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# REPORT ON EUROPEAN PRACTICES AND POLICIES FOR PROMOTING WELL-BEING AT SCHOOL

SEL Approaches in European Schools: Insights and Transfer Enablers

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# 1. Introduction

## Policy context in Romania and at EU level

The promotion of well-being and mental health in schools is a pressing concern in both Romania and the European Union. In Romania, there is a growing recognition of the need to support students' social and emotional development, particularly within the context of the national curriculum. At the EU level, the European Commission has emphasised the importance of mental health and well-being, highlighting the need for comprehensive and inclusive approaches to promote healthy and supportive learning environments. The [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#) and the [EU guidelines for supporting well-being at school](#) further underscore the importance of addressing the holistic needs of students.

## Project context and initial key findings

This report is part of a TSI project aimed at helping Romania promote well-being and mental health at school. The project seeks to provide customised tools and training for educational staff to integrate social and emotional learning into teaching and classroom management. Through a comprehensive analysis of students' well-being, social and emotional skills in Romania and an assessment of European good practices, the project has identified promising approaches and initiatives that can inform policy and practice in Romania. Preliminary findings suggest that the effective promotion of well-being and mental health in schools requires a multi-faceted approach that involves the entire school community, including teachers, students, parents and policymakers.

The comprehensive analysis of the social-emotional skills, well-being and mental health of secondary school students in Romania has yielded several key conclusions. Firstly, secondary school students in Romania frequently experience emotional discomfort, engage in risky behaviours and face bullying and cyberbullying, particularly in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged areas. Schools lack standardised tools for the early identification of emotional risks, and collaboration between schools, families and specialists is often informal and inconsistent. Secondly, the excessive use of technology and social media among students is associated with reduced well-being and emotional imbalances. Findings show that students lack digital discernment, while parents and teachers struggle to provide guidance. Finally, teaching practices and classroom management in Romanian schools often fail to promote social and emotional learning (SEL) among students due to a lack of a coherent framework, limited resources and inadequate support for teachers.

These conclusions highlight the need for a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to promoting well-being and mental health in Romanian schools, including the development of standardised tools for the early identification of emotional risks, guidance on digital literacy and support for teachers in promoting SEL.

The analysis of EU good practices was guided by six thematic dimensions: i) Institutional and legislative capacity; ii) Promoting SEL, well-being and mental health in schools; iii) Human resource capacity development in education; iv) Reforming educational practices and classroom management; v) Strengthening intersectoral and interinstitutional collaboration; vi) Evidence-based policymaking.

The report highlights good and promising practices from five countries (Finland, Spain, Ireland, France and Malta) that have demonstrated innovative practices in at least two of these areas, offering valuable insights into implementing mechanisms and tools that can be adapted and applied in the Romanian context.

### **Well-being at school: Key concepts**

Well-being at school refers to the holistic and inclusive approach to supporting students' physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a critical component of this approach, encompassing skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Promoting well-being and mental health in schools requires a comprehensive understanding of these key concepts and their interrelationships. The report will delve into these concepts in more detail, exploring how they are addressed in the selected EU countries and what lessons can be learned and applied to the Romanian context.

Based on the research methodology presented in detail in the following section of the report and with guidance from Ministry of Education representatives and the UNICEF team, the authors identified eight countries with relevant experience in the area of social and emotional learning and well-being.

In the second stage of the process, a comparative analysis of the selected countries was carried out based on the document presented in Annex 1 of the report. The final selection of countries was informed by the process documented in Annex 2 of this report, considering the relevance of the good practices identified in each country.

All countries selected for our analysis demonstrated innovative practices in at least two areas corresponding to the established criteria and the priorities set by the Ministry of Education. Access to relevant documents was more difficult in some cases, which limited the accuracy of our assessment. At the same time, some of the promising practices that have been developed remain only partly focused on the target group defined in our methodology (lower secondary students, ages 10-14), while others cover the entire pre-primary, primary and secondary levels.

Despite these challenges, the final countries selected for an in-depth analysis (**Finland, Spain, Ireland, France and Malta**) offer consistent and actionable insights to better understand the various existing implementation mechanisms and tools. Where possible, our case studies also examined the resources allocated and monitoring/evaluation mechanisms. As indicated by various research studies conducted in the SEL area (OECD, 2022; IB/Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre, 2023), only a few of the widely used well-being resources and practices are currently solidly grounded in scientific evidence. Therefore, the methodological section also highlights the limitations of our research.

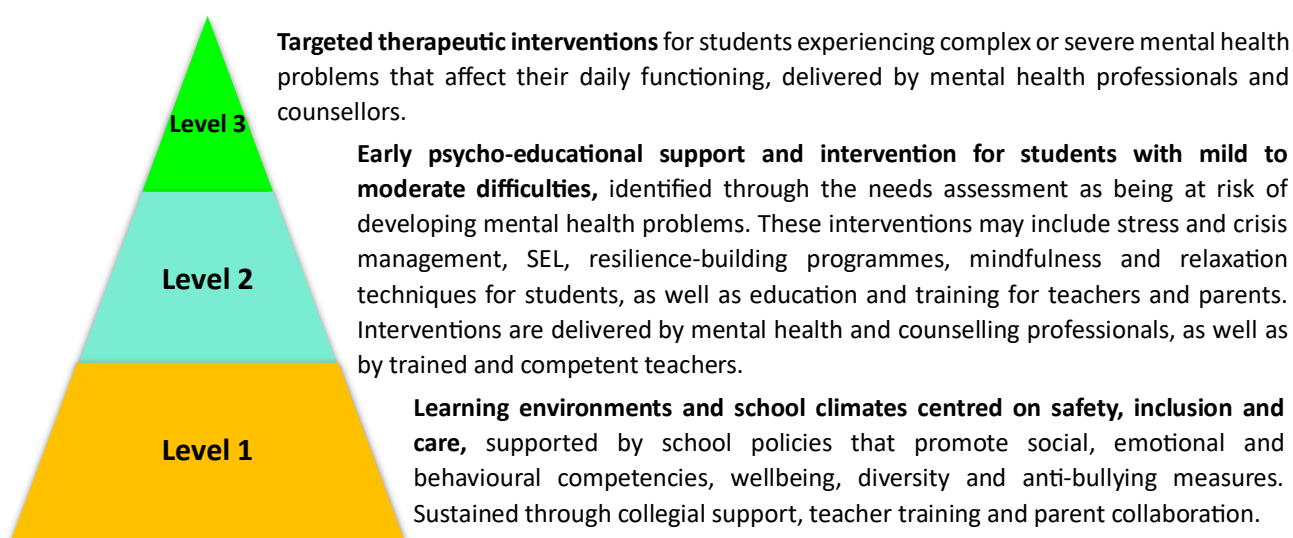
The structure of the report is straightforward, including the conceptual and methodological approach in section two, the synthesis of the main findings for each national case study in the subsequent chapter and a section dedicated to conclusions and recommendations. At the same time, the report includes a consistent section on resources (studies, tools, research), which are both general and specific to each country researched, along with a relevant set of annexes.

## 2. Methodology

### Conceptual framework

The methodological approach is grounded in the first pillar of action for promoting and protecting mental health in schools and learning environments - namely, creating a learning environment that is conducive to positive mental health and well-being (WHO, UNESCO & UNICEF, 2022). Within this pillar, the three organisations explicitly recommend the inclusion of social-emotional learning (SEL) in the curriculum. In addition, the report considers European policy recommendations, such as the whole-school, whole-system approach promoted by the EU Guidelines for school leaders, teachers and educators on well-being and mental health at school (EC, 2024), as well as those intended for policymakers in education. These emphasise the strong interconnections and mutual reinforcement between well-being, academic performance and social-emotional learning. For example, students who develop strong social and emotional skills at school tend to achieve significantly better academic results (European Commission, 2024, p. 12).

The framework of recommended interventions is multi-layered and targets several levels: universality (addressed to all students), group-focused strategies and early interventions (for children at risk) and, at the individual level, targeted therapeutic interventions designed for students with complex or severe mental health needs. These may be led by school counsellors in collaboration with specialised mental health professionals or solely by the latter.



*Figure 1. Multi-layered psycho-educational interventions.*

Source: Translated and adapted from UNESCO (2019) apud Cefai (2022).

The methodological approach of the report builds upon the working definitions of key concepts presented in Annex 6.

The proposed conceptual framework assumes that there is a direct and dynamic relationship between a child's social-emotional competencies, their well-being and mental health. Social-emotional skills act as protective factors for mental health and contribute significantly to overall well-being. In other words, the

more developed a child is in terms of social emotional skills, the better prepared they will be to attain and maintain a high level of well-being, which is reflected in the use of self-regulation strategies, the ability to cope with everyday challenges, increased resilience and self-protective behaviours when facing adverse or violent environments. Mental health is also positively influenced by higher levels of social-emotional competence, which contributes to increased overall well-being.

A relevant international model, promoted by the University of Oxford (2020), is summarised in the figure below:



*Figure 2. Key drivers of student well-being*

Social-emotional skills are equally:

1. A distinct domain of learning that education systems and curricula should consider to be just as important as the academic and cognitive domains (OECD PISA: beyond academic learning);
2. A set of essential competencies that all students should develop in preparation for adult, professional, and social life. These include curiosity, perseverance, emotional regulation, stress management, assertiveness, empathy, cooperation and a growth mindset (OECD PISA).

The main **SEL competencies** tracked in the report include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship and communication skills, and responsible decision-making. They are based on the CASEL framework, which is grounded in more than two decades of rigorous research and has been applied in various international educational contexts. The CASEL model has been referenced in Romanian educational literature since 2015 (Negovan, 2015). In 2022, the framework was translated and adapted into Romanian by the Education Research Unit of the National Centre for Policy and Evaluation in Education (CNPEE) and has since been included in official educational policy recommendations and methodological guides for practitioners.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is both a key driver and a reliable indicator of children's well-being. In addition to SEL, well-being – as an outcome – is reflected in students' satisfaction with various aspects of their personal lives, their sense of belonging, their confidence in their ability to learn independently and reduced levels of anxiety related to school subjects (e.g. math anxiety).

Satisfaction with personal life is shaped by several key factors, including relationships with parents, teachers, peers and friends: material possessions, physical appearance, health and the way they spend their time, both at school and during their free time. In our approach, well-being and mental health in the school environment are addressed in an integrated manner, with a specific focus on the healthy use of technology in schools and the development of students' social and emotional competencies.

### **Methods and tools used**

The case studies were documented through online desk research, conducted in two stages, as indicated in the introductory section. In order to collect secondary data from relevant public and academic sources, we used various search engines and AI apps (Claude, Chat GPT and Notebook LM). We used specific data inquiries, with official data published by the Ministry of Education serving as a key source of information.

### **The grid used to identify and analyse case studies was structured around several key criteria:**

- National or regional policies and programmes with a high level of implementation across the school population and direct relevance to the SEL domain. In line with the methodological framework, the focus was placed primarily on universal measures and early interventions targeted at children at risk.
- Targeted therapeutic interventions for complex mental health problems were only documented when integrated within broader policies that also included universal or early-stage interventions.
- Policies and programmes implemented in pre-university education, with a specific focus on lower secondary education (middle schools).
- Case studies focused primarily on the education systems of EU Member States.
- Systemic interventions that had already been implemented, ideally those that had undergone some form of (internal or external) evaluation and that could be documented based on available resources, without requiring interviews with directly involved stakeholders.

### **Priority areas of interest**

The case studies focused on several key thematic areas (non-exhaustive list), including:

- Curriculum development (conceptual frameworks, ways of defining students' SEL competencies, integration within different reference frameworks, curriculum plans and school curriculum);
- Assessment of students' SEL competencies (approaches, tools, ways of applying these tools, etc.);
- Use of digital technologies for promoting SEL, as well as interventions aimed at mitigating the negative effects of excessive screen time and digital overexposure;
- Systemic measures for preventing cases of school violence, with a particular focus on online environments, including cyberbullying;
- Integration of SEL into initial teacher education frameworks;
- Expansion of continuous professional development (CPD) offers in the field of SEL and the development of training programmes at national and regional levels; SEL training models for school leadership and management teams;

- Funding mechanisms for SEL-related policies and governance models, including frameworks for collaboration with non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations; etc.

The structure of the case studies generally follows and addresses most of these thematic areas (see Annex 2).

### **Consultations workshops**

Two consultation workshops were organised to discuss the main findings of the good practice research report – one held in person and one conducted online. In total, more than 50 participants attended, representing relevant public institutions, civil society organisations and universities. As methodology, both events included a concise presentation of the main findings of the report, followed by group discussions aimed at identifying the most relevant examples for the Romanian context and exploring possible ways to transfer elements of the innovative practices identified. The key points from the discussion handout were integrated into the final set of recommendations.

**Key research limitations** include limited data availability, documentation accessible only in national languages, insufficient focus on the targeted education level (lower secondary), a general lack of monitoring and evaluation data, limited scientific validation and a lack of publicly available information on the resources required for policy implementation.

To mitigate these limitations, the team triangulated multiple secondary sources, including policy and academic publications. The consultation workshops also played an important role in verifying the report's findings and collecting feedback from key stakeholders.

## 3. National case studies

This section of the report summarises the main findings from the five selected countries, as detailed in the methodology. The structure of the case studies highlights key aspects related to social and emotional learning (SEL), viewed as a central component of students' and teachers' well-being. For further details, see Annexes 1 and 2.

### Finland

Finland offers a comprehensive and well-integrated model for promoting student well-being and SEL. Its strong legal foundation, curriculum integration and effective intersectoral collaboration, combined with a strong culture of evaluation and prevention, make it a leading example and a valuable source of inspiration for education policy development in Romania.

#### 1. Strengthening institutional and legislative capacity

##### 1.1. Legislation and policy context

Finland has a long-standing and comprehensive education and child welfare legislation that underscores the importance of student well-being as an integral part of learning. Finland's legislative framework supporting student well-being has evolved significantly over the past decades, reflecting broader social changes and the increasing recognition of mental health as a critical component of education. The foundational Finnish Basic Education Act (628/1998) established the principle that education should not only impart knowledge but also promote the holistic development and welfare of students. This act mandated education providers to offer both teaching and comprehensive student welfare services, integrating support mechanisms directly within schools.

In response to the growing societal awareness of mental health challenges among young people, the Pupil and Student Welfare Act (1287/2013) introduced a more detailed structure, ensuring students' rights to psychological, school social work<sup>1</sup> and health services. Importantly, the legislation emphasised the shared responsibility of educators, welfare professionals and municipalities to create supportive school environments, marking a shift towards collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches to student well-being (1287/2013).

Further legislative milestones, such as the National Child Strategy (2021) and the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018), reinforce a child-centred perspective across both educational and social services. National steering is accomplished through a combination of binding legislation, core curricula and flexible financing systems, enabling local authorities and schools to tailor well-being initiatives to current societal realities (Finnish National Agency for Education [EDUFI], n.d.-d; Ministry of Social Affairs and Health [MSAH], n.d.). These laws recognise evolving family structures, the influence of digitalisation and the importance of early intervention in addressing well-being challenges.

Recent reforms specifically address the impact of digital media on youth mental health, promote inclusive education for diverse learners and enhance student participation in school governance (Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC], 2023). Overall, this legislative evolution reflects Finland's commitment to proactive, inclusive and evidence-based approaches, placing well-being at the core of

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<sup>1</sup> School social work services are provided by school curators (Finnish: koulukuraattori), an officially regulated professional role within the Finnish student welfare system.

education and responding sensitively to demographic changes, technological advances and emerging social needs (EDUFI, 2019; Ministry of Social Affairs and Health [MSAH], 2021).

## 1.2. Reform of welfare service governance

A significant structural reform was implemented in Finland in January 2023, with the creation of 21 autonomous Well-Being Services Counties (WSCs). This transformation redefined the governance of health and social services, including school welfare personnel, aiming to improve cross-sector collaboration and accessibility, with municipalities now focusing on managing basic education and early childhood services, while the new counties coordinate student welfare professionals, such as school nurses, psychologists and social workers. (MSAH, 2023; Eurydice, 2023). This model is designed to reduce disparities in service provision by ensuring that all students have access to consistent, high-quality support in every municipality. It strengthens cross-sector collaboration between schools and healthcare services, streamlining referral processes and enabling multidisciplinary intervention teams to function across institutional boundaries (MSAH, 2023). This governance reform reflects a shift towards a more child-centred and holistic approach, aligning service structures with Finland’s broader commitment to safeguarding student well-being, which is foundational to educational success (MSAH, 2023).

## 2. Promoting student well-being and mental health in schools

### 2.1. Integration into the National Core Curriculum

The New National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (EDUFI, 2016) embeds well-being and mental health throughout subjects and school culture. Schools are required to promote emotional and social skills, self-awareness, empathy and stress management. Transversal competence areas, such as ‘Taking care of oneself and managing daily life’ and ‘Participation, involvement and building a sustainable future’, reflect this integration.

**Example of curriculum development.** Finnish National Core Curriculum (2016) - SEL and Well-Being Integration. Transversal Competences and SEL

Subject	Transversal Competence	SEL Skills Embedded	Exact Text Excerpt
Health Education	Taking care of oneself and managing daily life	Emotional regulation, stress management, self-care	<i>“Health education helps students grow into responsible and active members of society by promoting their health, safety and well-being. Students learn to recognise and express their emotions, understand their own bodies and health and develop self-care skills. They are guided to manage stress and make responsible decisions concerning nutrition, physical activity and rest.”(p. 43)</i>
Social Studies	Participation, involvement and building a sustainable future	Empathy, cooperation, ethical reflection	<i>“Social studies education develops students’ understanding of society, democracy and sustainable development. Students are encouraged to participate actively and responsibly in society, reflect on ethical issues and develop empathy and cooperation skills. Group work and discussions foster respectful interaction and critical thinking about social justice and human rights.”(p. 72)</i>

Subject	Transversal Competence	SEL Skills Embedded	Exact Text Excerpt
Arts Education	Taking care of oneself and managing daily life	Emotional expression, creativity, resilience	<i>"Arts education enhances students' ability to express their feelings and thoughts through various art forms such as visual arts, music and drama. It supports creativity, self-confidence and resilience by encouraging experimentation, reflection and collaborative artistic activities."</i> (p. 102)
Physical Education	Taking care of oneself and managing daily life	Self-regulation, teamwork, perseverance	<i>"Physical education promotes students' physical and emotional well-being by developing body awareness, stress management and perseverance. Team sports and cooperative games teach students to work together, resolve conflicts and support each other's progress. Reflection on personal goals and achievements is an integral part of the learning process."</i> (p. 118)

The Finnish curriculum integrates SEL through transversal competences rather than as a separate subject. It promotes holistic development, including emotional skills, ethical reflection, social responsibility and active participation. Multidisciplinary and phenomenon-based learning approaches are used to embed these competences across subjects. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning, reflect on their progress and engage collaboratively.

Key references for documenting the SEL curriculum approach at primary and secondary levels:

- Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI). (2016). [New National Core Curriculum for Basic Education](#) and [National core curriculum for primary and lower secondary \(basic\) education](#)
- Finnish National Agency for Education. (2016). *National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 (English version)*. Helsinki: EDUFI. ISBN: 9789521362590

Student well-being is considered a prerequisite for learning, and schools have the autonomy to design local curricula that support health promotion (EDUFI, n.d.-c).

## 2.2. Multidisciplinary student welfare teams

Finland's student welfare system operates through **three distinct multidisciplinary groups**, each with specific roles and levels of operation:

- 1) Multidisciplinary Student Welfare Steering Group  
This group operates at the level of education providers (e.g. municipality or consortium of schools). It is responsible for the general planning, development, guidance and evaluation of student welfare services. It may include multiple education providers and ensures strategic coordination and policy alignment.
- 2) School-Specific Multidisciplinary Student Welfare Group  
Operating within individual schools, this group focuses on community-level planning and the development of student welfare. It addresses issues related to the school environment, class dynamics and group-level well-being, but it does not handle individual student cases. Importantly, it includes students and guardians as members, promoting participatory governance.
- 3) Multidisciplinary Expert Group for case-by-case interventions  
This group is convened on a case-by-case basis to support individual students or specific groups with identified needs. Experts are appointed only with the consent of the student or their guardian, and the group designates a responsible person for each case. Information is

documented in a student welfare report and, where applicable, **in-patient records** maintained by healthcare professionals in accordance with Finnish legislation (Act 785/1992).

This structured model ensures that student welfare is addressed at both systemic and individual levels, with clear boundaries and confidentiality safeguards. This team-based approach is embedded within the broader Finnish strategy for school well-being, which integrates social and emotional learning (SEL) into the daily fabric of school life. The National Core Curriculum specifies that SEL and well-being are not treated as separate initiatives, but rather are woven into all aspects of schooling, supporting students' academic, mental and social development (EDUFI, 2014/2020; EDUFI, 2016). The welfare team's work is thus a vital, school-based mechanism for ensuring that every student receives holistic, timely and confidential support.

In January 2021, Finland extended compulsory education to 12 years. Under this law, education must be continuous, eliminating the option for students to take a "gap year". School guidance counsellors are responsible for following up with students who complete lower secondary education at age 16 to ensure that they apply to and enrol in upper secondary general or vocational education. In Finland, guidance counsellors are full-time salaried staff whose qualifications are legally defined by the state. The current student-to-counsellor ratio is approximately 250 to 1 (OECD, n.d.). In Finland, guidance counsellors assist pupils and students in selecting their courses and subjects, as well as in addressing any learning challenges they may face. A significant aspect of their role is their close collaboration with students, teachers, student welfare staff and parents. They also maintain connections with the world of work by arranging study visits and work-based learning opportunities for students. The qualification requirements for guidance counsellors are a master's degree and guidance counsellor studies (Eurydice, n.d.).

### **3. Developing human resource capacity in education**

#### **3.1. Teacher training and professional development**

In Finland, initial and in-service teacher education places a strong emphasis on social-emotional competence, mental health literacy and inclusive pedagogical approaches. Programmes at the university

level incorporate modules on child development, educational psychology, inclusive education and frameworks for promoting well-being in everyday school life. There is a systematic effort to prepare all educators, including principals, special needs teachers, school psychologists, nurses and school social workers, to address emotional and psychological needs in schools.

Teacher education in Finland also includes comprehensive training on social and emotional learning (SEL) and student well-being. Teachers, along with study counsellors and special needs educators, are increasingly prepared to actively contribute to whole-school well-being initiatives. Continuous professional development ensures that they remain equipped to foster inclusive, psychologically safe and supportive learning environments (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022).

This emphasis is formally embedded in Finland's *Teacher Education Development Programme 2022–2026*, which outlines the broad-based core competences expected of educators. These include the development of social-emotional and interpersonal expertise, alongside subject knowledge. According to the document, teacher training should promote "*expertise in values, culture, emotions, interaction and cooperation*" as foundational to professional identity and effectiveness (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022, p. 9). This vision reinforces the view of teachers as agents of well-being and community building in schools.

Principals and school leaders also receive training focused on resilience-oriented leadership and the development of supportive school cultures.

Recent national and institutional initiatives include:

- › THL's (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare) e-learning courses on children's mental health and social-emotional development (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023). Between 2021 and 2023, state-funded projects in Finland organised 630 courses and workshops, enhancing mental health, substance use and addiction competencies for 22,800 professionals nationwide. Building on this capacity-building endeavour, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health issued a guidance document in 2023 titled 'Mental Health, Substance Use and Addiction Content in Education for Sectors Working in Direct Interaction – Recommendations for Strengthening Competence'. The document sets out minimum learning objectives, core content and practical teaching tips (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), 2024).
- › EDUFI-led CPD programmes promoting positive pedagogy, inclusive practices and mental health literacy for teachers and school personnel (MSAH, 2023).

### **Finnish initiatives focused on teachers' well-being and SEL**

In addition to the structural emphasis on social-emotional competence in teacher education, Finland implements concrete initiatives to enhance teacher well-being and SEL competencies through research-backed, systemic approaches.

According to a biannual occupational well-being survey conducted by the University of Helsinki in autumn 2024, teachers' burnout has declined, and work engagement has increased across all education levels in Finland. This positive trend is attributed to effective leadership, inclusivity and teachers' autonomy in their work (Salmela-Aro & Hietajärvi, 2025). The survey's findings have informed targeted interventions aimed at reducing unnecessary workload and enhancing the meaningfulness of teachers' tasks, thereby supporting sustained occupational well-being.

Finnish schools actively promote *collaborative teacher teamwork* and *co-teaching models*, which have their roots in special education but have since become a widespread practice across the education system. This approach has been shown to enhance both student learning time and teachers' job satisfaction. The effectiveness of co-teaching relies on clear role definitions, systematic planning and professional development that supports shared pedagogical practices (EduCluster Finland, 2025). Importantly, such collaboration nurtures social-emotional skills among teachers by fostering mutual support and shared responsibility. For example, teacher training programmes in Finland are designed to strengthen these collaborative skills, as highlighted by the resources available through [EduCluster Finland](#).

The co-teaching model is firmly embedded in the Finnish education system at both the curriculum and teacher education levels. The national core curriculum for primary and lower secondary education emphasises teacher collaboration, advocating for flexible teaching arrangements and shared responsibilities to support inclusion and student diversity. This is reflected in the curriculum's encouragement of flexible groupings, joint lesson planning and integrative teaching, which make co-teaching a standard practice in Finnish schools (Finnish National Agency for Education [EDUFI], 2016; EDUFI, 2014/2020). Moreover, teacher education and professional development programmes, as developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, explicitly address the competencies required for

effective co-teaching, including collaborative planning, pedagogical reflection and the adaptation of instructional strategies to meet diverse student needs (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

In everyday classroom practice, co-teaching typically involves two or more teachers, often a classroom teacher working alongside a support or special education teacher, jointly planning, instructing and assessing the same group of students, including those with special educational needs. This collaborative approach allows for varied teaching methods, individualised support and the seamless integration of students with special needs into mainstream classrooms. Evidence from Finnish schools shows that co-teaching not only increases learning opportunities for all students but also strengthens the professional community and supports teacher well-being, all of which are reinforced by national policy and curriculum frameworks (EDUFI, n.d.-b; EDUFI, 2016; EDUFI, 2014/2020).

In Finland, continuing professional development (CPD) is robustly supported by the state, which allocated over €15 million in 2023 specifically for CPD activities emphasising inclusive culture, mental health literacy and collective leadership skills (Eurydice, 2024). Although teachers are required by collective agreements to participate in CPD for one to five days annually, many engage voluntarily beyond these statutory minimums, motivated primarily by professional growth and well-being benefits (Eurydice, 2024). CPD is organised by different providers, including universities and specialised teacher training institutions, and it encompasses various forms such as self-motivated, employer-funded and state-funded training linked to education policy priorities (Eurydice, 2024).

Notably, CPD programmes include specific modules on stress management, positive pedagogy and social-emotional learning (SEL), which equip educators to foster psychologically safe and supportive learning environments (EDUFI, 2023b). The Ministry of Education and Culture's Teacher Education Forum actively promotes these themes within the national Teacher Education Development Programme 2022–2026, aiming to enhance inclusive operational culture and collective leadership competencies among education professionals (Eurydice, 2024; EDUFI, 2023b).

Furthermore, Finnish teacher education encourages a *research-oriented and reflective practice*, where teachers continuously analyse and innovate their teaching methods to meet diverse student needs. This approach supports teacher autonomy and well-being by valuing professional agency and ongoing learning (Korpi, 2025).

Nationwide training sessions have focused on promoting healthy digital habits, preventing digital overexposure and addressing the balanced use of technology, internet and social media among students (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023).

Overall, Finnish teacher education builds the capacity of school personnel to become emotionally intelligent professionals who are equipped to contribute to a psychologically safe and health-promoting school environment.

### **3.1. Collaborative school culture**

Finnish schools prioritise trust, autonomy and collaboration. Professional learning communities are common, allowing teachers to co-develop practices and reflect on well-being in teaching. Student participation is encouraged, with class meetings and school-wide student bodies contributing to decisions on school environment and daily routines. This shared responsibility model fosters a sense of belonging, equity and inclusivity, which are essential to well-being (EDUFI, 2022).

## **4. Reforming teaching practice and classroom management**

### **4.1. Pedagogical approaches supporting well-being**

Well-being is promoted through active, student-centred learning methods emphasising autonomy, problem-solving, cooperation and emotional safety. Examples include phenomenon-based learning that integrates real-world problems; cooperative learning and dialogue-based instruction; positive pedagogy, promoting strengths-based feedback and a growth mindset. These practices are embedded in daily teaching, reducing performance pressure and enhancing motivation and emotional security.

Schools implement social-emotional learning (SEL) curricula that nurture emotional regulation, empathy and resilience. Flexible schedules, varied learning spaces and outdoor activities are encouraged to reduce stress and support physical health (EDUFI, 2016).

In strategies, classroom management is seen as a component of pedagogical leadership and emotional literacy. Teachers are trained to use inclusive and proactive strategies, such as restorative practices; clear routines and participatory rule-setting; regulation-supportive environments for students with challenging behaviours. The Finnish model promotes teacher autonomy, while expecting high ethical standards and relational competencies.

### **4.1. Preventive and early intervention**

Schools deploy screening and assessment tools to identify students at risk early. Referral pathways involving welfare teams ensure timely support. Peer support programmes, anti-bullying policies and mental health campaigns contribute to a positive school climate. Initiatives such as the [KiVa](#) anti-bullying programme have been adapted in Finnish schools, providing evidence-based tools to prevent bullying and promote inclusivity ([Parents' guide](#)).

## **5. Strengthening intersectoral and interinstitutional collaboration**

### **5.1. Coordination between education and health services and referral mechanisms**

While multidisciplinary student welfare teams operate within individual schools, Finland's model of intersectoral and interinstitutional collaboration extends support beyond the school environment.

This broader system involves coordinated partnerships between schools and external health and social services, ensuring a continuum of care for students with complex or multifaceted needs. When a student requires specialised interventions, well-defined referral protocols are followed, often involving parental consent, and multi-agency teams are convened to design and monitor holistic support plans (Kela, 2024; Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2023).

Key to this coordination are school nurses and psychologists, who serve as primary liaisons between the school and external services. The national digital health and welfare record system – Kanta Services – facilitates secure, efficient information sharing among professionals, while upholding privacy and confidentiality (Kela, 2024). This integration ensures timely interventions and seamless care pathways, reinforcing the principle that student well-being is a shared responsibility across education, health and social sectors (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2023; Finnish National Agency for Education [EDUFI], n.d.-b).

## 5.2. Youth participation in well-being governance

Youth are systematically involved in policymaking processes through mechanisms such as national youth councils and school-level student boards, a practice underpinned by Finnish legislation that actively promotes youth participation in well-being governance. The Youth Act (1285/2016) mandates municipalities to provide platforms for young people to participate meaningfully in planning and evaluating services that affect them (Finlex, 2016). Mechanisms include national youth councils and school-level student boards, ensuring youth voices influence policies and service design. Well-being surveys often incorporate questions co-created with youth, further embedding their perspectives in data collection and policy feedback loops.

A concrete example is the Helsinki Regional Youth Council (*Helsingin seudun nuorisovaltuusto*), (Youth Helsinki, n.d.), which engages metropolitan youth in consultation on education, mental health and social inclusion. The Council has launched mental health awareness campaigns in schools and has contributed to improving digital well-being curricula. Feedback from participants reveals increased trust in authorities and a stronger sense of ownership over well-being initiatives. Local or municipal decision-makers have recognised the Council's contributions by integrating youth recommendations into regional youth policies and dedicating budgets for youth-led well-being projects. This exemplifies the effectiveness of structured youth participation in enhancing policy responsiveness and empowerment.

## 6. Evidence-based education policymaking

### 6.1. School health promotion study

The School Health Promotion Study, conducted biennially since 1996 by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), provides nationally comparable data on student health, well-being and school experiences. It covers comprehensive samples of students in grades 4, 5, 8, and upper secondary education. SHPS data support local and national planning, monitoring and research activities. Schools receive customised feedback reports facilitating targeted well-being interventions (EDUFI, 2022).

### 6.2. Policy adjustments informed by research

School Health Promotion Study findings inform key policy documents such as the National Development Plan for Education and Research and local well-being strategies. EDUFI collaborates on pilot projects and impact evaluations that continuously refine well-being policies. For example, School Health Promotion Study data revealing rising screen time among adolescents led to nationwide campaigns promoting digital balance and well-being (EDUFI, 2024). Such dynamic adjustment mechanisms ensure policies remain relevant and responsive to evolving well-being needs. SHPS data are not only descriptive but also formative.

The School Well-Being Profile Tool (*Hyvinvointiprofiili*) is an evidence-based online platform that helps measure and track the well-being of a school (Koulun hyvinvointiprofiili, n.d.). This tool enables schools to design and monitor customised interventions based on evidence, ensuring that mental health promotion is embedded in curricula, classroom practices and extracurricular activities (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare [THL], 2025; Finnish National Agency for Education [EDUFI], 2014).

However, such policies have sparked a national discussion about student autonomy, digital literacy and equitable enforcement. Critics warn that blanket bans may inadvertently exclude students who rely on phones for learning support or social connection, particularly those with special educational needs or migrant backgrounds. Consequently, MEC's 2023 guidelines recommend co-creating school-level digital well-being strategies instead of imposing top-down restrictions, balancing autonomy with well-being (MEC, 2023).

From a comparative perspective, such measures may be challenging to replicate in contexts where school governance is more centralised or where students rely heavily on personal devices due to a lack of institutional digital infrastructure. Nonetheless, Finland's approach illustrates how evidence-based, locally adapted initiatives developed through trust-based collaboration can improve school well-being, while respecting diverse student needs – a model that may be challenging to replicate in more centralised systems (Finnish National Agency for Education [EDUFI], 2022).

The Finnish National Agency for Education points out that many schools already ban disruptive mobile-phone use during lessons and urges the other institutions to adopt the same policy. Under the current law, teachers may instruct students to keep their phones in their pockets or schoolbags to avoid distractions, and the practice of 'phone parking' (placing devices in a designated classroom spot) is permitted only on a voluntary basis, as ruled by the Deputy Parliamentary Ombudsman (Finnish National Agency for Education [EDUFI], 2024).

The Finnish National Agency for Education has launched an open expert network to draft national recommendations that balance children's and adolescents' leisure-time use of digital devices with their well-being and safety needs (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare [THL], 2024).

### **Examples of promising practices in Finnish schools**

In Finland, the promotion of student well-being is supported not only by robust national frameworks and teacher education, but also by the implementation of innovative, evidence-based programmes. These initiatives integrate mental health promotion, social-emotional learning and community engagement into everyday school life. Below are two exemplary practices that have demonstrated measurable benefits for both students and their wider social environments.

#### **1) Let's Talk about Children**

Let's Talk about Children is a three-year project running in nine European countries. It is based on a brief, evidence-based, child-centred intervention also called Let's Talk about Children (LTC). Project actions aim to promote positive parenting within vulnerable families and take a universal approach by implementing the LTC project in primary and secondary school settings, providing a tool for better home-school collaboration.

The Let's Talk about Children (LTC) intervention promotes children's mental health and prevents the intergenerational transmission of problems by identifying strengths, resources and everyday solutions for children, parents, teachers and families. The LTC intervention is a two-step model: 1. the LTC discussion, which is usually conducted in one or two sessions – depicting the child's ordinary day and concluding with an action plan made with the parents to build upon identified strengths and address pressures; and 2. the LTC network meeting that provides a forum for case-based cross-sectoral collaboration, also involving the families and their social networks. Practitioners have flexible logbooks tailored to different ages and settings, and the Romanian versions are already available.

The LTC project has proven to be both practical and appreciated in schools. Allemand, Niemelä, Merikukka and Salmela-Aro (2023) found that when used in a school setting, the LTC intervention was delivered with high fidelity; parents felt the atmosphere was positive and reported real benefits.

## 2) Gutsy Go

Gutsy Go is a school-based programme mainly targeted at youth aged 13-15. This positive youth development intervention is designed to enhance adolescents' psychosocial well-being by enabling them to develop and carry out good deeds within the community. The programme combines service-learning pedagogy, media pedagogy and social action training. It consists of three components: coach training, an activity week and showcasing good deeds.

The programme requires teachers to attend a three-day Gutsy Go Coach training and teenagers to attend a two-to-five-day Gutsy Sparks Mentor training. After that, the intervention involves a week in which teenagers are challenged to find solutions to problems in their own city. During the activity week, teenagers co-create a project plan, execute it in different city locations and then present their results (documenting them on video). The activity week leads to many positive actions benefiting the entire community. While viral videos create visibility and some projects are integrated into schoolwork, the true benefits are teenagers' increased motivation and skills development. By working together to help others, young people can strengthen their own well-being and self-esteem.

Ahrnberg, Appelqvist-Schmidlechner, Mustonen, Fröjd & Aktan-Collan (2022) found that the Gutsy Go programme could improve adolescents' experience of social inclusion, cooperation skills, and empathy.

### Policy learning implications for the Romanian education system

Finland's integrative, data-informed and participatory approach offers a comprehensive model that could inform the development of well-being policies in Romania. Key transferable elements include:

- Institutionalisation of school-specific well-being plans;
- Use of nationwide health and well-being surveys to guide interventions;
- Legal mandates for mental health services in schools;
- Embedding SEL and mental health literacy in the curriculum;
- Empowering students as co-creators of school climate policies.

Romania could benefit greatly from developing structured teacher training modules in well-being education and setting up intersectoral school welfare teams that collaborate across education, health and social services.

Another relevant area in which Romania could learn from Finland is initial teacher training and the way pedagogical training approaches SEL. In Finland, initial teacher education systematically integrates Social

and Emotional Learning (SEL) as a core component of pedagogical training. The curriculum includes modules that develop teachers' social-emotional competencies such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy and relationship skills, which are essential for fostering supportive and inclusive learning environments.

Specifically, Finnish teacher training programmes incorporate the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) framework, adapted to local educational contexts. Trainees engage in practical activities such as self-assessment of SEL skills, development of self-care strategies and designing lesson plans that embed SEL objectives. For example, the 'Leading with SEL – Educators & Classrooms' course offers modules on understanding SEL, integrating it into curricula and fostering educator well-being, drawing inspiration from Finnish educational practices (CCE Finland, 2020).

Moreover, SEL is embedded in the national curriculum across subjects and transversal competences, emphasising skills like emotional regulation, empathy and responsible decision-making from early childhood education through upper secondary levels (OECD, 2021). Teacher education prepares

educators to apply these principles in everyday school life, supporting whole-school well-being initiatives and inclusive pedagogy (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

## Spain

Spain embeds social-emotional learning through the 'personal, social and learning to learn' key competence, finances mental health and well-being initiatives via annual Emotional Well-Being in Education grants (since 2022, planned to end by December 2025) and promotes cooperation between the education and health sectors; nevertheless, implementation and referral protocols still vary across autonomous communities because both systems are decentralised.

### 1. Strengthening institutional and legislative capacity

#### Legislation and policy context

In June 2025, Spain's Ministry of Education launched a new €5 million Programme for Emotional Well-Being in Schools for the 2025/2026 academic year, extending the pilot initiatives rolled out in 2022 and 2023. The grant allows each autonomous community to deliver the measures locally (Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, 2025). Aligned with the National Mental Health Strategy, the Programme for Emotional Well-Being in Schools addresses students' emotional well-being and mental health needs through targeted educational interventions (Ministerio de Sanidad, 2022). Previous laws include Organic Law 3/2020 (Jefatura del Estado, 2020), which calls on schools to nurture learners' personal, social and professional competencies, while the current National Mental Health Strategy (2022-2026) identifies schools as the prime arena for prevention among children and adolescents (Ministerio de Sanidad, 2022).

National and regional laws on education, as well as the different levels of the education system, address emotional well-being. The National Mental Health Strategy (2022–2026) emphasises the need for coordination between the health and education sectors. The legal framework is based on Organic Law 3/2020, which identifies the development of students' emotional, social and ethical capacities as a core aim of the education system. These competencies are integrated across all subjects and stages, as detailed in the following royal decrees:

- For early childhood education – Royal Decree (RD) 95/2022 (ages 0-6) (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2022a) establishes the minimum curriculum and emphasises inclusive education, emotional development and the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- For primary education (ages 6-12) – RD 157/2022 (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2022b) confirms the integration of *emotional and social competencies* into the curriculum and outlines *competency-based learning*.
- For secondary education (Baccalaureate) – RD 243/2022 (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2022c) establishes the organisation of the Baccalaureate and minimum teaching requirements, reinforces the same principles and includes *emotional development* and *citizenship education* as part of the curriculum.

Each curriculum framework weaves personal, social and learning to learn competences into subject criteria (language, civic values, etc.). Implementation practices vary across Spain's different autonomous regions.

The personal, social and learning to learn competence, a key competence in the graduate profile at both primary and basic levels, involves the capacity to reflect on oneself in order to achieve self-awareness, acceptance and continuous personal growth; manage time and information effectively; collaborate constructively with others; maintain resilience; and manage lifelong learning. It also includes the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity; adapt to change; manage metacognitive processes; identify

behaviours that hinder coexistence and develop strategies to address them; contribute to one's own and others' physical, mental and emotional well-being by developing self-care and care for others through shared responsibility; be able to lead a future-oriented life; and express empathy and address conflict in an inclusive and supportive manner. (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, n.d.-b).

One example of a local project that has become a best practice is the DPT STEPS-A programme. The Basque Country's Mental Health Strategy 2023–2028 formally recognises the Resilience and Socio-Emotional Curriculum Project for Adolescent Students in Biscay (DBT STEPS-A) – detailed below – as a best practice for promoting mental health in childhood and adolescence and fighting the discrimination and social stigmatisation of children and adolescents with mental disorders (Fernández-Rivas, 2024, p.35).

Also, the [Mental Health Assistance Strategy 2024–2030](#), implemented by the Autonomous Community of Castilla y León, serves as a comprehensive framework for promoting psychological well-being and improving mental health services across the region.

## 2. Promoting SEL, well-being and mental health in schools

As already mentioned, Royal Decree 217/2022 of 29 March, which sets out the structure and minimum curriculum for compulsory secondary education, lists the 'personal, social and learning to learn competence' as a core skill. This competence is described as the ability to engage in self-reflection, gain self-knowledge and self-acceptance and commit to lifelong personal growth; manage time and information effectively; work constructively with others; remain resilient; and take charge of one's own learning. It also encompasses coping with uncertainty and complexity, adapting to change and steering one's metacognitive processes.

Media reports and recent surveys indicate a sharp rise in anxiety, ADHD and self-harm among students (ANPE, 2024; RTVE, 2024). Each autonomous community has developed referral protocols for students needing mental health support (Agència de Salut Pública de Catalunya, 2023; Comunidad de Madrid, 2025). When therapeutic intervention is required, students are typically referred to external mental health services (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2025 a, b).

In Andalusia, the regional government has implemented comprehensive protocols to address suicide risk and self-harming behaviours among students. This includes individualised prevention and protection plans, immediate response procedures and coordinated action between educational and health services (Junta de Andalucía, 2023). The example set by the Autonomous Community of Castilla

y León is particularly noteworthy for establishing a coordinated detection and alert network across the health, education and social sectors. The region created the Emotional Well-Being Unit (Unidad de Bienestar Emocional – UBE) and reinforced school guidance departments. The strategy includes annual training for educators and a structured referral system involving mental health professionals and school staff.

Spain's new National Mental Health Action Plan 2025–2027 dedicates Line 6 to perinatal, child and adolescent mental health, calling for closer coordination with services such as those in the education sector, though it offers limited operational guidance (Ministerio de Sanidad, 2025).

There is no general, CASEL-style framework for everyday classroom use. Instead, the Ministry of Education runs the previously mentioned Emotional Well-Being in Schools programme, which will end in December 2026. It also distributes funds to regions for local pilot initiatives (Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, n.d.-a).

The Programme, initially launched in 2022, aims to strengthen the capacity of educational staff through training in emotional well-being and mental health literacy. This training supports both the early detection of potential issues and the development of a supportive and secure learning environment.

Another key goal is to promote professional development grounded in best practices for supporting children and adolescents, with an emphasis on safeguarding their fundamental rights. The Programme also seeks to improve staff awareness of existing referral protocols for students considered at risk, facilitating rapid access to primary mental health services. Moreover, it encourages the sharing of effective strategies to enhance students' emotional health, monitor related challenges in schools, reduce negative academic or social consequences and address stigma. Raising awareness of the risks associated with digital overuse and addictive behaviours, whether substance-related or not, is also a priority. The initiative further supports community-based approaches by fostering collaboration among school staff, healthcare providers and local organisations that assist youth. To that end, it promotes the development and distribution of educational resources on mental health for the entire school community. Lastly, it aims to "increase human resources in school support and guidance sections and departments, taking into account the peculiarities and differences in the structures of each regional educational administration, aimed at intervention in the promotion of students' emotional well-being and mental health" (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2025c).

The 2025/2026 edition of the Programmes for Emotional Well-Being in Education benefits from a budget of €5 million, which is allocated to autonomous communities based on the number of publicly funded schools, the number of students enrolled in those schools and factors related to population dispersion and insularity. Each community has to spend the money on the Programme's eligible lines of action: 1) providing teaching relief or extended release time for designated Well-Being and Protection Coordinators, enabling them to focus on prevention, coordination and student support activities; 2) recruiting specialised professionals to strengthen human resources for student mental health and well-being and 3) delivering training, dissemination and material development activities focused on priority risk and prevention areas, such as emotional health, suicide prevention, violence and stigma reduction, digital risks, substance-related and behavioural addictions and the strengthening of protective factors and positive parenting practices. All expenditure has to be tracked via an initial implementation report, continuous technical oversight and a final financial and outcomes report, to be submitted to the Ministry of Education by 31 March 2027 (Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, 2025).

Here are some examples of how this Programme has funded initiatives of the autonomous communities:

- The Catalan Department of Education launched its Emotional Well-Being Support Programme, with a team of 20 experts – comprising two coordinators, 17 educational psychologists and an administrative officer, with regular input from external specialists – to help schools tackle students' mental health challenges. Operating a weekday helpline (08:00-19:00), the team offers real-time advice, on-site emergency intervention, classroom activities focused on emotional regulation and continuous guidance for head teachers, tutors and support staff in upper primary, secondary and post-compulsory education. In parallel, it develops teaching materials, provides teacher training and produces practical tools for families (Departament d'Educació, 2023).
- The Community of Madrid's 'Bienestar Emocional en el ámbito educativo' platform offers 15 classroom-ready units grouped into five thematic blocks: A) Social & Emotional Skills, B) Coexistence and Violence Prevention, C) Health Protective Factors, D) Addiction and Gang Involvement Prevention, and E) Responsible Social Media Use & Data Protection (Comunidad de Madrid, Consejería de Educación, 2024).
- Autonomous communities also have other programmes of their own, which have been in place before the Programmes for Emotional Well-Being in Education, such as:
  - Andalusia – 'Escuela: Espacio de Paz' (Peace & emotional education network) (Junta de Andalucía, n.d.).
  - Madrid – Framework for school coexistence and emotional well-being (Regional Decree 10718/2021) (Comunidad de Madrid, Consejería de Educación, 2021).

References to other educational regulations and royal decrees (RDs) concerning different stages of the education system – such as RD 95/2022 for Early Childhood Education and RD 157/2022 for Primary Education – generally mention emotional education and the development of personal and social competencies. However, these references tend to be broad and lack specific implementation guidelines or clearly defined objectives.

There is no unified model for training in social and emotional competencies. This results in a fragmented approach, with significant variation in how these skills are taught and integrated into the curriculum across different regions and schools. Therefore, we will focus on practices that have proven to be effective for certain relevant skills within the SEL spectrum.

### 3. Developing human resource capacity in education

Initial teacher degrees and postgraduate teacher training master programmes include some content on classroom climate, emotional intelligence and bullying prevention, but coverage varies across universities. Continuous professional development centres offer short courses on emotional education, teacher well-being and risky behaviour prevention.

The National Institute for Educational Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF) is the unit within the Spanish Ministry of Education and Training responsible for the integration of digital technologies into pre-university education and continuous teacher training (including topics on digital well-being). Each autonomous community has centres and platforms where they offer continuing education courses on well-being, including courses on teacher well-being.

Guidance is recognised as a student right and a quality factor in education. All secondary schools therefore maintain their own guidance and counselling services. “Spanish guidance counsellors working for the education public sector are mainly psychologists or pedagogues (Master’s degree) that have passed a competitive exam to become civil servants” (Euroguidance, 2024).

### 4. Reforming teaching practice and classroom management

A best practice example is the **DBT STEPS-A initiative in Biscay** (‘Resilience and socio-emotional curriculum project for adolescent students in Biscay’), which involved the solid and thorough testing of a socio-emotional curriculum in secondary schools. Within this project, mental health experts first trained teachers, then teachers trained students (Fernández-Rivas, 2024). This is a multi-layer and whole-school approach.

The ‘Resilience and socio-emotional curriculum project for adolescent students in Biscay’ is mentioned as a best practice on the website of the European Commission’s event ‘Best and promising practices on mental health’.

The programme aims to promote and prevent adolescent mental health through the implementation of social-emotional education in schools. Teachers train students in the classroom (an experiential, skills-based form of learning) in 30 sessions of 50 minutes, once per week throughout the school year. DBT STEPS-A focuses on the following skills: dialectics (increasing flexibility and avoiding extreme positioning), mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness. All students take the core class, but those showing early warning signs join a smaller group with two teachers/classroom, and those with more chronic and complex needs will require a complementary intervention at an individual level. The programme started in 2017 and it has included parent training and a whole-school approach since 2019. Impact is tracked with before-and-after questionnaires on emotional symptoms, behaviour and peer relations, using control classes for comparison; results after the first year showed clear improvements, especially in vulnerable students. All teachers, students and parents evaluated the programmes positively and found the skills useful.

## 5. Strengthening intersectoral and interinstitutional collaboration

Objective 5.1 of Spain's National Mental Health Strategy (2022-2026) calls for a concerted, multi-agency effort to protect mental health from childhood through late adolescence, focusing on prevention and early detection (Ministerio de Sanidad, 2022). Schools are expected to nurture key protective factors – resilience, self-esteem, social competence, decision-making and conflict resolution skills within a safe, positive climate that encourages prosocial behaviour and healthy lifestyle choices.

Amid Spain's regionally differentiated approach to school mental health collaboration, the 2023 [Intersectoral Protocol for the Prevention of Suicidal Behaviour in Students](#) from Andalusia offers an innovative model that Romanian teachers and schools could adapt to strengthen their own suicide prevention efforts; the full text can be consulted by clicking on the name of the protocol (Junta de Andalucía, 2023).

## 6. Evidence-based education policymaking

There is data available for practices implemented at the regional level in Spain's autonomous communities.

One such best practice comes from the Biscay region: the DBT STEPS-A programme, which has been recognised on the European Commission's Best and Promising Practices portal for its structured, evidence-informed approach to strengthening students' emotional regulation and resilience in school settings (Fernández-Rivas, 2024).

Between 2017 and 2019, the programme reached 1,395 students aged 12-17 (mean age: 13.73) over the course of one or two academic years. A separate control group of 182 students of similar age (mean: 13.38) did not receive the intervention, providing a robust baseline for impact evaluation. This rigorous use of control groups strengthens the programme's scientific credibility and can lead to data-driven educational policies at the regional level. In Biscay, the DBT STEPS-A programme showed that teaching emotional and social skills in a structured way can make a real difference for teenagers and a positive impact was observed, especially among the most vulnerable. Post-intervention measures showed reduced emotional symptoms, behavioural problems and hyperactivity among secondary school students and enhanced positive behaviours.

Moreover, satisfaction with the programmes was high among all members of the school community: teachers felt "competent in social-emotional teaching and evaluated that DBT STEPS-A improved their well-being and coexistence in the classroom; students felt empowered, valued themselves more

highly, resolved serious problems in the classroom and felt that teachers were more involved in their needs; parents asked for more sessions and felt that the training received helped them to clarify difficult situations that arose at home"(Fernández-Rivas, 2024, pp.23-29).

Examples of promising practices in Spanish schools:

- The 'Resilience and Socio-Emotional Curriculum Project for Adolescent Students in Biscay', presented earlier, is listed as a best practice on the European Commission's Best Practices on Mental Health portal, which features a presentation of the project and its results (European Commission, 2024). DBT STEPS-A-inspired curricula have also been implemented in Ireland, Catalonia (Spain), the United Kingdom and the United States, with promising results reported across various school settings (Flynn et al., 2018; Gasol et al., 2022; Hastings et al., 2022; HSE, 2017).
- The training programme on mental health for school reference nurses in Andalusia (NurSch-MH) is an example of a Spanish best practice presented on the website of the European Commission's event 'Best and promising practices on mental health'. The programme addressed a public health priority in Andalusia, the early detection of depression and preventing suicide among school-aged individuals (Crespo-Facorro, 2024). Its main aims were to improve school nurses' knowledge

and competence in the early identification of and support for depression and suicide risk in school-aged children and adolescents; enhance nurses' confidence levels about clinical assessments and recommendations; and increase multi-professional cooperation with other school personnel and mental health services. A total of 361 school nurses were trained in Andalusia in an e-learning format of 30 hours, covering seven modules, and a final webinar of two hours with experts in suicide prevention in childhood and adolescence.

## Policy learning implications for the Romanian education system

Spain presents different regional programmes that advance emotional well-being in schools. This territorial diversity stimulates innovation and allows each autonomous community to tailor interventions to local needs; however, it also complicates rigorous research, comparative evaluation and the large-scale replication of effective models.

Romania could pilot three of the Spanish examples discussed above. First, the DBT STEPS-A curriculum from Biscay – tested with control groups and strong outcome data – could be introduced in a small cohort of lower secondary schools and tested in order to build evidence on adolescents' emotion regulation skills. According to the project presentation, the programme cost about €25.80 per student in the first year, making it cost effective. Overall, DBT STEPS-A offers a practical, low-cost and inclusive model for improving adolescent emotional health – one that could be adapted and tested in Romania as well.

Second, the NurSch-MH e-learning programme from Andalusia could be adapted for Romania's school nurses and school doctors (maybe even school counsellors), improving the early detection of depression and suicide risk.

Finally, elements of Spain's national 'Bienestar Emocional' grant scheme could be adapted, providing counties with flexible funding and common quality indicators to scale up successful evidence-based pilots.

## France

France presents a compelling example of a **holistic, inclusive and forward-thinking education system**, where SEL and well-being are integrated into every layer of schooling, from legislative design to classroom practice, family engagement and policy evaluation. The French experience highlights the impact of sustained, multi-professional investment in students' mental health and personal development.

Such a model provides **valuable guidance for Romania**, where structural investment in school climate, early mental health prevention, SEL integration into the curriculum and teacher training remains at a developmental stage.

### 1. Strengthening institutional and legislative capacity

#### 1.1. A national framework for health-promoting schools

Since 2020, France has redefined the role of education through the launch of the *École Promotrice de Santé* (Health-Promoting School) initiative, aligning national policy with the WHO's holistic definition of health, namely "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being" (Éducation nationale, 2020). This marked a shift from traditional risk-focused approaches to a developmental model supporting lifelong health behaviours and proactive well-being promotion.

The initiative encourages schools to integrate well-being into curricula, school governance, interpersonal relationships and community engagement, positioning schools as active agents of public health. For example, in the *Académie de Lyon*, pilot institutions have adopted whole-school strategies prioritising mental health awareness, inclusive climates and accessible counselling (Éducation nationale, 2020;

Éducation nationale, Santé publique France, 2016). These approaches have been associated with increased student engagement and reduced behavioural issues.

Institutionally, the programme is embedded in national education priorities and monitored through periodic regional audits in partnership with regional health agencies (ARS), ensuring accountability and adaptability at the local level.

#### 4.2. Legislative commitment to mental health in schools

The legal foundation for well-being was further strengthened in 2022, when the ministerial circular MENE2219299C (*Circulaire de rentrée 2022*) formally recognised student well-being as a central goal of the education system (MENJ-DGESCO, 2022). This legislative advance requires schools to assign equal importance to academic learning and learner mental health, embedding well-being in institutional strategies, resource allocation and evaluation mechanisms.

In 2023, France adopted a national mental health protocol that formalises the responsibilities of education authorities in responding to psychological crises, supporting students with chronic mental health conditions and implementing suicide prevention frameworks. One flagship measure is the introduction of mental health first aiders (*secouristes en santé mentale*), who are trained based on international best practices and deployed across schools to provide early identification and support (Santé publique France, 2022; Éducation nationale, n.d.-g).

Additionally, schools are required to disseminate information about the national psychological support hotline (3114) via student diaries and on-site posters, aiming to ensure visibility and destigmatise help-seeking behaviours (Éducation nationale, 2023). These initiatives are part of a systemic effort to foster an inclusive and responsive school ecosystem (environment) that treats well-being as a systemic priority, not as an auxiliary service.

## 2. Promoting student well-being and mental health

France employs a multidimensional framework<sup>2</sup> for student well-being, built around seven pillars: emotional support, physical health, social connection, mental resilience, academic engagement, personal development and community involvement. These principles are embedded through policy, school programmes, student voice and family engagement.

### 2.1. Programmes for social-emotional learning and mental health

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is systematically addressed in France through national programmes such as pHARe, the country's flagship anti-bullying initiative, which employs a whole-school, systemic approach to school climate and emotional safety. Launched in 2021 and made compulsory in all primary and secondary schools by 2023, pHARe (*Prévenir, HAbilité, Réagir* – Prevent, Empower, Respond) targets bullying and violence through five key pillars: prevention education, a trained protective community, intervention mechanisms, family and partner engagement and mobilisation of student democratic bodies (Éducation nationale, n.d.-a; Éducation nationale, 2023).

To ensure implementation, each school has to train at least five staff members as pHARe focal points, a requirement monitored through regular reporting to academic authorities and subject to inspection. These focal points are responsible for coordinating anti-bullying actions, while student ambassadors are designated to raise awareness and detect incidents within the school community (Éducation nationale, 2023).

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<sup>2</sup> This framework is part of the national initiative *École promotrice de santé* launched by the French Ministry of National Education in 2020 and strengthened by the ministerial circular MENE2219299C (*Circulaire de rentrée 2022*). See: <https://eduscol.education.fr/2063/je-souhaite-m-engager-dans-la-demarche-ecole-promotrice-de-sante>; <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/22/Hebdo26/MENE2219299C.htm>

Schools are also required to adhere to a national protocol for responding to bullying, which includes:

- Immediate safety planning for victims,
- Provision of psychological and educational support,
- Parental involvement at each stage,
- Clear disciplinary procedures for perpetrators,
- Ongoing monitoring of the situation.

The protocol is designed to ensure a rapid, coordinated and confidential response to all reported cases (Éducation nationale, 2023). In addition, the *3018 anti-bullying* helpline number must be visibly displayed in all student planners and throughout school premises, guaranteeing accessibility and promoting help-seeking behaviour (Éducation nationale, n.d.-a).

Complementing pHARe, France addresses sexual and gender-based violence through *Eduscol guidelines*, which promote awareness, prevention and the integration of these topics into the broader framework of inclusive school safety (Éducation nationale, n.d.-b).

La Mallette des Parents, a national digital toolbox, supports family-school collaboration on student mental health by providing guidance on emotional development, digital well-being and stress management. The platform offers expert videos, conversation templates and practical strategies to strengthen resilience at home (Éducation nationale, n.d.-g). Parental training is organised through school-based workshops and digital modules, focusing on the prevention of mental health risks by raising awareness of emotional well-being, stress management and the early signs of psychological distress in children. While participation rates vary by region and school, these initiatives are part of a nationwide effort to equip parents with the tools needed to support their children's mental health (Éducation nationale, Eduscol, 2024).

Since 2023, France has strengthened school-based mental health support through three core measures as a crisis response:

- A revised national mental health protocol, clarifying procedures for detecting and responding to psychological distress, including referral and crisis management pathways;
- Nationwide training of mental health first aiders (*secouristes en santé mentale*) in lower secondary schools, equipping staff to recognise early warning signs and provide immediate assistance;
- Widespread dissemination of the 3114 suicide prevention hotline in school diaries and on premises, aiming to normalise and facilitate help-seeking (Éducation nationale, 2023).

These initiatives are informed by robust national data from the Enabee and EnCLASS surveys, conducted by the French National Public Health Agency (Santé publique France) in partnership with the Ministry of Education. These surveys systematically monitor student well-being, providing granular, up-to-date evidence to guide both national and local interventions in mental health promotion (Santé publique France, 2022; ENCLASS, n.d.).

## 2.2. Democratic participation and emotional skills

Student involvement in school governance is a recognised contributor to well-being. Councils such as the CVC (Conseil de la Vie Collégienne – Middle School Student Council) and CVL (Conseil de la Vie Lycéenne – High School Student Council) provide platforms for student voice and engagement. National guidance encourages these bodies to promote empathy, cooperation and shared responsibility (Éducation nationale, n.d.-e).

At Lycée Joliot-Curie in Nanterre, the student council includes a *commission bien-être* (well-being commission), running awareness campaigns, peer mediation and wellness spaces, fostering inclusive environments and emotional development through collective action.

### 2.3. Inclusive education and personal growth

SEL and ethical reflection are integrated into curricula through moral and civic education (*Éducation morale et civique* – EMC), which addresses empathy, ethics and cooperation (Éducation nationale, n.d.-k).

To address and combat academic stress and inequality, programmes such as *Devoirs faits* (Homework Completion) offer supervised homework support, particularly targeting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These sessions reduce academic burden, reinforce motivation and promote a supportive learning atmosphere (Éducation nationale, n.d.-h).

*École ouverte* (Open School), another inclusive initiative, provides educational and recreational activities during school holidays for vulnerable students. This programme blends academic reinforcement with social-emotional experiences, ensuring that learners continue to grow in safe, structured environments outside of traditional school hours (Éducation nationale, n.d.-i).

### 2.4. Physical health as a lever for well-being

Physical activity is a recognised lever for student well-being in France. All primary schools are now required to implement 30 minutes of daily physical activity, supplementing regular physical education classes. This initiative, part of the Health-Promoting School model, supports concentration, emotional regulation and physical development (Éducation nationale, n.d.-c).

The *parcours éducatif de santé* further ensures a continuous health education trajectory from early childhood to adolescence. Themes such as nutrition, hygiene, emotional regulation and risk prevention are systematically integrated into school programmes, contributing to holistic health and well-being (Éducation nationale, n.d.-d).

## 3. Developing human resource capacity

### 3.1. Mental health training for school staff

Since 2023, the French Ministry of Education has mandated training modules on mental health first aid as part of both initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD), with the objective of training 10,000 school professionals annually. These modules are designed to equip staff with core competencies in identifying the early signs of psychological distress, conducting supportive dialogue and engaging collaboratively with school psychologists and healthcare services.

Implemented in collaboration with Santé publique France and the Mutuelle Générale de l'Éducation Nationale (MGEN), the initiative is systematically integrated into the curricula of INSPEs (National Institutes for Teaching and Education) and regional education academies. For instance, the *Académie de Bordeaux* offers interdisciplinary workshops for all new teachers, with scenario-based learning focused on anxiety, trauma, self-harm and referral pathways (Éducation nationale, 2023).

This national strategy aligns with the broader pHARe programme, which requires every school to designate and train a minimum of five staff members as part of a dedicated anti-bullying resource team. These staff members receive structured training in emotional regulation, peer mediation and bullying prevention and intervention, creating a consistent and systemic capacity for safeguarding student well-being across institutions.

Training also addresses related areas such as gender inclusion, civic values (*laïcité* – secularism) and the promotion of a positive school climate, reinforcing a holistic approach to inclusive and supportive education (Éducation nationale, n.d.-f).

### 3.2. Embedding SEL in teacher education

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is increasingly embedded within both pre-service and in-service teacher training frameworks. INSPEs offer targeted modules such as inclusive classroom management (*gestion de classe inclusive*), conflict mediation (*médiation des conflits*) and child psychology (*psychologie de l'enfant*), which are compulsory components of the MEEF (Métiers de l'enseignement, de l'éducation et de la formation) Master's programme.

INSPE de Paris includes sessions on active listening, emotional development and inclusive pedagogy. CPD offerings include MOOCs (e.g. *Bien-être à l'école*) and Canopé workshops, offering practical tools for SEL, reflective teaching and cooperative learning strategies (OECD, 2021).

Continuous professional development has become compulsory for all teachers since 2019, although the specific content and requirements may vary by sector and region. While certain SEL-related modules, such as inclusive classroom management and conflict mediation, are mandatory within the MEEF Master's programme for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers are required to participate in ongoing training, which may include SEL topics but is not uniformly structured across all levels, particularly in secondary education (Eurydice, 2024).

For in-service teachers, SEL-related CPD is available through national platforms such as Réseau Canopé, which offers workshops and MOOCs on well-being and classroom climate, but participation in specific SEL modules is not systematically compulsory for all secondary school teachers (Eurydice, 2024; OECD, 2021). The national framework encourages schools and local authorities to prioritise SEL in their training plans, yet implementation remains context dependent. These initiatives reflect a national effort to align professional development with SEL, aiming to equip educators with transversal competencies such as empathy, emotional regulation and restorative practices, thereby ensuring they are both academically prepared and emotionally equipped to foster safe, supportive and equitable learning environments, while also highlighting the evolving and differentiated nature of in-service requirements.

## 4. Reforming teaching practice and classroom management

### 4.1. Assessment for learning and mental health

National policy promotes formative assessment to build learner confidence and engagement and reduce stress. Teachers are trained to use diagnostic tools, narrative feedback and self-evaluation strategies. These practices aim to de-emphasise grades in favour of competence development, helping students identify progress and manage school-related stress.

Pilot schools in the *Académie de Créteil* use digital portfolios and peer feedback routines in lower secondary classrooms to support SEL and learner autonomy (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2023).

*Devoirs faits* offers structured homework support during school hours, addressing educational inequality. *École ouverte* provides enrichment activities and support outside term time (MENJ, 2023).

### 4.2. Digital citizenship and AI ethics

To promote digital well-being, France has banned smartphone use during school hours, aiming to reduce distractions, foster social interaction and improve the overall school climate. Curricula also include *education on digital responsibility, AI ethics and online safety*, aligning with EU digital literacy frameworks through modules on *cyberbullying prevention, responsible AI use and the ethical challenges* posed by emerging technologies. Drawing on UNESCO's *Futures of Education* framework, the French education system also aims to embed transversal competencies such as intercultural understanding, digital ethics and identity development (UNESCO, 2021).

To further promote positive digital behaviour, France combines *citizenship education with digital ethics* through the *Éducation aux Médias et à l'Information (EMI) (Media and Information Literacy) curriculum*.

This includes structured lessons on digital identity, online empathy, data privacy, misinformation and respectful communication. Schools frequently collaborate with specialised agencies such as CLEMI (Centre pour l'éducation aux médias et à l'information – Centre for Media and Information Literacy) and CNIL (Commission Nationale de l'Informatique et des Libertés – National Commission for Information Technology and Civil Liberties) to deliver interactive workshops and national awareness campaigns addressing cyberbullying, screen time management and media literacy.

In 2024, the French Ministry of National Education issued new national guidance on the use of artificial intelligence in education. Teachers are encouraged to help students critically engage with digital tools, including generative AI, through pedagogical activities focused on algorithmic bias, ethical dilemmas and the preservation of human agency in digital decision-making. These initiatives aim to empower students to become discerning and ethically responsible users of technology, fostering resilience and a reflective digital citizenship mindset (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Jeunesse, 2024; CLEMI, 2023).

### 4.3. SEL-infused curriculum

France increasingly embeds *social-emotional learning (SEL)* in the national curriculum as a cross-cutting priority to foster student well-being and inclusive classroom dynamics. *Psychosocial competencies*, including empathy, emotional regulation and conflict resolution, are explicitly taught as part of *life skills education* across primary and secondary levels. These skills are foundational to both long-term personal development and social adaptability.

The SEL approach is supported by pedagogical practices that integrate cooperative learning, peer mediation and classroom management strategies. In addition, educators are encouraged to create *emotionally safe classroom environments* that promote self-expression, respectful dialogue and a sense of belonging.

This integration of SEL into curriculum design, teacher training and assessment practices contributes to a *holistic model of education*, where academic achievement is developed in tandem with emotional resilience, civic engagement and ethical awareness.

## 5. Strengthening intersectoral and interinstitutional collaboration

### 5.1. Whole-school and interdisciplinary models

A central component of France's approach to promoting well-being involves strengthening collaboration and partnerships between schools and external stakeholders. Initiatives such as the appointment of mental health focal points (*référénts santé mentale*) in schools, as seen in the *Académie de Marseille*, facilitate integrated psychosocial support, case management and family support, especially for vulnerable students (Santé publique France, 2022). Moreover, family and community engagement are enhanced through *Colos apprenantes*, summer learning camps promoting co-educational environments and family bonding (Jeunes.gouv.fr, n.d.).

This whole-school logic is supported by joint efforts from national actors, including the *Ministry of Education (MENJ)*, *Santé publique France*, and *DGESCO*, as well as independent experts such as paediatricians, public health researchers and psychologists. The result is a stable, robust and interdisciplinary ecosystem for school well-being that aligns professional expertise with the specific needs of each school community.

In France, approximately 17% of the 30,000 guidance and counselling professionals are psychologists. Within the Ministry of Education's guidance centres (CIOs), all counsellors are national education psychologists and civil servants. These professionals, numbering around 4,500, are selected through a competitive examination following a master's degree in psychology and are then required to complete one year of specialised training (Euroguidance, n.d.).

National education psychologists specialising in 'education, development and learning' work with school children. These professionals play a key role in promoting students' psychological well-being and social integration, which, in turn, supports their academic success and helps prevent school disengagement and dropout. National education psychologists specialised in "education, development and counselling in academic and professional orientation" work with secondary and university students to help foster their psychological well-being and support their academic success, while guiding them in shaping their educational and career plans (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, n.d.).

## 5.2. Inclusion and equity through tailored support

France has developed targeted mechanisms to support migrant, refugee and disadvantaged students, recognising the link between emotional well-being, cultural adaptation and academic integration. Units for newly arrived allophone students (UPE2A) offer intensive French language instruction, socio-emotional guidance and cultural mediation. Schools use *multilingual materials, differentiated pedagogical approaches, family orientation programmes* to facilitate smoother transitions and reduce emotional stress associated with resettlement for both students and their families (Éducation nationale, n.d.-l; Éducation nationale, 2023).

In *REP+ zones* (*Réseau d'Éducation Prioritaire Renforcé* – Reinforced Priority Education Network), these supportive initiatives are reinforced by contextualised action plans that adapt curricula and services to ensure emotional safety, equity and meaningful inclusion (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2023).

## 5.3. Promoting student agency and democratic participation

Student voice is recognised as a key dimension of school well-being in France. Structures such as *CVC* (conseils de vie collégienne – middle school student councils) and *CVL* (conseils de vie lycéenne –

high school student councils) are formally recognised participatory bodies that empower students to shape school life and contribute to a positive school climate. These councils foster civic engagement, empathy and cooperation, aligning with the national SEL competence framework (Éducation nationale, n.d.-e).

Several schools have developed 'commissions bien-être' (well-being committees) within these student councils. These lead initiatives such as mental health awareness campaigns, peer support programmes and the creation of dedicated wellness spaces (Éducation nationale, 2023). These opportunities enhance students' sense of belonging, personal agency and social-emotional skills, while contributing to a more positive and inclusive school climate.

## 6. Evidence-based education policymaking

### 6.1. School health promotion studies and tools

France's well-being policies are strongly grounded in systematic data collection and monitoring. National surveys such as *EnCLASS* (connected to the HBSC study) and *Enabee* monitor student well-being, behaviours and emotional health across a range of indicators, including physical activity, anxiety levels, bullying and school climate. These instruments allow for real-time policy calibration and targeted interventions across regions.

For example, the 2022 Enabee data revealed rising emotional distress among adolescents, prompting the Ministry of Education to scale up the *early intervention programme* and *reinforce teacher training in emotional literacy* (Santé publique France, 2022). These findings also informed the *reallocation of resources* towards mental health education, especially in priority education zones (REP+) and the introduction of *daily physical activity sessions* in primary schools.

Digital safety protocols, including helplines like *3018* (cyberbullying) and *3114* (suicide prevention), have also been implemented in response to trends identified through these national tools and

epidemiological analyses. The combination of *real-time data and policy responsiveness* enhances the system's ability to address emerging risks and improve student outcomes.

### **Policy learning implications for the Romanian education system**

France offers Romania a robust, multi-layered model for promoting student well-being, which combines national legislation, institutional reforms and innovative practices. The strategy is built on *collaborative governance*, *evidence-informed policymaking* and *system-wide integration* of mental, emotional and social support mechanisms.

By embedding well-being across *curricula*, *teacher education*, *classroom practices*, *intersectoral partnerships* and *student voice structures*, the French education system ensures that well-being is not a peripheral goal, but a *core educational value*. The use of national data platforms (e.g. Enabee, EnCLASS), continuous teacher development and interdisciplinary networks strengthens the system's capacity to adapt and respond to the evolving needs of students. France's model offers valuable insights, particularly in terms of *scaling up SEL-based training* for educators, *designing holistic mental health protocols* and *building sustainable intersectoral coalitions* for long-term educational and health outcomes. A similar investment in coherent, inclusive frameworks could lead to improved school climate, reduced disparities, greater student engagement, enhanced life satisfaction and stronger foundations for academic achievement and lifelong resilience.

## **Ireland**

Ireland demonstrates a systematic whole-school approach that tightly links social-emotional learning, well-being promotion and mental health supports within national legislation and curriculum.

### **1. Strengthening institutional and legislative capacity**

#### **1.1. Legislation and policy context**

Ireland has a Well-Being Policy Statement and Framework for Practice for 2018-2023, updated in 2019, which constitutes the foundational approach to its well-being and mental health policy in schools. According to it, there are four key areas of well-being promotion: 1) Culture & environment (Mission and ethos; School & classroom climate & culture; Quality & use of school buildings & grounds); 2) Curriculum/Teaching & Learning (Extra-curricular learning; Co-curricular learning; Planning supports; Monitoring); 3) Relationships & partnerships (Student & staff relationships; Peer relationships; Student voice; Partnership – staff, children and young people, parents/carers; Partnerships with other schools; Community partnerships; External supports); 4) Policy & planning (All policies relevant to well-being; All plans relevant to well-being; School & centre self-evaluation; Continuing professional development). Under this policy, each school is advised to run a School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Well-Being Promotion process and complete a full review cycle within the policy period (due to the pandemic, some schools have postponed this review). (Department of Education and Skills, 2019).

### **2. Promoting SEL, student well-being and mental health in schools**

#### **2.1. Integration into the National Core Curriculum**

“The promotion of well-being is central to the Department of Education mission to enable children and young people to achieve their full potential. Promoting the well-being of our children and young people is a shared community responsibility and is everybody's business.” (Department of Education, n.d.-b)

At post-primary level, every school must also provide a 400-hour Junior Cycle Well-Being Programme, mixing Social, Personal and Health Education, Civic Social & Political Education and Physical Education.

According to Junior Cycle Well-Being guidelines, a minimum of 335 hours is explicitly allocated to Physical Education (135 h), Social, Personal and Health Education (100 h) and Civic, Social & Political Education and Physical Education (100 h). The remaining 65 hours can be autonomously arranged by each school, which can decide to allocate them to existing well-being-related programmes or to new learning units to match local priorities and students' needs (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2021). Schools can add evidence-informed SEL programmes of their choice, provided they meet DES quality rules (Circular 0043/2018). The schools are encouraged to establish good links with the Department's support services and other external agencies to support the needs of students with additional and/or complex needs.

## **2.2. Multidisciplinary student welfare teams**

The 2021 revision of Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools explains that every team should be anchored by a small, permanent core. This core consists of a senior leader—usually the principal or deputy principal—together with the guidance counsellor, the special educational needs coordinator, a representative from the Critical Incident Management Team (group of staff members designated in advance to coordinate the school's response in a crisis), the co-ordinator for Junior Cycle Well-Being (or the whole-school Well-Being Co-ordinator) and the year heads or form tutors. Although year heads are not expected to sit through every meeting, they must be informed of the students under discussion because they form a crucial link in both the referral chain and internal communication (Department of Education & National Educational Psychological Service [NEPS], 2021).

The guide also notes that other staff may be regular members where such posts exist—namely the Home-School-Community Liaison teacher, the School Completion Officer, the chaplain, a behaviour support teacher and the SPHE coordinator. Participation can widen as required: a subject or resource teacher working with a group of concern may attend to report on progress, parents or guardians may be invited for specific well-being projects, and students themselves can give feedback on whole-school initiatives. (Department of Education & NEPS, 2021).

Under the Education Act 1998, Irish post-primary schools are required to provide students with 'appropriate guidance', implemented as a whole-school guidance programme (Euroguidance, 2025). Guidance counsellors must hold dual qualifications – a recognised post-primary teaching credential and an accredited postgraduate award in guidance counselling (Department of Education and Youth, 2025). They deliver personal, social, educational and career guidance to students aged 12–18 and coordinate wider guidance activities across the school (Euroguidance, 2025).

## **3. Enhancing human resource capacity in education**

### **3.1. Teacher training and professional development**

Irish initial teacher education places a clear emphasis on well-being and social-emotional learning. The national benchmark, CÉIM – Standards for Initial Teacher Education, states that “the programme will facilitate student teachers' personal development, their growth and well-being into their professional role, enabling them to become responsible, trustworthy, and reflective practitioners” (Teaching Council, 2020, p.10). It also states that (personal and community) well-being is a core element of Global Citizenship education that every programme must address, stressing that “there should be demonstrable integration between Inclusive Education and Global Citizenship Education rooted in the principle of care for others” (Teaching Council, 2020, p.14).

Universities translate that mandate into concrete modules. At Dublin City University, first-year undergraduates follow EDP1152 Well-Being, a course that equips them to teach SPHE and Physical Education, while building key skills such as emotion regulation, resilience and empathy (DCU Institute of

Education, 2024). For a presentation of this course, you can access this link: [https://modspec.dcu.ie/registry/module\\_contents.php?function=2&subcode=EDP115](https://modspec.dcu.ie/registry/module_contents.php?function=2&subcode=EDP115)

At Mary Immaculate College, the Bachelor of Education timetable lists 'Well-Being 1 & 2: SPHE & PE' in second year and even offers an optional SPHE specialism for those who want deeper expertise in social-emotional learning (Mary Immaculate College, 2025). Schools are encouraged to offer teachers opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in order to have the relevant knowledge and understanding to promote well-being and create a positive classroom environment.

In terms of continuing education, we present below some ideas and resources developed by the Department of Education and the National Educational Psychological Service, which could be adapted to the Romanian context in collaboration with representatives from the Romanian Board of Psychologists:

- › [Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour](#) is a guide that provides best practices for schools in working with parents to help their children attend and stay in school.
- › [Responding to Self-Harm in Schools – Guidance for Staff](#) translates National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines for the management of self-harm into school-level protocols, including sample safety plans, risk assessment forms and a staff self-care section. This could be adapted to the Romanian context in collaboration with representatives from the Romanian Board of Psychologists.
- › [Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties – A Continuum of Support](#) is a 144-page guide designed to help teachers identify and address students' behavioural, emotional and social needs. Although it was written for Irish primary schools (up to age 12), it can also be adapted by Romanian teachers working with 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and even 7<sup>th</sup> graders. Teachers can learn from its case studies and adapt whole-school policy guidance, classroom management strategies or templates.
- › *Other brief handouts published on the website <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/publications/well-being-information-for-school-staff-post-primary>*
  - The brief handout *'Normalising Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours'* explains to teachers how everyday stress reactions manifest in students and proposes simple cognitive behavioural responses.
  - Complementing this, *'Managing Stress and Anxiety – A Guide for School Staff'* provides useful short strategies for teachers to use at school.
  - *'Panic Attacks – A Guide for School Staff'* demystifies panic physiology, lists observable signs and offers some short ideas about how to help students who may show signs of panic attacks.
  - *'Self-Regulation for Students – A Guide for Staff'* adapts Bruce Perry's 'Regulate-Relate-Reason' model to classroom incidents and includes a practical problem-solving worksheet.
  - Finally, *'The Response to Stress – Information for School Staff'* outlines what happens in the body in response to stress; the needs of children who have experienced chronic stress; the impact it can have on their behaviour and learning; and how to intervene using the 3 R's – Regulate, Relate, Reason.

### 3.2. Collaborative school culture

Irish schools cultivate collaboration first and foremost through the Student Support Team (SST) model, which brings together senior leaders, guidance counsellors, special educational needs coordinators, year heads/form tutors and, where available, Home-School-Community Liaison teachers and School Completion Officers. The SST coordinates academic, behavioural and social-emotional supports for at-risk students (Department of Education & National Educational Psychological Service, 2021).

NEPS psychologists participate on a consultative basis, advising on individualised or group interventions. When complex needs emerge, the team, guided by NEPS, activates clear referral pathways to HSE Child

and Adolescent Mental Health Services or community youth agencies, ensuring continuity of care (NEPS, 2014).

## 4. Reforming teaching practice and classroom management

### 4.1. Pedagogical approaches supporting well-being

**Oide**, the national teacher support service created in September 2023, when four former services – Centre for School Leadership, Junior Cycle for Teachers, the National Induction Programme for Teachers and the Professional Development Service for Teachers – were brought under one roof (Oide, 2023), offers many toolkits and course announcements that help teachers translate policy into daily practice.

Teachers are encouraged to use approaches that build strong teacher-student relationships, encourage student voice and proactively foster good behaviour and engagement – all of which contribute to mental and social well-being. For example, many schools have adopted elements of restorative practice in their discipline policies. Rather than relying solely on detentions or suspensions, restorative approaches train teachers to facilitate conversations when conflicts arise, focusing on repairing harm and restoring relationships.

The six principles of restorative practice are: respect, empathy, safety, accountability, equality, community and trust (Oide, n.d.). Restorative practice aims to foster positive relationships and handle conflict in constructive ways. Restorative practice encourages individuals to take responsibility for their actions and engage in open, respectful dialogue. A key tool in RP is a set of reflective questions designed to guide students through conflict resolution—promoting self-awareness, empathy for those affected and strategies for repairing relationships.

### 4.2. Preventive and early intervention

In Ireland's education system, schools follow a multi-tiered Continuum of Support framework for identifying and assisting students with psychosocial needs. This NEPS framework encourages every school to implement universal, preventive supports for all students and more targeted interventions for those showing signs of difficulty. Every school follows NEPS' **Continuum of Support**: *Support for All* (universal SPHE, classroom activities, positive behaviour norms), *Support for Some* (small-group or individual programme) and *Support for Few* (targeted, individualised plans). (National Educational Psychological Service, 2010).

### 4.3. Responsible digital technology use and online safety

Since 2018, Irish schools have been asked – under Circular 0038/2018 – to adopt (or update, after consulting teachers, parents and students) a whole-school smartphone/tablet policy, as part of their Well-Being and Anti-Bullying policies (Department of Education, 2018).

Building on that foundation, the Digital Strategy for Schools 2022-2027 now requires every post-primary school to teach students the “safe, responsible and ethical use of the internet and digital technologies” and to embed digital well-being in everyday classroom management (Department of Education, 2022).

Connected – An Introduction to Digital Media Literacy is a course developed by [Webwise](#) (the online safety initiative of the Department of Education, co-funded by the European Commission) for Ireland's Junior Cycle (lower secondary) students. The course has five modules: My Online Well-Being; News, Information and Problems of False Information; Big Data & the Data Economy; My Rights Online; and Publishing Online – Group Project. Romanian teachers looking for a ready-made digital citizenship unit can freely download the full 112-page teacher handbook (PDF) in English. The resource is adaptable to Romanian lower secondary classes that cover online safety, media literacy or SPHE-style content.

## 5. Strengthening intersectoral and interinstitutional collaboration

### 5.1. Coordination between education and health services and referral mechanisms

Schools are advised to run multidisciplinary Student Support Teams that bring together principals, guidance counsellors, special needs co-coordinators, etc. NEPS psychologists collaborate with SSTs and will recommend the most appropriate referral pathways for specialised help. If a school asks the assigned NEPS psychologist to focus on setting up or reviewing the Student Support Team, the psychologist will likely be involved with the team throughout the academic year. NEPS classifies this as 'Support and Development work', which may include: a) delivering training on how to form and maintain an effective student support team; b) observing the team's functioning and providing constructive feedback; c) collaborating with the designated teacher or school principal to consult and plan actions; d) attending team meetings to offer general guidance and support.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), part of the Department of Education in Ireland, provides psychological services to all primary, post-primary and special schools. NEPS applies psychological theory and practice to support students' well-being, as well as their academic, social and emotional development, with a focus on children with special educational needs and those at risk of educational disadvantage. When the need for more specialised support is identified, NEPS psychologists may refer students to external agencies, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) or community-based psychological services. Additionally, NEPS supports schools through capacity-building work with teachers and school staff to effectively meet student needs (Oireachtas, 2024).

### 5.2. Youth participation in well-being governance

Student voice is central to education in Ireland. The Junior Cycle Well-Being Guidelines require schools to consult learners when designing, reviewing and evaluating their Well-Being programme. The **Guidelines** explain that, for student participation to be truly meaningful, schools should follow Laura Lundy's four-part model: provide learners with a safe, inclusive **Space** to speak; enable their **Voices**; ensure a decision-making **Audience** hears them; and allow their views exert real **Influence** (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2021, p. 24). The following resource can serve as a template for planning a voice initiative in the school: [Planning a voice initiative in your school: A template \(Our Voices Our schools, 2019b\)](#). This template is part of the 'Young People Leading' collection on the Our Voices Our Schools website, which offers three more useful guides: 1) [Having a Voice in School and Why It Matters](#), a two-hour lesson plan (Our Voices Our Schools, 2019a); 2) [The Planning Surveys guide](#), which explains when and how to use surveys (Our Voices Our Schools, 2019d); 3) [The Planning Focus Groups manual](#) shows students how to run small-group discussions (Our Voices Our Schools, 2019c).

**Comhairle na nÓg** are youth councils in each of the 31 local authority areas. The councils are funded and managed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and enable young people aged 12-17 to exercise their right in influencing decision-makers on the topics most important to them. They elect one delegate each to form a **National Executive**, whose job is to bring young people's priorities to government departments and committees. The Executive "works with Ministers, Oireachtas Committees and policymakers to make sure the recommendations from *Dáil na nÓg* are taken on board" (Comhairle na nÓg, n.d.). *Dáil na nÓg* is Ireland's national youth parliament that has been held every two years since 2001.

The 200 elected delegates from the 31 local youth councils around Ireland discuss and vote on issues of local and national importance for young people and make a recommendation for their National Executive to work on over their two-year term. Between 2024 and 2026, the National Executive has been assigned the responsibility of advocating for policy reforms aimed at tackling school-related stress. Ahead of *Dáil na nÓg*, more than 3,000 young people involved in *Comhairle na nÓg* identified mental

health as their primary concern. Among the various issues discussed, school stress emerged as the key topic they believe the government should prioritise in addressing youth mental health.

## 6. Evidence-based education policymaking

Progress is tracked through the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) well-being promotion review and development cycle. Each school gathers stakeholder feedback and sets targets in its School Improvement Plan based on existing data. At the same time, the schools are responsible for regularly reviewing results and identifying corrective actions, if necessary. Recommended key indicators include (active) attendance, successful school completion, successful transitions of students, surveys, consultation with children and young people, parents, teachers and other staff members and information from Inspection Reports (Department of Education and Skills, 2019, p. 23).

The Department of Education and Youth recommends the following six-step process for School Self-Evaluation (SSE): 1) identify well-being as a focus; 2) gather data from teachers, students, parents (focus groups, questionnaires) – this step does not necessarily have to be a ‘from scratch’ exercise for schools if there is already information available; 3) analyse and make judgements on each of the four key areas of well-being promotion to focus their attention on: culture and environment, curriculum, relationships and partnerships or policy and planning; 4) write and share a report and an improvement plan (a summary report and the plan can be shared with the school community); 5) put the improvement plan into action; 6) monitor actions and evaluate impact. (Department of Education, n.d.-a).

### Examples of promising practices

#### ➤ *FUSE Anti-Bullying & Online Safety*

Developed by DCU’s Anti-Bullying Centre and funded by the Department of Education, FUSE is the first research-based Anti-Bullying and Online Safety Programme designed to comply with UNESCO’s Whole Education Approach, which aims to address bullying and online safety issues in schools. It is based on 25 years of research on prevention and intervention and is designed to support the wider SPHE/RSE/Well-Being curricula in schools. The infographic from the FUSE programme (DCU Anti-Bullying Centre, 2024) highlights both the scale and the impact of its anti-bullying and online safety efforts in Irish schools: over 400,000 students have participated in FUSE across Ireland and, following participation, 83% of students reported that they now know who to ask for help; 81% felt more confident in recognising harassment or bullying online; 79% felt more confident in speaking up about bullying. Lessons require participants to provide their school roll number and contact email addresses, but a set of freely accessible resources developed to support parents and guardians is available at <https://antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse/parent-hub/>

#### ➤ *NEART*

NEART is Jigsaw’s partnership with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)/Department of Education. Through this initiative, post-primary schools will gain access to a full package of mental health and well-being tools of support such as “learning opportunities for students to promote mental health and well-being, as well as mental health webinars and e-Learning courses for parents and school staff”. NEART is designed to complement the supports schools already offer—guidance counselling, the work of NEPS, Student Support Teams and existing well-being programmes. According to the Neart Programme 2025 information pack, there will be a flexible mix of self-directed e-Learning, live webinars, masterclasses and seminars for the whole school community. E-Learning courses for staff include *Supporting Mental Health & Well-Being in the School Setting; Understanding anxiety in the classroom; Trauma-informed approaches for school staff* (developed and delivered in partnership with NEPS); *Self-compassion as a strategy for self-care for school staff; Body image and creating a body-confident school environment*.

Classroom-based programmes for students include the 13-week Take Action! Transition-Year programmes and the four-session Let's Talk – Sure Why Not? for 3rd-year students, both of which develop students' mental health literacy and peer-led initiatives. NEART also aims to build the capacity of Student Support Teams (SSTs), offering clinician-led masterclasses that cover whole-school approaches, trauma-informed practice (in partnership with NEPS) and ways to maximise student voice. An interactive multimedia toolkit will give SSTs ready-to-use resources on the most common mental health issues. From February 2025, a podcast and webinar series will equip families with strategies to support young people's well-being. Schools will also receive an interactive toolkit to enhance parent/carer involvement and engagement (Jigsaw, 2025, p. 12)

➤ *Cineáltas*

*Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying – Implementation Plan 2023-2027* explains how Ireland's Department of Education will implement 61 measures in the national anti-bullying strategy between 2023 and 2027 (Department of Education, 2023). We recommend this guide as a useful resource.

The European Commission's Well-Being and Mental Health at School – Guidelines for Education Policymakers lists *Cineáltas* as an inspiring practice “to enhance the development of inclusive schools where children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported” (European Commission, 2024, p. 21)

### **Policy learning implications for the Romanian education system**

The Irish education system provides a strong example of how well-being can be meaningfully embedded within both legislation and the curriculum. Through a coherent legal framework and dedicated national policy, student well-being is a central goal of schooling. Schools are supported in this mission by national guidelines, cycles of school self-evaluation (SSE) and compulsory programmes such as Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

Ireland also offers clear and effective operational models. Student Support Teams (SSTs) work within a three-tier Continuum of Support to ensure that all students—whether they need universal, targeted or specialised support—receive appropriate interventions. This system also promotes structured collaboration with external services, including those in the health sector.

Professional capacity building is another defining feature of the Irish model. The national standards for initial teacher education (CÉIM) require the development of social-emotional competencies in future teachers. In addition, continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities—offered through Oide and NEPS—cover a wide range of topics, including trauma-informed practices, digital well-being and emotional self-regulation. The Irish approach also recognises the importance of responsible technology use.

Young people are not passive recipients of these policies; they play an active role. Platforms such as [Comhairle na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg](#) ensure that students are involved in shaping school policies on well-being. This institutionalised student voice strengthens democratic participation and enhances the relevance of school-level strategies.

Romania can draw several lessons from Ireland's experience when seeking to strengthen student well-being within its own education system. The introduction of a compulsory module on student well-being and social-emotional learning in the teaching master's programme could help future educators better support their students.

This could be complemented by free, online CPD courses developed in collaboration with universities and educational authorities. To foster meaningful student participation, the structure of the National Student Council could be expanded and supported through local grants. Digital well-being should also

be prioritised. Romania could develop a national strategy for digital safety in schools, while adapting existing Irish resources, such as the *Webwise digital citizenship handbook*, for local use.

Finally, Romania's education quality assurance system could officially begin piloting and implementing, at system level, a set of well-being indicators focused on school climate, student and teacher well-being.

## Malta

Malta presents a comprehensive and integrated approach to promoting student well-being, mental health and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Despite its small size, Malta demonstrates strong strategic alignment between national education policies, school-level practices and cross-sectoral collaboration. Core policy documents, such as the Education Act (Chapter 605), the National Curriculum Framework and the Inclusive Education Policy, reinforce a whole-child development model. European initiatives like the FLOURISH Erasmus Mundus project for teacher education show the country's commitment to promoting SEL in all teaching and learning practices.

The Well-Being pillar of the National Education Strategy (NES) 2024–2030 strengthens this roadmap by placing the holistic well-being of both students and educators at the heart of educational reform. It does so by expanding existing services—such as the Well-Being Directorate, School Psychological Service and Student Support Teams—into a more coordinated framework that balances preventive programmes (like PSCD lessons, resilience and life skills education and universal health initiatives) with intervention measures (counselling, targeted support and specialist referrals). By setting up new structures like a National Learner Well-Being Unit, introducing an Educator Well-Being Programme and embedding regular monitoring through surveys and feedback loops, the pillar ensures that well-being is not an add-on but a systemic priority. In this way, the strategy not only builds on Malta's existing support services but also integrates them into a layered model of prevention, intervention and continuous evaluation, creating a more sustainable environment where both students and teachers can thrive.

Malta's national approach to mental health, particularly within the school context, is guided by the Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2020–2030, titled *Building Resilience, Transforming Services*. This strategy emphasises a whole-school approach to mental health, recognising that schools play a pivotal role in promoting mental well-being among students. It advocates for integrating mental health education into the curriculum, fostering a supportive school environment and providing accessible mental health services in educational settings.

In line with this strategy, the National Education Strategy 2024–2030 incorporates mental health as a core component of student well-being. It highlights the interconnectedness of physical, socio-emotional, mental and digital well-being, aiming to create a holistic support system for students. Furthermore, in August 2025, the Centre for Resilience & Socio-Emotional Health at the University of Malta was designated as the WHO Collaborating Centre for Mental Health Promotion and Protection in Schools (2025–2029), underscoring Malta's commitment to enhancing mental health initiatives within schools.

These strategies collectively aim to foster an educational environment where mental health is prioritised, ensuring that students receive the necessary support to thrive academically and personally.

## **1. Strengthening institutional and legislative capacity**

### **1.1. Legislation and policy context**

Malta is a very small country (population of approx. 520,000), with a highly centralised education system. The small scale allows for more rapid policy implementation and closer coordination between schools and authorities. In contrast, Romania's large and diverse system poses greater challenges in directly replicating Malta's models at the national level.

Malta's work on well-being in education is founded on its national legislation and education strategies. The Education Act (Chapter 605) frames education as a right that supports the full personal development of children. This act ensures every child's right to a holistic education, including social, emotional and mental well-being (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation [MEYR], 2023).

The National Education Strategy 2024–2030 (MEYR, 2023) places well-being among its core principles, outlining national goals around supportive learning environments, student agency and mental health promotion. Learner well-being is at the core of education reform, explicitly linking well-being to academic success, positive behaviour and civic participation. These legal and strategic documents not only create top-down mandates but also guide school self-evaluation and development planning.

Schools are required to provide inclusive environments that nurture each learner's identity, mental health and resilience. The 2024 Policy on Inclusive Education requires all schools to implement inclusive practices, with a focus on emotional safety and equity.

The Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools (MEYR, 2024) reinforces the requirement for schools to proactively support diversity, including students' emotional and social needs, and promote well-being as a systemic goal.

### **1.2. Reform of welfare service governance**

The Well-Being Directorate within the Ministry coordinates a wide range of initiatives, including counselling, mental health support and resilience-building programmes in schools (MEYR, 2023).

The National Curriculum Framework explicitly integrates personal and social development across learning areas, systematically fostering SEL competencies from early years through secondary education (MEYR, 2012).

Governance reforms are articulated through the Children's Policy Framework 2024–2030, which ensures interministerial coordination between the Ministry for Education, the Ministry for Social Policy and the Ministry for Health. This cross-sectoral framework enables joint planning, shared service delivery and standardised referral mechanisms to support students at risk. Local education agencies are responsible for coordinating school-based teams, ensuring vertical alignment from national to school level.

## **2. Promoting SEL, student well-being and mental health in schools**

### **2.1. Integration into the National Core Curriculum**

Malta's National Curriculum Framework embeds SEL across multiple subject areas.

The Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) learning outcomes syllabus focuses on core areas such as emotional literacy, resilience, healthy relationships, responsible decision-making and career exploration. PSCD is a statutory subject and is taught in both primary and secondary state schools, from Year 3 to Year 11. PSCD adopts a student-centred methodology, incorporating the use of Circle Time and

smaller groups (17 students), which foster active participation, dialogue and meaningful reflection. The PSCD framework is grounded in two key pillars: the Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) and Processing. The ELC model emphasises holistic learning, with students engaging in real or simulated experiences, continuous reflection and critical thinking to improve themselves. Meanwhile, processing helps students build both cognitive and non-cognitive skills, which are essential for personal growth. To ensure the effective delivery of this curriculum, teacher training is paramount. The University of Malta offers a specialised master's degree in teaching and learning for PSCD, while the Institute for Education provides blended learning programmes and advanced training.

In early years and primary education, emotional and social learning is woven into cross-curricular themes and play-based approaches. At the secondary level, themes like mental health, bullying prevention and digital well-being are emphasised.

Malta systematically integrates SEL and resilience development into its national curriculum through transversal skills education (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, 2022). Romania is beginning to address life skills and social-emotional competencies more explicitly (e.g. through the new Curriculum for Social Development), but full systemic integration is still in progress.

Additionally, project-based learning and service learning are used to foster empathy and community engagement. Schools also implement thematic well-being weeks and assemblies to reinforce SEL content in whole-school settings.

## **2.2. Multidisciplinary student welfare teams**

Most schools in Malta have multidisciplinary well-being teams made up of educators, psychologists, guidance counsellors and social workers. These teams meet regularly to review student data, coordinate interventions and promote a safe learning environment. They also collaborate with external agencies for mental health referrals and case management (public). Their work is supported by guidelines from the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE).

Malta's career guidance framework ensures that students receive both individual and group support from state-employed practitioners within schools. These professionals include guidance teachers, who provide personal and career advice in addition to their classroom duties, and career advisors, who focus full-time on coordinating activities such as work exposure visits for Year 9 and Year 10 students, employer talks and participation in career fairs. All services are integrated into primary, secondary and some post-secondary educational institutions and are supervised by the Ministry of Education's Well-Being Services (Euroguidance, n.d.).

## **3. Developing human resource capacity in education**

### **3.1. Teacher training and professional development**

Malta has made significant investments in preparing educators to support student well-being. The University of Malta leads the FLOURISH ('Fostering Resilient Learners through Integrated Support and Holistic Training') Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's degree (EMJM), which specialises in resilience-building education. This two-year programme is implemented with universities from other countries and prepares educators to become well-being specialists, with strong competencies in mental health literacy, trauma-informed pedagogy and whole-school approaches (University of Malta, 2024).

This is one of the most innovative and inspiring aspects for Romania and the policy transfer could be facilitated by the experience of Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava (Romania) – one of the project partners. Romania could learn from this initiative how to equip teachers not only with academic and

pedagogical knowledge but also with skills to foster resilience, well-being and mental health among their students and themselves – see also the ‘General resources’ section for specific links.

This model offers a concrete example of how Romania could embed SEL and well-being in the formal structures of initial teacher training, creating a new generation of resilience-informed and well-being-oriented educators.

In-service teachers also benefit from Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes coordinated by the Ministry. Topics include SEL implementation, psychosocial support, restorative practices and positive discipline. These are integrated into whole-school improvement plans, ensuring that capacity building is aligned with national priorities.

### **3.2. Collaborative school culture**

Malta promotes strong collaboration between schools, families and communities. Programmes like the Family, Community and School Learning (FCSL) initiative operationalise a whole-community approach by strengthening relationships to enhance students' social and emotional development (MEYR, 2024).

Parents are also engaged through this programme, which creates platforms for families to actively support well-being promotion at home and in school. In a Whole-School Approach, schools are encouraged to form Well-Being Teams, consisting of educators, social workers, psychologists and counsellors, to ensure early intervention and preventive action (MEYR, 2023).

A strong culture of collaboration is also fostered in schools through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), peer mentorship structures and school-led working groups. Teachers co-develop well-being plans and reflect on interventions using data from classroom observations and student feedback. This participatory model encourages collective responsibility and builds relational trust within schools.

Schools routinely collaborate with school psychologists, social workers, nurses and student services to support students at risk (MEYR, 2023). At an intersectoral level, the Children's Policy Framework 2024–2030 explicitly mandates interministerial collaboration, bringing together education, social protection and health authorities to promote child well-being and monitor implementation (Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights, 2023).

## **4. Reforming teaching practice and classroom management**

### **4.1. Pedagogical approaches supporting well-being**

Well-being is integrated into daily classroom routines through inclusive and student-centred pedagogies. Teachers use project-based learning, cooperative group tasks and reflective journaling to foster emotional literacy. The PSCD curriculum includes modules on friendship, identity, emotional intelligence and stress management. Educators are trained to use emotionally safe language, adapt to individual needs and promote empathy through literature and arts.

A good classroom management strategy that is increasingly adopted in Maltese schools (mostly for primary education) is the [Zones of Regulation framework](#). This structured approach helps students identify and regulate their emotions using a colour-coded system (blue, green, yellow, red), with each colour representing a different emotional state from low states of alertness (e.g. feeling sad, tired) to extreme emotions (e.g. anger, panic). This framework supports the development of emotional vocabulary, self-awareness and coping strategies, being particularly effective for younger learners and those with additional needs. Teachers report improvements in classroom climate, reduced behavioural disruptions and increased emotional safety. The approach is embedded in daily routines and aligned

with Malta's broader emphasis on inclusive education and early intervention, as promoted in the [National Inclusive Education Framework](#). Furthermore, schools implement "mindfulness minutes", daily check-ins and flexible seating or classroom areas that reduce anxiety and support sensory regulation.

#### **4.2. Preventive and early intervention**

Preventive strategies are deployed using a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). At the universal level, all students participate in well-being-focused assemblies, peer support initiatives and SEL-integrated lessons. Targeted interventions include small-group sessions, check-in/check-out systems and referrals to in-school counsellors. Intensive interventions are developed in collaboration with external clinical services and coordinated by school-based Well-Being Teams. The system prioritises early identification through regular screenings and teacher observations.

#### **4.3. Digital well-being: responsible technology use and online safety**

In Malta's Digital Education Strategy 2024–2030, digital well-being is placed at the centre of how learners and educators engage with technology, recognising that the safe, balanced and mindful

use of digital tools is essential for healthy development. The strategy goes beyond promoting technical competence by embedding responsible digital practices and online safety as core aspects of well-being and ensuring that students are not only protected from risks such as cyberbullying and misuse but are also guided to cultivate positive, sustainable relationships with technology. By framing digital well-being as a priority, the strategy equips young people with the skills, values and resilience needed to thrive in a digital society and supports educators in modelling and fostering these practices in their daily work.

Malta's Digital Education Strategy 2024–2030 sets a policy framework that recognises digital well-being, *eSafety* awareness and digital citizenship as central competences for learners. Preventive sessions on internet safety and digital well-being are embedded within the PSCD curriculum, ensuring that all students receive foundational guidance on responsible and balanced technology use. Beyond classroom activities, *BeSmartOnline!*, implemented in collaboration with the Cyber Crime Police, the Commissioner for Children, the Directorate for Early Years, Languages and Humanities and the Ministry for Social Welfare, provides practical support to implement the Strategy's goals. This includes school-based training, awareness campaigns, resources, a hotline/helpline and outreach programmes, making *BeSmartOnline!* a key delivery mechanism of the Strategy.

In addition to preventive education, the Strategy recognises the importance of intervention and stakeholder involvement. Appogg staff carry out targeted talks and interventions with parents, caregivers and students as needs arise, complementing the preventive work in PSCD. *BeSmartOnline!* similarly supports both prevention and intervention—educating students and raising awareness, while providing reporting tools and support for incidents of online harm. Through ongoing monitoring, inclusion efforts and engagement with educators, youth panels and other stakeholders, this collaborative effort ensures that digital well-being is embedded throughout the education system and responds to the needs of all learners.

### **5. Strengthening intersectoral and interinstitutional collaboration**

#### **5.1. Coordination between education and health services and referral mechanisms**

The Children's Policy Framework formalises partnerships between education, social policy and health sectors. Joint protocols enable schools to refer students for mental health services, family mediation and child protection when needed. Local Well-Being Hubs, currently piloted in several regions, serve as

integrated support centres, offering psychological consultations, nutrition services and social work support directly within the school or local community.

## **5.2. Youth participation in well-being governance**

Student councils are empowered to propose well-being initiatives and offer direct feedback on school environments using participatory tools like student-led surveys or focus groups. Youth are included in school development planning committees and national education consultations. In several schools, students lead peer mediation and anti-bullying campaigns, contributing to inclusive and responsive school cultures.

## **5.3. Collaboration with outside agencies and NGOs**

Collaboration with external agencies and projects further strengthens the PSCD programme and enhances learners' well-being. Initiatives like *BeSmartOnline!*, which promotes digital safety, My Choice, which focuses on building resilience and stress management, and the Friends Are Forever Foundation, which supports emotional literacy and conflict resolution, enrich the curriculum by addressing contemporary challenges. All these initiatives align with the EU policy on social and

emotional competences, ensuring that students develop key skills such as self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation and effective interpersonal communication. By integrating these evidence-based programmes, the PSCD curriculum not only promotes academic growth but also fosters holistic well-being and positive social-emotional development among learners.

## **6. Evidence-based education policymaking**

### **6.1. Monitoring and evaluation tools**

Malta emphasises accountability and continuous improvement, and the Quality Assurance Department oversees systematic monitoring and evaluation, providing structured external reviews to ensure that well-being policies and practices are effectively implemented in schools (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education [DQSE], 2024).

Regular inspections that evaluate both academic and well-being indicators are conducted. Schools are assessed on student attendance, engagement, emotional safety and inclusivity. Surveys such as the Student Voice Audit and Staff Well-Being Index are used to monitor climate and guide improvement. Indicators are benchmarked against EU and OECD frameworks to ensure comparability and policy coherence. Additionally, educator well-being surveys are conducted to assess teacher satisfaction and resilience levels, informing further policy development (MEYR, 2024).

Malta is currently implementing the National Assessment of Socio-Emotional Well-Being & Academic Learning Skills (2023-2025), coordinated by the Centre for Resilience & Socio-Emotional Health and the Ministry for Education, Youth, Sport, Research and Innovation (Centre for Resilience & Socio-Emotional Health, 2023). Findings from this survey are translated into actionable policy advice for children and young people through the Well-Being INDEX policy brief (Cefai, Spiteri, Galea, & Briguglio, 2024).

The FitMAP-Malta initiative is piloting a national fitness and well-being monitoring system for adolescents (Malta Daily, 2025).

### **6.2. Policy adjustments informed by research**

Insights from EU projects like FLOURISH and the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) have directly influenced policy in Malta. Findings from local research conducted by the University of Malta have shaped new CPD priorities and prompted a revision of the National Curriculum. Pilot

programmes are evaluated through quasi-experimental methods, and their outcomes inform broader national rollouts.

### **Examples of promising practices**

- FLOURISH Project: A European teacher education programme that embeds SEL and resilience education in initial training.
- Family, Community and School Learning (FCSL): Collaborative model for engaging parents in student well-being initiatives.
- Mindfulness Journals: Daily SEL check-ins used in primary and secondary classrooms.
- Whole-School Well-Being Teams: Proactive, multidisciplinary teams providing ongoing support and crisis intervention.
- Youth-led Climate Audits: Student-led initiatives evaluating and improving emotional safety and school culture.
- BeSmartOnline Project: An EU initiative that promotes online safety, digital citizenship and responsible technology use among children, youth and educators across Europe.
- Choice Programme: A Maltese initiative that helps students build resilience, manage stress and develop coping skills for emotional well-being.
- Emotional Literacy and Conflict Resolution Programme: A programme that promotes emotional literacy and conflict resolution skills among students through the use of innovative cards, helping them understand, express and manage emotions, while resolving conflicts positively.

### **Policy learning implications for the Romanian education system**

Malta's experience offers other valuable insights in areas such as curriculum integration, teacher preparation, and interinstitutional support structures. Key takeaways include the institutionalisation of well-being teams within schools, the integration of SEL into the national curriculum and the inclusion of resilience training in teacher education programmes. School-level experiences provide valuable and actionable insights, offering new tools and ideas to Romanian authorities to support SEL curriculum management and regular monitoring.

Malta's approach offers practical inspiration for Romania as it seeks to enhance well-being in its education system. Romania could also benefit from Malta's model of interministerial collaboration, localised well-being hubs and student participation in school governance. These strategies can support equitable access to well-being services, improve learning outcomes and foster a more inclusive and responsive educational environment. Some of these potential policy learning actions are detailed below.

### **Integration of well-being into initial teacher education**

Malta has innovatively incorporated well-being competences into initial teacher training, notably through the FLOURISH project (University of Malta, 2021). In contrast, Romania currently addresses well-being in teacher education in a more fragmented manner, typically through optional courses or postgraduate training. Romania could benefit from developing formal, structured modules on SEL and resilience within bachelor's and master's programmes for future teachers.

### **Legislative support for multi-professional school teams**

Malta's Student Support Services Framework institutionalises collaboration among teachers, counsellors, psychologists and social workers directly within schools (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research

and Innovation, 2022). In Romania, while school counsellors are available through CJRAE structures<sup>3</sup> (County Centres for Educational Resources and Assistance), multi-professional teams are not systematically integrated at school level. Romania could consider creating legal frameworks for permanent, school-based well-being teams.

### **Whole-school and community approach**

Malta promotes a holistic model that systematically involves families, NGOs and health professionals in school well-being initiatives. In Romania, such partnerships are often project-based and vary significantly across regions. Establishing national guidelines for whole-community collaboration would strengthen Romanian practice.

### **Focus on resilience and social-emotional learning in the curriculum**

Malta systematically integrates SEL and resilience development into its national curriculum through transversal skills education (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, 2022). Romania is beginning to address life skills and social-emotional competencies more explicitly (e.g. through the new Curriculum for Social Development), but full systemic integration is still in progress.

### **Participation in international well-being projects**

Malta's active role in international initiatives, such as FLOURISH and ERASMUS+ well-being programmes, helps modernise its education system and align with European best practices. Romania also participates in European projects, but more targeted engagement in well-being-specific programmes could accelerate innovation. The examples provided in the 'General resources' section of the report (University of Suceava, Institute of Education Sciences) offer practical suggestions in this area.

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<sup>3</sup> CJRAE / CMBRAE – County Centres for Educational Resources and Assistance/Bucharest Municipal Centre for Educational Resources and Assistance (Romanian: Centrele județene de resurse și asistență educațională / Centrul Municipiului București de Resurse și Asistență Educațională), public institutions providing school counselling and psycho-educational support at county level in Romania (see more on [https://www.edu.ro/cjrae\\_cmbrae](https://www.edu.ro/cjrae_cmbrae)).

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

### Current needs within the Romanian education system and the relevance of documented national case studies

As indicated in the methodological section, the selection of case studies was highly relevant to the specific needs of the Romanian education system in the areas of social and emotional learning (SEL), student well-being and mental health. The overview below highlights the potential contributions of the documented national practices to these key challenges identified in Romania:

- The conceptual framework for SEL is still underdeveloped and insufficiently understood by education stakeholders, particularly when compared with the good practices documented across all case studies.
- SEL competencies are not given enough importance in curriculum development, including within curriculum frameworks, graduate profiles or school-level curriculum plans (all).
- The use of digital tools to promote SEL remains limited, along with a lack of open educational resources (Ireland, Malta).
- There is a persistent shortage of specialised staff and qualified trainers in this field (all).
- The initial teacher training system is in transition, with progress made at pre-primary and primary levels but limited development at secondary and higher education levels (Finland, Ireland, Malta, Spain).
- Continuous professional development offers for teachers are limited in scale and mostly available at local or county level, with no national coverage (all).
- School leadership teams demonstrate low awareness, lack of training and limited practical exposure to SEL-related content and practices (Ireland, Finland).
- Strategic documents at school, local and county levels rarely prioritise SEL and mental health (all).
- There is a lack of informational materials and training resources for different categories of educational actors, along with an absence of funding programmes specifically dedicated to SEL development (all).
- There is limited experience in integrating SEL into quality assurance mechanisms, both at the school level and across the education system (Ireland, Finland).
- Promising pilot initiatives are rarely linked to broader policy development, which limits their potential for systemic impact (all).
- There is no standardised instrument for measuring SEL outcomes or tracking the progress of interventions in this area (Malta, Ireland, France).

## Key findings

The case studies resulted in a diverse collection of promising practices that are clearly relevant to the policymaking process within the Romanian education system. To facilitate the understanding of the most valuable findings from the country analyses, this section organises the main data from the case studies into six thematic areas: (1) Institutional and Legislative Capacity; (2) Promoting SEL, Well-Being and Mental Health in Schools; (3) Human Resource Capacity Development in Education; (4) Reforming Educational Practices and Classroom Management; (5) Strengthening Intersectoral and Interinstitutional Collaboration; and (6) Evidence-Based Policymaking. The recommendations presented in this section are grounded in these key findings. The detailed data presented in each national case study should be consulted to support the interpretation of the recommendations, along with the resources included in the annexes to this report.

### Thematic Area 1: Institutional and Legislative Capacity

This area refers to the legal frameworks, public policies and institutional mechanisms that support the development of social and emotional competencies, as well as the role of central and local authorities in ensuring a systemic approach to student well-being and mental health.

#### Common perspectives:

- All five countries have a legislative and/or strategic framework that recognises the importance of SEL, as well as the well-being and mental health of students.
- There is a common tendency to integrate well-being into national education strategies.

#### Specific elements:

- **Finland** has the most advanced integrated model, supported by clear regulations and a well-structured system of regional services (Well-Being Services Counties).
- **France** and **Ireland** implement supportive regulatory instruments (circulars, internal guidelines and directives) that establish consistent approaches, while encouraging local autonomy and context-specific responses. **France** and **Spain** promote implementation through grant-based mechanisms, with variable regional application.
- **Ireland** has a clear strategic framework articulated through the Well-Being Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.
- **Malta** has recently adopted a strategic framework, although with a narrower institutional scope.

#### *Details of Thematic Area 1:*

- **Finland:** The Basic Education Act (1998) and the Student Well-Being Act (2013) require the inclusion of psychological, social and medical services within the school. The 2023 reform introduced 21 autonomous Well-Being Services Counties and strengthened cooperation across the education (including school care), health and social services sectors. The goal is to guarantee consistent coordination of services, reduce regional disparities and ensure equitable access to support.
- **Spain:** Organic Law 3/2020 enshrines the development of social competencies as a general education objective within the key competence framework. The National Programme

on Emotional Well-Being (2022–2025) provides annual grants of €5 million to support local projects aimed at promoting mental health in schools.

- **France:** The 'Health-Promoting School' initiative ('École promotrice de santé', 2020) marks a shift towards a development model that supports healthy behaviours and promotes well-being throughout the lifespan. Well-being is defined as an *"integrated state of physical, mental and social well-being"*. The initiative encourages the integration of well-being into the curriculum, school governance, interpersonal relationships and community involvement, *transforming the school into an active agent of public health*. The 2022 ministerial circular officially recognises well-being as a central objective of both the education system and the school.
- **Ireland:** The Well-Being Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018–2023) is being implemented through national policies and resources from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). The broader education law reinforces preventive and cross-sectoral approaches.
- **Malta:** The Well-Being Strategy (2022) and existing inclusive education policies were introduced to support mental health and SEL. Monitoring and implementation involve the Ministry of Education, school principals and local partners.

## Thematic Area 2: Promoting SEL, Well-Being and Mental Health in Schools

This area covers the integration of social-emotional (SEL) competencies into the curriculum, anti-bullying policies, the prevention of emotional problems, support services, as well as the role of the school climate.

### Common perspectives:

- All countries integrate SEL and well-being into the curriculum, either as dedicated subjects, modules or cross-curricular topics.
- Prevention and psycho-emotional support activities are promoted. SEL and well-being are addressed in a multidisciplinary, integrated manner, particularly through school-based support teams. Finland and Ireland, in particular, demonstrate consistent experience in this area.

### Specific elements:

- **Finland** and **France** approach SEL as a foundational element of the school's mission, integrating it across all subject areas.
- **Ireland** allocates specific curricular time – 400 hours in the Junior Cycle – which is delivered through three pillars: (1) Social, civic and political education; (2) Physical education; and (3) Social, personal and health education.
- **Malta** promotes SEL through targeted interventions implemented by school support teams.
- **Spain** follows a decentralised approach, with promising practices developed at the regional level (e.g. Catalonia and Andalusia), resulting in both opportunities and challenges.

### **Details of Thematic Area 2:**

- **Finland:** The National Curriculum (2016) integrates transversal competences such as 'Taking care of oneself and managing daily life' and 'Participation, involvement and building a sustainable future'. Students develop their self-regulation, empathy and resilience skills through subjects like health education, arts and physical education. In addition, the *Gutsy Go* programme engages adolescents in community projects designed to strengthen their well-being, social skills and self-esteem. This programme combines service-learning pedagogy, media literacy and training for civic engagement. It consists of three phases: coach training, a week of school-based activities and the promotion of socially impactful actions.
- **Spain:** DBT STEPS-A is a social-emotional and resilience development programme for adolescent students in Biscay. It comprises 30 weekly sessions of 50 minutes each, spanning the entire school year. Initially, mental health professionals coached teachers, who subsequently worked directly with students (Fernández-Rivas, 2024). DBT STEPS-A programmes have also been implemented in Ireland, Catalonia (Spain), the United Kingdom and the United States, with promising results in various educational contexts (Flynn et al., 2018; Gasol et al., 2022; Hastings et al., 2022; HSE, 2017).
- **France:** It has adopted a multidimensional framework for student well-being, organised around seven pillars: (1) emotional support, (2) physical health, (3) social relationships, (4) mental resilience, (5) academic engagement, (6) personal development and (7) community involvement. These principles are integrated into policies, the curriculum, student voices and family engagement activities. The pHARe programme (Plan de lutte contre le harcèlement à l'école – Action Plan to Combat Bullying in Schools) is implemented nationwide and involves trained school staff, student ambassadors, family partnerships and a national support line (3018) dedicated to emotional safety. Students contribute to well-being councils, participate in awareness campaigns and access relaxation spaces. Information about psychological helplines is visibly displayed in student planners and school facilities to ensure accessibility and awareness.
- **Ireland:** The well-being curriculum is an integrated part of the lower secondary cycle core curriculum and includes SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education), PE (Physical Education) and CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education). *FUSE* is the first research-based anti-bullying and online safety programme, aligned with UNESCO's Whole Education Approach for combating bullying and online risks in schools. The programme builds on 25 years of research in prevention and intervention and supports the school-level implementation of the extensive curriculum on health education, relationships and well-being (SPHE/CSR/Well-Being).
- **Malta:** The *Well-Being Directorate*, a division of the Ministry of Education, promotes *policies and initiatives for student well-being*. Services are coordinated with other governmental departments to help students become resilient and confident in achieving their goals and potential. Students are guided in overcoming challenges related to safety, mental health, bullying, substance use and career planning. Policy efforts aim to build sustainable *support networks* that enhance each student's academic, social and emotional development.

### Thematic Area 3: Human Resource Capacity Development in Education

This area refers to the initial and continuous training of teaching staff to integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and well-being into teaching.

#### Common perspectives:

- Teacher training in the field of SEL is present in all countries.
- The need for the continuous development of teachers' social-emotional competencies is recognised and assumed at the level of educational policies.

#### Specific elements:

- **Finland** and **France** provide systemic and compulsory training, which is integrated into initial training.
- **Ireland** and **Malta** have well-developed programmes in the SEL and well-being areas, as well as a framework for providing continuous training and support to multidisciplinary teams.
- **Spain:** Initial teacher education programmes include elements on classroom climate, social-emotional learning and bullying prevention, but coverage varies by university. Continuing professional development centres offer numerous courses on topics such as emotional education and well-being.

#### Details of Thematic Area 3:

- **Finland:** All teachers and school leaders are trained in social-emotional competencies, media literacy and inclusive pedagogy during their university studies. Continuing professional development is funded by the state and included over 630 courses between 2021 and 2023, focusing on inclusive culture, whole-school well-being, mental health, substance use and addiction, reaching 22,800 professionals nationwide. *Co-teaching* and *collaborative leadership* are actively promoted. Successful collaborative teaching involves clear role definition, systemic planning and professional development that support common pedagogical practices (EduCluster Finland, 2025). Details can be found on the resource page of [EduCluster Finland](#). Professional Learning Communities allow teachers to jointly develop practices and reflect on well-being in teaching.
- **Spain:** The National Institute for Educational Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF) is the unit within the Spanish Ministry of Education and Training responsible for the integration of digital technologies into pre-university education and continuous teacher training, including topics on digital well-being. Each autonomous community has centres and platforms where they offer continuing education courses on well-being, including teacher well-being courses.
- **France:** Since 2023, the Ministry of Education has significantly expanded access to training modules on mental health first aid, including child psychology, conflict mediation and positive climate, both as part of initial teacher training (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD). *While participation is not compulsory, the initiative aims to train over 10,000 school professionals annually as mental health first aiders (secouristes en santé mentale), who voluntarily support the early identification and referral of students in psychological distress.*

- **Ireland:** Initial training includes *Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)* courses and the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS) supports continuous professional development for teachers in these areas.
- **Malta:** Annual SEL-related CPD modules are delivered in collaboration with research centres from universities, NGOs and wellness centres. Teachers are supported in developing inclusive approaches.

School counsellors, alongside teachers, play a pivotal role in promoting student well-being and facilitating access to mental health services across the five education systems analysed. While titles and responsibilities vary – from *national education psychologists* in France to *guidance counsellors* in Ireland and *orientadores educativos* in Spain – all countries emphasise the importance of having trained professionals in schools to support students’ emotional, social and academic development.

Also, during the consultation process, special emphasis was placed on activities and support areas for school counsellors, who are seen as key stakeholders in promoting student well-being and the development of social and emotional skills. The role of school counsellors, as part of the broader educational workforce, is essential not only in supporting students’ socio-emotional development but also in facilitating collaboration with external health and social services — a dimension further explored in Thematic Area 5.

#### Thematic Area 4: Reforming Educational Practices and Classroom Management

This refers to pedagogical approaches, behaviour management and teaching methods that support emotional safety and the active engagement of students.

##### Common perspectives:

- All countries emphasise the promotion of student-centred practices and the development of emotional self-regulation.
- Leadership practices are essential for embedding SEL in daily school life and ensuring the systemic implementation of well-being strategies.
- There is a focus on using formative, continuous feedback and collaborative activities.

##### Specific elements:

- **Finland** promotes innovative methods such as phenomenon-based and project-based learning, as well as cooperation.
- **Spain:** For example, the socio-emotional and resilience development curriculum for adolescents – the DBT STEPS-A programme in Biscay; The [‘Bienestar emocional’](#) programme for emotional well-being in the school environment is an online platform developed by the community of Madrid.
- **France** implements clear policies for formative assessment and the integration of moral and civic education (Éducation morale et civique).
- School leadership practices in Finland and Ireland play a pivotal role in shaping emotionally safe and inclusive learning environments. Finnish principals are trained in resilience-oriented leadership and foster collaborative school cultures through co-teaching and professional

learning communities. Ireland's model includes Student Support Teams anchored by school leaders, who coordinate academic, behavioural and socio-emotional supports.

- **Malta and Ireland** focus on activities tailored to vulnerable groups and student-teacher cooperation.

#### ***Details of Thematic Area 4:***

- **Finland:** The focus is on student-centred teaching and project-based and cooperative learning. Practices include phenomenon-based learning, positive pedagogy and restorative routines for managing challenging or difficult behaviours; prevention is addressed through screening tools and formative assessment. Flexible schedules, varied learning spaces and outdoor activities are encouraged to reduce stress and support physical health (EDUFI, 2016). The [KiVa](#) anti-bullying programmes are implemented nationally to prevent bullying and promote inclusion, offering evidence-based tools for schools and families ([Parents' Guide](#)).
- **Spain:** The DBT STEPS-A programme focuses on increasing flexibility and avoiding extreme positioning, mindfulness, tolerating psychological discomfort, regulating emotions and interpersonal effectiveness. The 'Emotional Well-Being in the Educational Field' (*Bienestar Emocional en el ámbito educativo*) platform developed by the Community of Madrid provides 15 ready-to-use classroom teaching units, grouped into five thematic blocks: 1. Social and emotional competencies; 2. Coexistence and prevention of violence; 3. Health protective factors; 4. Prevention of addiction and gang involvement among traffickers and users; 5. Responsible use of social media and data protection.
- **France:** Formative assessment is encouraged to reduce anxiety and emphasis on grades. Teachers are trained to use diagnostic tools, digital portfolios, self-assessments and peer feedback. Homework support programmes, such as '*Devoirs faits*' [Homework Completion] – providing structured in-school homework support, and '*École ouverte*' [Open School] – providing support outside of school hours or during extracurricular activities, are proposed to address and reduce educational inequalities (MENJ, 2023).
- **Ireland:** Mindfulness, emotion management and inclusion are promoted through SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) and practical activities. The Well-Being Team at OIDE (Ireland's National Teacher Support Service) provides training and resources for different needs, such as the use of restorative practices.
- **Malta:** Classroom management based on emotional support, the prevention of disruptive and/or deviant behaviour and the creation of a safe climate for every student is actively promoted. A promising practice is the '*Zones of Regulation*' approach, especially in primary education (a time-out space for calming down, not a detention/punitive area).

#### **Thematic Area 5: Strengthening Intersectoral and Interinstitutional Collaboration**

It addresses partnerships between the education, health, social services and community sectors for holistic student support.

### Common perspectives:

- All countries promote collaboration between education, health and social services.
- There are referral mechanisms and interprofessional cooperation.
- **School counsellors as key actors in intersectoral collaboration.**

### Specific elements:

- **Finland** has a digital data sharing system (Kanta, used by social welfare and healthcare sectors) and formal cross-sectoral teams.
- In **France**, the national framework '*School Health: Acting for Students at the Heart of the School*' formalises a strategic alliance with the Ministry of Health and the Regional Health Agencies. This partnership enables joint planning, coordinated care pathways and shared accountability for student well-being, ensuring that health promotion and early intervention are embedded in the education system.
- **Ireland**: Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) ensure effective coordination and collaboration between agencies to achieve the best outcomes for all children and young people (0-24 years) in their reach.
- In **Malta**, the **Ministry of Education** has a **Well-Being Directorate**. There is direct collaboration between **schools** and **social services**.
- **Spain** applies various protocols at the regional level.

### Details of Thematic Area 5:

- **Finland**: Multidisciplinary teams in schools collaborate with health services through the Kanta digital platform that facilitates the safe and efficient exchange of information between professionals, while ensuring respect for confidentiality and privacy (Kela, 2024).
- **Spain**: Regional Protocol for Suicide Prevention in Andalusia, Collaboration with Health Services and Mental Health Training for School Nurses (NurSch-MH).
- **France**: Regional health agencies work with schools. In disadvantaged areas, additional measures are implemented to improve the **school climate** as part of REP+ (fr. *Réseau d'éducation prioritaire renforcé*) – Reinforced Priority Education Network.
- **Ireland**: CYPSC - Children and Young People's Services Committees promote coordinated interventions between the education, health and social protection sectors. There are Student Support Teams in schools. Psychologists from NEPS (National Educational Psychology Service) can collaborate with multidisciplinary well-being teams (Occupational Safety and Health – OSH teams), if requested.
- **Malta**: Malta has developed a national programme on assessing social and emotional well-being and learning skills, coordinated by the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

## The role of school counsellors in intersectoral and interinstitutional collaboration

The education systems reviewed offer relevant insights, as they all rely on specialist school counselling staff. These professionals often serve as the first point of contact for students experiencing distress and are integral to referral pathways connecting schools with external health and social services.

**France** has a single professional corps – national education psychologists (PsyEN) – focusing on two strands: education, development and learning for primary students; education, development and academic and career counselling for lower/upper secondary and tertiary students. Both strands promote students' well-being and prevent disengagement, while the second strand additionally delivers career guidance (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2025).

**Spain** assigns these functions to an *orientador educativo* (usually a psychologist or pedagogue with a master's degree who has passed a public service examination), while **Ireland** relies on qualified guidance counsellors – post-primary teachers holding a postgraduate guidance award – to provide the same integrated blend of personal, social, educational and career support (Euroguidance, 2024; Eurydice, 2025; Department of Education, 2024).

In **Finland and Malta**, a dual-role model is applied, where guidance counsellors focus on educational and career pathways, while school psychologists or counsellors deliver targeted mental health interventions.

Romania's recent policy developments, including Ministerial Order No. 5701/2024, allow for the appointment of school psychologists alongside school counsellors, opening the way for a dual-role model. This evolution aligns with European practices and provides opportunities to strengthen multidisciplinary teams and intersectoral collaboration at the school level.

## Thematic Area 6: Evidence-Based Policymaking

This refers to the use of data, studies and evaluations to inform educational policies in the field of SEL and well-being.

### Common perspectives:

- All countries use data to monitor and shape well-being-related policies.
- The main evaluation methodologies are based on data and institutional feedback.

### Specific elements:

- **Finland** implements the School Health Promotion Study (SHPS) and the Well-Being Profile Tool (*Hyvinvointiprofilil*).
- **France** has robust systems for survey research and monitoring, including EnCLASS and Enabee.
- **In Spain**, the Ministry monitors the outcomes of the Well-Being in Education programmes. There are also examples of rigorous programme testing using a control group (e.g. DBT STEPS-A).
- **Malta** is currently conducting a national assessment (2023–2025) of the social-emotional competencies, school learning skills and mental health of children and youth.
- **In Ireland**, the National Educational Psychology Service supports schools with evidence-based guidelines. Schools conduct self-evaluations that focus on well-being promotion.

### **Details of Thematic Area 6:**

- **Finland:** The School Health Promotion Study has been collecting national data since 1996. Another widely used tool is the Well-Being Profile Tool (*Hyvinvointiprofilli*), which allows each school to generate a custom report and subsequently design and monitor tailored interventions.
- **In Spain,** the Well-Being in Education programmes require a final report that presents outcome data (expected by March 2026). The DBT STEPS-A programmes include rigorous evaluations with control groups.
- **In France,** the EnCLASS and Enabee national surveys monitor well-being, enabling targeted interventions, resource allocation and policy adjustments aligned with identified needs.
- **In Ireland,** the National Teacher Support Service (Oide) and the National Educational Psychology Service (NESP) provide support to schools through evidence-based guides. Schools carry out self-evaluation processes, which also focus on well-being promotion.
- **In Malta,** the policy brief 'Enhancing the Well-Being of Children and Young People in Malta' was published in 2024. It is based on a study recommending public policy actions to improve youth well-being. The study is part of the Well-Being INDEX project, coordinated by the Malta Foundation for the Well-Being of Society and the University of Malta. Malta has also recently piloted the FitMAP - Malta programme, which aims to develop a nationwide monitoring system that promotes physical literacy, encourages an active lifestyle and collects essential data on adolescents' health.

## **Recommendations and support mechanisms for the development of future SEL policies**

The following recommendations focus on five main areas of intervention, as documented in the needs assessment conducted in the project. These areas are: governance and interinstitutional cooperation; curriculum and the development of support resources for school stakeholders; initial training and continuous professional development programmes for teachers, support staff and school management; integration of SEL into effective daily practices and quality assurance systems; and the development of well-being and SEL measurement tools.

### **SEL, well-being and mental health governance**

Finland has significant experience in promoting SEL governance, given its effective approach in defining legal mandates for mental health services in schools, with a direct positive impact on well-being and SEL promotion. Finland has successfully defined distinct institutional roles, together with a clear framework for collaboration at school and system levels. Its integrative, data-informed and participatory approach offers a comprehensive model for the development of well-being policies in Romania.

France offers Romania a robust, multi-layered model for promoting student well-being, which combines national legislation, institutional reforms and innovative practices. The strategy is built on *collaborative governance*, *evidence-informed policymaking* and *system-wide integration* of mental, emotional, and social support mechanisms.

Spain demonstrates effective governance of various services at school level, an inspiration for the future integrated support measures promoted in Romania. For example, the NurSch-MH e-learning programmes from Andalusia could be adapted for Romania's school nurses and school doctors, but they could also inspire the professional development of school counsellors and school psychologists, improve the early detection of depression and reduce suicide risks, while offering students valuable tools for developing SEL skills.

The Irish education system also provides a strong example of how well-being can be meaningfully embedded within both legislation and the curriculum. Through a coherent legal framework and dedicated national policy, student well-being is a central goal of schooling. Schools are supported in this mission by national guidelines, cycles of school self-evaluation (SSE) and compulsory programmes such as Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

Malta also provides inspiration for building a comprehensive and integrated approach to promoting student well-being, mental health and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Core policy documents such as the Education Act (Chapter 605), the National Curriculum Framework and the Inclusive Education Policy are useful policy learning references in the efforts to reinforce a whole-child development model and a strategic alignment between national education policies, school-level practices and cross-sectoral collaboration. Romania could also benefit from Malta's model of interministerial collaboration, localised well-being hubs and student participation in school governance. These strategies can support equitable access to well-being services, improve learning outcomes and foster a more inclusive and responsive educational environment.

### **Embedding SEL in the national curriculum and the development of support resources**

Romania could learn from Finland's extensive experience in promoting a comprehensive curricular approach to SEL and well-being. SEL is embedded in the national curriculum across subjects and transversal competences, emphasising skills like emotional regulation, empathy and responsible decision-making from early childhood education through upper secondary levels (OECD, 2021). Teacher education prepares educators to apply these principles in everyday school life, supporting whole-school well-being initiatives and inclusive pedagogy (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

At the same time, Romania could learn from the DBT STEPS-A curriculum initiatives from Biscay – tested with control groups and strong outcome data. It could be introduced in a small cohort of lower secondary schools and tested in order to build evidence on adolescents' emotion regulation skills. According to the project presentation, the programme cost about €25.80 per student in the first year, making it cost effective. Overall, DBT STEPS-A offers a practical, low-cost and inclusive model for improving adolescent emotional health – one that could be adapted and tested in Romania as well.

By embedding well-being across *the curriculum, teacher education, classroom practices, intersectoral partnerships* and *student voice structures*, the French education system ensures that well-being is not a peripheral goal, but a *core educational value*. This is an important source of inspiration for Romania, given its strategic goal to promote a comprehensive SEL and well-being policy.

Malta systematically integrates SEL and resilience development into its national curriculum through transversal skills education (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, 2022). Romania is beginning to address life skills and social-emotional competencies more explicitly (e.g. through the new Curriculum for Social Development), but full systemic integration is still in progress.

Our research also identified various transnational initiatives in which the surveyed countries were involved. Malta's active involvement in international initiatives, such as FLOURISH and ERASMUS+ well-being programmes, demonstrates the role of these initiatives in modernising education systems

and aligning them with European best practices. Our report also identified relevant examples of such initiatives developed by Romanian organisations (University of Suceava, Institute of Education Sciences), which could support a more focused engagement in well-being-specific policies.

### **A systemic approach to SEL in initial and continuous training programmes**

Romania could particularly benefit from Finland's experience in developing structured teacher training modules in well-being education and setting up intersectoral school welfare teams that collaborate across education, health and social services.

Another relevant area in which Romania could learn from Finland is initial teacher training and the way pedagogical training approaches SEL. In Finland, initial teacher education systematically integrates Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as a core component of pedagogical training. The curriculum includes modules that develop teachers' social-emotional competencies such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy and relationship skills, which are essential for fostering supportive and inclusive learning environments.

Specifically, Finnish teacher training programmes incorporate the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) framework, adapted to local educational contexts. Trainees engage in practical activities such as self-assessment of SEL skills, development of self-care strategies and designing lesson plans that embed SEL objectives. For example, the 'Leading with SEL – Educators & Classrooms' course offers modules on understanding SEL, integrating it into curricula and fostering educator well-being, drawing inspiration from Finnish educational practices (CCE Finland, 2020).

France's use of national data platforms (e.g. Enabee, EnCLASS), continuous teacher development and interdisciplinary networks offers a good model for strengthening the education system's capacity to adapt and respond to the evolving needs of students. France's model offers valuable insights, particularly in terms of *scaling up SEL-based training* for educators, *designing holistic mental health protocols* and *building sustainable intersectoral coalitions* for long-term educational and health outcomes. A similar investment in Romania for achieving coherent, inclusive frameworks could lead to improved school climate, reduced disparities, greater student engagement, enhanced life satisfaction and stronger foundations for academic achievement and lifelong resilience.

Professional capacity building is a defining feature of the Irish model that is highly relevant to Romania. The national standards for initial teacher education (CÉIM) explicitly require the development of social-emotional competencies in future teachers. In addition, continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities – offered through the national teacher support service Oide and the National Educational Psychological Service NEPS – cover a wide range of topics, including trauma-informed practices, digital well-being and emotional self-regulation. The Irish approach also recognises the importance of responsible technology use, which is another area of interest. Romania can draw several lessons from Ireland's experience when seeking to strengthen student well-being within its own education system. The introduction of a compulsory module on student well-being and social-emotional learning in the teaching master's programme could help future educators better support their students.

This could be complemented by free, online CPD courses developed in collaboration with universities and educational authorities. To foster meaningful student participation, the structure of the National Student' Council could be expanded and supported through local grants. Digital well-being should also be prioritised. Romania could develop a national strategy for digital safety in schools, while adapting existing Irish resources, such as the [Webwise](#) digital citizenship handbook, for local use.

As already indicated in the previous section, European initiatives like the FLOURISH Erasmus Mundus project for teacher education show the country's commitment to promoting SEL in all teaching

and learning practices. This policy learning area is highly relevant, given that Romania currently addresses well-being in teacher education in a more fragmented manner, typically through optional courses or

postgraduate training. Romania could benefit greatly from documenting these outcomes in detail, developing formal, structured modules on SEL and resilience within bachelor's and master's programmes for future teachers.

### **Integration of SEL into effective daily practices and quality assurance systems**

Romania could learn from Finland's significant experience in institutionalising school-specific well-being plans as well as from the results achieved through its wide variety of pilot financing mechanisms/programmes dedicated to SEL development, capitalising on the promising results of pilot projects for developing systematic policies in this area. Empowering students as co-creators of school climate policies is another important and relevant intervention area promoted by Finland that could inspire Romania.

Ireland also offers clear and effective operational models. Student Support Teams (SSTs) work within a three-tier Continuum of Support to ensure that all students—whether they need universal, targeted or specialised support—receive appropriate interventions. Romania's education quality assurance system could officially begin piloting and implementing, at system level, a set of well-being indicators focused on school climate, student and teacher well-being, enhancing the model of structured collaboration with external services, including those in the health sector. The Irish approach to promoting young people's voices and their active participation in education policymaking validates the steps that Romania has already taken. Platforms such as <https://comhairlenanog.ie> ensure that students are involved in shaping school policies on well-being and offer a concrete example of how an institutionalised student voice can strengthen democratic participation and enhance the relevance of school-level strategies.

Malta's experience offers other valuable insights into the institutionalisation of well-being teams within schools. School-level experiences provide valuable and actionable insights, offering new tools and ideas to Romanian authorities to support SEL curriculum management and regular monitoring. At the same time, Romania could learn from the institutionalised holistic model that systematically involves families, NGOs and health professionals in school well-being initiatives. Currently, such partnerships are often project-based and vary significantly across regions, with Malta offering valuable experience in establishing national guidelines for whole-community collaboration.

### **Development of well-being and SEL measurement/monitoring tools**

Romania could learn from Finland's use of nationwide health and well-being surveys conducted to guide interventions, which are also highly relevant for SEL. Spain, Malta and France also offer examples of useful tools for measuring SEL (students, teachers), as it is important to measure the progress of specific policies in this area.

Spain's recent experience in developing different regional programmes that advance emotional well-being in schools is highly relevant to Romania. Of particular interest is the impact of Spain's territorial diversity on SEL and well-being policy development and implementation, stimulating innovation and tailoring interventions to local needs. Significant geographical differences in Romania (in particular those related to rural areas or socioeconomically disadvantaged areas) impose a more flexible approach to developing national policies and specific mechanisms that acknowledge local needs. Elements of Spain's national '*Bienestar Emocional*' grant scheme could be adapted to Romania's specific context, providing counties with flexible funding and common quality indicators to scale up successful evidence-based pilots.

Romania could learn from Malta's regular educator well-being surveys that are conducted to assess teacher satisfaction and resilience levels, informing further policy development. At the same time, Malta's current programmes, such as the National Assessment of Socio-Emotional Well-Being & Academic Learning Skills (2023-2025), coordinated by the Centre for Resilience & Socio-Emotional Health and the Ministry for Education, Youth, Sport, Research and Innovation (Centre for Resilience & Socio-Emotional Health, 2023), could be of high interest. For Romanian policymakers, it is important to understand how the findings from this survey are translated into actionable policy advice for children and young people through the Well-Being INDEX policy brief (Cefai, Spiteri, Galea, & Briguglio, 2024). Another relevant initiative is FitMAP-Malta, piloting a national fitness and well-being monitoring system for adolescents.

These promising practices also need specific support mechanisms. The development of future SEL, well-being and mental health policies will need to be based on:

- Documenting and learning from international practices (policy learning) and from relevant programmes and pilot projects carried out at the national level;
- Developing relevant case studies focused on the needs of our education system and on one or more anticipated areas of intervention;
- Analysing the conditions for the transfer of the identified promising practices/good practices, taking into account the current framework.

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## Other important tools:

### A. Romania:

#### *University of Suceava:*

- Developing a mental health curriculum with the help of interdisciplinary experts. PROMEHS (<https://www.promehs.org/>). A wide range of resources for relevant actors: teachers ([For Teachers | Promehs](#)); Parents ([For Parents | Promehs](#)); Policymakers ([For Policymakers and Scholars | Promehs](#)); resources for students are currently being developed and validated.
- [EDUCARDIA](#) is an international project including Romania, which focuses on assessing and improving the social-emotional competencies of students in primary and secondary education. EduCardia is based on an existing open-access emotional intelligence (EI) model, known as EmoSocio.

***Institute of Education Sciences – SEEVAL project*** (Erasmus +), implemented between December 2019 and November 2022, aimed to foster a holistic, school-wide approach to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and make the best SEL practices freely accessible as open educational resources. Targeting students aged 10–16 from disadvantaged backgrounds—including minorities, migrants and refugees, the project produced a comprehensive state-of-play report based on needs analyses in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Italy, combining desk research with an online survey of 997 teachers and 4,738 students.

#### Main results:

- [Needs analysis among teachers and students](#) (Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy)
- SEL model of implementation in schools
- Training of National Trainers / [Training of Practitioners](#) /
- Development of Action Protocols / Piloting in Schools / [SEEVAL Manual](#)

### B. International:

International Baccalaureate: [Wellbeing Research Centre](#)

[OECD – Social and emotional skills: Social and Emotional Skills – Well-being, connectedness and success](#)



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# ANNEXES

## Annex 1: Preliminary analysis of promising practices to be explored in the Case Studies Report

This document briefly presents the countries analysed as potential candidates for documenting promising practices in the area of Social and Emotional Learning and students' and teachers' well-being. The selection and analysis were based on the criteria set out in the previous document, outlining the methodological approach. The following eight countries were included in the review: Finland, France, Cyprus, Ireland, Spain, Malta, Denmark and the United Kingdom.

No.	Country selection justification	Short feedback and limitations	References and other details
1.	<p><b>Finland</b> offers a comprehensive and well-integrated model for promoting student well-being and SEL. Its strong legal foundation, curriculum integration and effective intersectoral collaboration, combined with a strong culture of evaluation and prevention, make it a leading example and a valuable source of inspiration for education policy development in Romania.</p> <p><b>1. Legislation and Policy Context</b> Finland has a robust (strong and coherent) legal framework that has supported student well-being and social-emotional learning (SEL) for decades. Since 1998, the Basic Education Act has made well-being a core goal of education. The Pupil and Student Welfare Act, initially introduced in 2013 and updated in 2023, provides clear guidelines for both community-level and individual support (Finlex, 2013, 2023). In 2023, Finland underwent a significant reform, placing health and social services under new Well-Being Services Counties, thus improving the integration of education and welfare services (Eurydice, 2023).</p> <p><b>2. Well-Being and SEL Services, Programmes &amp; Curriculum</b> The well-being model in Finland combines universal, preventive strategies with tailored individual support. This is guided by the National Core Curriculum, which integrates SEL into the daily life of schools, aiming to</p>	<p>This is one of the most promising candidates to be included in the case studies, given its long-term experience in the field and wide coverage of policy areas</p>	<p><b>References</b> Eurydice. (2023). Administrative reform on the provider of pupil and student welfare in Finland. Retrieved 7 June 2025 from <a href="https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/news/finland-administrative-reform-affecting-provider-pupil-and-student-welfare">https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/news/finland-administrative-reform-affecting-provider-pupil-and-student-welfare</a></p> <p>Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). (2022). <i>Well-being of children and young people</i>. <a href="https://thl.fi/en/statistics-and-data/data-and-services/quality-and-statistical-principles/quality-descriptions/well-being-of-children-and-young-people-school-health-promotion-study">https://thl.fi/en/statistics-and-data/data-and-services/quality-and-statistical-principles/quality-descriptions/well-being-of-children-and-young-people-school-health-promotion-study</a></p> <p>Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI). (n.d.-c). <i>National core curriculum for primary and lower secondary (basic) education</i>. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.oph.fi/en/education-and-qualifications/national-core-curriculum-primary-and-lower-secondary-basic-education">https://www.oph.fi/en/education-and-qualifications/national-core-curriculum-primary-and-lower-secondary-basic-education</a></p>

No.	Country selection justification	Short feedback and limitations	References and other details
	<p>enhance students' learning, mental and physical health and social development. The curriculum ensures that SEL and well-being are not separate, but rather are embedded within the school system as part of a systemic, school-wide effort.</p> <p><b>3. Whole-School and Community Approach – Multi-Layer Model</b>  A distinctive feature of Finland's approach is its whole-school and community model. All school staff are legally required to contribute to promoting student well-being. This responsibility falls mainly on principals and teachers, but each school also has a multidisciplinary welfare team consisting of educators, health professionals, students and parents. These teams plan, implement and monitor well-being initiatives collaboratively, ensuring a holistic approach to student support (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).</p> <p><b>4. Teacher Education &amp; Professionalisation</b>  Teacher education in Finland includes comprehensive training on SEL and student well-being. Teachers, along with study counsellors and special needs educators, are prepared to actively contribute to well-being initiatives within schools. Continuous professional development ensures that teachers remain equipped to create inclusive, safe and supportive learning environments (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022).</p> <p><b>5. Good Practices &amp; Multi-Professional Cooperation</b>  Finland ensures close cooperation between the education, health and social care sectors. Multidisciplinary school teams include psychologists, nurses, social workers and school doctors who work together on both preventive and case-specific measures. This cooperation is institutionalised, and student and parent participation in individual support plans is encouraged and formally integrated into the process (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023).</p>		<p>Finlex. (2013). <i>Pupil and Student Welfare Act 1287/2013 (updated in 2023)</i>.  <a href="https://www.finlex.fi/fi/lainsaadanto/2013/1287">https://www.finlex.fi/fi/lainsaadanto/2013/1287</a></p> <p>Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (MSAH). (2023). <i>Well-being services counties reform</i>. Helsinki.  <a href="https://stm.fi/en/well-being-services-counties">https://stm.fi/en/well-being-services-counties</a></p> <p><b>Comparative Observations for Romania</b>  Finland's approach to student well-being and SEL offers several key lessons for Romania. For instance, while Romania has made strides in integrating SEL into its curriculum, Finland's comprehensive legislative framework, including laws like the Pupil and Student Welfare Act, sets a clear example for creating a legally binding structure that ensures the well-being of students at all levels. In Romania, the integration of health services into the education system is still developing, whereas Finland's Well-Being Services Counties provide a well-established model for intersectoral cooperation (Eurydice, 2023; MSAH, 2023).  Additionally, Finland's mandatory inclusion of all school staff in promoting well-being contrasts with the more fragmented approach in Romania, where the responsibility for student well-being often falls more heavily on specific roles like school psychologists or counsellors. Finland's model encourages collaborative work among multidisciplinary teams, involving educators, health professionals and parents, which</p>

No.	Country selection justification	Short feedback and limitations	References and other details
	<p><b>6. Impact Evaluation</b></p> <p>In Finland, efforts to promote student well-being are continuously evaluated. Schools collaborate with municipal and regional authorities to monitor well-being initiatives. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare collects data from schools, professionals and students to inform policies and improve practices. The Regional State Administrative Agencies ensure the consistent application of national standards across the country (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2022).</p>		<p>can be an inspiring framework for Romania to adopt in order to create a more holistic and integrated support system for students.</p>
2.	<p>France presents a compelling example of a <b>holistic, inclusive and forward-thinking education system</b>, where SEL and well-being are integrated into every layer of schooling, from legislative design to classroom practice, family engagement and policy evaluation. The French experience highlights the impact of sustained, multi-professional investment in students' mental health and personal development.</p> <p>Such a model provides <b>valuable guidance for Romania</b>, where structural investment in school climate, early mental health prevention, SEL integration into the curriculum and teacher training remains at a developmental stage.</p> <p><b>1. Legislative and Policy Framework</b></p> <p>Since 2020, France has adopted the national programme '<b>École Promotrice de Santé</b>', a health-promoting schools policy aligned with the WHO's comprehensive health definition, which focuses on physical, mental and social well-being (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2020). This represents a significant shift in focus, moving from merely preventing risks to fostering lasting, positive behavioural patterns and emotional resilience within the school ecosystem.</p> <p>In 2023, three additional national measures strengthened this holistic approach: the rollout of a <b>mental health protocol</b>, the training of <b>mental</b></p>	<p>France's ability to adapt to technological and social change underscores its relevance as a benchmark for countries looking to future-proof their education systems.</p>	<p><b>References</b></p> <p><b>PowerPoint Sources:</b></p> <p>Ministère de l'Éducation nationale. (2020). <i>École promotrice de santé</i>. <a href="https://www.education.gouv.fr">https://www.education.gouv.fr</a></p> <p>Ministère de l'Éducation nationale. (2021). <i>Programme pHARe - lutte contre le harcèlement scolaire</i>. <a href="https://www.education.gouv.fr/non-au-harcelement/phare">https://www.education.gouv.fr/non-au-harcelement/phare</a></p> <p>Ministère de l'Éducation nationale. (2022). <i>30 minutes d'activité physique quotidienne</i>. <a href="https://eduscol.education.fr/2569">https://eduscol.education.fr/2569</a></p> <p>Ministère de l'Éducation nationale. (2022). <i>Conseils CVC/CVL</i>. <a href="https://eduscol.education.fr/2276">https://eduscol.education.fr/2276</a></p> <p>Santé publique France. (2022). <i>Enabee study on child well-being</i>. <a href="https://www.santepubliquefrance.fr">https://www.santepubliquefrance.fr</a></p>

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	<p><b>health first aiders</b> in lower secondary education, and the inclusion of the national suicide prevention number (3114) in student planners (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2023).</p> <p><b>2. Well-Being and SEL Services, Programmes &amp; Curriculum</b></p> <p>France's approach to student well-being and SEL is embedded across key developmental dimensions:</p> <p><i>Emotional Support.</i> The <i>pHARe</i> programme offers a systemic, inclusive strategy to combat bullying and improve school climate through prevention, early detection and coordinated interventions (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2021).</p> <p><i>Physical Health.</i> Students engage in <b>30 minutes of daily physical activity</b>, integrated into school routines as a complement to physical education, encouraging daily movement and wellness habits (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2022).</p> <p><i>Social Connections and Inclusion.</i> Democratic participation is supported via the <i>Conseils de la vie collégienne et lycéenne</i> (CVC, CVL), enhancing civic engagement and peer leadership (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2022). Moreover, strong emphasis is placed on secularism and cultural diversity through inclusive secular education policies.</p> <p><i>Mental Resilience.</i> Student well-being is monitored nationally through data collection tools like <b>Enabee</b> and <b>EnCLASS</b> studies, informing targeted mental health strategies (Santé publique France, 2022). Parents are also involved through digital platforms such as <i>La Mallette des parents</i>.</p> <p><i>Academic Engagement.</i> Policies like <i>Devoirs faits</i> offer dedicated study hours for lower secondary students, while <i>École ouverte</i> enables learning through sports and culture during holidays (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2021).</p>		<p>Ministère de l'Éducation nationale. (2023). <i>First aid for mental health in schools</i>. <a href="https://www.education.gouv.fr">https://www.education.gouv.fr</a></p> <p>Eduscol. (n.d.). <i>Life skills and empathy development</i>. <a href="https://eduscol.education.fr/3901">https://eduscol.education.fr/3901</a></p> <p><b>Supplementary Sources:</b></p> <p>World Health Organization. (2021). <i>Health-promoting schools: An effective approach to early action on mental health</i>. WHO Regional Office for Europe.</p> <p>OECD. (2021). <i>21st-Century Children: Promoting Quality of Life in Schools</i>. OECD Publishing. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1787/b7f33425-en">https://doi.org/10.1787/b7f33425-en</a></p> <p>UNESCO. (2021). <i>Futures of Education – Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education</i>. <a href="https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707">https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707</a></p> <p><i>Comparative notes</i></p> <p>Unlike France, Romania currently lacks a unified national policy for mental health and SEL in schools, especially at the lower secondary level. Programmes such as <i>Devoirs faits</i> or <i>pHARe</i> could inspire structured interventions in Romanian schools,</p>

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	<p><i>Personal Growth and Life Skills.</i> Arts, cultural activities and life skills education are widely promoted to foster empathy, creativity and personal agency.</p> <p><b>3. Whole-School and Community Approach – A Multi-Layer Model</b> France adopts a <b>multi-tiered</b> strategy:</p> <p><i>Democratic Engagement:</i> Student councils (CVC, CVL) empower youth voices in institutional decisions.</p> <p><i>Family and Community Involvement:</i> Initiatives like <i>Colos apprenantes</i> (summer learning camps) aim to strengthen learning equity and connect families with schools.</p> <p><i>Support for Newly Arrived Students:</i> Dedicated structures help <i>allophone students</i> and families integrate into French schools.</p> <p><b>4. Teacher Training and Professionalisation</b> The training of <i>mental health first aiders</i> among teachers reflects a national commitment to early detection and peer support (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2023). Moreover, educators are supported in embedding SEL themes, such as empathy, citizenship and conflict mediation, into cross-curricular learning.</p> <p><b>5. Multi-Professional Collaboration and Good Practice</b> A key strength of the French model is its institutionalised, <i>multi-professional cooperation</i>. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health professionals collaborate with schools in delivering psychological support and crisis prevention;</li> <li>- NGOs and parents are involved in <i>resilience-building programmes</i>;</li> <li>- The integration of health education into the curriculum promotes shared responsibility across stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p><b>6. Impact Evaluation and Adaptive Policy.</b> France demonstrates a dynamic response to emerging social and educational challenges. For example:</p>		<p>where student support hours or anti-bullying strategies are inconsistently implemented.</p> <p>The French emphasis on multi-professional collaboration could be an important lesson, as Romanian schools often rely solely on individual school counsellors, without proper interinstitutional support.</p> <p>Finally, France's efforts to monitor students' well-being through national studies (e.g. EnCLASS) could serve as a model for Romania's educational planning and policy evaluation.</p>

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	<p>In response to <i>stress and anxiety</i>, primary and lower secondary curricula are increasingly using <i>formative and skill-based assessment</i> to promote confidence and reduce high-stakes pressure.</p> <p>In the context of <i>AI and digitalisation</i>, schools are responding to risks such as digital dependency, isolation and inequality: (i) banning smartphones in schools supports focus and socialisation; (ii) transparent school guidance processes and ethical algorithms support equitable higher education access; (iii) intercultural competence is fostered through <i>mobility programmes</i> and the learning of multiple foreign languages.</p>		
3.	<p><b>Cyprus</b>  In recent years, <b>Cyprus</b> has played an active role in aligning its national policies with priorities centred on the concept of <b>students' and teachers' collective well-being in a sustainable environment</b>. For Cyprus, sustainable well-being and sustainable school environment are intertwined concepts and critical elements for transforming schools into learning communities of sustainability.</p> <p>This concept is fully aligned with the EC's understanding of social and emotional learning (SEL), the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy, establish and maintain positive relationships, build resilience and make responsible decisions. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools.</p> <p>In its current approach, Cyprus promotes a transformative learning environment at policy level and captures sustainable well-being holistically, fostering an iterative learning process, whereby both students and teachers</p>	<p>Small-scale policies compared to Romania</p> <p>Insufficient information on relevant data (mainly due to language barriers)</p>	<p>In Cyprus, the concept of social and emotional learning (SEL) is integrated into various education laws and official regulations.</p> <p>Relevant links:  Law on Compulsory and Free Education at Primary and Secondary Levels (No. 24 (I)/1993): This law outlines the framework for compulsory education and includes provisions for promoting social and emotional skills among students.</p> <p>Legislation and official policy documents</p> <p>Regulations on the Operation of Public Elementary Schools (Κ.Δ.Π. 225/2008 - Κ.Δ.Π. 253/2012): These regulations govern the operation of public elementary schools and emphasise the importance of social and emotional development in the curriculum and social inclusion through education and training.</p>

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	<p>are encouraged to continuously improve as learners and members of a school, community and society.</p> <p>In this approach, all stakeholders act intentionally and responsibly, contributing to the long-term goal of <b>collective well-being</b>. Through planning, experience and reflection, both students and teachers deepen their understanding of themselves and others, thereby shaping their individual perspectives and expanding their worldview.</p> <p>Cyprus has recently developed a set of tools to measure <b>teachers' well-being</b>, a framework encompassing key components. This is linked to the recent initiative concerning the School Self-Evaluation Framework.</p> <p>In the area of SEL and students' well-being, Cyprus has initiated and piloted the <i>Students as Well-Being Ambassadors Programme</i> (SWAP) at the national level. The innovative approach is the focus on students at the end of primary level/beginning of lower secondary level (with a direct impact on facilitating transitions across education levels).</p>		<p>Special Education Laws: The legislative framework for special education in Cyprus includes provisions for the social and emotional development of children with special needs. This is detailed in the annual reports prepared by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and in various policy documents on special education – MOEC 3.</p>
4.	<p><b>Ireland</b></p> <p><b>1. Legislation and Policy Context</b></p> <p>Ireland has a Well-Being Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023, which was updated in 2019. Under this policy, each school is advised to run a School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Well-Being Promotion process and complete a full review cycle within the policy period (due to the pandemic, some schools postponed this review).</p> <p><b>2. Well-Being and SEL Services, Programmes &amp; Curriculum</b></p> <p>Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is compulsory from primary level right through to the end of Junior Cycle. At post-primary level, every school also has to deliver a 400-hour Junior Cycle Well-Being Programme, mixing SPHE, Civic, Social &amp; Political Education and Physical Education. Schools can add an evidence-based SEL programme of their choice, provided</p>	<p>Ireland is another country with a complex educational approach to well-being and SEL, as reflected in legislation, policies and specific practices</p>	<p>Department of Education. (2019). <i>Well-being policy statement and framework for practice 2018–2023 (Revised edition)</i>. Government of Ireland.</p> <p>Department of Education Inspectorate. (2021). <i>Circular 0032/2021: Arrangements for Inspectorate engagement with primary and special schools, 2021/2022</i>.  <a href="https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Circular%2032%202021_0.pdf">https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Circular%2032%202021_0.pdf</a></p> <p>Department of Education and Skills &amp; National Educational Psychological Service. (2014). <i>Student</i></p>

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	<p>they meet DES quality rules (Circular 0043/2018). Schools are encouraged to establish good links with Department support services, community-based statutory and voluntary support services and other external agencies (for example, the HSE) to support the needs of students with additional and/or complex needs.</p> <p><b>3. Whole-School and Community Approach – Multi-Layer Model</b>  Delivery follows a whole-school, multi-component, preventive model built on four pillars—Culture &amp; Environment, Curriculum, Policy &amp; Planning and Relationships &amp; Partnerships (Figure 2, p. 16). Support is tiered through the Continuum of Support (Support for All, Support for Some, Support for Few), ensuring that every student receives universal, targeted or individual help.</p> <p><b>4. Teacher Education and Professionalisation</b>  Schools are encouraged to offer teachers opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in order to have the relevant knowledge and understanding to promote well-being and create a positive classroom environment.</p> <p><b>5. Good Practices &amp; Multi-Professional Cooperation</b>  Schools are advised to run multidisciplinary Student Support Teams that bring together principals, guidance counsellors, special needs co-ordinators, etc.</p> <p><b>6. Impact Evaluation</b>  Progress is tracked through the mandatory School Self-Evaluation (SSE) well-being promotion review and development cycle. Each school gathers stakeholder feedback, sets targets in its School Improvement Plan and reviews results. Recommended key indicators include attendance, successful school completion, successful transitions of students, surveys, consultation with children and young people, parents, teachers and other staff members and information from Inspection Reports (p. 23).</p>	<p>Data from the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Well-Being Promotion process is not yet available.</p>	<p><i>support teams in post-primary schools: Guidelines for review and development.</i> <a href="https://www.lmetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Student-Support-Teams-in-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf">https://www.lmetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Student-Support-Teams-in-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf</a></p> <p>European Commission. (2024). <i>Supporting well-being at school: New guidelines for policymakers and educators.</i> <a href="https://education.ec.europa.eu/news/supporting-well-being-at-school-new-guidelines-for-policymakers-and-educators">https://education.ec.europa.eu/news/supporting-well-being-at-school-new-guidelines-for-policymakers-and-educators</a></p>

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	Ireland's framework is showcased as a promising practice in the EU Guidelines on Well-Being and Mental Health at School (2024).		
5.	<p><b>Spain</b></p> <p><b>1. Legislation and Policy Context</b>  In September 2024, Spain's Ministry of Education launched a new €5 million Programme for Emotional Well-Being in Schools for the 2024/25 academic year, extending the pilot initiatives rolled out in 2022 and 2023. The grant will allow each autonomous community to deliver the measures locally. In line with the National Mental Health Strategy, the Programme for Emotional Well-Being in Schools addresses students' emotional well-being and mental health needs through targeted educational interventions. Previous laws include Organic Law 3/2020, which calls on schools to nurture learners' personal, social and professional competencies, while the current National Mental Health Strategy (2022-2026) identifies schools as the prime arena for prevention among children and adolescents. Well-designed, school-based programmes that also tackle digital well-being can strengthen psychological assets, celebrate diversity and ultimately improve both social and academic outcomes.</p> <p><b>2. Well-Being and SEL Services, Programmes and Curriculum</b>  Royal Decree 217/29 March 2022—which sets out the structure and minimum curriculum for compulsory secondary education—lists the 'personal, social and learning to learn competence' as a core skill. The decree portrays this competence as the ability to engage in self-reflection, gain self-knowledge and self-acceptance and commit to lifelong personal growth; manage time and information effectively; work constructively with others; remain resilient; and take charge of one's own learning. It also encompasses coping with uncertainty and complexity, adapting to change and steering one's metacognitive processes.</p>	<p>Spain has some promising practices, including two best practices mentioned on the website of the European Commission's event 'Best and promising practices on mental health'.</p> <p>Regional policies are not always harmonised, which makes research more difficult.</p>	<p>Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional. (2022). <i>Real Decreto 217/2022, de 29 de marzo, por el que se establece la ordenación y las enseñanzas mínimas de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria</i>. BOE-A-2022-4975.</p> <p>Ministerio de Sanidad. (2022). <i>Estrategia de Salud Mental del Sistema Nacional de Salud 2022-2026</i>. Government of Spain.</p> <p>Boletín Oficial del Estado. (2024, 26 June). <i>Resolución por la que se distribuyen créditos a las comunidades autónomas para el Programa de Bienestar Emocional en los Centros Educativos 2024-2025</i>. BOE-A-2024-18086.</p> <p>Fernández-Rivas, A. (11-13 March 2024). <i>Resilience and socio-emotional curriculum project for adolescent students in Biscay</i> [Conference presentation slides]. European Commission, Marketplace Event on Best &amp; Promising Practices in Mental Health.  <a href="https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dyna/bp-portal/best-practice-file/558">https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dyna/bp-portal/best-practice-file/558</a></p>

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	<p><b>3. Whole-School and Community Approach – Multi-Layer Model</b>  The Ministry of Health’s working group on health promotion is drafting a national ‘Health-Promoting Schools’ guide that places students’ emotional well-being at the forefront. Drawing on the European Health-Promoting School model, the guide will help Spanish schools embed mental health promotion across all areas of school life.</p> <p><b>4. Teacher Education and Professionalisation</b>  Since 2018, teachers have been able to enrol in the short MOOC ‘Life Skills and Emotional Literacy in Educational Settings’ (Habilidades para la vida y alfabetización emocional en contextos educativos), which is delivered online by Spain’s National Institute for Educational Technologies and Teacher Training.</p> <p><b>5. Good Practices &amp; Multi-Professional Cooperation</b>  Objective 5.1 of Spain’s National Mental Health Strategy (2022-2026) calls for a concerted, multi-agency effort to protect mental health from childhood through late adolescence, focusing on prevention and early detection. Schools are expected to nurture key protective factors—resilience, self-esteem, social competence, sound decision-making and non-violent conflict resolution—within a safe, positive climate that encourages prosocial behaviour and healthy lifestyle choices.</p> <p><b>6. Impact Evaluation</b>  A best practice example is the DBT STEPS-A initiative in Biscay, which involved the solid and thorough testing of a socio-emotional curriculum in secondary schools. Within this project, mental health experts first trained teachers, then teachers trained students. This is a multi-layer and whole-school approach.  The ‘Resilience and socio-emotional curriculum project for adolescent students in Biscay’ is mentioned as a best practice on the website of the</p>		

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	European Commission's event 'Best and promising practices on mental health'.		
6.	<p><b>Malta</b> offers an increasingly integrated and dynamic model for promoting student well-being and social-emotional learning (SEL). Through a combination of strong national policies, systemic approaches within schools, innovative international cooperation, particularly the FLOURISH project, and a growing culture of evaluation, Malta stands out as a valuable source of inspiration for education policy development in Romania, especially with regard to the integration of well-being competences into initial teacher education and the development of multi-professional school teams.</p> <p><b>1. Legislation and Policy Context</b></p> <p>Malta has developed a solid legislative and policy foundation that supports inclusive, holistic education aimed at fostering well-being: The Education Act (Chapter 605) ensures every child's right to a holistic education that supports their full development, including social, emotional and mental well-being (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation [MEYR], 2023).</p> <p>The National Education Strategy 2024–2030 (MEYR, 2023) places learner well-being at the core of education reform, explicitly linking well-being to academic success, positive behaviour and civic participation.</p> <p>The Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools (MEYR, 2024) reinforces the requirement for schools to proactively support diversity, including students' emotional and social needs, promoting well-being as a systemic goal.</p> <p><b>2. Well-Being and SEL Services, Programmes and Curriculum</b> through multiple layers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Well-Being Directorate within the Ministry coordinates a wide range of initiatives, including counselling, mental health support and resilience-building programmes in schools (MEYR, 2023).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Differences in Scale and Context</b></p> <p>Malta is a very small country (population of approx. 520,000), with a highly centralised education system. The small scale allows for more rapid policy implementation and closer coordination between schools and authorities. In contrast, Romania's large and diverse system poses greater challenges in directly replicating Malta's models at the national level.</p> <p><b>Resource Availability</b></p> <p>Malta benefits from</p>	<p><b>References</b></p> <p>Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE). (2024). <a href="#">Quality Assurance Framework for Education in Malta (0–16 years)</a>.</p> <p><a href="#">FLOURISH Project</a>. (2024). <i>Fostering Resilient Learners through Integrated Support and Holistic Training</i></p> <p>Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR). (2012). <a href="#">A National Curriculum Framework for All</a>.</p> <p>Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR). (2023). <a href="#">Education Act (Chapter 605)</a>.</p> <p>Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR). (2023). <a href="#">National Education Strategy 2024–2030</a>.</p> <p>Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR). (2023). <a href="#">Well-Being Services</a>.</p> <p>Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR). (2024). <a href="#">Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools</a>.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The National Curriculum Framework explicitly integrates personal and social development across learning areas, systematically fostering SEL competencies from early years through secondary education (MEYR, 2012).</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Whole-School and Community Approach – Multi-Layer Model</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programmes like the ‘Family, Community and School Learning (FCSL)’ initiative operationalise a whole-community approach by strengthening relationships to enhance students' social and emotional development (MEYR, 2024).</li> <li>- Schools are encouraged to form Well-Being Teams, consisting of educators, social workers, psychologists and counsellors, to ensure early intervention and preventive action (MEYR, 2023).</li> </ul> <p><b>4. Teacher Education &amp; Professionalisation – Special Focus on FLOURISH</b></p> <p>One of the most innovative and inspiring aspects for Romania is Malta's emphasis on integrating well-being and SEL into initial teacher education: The international FLOURISH Project (‘Fostering Resilient Learners through Integrated Support and Holistic Training’), co-initiated by the University of Malta and involving the Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava (Romania), has developed a master’s degree programme on resilience education for future teachers (University of Malta, 2024);</p> <p>The FLOURISH project aims to equip teachers not only with academic and pedagogical knowledge but also with skills to foster resilience, well-being and mental health among their students and themselves (FLOURISH Project, 2024);</p> <p>This model offers a concrete example of how Romania could embed SEL and well-being in the formal structures of initial teacher training, creating a new generation resilience-informed and well-being-oriented educators.</p> <p><b>5. Good Practices &amp; Multi-Professional Cooperation</b></p>	<p>relatively high per capita investment in education and social services compared to Romania (European Commission, 2023). Implementing similar multi-professional well-being teams and extensive support services in Romanian schools would require significant financial, human and infrastructural resources, which are currently more limited in Romania.</p> <p><b>Stage of Development</b></p> <p>While Malta has strong frameworks and innovative initiatives, some of its national policies on well-being and</p>	<p>Ministry for Social Policy and Children’s Rights. (2023). <a href="#">Children’s Policy Framework 2024–2030</a>.</p> <p><b>Observations for Romania</b></p> <p><b>Comparative Notes: Malta – Romania</b></p> <p><b>Integration of Well-Being into Initial Teacher Education</b></p> <p>Malta has innovatively incorporated well-being competences into initial teacher training, notably through the FLOURISH project (University of Malta, 2021). In contrast, Romania currently addresses well-being in teacher education in a more fragmented manner, typically through optional courses or postgraduate training. Romania could benefit from developing formal, structured modules on SEL and resilience within bachelor’s and master’s programmes for future teachers.</p> <p><b>Legislative Support for Multi-Professional School Teams</b></p> <p>Malta’s Student Support Services Framework institutionalises collaboration among teachers, counsellors, psychologists and social workers directly within schools (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, 2022). In Romania, while school counsellors are available through CJRAE structures, multi-professional teams are not systematically integrated at school level. Romania</p>

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	<p>Malta actively fosters cross-sectoral collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Children's Policy Framework 2024–2030 explicitly mandates interministerial collaboration, bringing together education, social protection and health authorities to promote child well-being and monitor implementation (Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights, 2023);</li> <li>- Schools routinely collaborate with school psychologists, social workers, nurses and student services to support students at risk (MEYR, 2023).</li> </ul> <p><b>6. Impact Evaluation</b></p> <p>Malta emphasises accountability and continuous improvement. The Quality Assurance Department oversees systematic monitoring and evaluation, providing structured external reviews to ensure that well-being policies and practices are effectively implemented in schools (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education [DQSE], 2024). Additionally, educator well-being surveys are conducted to assess teacher satisfaction and resilience levels, informing further policy development (MEYR, 2024).</p> <p><b>7. European/International Recognition</b></p> <p>Malta is increasingly recognised internationally for its inclusive education and well-being initiatives. Malta actively participates in international research projects and comparative studies such as the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS 2022), highlighting its growing alignment with European best practices in inclusive education and well-being promotion (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, 2023).</p>	<p>SEL are still relatively recent and evolving (e.g. post-2020 curricular updates, FLOURISH project outcomes still in the early stages). Romania should consider Malta as an emerging model that has not yet been fully consolidated, and complement it with insights from more mature systems.</p>	<p>could consider creating legal frameworks for permanent, school-based well-being teams.</p> <p><b>Whole-School and Community Approach</b></p> <p>Malta promotes a holistic model, systematically involving families, NGOs and health professionals in school well-being initiatives. In Romania, such partnerships are often project-based and vary significantly across regions. Establishing national guidelines for whole-community collaboration would strengthen Romanian practice.</p> <p><b>Focus on Resilience and Social-Emotional Learning in the Curriculum</b></p> <p>Malta systematically integrates SEL and resilience development into its national curriculum through transversal skills education (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, 2022). Romania is beginning to address life skills and social-emotional competencies more explicitly (e.g. through the new Curriculum for Social Development), but full systemic integration is still in progress.</p> <p><b>Participation in International Well-Being Projects</b></p> <p>Malta's active role in international initiatives such as FLOURISH and ERASMUS+ well-being programmes helps modernise its education system and align with European best practices. Romania also participates in European projects, but more targeted engagement in well-being-specific programmes could accelerate innovation.</p>

No.	Country selection justification	Short feedback and limitations	References and other details
7.	<p><b>Denmark</b></p> <p>The country has developed several policies and initiatives to promote social and emotional learning (SEL) and skills among students. Here are some key aspects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>A student-centred pedagogical approach.</b> The Danish education system emphasises student-centred learning, where students are encouraged to take an active role in their education. This approach fosters self-efficacy by allowing students to set their own goals, make decisions and take responsibility for their learning.</li> <li>2. <b>Whole-school approach:</b> Danish schools often adopt a whole-school approach to SEL, integrating it into the curriculum and daily activities. This approach ensures that SEL is not just an add-on but a fundamental part of the educational experience.</li> <li>3. <b>Teacher training:</b> Denmark invests in training educators to effectively teach SEL. Programmes like the HAND in HAND project focus on developing teachers' social and emotional skills and increasing their cultural awareness. This helps teachers manage diverse classrooms and support students' emotional development.</li> <li>4. <b>School environment:</b> Creating a supportive and inclusive school environment is a priority. Danish schools work on fostering positive relationships among students and between students and teachers, which is crucial for effective SEL.</li> <li>5. <b>Inclusive education policies.</b> Denmark's commitment to inclusive education ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have access to quality education. This inclusive approach helps build self-efficacy by providing students with the support they need to succeed.</li> <li>6. <b>Feedback and assessment.</b> Regular and constructive feedback is a cornerstone of the Danish education system. Teachers provide feedback that focuses on students' efforts and strategies rather</li> </ol>	<p>Denmark is one of the most relevant and interesting 'candidates' for an in-depth case study, as it has a long tradition and specific SEL interventions in all key policy areas. Denmark has invested significantly in the development of SEL and continues to innovate in this field.</p> <p>Another strength is its experience in evaluating activities that promote SEL and well-being.</p>	<p><b>EN and DK relevant resources:</b></p> <p><a href="#">EURYDICE Education system overview</a></p> <p><a href="#">Country policy profile: Education Policy Outlook in Denmark - OECD</a></p> <p><a href="#">EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK DENMARK - Altinget</a></p> <p><a href="#">Making the case for social and emotional learning (PDF) Developing Social-Emotional Skills in Denmark - Academia.edu</a></p> <p><a href="#">Trivselsmåling   Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet - uvm.dk</a></p> <p><a href="#">Trivselskommissionens anbefalinger er klar   Børne- og ...</a></p> <p><a href="#">250224-kort-om-trivselskommissionens-afrapportering.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="#">3 Ways to Integrate SEL Into the Curriculum</a></p> <p>The Trivselskommission has recently provided <b>35 specific recommendations to further enhance the well-being of children and young people in Denmark.</b> Among specific recommendations for embedding SEL in academic instruction, we have identified examples of activities that provide explicit</p>

No.	Country selection justification	Short feedback and limitations	References and other details
	<p>than just outcomes, helping students understand their progress and build confidence in their abilities.</p> <p>7. <b>Collaborative learning environments.</b> Denmark promotes collaborative learning environments where students work together on projects and assignments. This collaborative approach helps students develop self-efficacy by allowing them to share knowledge, support each other and learn from their peers [2].</p> <p>In particular, Denmark has implemented several education policies and initiatives to develop self-efficacy among students, regarded by the OECD as one of the core competence areas of SEL. In practice, Danish schools implement SEL through various activities and projects.</p> <p>An important role is played by the <b>Well-Being Commission</b>, which has recently published a set of key policy recommendations for promoting SEL and student well-being. Programmes like 'Trivsel' (well-being) focus on creating a supportive school environment that promotes students' social and emotional well-being.</p> <p>In Denmark, Trivsel programmes are comprehensive programmes aimed at promoting social and emotional learning (SEL) and overall well-being among students in Denmark. Here are some key aspects of these programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mindfulness practices: Schools incorporate mindfulness exercises to help students manage stress and improve focus. These activities include guided meditation sessions and breathing exercises.</li> <li>- Collaborative projects: Students engage in group projects that require teamwork and cooperation, fostering social skills and empathy.</li> <li>- Conflict resolution workshops are conducted to teach students effective strategies for resolving conflicts peacefully and constructively.</li> </ul>		<p>SEL instruction, create supportive classroom environments, integrate SEL into school culture and use new technologies, tools and resources to develop SEL.</p> <p>Denmark also has significant experience in SEL <b>research and evaluation</b>, as it actively participates in research projects to evaluate the effectiveness of SEL programmes. This helps refine and improve the strategies used to promote social and emotional skills (see for example, the study conducted in Copenhagen schools on activities designed to develop self-awareness, self-management and positive relationships – qualitative research, involving participant observation and direct engagement with students to understand their emotional skills development).</p>

No.	Country selection justification	Short feedback and limitations	References and other details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emotional regulation exercises: Activities designed to help students recognise and manage their emotions, such as journaling and role-playing scenarios.</li> <li>- Peer support programmes: Older students mentor younger ones, providing guidance and support, which helps build a sense of community and belonging.</li> </ul> <p>The effectiveness of Trivsel programmes is assessed through the National Trivsel Measurement (Trivselsmåling), which is conducted annually among students from kindergarten to 9th grade. This assessment includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Electronic questionnaires: Students complete electronic questionnaires that measure various aspects of their school well-being, including their relationships with peers and teachers, their sense of belonging and their overall satisfaction with school life.</li> <li>- Expert recommendations: The content of the questionnaires is developed based on recommendations from an expert group on student well-being.</li> <li>- Annual reporting: The results of the Trivselsmåling are used to track the development of student well-being at the national level and to inform local initiatives at the municipal, school and classroom levels.</li> <li>- School environment assessments: The results are integrated into schools' assessments of their educational environment, helping to identify areas for improvement and develop targeted interventions.</li> </ul>		
8.	<p><b>The United Kingdom</b></p> <p><b>1. Legislation and Policy Context</b></p> <p>The United Kingdom has progressively integrated social and emotional learning (SEL) into education policies, especially through the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) curriculum. Starting with 2019/2020, all primary and secondary schools in England have been required to deliver Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex</p>	<p>The UK has several innovative approaches in the area of curriculum development and implementation.</p>	<p>Burton, S., Traill, M., &amp; Norgate, R. (2009). <i>An evaluation of the emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) programme</i>. Hampshire Educational Psychology Service. <a href="https://www.elsanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ELSA-evaluation-report-july-2009_hampshire.pdf">https://www.elsanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ELSA-evaluation-report-july-2009_hampshire.pdf</a></p> <p>Cefai, C., Bartolo, P. A., Cavioni, V., &amp; Downes, P. (2018).</p>

No.	Country selection justification	Short feedback and limitations	References and other details
	<p>Education (RSE) and Health Education (Department for Education, 2019), with updates introduced in 2021.</p> <p><b>2. Well-Being and SEL Services, Programmes and Curriculum</b>            Since 2019/2020, Health Education, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) have become statutory parts of the curriculum, requiring the teaching of mental health awareness, positive relationships, online safety and emotional resilience (Department for Education, 2019). Many schools also run peer mentoring schemes (Education Endowment Foundation, 2025), emotional literacy programmes (Burton, Traill, &amp; Norgate, 2009) or mindfulness initiatives such as the Mindfulness in Schools Project (n.d).</p> <p><b>3. Whole-School and Community Approach – Multi-Layer Model</b>            The UK administration promotes a whole-school, whole-community approach to well-being, as recommended in the Public Health England’s guidance (Public Health England &amp; Department for Education, 2015). This involves integrating SEL across the school environment and fostering strong partnerships with parents, community health services, youth organisations and mental health professionals.</p> <p><b>4. Teacher Education and Professionalisation</b> – Staff development to support their own well-being and that of students is one of the eight principles set out in ‘Promoting children and young people’s emotional health and well-being: A whole school and college approach’ (Public Health England &amp; Department for Education, 2015). To strengthen practice, the Department for Education launched the Senior Mental Health Lead training programmes in 2021, offering schools funding to help their staff develop expertise in promoting mental well-being at school level (Department for Education, 2021). Organisations like the PSHE Association provide accredited Continuing</p>	<p>SEAL and HeadStart programmes: mixed/limited impact evidence</p> <p>Different and fragmented policies in the four regions (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland)</p>	<p><i>Strengthening social and emotional education as a core curricular area across the EU: A review of the international evidence</i> (NESET II report). Publications Office of the European Union. <a href="https://doi.org/10.2766/664439">https://doi.org/10.2766/664439</a></p> <p>Department for Education. (2019). <i>Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers</i>. <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62cea352e90e071e789ea9bf/Relationships_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62cea352e90e071e789ea9bf/Relationships_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf</a></p> <p>Department for Education. (2021). <i>Senior mental health lead training: Guidance for schools and colleges</i>. GOV.UK. <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training</a></p> <p>Education Endowment Foundation. (2025). <i>Peer tutoring</i>. Education Endowment Foundation. <a href="https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/peer-tutoring">https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/peer-tutoring</a></p> <p>Evidence Based Practice Unit. (2023). <i>HeadStart national evaluation final report. Supporting the mental health and well-being of children and young people: The role of HeadStart</i>. <a href="https://www.annafreud.org/research/past-">https://www.annafreud.org/research/past-</a></p>

No.	Country selection justification	Short feedback and limitations	References and other details
	<p>Professional Development programmes for teachers on emotional health, resilience education and safe delivery of sensitive subjects.</p> <p><b>5. Good Practices &amp; Multi-Professional Cooperation</b> Schools work with Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) (NHS England, 2023), social workers, school nurses and charities like Place2Be, which provide services in schools (Place2Be, n.d.).</p> <p><b>6. Impact Evaluation</b> – The independent evaluation of the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programmes found mixed results: while they improved the school climate and student attitudes, they had limited short-term effects on measurable behaviour or academic outcomes unless they were strongly embedded (Humphrey et al., 2010). As a result, the Department for Education shifted towards embedding SEL in statutory curricula through RSE and Health Education reforms.</p> <p>HeadStart is a large-scale, multi-site mental health initiative in England, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, aimed at improving the emotional well-being and resilience of young people aged 10 to 16. Large-scale survey data from the HeadStart programmes showed no statistically significant improvement in students’ mental health or well-being (Evidence Based Practice Unit, 2023). Even so, the programme had clear upsides: many young people said they felt more resilient and confident, staff noticed better social-emotional skills, and schools reported fewer exclusions in the early years of the scheme.</p> <p>Cefai and colleagues (2018) list the UK’s SEAL programme and PSHE curriculum as European examples of how social-emotional education can be included into everyday school life. According to the authors, alongside international examples such as the CASEL framework, the WHO Health-Promoting Schools model and Australia’s KidsMatter initiative, the UK’S SEAL and PSHE both follow a whole-school approach.</p>		<p><a href="#">researchprojects/the-headstart-learning-programmesme/</a></p> <p>Humphrey, N., Lendrum, A., &amp; Wigelsworth, M. (2010). <i>Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programmes in secondary schools: National evaluation</i>. Department for Education. <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a79fa24ed915d6d99f5c42e/DFE-RB049.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a79fa24ed915d6d99f5c42e/DFE-RB049.pdf</a></p> <p>Kuyken, W., Weare, K., Ukoumunne, O. C., Vicary, R., Motton, N., Burnett, R., ... Huppert, F. (2013). Effectiveness of the Mindfulness in Schools Programme: Non-randomised controlled feasibility study. <i>British Journal of Psychiatry</i>, 203(2), 126–131. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.113.126649">https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.113.126649</a></p> <p>Mindfulness in Schools Project. (n.d.). <i>Mindfulness in Schools Project</i>. <a href="https://mindfulnessinschools.org/">https://mindfulnessinschools.org/</a></p> <p>NHS England. (2023). <i>Mental health support in schools and colleges</i>. <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers/">https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers/</a></p> <p>Place2Be. (n.d.). <i>Place2Be: Improving children's mental health</i>. <a href="https://www.place2be.org.uk/">https://www.place2be.org.uk/</a></p> <p>Public Health England, &amp; Department for Education. (2015). <i>Promoting children and young people's emotional health and well-being: A whole school and college approach</i>. <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/614cc965d3bf7f718518029c/Promoting_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_and_well-being.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/614cc965d3bf7f718518029c/Promoting_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_and_well-being.pdf</a></p>

## Annex 2: Selection of countries based on the policy priorities set out by the Ministry of Education

Ministry of Education and Research in Romania – Policy Areas	Relevant Countries
Strengthening Institutional and Legislative Capacity	Finland, France, Ireland
Evidence-Based Policymaking	France, Spain, the United Kingdom
Promoting Student Well-Being and Mental Health in Schools	France, Malta, Spain
Enhancing Human Resource Capacity in Education	Malta, Ireland, Cyprus
Reforming Educational Practice and Classroom Management	Denmark, the United Kingdom, Malta
Strengthening Intersectoral and Interinstitutional Collaboration	Finland, Spain, Denmark

Country	Number of Areas	Covered Policy Areas
France	3	Strengthening Institutional and Legislative Capacity; Evidence-Based Policymaking; Promoting Student Well-Being and Mental Health in Schools
Spain	3	Evidence-Based Policymaking; Promoting Student Well-Being and Mental Health in Schools; Strengthening Intersectoral and Interinstitutional Collaboration
Malta	3	Promoting Student Well-Being and Mental Health in Schools; Enhancing Human Resource Capacity in Education; Reforming Educational Practice and Classroom Management
Finland	2	Strengthening Institutional and Legislative Capacity; Strengthening Intersectoral and Interinstitutional Collaboration
Ireland	2	Strengthening Institutional and Legislative Capacity; Enhancing Human Resource Capacity in Education
The United Kingdom	2	Evidence-Based Policymaking; Reforming Educational Practice and Classroom Management
Denmark	2	Reforming Educational Practice and Classroom Management; Strengthening Intersectoral and Interinstitutional Collaboration
Cyprus	1	Enhancing Human Resource Capacity in Education

## Annex 3. Common structure of the case studies

**Key comment: Why the country is considered a best practice example in the field. How SEL, well-being and mental health are connected.**

### **1. Strengthening institutional and legislative capacity**

- › Legislation and policy context/A national framework for health-promoting schools (France)
- › Reform of welfare service governance/Legislative commitment to mental health in schools (France)

### **2. Promoting SEL, student well-being and mental health in schools**

- › Integration into the National Core Curriculum/Programmes for social-emotional learning and mental health (France)
- › Multidisciplinary Student Welfare Teams/Democratic participation and emotional skills (France)
- › Inclusive education and personal growth (France)
- › Physical health as a well-being lever (France)

### **3. Developing human resource capacity in education**

- › Teacher training and professional development/Mental health training for school staff (France)
- › Collaborative school culture/Embedding SEL in teacher education (France)

### **4. Reforming teaching practice and classroom management**

- › Pedagogical approaches supporting well-being/Assessment for learning and mental health (France)
- › Preventive and early intervention
- › Digital citizenship and AI ethics (France)
- › SEL-infused curriculum (France)

### **5. Strengthening intersectoral and interinstitutional collaboration**

- › Coordination between education and health services and referral mechanisms/Whole-school and interdisciplinary models (France)
- › Youth participation in well-being governance/Promoting student agency and democratic participation (France)
- › Inclusion and equity through tailored support (France)

### **6. Evidence-based education policymaking**

- School Health Promotion Study/Monitoring and evaluation tools (Malta)
- Policy adjustments informed by research

### **Examples of promising practices**

### **Policy learning implications for the Romanian education system**

## References

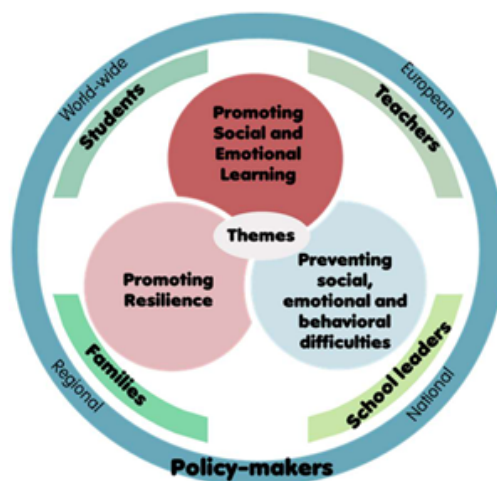
- General legislative and regulatory documents
- Other relevant documents

## Annex 4. Scientific evidence for SEL

The report considers the various recent meta-analyses of the impact of universal SEL interventions carried out in schools. An example is Cipriano et al. (2023), which conducted a meta-analysis of 424 studies from 53 countries, documenting the significant positive effects of universal SEL-based interventions carried out in school on the development of social-emotional competencies, behaviours and prosocial attitudes; improving relationships with peers and school functioning; reducing problematic behaviours and emotional distress. These conclusions support the idea that SEL is an effective universal intervention that can be carried out in school to promote the well-being of students and justify investing in public policies dedicated to this area of intervention.

The figure below illustrates the theoretical framework used in the EU-funded Promoting Mental Health at Schools (PROMEHS) project (2019-2022) – showing how activities that simultaneously promote social-emotional learning, strengthen resilience and prevent social-emotional and behavioural problems can be embedded in an approach that engages students, teachers, families, school leaders and policymakers (Cavioni, 2022).

### PROMEHS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



Cavioni, V., Grazzani, I., Ornaghi, V. (2020). Mental health promotion in schools: A comprehensive theoretical framework. *International Journal of Emotional Education*, 12(1), 65-82

Figure from Cavioni, V. (2022). Promoting mental health and social emotional learning in schools: The PROMEHS Project. Presentation at the 11th Policy Forum of the Education for Inclusive Societies Project: Engaging learners: Fostering inclusion through well-being and mental health supports, OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/about/projects/edu/education-for-inclusive-societies/Session-1-2-Cavioni-Valeria-OECD.pdf>

## Annex 5. Related measures/programmes that need to be further explored

### A. Increase our students' physical activity and participation in physical education (outside the dedicated Physical Education classes) to reach the MVPA target of at least 60 minutes/day

*Why? Eighty-five per cent of children & adolescents worldwide do not meet the recommended 60 minutes of MVPA per day. Declines accelerate in early teens and are worse for girls. Regular PA is linked to lower anxiety, higher life satisfaction and self-esteem, as well as better social skills and a greater sense of belonging. Good habits formed during PE lessons later on correlate with healthy sports habits as adults.*

(Source: IBA 2024)

Examples to learn from	Core ingredients	Key outcomes
<b>AMPED – Activity &amp; Motivation in PE</b> (whole secondary, low-SES)	Teacher PD + tech-supported	+7 min of MVPA/day, better PE pedagogy and student motivation at 12 & 24 months.
<b>Move for Well-Being in Schools</b> (multicomponent, ages 10-13)	5-min 'brain breaks', active recess facilitation, enhanced PE units	Gains in global self-worth, especially for least-active students; MVPA maintained across school year.
<b>PAAC – Physical Activity Across the Curriculum</b> (elementary)	Teachers embed two 10-min energisers per class to hit 90 min/week; robust training & support.	Slowed BMI gain over 3 yrs and lifted maths/reading scores, while raising daily MVPA.
<b>ATLAS</b> (boys, yrs 9-10)	20-week sport-skills & lifestyle programme plus phone app and teacher modelling.	Sustained ↑ in fitness & MVPA at 8-month follow-up.

### B. Develop programmes aimed at increasing teachers' well-being

*Why? Teaching and learning in school are more effective when both students and their teachers enjoy high levels of well-being. It is not possible to support the development of students' competencies if teachers themselves have not developed these competencies to a sufficient degree. This applies in particular to competencies related to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).*

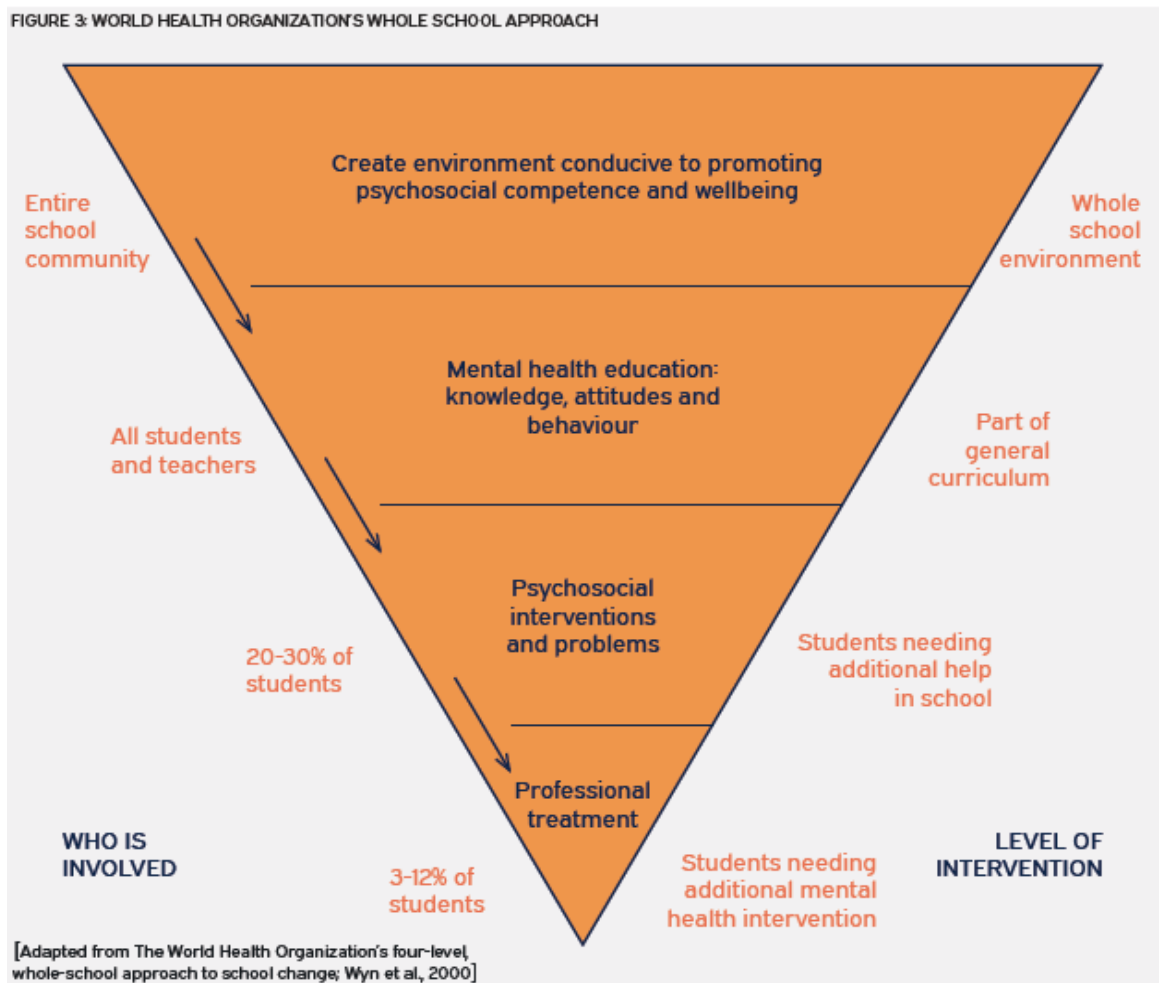
Six fundamental core elements that consistently emerged across interventions aimed at improving teacher well-being (Vo & Allen, 2022)

- Promoting Autonomy (Voluntary Participation and Multiple Methods)
- Context-Specific Design
- Group Format
- Professional Knowledge

- Regular Meetings (Weekly meetings were a constant element across the interventions, regardless of their duration)

A comprehensive systematic review, encompassing 98 studies, also underscores the crucial role of social relations in enhancing teacher well-being (Hascher & Waber, 2021).

### C. Effective Whole School Approach interventions



Programme & scope	Core ingredients	Stand-out outcomes
<b>Health Promoting Schools (HPS)</b> – WHO framework, used in 60+ countries	Policy review, healthy school committees, curriculum plus environment change	Students <b>less likely to smoke or be bullied</b> , better BMI & fitness in Langford et al. meta-analysis
<b>MindMatters</b> – Australia, nationwide	Staff PD, student modules, parent resources, referral pathways	Widely adopted model that embeds universal SEL, while flagging <i>targeted</i> supports for at-risk students
<b>Aban Aya Youth Project</b> – 12 Chicago schools	SEL lessons <b>plus</b> school climate, parent & community components	<b>34% reduction</b> in substance use, lower violence & truancy in boys (RCT)

## Annex 6. List of key concepts used in the report

### **Mental health (WHO definition)**

Mental health is a state of mental wellbeing that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to their community. (WHO, 2022).

The definitions of well-being, social and emotional learning (SEL) and whole-school approach are based on the glossary of 'Well-Being and Mental Health at School: Guidelines for Education Policymakers' (EC, 2024):

**Well-being** is a dynamic state in which the individual becomes aware of their own potential, develops their skills and effectively manages the normal stresses of life, thus contributing to their own community through productive and meaningful work. This implies the ability to make sense of experiences, manage one's thoughts and emotions, build healthy social relationships and interact harmoniously with the environment — all of these aspects are fundamental to effective learning. (EC, 2024, p.34)

**Social-emotional education (SEE)** is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes 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).

**Social and emotional learning (SEL)** refers to the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy, establish and maintain positive relationships, build resilience and make responsible decisions. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower youth and adults to co-create schools where everyone thrives. (EC, 2024, p.34). The **whole-school approach** is an ecological perspective on school, according to which schools, families and communities form an interconnected system that influences student development. In such a framework, interventions are carried out simultaneously on several system levels and involve intersectoral collaboration between specialists from several fields, as well as cooperation with the family and the community, in order to manage complex problems for which schools do not have (nor can they have) the necessary expertise (EC, 2004, p.34).

The Policies and Resources for Safe and Supportive Schools project is funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, and implemented by the Ministry of Education and Research, with the technical assistance of UNICEF and in cooperation with the European Commission.