The European Assessment Protocol for Children’s SEL Skills (EAP_SEL) was funded through the European Funding Programme in the Field of Education and Learning, known as Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 (LLP).

Social-emotional competence in early childhood has been the focus of this research where SUPSI, Department of education and learning, was in partnership with the Universities of Perugia and Udine (Italy), Orebro (Sweden), Zagreb (Croatia) and Lubljana (Slovenia). This summary aim is to present the outcomes and results of the project.

Two new measurement scales have been developed, “How One Feels” and “Self Assessment Scale on the Quality of Inclusive Processes”. The randomized controlled study included 876 children in the longitudinal study with a baseline and measure after six months and eighteen months. Outcome measures were different scales covering hyperactivity and inattention; social problems, problem behavior, and academic measure. The outcome measures had adequate good psychometric quality. 

For the four partner countries using PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies, an international spread program) a multi-level analysis (Hierarchical Linear Model) was used. Multivariate model was also used for the Swedish data, general linear modelling including the initial value of response, gender, treatment, time, and treatment-by-time interaction. Significant program effects were seen in the pooled data as well as country-specific.

RESULTS

The EAP_SEL project results were many, and not only data-driven.

Development of Measurement Scales

The three years of the project saw the production and creation of the tool How One Feels (HOF). This particular tool, aimed at children aged 6-10, the first of its kind, represents a further contribution at European level in raising the awareness on the importance of the development of SEL skills and how
they can be assessed. HOF is made of 10 illustrations, each one representing a particular situation to which children of young age can relate – but at the same time it does not suggest the “right” or “wrong” answer. HOF is undergoing digitalization and is planned to be available soon in an on-line version on the project’s official website (www.eap-sel.eu). One other important result was the mainly overall positive feedbacks gathered from teachers in all partner countries. Many of them reported how working with SEL programs helped them not just in their daily practice and while dealing with their pupils, but also how the program worked on themselves, how to get to know and manage their own emotion.

**Quantitative outcomes**

When SDQ (Strenght and Difficulties Questionaire) Total Score was used, significant program effects were seen. The SDQ questionnaire can be used for assessing the overall situation for the children, which is achieved by summarising the four subscales including 20 items. By the end of the study, intervention children have significantly improved on all measures except for the academic performance questions.

**Country-specific results**

There was a strong significant differences in SDQ Total Scores between experiment and control children. Using the different outcome measures the following differences were seen:

**Italy** had significant means of treatment at the end of the study for five outcome measures: Child Interaction Scale (p=.005); SDQ Conduct problems (p=.048); SDQ Peer problem (p=.002); and SDQ Total scale (p=.009). Moreover, there was a trend for SDQ Hyperactivity/Impulsive (p=.067).

**Croatia** showed a significant difference on one outcome measure: SDQ Peer problem (p=.023). Moreover, there was a trend for Academic Performance Scale (p=.089).

**Slovenia** showed a significant difference on one outcome measure: SDQ Peer problem (p=.043). Moreover, there was a trend for SDQ Total scale (p=.081).

**Switzerland** showed significant differences for five outcome measures: CAS Impulsive/hyperactive (p=.005); CAS Inattentive/Hyperactive (p=.001); CAS Total scale (p=.001); SDQ Hyperactivity/Impulsive (p=.000); and SDQ Total scale (p=.009). Moreover, there was a trend for Learning Behaviour Scale (p=.085).

**Sweden**, where a different SEL intervention was implemented, showed significant differences for Prosocial Behavior, Social Competences, Emotional Symptoms and Emotional Regulation.
DISCUSSION

In all the partner countries involved, teachers reported positive changes in the behavior of their pupils, and regarding conduct problems, by the end of the study, intervention children have shown significantly less of these. These results have to be seen as an interesting and fertile ground for further investigations and research on SEL, on the different modalities of school inclusion found across Europe and how these two aspects of education can establish a fruitful dialogue and interaction. A collection of best European practices has started within the project, which could complement the further analysis of the rich data set that has been collected.

The project obtained a global score of 9 out of 10 by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, and will be published on the EACEA website.

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