



New results for Included project

It is an exciting time for the Erasmus+ project "[INCLUDED: Inclusive sex-ed through creative methods](#)" as the project is now approaching its end and the partnership is finalising two important deliverables that will soon be published:

- **The e-learning course for teachers** to support the teaching of inclusive sex-education in schools (already available in the pilot version at <https://includedproject.eu/training/>);
- **The guide for schools** to include the family in sex education programmes (available soon).

The e-learning course is designed to support teachers to be able to promote sex education with their students. It was developed to equip teachers with tools while also encouraging them to reflect on their own attitudes and preconceptions towards sexuality and the values and norms conveyed by society itself, as these can influence their approach to sex education. This factor is extremely important since teachers are often seen as role models and reference figures by students.

The Guide for Schools, on the other hand, was created with the aim of promoting a fundamental dialogue between families and the school system, to support parents to play an active and effective role in their children's sex education and to collaborate with schools to achieve positive and shared learning outcomes.

In order to best develop the two results, the partners piloted these tools in their own countries, to test their activities and to gather the opinion of the main target groups of the project: teachers, families and students. These experiences made it possible to collect feedback and comments, which were useful for improving the results developed and supporting the well-being of all those involved.

We would like to leave you with some accounts of the pilot experiences from the implementation of the activities with teachers and parents.



How was the experience in Italy?

In Italy, the teachers and educators involved in piloting the e-learning course also took part in the course for families and schools, creating a continuity and enrichment of their skills in inclusive sex education.

A total of 32 participants including educators, support teachers, discipline teachers and university students interested in the topics were involved. After an initial meeting on Zoom to introduce the activities, they completed the e-learning course on their own, leaving feedback and comments, from which emerged a general appreciation for the course and the methods proposed, which enabled them to engage in reflection on their own ideas and beliefs about sex and sexuality and how these might influence the teaching of sex education with students.

The pilot of the pathway that led to the production of the Guide included the piloting of activities with teachers and families and in Italy 43 participants were involved. All of them enjoyed the activities proposed and particularly appreciated the interactive mode that allowed them to work well in groups and to be able to share their ideas and experiences in an atmosphere of non-judgement and respect for others. The path was designed precisely to create a dialogue between professionals and among families, fostering personal reflection and greater awareness of sexual education topics.

The great involvement and enthusiasm in the programmes we have proposed proves a very felt and urgent need for attention on these issues, which to date do not receive due consideration.

Here are some comments from participants that we collected:

"I found it very useful from the point of view of thinking and reflecting on oneself as an educator"

"The course was really useful for raising awareness and creating dialogue on these issues".

"I liked the fact that I got involved with various activities that helped me reflect on my values, limits, points of view, abilities in order to teach sex education."

How was the experience in Greece?

In Greece twenty (20) secondary school teachers / school staff were involved in the e-learning course. They found that carrying out the e-learning course in their own space and time was very helpful. They also found that the e-course contributed significantly in gaining knowledge about the main subjects of the project and in providing support and further understanding the need of applying sex education programs in secondary schools. Virtual meetings with the directors and teachers / school staff of the schools that participated in the piloting as well as the opportunity of further communication with teachers /



school staff who were involved in the e-course were very helpful in discussing topics and providing support.

The piloting was very successful: twenty-five participants were involved. All of them were Greek citizens from urban areas and university graduates. The group included teachers, parents and school staff (psychologists, a school nurse, and social workers) from two general education schools and one special education school. The participants were selected through our schools' and teachers' network and no difficulties were encountered. They stated that they were very pleased with the experience and with the overall design of the piloting. They gained new knowledge, met new colleagues, exchanged ideas, discussed challenging subjects and had fun. They enjoyed the activities, learned new things and believed that they were motivated to change the way they think about sex education issues. The participants had lively discussions on subjects that were of great interest to parents, teachers and students and enjoyed role-playing. We are very pleased with the results of the piloting as it was an interesting experience that underlined the need of introducing sex-ed in national school curricula and providing further support for teachers and parents. We could and will use the material for organising seminars in the future. The results are going to be very helpful especially in our future work in secondary special education settings.

How was the experience in North Macedonia?

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 workshops), other school networks, and to the general public. The teachers and school staff had a chance to go through the course individually on their own time after the piloting workshops took place. Overall, 16 participants from N. Macedonia completed the e-learning course for teachers. What we could gather from the follow-up evaluation and feedback was that teachers found very interesting and useful the course creative methods and education resources which will contribute for the social inclusion of vulnerable societal groups, including young people with intellectual disabilities.

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 group included 8 teachers and school staff (psychologists, pedagogists, special educators) from two general education schools and one special education school. The second group included parents and one teacher that was also part of the workshop for teachers.

Teachers were very satisfied with the activities and the workshop. It was useful for them and they have acquired information and tools that can help them when talking about sex-ed with their students.



They were very enthusiastic and dedicated to the activities, enjoyed sharing and exchanging their experiences and challenges that they encountered. It was emphasized that of particular importance for teachers was the involvement, support and partnership with parents in order to be able to implement the program in schools.

Generally, 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. However, the parents do not have enough prior knowledge, especially about how to act in different situations that their children face, related to sex education.

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.

How was the experience in Spain?

In Spain, teachers from the INS Vallbona d'Anoia secondary school were involved in both the e-learning course and the training addressed to school staff and families. Thanks to this, we were able to ensure not only a solid group of participants, but also a structured and comprehensive training experience.

Apart from carrying out the e-course individually and at their own pace, teachers were invited to two online sessions facilitated by La Xixa in order to present the e-course, provide support in the registration process and then to finally assess the overall experience. Through the non-formal and formal evaluation, participants said that thanks to the platform they have acquired new knowledge and tools to implement sex education programmes at school.

Regarding the training for schools and families, we decided to also involve students, to be able to consider their views, questions and concerns, but also to motivate their families to take part in the project.

In total, 8 teachers, 7 students and 10 family members participated in the training, without counting teachers and students who participated as audience in the forum theatre presentation.

The training focused on creating an effective dialogue among the school, students and families. During the first sessions, teachers worked on recognising and valuing diversity, rediscovering and reconnecting with the profound motivation that drove them towards their profession and exploring the role of teachers in sex education, together with the fears and difficulties that it triggers. In the following sessions, teachers and students worked together to create two Forum Theatre plays



which were then performed in front of an audience of students, school staff and family members. Thanks to the forum theatre technique, which allows spectators to intervene in the scene, it was possible to generate a fruitful dialogue and deep reflection on the issues presented on stage (gender roles, consent and homophobia). The training experience then continued separately with teachers on the one side and families on the other.

The pilot training was a great success. Teachers agreed that they had acquired useful information and tools to be able to talk about sex education with their students in the classroom, but also to generate dialogue within the school community. They greatly appreciated the methodologies and tools applied during the training, arguing that theatre should be practised more in schools to improve teacher-student-family communication and deal creatively with difficult topics such as sexuality. Families stated that their participation in the event made them reflect and partly changed their perspective on the importance of sex education in schools.

How was the experience in the UK?

In the UK, the piloting sessions of the e-learning course took place at The Joseph Lappin Centre, Liverpool on the 28th and 30th of March. 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.

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 the piloting sessions, the e-course could be shared and promoted to a wide audience of school teachers, staff and educators. 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. The team-building activities, non-verbal exercises as well as the non-formal activities enabled educators to reflect, suggest solutions and discuss challenges that they face with students, parents, and their children. In addition, families could learn about gender and sex education terminologies and become aware of the importance of participating in open and clear dialogue to support the sex education of their children which is still a taboo in the UK.



How was the experience in The Netherlands?

The Sexmatters pilot for teachers took place at the Sexmatters office, where we had six people present. The participants worked hard and focused and were really enthusiastic about seeing what was made for the e-learning course and what they could give as feedback. Some participants were much more enthusiastic than others, who were very critical. It may have had something to do with how open the different participants were to the more creative or embodied methods used in the e-course, contrary to them being used to more 'dry' and theory-focused forms. As facilitators, we realized it was extra useful for our own team members to see and experience this way of teaching because we could maybe incorporate more creative or embodied methods in our own teacher training.

The enthusiastic and positive responses were mostly about analysing one's own prejudices and emotional baggage, as well as about the visualization exercises to think about what you would do in a specific situation. There were positive opinions on involving the families in sexual education as well, because, as two of the participants put it so very succinctly: "Sexual education happens at home as well as in the classroom" and "the conversations about sexual education don't stop in the classroom but keep going home." Some of the participants were happy to prepare themselves for talking to families in some of the visualization exercises, while others said they would have preferred to get some tips and tricks on how to have a conversation like that.

What we take home

The added value of this experience is to have the opportunity to gather different feedback precisely because they come from very different socio-cultural backgrounds. This is a great asset that makes it possible to put forward innovative proposals as they are in touch with the real needs of the area and also to take inspiration from successful initiatives and experiences!

To stay updated on INCLUDED visit the project [website](#) and follow us on social media channels with the hashtag #includedproject.



INCLUDED to get institutional and policy support

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”. Furthermore, the definition states that “the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled”. Individuals with intellectual diversities are no different in this respect, and express the need and desire to form relationships, engage in sexual contact, and acquire sexual knowledge. However, access to sexual health education is limited for many youths with intellectual diversities. The INCLUDED project focused on creating materials and training that can help all actors involved in sex education: students, teachers, the school system and families, with a strong focus on students with disabilities. With the latest outcome of the project, there is the intention to support the effective implementation of these pathways by seeking support from the institutional and legislative point of view.

According to UNESCO, a Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) is a sex-ed curriculum-based process that includes the aspects of cognitive, emotional, physical, and social levels. A 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 respectful relationships, c) make them understand and ensure the protection of their rights and respect others’ rights as well.

With the first result of the project, the INCLUDED partnership created an innovative sex education training programme, precisely in line with UNESCO's recommendations.

The second outcome of the project was designed to support teachers and provide them with an opportunity to reflect on their role as educators, how important their influence is on students both in general and specifically in the area of sexuality and thus give them tools to consciously implement the INCLUDED sex education programme.

Furthermore, with the third outcome of the project, action was taken at an even higher level, providing a Guide for schools on how to create pathways to actively involve parents in sex education. In fact, the Guide aims to support the entire school system in the implementation of sex education and to involve parents, as informal educators, in order to create a fundamental dialogue between these two actors and promote compliance with the proposed courses and a more effective achievement of the learning outcomes, as they are shared.

All these achievements are extremely important and innovative but need fundamental support from the school authorities and the policymakers. Here comes the fourth and final result of the project: a guide to implementing a creative whole-school approach to inclusive sex-ed.

This document covers the development of policy guidelines and a detailed roadmap that are based on the experience in each partner country. More specifically, the main objective of the IO4 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.



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Here, the experience of INCLUDED can help to identify in each country of the partnership the critical points, difficulties and barriers encountered that need the support of the authorities to be overcome. The same can be done for the strengths and qualities of the process that was done with INCLUDED and can thus be taken as an example.

The document is available and downloadable for free in all partnership languages (English, Italian, Greek, Macedonian, Dutch and Spanish) at this link: <https://includedproject.eu/outputs/>

NOTES TO EDITORS

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