the second institution with significant challenges (disorders, mental illnesses) likely saw their attendance and grades decline due to these pre-existing difficulties. It's important to consider that family support, not directly addressed by the project, could be particularly crucial for the Polish sample as the youngest group under study. A more holistic approach focused on the family environment would make Polish participants more receptive to its influence.

SPAIN

In the case of the Spanish sample, in the first implementation cycle the data on 14 observations with indicators on truancy rate and school attendance was collected in Jovent. The results from the first cycle were not very promising, as there was a marked increase in the number of truants in the study group. Initially, at the first measurement, only five of the 14 participants were truant. In the second measurement, it was almost all of them, i.e. 12 out of 14 participants. However, not only did the number of truant students increase, but also the truancy rate itself in relation to the previously truant students. In no case was there a decrease in the number of absences, although sometimes there was a slight increase. In the case of the pupils with the highest truancy rates in the second measurement, it is worth noting that none of them were truant in the first measurement.
However, during the second implementation cycle, when it was possible to collect data on 27 participants from two institutions (Jovent - 12 participants and Naüm - 15 participants), the data is no longer so clear-cut and proves the overall positive impact of COSI.ed project on participants.
In the case of Jovent, absenteeism decreased in two participants, increased in four and remained unchanged in the rest. However, the improvement in the attendance rate only occurred in students who had absences at the first measurement. In the case of an increase, these students had an initial zero absence rate.
In Naüm, the absenteeism count was quite different, as it referred to the number of days/hours absent in training and internships programme, counting 1,198 hours, 200 days in total. The number of days of absence in this group varied greatly, ranging from 1 to 23.5 days, with an average of 10 days for 11 participants. For the remaining 4 participants, absences could not be calculated due to leaving the programme.

[11] The grading scale is from 1 to 6, where 6 is the highest and 1 is the lowest. 1 is a failing grade.

Naüm also collected data regarding students' educational outcomes. Their grade point averages between the first and second measurement increased from 6.599 (14 participants) to 7.47 for 10 participants. The lack of data for 5 students is related to the fact that they abandoned professional training due to various reasons e.g. taking up a job, change of life plans, personal problems, placement in a refugee centre. However, it can be summarised that participation in the project contributed to the educational success of this group, as 10 out of 15 mentees completed their training at NAÜM and some of them went on to work in the internship companies (5 pers.) or are continuing their education or training.

In case of both Naüm and Jovent the data on the participants' achievement of their educational, training, work-related or personal goals were also collected and analysed. Each participant could set up to 3 objectives.

At Jovent the participants' focus was mostly professional development within the nautical sector, with some personal development goals, while at Naüm - obtaining a professional certificate (PCPI level1) and job placement, with additional support for various personal needs were more strongly emphasised.

Table 5: Examples of objectives set by young people in Jovent and Naüm.

Jovent	Naüm
Obtain professional certificates (Jaime, Christian) Find job opportunities in the nautical field (Christian, Pablo) Maintain motivation and positive experience (Jaime, Carlos, Jonatan) Bridge to further training (Pablo, Manuel) Maintain work-life balance (Christian)	Obtain PCPI certificate (all participants except Manuel) Find a job (Jorge, Ousmane, Gabriel, Mariano, Nikolai) Address personal challenges (hyperactivity - Jorge, self-control - Javier, legal status - Saleh, Ousmane, bullying - Edu, social interaction - Nikolai) Help with future training options (Manuel, Cristian) Improve basic language skills (Spanish, Catalan) (Saleh, Kaidiatou) Support in changing a difficult living situation (Alpha)

In the case of Jovent, we have information on goal achievement for 12 participants. The results are very positive, as all but one of the respondents achieved their goals at the end of their work with the COSI.ed model, 10 of them achieved all three goals, and only one achieved two of the intended three goals.

Of the 15 participants from Naüm, 9 successfully achieved all three objectives, 1 achieved two out of three, 4 achieved one out of three, and just one did not achieve any of the objectives. This suggests a positive success rate for the Naüm program in supporting participants in reaching their goals.

In addition, other, supplementary indicators were measured in both Spanish institutions, for which a baseline (minimum) was defined at the beginning and then, at the end of the work, during the second measurement, these values were compared to the achieved results. For all of the targeted indicators, results were achieved above target, in many cases significantly higher as shown in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6. Additional indicators monitored in Jovent.

	Indicator	Baseline	Outcome
1.	Percentage of students who finish the training	80%	91.6%
2.	Percentage of students who continue working in the same company or professional sector	50%	72%
3.	Percentage of students who improve their self-assessment (personal and/or professional)	85%	90%

Table 7. Additional indicators monitored in Jovent.

	Indicator	Baseline	Outcome
1.	Number of students who obtain the degree	50%	66.66%
2.	Number of students studying or working of those who have completed the course	50%	80%
3.	Number of students who complete the course, who evaluate the course positively	75%	100%

Although the first implementation cycle in Jovent showed an increase in truancy rates, indicating a need for program adjustments, the data from the second cycle, involving both Jovent and Naüm, suggests a positive overall impact of COSI. ed project on participants.
At Jovent attendance improved for some participants, and all but one achieved their educational/professional goals. At Naüm a high success rate was observed in achieving personal and professional goals (60% of participants achieved all three objectives). Naüm participants also showed an average grade point average increase. Completion rates and job placement for Naüm graduates were also positive. Both institutions exceeded baseline targets for various indicators like training completion, employment, and self-assessment improvement. Overall, the COSI.ed project appears to be successful in supporting young people in Spanish samples to achieve their educational, training, and work-related goals.

PORTUGAL

In this paragraph the data on attendance and grades for the Portuguese sample is based on the information provided during the first implementation cycle.

For the Portuguese sample, we have complete data on the attendance of 15 individuals. As with the other samples, the focus in the context of attendance will be on changes in the truancy rate.
Considering 15 participants from the target group, the truancy rate was 25% (=attendance rate - 75%) in the 1st semester and 26,62% (=attendance rate - 73,38) in the 2nd semester so there was a slight increase of truancy of 1,635 pp. However, this result is a consequence of a significant increase in only three participants. For the remaining participants, there is no change or a decrease in truancy.
When compared to the total of 51 students at the centre, 41,18% completed their courses, 23,53% did not complete their courses and 35,29% continue their courses (the duration of the courses vary according to its type, so its completion occurs only after the total of its duration, usually more than one year). Considering the total of 51 students, the truancy rate was 58.04%, however it had a discrete decrease (-3,14%), when comparing the 1st and 2nd semesters. Finally, considering the total of 51 students, the attendance rate was 41,96% and it was noticed an increase of 3,14% from the 1st semester and 2nd semester.
For the next indicator analysed - school grades - we have complete data for 10 learners. Of the 10 Portuguese participants for whom we have data on the change in grades between 1st and 2nd semester, only in one participant the grades worsened. In the others, they remained at the same level (1 person) or improved slightly (8 people).
When compared to the results of all the learners from the centre the grade of the target group is lower. The grade point average for the students of the same level or grade as participants' age was 2,93% for the 2nd level students and 3,27% for 3 rd level.
In the case of this country's sample, information on the number of courses failed was also collected. The results showed that the number of failures decreased by a total of eight at the end of the year compared to the first semester, of which two participants managed to correct as many as three failures each and another two - two failures each. One participant managed to pass one out of two failed courses.
In the 2nd cycle of the COSI.ed project, the E2OM recorded a completion rate of approximately 25.81%. This figure was derived by assessing the number of students who successfully completed the program against the total number enrolled. Specifically, out of 62 students who began the course or program, only 16 reached completion. This rate reflects the proportion of students who were able to fulfil all the requirements and objectives of the program during this particular cycle.
While this completion rate provides valuable insights into the program's outcomes, it also highlights areas for potential improvement in terms of student engagement, support mechanisms, and program structure to enhance future completion rates.

Comparative perspective

When attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of the COSI.ed model based on the analysis of administrative data related to school attendance and school grades, we encounter numerous challenges. The systems for assessment, attendance monitoring, and the quality and completeness of the data collected vary to a significant extent. Due to the diversity of educational pathways of the students, it is not always possible to access data from previous educational stages. In the case of currently attended institutions, not all of them use a grading system. Hence, information on participants is incomplete and the number of cases we can analyse is significantly smaller than the group of participants involved in the COSI.ed project and interviewed. Another challenge was the relatively short implementation period and the small interval between moments when data was measured. Thus, even if changes occurred, e.g. at the cognitive level of the participants, they did not always manage to translate into behavioural indicators of a quantitative nature, i.e. a reduction in the truancy rate.

We can see this clearly when we compare the perceptions of the COSI.ed project participants (young people and role models), which emphasise favourable changes in terms of educational outcomes and attendance, with data obtained from other sources, which do not always explicitly confirm this.
One can observe slight improvement, during the implementation of the project and the work with the role models, in the educational results of the participants but not for all of them - this applies to participants from Norway (both cycles), Poland-SOW (first cycle), Spain-Naüm (one institution) and Portugal (first cycle).
Nevertheless, for some of the young people, often in combination with their particularly difficult life situation, the improvement in educational results did not occur and was often accompanied by increasing absenteeism or dropping out of education. This was particularly evident in the Polish group - the youngest participants - in whom, due to their age and lack of independence, the educational situation was strongly dependent on family circumstances. It is therefore worth considering a modification of the working model for younger age groups so that it also takes into account cooperation with families and the social environment.
Moreover, we do not see a clear pattern in the context of school attendance - in Spain, Poland and Portugal the truancy rate increased. However, looking at the individual-level data, rather than the group average, we see that the increase in truancy is usually behind the 2-3 participants in the group with a significant deterioration in attendance.
In this context, the most positive and promising changes were observed in relation to the achievement of educational, professional and personal goals, which were examined in relation to the Danish group (first cycle) and the Spanish group (second cycle). While data from Denmark is limited, both Jovent and Naüm programs in Spain demonstrate positive results. Nearly all Jovent participants (11 out of 12) achieved all or most of their goals. Similarly, Naüm participants displayed a strong success in achieving the set objectives. This suggests the program effectively supports young people in reaching their educational, training, professional, and personal goals.

6.3. Changes in young people's educational and career aspirations

Introduction

Aspirations are one of the most important motives for human action. They are understood as "the driver of an individual's life path and well-being (...) and proxies for human choice and determinants of socioeconomic outcomes is not new to the social sciences" (Gardiner, Goedhuys, 2020 p. 8). Some changes in young people's educational aspirations include: increased focus on higher education, emphasis on practical skills, entrepreneurial aspirations, global perspective, advancements in technology and increased interconnectedness, as well as focus on personal development.
Aspirations of young people guide their learning processes and are responsible for creative activity (or lack thereof). Aspirations also have a strong influence on individuals' innovative actions aimed at transforming and improving themselves and their environments. In psychological terms, the basis for the formation of aspirations is an individual need (what a person considers crucial, important, necessary to be able to develop and realise their intentions and plans in a particular area).
In international literature, scholars point to educational aspirations as those that play an important role in the development of young people and in their career choices. These aspirations relate to the level of education that a given young person wants or intends to achieve in their future (Skorny, 1980, p. 35).
Overall, young people's educational aspirations are evolving to encompass a wider range of possibilities and opportunities, reflecting the changing needs and demands of the modern world (real and virtual).

6.3.1. Educational and career aspirations of youth

This part focused on the educational aspirations of young people. The task of those conducting the research was:

a. to describe how participants think their educational aspirations have changed;
b. to compare the initial and follow-up interviews from two implementation cycles.

The researchers pointed to the contextual determinants of aspirations and to external as well as internal factors in the aspects analysed.
Below are the questions and an analysis of the results based on the responses collated from the four countries. We present the results of the study on educational and career aspirations of young people in the COSI.ed project. In several places, we zoom in on country case studies to provide context.
The first question was about **the change in young people's educational aspirations**. The results show how, according to the participants, their educational aspirations have changed.

NORWAY

Norway indicated that several participants in follow-up interviews mention a clearer idea about their educational aspirations than in initial interviews, some even think more about higher education. However, the critical question is whether this is about the cosi.ed project implementation or the time, a natural process, maturing, teachers' competencies.

DENMARK

Results from Denmark show that there are many students who are experiencing changes in their career, education goals and expectations.

POLAND

In the Polish case, students' educational aspirations evolved, becoming more grounded and realistic as they approached its end. Initially driven by high hopes and enthusiasm, they start to adjust their goals based on the feedback and grades they receive. This realisation prompts a strategic recalibration of their aspirations, aligning them more closely with their academic results and practical possibilities. Ultimately, this shift towards realism reflects a mature understanding of their strengths and the realities of the educational institutions.

SPAIN

Comparing the participants' perceptions of their educational interests and aspirations before and after the COSI.ed project, we realize that they have undergone two significant changes: an increase and clarity of their specific interests and, in turn, an improvement in the clarity of their aspirations, i.e., a greater awareness of their potential and possible educational paths to follow. In addition to improving clarity and future interests, it is also worth noting that practically all of them want to continue training in the same field of the course (nautical, in the case of Jovent; and plumbing, in the case of Naüm).

PORTUGAL

In Portugal in general education, aspirations were not considered, because schools follow a specific curriculum that most of these young people do not want to follow. The change was that when they started their journey in the Second Chance School, they defined an aspiration, or more than one, and worked towards that goal together with teachers and other educational staff.

The second question investigates **how the participants' desired highest level of education changes throughout the COSI.ed project**. The findings are presented for each of the fivecountries involved: Norway, Denmark, Poland, Spain, and Portugal. This section explores whether participation in the program influenced participants' educational ambitions, and if so, how.

NORWAY

In Norway, the students have either increased their opinion on the chance to achieve the desired level of education by 1 or even 2 points, or the scale that is referred to is stable. None has decreased their opinion about achieving their education.

DENMARK

According to the data provided, about 41% of participants have changed their expectations for education/jobs. It seems as if they have gained more confidence when it comes to their beliefs in finishing their exams. We do not have any particular data on how the participants perceive the teachers' expectations regarding the level of education they expect of the participants – and whether the teachers have changed their expectations of the participants during their time at FGU.

POLAND

In the Polish case, all participants already have a specific plan for future education - they know what type of school they want to apply to after graduating from primary school. One participant (WSOW2, male - 7th grade) said that he "hasn't thought of it yet" but he mentions high school as his probable choice. Most of the participants consider some kind of "option B" - another type of school in case of a failure to get to their first choice school. One of them (WSOW12) said: "High school. If I fail, then technical school." 5 of 8 don't preclude trying to get into college but most have quite specific aspirations, and high school or higher education remains in the zone of distant planning, with no high expectations to achieve. 6 of 8 declare a choice of vocational school or technical school as most probable. The participants have a specific plan for the future - they seem to know who they want to be in the future - what profession - but are less certain of how to achieve that, which school they should choose, or they say they may simply continue in high school on MOS (3 of 6). 5 participants presented realistic educational plans that would lead to their expected professions.

SPAIN

In the case of Jovent, 11 out of 12 participants have successfully obtained the certificate of professionalism. In the case of Naüm, 10 out of 15 participants have completed the initial vocational qualification course. Of those who have finished, 3 are continuing their training, either to obtain the certificate of compulsory secondary education or another vocational training course. In addition, 6 participants have found a stable job. 5 participants dropped out of the course, the main reasons for dropping out being a change of training speciality, financial needs and moving house.

PORTUGAL

In Portugal in the initial questionnaire, with a sample of 15 participants, young people are very divided in levels. Some young people (n=4) wanted to finish 6th grade and keep studying; others (n=3) wanted to complete 9th grade and keep studying; others (n=2) wanted to complete 9th grade but later go to work; others (n=2) wanted to complete upper secondary and keep studying while others (n=2) wanted to complete 12th grade and go to work instead; and the other one has not decided yet. (In this item,

only 14 answered it). In the follow-up questionnaire, with a sample of 7 participants, they all stood by their answers, except for one youngster who in the initial questionnaire said that he/she wanted to complete the 12th grade and go to work, but in the follow-up questionnaire, reported that he/she had not decided yet.

The COSI.ed project appears to have had a positive impact on participants' educational aspirations across the board. Students reported increased confidence in achieving their desired level of education, with some participants even aiming higher after the program. The project also fostered a more realistic approach to educational planning, with participants gaining a better understanding of the steps needed to achieve their goals. Teacher support also seems to have played a role, with participants feeling more encouraged by teachers in their educational pursuits.
Below we present a case study regarding the changes in participants' chances of achieving desired level of education.

CASE STUDY
How has the opinion on the chance to achieve participants' desired levels of education changed?

NORWAY
The students have either improved their rating by 1 or even 2 points regarding their likelihood of achieving the desired level of education, or their rating remains unchanged. None of them have lowered their rating concerning achieving their education goals.

DENMARK
Four out of the seventeen participants either aspire to or have already completed upper secondary education. A significant portion of the participants have revised their educational and job goals. This suggests an increase in confidence regarding their ability to complete their exams and potentially pursue higher education.

POLAND
In most cases the opinion on the chance to achieve desired level of education hasn't changed much (1-2 points). The rate between initial and follow-up interviews changed significantly (from 5 to 10) in only one case. The assessment of probability varied a lot within the group: half of the participants knew they were going to achieve their goals from the beginning - they rated their chances 9-10 during both interviews. Some rated their chances in the middle of the scale 5-7 (2 participants). The rate between initial and follow-up interviews changed significantly (from 5 to 10) in only one case.

SPAIN
While the majority of participants initially held a pessimistic view of training and future opportunities, follow-up interviews revealed a more nuanced picture for four participants. These four individuals still believe education isn't an option and significantly improving their academic level is impossible (or highly difficult). However, their negativity is now accompanied by specific reasons. Initially, they dismissed school as a "waste of time." Now, they point to the real-world challenges of the education system: their basic economic needs require them to work, making it difficult to attend school. In essence, they acknowledge the multi-layered challenges of continuing education, which they can't realistically envision at this point.

PORTUGAL
In the initial questionnaire, with a sample of 15 participants, in the sentence "*I feel that I have skills to achieve my school goals*", most young people (n=9) agreed, others (n=3)

strongly agreed, still others (n=3) neither agreed nor disagreed and the remaining one disagreed. In another sentence, "*I know I will achieve my school goals, if I have my teachers' support*", most young people (n=8) agreed and others (n=6) strongly agreed, and the remaining one disagreed. In the follow-up questionnaire, with a sample of 7 participants, in the first sentence "*I feel that I have the skills to achieve my school goals*", most of the young people changed their opinions. One of them, who answered "Neither agree nor disagree" in the initial questionnaire, changed to "I strongly agree"; others (n=2) who answered "I agree", changed the answers to "I strongly agree"; another one changed from "I strongly agree" to "I agree" and the other changed from "I disagree" to "I agree". The other two did not change their opinions: one neither agreed nor disagreed and the other one strongly agreed. In another sentence "*I know that I will achieve my school goals if I have the support of my teachers*" there were two changes. One young person changed from "I agree" to "I strongly agree" and the other one changed from "I strongly agree" to "I agree". The remaining ones stood by their opinions, 3 of "I strongly agree" and 2 of "I agree". This means that, in general, youngsters increased their self-confidence in being able to achieve their school goals, but also felt more capable of achieving it when having teachers' support.

Beyond the impact on students' own aspirations, the COSI.ed project also investigated teacher involvement. This section explores **how participants perceived changes in teachers' expectations regarding the level of education they believed students could achieve**. Did the program foster a shift in teacher perspectives on student potential in all participating countries?

NORWAY

In Norway, the *students show from the beginning that the teachers believe in them. However, it is more something that they think. In the follow up questions they are more confirming this idea that teachers believe in them, also probably because they have a stronger relationship* (Norway).

DENMARK

In Denmark, students arrive at school with an educational plan containing their educational expectations. This plan is developed based on teachers' evaluations and in collaboration with municipal educational counselors. Therefore, teachers initially base their expectations for students' achievements on this plan. Both initially and throughout the school year, students have meetings and coversations with both teachers and counselors to revisit these goals. During the project period, many students experienced changes in their expectations for their educational paths and achievements. These changes emerged through conversations with teachers and counselors, where it proved crucial to have built a high degree of security, trust, and renewed confidence and hope. Consequently, students also revised their perceptions of what they believed their teachers and counselors expected of them.

POLAND

In Poland opinions on the subject are diversified. Although it was hard to tell for some participants what the educators' expectations were. During the second interview, some participants indicated that in educators' opinions their aspirations are too high - "They said that I would not succeed in the technical school". However, in most cases, participants declare educators' support (5 of 8). Participants' statements indicate that they feel that the educators believe in them, that they are supportive, that they want them to achieve the best possible results and level of education. But not all of them have discussed the matter in MOS.

SPAIN

The COSI methodology appears to have significantly impacted teachers' expectations and students' openness towards them. Before the program, only one participant from Jovent expressed having shared his goals with teachers. He confidently anticipated support and positive expectations for his academic improvement. This confidence remained in the follow-up interview, where he emphasized the crucial role of respect and trust from teachers (role models). Initially, all other participants were hesitant to discuss their teachers' expectations. They avoided taking a position. However, the follow-up interview revealed a dramatic shift. All but one participant confirmed discussing their doubts and aspirations with role models and being aware of the teachers' positive expectations for significant academic improvement.

PORTUGAL

In Portugal, in the initial questionnaire, with a sample of 15 participants, in the sentence "*I feel that my teachers believe that I will be able to achieve my school goals*", most young people (n=7) agreed, others (n=6) strongly agreed, 1 disagreed and the remaining 1 neither agreed nor disagreed. In the follow-up questionnaire, with a sample of 7 participants, in the same sentence, there were two changes: one youngster changed his/her answer from "I agree" to "I strongly agree", and the other changed from "Neither agree nor disagree" to "I agree". The others kept their opinions unchanged: 5 of "I strongly agree". This points to an improvement in young people's perceptions of their teachers' expectations regarding their future and achieved level of education.

Beyond the boost in confidence and motivation, the COSI.ed project also delved into a crucial aspect: how participants' understanding of the path towards their educational goals evolved. This section explores whether the program equipped students with a clearer picture of the steps needed to reach their desired level of education. We aim to explore whether the participation empowered them to navigate the educational system more effectively. The question asked was: **How has the knowledge of how to reach the desired level of education among the participants changed?** The results are again broken down by country.

NORWAY

In the case of Norway, teachers conduct individual interviews and supervision to guide the students .

DENMARK

In Denmark, students engage in numerous conversations with both counselors and teachers throughout their schooling at the FGU. This enables them to gain a clearer understanding of how they can achieve their educational or career goals. Additionally, in collaboration with teachers and counselors, they can develop a concrete plan for how to actually attain these goals, outlining the academic and social requirements needed. In this way, the majority of participants feel better prepared for employment or further education after attending a course at the FGU.

POLAND

Although during the first interviews participants already pointed out steps to reach the desired level of education, the follow-up interviews seem to show that the awareness is higher. The steps described in general at the beginning, seem to be more specific during the follow-up interviews. For example:

WSOW12 - from: “I would have to mobilize myself to study and write tests better; pay attention in class and not do stupid things.” to “better academic performance; to learn a foreign language.” WSOW10 - from: “get better at school; learn a lot; realise 100% of the potential '' to “study and pass to the next grade”. The follow-up interviews in MOS seem to show that the awareness of the actions participants are supposed to take is higher. The steps are described in general at the beginning but are more realistic during the follow-up interviews.

SPAIN

Prior to participating in COSI, a large majority of the participants (around 82%) held an uncertain and negative view of their future prospects. However, the follow-up interviews following COSI implementation revealed a significant shift. Nearly all participants (except one) gained clarity on their future interests and potential paths. The majority prioritize working directly in the fields they trained in (nautical or plumbing). While some participants seek further training within other fields.

PORTUGAL

No information was provided on whether and how perceptions among Portuguese participants about the way to achieve the desired level of education have changed.

An important element of our research was also to explore the support network available to young people in achieving their life and education plans. We therefore asked them to identify the people who support them in making important decisions. In Poland, participants displayed a clearer understanding of the steps needed, like choosing the right school after primary school. While some aspects like who they share their plans with remained unchanged (Denmark, Poland), there's a hint of a positive shift in Spain, where participants reported feeling more supported by their network after COSI.ed. This positive trend was nearly unanimous, with only one exception. In the case of Portugal extensive information was provided. We present it below as an important case study.

CASE STUDY - PORTUGAL

How has the list of people with whom participants share their education plans changed?

In this topic, we will present the code numbers from each participant in the initial questionnaire (1-15) and in the follow-up questionnaire (1-3; 5-7; 10), to compare both questionnaires, once the sample is different in both questionnaires. We also must highlight the fact that the questions about educational and career plans were made in the same item on the Portuguese questionnaire. In the *initial questionnaire*, with a sample of 15 participants, the list of people with whom young people share their education plans is as follows:

1: Other professionals of E2OM; Young friends who also go to school.
2: Teachers; Family.
3: Teachers; Other friends.
4: Family; Other friends; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
5: Teachers; Family.
6: Teachers.
7: Nobody.
8: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM.
9: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Family; Young friends who also go to school; Adult friends who already work; Other friends; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
10: Teachers; Family; Other friends.
11: Teachers; Family; Young friends who also go to school; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
12: Family; Young friends who also go to school; Other friends.
13: Family; Young friends who also go to school; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
14: Teachers; Young friends who also go to school; Other friends.
15: Family.

In the follow-up questionnaire, the list of people with whom young people share their education plans is as follows:

1: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Other friends.
2: Other professionals of E2OM; Family; Young friends who also go to school.
3: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Other friends.
5: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Family; Other friends; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
6: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Young friends who also go to school; Adult friends who already work; Other friends; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
7: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Family; Adult friends who already work; Other friends; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
10: Nobody.

In general, young people started to trust more in other professionals of E2OM to share their education plans, rather than in teachers. Additionally, most young people started to trust in more people at the time of the follow-up questionnaire. The most significant differences are within the youngsters with codes number 6, 7 and 10.

Youngster 6 (who marked only “Teachers” in the initial questionnaire) changed his/her answer and marked almost all the people on the list (*see number 6 above*). This can be explained by the fact that this young person was previously in E2OM to finish 9th grade, then left, and then e (*this was explained in the initial questionnaire*).

Youngster 7 (who marked “Nobody” in the initial questionnaire) changed his/her answer and marked almost all the people on the list (*see number 7 above*). This can be explained by the fact that, in the initial questionnaire, the youngster was in E2OM for 2 months, but, in the follow-up questionnaire, the youngster was in E2OM for almost a year. This young person also said that E2OM had a comfortable environment. The fact that the answer changed and the participant came back to finish 12th grade may be because of his/her positive experience in E2OM.

Youngster 10 (who marked “Teachers”; “Family”; “Other friends” in the initial questionnaire) changed his/her answer and marked “Nobody” in the follow-up questionnaire (*see number 10 above*). Although the young person said that E2OM is the best school he/she has ever been, he/she

only was in E2OM for a year, and his/her answer changed quite a lot. This can be explained by a less positive experience or by some difficulties in share his/her feelings/thoughts/plans.

How has the list of people who support achieving participants' educational plans changed?
In this topic, we will present the code numbers from each participant in the initial questionnaire (1-15) and in the follow-up questionnaire (1-3; 5-7; 10), to compare both questionnaires, once the sample is different in both questionnaires. We also must highlight the fact that the questions about educational and career plans were made in the same item on the Portuguese questionnaire.

In the initial questionnaire, with a sample of 15 participants, the list of people who support achieving participants' educational plans is as follows:
1: Other professionals of E2OM; Other friends.
2: Teachers; Family.
3: Teachers; Other friends.
4: Family; Other friends; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
5: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Family.
6: Teachers.
7: Nobody.
8: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Family.
9: Teachers; Family; Other friends.
10: Teachers; Family; Other friends.
11: Teachers; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
12: Family; Young friends who also go to school; Other friends.
13: Family; Young friends who also go to school; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
14: Teachers; Young friends who also go to school; Other friends.
15: Family.

In the follow-up questionnaire, with a sample of 7 participants, the list of people who support achieving participants' educational plans is as follows:
1: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Family; Other friends.
2: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Family; Young friends who also go to school; Adult friends who already work.
3: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Other friends.
5: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Family; Other friends; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
6: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Family; Young friends who also go to school; Adult friends who already work; Other friends; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
7: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Family; Adult friends who already work; Other friends; Girlfriend/Boyfriend.
10: Teachers; Other professionals of E2OM; Family.

In general, these results point out an improvement in the youngsters' perceptions of the support of different professionals in E2OM, namely, other professionals rather than teachers, in helping them achieving their educational plans. This time, the main differences are within the youngsters with codes number 2, 6, 7.
Youngster 2 (who marked only "Teachers" and "Family" in the initial questionnaire) changed his/her answer and marked 5 people on the list (*see number 2 above*). This can be explained by the fact that the youngster, when answering the initial questionnaire, was in E2OM for a year and 3 months, and when answering the follow-up questionnaire, the youngster was in E2OM for 2 years.
Youngster 6 (who marked only "Teachers" in the initial questionnaire) changed his/her answer and marked all the people on the list (*see number 6 above*). This can be explained by the fact that the youngster was previously in E2OM to finish 9th grade, then left, and then came back to finish 12th grade (*this was explained in the initial questionnaire*). Maybe he/she felt more comfortable in his/her second experience, more than in his/her first one.
Youngster 7 (who marked "Nobody" in the initial questionnaire) changed his/her answer and marked 6 of the people on the list (*see number 7 above*). This can be explained by the fact that, in the initial

questionnaire, the youngster was in E2OM for 2 months, but, in the follow-up questionnaire, the youngster was in E2OM for almost a year. The fact that the answer changed significatively may be because of his/her positive experience in E2OM; and the fact he/she did not choose "Young friends who also go to school" it can be because he/she does not feel comfortable with his/her friends and does not feel supported by them.

While the roles of those supporting young people in educational planning appear to remain relatively stable across Denmark, Poland, and Spain, the availability and completeness of data vary. Denmark and Poland show a consistent pattern of support, with teachers, family members, and friends playing significant roles. In Spain, the support is generally strong, although individual circumstances can create unique challenges and preferences. It highlights the need for professional relationships support to address better guiding students' educational and career paths across different European contexts.

6.3.2. Changes in professional aspirations

In the following section, the analysis deals with the answer to the question: how according to participants their **professional aspirations have changed.**
It should be noted that in some cases young people's perception of educational aspirations is in close correlation with their future career aspirations. And this is a result of the participation in the study on the part of Poland and Denmark of younger adults (teenagers) who have experience of education and not yet have experience of work and preparation for a profession.

NORWAY

In Norway, the project's impact on professional aspirations appears to be one of reinforcement rather than radical change. While some participants might not have completely redefined their dream jobs, the program likely solidified their existing aspirations. This suggests that COSI.ed may have helped them gain a clearer vision of the path towards achieving those long-held dreams.

DENMARK AND POLAND

In Denmark and Poland, educational plans are intricately linked with career aspirations. Young people in these countries strategically align their educational trajectories with their long-term professional goals, demonstrating a pragmatic approach to their future. This alignment reflects a broader understanding among students that their educational choices are pivotal in shaping their career opportunities. These findings indicate that students in Denmark and Poland often adjust their educational plans to ensure they are on track to achieve their career objectives.

PORTUGAL

The Portuguese team highlighted these issues as follows: *In general, the young people have strong feelings about their professional aspirations. In the initial questionnaire, most of the youngsters said they wanted professions related to beauty, sports, arts, but in the follow-up questionnaire, there are more interested in arts and sports.* In the initial questionnaire, with a sample of 15 participants, all of them said that they know what professional activity they wanted to have. Related to the profession itself, some of them were related with beauty (n=5), other related with sports (n=4), other related with arts (n=2), other related with education/training (n=1), and the others related with other professions, like firefighter, mechanic, or entrepreneur (n=3). In the follow-up questionnaire, with a sample of 7 participants, most of the young people (n=6) said they know what professional activity they wanted to have, but one of them changed from "Paramedic, drummer, chef" to "I don't know yet". The

professions, in this case, some are related with arts (n=2), sports (n=2), beauty (n=1), firefighter (n=1), and the other one said, once again, “Don’t know yet”.

SPAIN

In Spain, participants' professional aspirations have become more defined and achievable by the end of the academic period. This clarity is especially evident in fields introduced through specific programs, such as Nautical Mechanics through Jovent’s grade. Two primary factors contribute to this refinement: improved self-esteem and heightened motivation driven by exposure to practical, hands-on experiences in their areas of interest. This suggests that practical engagement and self-confidence are crucial in helping students solidify their professional goals.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

In relation to educational, career and professional aspirations of young people, participation in the COSI.ed project led to a significant increase in clarity and confidence regarding educational and career aspirations among most participants. This was evident in a shift from uncertain and negative views to a more focused and positive outlook. The project fostered a more realistic approach to educational planning. Participants gained a better understanding of the steps needed to achieve their goals and how their choices aligned with their abilities. While some participants maintained their initial aspirations, others adjusted their goals based on feedback and self-reflection. This resulted in a better alignment between their desired careers and achievable educational paths. The COSI.ed methodology appears to have positively impacted teachers' expectations and students' openness towards them. Participants reported feeling more supported and encouraged by teachers in their educational pursuits. Moreover, COSI.ed highlighted the importance of role models, such as teachers and other professionals, in shaping educational and career aspirations. Participants who felt supported by such figures demonstrated a greater sense of direction and confidence.
The availability and completeness of data, as well as the specific contexts of each country, resulted in some variations in the finding. Here's a brief overview:

- **Norway:** Participants mostly maintained their initial aspirations but reported feeling more confident in achieving them. The role of teachers in providing guidance was unclear due to limited data.
- **Denmark:** Educational plans were closely linked to career aspirations. Participants demonstrated a pragmatic approach, adjusting their educational goals to align with their career objectives. Data on teacher expectations was not available.
- **Poland:** Similar to Denmark, educational plans were strategically aligned with career goals. Participants also reported increased awareness of the steps needed to achieve them.
- **Spain:** Participants' professional aspirations became more defined and achievable, particularly in program-specific fields like Nautical Mechanics. This was attributed to practical experiences and a boost in self-confidence.
- **Portugal:** Initially, aspirations were diverse, with a focus on beauty, sports, and arts. However, the follow-up showed a shift towards arts and sports. The role of professionals within the program, beyond teachers, gained more trust from participants.

Overall, the COSI.ed project appears to have had a positive impact on the educational and career aspirations of young people as it fostered a more focused, realistic, and confident approach to planning their futures.

6.4. Role models voices

A crucial aspect of understanding the impact of co-created education models like COSI.ed lies in listening to the voices of those directly involved - the role models. This section of the report focuses on the experiences and perspectives of teachers and other educational staff. By exploring their observations and feedback on the implementation of COSI.ed principles in their daily routines, we gain valuable insights into the model's effectiveness and potential areas for improvement. Examining the role models within the institutional environment allows us to assess how COSI.ed fosters collaboration, inclusivity, and student empowerment, ultimately contributing to a more holistic understanding of the role model's influence on the educational trajectories of young people.

NORWAY

The implementation of the COSI.ed methodology at Kragerø Upper Secondary School has yielded significant professional benefits for the role models involved and positive outcomes for the students. The methodology has provided the teachers, who serve as role models, with a structured framework to articulate and enhance their teaching practices and engage more deeply with their students.
The role models expressed that the project has validated and given language to the intuitive practices they had already been implementing. This new vocabulary has enabled them to discuss and refine their methods more effectively. They have become more conscious of their teaching practices and the learning environment they cultivate. The methodology has provided security and confidence in their approaches, especially through the use of the indirect approach (IA).
While the role models acknowledged the students' feedback that teaching had become more democratic and inclusive, they found it challenging to pinpoint specific changes in their practices. This difficulty may stem from the deeply ingrained traditions of vocational training, which typically emphasize hands-on, master-apprenticeship learning over explicit cognitive instruction.
The IA was particularly transformative, allowing role models to guide discussions and share their experiences in a more comfortable and less direct manner.
Facilitated deeper conversations about personal and educational experiences, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and engagement among students.
The drawing exercise was highlighted as a surprisingly effective tool, particularly with boys, for eliciting rich, contextual insights into students' backgrounds and school experiences and providing a new basis for discussing both positive and challenging aspects of school life.
The project reinforced the importance of developing strong relationships within the classroom. Both teachers and students noted improvements in how teachers connect and build rapport, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.
In Norway, throughout the COSI.ed project, the indirect approach has proven to be the most impactful element. It emphasizes utilizing everyday interactions to build relationships and explore difficult subjects, allowing students to control the narrative and share their experiences at their own pace, ensuring teachers are prepared to address or escalate issues ethically and appropriately.
The role models' enhanced consciousness and reflection on their practices, coupled with their enthusiastic participation in the project's collaborative implementation, underscore the success and transformative potential of the COSI.ed methodology. Their commitment to continuing and expanding these practices highlights the project's lasting impact on both professional development and student engagement.
Recognizing the success of the methodology, the school leadership plans to introduce the COSI.ed approach to additional educational programs.

DENMARK

The role models find that the indirect approach has been intuitively (subconsciously) applied to the ongoing dialogue with the students at FGU since as an organization is a result of The Act on Preparatory Basic Education (2017), which aims to provide a comprehensive and inclusive education and training program for young people aged 18-25. The main aim of this Act includes providing flexible educational pathways, promoting personal and social development, improving employability skills, and facilitating transitions to further education or employment. The Act underscores the importance of inclusivity, equality, and cooperation among educational institutions, employers, and local communities, to ensure that all young people have equal opportunities to succeed in adult life as well as in the labour market.

The pedagogical practice at FGU is based on 15 didactic principles that largely aligns with the COSI conceptual apparatus. The project has supplied the role models with a conceptual framework (e.g. indirect approach, the equality literacy model and co-creation) for understanding and developing their pedagogical practice. The conscious and explicit application of the principles inherent in the COSI methodology has become a part of the role models' ongoing professional development and a framework for more qualified pedagogical conversations with colleagues, also in relation to the FGU's didactic principles. These conversations help qualify the process of how to meet the needs of the students and secure a more inclusive approach to teaching and to the learning experiences of the students.
The implementation of the methodology has been helpful in developing and achieving a more inclusive approach to the learning experiences of the students. Furthermore, the teachers/role models have experienced a professional development by discussing and working with the concepts of the COSI model.
The role models point to the relevance of working with the concepts of Context and Equality literacy. These are difficult issues to address within a complex educational system based on a certain legal framework. Indirect approach and co-creation are tools you can apply in the classroom, but context is difficult to change/improve/accept. Equality literacy can be difficult to obtain when our system is built on grades to gain access to a variety of educations. The concept of grades is inherently contradictory to the idea of equality. Therefore, the suggestion of the role models is to have even more focus on how to implement and operationalize the concepts in a pedagogical setting.
Working professionally and pedagogically within a cross-cultural/international educational project has been a valuable and eye-opening experience.

POLAND

In Poland, two focus group interviews (FGI) were conducted to gather information on the experiences and opinions of role models on the implementation of the COSI.ed model in working with vulnerable youth - one in each implementing cycle. An interview design in line with the *Guidelines for conducting a Focus Group (PART 3. Interviews with role models)* prepared by the University of Warsaw Team.

Role models in the COSI.ed project describe their workplace as not just a professional setting but as a friendly, homely environment with an extraordinary atmosphere. This nurturing atmosphere is pivotal in educational work, where "working on relationships" is a central theme. These role models see themselves as significant adult figures in their students' lives, fulfilling more than just an academic role but addressing fundamental needs such as basic self-service skills—hygiene, table manners, financial management, and temperance. They emphasize that while the institution's primary goal is to enhance school achievement, addressing these basic needs often takes precedence, highlighting the necessity to prioritize tasks when working with young people in the facility.

Interviews with role models involved in the project reveal a shift in their approach to educational work. A critical realization was the importance of one-on-one contact with students, which many noted as lacking in their daily routines due to time constraints. One role model reflected, "[The project] made me realize a very simple thing: how much these kids need one-to-one contact." This sentiment was echoed by another who said, “These meetings were an opportunity to talk things out because at our work there is no time to sit down with the child and devote myself wholeheartedly.”

Through these individual interactions, educators gained deeper insights into the residents' challenges and successes. One remarked, “I have seen how many things they fail at and what joy there is when goals are met.” Another added, “Goal-setting is something they find difficult, and seeing the positives is a cosmic thing for them,” pointing out the pervasive negativity that often obscures small victories for the youth.

The project’s methodology led to various positive outcomes for the role models and the students. Experiences varied, but the overall sentiment was positive. One educator shared, "I have an experience with a boy who has major intellectual deficits (...) he was not able to name, describe his feelings (...) then gradually he started to find the words for himself." Another observed significant progress: “I've seen him evolve, progress, such a development." The role models noted the students' enthusiasm and motivation, with one stating, “The kids were really bought into it, they were very excited.”

However, there were also systemic challenges in implementing the COSI.ed methodology. Organizational issues such as limited space and time during regular working hours posed significant hurdles. Additionally, the project's short duration made it difficult to achieve long-term goals. High absenteeism and frequent student turnover further complicated the effectiveness of the work. One role model highlighted this, saying, “Educational objectives—they didn't make it, whereas objectives such as ‘relationships’ were much easier to reach.”

Participation in the COSI.ed project offered valuable professional benefits. Role models reflected on the importance of individual work with students, noting, “In 1:1 contact, they reinvent themselves. Outwardly, their behavior is completely different… not playing the big boss.” They also underscored the necessity of regularity in pursuing goals: “I was reminded of how important it is to be systematic in your work if you are pursuing a goal. If this regularity is not there, nothing can be done about it.”

The project also fostered a greater appreciation for co-creation in goal-setting and the value of collaboration between various stakeholders, such as school and family. One educator emphasized, “For the children, it’s a shock, because we minimize the lie by being in constant contact with parents.”

Monitoring progress was another area where role models saw significant value. One mentioned, “I liked it very much. The brilliant thing is that I keep a calendar in the form of a weekly calendar, and that we plan—because it's the planning that is the basis.”

Despite the positive feedback, role models identified areas for improvement. The need for more time and better organizational support was a recurring theme. They suggested that reducing the impact of external factors, such as family and school context, could enhance the project's effectiveness. Addressing these systemic issues would enable more consistent and impactful engagement with the students.

Overall, the role models' impressions of the COSI.ed project were positive, focusing on the project's guiding principles of indirect approach, co-creation, and equality literacy. One role model summed up the value of the project, saying, “An awareness that this conversation with the child is key. Without the conversation, we won't learn about a lot of things that are sitting in the head somewhere.” This underscores the critical role of open communication and relationship-building in achieving educational and personal development goals for the youth.

SPAIN

The integration of the COSI.edu project into the educational frameworks of Jovent and Naüm training centers has catalyzed significant improvements in the support and development of work with young people facing challenging life circumstances. This project’s methodology, rooted in personalized and

student-centered approaches, has proven transformative for both the students and the educational teams. The COSI.edu project has underscored the importance of addressing the emotional and personal needs of young people. By fostering empathy and understanding, the centers have been able to provide a more supportive and nurturing environment. This is crucial for students who often arrive with low self-esteem, anxiety, and significant emotional baggage.

"Emphasizes the necessity of understanding the daily struggles against racism and discrimination that young people face, helping them navigate these challenges with greater resilience."

"Highlights the profound effect of showing genuine interest and affection towards students, many of whom have experienced traumatic journeys to reach the centers."

"Focuses on the mission to build students' confidence and self-esteem, empowering them to believe in their capabilities."

Moreover, the COSI.edu approach has been particularly valuable in addressing the exacerbated emotional issues brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes increased anxiety and the difficulties of adapting to new environments under stressful conditions.

"Notes a significant increase in students needing psychological support, a need that has been met with the provision of individualized counseling, helping students manage their anxiety and emotional challenges more effectively."

The COSI.edu project has improved the way centers guide students through their educational journeys, providing clarity and structure to those often confused about their academic and vocational options.

"Describes how orientation sessions have become integral to helping students understand their training options and future opportunities, reducing confusion and aligning their goals with achievable outcomes."

Students are better equipped to transition from training to real-life applications, thanks to a clearer understanding of their educational trajectories and the professional paths available to them. The COSI.edu project has reinforced and expanded student-centered learning methodology, where students actively participate in shaping their educational content. This approach has significantly increased student motivation and engagement. The project's methodologies are flexible, allowing educators to tailor their teaching strategies to the unique needs of each student group, whether through individualized support or adapting practical exercises. The COSI.edu project has amplified the impact of informal, spontaneous interactions outside the traditional classroom setting. These interactions build stronger emotional bonds between educators and students, which are crucial for understanding and addressing their needs. By emphasizing trust and security, the project has created a foundation for students to face new challenges and broaden their horizons with confidence. The COSI.edu project prepares students not only for academic success but also for the realities of life beyond the training centers. This includes understanding that while empathy is crucial, students must also be ready to face a world that may not always offer the same level of support. The project empowers students to take control of their learning, making them active participants rather than passive recipients. This self-directed approach equips them with the skills and confidence needed to succeed in various aspects of life.

The COSI.edu project has significantly enriched the educational practices at Jovent and Naüm, creating a supportive, engaging, and empowering environment for young people facing complex life challenges. By emphasizing emotional support, innovative learning methods, and strong personal connections, the project has transformed the educational landscape for these students, equipping them with the tools they need to succeed both academically and personally. As the centers continue to adapt and refine their approaches, the ongoing impact of COSI.edu promises to be even more profound, offering a model of education that is responsive, inclusive, and transformative.

PORTUGAL

The University of Porto team embarked on a series of insightful semi-structured interviews with role

models as part of the COSI.ed project. The team engaged with six students from the Educational Sciences Masters' program and a professional from the Second Chance School of Matosinhos (E2OM), uncovering a valuable practitioner's perspective on the implementation and impact of educational theories in real-world settings, particularly within a school dedicated to providing second chances to students.

The interviews revealed a wealth of insights, highlighting several significant themes in education and the impact of the COSI.ed project:

Participants emphasized the intricate connections between educational contexts, vulnerability, and learning. They acknowledged the diverse trajectories of students and reflected on how systemic conditions can contribute to marginalization. This recognition underscores the importance of understanding each student's unique challenges and experiences.

The interviews highlighted the value of building trust and establishing more balanced power dynamics within educational settings. Role models noted that the COSI.ed project facilitated a shift towards more equitable and culturally sensitive interactions, breaking down traditional hierarchies and fostering mutual respect.

A key theme was the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experiences. Masters' students noted how their coursework connected with the realities they observed and experienced at the Second Chance School. This bridging of theory and practice enriched their understanding and application of educational principles.

The project provided new opportunities for socialization, enabling interactions among peers, practitioners, and researchers. These connections not only enhanced their professional networks but also provided diverse perspectives that enriched their learning and personal growth.

The COSI.ed project offered a theoretical foundation for practices already in place at the Second Chance School. This alignment validated and reinforced the educational methods being used, providing a clearer understanding of the underlying principles and enhancing the credibility of their work. Participants reported an increase in awareness and empathy when interacting with young people. The project's indirect approach promoted open-mindedness and deeper mutual understanding, fostering a sense of closeness and better communication with students.

The collaborative nature of the project facilitated the co-construction of knowledge. This approach proved particularly beneficial when working with young people, as it encouraged active participation and creative adaptation of educational strategies, making learning more engaging and effective.

The UP team's semi-structured interviews provided a rich tapestry of insights into the impact of the project. Through these dialogues, the COSI.ed project not only highlighted the importance of contextual and empathetic approaches to education but also demonstrated the power of integrating theory with practice. The enthusiasm and thoughtful reflections of the participants underscore the transformative potential of projects like COSI.ed in fostering inclusive and effective educational environments.

Summary

The COSI.ed project, implemented across educational institutions in Norway, Denmark, Poland, Portugal, and Spain, has demonstrated profound impacts on both educators and students alike. Through its emphasis on structured yet intuitive practices, COSI.ed has not only validated and refined existing teaching strategies but also empowered educators to cultivate more inclusive and supportive learning environments.

In Norway, at Kragerø Upper Secondary School, teachers acting as role models found COSI.ed instrumental in articulating their teaching practices and fostering deeper engagement with students. The methodology's indirect approach facilitated open discussions and deeper personal connections, enhancing both classroom dynamics and student participation. Similarly, in Poland, where the focus was on vulnerable youth in two educational facilities, COSI.ed underscored the importance of individualized attention and systemic understanding, despite organizational challenges and high

turnover rates among students. Portugal's experience at the Second Chance School of Matosinhos highlighted COSI.ed's role in bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application. It promoted equitable interactions and empowered students through co-creation of educational content, fostering empathy and mutual respect among all stakeholders. Meanwhile, in Spain, at Jovent and Naüm training centers, COSI.ed addressed the emotional needs of students facing significant life challenges, fostering a supportive environment that emphasized personal growth and empowerment alongside academic achievement.

Across these diverse contexts, COSI.ed's impact resonates in its ability to adapt and enrich educational practices. By promoting empathy, trust, and inclusive methodologies, the project has not only enhanced academic outcomes but also nurtured holistic development among students. The methodology's success lies in its capacity to validate and enhance educators' professional roles while fostering a sense of belonging and engagement among students, regardless of their background or challenges they face.

Looking forward, the positive feedback and insights gathered from these implementations underscore COSI.ed's potential as a transformative educational model. Continued efforts to refine and expand the methodology, addressing identified challenges such as organizational constraints and student turnover, will be crucial in maximizing its impact. Moreover, advocating for broader implementation across educational systems and fostering collaboration among stakeholders can further enhance COSI.ed's effectiveness in meeting the evolving needs of students and educators alike.

In conclusion, the COSI.ed project exemplifies a forward-thinking approach to education, emphasizing not just academic achievement but also emotional support, inclusivity, and personal empowerment. Its ongoing development and application promise to continue reshaping educational practices, making them more responsive, empathetic, and effective in preparing students for success in both academic pursuits and life beyond the classroom.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

Main conclusions

The COSI.edu project has been implemented across diverse educational contexts, reflecting variations in the types of institutions involved, their roles within the educational system, and the profiles of both direct and indirect beneficiaries. Significantly, the project has successfully engaged with institutions dedicated to supporting particularly vulnerable groups of young people in various countries.
A comprehensive review of the project materials reveals a generally positive perception of the institutional climate within which COSI.edu has been introduced, changed positively within project implementation. The unique approach to educational tasks adopted by many of the participating institutions, often characterized by non-traditional methods and goals, significantly influences these positive climate assessments. The material provided by national teams indicates that relationships with teachers and educators are perceived positively, especially when compared to students' previous educational experiences. In many cases, students have identified particular teachers or educators as exceptional role models who have made a significant impact on their lives.

The COSI.ed project, implemented in five European countries, yielded significant positive impacts on both students and educators.
Impact on Students:
Students reported a significant improvement in their relationships with teachers, perceiving them as mentors and allies. The project fostered a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Young people valued personalized attention and the ability to build unique relationships with peers and teachers. COSI.ed facilitated these connections by emphasizing individual tailored interactions. Moreover, the participants desired educational institutions to foster creativity through innovative teaching methods. The project made strides in this area by integrating social, practical and theoretical learning.
The data shows that the project positively influenced the overall school/institutional atmosphere, challenges remain in ensuring optimal conditions for all the learners. COSI.ed improved the alignment of learning methods and provided career counseling according to students' needs, but continuous adaptation to better address the participants' life situations is necessary. A safe and positive atmosphere with strong peer relationships was paramount for young people. The project significantly enhanced the sense of safety and community within institutions, fostering positive peer interactions. Across all countries, there was a notable improvement in the relationship between students and teachers, reflected in positive changes in academic performance and engagement. However, specific findings varied by country:

- **Norway:** Students reported a positive trend due to increased participation in shaping their learning environment. They felt a stronger sense of accomplishment and a closer relationship with teachers.
- **Denmark:** A significant portion of participants reported feeling they were doing better in school, linked to enhanced motivation and differentiated instruction.
- **Poland:** While some students reported individual success, there was no significant overall improvement in perceived academic performance. Role models observed an improvement in the educational situation, suggesting potential benefits beyond self-reported measures.
- **Spain:** Students at Jovent and Naüm experienced a remarkable improvement in academic performance and confidence due to the practical learning approach.
- **Portugal:** There's evidence of improved student motivation and engagement. Student portfolios showed improvement and attendance rates increased slightly.

The analysis highlights the importance of a holistic approach, addressing personal development alongside academic performance.

Impact on Educators:
COSI.ed validated and refined existing teaching strategies, empowering educators to cultivate more inclusive and supportive learning environments. The project's structured yet intuitive practices facilitated open discussions and deeper personal connections between educators and students, enhancing classroom dynamics and participation. Moreover, COSI.ed underscored the importance of individualized attention, despite challenges like high student turnover rates.

Overall, the COSI.ed project demonstrates the potential of a co-created educational approach in fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and empowering learning environment for both students and educators. The project's **success lies in its adaptability and ability to address the specific needs of diverse educational contexts.** Continued efforts to refine the methodology, address identified challenges, and advocate for broader implementation can further enhance its impact on the educational landscape.

Recommendations for practice

Work package 5 of the COSI.ed project produced a number of recommendations (See: outputs 5.4 & 5.5), which can be found on the project website: https://cosied.eu/documents. Below are a number of recommendations for practice that are directly linked to the data analysis carried out from the two implementation cycles.
The research conducted allowed for a more accurate identification of the educational environment in every partner country. It can be the basis for analyzing the functioning of the institutions in which the model is being implemented - their environment, context and the resources of those people providing support. The results suggest in which areas the institutions could improve and in what direction these changes would be advisable.
Working methods based on power balance, respect, dialogue and co-creation are accepted and appreciated by young people and contribute to improving their cooperation with educational staff, making their learning and life expectations more realistic. For this reason, **such an approach should become part of the everyday work of institutions working with young people at risk of social exclusion**.
The research showed that **young people's opinions should be counted and that their voices are important in understanding the determinants related to their educational and career aspirations.**
As peer relationships are crucial in the teenage years and early adulthood, it is important **to foster positive relations among youth through interesting group activities, involvement in joint projects and leisure activities in tutorial groups.**
Well-tailored strategies of support and cooperation combined with participatory engagement through co-creation at the educational level with young people should include supporting young people in the development of their plans and aspirations by enabling them to see what perspectives they have for further development as young adults and adults.
The data show that the opportunity to **build a meaningful, inspiring relationship with an adult role model (s) is crucial to improving young people's perceptions** of how they will succeed in school/the labour market. Therefore, as important as **caring for young people and their needs**, it is equally important to **provide adequate guidance and support for educational staff**. In order to be able to adequately support young people at risk, they themselves need to be supported and motivated.
Finally, the analysis of the characteristics of the education systems and the results of our research confirm the repeatedly raised issue of putting **more emphasis on career guidance and raising the competence to consciously create one's own education/career pathway**.

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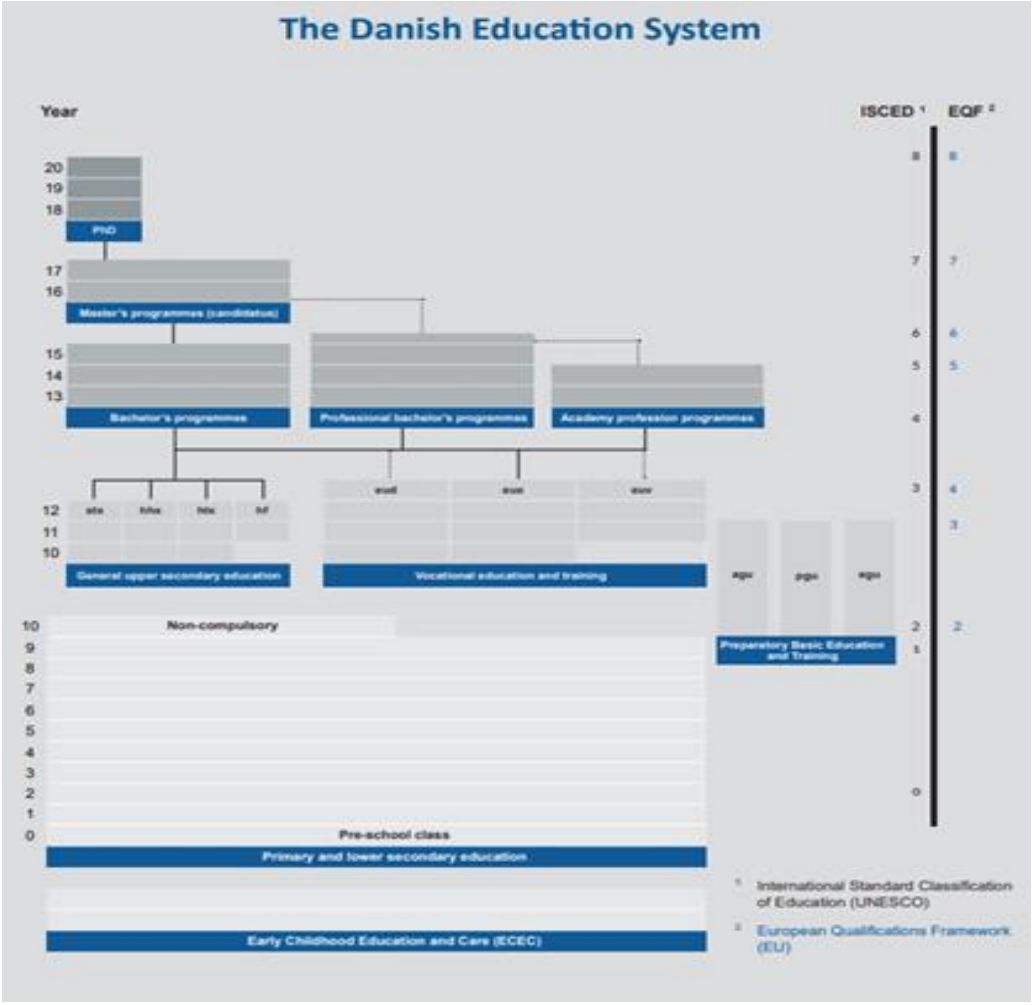
ANNEX

Table 1A. List of implementing institutions.

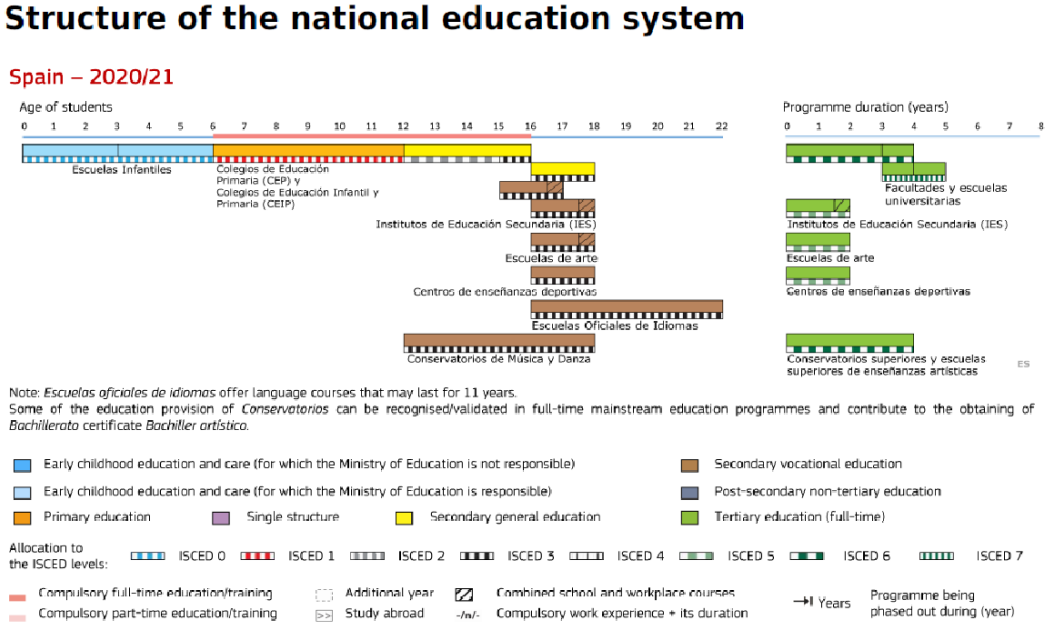
COUNTRY	IMPLEMENTING INSTITUTION - RESEARCH AREA
NORWAY	Kragerø Upper Secondary School Frydensborgveien 9-11, Kragerø, 3770, NO http://kragerovgs.no/engx.html
DENMARK	FGU Nordvest Elsøvej 101 7900 Nykøbing Mors https://fgunordvest.dk/
POLAND	Special Educational Centre “Dom przy Rynku” (in Polish: Specjalny Ośrodek Wychowawczy “Dom przy Rynku”, abbreviation: SOW) ul. Rynek Nowego Miasta 4, 00-229 Warszawa https://sow.waw.pl/ Youth Sociotherapy Centre No. 4 (in Polish: Młodzieżowy Ośrodek Socjoterapii Nr 4 w Warszawie, abbreviation: MOS) al. Władysława Reymonta 16, 01-842 Warszawa https://mos4.pl/
PORTUGAL	Escola de Segunda Oportunidade de Matosinhos (E2OM) Largo Capela do Telheiro, 4465-053, S. Mamede de Infesta https://www.segundaoportunidade.com/
SPAIN	© Societat Cooperativa Jovent C/. Son Gibert, 8 Palma de Mallorca, 07008 https://jovent.es/en/home/ Projecte Socioeducatiu Naüm C/ Can Ferragut 4A, 07011, Palma https://naumsonroca.es/home/

Graph 1A. The Danish education system.



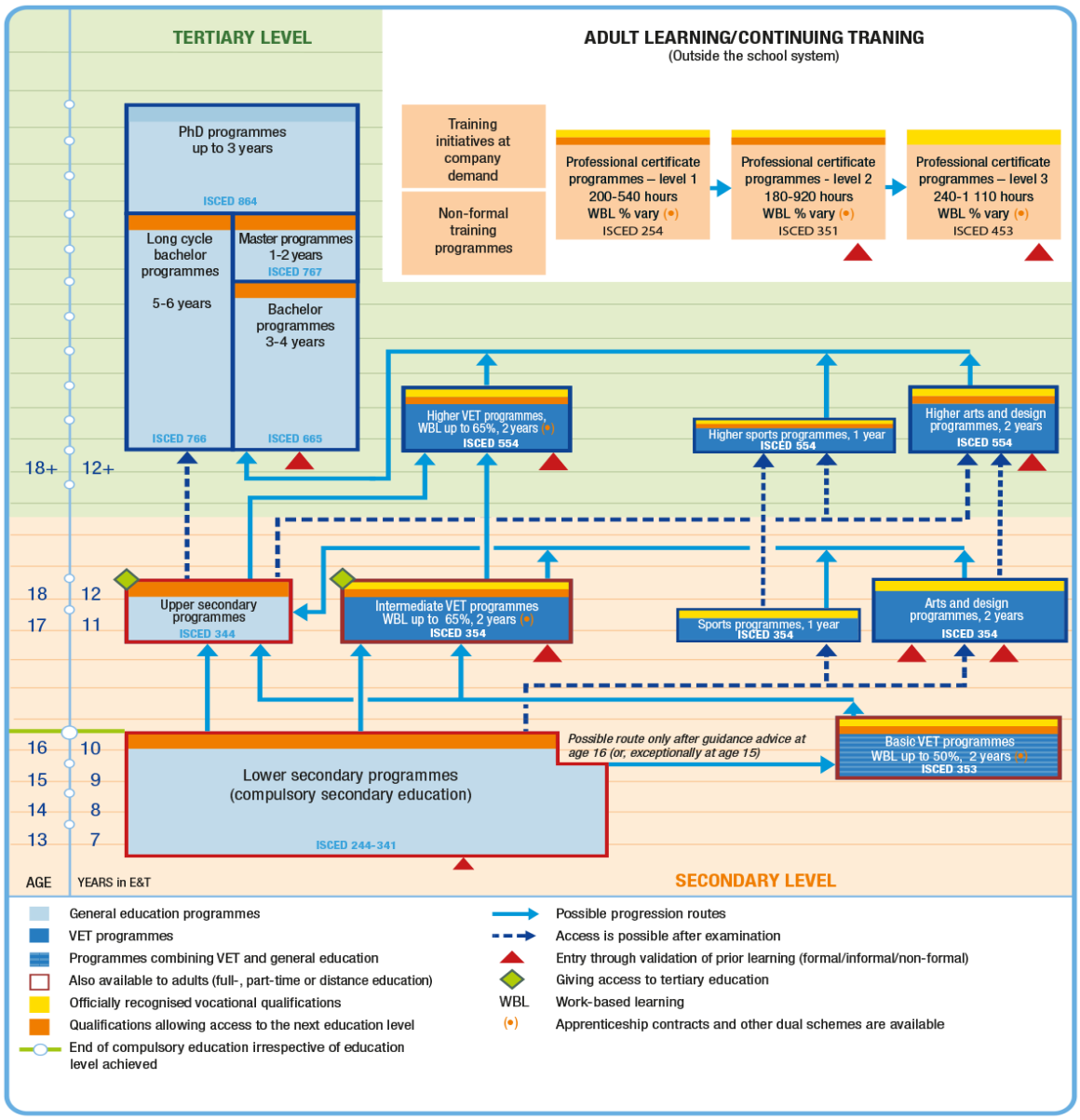
Source: https://ufm.dk/en/publications/2022/files/the-danish-education-system.pdf

Graph 2A. The Spanish education system.



Source: Eurydice 2020/21

Graph 3A. The Spanish education system.



NB: ISCED-P 2011. The Spanish education system is not referenced to EQF levels.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Spain.