

Romanian Teachers' Needs and Training Pilot Programme to Implement SEE in a Whole School Approach

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Abstract: School-based interventions to promote students' social and emotional competences are more likely to be effective if they are organised as part of a systemic, whole-school approach. This framework implies intentional and coherent interventions embedded in the school context, where teachers play a key role as they are the primary delivery agents of social and emotional education. As research shows, the success of such interventions is directly linked to the teachers' training and their confidence to deliver relevant learning experiences that support the development of children's social and emotional competences. Under the Erasmus+ project SEEVAL we investigated the Romanian teachers' needs and experiences related to the social and emotional interventions in the school environment, in order to better understand their needs and therefore to tailor a training programme and protocols of action for a whole-school social and emotional education approach. Within this article we will present the main results of the needs analysis in Romania (764 teachers/school counsellors and 3,667 students) and elements of the subsequent training programme which has been piloted with 41 teachers from 6 Romanian schools. Conclusions are drawn and reflections are made towards ways of improvement in relation to the implementation of a whole school approach to social and emotional education in Romanian schools.

Keywords: *Needs analysis; training programme pilot; social and emotional education; social and emotional competences; whole school approach.*

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Introduction – the need for social and emotional education in actual context

The study of the literature reveals a consensus on the need to develop students' social and emotional competences in order to “assure a good social and school adaptation, a decrease in aggressive and defiant behaviours, and good school performance” (Andrei, 2020). The two dimensions are “presented and studied in tandem, as they have direct effects on each other, and the overall effect on a person's functioning is cumulative” (Denham et al., 2014 apud Andrei, 2020). Overall, the social and emotional competences are seen as “critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker, and many risky behaviours (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students' social and emotional skills” (CASEL, 2015). According to the CASEL model (2015) “this is best done through multiple environments in which student learning takes place: effective classroom curriculum and instruction, a school climate, policies, and practices that promote student engagement in positive activities in and out of the classroom, and broad family and community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation”.

The literature conveys a recently increasing concern related to young people' mental health and wellbeing. Thus, the peak age of onset for mental disorders is 14.5 years (Solmi et al., 2021 apud Clarke et al., 2021) while “emotional disorders, including anxiety and depression, are the most common mental disorders experienced by young people, followed by behavioural disorders [...] with young people's mental health (being) further deteriorated” (NHS Digital, 2020 apud Clarke et al., 2021). Another factor identified in the literature which generated disruption and a very strong sense of uncertainty in young people was the Covid-19 (Clarke et al., 2021). The studies also suggest that “unaddressed emotional and behavioural problems will most likely persist into adulthood [...] and that young people who experience persistent emotional and behavioural problems during adolescence are at greater risk of negative outcomes throughout their adult life, including increased risk of depression and anxiety during adulthood, poorer employment outcomes, and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) status (Clarke & Lovewell, 2021, Clarke et al., 2021). The SEEVAL solution was designed to address these challenges and to help teachers provide coherent interventions for children's social and emotional development.

Within this article we operate with the common definitions of social and emotional education (SEE) in the literature as “the process by which children [...] acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, build resilience, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2021; Cefai et al., 2018). Other terms used refer to: social and emotional learning (SEL), life skills, soft skills, and social and emotional skills. The lifelong learning competence “personal, social and learning to learn” (European Council, 2018) includes a cognitive dimension (learning to learn) in addition to the usual intra (personal) and inter (social) domains of social and emotional education, which was included as a transversal dimension in our SEEVAL model. This new key competence is defined as “the ability to reflect upon oneself, effectively manage time and information, work with others in a constructive way, remain resilient and manage one’s own learning and career [...] (it) includes the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity, learn to learn, support one’s physical and emotional well-being, to maintain physical and mental health, and to be able to lead a health-conscious, future-oriented life, empathise and manage conflict in an inclusive and supportive context”. (European Council, 2018)

Problem statement

The Romanian context of SEE

In Romania, one of the first signs of recognition of the importance of social and emotional competences in children's education appeared in 1993, with the establishment of the school counselling offices. The aim of these services was and still is to provide personal development, including SEL and career guidance interventions to facilitate better adaptation to the school environment, as well as to ease the transition between different stages of study or career. Currently, the school counselling network in the Romanian pre-university education system comprises around 2,000 counsellors. There is no bachelor’s degree in guidance and counselling/SEE in Romania, as school counsellors might come from more general routes (psychology, educational sciences, social studies). The practical training in SEE is still scarce, in few cases provided through courses at Master's level (e.g., Individual and Group Counselling Skills Laboratory, Specialised Practice in Counselling and Supervised Practice, the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest; master’s degree in School Counselling and Emotional Education” at Faculty of Educational Sciences,

Stefan cel Mare University, Suceava). Different initiatives, on a smaller or larger scale, try to compensate for this gap by offering in-service training courses for teachers and school counsellors in SEE. Nevertheless, the Romanian system of initial and continuous professional training of teachers and school counsellors in SEE is insufficient and inconsistent and lacks a coherent strategic vision.

Another important step in the recognition of the importance of the social and emotional domain for the Romanian educational system was the introduction of Guidance and counselling curricular area (with specific elements of social and emotional development) within the Education plans for primary and secondary education (2003-2004). Since then, specific syllabi for the subjects included in this area have been developed and revised in several stages. Disciplines like Personal Development (for primary education, 2013) and Counselling and Personal Development (for lower secondary education, 2017) or Counselling and Guidance (for vocational schools, 2014) are included in this area and are mandatory at present, being taught by teachers. Personal development and SEE activities are somehow found also in the curricula of other subjects, but Romanian teachers are not confident in approaching SEE in their daily work, having to a large extent a traditional perspective on teaching, in the sense of addressing mainly the cognitive aspects and discarding the “soft skills” aspects. Nevertheless, from a neuroscience perspective, the authentic learning experience is multidimensional, integrating the cognitive, emotional, social and actional dimensions, which implies that efficient learning should take into account all these dimensions. (Zull, 2002; Hendel – Giller et. al, 2011)

In the context of OECD and European Commission recommendations for introducing structured SEE interventions in schools, the SEEVAL Erasmus+ project “Social and Emotional Education - Building inclusive schools and ownership of values” (2020-2023) designed and piloted a training programme to develop educators’ skills for the implementation of a whole school approach to SEE in middle and secondary schools. The present article presents the specifics of the Romanian SEEVAL training programme, based on one hand on the general SEEVAL competence framework and the structure of the international SEEVAL training programme, and on the other hand, on the results of the research developed at national level which underlined important aspects to be considered when designing training programmes for Romanian educators.

The SEEVAL competences framework

To promote students' social and emotional competences, schools usually chose one or more of the following approaches (CASEL, 2015): creating a supportive learning environment by infusing SEL into teaching or by introducing an academic curriculum, by creating policies and organisational structures that support students' SEL, or by introducing SEL in free-standing lessons. One aim of the SEEVAL project was to propose a training model that optimally fits the current SEL reality at national level consistent with the latest theories and models of adults learning and development and of effective educational interventions.

In the Romanian context, the effective SEE interventions at school level needs harmonisation and seamless articulation and therefore there is a need for the subject matter teacher and the school counsellor to work together in an integrated way. As opposed to the counsellors who may not know well each pupil, teachers can implement the following SEE practices (Wise, 2018): know students by name, start and end activities with feelings check-in/ check-out, set expectations and classroom guidelines, allow students to solve problems through question asking, encourage teamwork within the classroom, be competent of cultural and social differences, create opportunities for the student to find their voice, model social and emotional skills, develop interactions with students through positive relationships, be consistent with teaching SEL methods.

Other attributes of effective SEE programmes revealed by research (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jones et al., 2014; Bailey et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2017 apud Andrei 2020) indicate the following characteristics: take place in supportive contexts; develop social and emotional competences in teachers; recognize the characteristics of the context in which students live by building partnerships with family and community; aim to develop a set of key skills and behaviours (emotional, social/interpersonal, cognitive regulation); set reasonable goals for short- and long-term SEL outcomes.

At project level, one of the main challenges was to identify a profile of competences suitable for the national contexts of all implementing countries within the SEEVAL consortium, including Romania. Therefore, the SEEVAL social and emotional competences framework was developed as an integrated one being derived from some of the currently most well-known SEL models like CASEL, NESET, LifeComp (EU). Another important characteristic of the SEEVAL competence framework is that it was grounded in the results of the needs analysis accomplished by the SEEVAL project.

The analysis of the data collected from students, teachers and stakeholders at project level led to the identification of 14 social and emotional competences included in the SEEVAL framework, out of which 7 are related to personal and emotional competences and 7 to social, interpersonal competences:

- personal – 1. identifying and expressing emotions; 2. identifying strengths/self-efficacy; 3. growth mindset (positive thinking, optimism); 4. self-regulation (stress management, anger management); 5. dealing with negative emotions (anxiety, depression/suicidal ideation); 6. flexibility/resilience (developing resilience, enhancing problem solving skills); 7. wellbeing (adopting a healthy, sustainable lifestyle, avoiding risk behaviours such as substance use, delinquency);

- social – 1. empathy (developing perspective taking, developing empathy); 2. appreciating diversity (respect for others, embracing diversity); 3. relationship building (developing and maintaining healthy relationships, dealing with peer pressure); 4. collaboration (working as a team, social engagement); 5. conflict resolution (conflict management, conflict negotiation/resolution); 6. ethical and responsible behaviour and decisions (prosocial behaviour, responsible decision making); 7. dealing with negative relationships (bullying, online safety and cyberbullying).

The Romanian SEEVAL training programme

The structure of the Romanian training programme is derived from the international SEEVAL (2021) competences framework, taking into account the results from the Romanian needs analysis and the roundtable discussions. Thus, the Romanian training programme was structured into six modules, as follows: Module I - An integrated whole-school approach to SEE and the SEEVAL competences framework; Module II - Teachers' SEL competences, Module III - Developing SEL skills (adolescents); Module IV - Classroom climate and relationship building, Module V - Approaches to integrating SEL into teaching, Module VI Integrating SEL activities into the school curriculum.

The Romanian training programme was implemented in schools from different regions, to allow for transferability and dissemination at a large scale. The six pilot schools were thus selected to represent different geographical regions, different educational levels, and different educational profiles (Zalau - arts high-school, Iasi - vocational high-school, Sibiu - national college, Bucharest, Suceava and Bistrita Nasaud - lower secondary school). The selection was based on the interest of the school coordinator

and of the teachers' team to be involved in piloting the SEE whole school approach at their school level.

The 41 participants benefited from support materials and personal supervision, tutoring & mentoring from trainers in the learning and implementation activities. The team of trainers brought a mix of counselling and educational expertise, having academic, research, teaching background so that the team provided the programme with integrated and complex perspectives and foundations. The online meetings alternated with the individual study and practical applications in the classroom/school.

After following the training programme, the teams of teachers were encouraged to present the model and results to the school methodological committee and pedagogical events at local level, as well as to pilot SEE interventions within their schools, based on the SEEVAL training programme and SEEVAL Guidelines. Forthcoming in the economy of the SEEVAL project is a collection of good practices and interviews with Romanian school decision-makers about future priorities and sustainable strategies for SEE implementation at school level.

Research questions

The research questions oriented our study in two directions: on one hand, to make the voice of the students' heard as regards their social and emotional needs, and on the other hand, -to articulate students' and teachers views in order to understand both the gaps and the actions needed to design SEE whole school approaches tailored to the identified needs. Thus, the following research questions have been formulated: What are the social and emotional needs of the students - and what are the teachers' perceptions about these needs? What are the methods preferred by the students which support, in their vision, the development of their social and emotional competence - and what methods teachers usually use for the development of the students' social and emotional competences? What are the teachers' competences to address the social and emotional needs of their students – and what are students' perceptions related to the teachers' role for implementing SEL in school? Considering all this information, what are the guidelines of a training programme for Romanian teachers and school counsellors to implement SEL in a whole-school approach? The last one was proposed by the Romanian team of trainers at national level.

Within this article our focus will be on the teachers' dimension of the study, as it is reflected in the design and development of the training programme.

Purpose of the study

The aim of the study was to validate the SEEVAL teacher toolkit and training model for promoting SEL in the specific conditions provided by the Romanian education system.

Research Methods

In order to be able to offer an answer to the research questions, a study on students' and teachers' SEL needs was conducted at project level, to inform the development of the SEEVAL competences framework and structure of the SEEVAL international training programme. The data were afterwards analysed in the national contexts of all project partners, adapted and applied in each of the implementing countries. In the present article we will focus solely on the results obtained in the Romanian context.

The overall SEEVAL survey methodology was coordinated by the CRSEH - Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health/Department of Psychology, University of Malta and it was adapted by the project partners to specific needs and national particularities. It aimed to collect relevant data for grounding the competences framework and the teacher training programme. The developed SEL training programme (model of teachers' training and guide with learning activities) was based on the results of the research component of the project. The project research aimed to establish what social and emotional competences would be most useful and relevant for the students in the respective contexts where the activities were to be implemented. The needs analysis methodology scope covered the Romanian teachers, school counsellors and students from the lower and upper secondary education level.

The Romanian SEEVAL survey on students' and teachers' SEL needs was carried out from June to November 2020 and was based on two questionnaires: one for teachers and one for students. Participation in the survey was voluntary and the questionnaires were completely anonymous. The target groups of the surveys included teachers, school psychologists, counsellors working in middle and high schools, as well as students aged 10-14 (pre-teens) and 15-16 (teenagers) - middle and high school. Both the pupils' and the teachers' samples were randomly selected from the SEEVAL databases and adapted to the structure and operating conditions of the Romanian schools, while the selection was mainly made in relation to the study objectives, which were reflected in the socio-educational criteria of the questionnaire.

The Romanian online questionnaires were completed by 764 educators and 4,221 students. For teachers, in order to correlate-associate opinions with students' results, subjects who teach in middle school (GYM) or high school (HS) were retained. As an adaptation to the needs of the study, the teachers who teach at both levels were included separately at both levels of teaching. The structure of the sample is consistent with the age and experience distribution of teachers in the Romanian education system. The target group was therefore representing the diverse structure at the national level and encompassed the whole reality of opinions on the subject under investigation. For students, we kept as valid 3,781 answers received (we excluded the answers submitted twice to six times, while up to 1% (38 answers) included inappropriate language). Out of the valid responses received from students, we excluded the private school students and students under 11 years old and the corresponding new total of 3,667 responses was divided into two samples, according to the educational level of the students: 2,315 respondents' secondary school (students 11-14 years) and 1,352 high school (students 15-18 years).

Both questionnaires (for teachers and for students) have been applied in an online format and included items with a 5-step ordinal scale (Total disagreement - Total agreement) which was assimilated to a quantitative scale, assigning scores 1 to 5 to the five evaluation steps. At item level, the total achieved by student/teacher is generally calculated (by summing the individual scores by sub-item). The relevant reporting indicator represents the percentage value of the average result per (sub)item from the maximum possible level achieved (on a 5-step scale: the average score reported at the maximum of 5 possible points).

The influences of personal and environmental factors will be determined as mean values per item (sub-item) and the statistical comparison of differences between means. In the same way, is carried out the comparison between the student's and the teacher's answers at the level of sub-item and total item.

The comparison is made with the Z-test of differences between means (significant differences are marked by values $Z > 1.06$).

All categories allow for analysis as there are enough subjects to assure generalisation to the respective populations. The opinions expressed are evaluated at the level of the two samples (gymnasium, high school), accompanied by the analysis of potential influencing factors. Views on the student's ability to communicate and manage emotions are compared with the views expressed by the teachers teaching at that level.

The qualitative research included, for Romania, discussions with 25 stakeholders (school counsellors, heads of county counselling centres) in order to validate the results of the needs analysis and establish their relevance to the national, regional or local context.

Findings

Teachers versus students` opinion about students` SEL competences

The comparison Z-test confirms differences between the gymnasium teachers` opinions and that expressed by the gymnasium students, regarding the social and emotional competences of students with all items being overestimated by the students in comparisons with teachers. Considerable discrepancies between the students` and the teachers` appreciations are found for the following competences:

- understanding others (student 79.3% versus teacher 55.4%)
- set goals and try to achieve them (student 75.7% versus teacher 54.0%)
- being persistent and not giving up (student 76,5% versus teacher 55,6%)
- communicating with and actively listening to others (student 78,6% versus teacher 57,0%)

The biggest discrepancies between the opinions of high school teachers and those of the high school students are found for the following competences:

- I understand others (student 77.9% versus teacher 55.2%)
- I solve my own problems (student 75.4% versus teacher 53.5%)
- communicate with and actively listen to others (student 76.4% versus teacher 55.2%)
- respect other students who are different from me (student 80,5% versus teacher 59,2%)

It is important to notice here that the Z-test confirms not only the differences between the teachers` opinions and that expressed by the students, but the fact that all items are being overestimated by the students. These differences might indicate a deeper understanding of the SEL problems and needs by the teachers, compared to the students, given their initial and continuous psycho-pedagogical training and teaching experience. It is important also to note that these differences are perpetuated to high-school when the psychological understanding of the mind in general and of the self is expected to be much more solid in students.

Differences between Romanian teachers and the school counsellors

Such differences between different actors in the schools are yet to be found between the teachers and the school counsellors. The gymnasium school counsellors who possess a stronger background in psychology are much more critical than gymnasium teachers when assessing the social and emotional skills of the students. The survey recorded significant differences among teachers and counsellors for 12 out of the total 15 social and emotional competences included in the questionnaire, when assessing students, with teachers consistently overestimating the skills of the students. The highest differences are found for the following skills: “resolving conflicts constructively”, “expressing emotional states” (such as anger and sadness) and “communicating with and actively listening to others”. When looking at the high school data, we notice that these differences fall to about half with only 6 out of the total 15 items recording significant differences among teachers and counsellors, with teachers again overestimating the social and emotional skills of the students. The highest differences recorded are for the following items: “resolving conflicts constructively”, “setting goals and trying to achieve them”, as well as “managing my negative emotions such as sadness and anxiety”.

The teaching/counselling experience is not an influencing factor according to results of the survey, thus there are not found significant differences among the respondents compared by their professional experience in their current role, for neither the gymnasium, nor the high-school respondents (teachers and school counsellors). The fact that some social and emotional skills are better rated than others, regardless of the teaching experience, represents a validating factor for the results of the survey, indicating some strong and weak points of SEE in the Romanian education system. Thus, among 50% (+-1%) of all teachers consider the competence of “expressing emotional states” (such as anger and sadness) as developed in students, while again there is a very high consistency (61%, +-1%) of responses regarding the competence of “making friends” regardless of the duration of teaching experience.

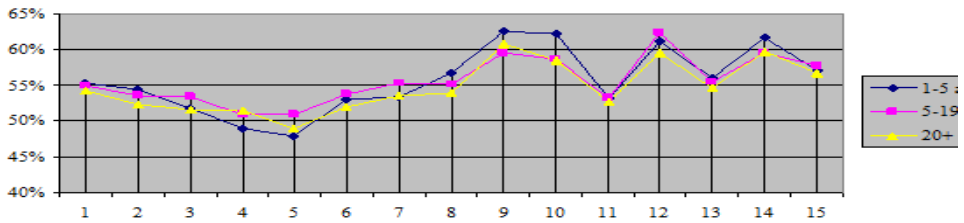


Fig. 1. Opinions of the gymnasium teachers/counsellors by professional experience in education

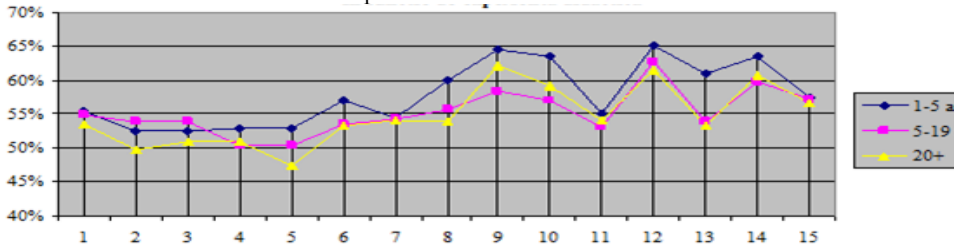


Fig. 2. Opinions of the high school teachers/counsellors by professional experience in education

Most gymnasium teachers and school counsellors are appreciating positively the level of SEL skills of students, with minor exceptions (“dealing with sadness and stress” in the case of Informatics and IT teachers). The same applies for the high school teachers for most of the SEL skills. At high school level, there are few more exceptions where less than half of the teachers consider the following skills well developed in high school students: “dealing with sadness” in the case of teachers for math and sciences, talents disciplines (arts, sports), Informatics and IT, school counsellor/psychologists; “expressing emotional states” (such as anger and sadness) in the case of Language and communication teachers as well as in the case of school counsellors/psychologists.

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents (teachers and school counsellors) agree that all teachers should be involved in SEE.

Teachers` social and emotional competences

Teachers generally have a good self-appreciation of their own competences to develop social and emotional skills in students regardless of the level of education (lower or upper secondary) or of the specific social and emotional competences. According to teachers` self-assessment, they place their specific competences at a very high level (all competences are considered to be above 80%), except for the items on “stress management”

and “emotion control” (also quite high). According to these findings, the Romanian training programme included a whole stress-management and emotion-management module for teachers. As Iancu et al. (2018) underline, the burn-out syndrome can be the result of an imbalance between professional requirements and resources. As the teaching profession might be a demanding one, Romanian teachers might feel they have to face high challenges with few resources. As there are specific social and emotional stressors for this occupation, the social and emotional competence is very important for teachers and their occupational health. Harris et al. (2016) show that the social and emotional interventions for teachers decrease the level of psychological and physical stress, anxiety, physical pain, insomnia, professional stress and burnout.

On the other hand, teachers appreciate that only about half of the students possess the respective social and emotional skills, while some of the priority areas of SEL development in students are, in teachers` opinion, “managing stress” (with only 49,7% of gymnasium students being competent and 49,9% of high school students respectively), “expressing emotional states” (50,8% of students), “responsible decision making” (52,4% - gymnasium students and 53,1% high school students), “setting goals and mobilizing to achieve them” (52,9% - gymnasium students and 53,9% high school students). Therefore, we can ask the question of why, if teachers` social and emotional competences are at such a high level, they are not reflected in the work with the students (the teachers` views on the student's social and emotional competences vary around 50-60% in range). These discrepancies need to be further investigated besides the issues already explored within this study.

The results show also very high confidence and self-appreciation of teachers relating their abilities to organise SEL activities (more than 71,2%), with a slight increase of confidence (of up to 4 percentual points) for the teachers with less didactical experience, which might indicate a generally bigger openness of younger teachers to non-cognitive aspects of education and teaching. Regardless of the taught discipline, the teachers and counsellors indicate a very high level of confidence in their SEL teaching skills. Some explainable bigger discrepancies are noticed for instance between the counsellors in high-school who feel confident in their majority (83,4%) to math and science teachers (with only 60,0% manifesting confidence in their abilities).

Table 1. Teachers` self-assessed competence and confidence in promoting SEL, by didactical experience and function

Didactical experience	GYM	HS	Function	GYM	HS
1-5 years	75,9%	75,5%	Teachers	72,4%	68,5%
6-19 years	75,1%	73,4%	Counsellors	84,4%	83,4%
20+	75,3%	71,2%			

Table 2. Teachers` self-assessed competence and confidence in promoting SEL, by curricular area

	Language and Communication	Mathematics and Science	Man and Society	Vocational subjects (arts, sport)	Informatics and IT	Technical and economic subjects
GYM	71,9%	66,8%	74,9%	78,1%	76,7%	
HS	68,0%	60,0%	73,5%	75,9%	68,7%	70,0%

Regardless of the level of education, teachers showing the lowest level of self-confidence in implementing SEE are those with a background in Math and Science. Thus only 66,8% of the Math and Science teachers in the gymnasium are confident of their ability to implement SEE and respectively only 60% at the high school level. At the gymnasium level the percentage of confident teachers is higher with at least 5% for the other teachers, up to 78,1% for those teaching Vocational subjects, Arts, or Sports. At high school level the percentage is higher with at least 8% and up to 16% for Vocational subjects, Arts, or Sports teachers. The percentage of confident school counsellors is higher, reaching to 84,4% at the gymnasium level and to 83,4% at high school level. The proportion of Maths and Science teachers in our training programme accounted for about one-third of the total of 41 participating teachers, being consistent with the results of the needs analysis indicating a higher need for this category of teachers.

Teaching methods for SEL

Teaching methods in the classroom are indicated as another important factor contributing to the development of the social and emotional competences in students. In this sense, by comparing the items referring to the strategies used in the teaching activity between the teachers' statements and the students' wishes, we can notice in both samples (gymnasium and high school), namely an unsatisfied need for practical

activities on the part of the students comparing to the actual practices, while for all the other methods it seems that the teachers are indicating a higher use than the needs expressed by students (group collaboration, discussions/debates, brainstorming, role play). The identified differences between students' statements on strategies used in teaching and the opinions expressed by the teacher are statistically significant. The data on this item only includes the teacher's responses and not the school counsellors. More than three-quarters of the respondents, both secondary and high school teachers, say they use specific strategies in the classroom, which is not confirmed by feedback from students.

Table 3. Students' expectations regarding SEE methods

	Group collaboration	Discussions / debates	Practical activities	Brainstorming	Role play
GYM Total	66,7%	74,3%	67,9%	40,3%	51,4%
Rural	62,3%	71,9%	64,7%	33,2%	51,4%
Urban	68,6%	75,3%	69,3%	43,5%	51,4%
Female	67,1%	76,0%	69,1%	41,4%	52,5%
Male	66,2%	72,1%	66,4%	39,0%	50,0%
HS Total	65,5%	77,1%	70,0%	37,4%	40,5%
Rural	64,2%	72,6%	68,8%	30,2%	40,5%
Urban	66,6%	80,7%	71,1%	42,9%	40,5%
Female	68,5%	80,0%	73,0%	38,4%	44,8%
Male	61,4%	73,2%	66,0%	35,9%	34,7%

Table 4. Methods used by teachers for SEE

	Group collaboration	Discussions / debates	Practical activities	Brainstorming	Role play
GYM Total	74,1%	88,4%	66,9%	73,6%	61,6%
Teachers	71,4%	86,8%	64,5%	68,9%	55,2%
Counsellors	82,9%	93,6%	74,3%	88,6%	81,4%
HS Total	81,7%	90,9%	66,9%	77,8%	61,0%
Teachers	79,7%	89,7%	64,4%	72,6%	53,0%
Counsellors	86,3%	93,5%	72,6%	89,5%	79,0%

In this regard, in our project we tailored a training programme and protocols of action for a whole-school SEE approach, prioritising guidance and mentoring and greater access to research-based strategies. Thus, the

project team developed teacher guidelines activities which provided teachers with practical information on how they may promote specific social and emotional competences in their classroom through embedded teaching on different subjects and the classroom climate. At the training programme level, we focused on workshop-type interventions through which the participants made different applications together with the trainers, then they had assignments. The examples of SEE activities, both from training and SEEVAL Guide are organised in the form of experiential, skills-based and collaborative activities making use of such strategies as role play, small group work, discussions, games and practical activities according to the students' and teachers' needs.

Teachers' initial and continuous professional development

Another contextual characteristic influencing the development of students' social and emotional competences is the background of the teacher in terms of the competences held. In this regard, the characteristics of the sample of teachers are complemented with data on their initial training in the field, as well as the conditions of coverage/completion of training needs.

According to the collected data, the initial training provided an adequate start in SEE for only a small percentage of teachers, regardless of their level of education (lower or upper secondary). The overall percentage shows only 6 out of 10 teachers have attended a course in social and emotional domain.

Table 5. Adequate training in SEE during the initial training stage

Total disagreement			Total agreement		Mean	Intensity of opinion
100	169	214	145	136		
13,1	22,1	28,0%	19,0%	17,8%	3,063	61,3

Table 6. Adequate training in SEE at current job

Total disagreement			Total agreement		Mean	Intensity of opinion
63	121	230	206	144		
8,2%	15,8%	30,1%	27,0%	18,8%	3.323	66.5%

Given that most respondents (almost 90%) confirm the importance given by their schools to social and emotional education (88.1% - GYM / 87% - HS) and the provision of training and skills development confirmed by about two-thirds of the responses to the item on continuous professional

development opportunities in the current workplace, a significant number of subjects still expressed a clear need for further participating in training programmes with themes related to these skills. Out of the respondents, 83.6% expressed the option to participate in training programmes dedicated to deepening SEL issues and didactics. The need is slightly higher for teachers compared to counsellors.

Despite that the teachers have weaker skills for implementing SEL than the school counsellors, they are not aware of or do not consider it a priority having further training in SEE, while on the other hand, the counsellors are eager for deepening their social and emotional skills.

Limits of the study

The study results and conclusions ought to be regarded as representative at the national level for the Romanian education system, given the used sample, and no meaningful extrapolations can be made to other educational contexts and systems. While the SEEVAL competence framework builds on transnational models that have been developed in different parts of the world like the USA and the EU (i.e. CASEL, LifeComp), it has only been tested and validated in the SEEVAL countries (Bulgaria, Italy, Greece, Romania). Furthermore, the analysis presented in this article, only extracted and discussed the data from the Romanian teachers` and students` surveys, therefore the results are meaningful and replicable only in the Romanian context. Possible mainstreaming of the implementation should take into account that the initial pilot programme involved a limited number of Romanian schools from the urban areas, which are generally coming from prosperous economical environments, while schools from disadvantaged areas may well rise other specific concerns when planning to implement a whole-school approach to SEL

Conclusions

The research data lead us to the following conclusions and reflections towards ways of improvement concerning the implementation of a whole-school approach to SEE in Romanian schools:

- When designing SEE programmes, it is important to take into account the students` and teachers` voices first, as such programmes should be tailored according to the specific school context and needs in which they will be implemented.

- SEE programme developers should be aware of the need to develop SEL competences in teachers. The initial and continuous training in

SEE is still insufficient in Romania, therefore Romanian teachers should be provided with teaching methodologies and guides on how to integrate SEL into their subjects. Special attention should be offered to STEM teachers who seem to encounter more challenges in approaching SEE.

- There is a need for shared responsibility in developing and implementing SEE programmes at the school level. Teachers should collaborate with school counsellors who have specialised initial training and can offer methodological support for the implementation of SEE at the school level. Nevertheless, the conclusions of the roundtables should not be neglected, as they showed that the methodological leading role of the Romanian school counsellors is still a desired goal, which we have not reached yet.

Programmes should focus on empowering teachers with methodologies for teaching SEL competences. Thus, the project team developed a Guide for teachers which included a theoretical background for each competence, as well as experiential, skills-based and collaborative activities making use of strategies such as role play, small group work, discussions, games and practical activities.

The teacher's ability to implement social and emotional education activities varies to a significant degree among teachers of different backgrounds with the teachers with a STEM background (e.g. Math and Science) showing the lowest level of self-confidence in implementing SEL due to a lack of psychological background. Consequently, any follow-up teacher training programmes for SEL would give higher attention to the higher training needs of the STEM teachers and facilitate interdisciplinary transfer and a stronger supervising role of the school counsellor.

School-based interventions to promote students' social and emotional competences are more likely to be effective if they are organised as part of a systemic, whole-school approach. Teachers play a key role as they are the primary delivery agents of social and emotional education. As research shows, the success of such interventions is directly linked to the teachers' training and their confidence to deliver relevant learning experiences that support the development of children's social and emotional competences.

The results of our study are aligned with the CASEL model (2015) which proposes that SEL "is best done through multiple environments in which student learning takes place: effective classroom curriculum and instruction, a school climate, policies, and practices that promote student engagement in positive activities in and out of the classroom, and broad

family and community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation”.

The Romanian school teams were very interested in learning about SEL theoretical framework and the practical interventions and innovative implementations that took place in the pilot schools, the teacher's motivation and openness being a key factor in the success of SEL activities. The design and organisation of the programme were optimal for the limited time of the teachers and the support materials (e.g., protocols for school action developed by the SEEVAL project as well as the Collection of resources gathered by the project team) were very useful for the teachers with backgrounds in various subjects. The piloting has shown that when teachers are motivated, it is enough to provide them adequate training in SEL and the school climate will change drastically, with vivid transfer between the teachers. There is a general need for Romanian teachers to better understand their own and students' social and emotional needs and how to properly and timely address them through a whole school approach.

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