

included



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

CREATIVE WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE SEX-ED ROADMAP & POLICY GUIDELINES



WWW.INCLUDEDPROJECT.EU



CREATIVE WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE SEX-ED: roadmap & policy guidelines

Adrián Crescini · Aikaterini Arampatzi · Anja Marojevic · Anna Bellan
Daniela Eletti · Dominique Borm · Eleni Bogiatzidaki
Epameinondas Koutavelis · Erisjan Bregu · George Balamotis
George Kosyvas · Kristina Vasileska · Laura Stanzani · Lorena Valencia
Marina Natsia · Meritxell Martínez · Naya Boemi · Nicola Paganoni
Salma Aladdin · Sarah Harou · Valentina Narváez · Veronica Cattini · Vesper Veer Visser

2023

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



This document has been developed within the framework of the project “***INCLUDED: Inclusive sex-ed through creative methods***” (Project n° 2020-1-UK01-KA227-SCH-094470). This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

INCLUDED Project Partners

- Merseyside Expanding Horizons (UK): www.expandinghorizons.co.uk
- La Xixa Teatre (Spain): www.laxixa.org
- Anziani e Non Solo (Italy): www.anzianienonsolo.it
- Regional Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education of Attica (Greece): <https://pdeattikis.gr/EU/>
- Sexmatters (The Netherlands): www.sexmatters.nl
- KMOP - Education and Innovation Hub (Greece): <https://education-hub.kmop.org/>
- KMOP Skopje (Macedonia): www.mk.kmop.org

This publication is licensed Creative Commons.



The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	6
METHODOLOGY.....	8
EXPERIENCE-BASED ROADMAPS	9
Italy	9
Introduction – National Context.....	9
Intellectual Output 1	10
Intellectual Output 2.....	16
Intellectual Output 3.....	17
Policy Recommendations	19
Conclusion	20
Spain.....	21
Introduction – National Context.....	21
Intellectual Output 1	22
Intellectual Output 2.....	28
Intellectual Output 3.....	29
Policy Recommendations	32
Conclusion	33
Greece.....	34
Introduction – National Context.....	34
Intellectual Output 1	34
Intellectual Output 2.....	39
Intellectual Output 3.....	39
Policy Recommendations	41
Conclusion	41
UK.....	42
Introduction – National Context.....	42
Intellectual Output 1	42
Intellectual Output 2.....	44
Intellectual Output 3.....	45



Policy Recommendations	45
Conclusion	46
The Netherlands	47
Introduction – National Context	47
Intellectual Output 1	50
Intellectual Output 2	51
Intellectual Output 3	52
Policy Recommendations	53
Conclusion	53
North Macedonia	54
Introduction – National Context	54
Intellectual Output 1	55
Intellectual Output 2	60
Intellectual Output 3	60
Policy Recommendations	62
Conclusion	63
References	64
IMPRESSUM	67



INTRODUCTION

Sexual health is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) (2006) not only as the absence of disease or negative experiences regarding sexuality but also as “the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences” (p. 4). Furthermore, the definition states that “the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled” (p. 4). Individuals with intellectual, cognitive and physical diversities are no different in this respect, and express the need and desire to form relationships, engage in sexual contact, and acquire sexual knowledge (Kelly, Crowley, & Hamilton, 2009; Konstantareas & Lunskey, 1997; McCabe, 1999; Siebelink, de Jong, Taal, & Roelvink, 2006). However, access to sexual health education is limited for many young people with intellectual, cognitive and physical diversities.

According to UNESCO, Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) is a sex-ed curriculum-based process that includes the aspects of cognitive, emotional, physical, and social levels. CSE is important because it provides children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that a) empower them regarding their health, well-being, and dignity, b) prepare them to develop respectful social and sexual relationships, c) make them understand and ensure the protection of their rights and respect others’ rights as well. While the benefit of CSE has been widely demonstrated, UNESCO has stated that there is limited information on its impact on already marginalised groups, including young people with intellectual, cognitive and physical diversities. Creative methods that are suitable and effective for this target group, such as theatre games and role-playing, should be further investigated.

Furthermore, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the sexual education of all children and young people in different ways: a) by closing schools, sexual education received less attention, because in online classes at home, it was not a priority, b) the increased use of the internet due to the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the risk of online sexual harassment of children. However, by closing schools, many parents took on an additional role as teachers. As families spent more time together at home, parents had the chance to connect with their kids and delve into sexual health in a meaningful and more intentional way. This effort from the parents should be supported as well.

The INCLUDED project aims to respond to these challenges by designing and implementing an inclusive sexual education curriculum for high school students and a model to foster a whole-school approach to sexual education, both based on student-friendly and creative theatrical techniques, such as roleplaying and theatre games mentioned above. These kinds of games have been proven to be effective in educating young people. In addition to the sexual education curriculum, the INCLUDED project aims to promote a holistic and inclusive environment for young people with intellectual, cognitive and physical diversities. For example, critical pedagogy and pedagogy of the oppressed approaches offer valuable tools to foster dialogical relationships with groups of young people. The project is in fact focused on the provision of important instruments, tools, and skills to teachers to increase their knowledge and capacity and make them able to deliver a high quality and holistic sexual education curriculum.



The main objectives of the project are a) to support teenage students, including those with intellectual, cognitive and functional diversities through a curricular training programme. Through this programme students will effectively achieve the core learning outcomes of sexual education according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) standards, b) to support teachers and school staff through an e-course that trains them to apply innovative practices in sexual education through creative methods, c) to engage parents and caretakers' active cooperation in the sexual education programme through a methodological guide and d) to develop open educational resources.

These objectives are linked to the following outcomes:

- A handbook for schools to implement inclusive sex-ed through creative methods: a curricular training programme for students. (IO1)
- An e-course for teachers about teaching inclusive sex-ed through creative methods (IO2)
- A guide for schools on how to include the family in inclusive sex-ed, based on critical pedagogy methods (IO3)
- A guide to implementing a creative whole-school approach to inclusive sex-ed (IO4)

This document is the latter guide, which includes policy guidelines and a detailed roadmap based on the experience in each partner country. This guide focuses on the implementation of a creative whole-school approach to holistic and positive sexual education and it targets school authorities and policymakers.

More specifically, the main objective of the document is to facilitate mainstreaming of holistic and positive sexuality education, and inform policy through a tried-out, beneficiary-centred, bottom-up approach regarding open educational resources that can contribute to the well-being and social inclusion of vulnerable societal groups.

It includes policy guidelines and a roadmap for further adoption, a holistic and positive approach to sex education in accordance with the WHO policy framework "Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe", and a diversity focus based on the intersectional approach where race, gender, abilities, social class, migratory status, sexual orientation, etc. are taken into account.

Hence, this document includes the methodology and the desk and field results generated through the implementation in each partner country of the previous project activities, the description of each national context regarding sexual education, and the existing policies. Through the comparison of the existing and missing policies in each country, we have created a policy roadmap with recommendations.



METHODOLOGY

As mentioned above, the aims of the INCLUDED project include the design, piloting and evaluation of an inclusive sexual education curriculum for secondary students by using creative and theatre-based methods. The INCLUDED project adopted a whole-school approach targeting three main groups: 1) teenage students (including students with intellectual, cognitive and functional diversities) attending high schools of partner countries, 2) teachers and school staff (directly or indirectly) involved in sexual education activities, and 3) parents/guardians/carers. We put into practise a holistic and positive approach to sexual education in accordance with the WHO policy framework “Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe” combined with a creative, embodied, arts-based, theatre-based and intersectional methodological approach.

Except for the desk research that each partner conducted in order to understand the in-depth context of sexual education in each national context, primary research was also conducted with the target groups in order to define their needs.

More specifically:

In the IO1, the partners developed a curricular training programme for students, a Handbook for schools and recommendations on how to introduce it in the school curriculum. The programme is based on the national context, and interviews with school authorities, teachers, parents and students that identified their needs. A pilot implementation took place. Each partner delivered the 8-hour training programme to 14–20-year-old students.

In the IO2, the partners developed an e-course for teachers on how they can teach inclusive sexual education through creative methods, based also on the previous experiences and results of IO1. The modules of the e-course are based on: a) the Critical Incident Methodology, which is a systematic, open-ended technique that involves analysing specific situations to determine which communicative actions or behaviours would lead to the best possible outcome of a given situation, b) the process of Oriented Psychology (POP), which is a model that integrates and uses contributions from various disciplines to facilitate transformation and growth both individually and collectively, c) the Theatre of the Oppressed, which is a method of dramatic techniques whose purpose is to bring to light systemic exploitation and oppression within common situations, and to allow spectators to become actors, and d) inclusion. A pilot with 6-8 teachers in each country implemented.

Finally, in the IO3, the partners also included the families and developed a guide for schools with interactive workshops for parents and educators. The primary research for these workshops includes two sets of interviews with each country’s school staff. The material that was developed is also based on a pedagogical approach of the Universal Design for Learning methodology and Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy. A pilot implementation took place in which both parents and educators were included.



EXPERIENCE-BASED ROADMAPS

Italy

Introduction – National Context

As revealed in the Italian primary research, there is an absence of an integrated ministerial program regarding sex education in schools. The MIUR (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca* - Ministry of Education, of University, and Research) has not adopted and formalised the inclusion of a standardised sex education programme in Italian schools. Italy is nowadays one of the few EU member states (together with Cyprus, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Lithuania) lacking compulsory sex-ed in schools.

The lack of a common sex education curriculum means that every school in every region can decide whether and how to carry out sex education programmes: some involve a few internal teachers, others join regional initiatives, some rely on external organisations, while in still other schools the topic of sex education is not dealt with at all. This situation causes sex education to be decidedly uneven across the territory, sometimes completely absent, fragmented or treated with different approaches, to which is added a total absence of specific guidance on sexual education in special and/or inclusive education. All of this leaves students in a condition of information disparity.

The most recent government indication that makes some mention of sex education issues in schools is the so-called "The Good School Reform" (2015), which states: "The three-years plan of the educational offer ensures the implementation of the principles of equal opportunities, promoting in schools of all levels education for gender equality, prevention of gender-based violence and all discriminations". It is based on a law approved in 2013 aimed to fight gender-based violence and femicide, which contained dispositions for implementing gender equality training programs in the schools, dealing with topics such as gender identity and sexual orientation, which are usually part of sex education paths. But the reality is that despite this law, there is still no law in Italy that aims to introduce sex education into the school curriculum nationwide.

In schools that choose to include sex education in their curriculum, the topic is usually taught in humanities subjects, such as Italian and/or history, or in science and biology classes. It can also be a topic covered during the optional weekly religion class, by using a debate activity or by watching a dedicated movie. However, these attempts are frequently unstructured and non-neutral.

Looking at the individual sex education programmes that exist in the Italian landscape, there are different educational pathways for each specific age group, roughly from age 8 up to age 18. Targeting the same age group, but outside of school and school programmes, in Italy there are different initiatives implemented by the "Consultori Familiari" ("Family counselling clinics"). "Consultori familiari" are the entities that generally propose specific training paths on sex-ed, with training curriculum which may differ from place to place, depending on the specific *consultorio* and on the professionals involved.



Intellectual Output 1

The first outcome of the project (IO1) is a manual to support teachers in implementing the inclusive sex education program. This program was created by the partners based on the results that emerged from the *desk research* phase on the national context of the countries involved in the current educational provision in the field of sex education, current regulations and legislation, and based on interviews with stakeholders (students, schools, and parents) that identified current needs. The training programme was then piloted in classes in which students with physical and/or intellectual disabilities were also present.

Desk research

The inclusion of students with disabilities in the Italian school system

Special classes for individuals with disabilities no longer exist in the Italian scholastic system. Regulations have been drafted to facilitate the inclusion of individuals with intellectual, cognitive and physical diversities within mixed classes. As a matter of fact, the MIUR (Ministry of Education, of University and Research) states that “*School integration of students with disabilities is one of the strengths of the Italian school, which aims to be a welcoming community in which all students, regardless of their functional differences, can experience individual and social growth*” (1977). To promote inclusion in the classroom setting and to meet the needs of each student, the PEI (*Piano Educativo Individualizzato* - Individualised Educational Plan) was established. It considers the educational, socialisation and learning goals of each student and it is drawn up jointly by the school and the public services (psycho-social health team) with the collaboration of the family. The common thread is an approach, that has been adopted by the Italian school system during the past few years, of maximum inclusion of students with disabilities, abolishing special schools and differentiated classes and enshrining their right to be included in the regular school system. Students with disabilities are therefore distributed within the ordinary classes in a number that generally does not exceed two students per class. This choice is based on the fact that by including students with special educational needs in ordinary classes, it is possible to promote their inclusion and participation, thus allowing them to take part in general education with the help of specific support figures and on the basis of the PEI established for the student.

Taboos and stigmas present in Italy in education and in general culture

Sexual education programmes aimed at persons with disabilities, where present, have arrived late in Italy and are still sporadic in the field because of the extremely widespread taboos concerning sexuality in disability. Talking about sexuality to children and youngsters is still perceived as “immoral” or “indecent” by a part of the Italian public opinion: the younger the child is, the more sexuality is perceived as something inappropriate to talk about. Rooted in time and in the minds of parents, as the first “informal” educators of sexuality, especially in the older generations, is the embarrassment to deal with the subject: there is a tendency not to talk about it and to consider sex as “dirty”.



Some conservative sectors of the society and the Catholic church are used to presenting gender studies and anti-discrimination sensitisation as some sort of “ideological indoctrination” aimed at cancelling the difference between male and female. Great taboo is also attached to the topic of sexuality in disability. The widespread perception is that people with disabilities, especially those with intellectual-cognitive disabilities, are "asexual" and therefore lack sexual needs. Sexual education among young adolescents with disabilities is therefore considered unnecessary or even "dangerous" because it is believed that these young people/adults should not have a sexual life. Even affective relationships are seen by the adults/guardians as puerile; they are not given the seriousness of an adult love relationship.

Informal education

Often because of the existing taboos and the lack of formal educational paths offered by schools, students resort to informal means of education to learn and inform themselves about sexuality. According to recent reports, Italian students overwhelmingly get their information on sexuality and reproduction on the Internet. The "National Fertility Study" (2019) project sponsored by the Ministry of Health and conducted in 2018, published in 2019 the results of the research that involved more than 16,000 students aged 16-17 and 482 schools distributed throughout the country. *“The sample is representative at the national level, both for the methodology used and for the high percentage of young people who participated in the survey. This makes it possible to extend the results to the entire 16-17-year-old population.”*

From the responses to the survey emerges an overestimation by boys and girls regarding the adequacy of the information they possess on the issues of sexual and reproductive health that in most cases (89% of males and 84% of females) search on the Internet. Friends come next as a second source of information (38% of males and 46% of females), then the family (20% of males and 25% of females), and the school (18% of males and 22% of females). Doctors are the fifth source (11% of males and 12% of females) (*ibidem*).

However, as noted in the "National Fertility Study", there is an overwhelming percentage of students who believe that schools should provide information on sexuality and reproduction: for some in elementary school (11%), for others in middle school (50%), and for still others in high school (32%). On the contrary, only 6% of those interviewed state that they do not consider this teaching useful. On the part of young people there is a strong demand for education in affectivity and sexuality.

The political climate on subjects such as sex-ed, sex positivity, sexual rights, diversity (LGBTQIA+), inclusion and other topics related to sex-ed

There are no official laws regarding sexuality education in Italy. Many proposals have been presented since 1975, when has been proposed the first law draft about the importance of deal sexual issues in public schools (Bill 13 March 1975 - Initiatives for information on sexuality problems in state schools), but none were approved. Recently in Italy, a legislative bill, called "DDL Zan" (2018), named after the rapporteur Alessandro Zan, which deals with "violence or discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity," has been at the centre of public debate. It was



intended as a *“legislative intervention that sanctions conduct dictated by persecutory intent toward homo- and transsexual persons or transgender persons, precisely because of their sexual orientation or of their gender identity”*.

This bill has generated a strong debate between the more "progressive" forces and political parties oriented towards a more inclusive community, and the more "conservative" ones, who see the bill as favouritism towards the LGBTQIA+ community.

These two visions are represented by the population through various forms of social-political manifestations. On the one hand, Pride parades during the last 3 years in Italy have exploded in many cities, not only the most populous and large. In this context, many social groups have claimed their right to assert their gender, sexual and affective identity. On the other hand, there have been demonstrations by "Pro Life and Family" associations, aiming to protect the traditional Catholic family, against "gender ideology"¹ as well as protest against abortion. Among the latest statements: *"Ddl Zan is a sexist and discriminatory law that intends to brand as homophobic or transphobic all voices of dissent or any statement based on sexual orientation that is said to be inspired by the concept of natural family formed by a mom and a dad - argued the vice president of Pro Life & Family Jacopo Coghe - and we cannot accept that space is given to a new and ambiguous dictatorship, much more hidden and dangerous."* (Giuffrida, 2021)

Speaking instead of the topic of sex education, not from a political but a strictly social point of view, many reliable channels of information are emerging. Many Italian professionals in the field, like gynaecologists, oncologists, andrologists, but also psychologists and educators, are using social networks to disseminate realistic and truthful information about sex, relationships, and the need to know one's own body and right, reaching hundreds of thousands of followers. Through platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, "good information" channels are opening up, with the will to counteract the distorted and biased information that young people can generally find on the web. On the other hand, while it is easier to convey more technical information through the web, according to some of the sex-eds *“what is missing is human mediation, especially for some fundamental concepts such as consent, respect, the right to pleasure, empathy and prevention.”* (Il Post, 2022)

Initiatives dealing with sexuality

Seeing individuals with physical and/or intellectual disabilities as eternal children or as asexual people, has not helped in the development of educational programs in which sexuality takes on a central role; on the contrary, it is unfortunately often completely overlooked by parents and caregivers because it is considered an area of little interest for people with disabilities.

¹ “The study of gender ideologies is concerned with describing and explaining cross-cultural similarities and differences in human views on women, men, and alternative gender identities. The use of the term ‘ideology’ reflects two aspects of research on this topic: (a) its roots in the feminist position that women are conceptualized as inferior to men to justify and sustain social and cultural systems dominated by men; and (b) the culturally constructed (as opposed to ‘natural’) nature of gender.” (S.U. Philips, [International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences](#), 2001)



Therefore, the teaching of sex education to young people with disabilities is often delegated to local initiatives or projects, like the Included project, which are proposed to special schools or institutions. Professionals in the field, such as educators and psychologists, complain of a lack of widespread best practices, and the few that exist are fragmented and unstructured. There is no widespread program, each initiative implements its own path. However, in the absence of formal training programs, these initiatives and projects attempt to fill the gaps that are present.

Here are some notable local and European examples:

- ["Amicizia, amore, sesso: parliamone adesso - Conoscere se stessi, gli altri, le proprie emozioni"](#) (*Friendship, love, sex: let's talk about it now - Getting to know yourself, each other and your emotions*) - Anna Contardi, Monica Berarducci: this material is a book published by Erickson in the series "Autonomy Workshops," edited by [AIPD](#) (Italian Association of Down People). The book addresses the issue of sex education in disability, "because there is a right to sexuality also for people with disabilities," says Anna Contardi. The approach is to allow sex education aimed at ensuring maximum autonomy for people with physical and/or intellectual disabilities, to give skills that then become a solid basis also for a reduction of inappropriate or risky behaviours.
- ["La Sessualità nella disabilità"](#) (Sexuality in Disability): [ANFFAS](#) Association (National Association of Families and Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and Neurodevelopmental Disorders) has been organizing trainings and seminars for years to increase knowledge and awareness in professionals (physicians, psychologists, therapists, educators, etc.), teachers, families and the general population on the topic of the right to sexuality and its education in individuals with disabilities. The common thread running through these trainings is the right to sexuality, as established by the U.N. In fact, the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes the right to self-determination, as well as all forms of expression, and therefore sexuality. The initiatives promoted by ANFFAS in Italy have been pioneers on these issues.
- ["Sexuality is the same for everyone"](#) and ["Does Disability rhyme with Sexuality?"](#), trainings of the [Besta Institute of Treviso](#) for *students* and *teachers*: the objective of training for young people is to enable all children, including those with disabilities, to acquire awareness of themselves and others, modulate the ability to integrate their feelings with the social and cultural models of reference, address the issue of relationship. The objective of training for teachers is to address the sexuality of people with disabilities, not by treating it as an isolated content, but applying to it the same human, pedagogical and methodological attitude used to know, teach and modify all other experiences of the disabled person.
- [AMAABILI](#) – Integrated Social-Health Project for the affective and sexual promotion of people with disabilities financed in 2010 by the Regional Directorate of Health and Social Services of the Umbria Region: the overall goal of the AMAABILI project is to promote the affective and sexual health of people with disabilities through the reduction and/or neutralization of socio-environmental barriers that hinder the social well-being of an integrated community.



- [DESEM](#) project: The Erasmus+ DESEM project aims to develop a sexual education model/methodology for *individuals with intellectual disabilities*. Each activity that constitutes the project content will provide coordinated work of educators/guidance specialists and families, which are the main actors in sexual education.
- [Stay Safe](#) project: the Erasmus+ Safe project aims to raise awareness and educate women with disabilities on how to respond to sexual harassment (both online and offline) and violent incidents, developing a training model which will apply the gender-based behavioural approach and will be based on creative drama techniques and gaming elements. Moreover, applying creative drama methodologies, it intends to train professionals working in the disability field on how to recognise the risks of sexual harassment to which women with psycho-social disabilities are exposed to and how to support them.
- [InTandem](#) - Online sexuality training course for both [parents](#) and [professionals](#) held by professional figures such as psychologists and psychotherapists.
- Training path promoted by the [Municipality of Torino](#) - The project aims to raise awareness, inform and train *professionals* and *parents* in the support of affectivity and sexuality of young disabled people.

Piloting

In total 48 students aged between 13 and 14 years old participated in the piloting in Italy, in two different schools. It was necessary to work on two different classes because in Italy there are no schools for children with special needs, who are instead part of classes with students without disabilities in a number not greater than two. In total there were two students with disabilities: one with a psychiatric disorder and one with a cognitive disability. Additionally, seven teachers were present, five curricular teachers and two special education teachers.

The 6 hours to deliver the programme were divided into three meetings on three different days.

Results

Piloting in Italy has been effective, the programme was very positively received by both students and teachers, who were present during the lessons, with varying levels of participation and support in analysing the feedback from students. It became evident that some students were already familiar with the topics, but wanted more specific and structured information than they already had. They showed particular interest and need for clarification regarding the topic of gender identity and sexual orientation, referring to LGBTQ+ community.

As much as the students showed this interest, not all teachers agreed to cover these topics. In particular one teacher considered the topic of homosexuality/gender treated too thoroughly relative to the age of the students. Although there was a separate discussion with the teacher which allowed the exchange of opinions, the positions remained different. This was not the only instance of questioning the appropriateness of these topics; in the final questionnaire, a few other teachers complained about the length and depth with which gender, sexual orientation, and LGBTQ issues



were discussed. Sexual orientation and gender appear to be still very sensitive issues to be dealt with in school settings in Italy, leading to the emergence of personal opinions duplicitously among students and teachers. In spite of this, teachers considered the training adequate.

Regarding the positive results, all students were curious and willing to participate, they interacted with each other, including youth with disabilities. They considered as particularly positive aspects the practical activities, the possibility to interact and work in groups, the welcoming environment and the atmosphere created. Regarding this final aspect, what was valued was the trainers' informal style, the fact that the students didn't feel evaluated or judged for their questions, and the opportunity to discuss topics that are frequently left unaddressed with their peers in groups. All students said they would recommend the Included programme to a peer.

Almost all the teachers involved were satisfied with the workshop and considered it advisable to other teachers. The innovative and friendly approach and methods implemented have been particularly appreciated. They discovered the students to be engaged and interested, and they found it to be extremely helpful to approach the topics discussed in particular with naturalness and not judgement.

Clearly there were also some difficulties during piloting. The main challenge was fitting in a lot of activities in a short amount of time. Since most exercises took longer than anticipated, it is therefore recommended to extend the planned time. Having to deal with parents' small doubts was another difficulty that was encountered. In order to overcome this, it was necessary to cooperate with the teachers to provide a detailed background of the project and the objectives to be achieved. Generally speaking, the project was understood by the parents, who recognised its value and shared its objectives. However, it is good to keep this in mind in terms of replicability, it is advisable to involve parents throughout the course of the sex education program. There were times when, although they were generally engaged and participatory, students needed more stimulation and guidance to follow the activities.

Some changes have also been made in the implementation of the program in Italy. First of all, there was a request for collaboration with a gynaecologist, to help trainers to deliver the main concepts about anatomy and sex. These specific topics require specific skills and knowledge and it is therefore useful to be supported by a sexologist or gynaecologist to deal with those parts and the questions and curiosities that may arise from the students. Some transversal activities have also been added, which are useful for improving students' attention and involvement: the first one was a virtual question box (through Google Forms) delivered to the students through the teachers which allowed us to collect questions from the students. These questions were dealt with over the course of the meetings, fitting them in with the topics on the programme and preparing answers accordingly. At the beginning of the first meeting, the activity "Drafting and definition of shared rules" was held, writing the rules proposed by the students on a large sheet of hanging paper. This made the students feel more responsible for "their" rules and created a more respectful and co-constructed atmosphere.



Intellectual Output 2

In the IO2 phase of the project, partners collaborated to build an e-learning course aimed at school teachers and support staff (support teachers, school counsellors, school nurses etc.). The contents of "Inclusive teaching of sex through creative methods: e-course for teachers" were developed from the research done by partners during the IO1 phase and the results of the IO1 piloting, capturing the potential of the work done in schools. The course aims to make teachers and school staff reflect on their role as educators, introducing them step by step to several relevant aspects of teaching sex education, using creative, participant-centred, and embodied methods like the Theatre of the Oppressed. The course was developed from a holistic, inclusive approach to sex education, inspired by critical pedagogy and attentive to intersectionality, to give space and voice to every experience, creating a model of sex education that is inclusive and also considers every student regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race, ability.

The e-learning course was created by the INCLUDED project partnership and once the English version was finalized, courses were created for each language of the partnership and these were adapted to their national context.

Piloting

In Italy, the pilot of the e-learning course was conducted simultaneously with the IO3 pilot to maximise participation in the testing. Teachers, educators, support teachers, psychologists and professionals working in schools of different orders in the local area were involved.

The e-learning course in Italian had a total of 31 registrants and 22 of them completed the course and also left feedback. The age of the participants ranges from 20 years to 59 years. Of these, 55% of the participants work as educators, 20% as support teachers, 10% as psychologists and 5% as discipline teachers. Two psychology students (10%) also registered for the piloting.

Results

All participants in the e-learning course were satisfied with the opportunity to learn more about the topics covered. In particular, the interactive structure of the course was appreciated as it allowed participants to actively participate, to question themselves through their own reflections, their own values and points of view, and their role as educator and an adult in order to be aware of what is involved in dealing with sex education with their students. The videos with testimonies of the pilot's experience in schools were also valued, as well as the multicultural and diversity-conscious matrix, and the activities based on Theatre of the Oppressed. The easy-to-use modular structure was also welcomed and made it possible to use the course according to one's professional and personal commitments. These approaches differed from the courses usually attended by participants. With regard to what could be improved in the course, the majority of suggestions were to shorten some of the activities and content and to deepen the approach to disability. This last piece of feedback is probably due to the fact that most of the participants were educators and therefore involved on a



daily basis in the management of young people with physical and/or intellectual disabilities and in great need of practical suggestions. However, most participants would recommend the course to colleagues (especially curricular teachers) and claim to have improved their knowledge of how to provide a sex education program.

Intellectual Output 3

The third outcome (IO3) of the INCLUDED project involved the creation of a guide addressed to schools with the aim of including families in the teaching of sex education. This objective is fundamental in order to attempt jointly and in an educational continuum between all those involved in sex education, to share a common direction and common goals, and to be most effective in achieving them. To this end, the INCLUDED project partnership worked on the creation of a methodological guide aimed for schools to be able to engage parents and caretakers' active cooperation in the sex-ed programme for students in accordance to WHO policy recommendations and following the holistic and positive approach to sexuality education in accordance to the WHO policy framework "Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe". As with the previous results, the methodological approach was based on three creative-based, participant-centred, embodied methods: Critical Incident Methodology, Theatre of the Oppressed, and Process Oriented Psychology in addition to an intersectional approach with a diversity focus, where race, gender, abilities, social class, migratory status, sexual orientation, etc. are considered.

Family involvement is a high-priority, as it is strongly recommended by the WHO policy framework: "for curriculum development, it is useful to organize some form of cooperation with parents, not only to secure the necessary support from them, but also for guaranteeing an optimal "fit" between the informal role of parents and the formal one of the schools." However, what emerged from the 2018 report "Sexuality Education in Europe and Central Asia: State of the Art and Recent Development" was that families, as representatives of society voices in school, can deter the introduction of adequate sex-ed programs. In the Italian context, it is noticeable that sex-ed is not compulsory in schools and, when programmes are proposed, participation must be authorized by families and seeking an alliance with them is crucial.

The guide developed under IO3, therefore, is particularly timely and beneficial for the purpose of supporting families in playing an effective role in the sexual education of their children and partnering with schools in order to achieve successful learning outcomes in relation to sexual education. This is even more true in the case of children with intellectual disabilities, as the messages conveyed and the teaching methods necessary to convey them require even more attention.

Before developing the activities of the Guide, interviews were conducted with teachers in order to have an overview of the fears and difficulties encountered by teachers in Italy in dealing with a sex education program with their students. This was based on their own experience of what was easy and what was difficult, what kind of tools would be useful, how to involve parents and at what stage of training, and how to facilitate dialogue between school and family on sex education. This step allowed us to identify the critical issues and the difficulty in involving families in this process. All



respondents stressed the importance of providing practical tips and stimulating activities to schools to attract even the most sceptical parents to take an active part in their children's sex education.

Thanks to these suggestions, the activities included in the IO3 Guide created by the INCLUDED partnership were developed. All activities are designed to be interactive and engaging in order to foster a dialogue between school and families.

Piloting

In Italy, the IO3 pilot was conducted simultaneously with the IO2 pilot in order to maximise participation in the testing. From the school sector, 31 participants were involved, with an age range of 20 years to 59 years. 55% of the participants work as educators, 20% as support teachers, 10% as psychologists, and 5% as discipline teachers. Two psychology students (10%) also registered for the piloting. On the side of the families, 12 parents were involved, ranging in age from 37 years to 61 years. Of these, 6 are parents of children and/or young people with some kind of disability (Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome and ADHD). The pilot was conducted online through the use of the Zoom platform, in order to facilitate everyone's participation in accordance with professional and non-professional commitments. A total of 43 participants were involved in the IO3 pilot.

Results

Pilot participants said they were satisfied with the experience. Most of them believed they gained information and tools that will be useful when talking about sex education with their students and would recommend the training to their colleagues. The aspect that was most appreciated was the highly interactive mode of participation that allowed participants to discuss and express their thoughts or concerns in a respectful listening atmosphere. This type of interaction is not common during daily work activities, although it is extremely important. Entering into a relationship and feeling comfortable was very important and is valued in the relationship between fellow teachers and educators. Although the interactive mode and relaxed atmosphere were highly appreciated, the difficulties reported were precisely in this aspect: participants initially found it difficult to express their ideas in front of a group of people for fear of saying something wrong or feeling judged, especially when talking about something personal. This fear was not realized because an atmosphere of active listening and respect was fostered, but participants said they were not used to it.

As for the piloting with families, they too were satisfied with the experience. All parents agreed that sex education should be part of the school curriculum and that teachers should be properly trained to provide this kind of teaching to students. At present, not all families expressed total confidence in the knowledge and competence of teachers in the field of sex education. All families, on the other hand, believe that family support for the teaching of sex education at school is important, as they believe that the family should complement and support the teaching. In the words of one parent who participated in the pilot, family involvement is very important in sex education as "it cannot just be a delegation to the institution, but must involve the parents, who are the first educators".



Policy Recommendations

Key policy recommendations for governments, policy makers, school systems and stakeholders to improve sexual, relational, affective and reproductive health education in a national context.

- Implement a nationally consistent sex education training programme;
- Follow UNESCO's indications and create a 'comprehensive' sex education curriculum, providing cross-curricular and holistic teaching on the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality, through the subjects of school curricula and not as individual teaching;
- Create an educational programme that considers the key topics recommended by UNESCO, which are equally important, mutually reinforcing and intended to be taught alongside one another:
 - Sexual and Reproductive Health
 - Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour
 - The Human Body and Development
 - Skills for Health and Well—being
 - Violence and Staying Safe
 - Understanding Gender
 - Values, Rights, Culture and Sexuality
 - Relationships
- Support the school system and facilitating school authorities to take the lead in motivating and supporting sex education, creating a positive environment that can facilitate the full implementation of educational programmes;
- Create policies and guidelines to support the institutional value of teaching sex education in order to emphasise that the implementation of CSE is a matter of institutional policy, rather than the personal choice of teachers;
- Train teachers on specific knowledge and skills needed to efficiently and accurately teach sex education, both in terms of content (UNESCO key concepts) and methodology to create a safe and positive environment for students, providing practical examples and activities to implement with students;
- Create specific training courses for teachers on sex education for people with physical and/or intellectual disabilities. In addition to general training, individualised courses should be created based on the needs, difficulties and strengths of the individual;
- Promote the use of creative-based, participant-centred, and embodied methods, such as theatre or interactive activities, to deliver sex education courses, as these methods have proven to be effective in engaging students and facilitating dialogue on sensitive topics;



- Provide only information and knowledge from reliable, evidence-based sources;
- Involve experts, health providers and other non-teaching staff in the creation, development, adaptation and delivery of the sex education training programme;
- Actively involve students in creating support for sex education through the school council and groups of student class representatives to provide input on students' needs and interests in sex education;
- Actively involve parents and create mutual support between teachers and families in implementing a guided and structured teaching/learning process on sex education. It is important to emphasize the primary concern of promoting the safety and well-being of children and young people that is shared by both schools and parents/caregivers;
- To overcome perceived or expected resistance to CSE due to misunderstandings about the nature, purpose and effects of sexuality education use evidence that demonstrates the needs of young people in the national/local context and existing international, regional and local frameworks and international agreements that support CSE

Conclusion

In conclusion, the INCLUDED project proved to be of significant relevance and value for the creation and implementation of comprehensive and inclusive sex education programmes for students and for the development of innovative, interactive and participant-centred teaching materials and training programmes for teachers, educators and parents, through the use of creative methods.

The INCLUDED project was a success and the objectives set during its lifetime were achieved.

These objectives were:

- Support secondary **students**, including those with intellectual disabilities, to effectively achieve the core learning-outcomes of sexual education (according to WHO standards), such as: to empower students to make informed choices based on understanding, and acting responsibly towards oneself and one's partner; to be able to develop as a sexual being, meaning to learn to express feelings and needs, to experience sexuality in a pleasurable manner; to have gained appropriate information about physical, cognitive, social, emotional and cultural aspects of sexuality, contraception, prevention of STI and HIV and sexual coercion; to be able to build (sexual) relationships in which there is mutual understanding and respect for one another's needs and boundaries and to have equal relationships etc.
- Support **teachers** and **school support staff** to be able to apply current practices in sexual education for their students through creative methods, improving their facilitative skills to promote learner engagement, reflective practice, critical thinking, and skill acquisition
- Support **parents** to play an effective role in sexual education of their children with intellectual disabilities and to partner with schools in order to achieve successful learning outcomes in relation to sexual education



- Develop **open educational resources** that can contribute to the well-being and social inclusion of vulnerable societal groups.

The experience of the pilots with the target groups of students, teachers and families has underlined the urgency and importance of structuring the teaching of sex education in the national context, where there are currently no curricular programmes for such teaching. The INCLUDED project contributed to increasing the well-being and health of students, including students with physical and/or intellectual disabilities; to supporting teachers in education through inclusive, respectful and responsive practices; to creating a fundamental dialogue between the school and parents, who can play an effective role in the sexual education of their children. With this latest contribution, it also made suggestions and recommendations that may promote the institutionalisation of sex education in schools. Thanks to the involvement of associations, students, teachers, educators, schools, school staff and stakeholders, the INCLUDED project has contributed to raising awareness on these issues and this is the direction in which political institutions should go to ensure sex education for all Italian students.

The successful experience of the INCLUDED project teaches that teaching sex education in schools is possible and must involve the active participation of all the actors involved: first and foremost, the students, who must feel free to express their needs, then the teachers and families, who must build a mutual support system that allows for educational consistency. Sex education is a need that students feel is urgent, a duty that teachers are willing to fulfil and a commitment that families feel they can share with the school and experts on the subject.

Spain

Introduction – National Context

According to the research conducted by La Xixa and focusing on sex education within the Spanish national context, at the legislative level, Spain appears to not fully comply with UNESCO and WHO standards. In fact, sex education is not compulsory, nor is part of the curriculum in all educational establishments. Apart from a few teaching hours introduced as part of the biology class in secondary schools, everything else related to sex education is left to the discretion and/or dependent on the schools. Some schools offer sex education to their students, but usually the programme involves talks, one-off workshops, or classes given by professionals from outside the schools.

A study conducted in 2011 (*Álvarez et al. 2011*) revealed that approximately half of preschool, primary and secondary school teachers have not addressed sex education during their professional practice. In addition, 50% of the teachers interviewed stated that sex education is not considered a priority in their schools and 60% added that they do not have sufficient resources to carry it out and that textbooks still maintain the androcentric model. Finally, only 0.5% of the teachers surveyed acknowledged having postgraduate training in sex education.

In practice, sex education continues to be a pending subject in the Spanish education system. With some exceptions, when sex education is tackled during biology classes, the focus is given to health



promotion. The topics most commonly discussed are contraceptive methods, sexually transmitted infections, anatomy, sexual health, among other contents, with an approach that prioritises the biological and risk prevention model, and which does not incorporate the view of a comprehensive and inclusive sexual education (*"La salud afectivo sexual de la juventud en España" s. f. Revista de estudio de Juventud 2019*).

As mentioned previously, sex education is often outsourced to professionals who are external to the school environment. When not delegated to external entities, sex education is usually assigned to biology teachers, who are not required to have any preparation other than that related to their subject, which means they are not obliged to have taken part in a specific training dedicated to sex education. Moreover, the use of informal or alternative methodologies, as well as the use of specific outreach materials, are elements that are left to the discretion of teachers, who often encounter difficulties in terms of training and in finding suitable methodological resources, as well as reliable tools and sources to deal with sex education in the classroom (*Montes Antúnez, 2014*).

In the National Survey on Sexuality and Contraception among Spanish youngsters (16-25 years old), published in September 2019 by the Spanish Society of Contraception (SEC), when asked the question "From whom have you received information on sexuality?" respondents indicated internet (47.8%) and friends (45.5%) as the main sources, leaving teachers (28%), mothers (23.1%) and fathers (12.4%) far behind. (*Encuesta nacional sobre sexualidad y anticoncepción entre los jóvenes españoles (16-25 años), s. F., 2019*)

Finally, there is serious opposition from right-wing parties to the teaching of sex education in schools, appealing to ideological, religious and other issues (*Menárguez, Gonzales, 2021*).

Intellectual Output 1

Desk research

Although it does not explicitly mention sex education, the first Spanish law that, , begins to introduce a less sexist and more integral and holistic vision of education is the Socialist LOGSE of 1990 (*Diez Prieto, 2018, pp 6*). However, its contribution is minimal and the references to sexuality and gender end with the prologue:

"Finally, education makes it possible to make progress in the fight against discrimination and inequality, whether they are based on birth, race, sex, religion or opinion, whether they have a family or social origin, whether they are traditionally rooted or whether they are constantly emerging as a result of the dynamics of society.

(...)



These will be the aims that will guide the Spanish education system, in accordance with the Preliminary Title of this law, and within the scope of these aims, education can and must become a decisive element in overcoming social stereotypes assimilated to gender differentiation, starting with the very construction and use of language."

(BOE-A-1990-24172 Ley Orgánica 1/1990, de 3 de octubre, de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo., s. f.)

In 2006, the LOE (*BOE-A-2006-7899 Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación., s. f.*⁸⁾ introduced some advances in this area. The text of the law showed greater concern for the development of students' affectivity and left the way open for the various autonomous communities to legislate in this respect. The introduction of the new subject of Education for Citizenship and Human Rights facilitated the inclusion of such content in the school curriculum. However, the development of teaching units related to affective-sexual education raised a great deal of controversy. (*Díez Prieto, 2018, pp 7*)

The following law, promoted by a conservative party (*BOE-A-2013-12886 Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la mejora de la calidad educativa s.f.*) eliminated any reference to "sexual-affective education", although if, on the other hand, introduced some relevant content such as defending the values associated with gender equality, preventing gender-based violence and preventing the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse. (*Díez Prieto, 2018, pp 7*)

In 2020, the LOMLOE (*BOE-A-2020-17264 Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación., s. f.*¹⁾ was approved with clear recognition of gender equality, prevention of gender-based violence and respect for sexual-affective diversity among its basic principles. Even if this law was interpreted as an important step forward in the implementation of an integral and respectful sex education in the education system, it has been also strongly criticised because of the shyness with which it tries to introduce a change. In fact, the LOMLOE only provides some guidelines and recommendations about sex education, but it does not make it compulsory or integrated into the educational curriculum. Because of this, the indications about sex education included in this new law have been put into practice only from a few schools (*«¿Que es la LOMLOE?», 2021*).

The Organic Law 2/2010 on sexual and reproductive health and the voluntary interruption of pregnancy (*BOE-A-2010-3514 Ley Orgánica 2/2010, de 3 de marzo, de salud sexual y reproductiva y de la interrupción voluntaria del embarazo., s. f.*) states that the public authorities, shall guarantee information and affective, sexual and reproductive education in the formal contents of the educational system. However, in the Spanish system, the autonomous communities are the ones responsible for education; this situation makes it difficult to have a national policy regarding sex education in schools (*Fernández, 2022, "La (falta de) educación sexual en España." The Conversation*).



Finally, these laws place an almost exclusive emphasis on sexual health, thereby contributing to a genitalised, biological, risk-focused, and preventionist view of sexuality.

The legislation described above seems to not take into account nor reflect the importance that a comprehensive sex education has for youngsters (*Ávila, 2022, "Es hora de hablar de la Educación Sexual en España." every Noticias LGBT*), nor does it seem to be coherent with the actions undertaken by executive bodies such as the General Directorate for Sexual Diversity and LGBTI Rights or the Secretary of State for Equality and against Gender Violence to prevent and address sexual aggressions and gender-based discrimination and violence (*Millán, 2022, "La larga lucha contra la violencia de género en España." Amnesty International España*).

A study by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) carried out in 2019 places Spain as the eleventh European country with the most progressive legislation in favour of LGBTI rights (*Rainbow Europe Map and Index - ILGA-Europe, 2017*). A result that nevertheless clashes with the results in 2018, when Spain ranked sixth (*Rainbow Europe Map and Index - ILGA-Europe, 2018¹⁸*). In this regard, the most significant Spanish legislative tool is provided by Article 14 of the Spanish Constitution, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of any personal or social condition or circumstance, including sexual orientation and gender identity.

"Spaniards are equal before the law, and no discrimination may prevail on the grounds of birth, race, sex, religion, opinion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance."

(*BOE-A-1978-31229 Constitución Española., s. f.*)

Spain has also been a pioneer in several legal initiatives, becoming the third country to approve same-sex marriage and the first to legalise single-parent adoption (*Martín Sánchez, M., 2016*). With regard to the rights of the transgender community, Spain passed the Gender Identity Law in 2007, which allows the change of name and sex in the Civil Registry (*BOE-A-2007-5585 Ley 3/2007, de 15 de marzo, reguladora de la rectificación registral de la mención relativa al sexo de las personas., s. f.*). When it comes to hate crimes, the Spanish Penal Code considers it an aggravating circumstance when the crime is committed because of the sexual orientation or gender identity of the victim. The same legislation expressly prohibits discrimination at work (Article 314) and in access to public or private services (Articles 511 and 512) on the grounds of sex or sexual orientation. It also prohibits associations that directly or indirectly foster, promote or incite hatred, hostility, discrimination or violence against persons on the basis of their sexual orientation and criminalises hate speech on this ground. (*BOE-A-1995-25444 Ley Orgánica 10/1995, de 23 de noviembre, del Código Penal., s. f.*)

Regarding consent, sexual aggression, and violations, in 2022 the law called "Only yes it's yes" has been approved. This law recognises sexual aggression and all conduct that violate sexual freedom without the consent of the other person. (*BOE-A-2022-14630 Ley Orgánica 10/2022, de 6 de septiembre, de garantía integral de la libertad sexual., s. f.*) The law recognises that there is consent



"when it has been freely expressed by acts which, having regard to the circumstances, clearly express the will of the person". In other words, "Yes" is consent. Saying or doing nothing is not consent. (*Sanchis, 2022*)

The 28th of February 2023 the so-called "Trans-Law", has been definitively approved. (*BOE-A-2023-5366 Ley 4/2023, de 28 de febrero, para la igualdad real y efectiva de las personas trans y para la garantía de los derechos de las personas LGTBI., s. f*)

Previously, for a change of gender identity registration, requirements such as "hormone treatment for two years, diagnosis of gender dysphoria and medical reports" were necessary.

This new law that aims to change this picture, includes:

- Sex change without evidence or medical reports.
- Hormone treatment will no longer be a requirement to apply for a sex change, nor will it be compulsory once it has been performed.
- Lesbian, bisexual, trans people, and single women will be able to access assisted human reproduction techniques.
- Prohibition of conversion, version or counter-conditioning therapies aimed at modifying the sexual orientation or identity of LGTBI persons.
- There is a system of infractions and sanctions to protect LGTBI people against discrimination or violence, whether in the workplace, in sport or leisure.
- It also legislates for the rights of intersex people, prohibiting non-essential surgeries on intersex children under the age of 12 and extending to one year the period for determining the sex on registration.

The law also set down the inclusion in the basic curriculum of knowledge and respect for sexual, gender and family diversity as an objective at all educational stages, as well as training in the subject for all teachers. Sexual and reproductive education and STI prevention programmes will be promoted, with special consideration for HIV. (*RTVE.es, "Ley Trans: claves, detalles y derechos con la nueva normativa". 2023*)

When it comes to people with intellectual, cognitive and/or functional diversity, the issue of sex education is almost forgotten both in politics and public opinion (*Lopez Sanchez, 2006*)., so much so that the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2018 denounced that the education system in Spain was segregating people with disabilities (*Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2018*). In this educational vacuum, the needs of these individuals for affective and sexual intimacy are particularly neglected, and although some progress has been made in other aspects; issues related to sexuality are often ignored and even rejected by both families and institutions (*Torraco, 2016*).



According to the conclusions of the conference on "Disability and intersectional Discrimination" organised by the Spanish Confederation of People with Physical and Organic Disabilities (COCEMFE) having a dissident sexual orientation or gender identity and being a person with a disability is a highly invisible political and economic spheres. For this reason, COCEMFE demanded an intersectional approach in public policies. (*Valencia, 2022*)

Piloting

"Inclusive sex-ed through creative methods" is a handbook co-created by the partners, based on the national context analysis and interviews with school authorities, teachers, parents and pupils. The handbook includes a curricular programme for students and schools, full of dynamic, creative, interactive activities, theoretical contents, tips and tricks for the facilitators and recommendations on how to introduce it into the school curriculum.

The handbook is divided in four main chapters, each one dedicated to a different aspect of sexuality:

1. Body, anatomy and reproduction;
2. Gender;
3. Sexuality and Sex;
4. Consent.

For the creation of this tool, the consortium developed a proposal for a learning path that addresses sex education through non-formal, participatory, and creative activities.

In January 2022, La Xixa Teatre tested the activities created within the framework of the INCLUDED project through a pilot workshop carried out at the Escola de les Aigües in Mataró (Barcelona), a special education institution for students with cognitive and intellectual diversity. Altogether, 14 students with special needs between 18 and 20 supported by 3 teachers and educators, participated in the proposed activities. The workshop lasted a total of 6 hours and was divided in 4 sessions, each one dedicated to one of modules/topics of IO1.

The first session, that took place on the 24th of January 2022 was aimed to foster teambuilding and trust between participants, but also to address topics related to Body and Anatomy. The main activity carried out in this session was called "*Drawing our bodies*", in which participants were asked to draw the body contour of each person of the group one by one on a big piece of paper. In groups, they were then asked to create the identity of their characters, choosing a name, gender/s, age, personality, sexual behaviour, and dressing them up with some clothes and accessories we brought (including different types of underwear). The activity turned out to be very useful and fruitful in facilitating the expression of curiosity and ideas of the participants that transferred on their characters a wide range of habits related to sexual orientation, gender identification and expression, and social and sentimental relationships. Through questions on the characters, the facilitators could foster the



dialogue among participants and address many relevant topics such as gender, consent, sex-affective relationships, STI, and contraception.

On the following day, La Xixa team came back to facilitate a session on gender. The main aim of the session was to think and share opinions about gender and relationships, to identify the prejudices connected to gender and sexual orientation, and to reflect and question the social pressure connected to it. We carried out two main activities:

1. *"Hello NO"*: The participants, divided in two groups according to the pronoun they wished to be called with, discussed a situation represented through a short theatre scene in which one person refusing to have sexual intercourse with their partner had to face the other person's insistence. The separation by gender helped identifying and tackling gender-based stereotypes. During this activity an enormous amount of complementary topics were also discussed such as consent, pornography, sexual desire, excitement, masturbation etc.
2. *"Opinion Line"*: Separating the room in two halves, one for the "no" and the other for the "yes", participants were invited to react to a set of statements by moving in the space in accordance to their grade of agreement. Some of the proposed statements were: *"Women have less sexual desire than men"*, *"Guys masturbate more than girls"* *"Girls and boys are the same"*. Per each statement, a space for debate was created so that participants could express their opinions and feelings around the topics presented. They were also invited to move in case they changed their opinion during the discussion.

The following session was carried out on the 27th of January 2022 and focused on Sex and Sexuality. The main activity was called *"Touch and find out"* during which participants were guided through an introspective journey which connected them with the sensation of pleasure. The activity was used to share opinions and feelings about sexual desire, intimacy, the differences between public and private spaces and public and private behaviours.

In the last session, on the 30th of January 2022, we addressed the topic of Consent. The session started with an activity called *"Yes and No"* during which participants were invited to work on their own and others' limits and boundaries.

In the following activity, the team acted in three theatrical scenes about (lack of) consent. Each scene was followed by a forum (debate) and then the participants were divided into three groups, each one working on the alternative solutions of the conflictive scene represented previously. This activity was very useful and gave the possibility to deeply discuss consent and respectful relationships, addressing them through the experience of imaginary characters.



Results

The workshop was very successful and inspiring. All participants were engaged during the entire duration of the workshop and appeared to enjoy the activities and the discussions. They particularly enjoyed being able to openly talk about sex and genders, even if it meant getting out of their comfort zone. At the beginning most of them felt embarrassed and shy, but afterwards they could open up and learn many things, for instance, the importance to communicate one's sexual desires to their partner, the importance of consent and the possibility to change opinion during an intimate encounter, and to give the space that each one needs to express their feelings. Participants also enjoyed the fact that intimate and delicate topics were addressed through games, theatre exercises and acting; the methodologies used helped them achieve amazing progress in the openness to share their thoughts and opinions in front of the class. Many students stated that they would suggest the workshop to their friends.

The teachers and school staff that attended the sessions supported the students and the facilitation team, intermediating in some cases with those students who encountered more difficulties in verbal communication. After the workshop teachers assessed the content and methodologies applied as very useful to tackle such difficult topics. They felt the need to create such space in the school and to feel supported by other professionals on topics that resulted in being hard to discuss in class. They could reflect on the limits and freedoms they have as educators and their own intrinsic contradictions and dilemmas that arise all the time, especially when thinking about families' opinions on sex education. Teachers felt that by participating in the workshop they learned activities and acquired competences that will make them feel more comfortable when delivering sex education classes. They said they would suggest the workshop to their colleagues.

The biggest challenge of the workshop was to break the taboos around sex and sexuality. The creation of a respectful and positive environment in which everyone could feel safe to share thoughts and emotions and to listen and learn those of the other people was fundamental to do so.

During the first session, the facilitation team, supported by the teachers, dedicated time to work on team building (as the participants came from different classes) and on trust, creating a space where everyone could feel safe. The group set its own rules, participants were asked with which pronoun they wanted to be addressed to and were told that each one of them could decide until what point they felt able and/or wanted to participate in the activities proposed. Once the participants felt safe to express themselves, they asked a lot of questions on the topics presented. It was also really important to give attention and accompany students without judgement when they reacted to something that was taking them out of their comfort zone.

Intellectual Output 2

"Teaching inclusive sex-ed through creative methods" is a 5-hour e-course for teachers that aims to support teachers and schools' staff to be able to apply innovative practices in sexual education for



their students through creative methods. The platform aims in particular to help teachers to be aware of and reflect on their cultural context and personal beliefs in order to deepen their relationship with students and teaching and enabling them to better fulfil their role as sexuality educators. The learning path is structured in 5 sections, linked to three different methodologies of introspection and analysis: the methodology of the critical incident, internal work, and theatre techniques. Among the materials available to teachers on the platform you can find interactive video-lessons, self-guided learning exercises, video-testimonies, additional learning material, and a self-evaluation questionnaire.

For the implementation of the e-course, La Xixa collaborated with a secondary school named INS Vallbona d'Anoia.

During an online session held on the 9th of January 2023, La Xixa presented the contents, structure, methodologies and objectives of the online training to 7 teachers.

On the 26th of January 2023, once the Spanish version of the platform was ready, a new session was held to support the teachers in the registration process and to navigate the different modules. A total of 9 teachers from INS Vallbona d'Anoia registered and up to now, 3 of them have already completed the course. All of them were asked to provide an evaluation on the platform, content and methodologies, which are very positive. The platform was designed to be flexible, offering a way to follow the lessons at any time and the possibility to interrupt and pick up where one left off. This aspect was much appreciated and allowed even the busiest people to participate in the course. The teachers found the course effective in stimulating reflection on the importance of sex education in schools and in helping to identify the internal processes triggered by these topics when occupying the role of teacher. The only defect identified seems to be that of not being able to share in a group the reflections gained from the exercises.

100% of those who completed the forms confirmed that they improved their knowledge of how to teach sex education lessons. Likewise, all participants stated that they were able, to do something at school to implement sex education programmes after the course.

Intellectual Output 3

“Including the family in inclusive sex-ed” is a guide for schools aimed to provide methods, contents, and tools to:

- Support parents to play an effective role in the sexual education of their children and to partner with schools.
- Support schools with easy-to-apply, easy-to-access guidance to reach out and involve families in sexual education.
- Develop open educational resources that can contribute to the well-being and social inclusion of vulnerable societal groups.

The content of the guide and activities provided are based on Universal Design for Learning methodology and Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy (Pedagogical approach) and on three creative-



based, participant centred, embodied methods: Critical Incident Methodology, Theatre of the Oppressed and Process Oriented Psychology (Methodological approach).

In order to identify the needs of the Catalan secondary education sector, La Xixa interviewed 9 teachers working at the INS Vallbona d'Anoia. Of these, 5 said that they had never participated in sex education trainings for teachers, 1 had attended a conference on the inclusion of the gender perspective in education in which sexuality issues were also touched upon, and 3 –all biology teachers– had taken part in specific trainings on teaching sex education years before, which they recalled as being very much related to the biological/health field. In the interviews, the teachers emphasised the urgency for the educational system to provide students with structured and continuous pathways of integral sex education, which should not only be entrusted to the sporadic intervention of external professionals or the goodwill of teachers and tutors. The interviewees emphasised the importance of being able to complement the contents offered in the framework of biology, anatomy, disease prevention, and sexual safety already normally taught in many schools with a deeper and comprehensive approach linked to the emotional and relational health of young people and connected to their real needs and curiosity. Many pointed out that tackling sexuality issues in the classroom is difficult and risky, not only because of the lack of preparation on the subject by school staff and the lack of clear and favourable legislation, but also because of the difficulty in finding effective tools, resources and exercises to make sex education more dynamic and less formal. All the teachers interviewed agreed that families are essential allies in guaranteeing quality sex education for pupils, stressing, however, that it is often difficult for a school to engage family members in the educational life of students, especially on topics such as sex education.

On the basis of the information collected through the interviews carried out both in Spain and in the rest of the partner countries, the consortium created a learning path and set of activities divided in four modules: 1. Team building and body activation; 2. Internal work; 3. Sex ed key concepts; 4. Dialogue with families. At the local level, La Xixa adapted the programme to the specific needs of the context.

The pilot workshop was held at INS Vallbona d'Anoia, applying theatre and creative methods to generate dialogue between schools, pupils, and families on sex education. The objective was to provide teachers with tools and creative resources to foster integral sex education and to create a space for dialogue within the school community (school-students-families) through innovative methodologies.

The training combined online and face-to-face sessions and was carried out between the 9th and the 26th of January 2023. It included:

- 9th of January 2023: One-hour online session with teachers to present the project, introduce the e-course and the face-to-face training. This session was used to get to know each other and foster a space of dialogue and open learning.



- 12th of January 2023: Three-hour face-to-face session with teachers in which theatrical activities were carried out to recognise and value diversity, to rediscover and reconnect with the profound motivation that drove participants towards their profession and to investigate and value the role of teachers in sex education, together with the fears and difficulties that it triggers.
- 19th of January 2023: Three-hour face-to-face session in which teachers and students collaborated in the creation of a forum theatre performance on topics related to sex education.
- 20th of January: Two-hour face-to-face session in which together, teachers and students presented the theatre play they had created in front of an audience of pupils, school staff and family members. Thanks to the forum theatre technique, which allows the audience to intervene in the scene, it was possible to generate a fruitful dialogue and reflection between the students, their families and the teachers in the audience on the issues presented on stage (gender roles, consent, and homophobia).
- 26th of January 2023: One-hour online session with teachers in which the participants reflected on their learnings and assessed the quality of the workshop's structure, content and methodology.
- 26th of January 2023: One-hour online session with families, in which the debate started during the forum theatre was deepened, the need to introduce integral sex education in schools was reflected upon, and the importance of dialogue and the alliance between school institutions and families was discussed.

The training directly involved a total of 8 teachers, 7 students, and 10 family members. Aside from these participants, on the day of the performance, 4 other teachers and 17 pupils from the school were present in the audience and participated in the discussion.

At the end of the training, the participants gave their feedback via evaluation forms. The pilot workshop was a great success. All participating teachers agreed that they had acquired useful information and tools to be able to talk about sex education with their pupils in the classroom. The activities conducted helped them “normalise” sexual topics and motivated them to discuss them in class. The teachers discovered participatory activities and fun exercises with which it is possible to value and protect the diversity of experiences and sensitivities while breaking the taboo that sees sexuality as something forbidden or dangerous.

The training seems to have been equally effective in providing opportunities and tools to generate dialogue with families, an element that reaffirms itself as essential to ensuring a quality sex ed for students. According to the teachers' feedback, they greatly appreciated the methodologies and tools applied during the training, arguing that theatre should be practised more in schools to improve teacher-pupil-family communication and deal creatively with often difficult topics such as sexuality. Some teachers stated that they would like to introduce the activities they learned in their lessons.



Some teachers also reported that they would have liked to have had more hours to be able to explore more topics.

Forum theatre demonstrated to be an excellent tool for dealing with topics related to sex education with the families. Those who took part in the presentation and in the follow-up session greatly appreciated the proposal. They acknowledged the potential of the methodologies used and stated that their participation in the event made them reflect and partly changed their perspective on the importance of sex education in schools. This led them to recognise the school's commitment to sex education topics, the supportive and accompanying role that families should have at home, and the difficulty of schools in establishing a fruitful and organic dialogue with students' families regarding sexuality.

Policy Recommendations

- Implement a compulsory and integrated sex education curriculum in all schools, which should not only follow a biological and risk prevention model, but instead incorporate a comprehensive, sexual-affective, and inclusive education.
- Strengthen legislation on integral sex education in schools and the alliance between public institutions and schools.
- Make comprehensive and inclusive sex education training for teachers and school staff mandatory.
- Guarantee support and dedicated resources for the implementation of sex education. Educational institutions and public administration should back teachers and educators who offer integral sex education to students.
- Introduce integral and inclusive sex education from the earliest years of school, producing and adapting the content to the different ages, stages of development, and sensibilities of the students.
- Promote the production and availability of materials, texts, sources, and training programmes on comprehensive sex education for different age groups.
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parents and families in sex education programmes, through their active participation in sex education training and while creating space of dialogue for families and school staff.
- Promote the use of creative-based, participant-centred, and embodied methods, such as theatre or interactive activities, to deliver sex education courses, as these methods have proven to be effective in engaging students and facilitating dialogue on sensitive topics.
- Develop and implement strategies to combat stigma and discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation, race, and intellectual, cognitive and/or functional diversity, within schools and communities, to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students.



- Give visibility to the specific needs of people with intellectual, cognitive and/or functional diversity, and dissident sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Strengthen and create more structured and frequent sex education courses for people with intellectual, cognitive and/or functional diversity, implementing their right to a quality education.
- Increase the preparation of teachers and school staff on multiculturalism, so that they are able to deal with and include students and families from other cultures and with other beliefs or traditions, enhancing the added value of diversity in the school community, but also ensuring an integral and respectful education for everyone.
- Monitor and assess the effectiveness of sex education programmes regularly, through the use of surveys and feedback from students, parents, and teachers, to ensure they are meeting the needs of students and addressing the concerns of all stakeholders.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the INCLUDED project proved to be of great value and importance. There is a strong need in schools to foresee and implement comprehensive and inclusive sex education programmes, which offer structured paths and not occasional interventions, which take place in synergy and complementarity with the entire educating community and with the support of the institutions, and which do not rely solely on the good will and scarce resources of the most sensible teachers.

Students, whether children or young people, and regardless of their physical, cultural or social condition, have the right and need to receive information, accompaniment and support from adults who should guide them towards healthy, inclusive and respectful relational and sexual practices. It is not through taboos and prohibitions that society can protect the present and future of young people, but by guaranteeing them the opportunity to learn and to express themselves.

In order to respond to this call and perform this arduous task, it is necessary that the reference figures, first of all, receive sex education. It is fundamental that they acquire familiarity with the subject, new tools to approach it in a dynamic and innovative manner, that they integrate updated concepts, words, and content. But above all, it takes adults to learn to listen to themselves, to confront their own taboos and prejudices, their own sorrows and traumas, in order to understand and accompany the youngest towards healthier relationships and a fairer society.

In this sense, the INCLUDED project demonstrated the effectiveness of creative and theatrical methodologies to introduce integral sex education in groups of young people as well as families and school staff. To the former, the project offered dynamic and non-formal exercises and practices to express and investigate their curiosities and knowledge, generating a constructive, equal, light-hearted, and judgement-free listening space in which the students themselves were the protagonists. INCLUDED also proposed innovative resources and tools for teachers to provide sex and relational education in the classroom and build a fruitful dialogue with students' families.



Theatre and creativity ultimately can and must be great allies to deepen and improve sex education in schools and to promote, establish and maintain the essential dialogue among students, schools and families.

Greece

Introduction – National Context

According to Greece's primary research, human/sexual rights, diversity issues, gender identities, sexual orientation, gender issues, and sexuality, remain stigmatised subjects in Greek schools. Hence, there is not a specific course on sexual education in special and/or inclusive education. Topics like these are taught as special/separate thematic units in an interdisciplinary approach within other subjects or courses (social skills, communication skills, emotional skills...) by teachers, psychologists, social workers, etc. The module's length depends on the needs of every teacher's class or group of students as well as on their relative programme's design. Sexual education, therefore, is not a compulsory subject for secondary general, special, or vocational education, and it is not included as a distinct subject in the national, formal curriculum. The ages of the students who attend sex-ed programmes in the two different types of secondary special and inclusive education schools are 12 to 24 years of age. The only formal sexual education introduced by the Greek Ministry of Education in 2021 is a part of the thematic unit "Well-being". It is a workshop programme for junior high school students (13-16 years old), but again it will be taught only if the teacher board chooses to be relevant to the schools' needs and for one teaching hour per week for up to 7 weeks.

For example, anatomy is taught in biology, and gender issues or relationships are taught in social sciences, art education, literature, or through after-school extracurricular activities. At the beginning of every school year, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs issues a list of professionals, primarily midwives, gynaecologists, and health care professionals, that are allowed to offer short edifying meetings (2 teaching hours) for students. In addition, some institutions provide informative and intervention opportunities in collaboration with schools. For students to attend these meetings, written parental consent must be submitted to the school before the meeting. These meetings focus mainly on anatomy, disease prevention and contraception, gender issues, and sexuality. Overall, there is no national and formal programme in the Greek education system.

Intellectual Output 1

As mentioned above, IO1 includes a curricular training programme for students, a handbook for schools, and recommendations on how to introduce it into the school curriculum. The programme is based on the national context and interviews with school authorities, teachers, parents, and students that identified their needs. Finally, a pilot implementation took place with students.

Desk research



Since last September, the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, with a law that was brought to the Parliament for voting on June 2020 (N4692 / 2020)¹ concerning the reform of public schools, has already included skill workshops that aim to cultivate the student's life skills, soft skills, and technology skills in the compulsory schedule of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. The action included 218 schools in the first pilot phase, while it also scheduled a second one, to gradually spread to all the country's schools. In these workshops, in the thematic cycle "Well-being", sex education is taught, while the thematic cycle "Social empathy and responsibility" includes the strengthening of values such as mutual respect, respect for diversity, and protection of human rights (Trigka, 2021). The new sex education program will be implemented at all levels of education, including kindergarten, primary, and secondary schools, according to the aforementioned law (N4692/2020). Until the first pilot of the new sex education program, which was implemented during the school year of 2020-2021, the issue was usually left to a few progressive teachers and professors who decided to tackle the issue of sexual life, e.g., in the framework of the Health Education program, which took place after the end of the teaching schedule and was optional for students.

According to data that has been retrieved from the Institute of Mental and Sexual Health, adolescents in Greece have their friends as their primary source of information regarding sex (52%) because they feel more comfortable discussing such issues with them and asking relevant questions. The internet is the second most popular source of information for children and adolescents (23%). Parents and schools are also sources of information regarding sex, but in very low percentages (14% and 11%) (Liaka, 2010).

In 2021, the general public, especially youth, was shocked by the Greek version of the "Me Too" movement, which concerned the publication of cases of sexual abuse in Greece by survivors. It started in the winter of 2020 after the public narration by athlete Sofia Bekatorou of the sexual assault she endured many years ago (1998). She named the aggressor was a member of the Hellenic Sailing Federation (Tzivola, 2021). Bekatorou's revelations were accompanied by a wave of applause and support that manifested itself mainly through social networks and the media. After these revelations, similar revelations were made public by other professional athletes, university students, journalists, politicians, and finally, actors. A culmination of the complaints led to the arrest of the former artistic director of the National Theater, Dimitris Lignadis, after the announcement of complaints against the actor and director for rape and pederasty.

Another topic is the rights of LGBTQ+ people in Greece. In April 2021, the Prime Minister created a special commission to investigate the state of the LGBTQ+ community in Greece and propose policy reforms that will bring equal rights and opportunities for the people. The commission finalised its work in June 2021. Some of the most important topics that have been debated a lot in the public sphere are same-sex marriage recognition (for the moment, only civil unions are recognised in Greece) and adoption rights. During the Athens Pride 2021 (held in September 2021), the debate was sparked once more. Currently, no political initiatives are undertaken regarding this commission's results.

Nowadays, the taboo/stigma subjects in Greek education and Greek society generally are:



1. **Sex:** The new law that introduces sex education at schools has met a lot of negative reactions from parents, some members of the church, and conservatives.
2. **Mental Health:** Mental health issues have been taboo in Greece for years. However, the ten-year socio-economic crisis has helped make them more visible in society, with people now talking more openly about them (naftemporiki.gr, 2019).
3. **Homosexuality:** Homosexuality is still a taboo subject in Greek society and education. Until recently, same-sex kisses that were part of a Greek television series led to the imposition of fines by the National Broadcasting Council.

Depending on their educational needs, students with special educational needs can attend either general education (typical schools with additional, supportive educational programs, applied by special and inclusive education teachers) or they can attend special education schools. This is determined on a case-by-case basis by the KEDASY (Diagnostic Assessment, Counseling and Support Centers).

Students with mild learning difficulties can attend typical classes at the general school with parallel support and co-education by special and inclusive education teachers if this is required by the type and degree of special educational needs. Specially organised and properly staffed inclusive education classes operate within the schools of general and vocational education with two types of programs (Doe, 2017a):

- A common and specialised program (up to 15 teaching hours per week) determined by a proposal of the relevant KEDASY for students with milder special educational needs.
- Specialised group or individual program of extended hours, determined by a proposal of the relevant KEDASY, for students with more severe forms of special educational needs, which are not covered by independent special education units corresponding to the necessary type and degree. The specialised program can be independent of the public, according to the needs of the students.

Students with significant difficulties can attend (Doe, 2017b):

- Independent SMEAE (Special Educational Schools).
- Schools or departments that operate independently or as branches of other schools in hospitals, rehabilitation centres, juvenile care institutions, institutions for the chronically ill, or mental health education and rehabilitation services, if people with disabilities inhabit them. These educational structures are considered SMEAE and are under the authority of the Ministry of Education.
- Homeschooling, when deemed necessary, can be done for serious short-term or chronic health problems, which do not allow students to move and attend school. A Special Education teacher does not necessarily provide home teaching unless the relevant KEDASY provides such a directive.



The lesson material taught at school is approved after a specific procedure. Books are assigned to an author or a writing team. After this choice, the respective person in charge of a specific course submits a proposal that must be approved by the relevant department of the Institute of Educational Policy. Then, the Institute's department makes the approval, and the relevant ministerial decision is issued, including specifications of the teaching material under production. The teaching material is supervised by the assigned Advisor or Assistant of the Institute and is ultimately judged by an external evaluation committee (Pedagogical Institute, 2009).

Since 2003, all-new compulsory education textbooks have been produced following a call for tenders. Then, during their writing, they are evaluated by an external crisis committee consisting of a university student specialising in the book's subject, one school counsellor, and a teacher.

Greece is one of the countries where transgender and homosexual people are less likely to experience a positive school atmosphere, as well as the countries with the lowest ranking in terms of how satisfied with their lives they are (Moshovakou & Ntani, 2018). The legislative reforms of 2015 improved the position of LGBTQI+ people in Greece. Also, the LGBTQI+ candidates in the previous elections prove that the model of the politician, who until now (almost should have been) a heteronormal—preferably masculine—male, is changing. A big step was made after the recent incidents and allegations of sexual assault and sexual abuse in the sectors of sports and theatre when the government decided to implement immediate sex education programmes at schools as a preventive measure.

Piloting

In total, 32 students participated in the piloting from two different schools.

Twenty-five (25) students were from a general education school, and seven (7) were from a special education school. More specifically, there were students with intellectual and cognitive diversities, among them two students with ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) and two students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) who attended additional inclusive-educational programs in the typical educational setting-high school, and they had additional support. Additionally, four educators were present—three general education and one special education—and one psychologist who works at the special education school.

Results

The piloting in Greece was fruitful and identified the needs of the students. Even though they stated they had knowledge about sexual education, in reality, there were many misconceptions, prejudices, and stereotypes. Additionally, the piloting was also helpful for the educators because they referred to homophobic attitudes. Specifically, they verified that many students seem to be homophobic and that toxic masculinity is prevalent. These students have little tolerance for anything different; they said they would use violence if someone tried to harass them and wouldn't interact with a gay student. These students thought they knew a lot about sex and asked why the facilitators pushed a gay agenda. For example, before the Image Theatre, there was a very brief reference to the Theatre



of the Oppressed method, focusing on the forms of oppression and the oppressed person. A student from the special school asked our team, "What should we do if we saw two boys kissing?" The question was the reason for creating a still image by a student. Then, an accurate description was given, titles of the image and a discussion of the oppression. The children were asked to intervene and change the image. We had two interventions: a reaction to the homophobic incident and another to change the kissing position of the two boys. Unfortunately, the time was too short to get to the ideal picture. This was an unexpected result of the piloting.

Regarding the positive results, first of all, all the students participated actively and interacted with each other. It is important to mention that the general school's students interacted and communicated during the training with the students from the special school. Also, the Theatre of the Oppressed was a significant asset of the training, and the students participated actively and worked as a team. Both teachers and students were interested and satisfied. Specifically, the educators asked to be informed about the next steps of the project to enhance their sexual education methods to be more inclusive and prepared for discriminative and violent incidents, while the students asked for more audio-visual material and content on the sexuality topic.

Of course, there were also some difficulties in the piloting. First of all, the restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, some of the activities were unsuitable for the specific target group because the students were unfamiliar with them, making them uncomfortable. The reasons behind this can be: i) the absence of somatic and experiential activities in the Greek educational system, ii) the pandemic that limited children physically and socially, iii) the large number of students participating, iv) and the pressure of time to complete the activities. Regarding the Greek Educational System educators, they are not as well used to somatic and experiential activities. Hence, their participation in this kind of activity was not so active. In contrast, their involvement in the activities that required oral speech was engaged and very supportive. Finally, the module "Anatomy, Puberty and Body Changes" was considered boring since the participants were already familiar with the content.

It is also important to mention in the results of the piloting that during the first day of the piloting phase, students were not so active, so the Greek team decided to propose a more interactive activity for the Module of "Sex and Sexuality". The activity is called "Mystery Box". The students were asked to write a question anonymously and place it in a basket with the purpose of answering all the questions the next day. Several students stated that they already knew everything and didn't have any questions, which is interesting since, as mentioned above, there were a lot of misconceptions and prejudices. This could be because the students wanted to appear as if they knew everything and succumb to peer conformity. The rest of the questions that we received were eye-openers. What the students care about is some answers to crucial subjects for them. For example: *when is the right time to start their sexual life, how to flirt, why people rape, how can we deal with sexual harassment, what if the harassment comes from a family member, and even how to enlarge a penis*. It is common for students at this age to compare themselves to the images they see around them (in pornography or even in discussions with their peers). They were interested in discussing important matters that caused them anxiety. This activity lasted for 40 minutes, but more time was needed. The participants



were excited with the concept of this activity, as they were going to discuss important issues and receive answers to their questions.

During the collection of the answers, it was identified that two of the students might have faced sexual harassment in the family. One of them asked *what the student should do if a family member sexually harassed them*. The second one asked for guidance on *how to help a friend who is sexually harassed by a member of their family without putting themselves or a friend in danger*. Of course, the educators and the school's psychologist were informed about these two situations to intervene to assist the students in need. The students were given the necessary information on how to deal with similar situations and access to a national anonymous helpline and sources for more information. The importance of including the "sexual harassment" topic in the INCLUDED materials is evident.

Intellectual Output 2

As mentioned above, in IO2, all partners contributed to the development of a free multilingual e-course for school teachers and support staff (school nurses, school counsellors, etc.). The teaching inclusive sex-ed through creative methods e-course is based on each partner's research phase from IO1, and the results of the piloting of IO1, which also included educators and teachers. The e-course aimed to develop educational resources for the support of the school staff to be able to deliver sex education courses through creative-based, participant-centred and embodied methods such as the Theatre of the Oppressed. It is important to mention that the content was developed through a holistic, healthy, inclusive, critical and positive sex education, critical pedagogy, and an intersectional approach. The last one is very important because the project aims to include each student regardless of gender, race, abilities, sexual orientation, etc.

Each partner not only contributed to the development of the Modules but also translated and adapted the context in regard to their national contexts. In Greece, RDPSEA and KMOP collaborated again with the schools from the piloting of IO1, and one more school that it was interested in, but this time only with the teachers. The e-course was presented and explained to the participants during the piloting of IO3 (Guide for teachers and families), while the piloting of IO2 was asynchronous. We asked the teachers and school staff to sign in to the platform in their own time, take the course and the small tests for self-reflection and then provide their feedback and comments.

Intellectual Output 3

The 3rd Intellectual Output of the project aimed to support families' role in the sex education of their children (including children with intellectual disabilities) and to improve their interaction and relationship with the school system. More specifically, in IO3 all partners contributed to developing a methodological guide (PDF) for schools with activities for parents and teachers/educators. This guide aims to engage families in sex education programmes, through their active participation and training in sex education.



Before the development of the content for the Guide, we conducted a set of interviews with teachers and educators regarding their relationship with families, and how families will be engaged, especially in the sex education subject. Even though only one of the interviewees has participated in proper training regarding sex education, all of them stated that they are interested in learning and being educated and informed on this topic. They also stated that not only through their education but also through the use of interactive tools students will be able to understand and actively participate in a sex education course. Regarding the relationship with the families and their engagement in sex education, they were not positive about it. One of the interviewees stated that she would be anxious if a conversation regarding sex education with the parents was needed, while one other said that there has been disapproval and negative reactions from parents regarding a sex education course. All of them believe that it is very important to have the families and the parents by their side because in that way the parents can become educators for their children and help them as well. Overall, there is not a common, national education for teachers and educators regarding sex education, and many of the stereotypes are the results of the family. Families are not so engaged in the school system, especially in sex education courses, so they have negative reactions. It is worth mentioning that it is really important to open a dialogue about sex education between schools, families, and students to break the taboos and provide knowledge.

After we gathered the results of the interviews, we developed the tools that we used in the Guide. All the tools are interactive activities for teachers and families which aim to open the dialogue between them. The piloting of IO3 took place at the 2nd Junior High School of Alimos on the 8 and 9 of February 2023 from 14:00 to 20:00. In the piloting 25 people in total participated (2 males and 23 females) from 24 to 60 years old. The group included teachers, parents, and school staff (psychologists, a school nurse, and social workers). The teachers were from two general education schools and one special education school.

After completing the training, the participants provided feedback through an evaluation questionnaire. Overall, the piloting was very successful, and the participants stated that they were satisfied with the design of the training. They gained new knowledge, interacted with colleagues and families, exchanged ideas and discussed challenging subjects. In their evaluation, all of the participants stated that the interactive, embodied theatre activities were the most challenging but at the same time the most interesting and helpful. Some of the teachers stated that it is important to open the dialogue between families through these kinds of activities and that the interaction between them helps to overcome their families' resistance and negative reactions. Regarding families, all of them highlighted the importance of sex education at schools, while some of them stated that the training helped them to change their stereotypical perspectives. It is important to mention that only 2 out of 5 participants trust teachers on sex education implementation because they believe that they are not well-informed, well-prepared and educated.



Policy Recommendations

- Implement a national sex education curriculum in all schools, general, special, vocational, which includes a comprehensive and inclusive approach to sex education, covering all aspects of sexual health, relationships, and gender identity.
- Provide mandatory and comprehensive training for teachers and school staff on sex education, including topics such as healthy relationships, consent, sexual orientation, and gender identity, to ensure they are well informed and prepared to deliver sex education courses.
- Encourage and facilitate the involvement of parents and families in sex education programs, through their active participation and training in sex education, to improve their relationship with the school system and support their role in the sex education of their children.
- Promote the use of creative-based, participant-centred, and embodied methods, such as theatre or interactive activities, to deliver sex education courses, as these methods have proven to be effective in engaging students and facilitating dialogue on sensitive topics.
- Develop and implement strategies to combat stigma and discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation, race, and disability, within schools and communities, to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of sex education programs regularly, through the use of surveys and feedback from students, parents, and teachers, to ensure they are meeting the needs of students and addressing the concerns of all stakeholders.
- Provide funding and support for the development and implementation of sex education programs and resources, to ensure that all schools and communities have access to the resources they need to provide comprehensive and inclusive sex education to all students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the implementation of the INCLUDED project was a successful effort to provide comprehensive sex education to students in a way that is inclusive, intersectional, and respectful of diverse cultures and identities. Through the collaborative efforts of the project partners, the project achieved its main objectives, which were to develop innovative, interactive, and participant-centred teaching materials and training programs for teachers, educators, and parents to deliver sex education through creative methods.

The impact of the project is significant, as it addresses a crucial aspect of students' health and well-being, as well as their social and emotional development. The project has contributed to the promotion of sex education policies and practices that are inclusive, respectful, and responsive to the needs of each student. It has also increased awareness and knowledge among teachers, educators, and parents regarding sex education, and provided them with the tools and strategies to deliver comprehensive sex education through creative and participatory methods.



UK

Introduction – National Context

In the UK, Relationships Education is compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is made obligatory for all students in secondary education.

Relationships Education (Primary) focuses on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and with adults. The aim is to make pupils recognise and report abuse, including emotional, physical and sexual abuse by focusing on boundaries and privacy, ensuring young people understand that they have rights over their own bodies. Topics cover marriage, consent, including the age of consent, violence against women and girls, online behaviours including image and information sharing (including ‘sexting’, youth-produced sexual imagery, nudes, etc.), pornography, abortion, sexuality, gender identity, substance misuse, violence and exploitation by gangs, extremism/radicalisation criminal exploitation (for example, through gang involvement or “county lines” drugs operations), hate crimes, and female genital mutilation (FGM).

Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) is compulsory from age 11 onwards in the UK. It involves teaching children about reproduction, sexuality and sexual health. However, primary schools that choose to teach sex education (beyond the compulsory Relationship Education) must allow parents a right to withdraw their children. Turnbull et al. (2010) has reported that adolescents judged the sex education to be of high quality and enjoyed being taught by sexual-health workers at schools. Preferred sources of SRE included sexual-health workers, parents and peers as well as the media. Gender, school’s faith (Church of England or Catholic) and school type (mainstream, special needs) were predictors of preference for various aspects of SRE. The results highlighted the crucial role of experienced qualified SRE educators, but also the supplementary role of parents and peers as well as the role of Internet sites, magazines, phone lines and schools. Stereotypical preferences of boys and girls outside SRE seem to be perpetuated in SRE, and special needs and mainstream adolescents’ preferences are consistent with their communication and education outside SRE.

Intellectual Output 1

IO1 includes a handbook for schools to implement inclusive sex education through creative methods with a curricular training programme for students and recommendations on how to introduce it into the school. In order to understand how the topic is addressed, held and understood in the British context, official structural definitions about sex education were collected during the desk-based research phase of the output.

“The aim of SRE is to give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, a good colleague, and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship. It should also cover contraception, developing



intimate relationships and resisting pressure to have sex (and not applying pressure). It should teach what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships.”

“Effective RSE does not encourage early sexual experimentation. It should teach young people to understand human sexuality and to respect themselves and others. It enables young people to mature, build their confidence and self-esteem and understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity. Effective RSE also supports people, throughout life, to develop safe, fulfilling and healthy sexual relationships, at the appropriate time.”

A short survey was developed in order to identify the current topics in the public eye in the U.K. The most common answers collected by mainly adult participants were: sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, all kinds of STIs, Chlamydia and topics such as consent, sexual violence, underage sex, unprotected sex, abortion regulation, peer pressure, and sexting.

According to the results collected from our adult participants, the prevailing taboo/stigma subjects in education and in general culture are sexually transmitted diseases, sex education and gender/LBTQ issues, disabled people, abortion, sex trafficking, sexuality in general and informed consent. As a result, the answers are quite similar to those collected within the public eye in the UK. Aside from the topics related to sex education, other matters like mental health, Brexit, the Black Lives Matter movement, and religion were identified to be taboo/stigmatized subjects in the U.K.

MEH tested the INCLUDED activities in February 2022 with 15 students who have different levels of deafness aged between 14-22 and with students attending either college or special programme training schools. Deaf Active carries out an after-school youth club for D/deaf, hard of hearing, CODA (Child of Deaf Adult) and hearing children and young people. They also train their older students to become youth workers. There were students with different levels of deafness and 3 youth workers who usually work with them have helped us to deliver our modules by interpreting into sign language.

The following activities were tested;

- Module 1: puberty changes,
- Module 2: who is this professional?
- Module 3: sex and sexuality brainstorming,
- Module 4: red and green light scenarios.

Piloting was overall positive. Students have demonstrated high interest and attention in our activities. Their teachers and the interpreters were glad of the content of activities, methodologies and the reaction of the students. Communication was the most challenging part of the piloting as facilitators did not know sign language, but interpreters helped with translating and making the content of the activities accessible to all participants. In addition, some students showed a bit of hesitation to answer questions in open discussions with the whole group. However, they were more interactive and communicative when they had to work in smaller groups with their peers. Another challenge we encountered was the low level of students' literacy. In order to solve this issue, words in the stories



were adapted and made more understandable for the activity of the “consent module”. Besides, students were given the possibility to share non-written evaluations.

The positive side of the piloting was the high interest shown by the students in the content of the piloting. Indeed, the initial challenge was the sensitive topic of the piloting and thus the probability of some students to be embarrassed or to refuse to engage in discussion. However, the teachers were very helpful, since they knew the group and the general environment was inclusive, and collaborative.

Some adjustments were made in order to meet the needs of the students who get easily tired due to their medical conditions if activities include too much discussions and efforts. As a result, a break was taken after the first two modules.

Evaluation questions showed that students were globally satisfied with the format of this lesson. According to their answers, they especially liked the informal way of talking, open group discussion, and group work. More specifically, they enjoyed taking part in the activities of the first module where they had to generate examples related to the topics of body and anatomy and social, emotional, and physical changes during puberty. Furthermore, all students unanimously liked the activity of module 4 regarding consent: red and green light scenarios. Most of them have indicated as an open answer that they wanted to discuss more and know more about the legal age of the sex, laws around this topic, and different scenarios that have been used during the activity. Finally, all the students would without hesitation suggest this training to their friends and peers.

Intellectual Output 2

IO2 aims to support teachers and school staff to be able to apply current practices in sexual education for their students through creative methods. In order to achieve this goal, all partners contributed to the development of open educational resources that can contribute to the well-being and social inclusion of vulnerable societal groups. As a result, a free multilingual e-course for school teachers and support staff was created based on the outputs of IO1.

The e-course was shared and promoted to a wide audience of school teachers, staff and educators in the UK. The course was also presented to our participants during the piloting phase of IO3 in order to reach a bigger number of people and to take the opportunity of a face-to face encounter to explain more in detail the purpose and benefits of the project, the topics, and the platform. The participants were invited to register in the platform and take part in the MOOC which offers a structured learning pathway as well as support materials and activities in order to help teachers and educators to better understand the topic and equip them with the tools and skills required to answer the needs of their students. By registering into the course, the participants were given access to different modules and had the opportunity to do inner work exercises at their own pace. Thanks to their involvement, MEH could collect feedback and comments on how to improve the platform, the course and the activities in order to reach a high level of satisfaction and better answer the needs identified in the beginning of the project. This feedback was also very important to rate the efficiency, the transferability and the impacts of the outputs and the project on the target groups.



Intellectual Output 3

INCLUDED third Intellectual Output aimed at enforcing the involvement of families in the sexual education of young people including young people with intellectual disabilities, and improve their interaction with the school system through a guide with activities for parents and educators.

Prior to the guide creation, interviews were conducted with high school teachers regarding their previous sex education training to teach students, their relationship with families, and the engagement and dialogue with them about sexual education.

Two school teachers were previously involved in sexual education training, and only one teacher stated that they are interested in teaching sex education to students but will need to feel more well trained by specialist facilitators, and have more well-designed course materials.

Regarding the families' engagement, they highlighted the importance of communicating with parents about the shared information. One of the teachers referred to the sensitivity of the topic, and the necessity of the existence of a consultation evening where there is open dialogue. The second teacher stated the importance of having clear conversations with parents. Another teacher mentioned that sex education should be a conversation with parents, and that effective teaching depends on their willingness to discuss openly, however, it will not be something parents will prefer to discuss with teachers. Generally, the need to have dialogue was highlighted.

Accordingly, tools were developed in the guide, including interactive activities for teachers and families, to facilitate dialogue, enhance the professional skills of teachers, and engage families in the sex education.

The piloting sessions of this Intellectual Output took place at The Joseph Lappin Centre, Liverpool on the 28th of March, 2023, from 9:00 to 15:00 GMT, and on the 30th of March, 2023, from 14:00 to 20:00 GMT. The Piloting was conducted with our network, "Deaf Active", which is working closely on several programs with schools including the Broadgreen International School with a focus on deaf students. 21 people from different age segments (18-39) including families, educators, and staff, attended and participated in the activities.

According to the participants' evaluations, the piloting sessions were successful and developed their knowledge and skills. The participants stated that the activities were fun, easy, and interactive. A friendly atmosphere was created to exchange ideas. Educators could discuss challenges that they face with students, parents, and their children and develop suggestions, and families learned about gender and sex education terminologies. They became aware of the importance of participating in open and clear dialogue to support the sex education of their children.

Policy Recommendations

- Relationships Education, SRE and Health Education must be accessible through high quality teaching for all pupils, especially for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities who represent a large minority.



- In special schools and for some SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) pupils in mainstream schools there may be a need to tailor content and teaching to meet the specific needs of pupils at different developmental stages.
- It may be appropriate to revisit topics more frequently with pupils with SEND to support “overlearning” for new and abstract topics. SEND pupils may need lots of support to generalise their learning outside of RSE lessons and support to personalise the learning to their own relationships, behaviours, and maturation.
- Materials should be available in appropriate learning media including tactile diagrams and physical materials when required.
- Follow up sessions may be used with smaller groups to personalise the learning from RSE group lessons. These may be targeted small group sessions, 1-1 as appropriate, or referrals to specific support staff.
- Schools must ensure that they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, (The Equality Act 2010 and schools: Departmental advice), under which sexual orientation and gender reassignment are amongst the protected characteristics.
- When schools teach their pupils about LGBT issues, they should ensure that this content is fully integrated to their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a standalone unit or lesson. Schools are free to determine how they do this, and the Education Department of the UK expects all pupils to be taught LGBT content at a timely point as part of this area of the curriculum.

Conclusion

To sum up, the implementation of the INCLUDED project as well as the local pilotings conducted in all partner countries enabled us to understand more the actual situation and identify the main needs regarding the sexual education of students and the approach to adopt between them, families, and teachers. We can thus assert that the project is successful in meeting and achieving its objectives and desired impact on all the target groups. The materials, courses and creative methods produced and implemented as part of the project thanks to the collaboration of all partners enabled us to break some taboos in all countries of the consortium and open up the dialogue towards a more inclusive and open society. Moreover, it provided support to help teachers and educators to better understand the topic and equip them with the tools and skills needed to answer the needs of their students. The project gave the opportunity to families to gain knowledge of gender and sex education so that they can better address the topic with their children and raise awareness among them. In addition, it helped educators to find solutions to problems they experience with students, parents, and students and engage in constructive dialogue and discussion.



The Netherlands

Introduction – National Context

In Dutch schools, sex education has been mandatory for years. This started around the seventies with lessons in high school about anatomy and reproduction. This coincided with protests for preconception and abortion rights, as well as sex being for pleasure, although condoms were not widely available yet. In the eighties, due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, lessons about STIs and the use of condoms were added (along with nationwide ad campaigns on TV and radio). The idea of sexual relationships being “free and just for fun” got tampered down somewhat. Many organisations in The Netherlands still tried to focus on the positive and fun sides of sex, since schools were more likely to warn and shame students about the dangerous aspects of sex. Since then, the government has almost looked at sex education as “complete” and finished, even though society’s view on the subject and connected themes have changed tremendously since the eighties.

In 2006, new laws around “civics education” meant that all schools from elementary schools to vocational education had to—among other things—teach their students about diversity in relationships and sexuality. This meant that new materials had to be produced to teach all classes age-appropriate lessons. Initially, teachers had to navigate this for themselves, but in later years, organisations like Rutgers, SoaAidsNederland, and the GGD (Municipal Health Service) produced materials that were free to use for all schools, and even provided teacher training based on the materials.

In 2019, Rutgers published a study (Cense *et al.*) in which students from several different Dutch high schools peer-researched students’ opinions in their schools and asked what they think about sexual education. The conclusion was that students want more focus on the positive side of sex and relationships, more skills around consent, and to know more about sexual and gender diversity, and the wide array of options that is available to them. The sexual education that they receive is focused more on anatomy, in addition to warnings about pregnancy and STIs. Students also stated that they wanted the lessons more often and in more than just biology classes. This publication spurred the Dutch government to pass an additional law for civics education and to make funding available for schools that want to strengthen their curriculum around sex education, or make use of guest educators on a structural basis.

Teachers often do not need to involve families in the sex education plans, due to most schools having written their justification and vision for the curriculum in their school guide. Parents can come to school with questions or concerns about the lessons, but by and large, there is very little family involvement. However, not all teachers get proper training on how to implement the vast array of options in methodologies that is available to them. Some don’t even know where to find all the options. This is a hurdle for schools in delivering sex education that is as good as the government requires, or as the students want and deserve. Teachers that do get some form of training are most often biology teachers, because reproduction is a mandatory part of the biology curriculum for younger students (11-14), as well as older students who choose biology as an exam subject (15-



17). The teacher education for elementary school teachers has some lessons on civics education, but from the stories we've heard at Sexmatters teacher trainings, that's not much to write home about.

Ideas about gender and sexuality start to form at a young age. Sexmatters therefore centres its work around adolescents and young adults (up to about 30 years of age) and is active wherever young people come together. In order to be able to be oneself, a safe social environment is important. For adolescents, peers begin to play a larger role in this than parents and other adults. For this reason, the Sexmatters team is both young and diverse in order to connect well with youth of all backgrounds. The goal of Sexmatters' activities is to make young people aware of gender and sexual diversity, and to teach them how to appreciate those who are different from themselves. Sexmatters engages youth in activities that reduce prejudice and stereotyping, as well as increases mutual understanding and acceptance.

The role Sexmatters fulfils within the current range of sexuality education methods for young people is based around the social aspect of sexuality. Sexmatters starts a conversation with young people about sexuality and diversity, including opinions, behaviours, and social manners, in addition to norms and values we have regarding gender and sexuality. In carrying out the activities, Sexmatters pays particular attention to the roles of society and culture and how they influence how people think about sex and gender. Sexmatters always pays attention to aspects of identity upon which people are socially included or excluded, such as ethnicity, culture, and religion, from an intersectional standpoint.

People learn early on that there are things that are typically considered "boy" and "girl" things. Not conforming to this dichotomy is often not accepted nor tolerated. Gender norms not only limit young people in who they are or who they can be, but also lay a foundation for societal gender inequality. Gender norms also shape ideas around sexuality and sexual identity. For example, people with non-heteronormative sexualities still face various forms of discrimination and harassment. A survey of LGBTQIA+ schoolchildren in the Netherlands shows that more than one third feel unsafe at school due to their sexual or gender identity. Additionally, recent studies show that LGBTQIA+ youth in secondary schools are more likely to be bullied by school staff than their heterosexual peers. Sometimes this bullying is subtle and the staff member in question does not realise it, nor is it noticed by bystanders (these could be microaggressions). With our teacher training, we make sure teachers and other school staff are aware of gender and sexual diversity and its impact on social safety in the classroom. With the "Speaking Up" workshop, we teach people to recognize these subtle comments and properly stand up for themselves and others, so that these comments are addressed and bullying, discrimination, and harassment is countered.

Because norms about gender and sexuality have an impact from an early age, it is important to discuss these norms and their consequences with young people early on. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has therefore drawn up core objectives around sexuality and sexual diversity. Unfortunately, research by the Education Inspection shows that the implementation of these objectives often depends on individual teachers and they are not necessarily integrated into the curriculum. While schools usually meet the legal requirements, the quality of sex education could be



better. As far as Sexmatters is concerned, the conversation about sexuality and gender is insufficiently conducted in schools, and where it is conducted, the tone should strive to be more positive and less normative. By discussing gender norms and their influence on one's identity, as well as how we treat each other (e.g., consent), Sexmatters creates social awareness among young people that counteracts the negative effects of gender-based stereotyping.

The desire among young people to learn more about the topics discussed in the Sexmatters workshops is significant, according to research by Rutgers (2019) on young people's wishes regarding sex education. This research titled "Just Take Away the Taboo" reveals that secondary school youth often lack information about sexuality and gender identity in current sex education. According to researchers, "Students want sex education to break through the normativity and make it clear that there is not one standard." Furthermore, young people want information about how to navigate relationships as well as how to discuss boundaries and desires during sex.

From our own experience, Sexmatters knows that young people are in the process of shaping their identity and regularly wonder if they are "normal." Young people encounter many images and ideas through the internet and social media, including more and more celebrities speaking out about being feminists, bisexual, or queer, for example. In the workshops that Sexmatters has been teaching in schools since 2015, we have found that the meaning of these terms is not always clear to adolescents. Despite the fact that young people are becoming increasingly acquainted with different gender and sexual identities, context and knowledge around them is frequently lacking. This is confirmed by the 2017 "Sex Under 25" survey which found that 60% of young people feel they did not receive enough information about homosexuality in school. Finally, recent research by Rutgers shows that young people want to talk more about gender diversity, sexual identity, desires, and boundaries, as well as sexual pleasure.

Young people's positive responses to our workshops clearly reinforce the need for an open conversation about sexuality, gender, and consent. Students indicate that they found it incredibly fun to talk about these topics with each other. They liked that the young adults gave the workshops because it made it more relaxed. The many questions the students ask during the workshops also show the need to talk about sexuality, gender, and consent.

For many students, a Sexmatters workshop is the first time they have contact with an LGBTQIA+ person. It is often also the first time they can ask questions and experience that talking about LGBTQIA+ identities are not a conversation *about* people (in an abstract sense) but a conversation *with people*. Several studies show that getting to know people who are "different" reduces prejudice. In addition, it is important that young people also see more normative workshop leaders (heterosexual, cisgender), who communicate positively about sexual and gender diversity. Youth who do not identify as LGBTQIA+ will recognize themselves more easily in a workshop leader who does not identify as LGBTQIA+ either. Because young people also get to see a cooperation and a healthy bond between LGBTQIA+ and non-LGBTQIA+ workshop leaders during the workshops, they start to think more positively about a bond between LGBTQIA+ and non-LGBTQIA+ people, according to Extended Contact Theory. Finally, many personal experiences of workshop leaders are



shared during the workshops. This ensures that conversations about difficult topics are easier to discuss and that students feel comfortable sharing their own experiences as well.

Intellectual Output 1

Sexmatters was initially the lead partner for the development of IO1, due to the specific experience and knowledge that we have; Sexmatters has been teaching workshops on sexuality, gender, and consent since 2013 in various Dutch educational settings. We worked on creating the framework for the IO1 lessons, but after that we sadly had to leave the project for a few months due to administrative difficulties. That is why we missed the piloting phase for IO1.

Because we have been teaching workshops in different schools for so long, we have experience with how students and teachers react to lessons about sexuality, gender, and consent. Keep in mind that most of the time Dutch students are already more used to talking about these subjects because of the mandatory civics and sexual education lessons in schools, but that does not take away the initial shyness or awkward feelings that students may have when the lessons start. This is why we always start our workshops with an ice breaker exercise that is connected to the theme and energises the students by having them walk around or talk to each other. After this, introducing the subjects we will talk about is usually a lot easier.

We teach a variety of groups. This means we come in contact with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, religions, genders, political views, etc. We strive to work with cultural sensitivity in mind. In one group it might be okay to discuss something like masturbation freely, while in other groups we focus more on relationships, love, and getting married. This means that we base the information (and way of delivering that information) on the group we have in front of us. The feedback we receive from the groups we teach is usually positive. Our approach is non-judgmental, open, and positive. We always specify that you don't have to talk or answer questions if it makes you feel uncomfortable. We see ourselves more as conversation facilitators than as trainers.

Sometimes students don't appreciate that we talk about diversity in sex and relationships, because—and this is especially true for kids going through puberty—being “normal” is very important to them. We keep in mind that we are planting seeds, not necessarily changing minds. The most important thing is for students to respectfully talk about what different options there are in life, whether they themselves feel a connection to those options or not. If you only ever hear one type of story, it is harder to find out what *your* story actually is.

Luckily, positive reactions from students are also abundant. Most students appreciate talking to guest educators about these subjects because it is less scary than talking to their own teachers, who they have to keep seeing every day for three to five more years. Students like that they get the opportunity to talk about these topics openly and without being judged by an adult. They learn from us as workshop leaders, but also from each other's thoughts and experiences. The team of educators we have at Sexmatters is very diverse, so students will almost always be able to relate to at least one of the two people in front of the class. Sharing our own experiences helps make the experiences and themes more human, and thus more relatable for students.



In the way our lessons are structured, we manage most of the time to form a bond with students quickly within the hour and a half we have with them. This is thanks to the energising ice breaker activity we do and the building up to more “awkward” conversations over time. First, we share some theoretical knowledge or watch a video, or we ask students what they already know. After that we have them exchange ideas by doing interviews or having a brainstorming session. The last activities we do are mostly about students giving their own opinions, or sharing experiences, or role-playing exercises. This building up the “intensity” of the activities helps in creating a safer space for students and for them to get used to talking about the subject, with us and with each other.

From time to time, we also receive negative feedback. Usually, people who have negative feedback make themselves heard more than people who have positive feedback. This feedback usually comes from the parents of the kids we teach. Parents don't always have a clear understanding of the contents of our workshops. They are scared that our workshops are explicit or that we would indoctrinate their children. This is why our workshops need a lot of context and explanation to parents. We work closely with teachers and youth workers to ensure that they talk to parents beforehand. We also have a brief summary that we sometimes share with parents. In this summary we share our vision and what we are going to do during the workshops. This makes them feel included so that they also see that the content of our workshops is not as explicit as they might think.

Intellectual Output 2

The second Intellectual Output for the Included Project saw all partners contribute to the development of an e-learning course for school teachers and support staff (nurses, counsellors, etc.) that will be available online for free in all five languages of the consortium partners. The e-learning, entitled “Teaching Inclusive Sex-Education Through Creative Methods” is based on each partner’s research phase from IO1 and the results of the IO1 pilots. The e-course’s objective is to help school staff deliver the IO1 sex education curriculum, but also possibly others, through creative, participant-centred, and embodied methods, such as the Theatre of the Oppressed. The content of the e-learning was developed holistically, to promote a healthy, inclusive, critical, and positive sex education, using critical pedagogy and an intersectional approach. The intersectional aspect of the course is very important; the Included project aims to include all students regardless of gender, race, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, cultural background, etc.

Sexmatters has had a more consulting and feedback-oriented role in the development of the IO2, providing insights from our extensive experience in training teachers and school staff to teach inclusive and positive sex education. Additionally, Sexmatters also made sure to translate the e-course into Dutch and we provided videos with tips and tricks for teachers that are available in the e-course with subtitles in each partner language.

Piloting the IO2 e-learning course in The Netherlands was rather difficult, due to the school that we planned to pilot both IO2 and IO3 with pulling out of the agreement on short notice. Sexmatters ended up testing the e-learning with our own team, but only teachers who haven’t had a role in the Included project before. The team members were asked to view this through the lens of teachers



who do not have a lot of experience with sex education. As Sexmatters team members also train teachers, they knew just what things the Dutch teachers usually miss, and could give enough feedback that way. The self-reflection and visualisation activities were mostly appreciated, but what was missed was more specific theory or tools on how to have conversations with students, family, and colleagues as well.

Intellectual Output 3

The objective of the third Intellectual Output of the Included project is to support schools in involving families in the sex education of their children, and to improve the pedagogical partnership, interaction, and relationship of the families and school. To ensure schools have the tools they need for effective family involvement, the project partners worked together to create a methodological guide for schools with activities that teachers and educators can do with families. This guide aims to engage families in the students' sex education programmes, because comprehensive sex education needs a holistic approach, and doesn't end at in-classroom lessons. This is in accordance with the WHO policy recommendations in the policy framework "Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe."

The development of the guide's contents is based on prior desk and field research, the results of the previous pilots, Sexmatters' previous experiences with teacher training and communication with families, and a set of interviews with teachers and educators. In these interviews we asked the teachers about their experiences in family involvement around the sex education of their students. All teachers interviewed reported minimal to no family involvement in the curriculum of their schools. Schools in The Netherlands never need a formal go-ahead from parents or families when it comes to teaching materials. What does happen is that sometimes a letter is sent out, or information is communicated through a newsletter. It is more of a notification than an ask for involvement. We know from experience and research however, that a holistic approach is necessary, as sex education does not end in the classroom, but goes beyond that. If schools can have dialogues with parents around their children's sex education, parents will be equipped with more theory and tools to keep having these conversations at home, as well as paving the way for equality among all students because taboos will be broken and respect and tolerance will be encouraged. A pedagogical partnership between families and schools is therefore ideal.

The pilot of IO3 had the same trouble as the pilot for IO2, as initially they were meant to coincide and run parallel, so eventually the choice was made to pilot online (in a Zoom video call) with parents from Sexmatters' own network. Seven participants attended the pilot, all of whom were familiar with Sexmatters but had not previously participated in the Included project. The group consisted of three men and four women, all of whom identified as cisgender and heterosexual and were aged between 35 and 50. Participants were white, residing in urban areas, and possessed varying educational backgrounds, ranging from college to university degrees. Although not religious, some participants had Christian backgrounds or childhoods. The pilot facilitator was one of the Sexmatters' team who has been involved with the Included project since early on.



All participants of the pilot believed that sex education is crucial. The participants expressed enthusiasm about the pilot and reported enjoying taking part in it. They believed that teachers require additional tools to provide effective sex education lessons and that these tools are currently lacking. While not all parents agreed with being more involved in their children's sex education, some expressed they had enough trust in schools to deliver appropriate education, as long as teachers have access to the necessary training and resources.

Policy Recommendations

- Teach lessons in comprehensive sexual education that fit the students' environment and experiences.
- Organise activities (for instance, a project week) around sex education, in which the Included curriculum can be taught to all students.
- Include a section about healthy relationships and sexual education in your school's vision or policies.
- Engage parents and caretakers by giving them information and inviting them to discover more about the lessons and lesson materials, by participating in parent-oriented workshops.
- Make sure students with problems regarding sexuality and relationships get the right help.
- Collaborate with partners like the GGD (Municipal Health Services) for extra information, short lines to professional help, training opportunities for teachers and other school staff, etc.
- Make sure the school environment is safe - this means to ensure that the entire school staff (not just teachers) is able to recognize and appropriately deal with discrimination and sexual harassment.

Conclusion

When it comes to sex education in The Netherlands, the Included project is another addition to an already wide range of lesson materials teachers and schools can use to implement comprehensive sex education (CSE). This is due to the fact that The Netherlands has been implementing CSE in many schools for many years already. Sexmatters is a front runner in The Netherlands when it comes to positive, inclusive, culturally sensitive, and intersectional approach to teaching CSE themes. The focus of the Included project on also including students with disabilities, is rather new however. The largest positive contribution of Sexmatters' participation in the Included project is therefore probably the passing along of expertise and theoretical knowledge to the project partners, and thereby the partner countries.

The main objectives of the project, which were to develop innovative, interactive, creative, embodied, and participant-centred teaching materials and training programs for students, as well as teachers and families. The results of the project definitely reflect those objectives.



The greatest impact of the project in The Netherlands is the expansion of CSE materials that are suitable for students with disabilities, and the addition of creative methods to teaching CSE themes. The impact of the project on Europe as a whole is significant, as it enhances the partner countries' abilities to implement the WHO policies around sexual education better than ever before, which hopefully sets off a domino effect of inspiration.

North Macedonia

Introduction – National Context

Human sexuality has been and it is still a taboo in many countries although it is one of the driving pillars of a living society (Coimbra França, J. V., & Sousa Costa, J. de L., 2020). Sexual and reproductive health and rights are still a taboo in Macedonia not just in the formal education and in the schools but in the families and at home as well. Although the educational system should play a key role in providing information, resources, and adequate tools for learning about sexual education and reproductive health, in Macedonia, the lack of proper approach on how to address and implement the sex education curriculum in the school system is evident. The absence of sex education curricula in the schools, consequently, can be linked with the increase in hate, violence, bullying, and discrimination which have been identified in the school settings (Hera, 2022) and have been constantly rising in the past years. As a result of the absence of sex education and lack of information, a lot of misconceptions can arise between the teenagers which can also lead to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and teenage pregnancies.

The research findings taken from the document “Strategy for sexuality and reproductive health in Republic of Macedonia” by the Ministry of Health (2011) demonstrates that in the school curriculum, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is only partially included in some other school subjects, such as STIs are only included in biology classes. However, a school subject entitled as Sex Education where other important topics such as sexual reproductive health, gender, sex or consent are discussed or addressed in the school settings is non-existent. Although a huge number of parents (82% to 96%) are in favour of introducing topics related to comprehensive sexuality education in the school curriculum in the country (Hera & IPPF, 2018), in Macedonia there is no mandatory or even optional subject Sex Education in the school curriculum (Ministry of Health, 2011).

Even though there are several civil society organisations who actively advocate for implementing comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) to become part of the curricula in primary and secondary schools in Macedonia (Hera, 2022), several pilot programmes in the schools have been tested but the curricula for CSE have still not been incorporated in the formal education in the country (Ministry of Health, 2011).



Intellectual Output 1

Desk research

Although there is no specific subject entitled sex-ed in the school curriculum, the Ministry of Health (2011) has set strategic goals and priorities until the year 2020 and one of them is regarding the adolescent sexual and reproductive health and the improvement of access of information and education for the youth when it comes to sexual and reproductive health. Moreover, some of the interventions are the following (p. 15):

- Introduction of the sex-ed in the primary and secondary schools with materials which are adapted for the age of the students.
- Education on sexual and reproductive health for marginalised and vulnerable youth which is gender-sensitive.
- Implementing educational campaigns and activities for improving the sexual and reproductive health for youth in the scope of the programs and activities for mass mediums, education institutions, and civil society organisations.
- Education for parents for how to manage and meet the needs of the adolescent which are related to their sexual and reproductive health.

Some of the indicators are the following (Ministry of Health, 2011, p. 16):

- Implementing sexuality education in the primary and secondary schools adapted according to the age and which promotes positive aspects of sexuality, and materials which are gender-sensitive.
- Establishing programs for sexuality education and reproductive health for youth in the formal educational system for vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- Implementing topics in the field of sexual educational and reproductive health for adolescents and youth which are included in the mass mediums, activities and programmes of educational institutions and civil society organisations.
- Establishing mechanisms and programmes which are in the scope of the health and educational institutions and civil society organisations which actively work and include youth in the processes of creating, implementing and evaluating the informal-educational activities.
- Establishing parent education programmes for adolescent sexual and reproductive health within educational institutions and the civil sector.

CSE has not been incorporated in the school curriculum in Macedonia despite the effort of several civil society organisations to actively advocate on implementing the sexual education curriculum. However, the piloting of a sexuality education curriculum was implemented in the country which was supported by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (PFIF) and the UN Population Fund



(UNFPA). As part of the piloting, several lessons have been tested with professors who took part in a programme, which was piloted in four schools in the capital city of Skopje and Tetovo, in urban and rural areas. Each teacher, after completing the training received a package of manual materials for teaching which was prepared during 2020. The result from the pilot-program and the evaluation will be the basis for the creation of a long-term educational strategy of the Ministry of Education and Science for the compulsory study which will enable the preparation of an appropriate curriculum of the topics of sex education which will be taught in primary and secondary schools in the future, in accordance with the educational reforms (Hera, 2020).

All of these interventions indicate that the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Science are aiming toward involving the sexuality education as part of the school curriculum which in the *new concept note on primary education*, sexuality education can be an optional subject for the 9th grade students. However, the process is slow as a result of many reasons on local and national level in the country, such as the lack of strategic framework for integrating the CSE in the education system, lack of competence of the staff to implement, and delivery of the curricula and lack of preparation for the staff, etc.

Taboos and stigmas about the youth with disabilities

Considering the current state of sexual education in Macedonia, sex-ed for young people with special needs is an even more stigmatized question in the country. When it comes to the sexuality of the people with disabilities, not only is the topic of sexuality and disability a taboo topic in Macedonia for years but also their personal, social and sexual development has been affected by discrimination, infrastructural barriers, and continuing prejudices on every level, Although the sexuality of the people with disabilities has been an inseparable part of each individual, this is still a topic left behind (Hera, 2022). Not only do people with special needs experience a lot of difficulties in the process of inclusion, but their families also experience a lot of difficulties integrating their children in the society. One main problem is the view that sexuality should not be an issue for the people with special needs (Hera, 2014).

As the First Children's Embassy in the world - Megjashi (2020) reports in the *Second alternative report on the situation of children's rights in Macedonia*, recording to the parents of the young people with disabilities, the young people with disabilities do not enjoy their rights equally as the others. Most of the time they are discriminated against in the healthcare system, in addition to the social protection and in the educational systems. There are a lot of stereotypes of the health professionals when it comes to the young people with disabilities and especially about their sexuality which further complicates their access to services for sexual and reproductive health (Bojadzi V., First Children's Embassy in the world - Megjashi).

The civic society organisation Hera (the Health Education and Research Association) as an organisation was formed as a result of the country's need for sexual and reproductive health and rights and rights-based policies and programs that include these issues and questions that involve the people with special needs as well (IPPF, 2018). Hera is the largest non-governmental organization working in the field of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). Hera also runs



several health and social services to young and marginalized communities and it is also a leading organization in delivering comprehensive sexual education (CSE) to young people.

The first Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health for Persons with Disabilities was published in 2010, in which Hera together with 10-or-so civil society organisations and several institutions took part in the preparation and worked on inclusion and promotion of access to sexual and reproductive health information and services (Hera, 2022). In 2014 the “Platform for the Promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health of Persons with Disabilities” was founded which has been a campaign focused on raising public awareness of the sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities and emphasizing the importance of the existence of accessible services for sexual and reproductive health of persons with disabilities (Hera, 2022; Platformers, 2020).

The inclusion of young people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities in the school settings

The research indicates that the inclusion of young people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities in the secondary education in Macedonia in general is a matter of improvisation. The process of inclusion of young persons with disabilities is rather slow paced as a result of the lack of proper conditions in the schools, lack of expertise of the staff that is working with students with physical and/or cognitive disabilities, lack of proper conditions to meet their needs, and the absence of clear strategy and models on improving the conditions and capacities for inclusion of young people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities. The lack of proper and defined standards for the inclusion of young persons with physical and/or cognitive disabilities in the school settings creates and unreal expectations for the inclusion as a process. Another main problem is also that there are no mechanisms and strategies in the country of exchanging experiences of good practices between schools, professional teams and teachers as well as the coordination between the different levels of secondary education (Unicef, 2022).

Despite of the research conclusions that have been drawn, the research findings indicate that apart from the lack of proper conditions for the inclusion of young people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities in the school system there are other concrete steps that need to be improved such as (Unicef, 2022, p. 51):

- providing sufficient support for inclusion among the general and professional public
- providing sufficient budget funds for support of the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular secondary education
- spreading awareness about the needs, possibilities, and the abilities of the students with special needs in the school, community and in the general public
- fostering participation of the students with physical and/or cognitive disabilities in the participation in extracurricular activities
- fostering participation of the parents of the students with physical and/or cognitive disabilities in active participation in the school



Piloting

In order to proceed with the pilot implementation and delivery of the training programme of the Included project to a class where young people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities have access to formal education, it was crucial first to map and identify high schools in the country where students with physical and/or cognitive disabilities are incorporated in the educational settings.

In the process of mapping and identifying high schools where young people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities have access to formal education, in Skopje only several gymnasiums were identified in which young people with disabilities have access to formal education and where their needs are met. The final piloting of the training programme of the Included project took place in March 2022 in the gymnasium Algoritam where eighteen students in total with two professors, one English teacher, and one psychologist who also took part in the piloting and in the implementation of the workshop. Among the students five had physical and/or cognitive disabilities; among them three students had ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder), one of them had a physical disability, and one had a learning disability. All of the students were 18-19 years old in their fourth year of secondary education. The duration of the whole workshop lasted for 6 hours. Apart from the ice-breakers and energizers some of the activities that were tested during the piloting were from the following modules:

- *Module 1 – Puberty and Body changes;*
- *Module 2 – Who is this profession;*
- *Module 2 – Opinion line;*
- *Module 3 – Case Studies;*
- *Module 4 – Safe Distance;*
- *Module 5 – Red light – green light game;*

Result

As part of the first piloting phase of the project “INCLUDED: Inclusive sex-ed through creative methods” a workshop named “Creative educational methods for youth development” was piloted by KMOP Skopje on 29th of March 2022 in the Gymnasium Algoritam Centre in Skopje.

The overall results of the workshop demonstrated that most of the students were highly satisfied and interested in taking part in the activities that were implemented. The positive aspect of the implementation of the workshop was the satisfaction level of the students and the professors, the active participation and engagement in the activities, as well as their interest for future collaboration and activities. All teachers were satisfied with the implementation of the activities. After the piloting of the Included programme we are still in contact with the school and the professors who also contacted us and asked for the activities that we implemented because they found them useful and interesting for the students.



Another positive aspect of the workshop was the satisfaction level of students during the implementation of several activities in which the students got engaged and found the most interesting such as the activities “Opinion line”, “Puberty and Body Changes” and “Who is this profession”. During the evaluation at the end of the workshop, the students demonstrated that they enjoyed the activity “Opinion line” the most since they had a chance to express their opinions on the barometer line and engage in discussion on different topics. This activity was particularly interesting for the students because they had a chance to discuss with their fellow peers on questions that they have not discussed in school before and at the same time to express themselves by sharing their opinions. Most of the topics covered statements which were connected with topics such as forming and building friendships, maintaining trust, giving consent etc. The barometer activity gave the possibility to the students to show their opinions and beliefs on certain topics in a non-judgmental space which was built during the workshop. Since some of the students said that they are part of the theatre section in the school and, that they liked the activities where they used the Theatre of the oppressed as a method and the acting as a tool for showing the changes that are occurring during puberty.

Another activity we implemented was the “Who is this profession?” from the Gender module. The goal of this activity was to open a discussion about certain professions which are connected with certain gender as a result of social constructions in the society. The activity opened a debate and a discussion about different perceptions and stereotypes about gender, profession, roles, characteristics, beliefs, and opinions. This activity was a great way for the students to show how even though some students do not have stereotypes, they link some professions with a certain gender.

Although the students enjoyed and liked most of the activities, there were a few remarks about the case studies that were used during the piloting. Moreover, most of the students said that the scenarios are rather outdated and that those stereotypes or types of discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation no longer exist. Despite this, they suggested for instance, if KMOP Skopje implements these activities in other schools or cities, the views or the opinions would differ and vary depending on the environment. This was very unexpected, but this critique was also very constructive and helpful, especially for us as facilitators and creators of the modules to be aware that the generations have changed in positive ways and that the activities should be adapted. We as facilitators were positively surprised about the maturity of the views and opinions of most of the students.

The difficulties that we encountered during the implementation of the workshops were definitely the energizers. What was missing during the preparation of the piloting of the Included programme were energizers and ice-breakers who will be adapted for students with physical and/or cognitive disabilities. Since we already got some energizers and ice-breakers ready, before the workshop we adapted the activities for students with physical and/or cognitive disabilities so that everyone can take part. In order to overcome this problem, we wanted to ensure that all students can take part in all activities so that nobody will be left behind. Therefore, we adapted the activities. However, it would be useful if during the preparation of the programme energizers and ice breaking activities were also incorporated and adapted for students with physical and/or cognitive disabilities.



Intellectual Output 2

All partners have contributed to the development of the “Teaching inclusive sex-ed through creative methods: e-course for teachers” (IO2), who will be delivering the curricular sex-ed training programme for students (IO1). The main target group of this output were the teachers and school staff that will deliver a sex-ed training programme that is inclusive, effective and the methods are pedagogically innovative. The main goal of this output is to support teachers and school support staff to be able to apply current practices in sexual education. The course developed creative methods and education resources which will contribute for the social inclusion of vulnerable societal groups, including young people with intellectual disabilities. The use of creative methods such as role-playing and theatre games have been proven to be effective in the education of young people and even more with young people with intellectual disabilities. The whole learning approach and methods of this output are not similar to the teacher-teaches-students approaches, rather, the course promotes creative and embodied methodology. The e-course for teachers was presented and shared to the target group of school staff from the gymnasium “Orce Nikolov” (which participated in the piloting of the third intellectual output), other school networks, and to the general public. The teachers and school staff from the gymnasium had a chance to go through the course individually after the piloting took place. Overall, 16 participants from North Macedonia completed the e-course for teachers.

Intellectual Output 3

First set of interviews with school staff

The aim of the first set of interviews with school staff (educators and decision makers) was conducted in order to understand the school context for family engagement in sex education programmes. The analysis of the interviews contributed in the creation of learning paths, activities and in the development of the methodological guide (PDF) for schools with activities for parents and teachers. The aim of the third intellectual output was to support families’ role in sex education of their children (including children with intellectual disabilities).

The first set of interviews with school staff was carried out on the 5th of October 2022 in premises of the high school “Orce Nikolov” Skopje, N. Macedonia. In the interviews 3 school staff members aged between 40 and 58 years old participated. The group included 2 psychology teachers and 1 biology teacher that are also teaching at the high school of “Orce Nikolov”.

Two of the teachers stated that they have not participated in a sex education training program before, while one of the teachers has participated in a similar program for sex-ed adopted for high school teachers several years ago. The biology teacher was already well informed on the content of sex-ed because some of the topics are already present in the biology school curriculum. The other two teachers had attended several trainings on topics that cover themes from sex education, but they did not participate in teacher training for sex-ed before.



All of the teachers agreed that they would be interested in teaching sex-ed to the students as a part of the school curriculum or as extracurricular activity. In particular, they have emphasized the importance of having training on sex-ed topics for teachers beforehand as well having adequate educational tools such as fliers, videos, podcasts, and a teacher's book. All of teachers shared a strong view that the programme should be first approved by the parents so that they can be informed and give their consent to the content.

Two of the teachers stated that they did not have any conversation with the parents regarding sex-ed so far. However, they expressed their concern regarding having any conversation with the parents related to sex-ed since there are many prejudices and stereotypes about sex-ed in the country. The other teacher emphasized the importance of informing the parents regarding the importance of teaching the students information regarding unplanned pregnancy, sexually-transmitted diseases, and gender-based violence, because in this way, they will have more understanding regarding the importance of teaching the content. All of the teachers agreed that the dialogue with the families regarding sex-education is necessary for them in order to understand the need for sex-ed for their children.

Pilot – Including the family in inclusive sex-ed guide for school

The piloting of the “Including the family in inclusive sex-ed guide for school” in North Macedonia was organized in two separate workshops on two days with a duration of 8 hours each. The first piloting with the teachers and school educators (IO3/A6) was organized within the premises of KMOP Skopje office on the 28th of February from 09:30h to 17:30h. The group included 8 teachers and school staff (psychologists, pedagogists, special educators) from two general education schools and one special education school. The second piloting with families (IO3/A7) was organized within the premises of KMOP Skopje office on the 22nd of February from 08:00h to 15:30h. The group included parents and one teacher that was also part of the workshop for teachers. After completing the training all of the participants provided feedback through evaluation questionnaires.

Pilot implementation with teachers and school educators

All of the teachers agreed that after the training the families will consider sex-ed programmes more important than before. Some of the teachers emphasized the importance of presenting and explaining the content to the parents adequately. While other participants stated that this activity was a good way to see how sex-ed topics can be implemented with parents by taking into consideration the local culture and environment.

All of the teachers shared a strong view regarding the importance of the inclusion and the engagement of the families in all aspects of the implementation of the sex-ed. The teachers expressed their views regarding the role of the parents and their involvement in the whole process. Some of the teachers stated that since there are a lot of prejudices related to sex-ed, parents need to be prepared and well-educated on this topic beforehand. On the other hand, other participants stated that although the role of the parents is crucial when it comes to sex-ed, they did not have any conversation with parents related to sex-ed so far.



Overall, it can be concluded that teachers were very satisfied with the activities and the workshop. The majority of them agreed that the workshops were useful for them and that they have acquired information and tools that will help them when talking about sex-ed with their students. The teachers stated that the workshop met their expectations and they did not have any fears related to the topic, with an exception of one of the participants, who stated that they were generally concerned about the unknown content and topics. However, they were very enthusiastic and dedicated to the activities, enjoyed sharing and exchanging their experiences and challenges that they encountered. Of particular importance for teachers was the involvement, support and partnership with parents in order to be able to implement the program in schools.

Pilot implementation with families

All of the parents agreed about the importance of the sex-ed curriculum to be present in the school curriculum or at least to be introduced through various activities, programmes, or educational workshops.

In general, the parents do not have enough prior knowledge, especially about how to act in different situations that their children face, related to sex education. More background and information regarding the content of the sex-ed are needed for the parents, especially for the parents of children with special educational needs. All of the parents agreed that their involvement in the school and school activities of their children is needed.

The main problem that remains is that the majority of the parents do not trust teachers in teaching sex-ed at school nor that they believe that the teachers are well prepared and have the sufficient tools to teach sex-ed. The general view of the parents is that the teacher needs to be provided with training where they will be equipped with the necessary tools and support in order to be prepared to teach sex education programmes.

Policy Recommendations

Key policy recommendations for governments, civil society organisations, donors, and interested parties on improving the sexual and reproductive health education in a national context.

- Implement sex education curriculum program which is relevant, evidence-based and age-appropriate
- Implement policies that foster comprehensive approach and supportive environment for sexual health education
- Develop sex education curriculum which is culturally diverse and materials that are inclusive of ethnicity, race, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, different abilities
- Provide monitoring and evaluation mechanisms through action plans, questionnaires and other tools to ensure the implementation of the comprehensive sexuality education is adequate



- Equip the teachers with the needed knowledge and skills to deliver sexual health education by providing adequate trainings and support
- Engage parents, families and community members in the programmes of the sexual education
- Raise public awareness regarding the importance of sex education and familiarize the public with the content of the subject
- Build the competences of teachers to deliver comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in the school curriculum
- Maintain collaboration and involve the parents and families by having the right to contribute to their children's knowledge
- Provide sex-ed curriculum which is inclusive regarding the gender identity including the emotional, behavioural and cultural characteristics
- Establishing mechanisms for inclusion of the parents and families in the sex-education programme of their children

Conclusion

To summarise, through the collaborative partnership, exchange of expertise and knowledge the partners have made great impact through the implementation of the project activities of the Included project. The use of the different techniques and approaches such as the use of role-play and theatre games developed through the Included project have proven to be effective ways of teaching through creative methods, especially for young adults with intellectual disabilities.

The involvement and collaboration between the students (including those with intellectual disabilities), teachers and school staff support, parents, guardians and families has proven to be effective, especially for implementation and monitoring of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in the school settings. It has also influenced raising awareness not just for students and teachers but also parents about the significance of sexual education and their involvement in the education of their children. The project contributed to teachers and educators acquiring new skills and knowledge needed to fully accomplish the task of delivering a holistic, healthy, inclusive, critical, and positive sexuality education, which truly puts the students' needs, rights and well-being at its centre.



References

Bini, Fabbri Seroni, A., Casapieri Quagliotti, C., & Chiarante. (1975). *Bill 13 March 1975 - Initiatives for information on sexuality problems in state schools.*

Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana. (1977). *LAW No. 517 of 4 August 1977 Regulations on the evaluation of students and on the abolition of remedial examinations as well as other regulations amending the school system.*

Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana. (2015, July 13). *LAW no. 107 of 13 July 2015 - Reform of the national education and training system and delegation for the reorganisation of existing legislative provisions.* <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/07/15/15G00122/sg>

Giuffrida, F. (2021). Milan, 'Popolo della Famiglia' in the square against the Zan ddl. The slogan: 'Free to Think'. Open. <https://www.open.online/2021/05/15/ddl-zan-popolo-famiglia-manifestazione-milano/>

Il Post. (2022). Is sex and affective education done online today? Il Post. <https://www.ilpost.it/2022/12/03/educazione-sessuoaffettiva-instagram/>

Ministero della Salute and Istituto Superiore di Sanità. (2019). Main results of the 'National Fertility Study' Project - Surveys on sexual and reproductive knowledge, behaviour and att https://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_pubblicazioni_2823_allegato.pdf

Ministry of Education, of University and Research. (s.d.). "Students with disabilities". <https://www.miur.gov.it/alunni-con-disabilita>

Zan, Annibali, Bersani, & Bordo. (2018). Amendments to Articles 604-bis and 604-ter of the Criminal Code, on violence or discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. <http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/pdl/pdf/leg.18.pdl.camera.569.18PDL0012340.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education/relationships-education-primary>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education/relationships-and-sex-education-rse-secondary>

<https://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/RSE%20for%20disabled%20pupils%20and%20pupils%20with%20SEN%20-%20SEF.pdf>

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249806805_Adolescents'_preferences_regarding_sex_education_and_relationship_education

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908013/Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education/relationships-and-sex-education-rse-secondary>

<https://www.movisie.nl/artikel/heersende-gendernormen-hebben-al-vanaf-jonge-leeftijd-grote-gevolgen>

<https://www.coc.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/The-2018-Dutch-National-School-Climate-Survey-Report.pdf>

Disparities in Perpetrators, Locations, and Reports of Victimization for Sexual and Gender Minority Adolescents. Tessa M. L. Kaufman, Ph.D. and Laura Baams, Ph.D (2021)

<https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/onderwerpen/themaonderzoeken/documenten/publicaties/2016/06/01/rapport-omgaan-met-seksualiteit-en-seksuele-diversiteit>

<https://www.movisie.nl/sites/movisie.nl/files/2018-09/Toolbox-Verandering-van-binnenuit-onderdeel-A-Beschrijving-werkvormen.pdf>

Zhou, S., Page-Gould, E., Aron, A., Moyer, A., & Hewstone, M. (2019). The Extended Contact Hypothesis: A Meta-Analysis on 20 Years of Research. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 23(2), 132–160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868318762647>

<https://www.rutgers.nl/nieuws-opinie/nieuwsarchief/onderzoek-rutgers-%E2%80%9Cgewoon-het-taboe-eraf-halen%E2%80%9D-meer-seksuele-vorming>

https://seksonderje25e.nl/het_ onderzoek

<https://act4respect.nl/actueel/seksuele-vorming-wat-leerlingen-wel-willen-leren/>

<https://nos.nl/artikel/2200968-50-jaar-seksuele-voorlichting-van-lesje-biologie-naar-sexting>

<https://www.vo-raad.nl/onderwerpen/burgerschapsonderwijs/wat-speelt-er#:~:text=Niet%20ieder%20kind%20krijgt%20burgerschapsvaardigheden,aandacht%20te%20besteden%20aan%20burgerschap.>

Cense, M. (2019) Navigating a bumpy road. Developing sexuality education that supports young people's sexual agency, *Sex Education*, 19:3, 263-276

Cense, M. (2019) Rethinking sexual agency: proposing a multicomponent model based on young people's life stories, *Sex Education*, 19:3, 247-262

<https://rutgers.nl/themas/seksuele-vorming/>

<https://www.movisie.nl/publicatie/doing-it-optimal-impact>



Bojadzi V. First Childrens Embassy in the world (2020). *Second alternative report on the situation of children's rights in Macedonia*. Retrieved January 11, 2023, from <http://www.childresembassy.org.mk/content/pdf/Childrens%20report%202020.pdf>

Coimbra França, J. V., & Sousa Costa, J. de L. (2020, June 10). *Sexual taboos for children and teenagers in public education: Understanding what is not written*. IFMSA. Retrieved December 19, 2022, from <https://ifmsa.org/sexual-taboos-for-children-and-teenagers-in-public-education-understanding-what-is-not-written/>

Comprehensive sexuality education. XEPA - Асоцијација за здравствена едукација и истражување. (2022, July 26). Retrieved December 20, 2022, from <https://hera.org.mk/shto-rabotime/seopfarno-seksualno-obrazovanie/?lang=en>

Comprehensive sexuality education. XEPA - Асоцијација за здравствена едукација и истражување. (2022, July 26). Retrieved December 20, 2022, from <https://hera.org.mk/shto-rabotime/seopfarno-seksualno-obrazovanie/?lang=en>

Sexuality and disability. XEPA - Асоцијација за здравствена едукација и истражување. (2021, May 5). Retrieved December 20, 2022, from <https://hera.org.mk/shto-rabotime/seksualnost-i-poprechenost/?lang=en>

Health Education and Research Association (HERA) - north macedonia. IPPF. (2021, November 17). Retrieved December 20, 2022, from <https://www.ippf.org/about-us/member-associations/republic-macedonia>

HERA, & IPPF. (2018). POLICY BRIEF Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the National Policies of North Macedonia Evidence from the Monitoring of the National SRH Action Plan 2018 – 2020. Retrieved from https://hera.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PolicyBrief_ANG_compressed.pdf.

Hera. (2020, December 2). *XEPA и Бирото за развој на образованието започнуваат со пилот-програмата за сеопфатно сексуално образование*. XEPA - Асоцијација за

здравствена едукација и истражување. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from <https://hera.org.mk/hera-i-bro-zapochnuvaat-so-pilotiranje-na-sso/>

Ministry of Health, *Strategy for sexual and reproductive health in Republic of Macedonia until 2020* (2011). Retrieved from <https://www.cph.mk/ftp/Strategii/strategija-seksualno-i-reproduktivno-zdravje.pdf>.

Ministry of Education, of University and Research, "Students with disabilities"

Macedonia: Tackling the taboo of sexuality education for young people with learning disabilities. XEPA - Асоцијација за здравствена едукација и истражување. (2014, March 26). Retrieved December 20, 2022, from <https://hera.org.mk/%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE-%D0%B4%D0%B0->



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

[%D1%81%D0%B5-%D1%81%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B5-%D1%81%D0%BE-%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B1%D1%83/?lang=en](#)

UNICEF N. Macedonia. UNICEF global. (2022, December 27). Retrieved January 11, 2023, from <https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/>

IMPRESSUM

Coordination of the guide and editing

KMOP - Education and Innovation Hub
Epameinondas Koutavelis
Marina Natsia

Authoring and editing

In KMOP - Education and Innovation Hub

Epameinondas Koutavelis
Marina Natsia

In Anziani e Non Solo

Laura Stanzani
Veronica Cattini

In Associació La Xixa Teatre

Adrián Crescini
Daniela Eletti
Lorena Valencia
Meritxell Martínez Bellafont
Nicola Paganoni
Valentina Narvaez Bravo

In Merseyside Expanding Horizons

Anja Marojevic
Anna Bellan
Erisjan Bregu
Salma Aladdin
Sarah Harou
Stacey Robinson



In KMOP Skopje
Kristina Vasileska
Vaska Bojadzi

In Regional Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education of Attica
Aikaterini Arampatzi
Eleni Bogiatzidaki
George Balamotis
George Kosyvas
Naya Boemi

In Sexmatters
Dominique Borm
Vesper Veer Visser
Taoufik Boulachioukh

Cover design and layout

Rita Seneca
Licia Boccaletti

Translation

Dominique Borm, Vesper Veer Visser and Taoufik Boulachioukh (Dutch)
Σάρρα Μαυρίδου, Epameinondas Koutavelis and Marina Natsia (Greek)
Veronica Cattini and Laura Stanzani (Italian)
XXX (Macedonian)
Meritxell Martínez Bellafont (Spanish)

Layout of translated texts

Dominique Borm, Vesper Veer Visser and Taoufik Boulachioukh (Dutch)
Epameinondas Koutavelis and Marina Natsia (Greek)
Veronica Cattini and Laura Stanzani (Italian)
XXX (Macedonian)
Nicola Paganoni (Spanish)

