D6.3 Lessons learned and best practices report

Analysis and identification of best practices

Due date – M34

Submission date – 31/10/2023

Document identifier: D6.3

Version: 1

Author: UAB

Dissemination status: Public

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Grant Agreement n°:	101004717
Project acronym:	REFUGE-ED
Project title:	Effective Practices in Education, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for the integration of Refugee Children
Funding Scheme:	H2020-MIGRATION-05-2018-2020: Mapping and overcoming integration challenges for migrant children
Project Duration:	2021/01/01 – 2023/12/31 (36 months)
Coordinator:	UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE BARCELONA (UAB)
Associated Beneficiaries:	UNIVERSITA DEGLI STUDI DI FIRENZE (UNIFI)
	NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY (NBU)
	KENTRO MERIMNAS OIKOGENEIAS KAI PAIDIOU (KMOP)
	THE PROVOST, FELLOWS, FOUNDATION SCHOLARS & THE OTHER MEMBERS OF BOARD OF THE COLLEGE OF THE HOLY & UNDIVIDED TRINITY OF QUEEN ELIZABETH NEAR DUBLIN (TCD)
	RED BARNET (STCD)
	DANSK RODE KORS (DANISH RED CROSS) (PSD)
	SUPPORT GROUP NETWORK (SGN)
	ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE COOPERAZIONEINTERNAZIONALE SID SUD (CISS)

Project no. 101004717
REFUGE-ED

Effective Practices in Education, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for the integration of Refugee Children

MIGRATION-05-2018-2020: Mapping and overcoming integration challenges for migrant children

Start date of project: 01/01/2021   Duration: 36 months

History Chart				
Issue	**Date**	**Changed page(s)**	**Cause of change**	**Implemented by**
0.10				
1.0				
2.0				

Validation			
No.	**Action**	**Beneficiary**	**Date**
1	Prepared		
2	Approved		
3	Released		

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1. Executive Summary

Building on the social impact of previous EU research in the field of education and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), REFUGE-ED identified, implemented and evaluated evidence-based practices in education and MHPSS that have been shown to promote educational success, well-being and sense of belonging for all children, focusing on those in recent migration cohorts, refugees and asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, including those residing in hotspots, reception/identification centres and institutionalised care. This was done through a dialogic process of co-creation, involving all members of the education community (children and families, civil society organisations and local service providers, schools, and teaching staff; including school counsellors or other focal points focusing on MHPSS needs in education; and policy makers working in different educational settings).

At this point, this report synthesises lessons learned and best practices towards the end of the project period. At the same time, it suggests effective strategies and actions not only for the pilots involved, but especially for those interested in implementing them.

2. Sources

The **D6.3 Lessons Learned and best practices** report was developed based on the several dialogic and co-creative spaces along the project, and with the contributions of all partners. This way, the report puts together the acquired knowledge by the researchers and by the beneficiaries. The report's main focal point is to highlight what will contribute to the sustainability and replicability of the actions implemented.

The following insights were considered in the drafting of the report (see more in detail in Annex 1):

- Focus groups with the educational community of the pilot sites at the beginning of the project. The identification of needs was key to the co-creation process.
- General Assemblies and wrap-up meetings with the educational community of the pilot sites during the implementation phase. The benefits and positive results obtained as well as the detection of opportunities for improvement were essential to adjust the actions undertaken in the project.

- Follow-up meetings with consortium partners to identify what worked and possible shortcomings in the implementation process and additional training needs of the centres in both, SEAs and MHPSS.
- Interviews with members of the pilot centres. These inputs have been essential in deepening the analysis of what has worked well and what requires a different approach.
- At the end of the project, a lessons learned template was developed for all partners to systematise what worked well and what did not in all stages of the project, i.e. the co-creation process, training, implementation, evaluation and dissemination.

3. Brief description of the project: What were the issues the project tried to address?

The REFUGE-ED project identified, implemented, and evaluated evidence-based practices in education and MHPSS that have been shown to promote the educational success, wellbeing, and sense of belonging of all children, targeting those from recent migration cohorts, refugees and asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, including those residing in hotspots, reception/ identification centres and institutionalized care. This way, the identified practices covered the fields of formal, non-formal and informal education and had already showed to be effective in promoting the above-mentioned areas.

Building on the social impact of prior EU research in the field of education and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) as well as the combined two fields, through a dialogic process of co-creation, it involved all members of the education community, i.e., children and families, communities, civil society organisations and local service providers, school staff and teachers throughout the process. In doing so, REFUGE-ED aims to address the challenges of the refugee crisis in Europe, which has had a significant impact on the education, social services, and mental health sectors in host countries.

Considering, on the one hand, that Successful Educational Actions have proven their positive effect towards social cohesion and improved learning in any context (De Botton, et al., 2014)(Diez & Cabré, 2015) (Diez, et al., 2011) (Flecha, 2015) (Duque, et al., 2021) (Khalfaoui, et al. 2020), to name a few, and, on the other hand, that MHPSS practices have been used in a wide diversity of contexts, the project has implemented these practices in 46 pilots in six countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, and Spain.

Therefore, the project was expected to deliver results on three main components: wellbeing, sense of belonging and academic success each with interrelated advantages. This means that belonging will have an impact on well-being, well-being on academic success and so on in all combinations.

4. REFUGE-ED: What were its major outputs?

The project's overall results, especially, highlighted the interconnectedness of these three pillars –wellbeing, sense of belonging and academic success– which altogether, can impact refugee and migrant children integration with their environment. The enhancement of sense of belonging promoted children's wellbeing which in turn supported their academic success. This means, when children feel emotionally supported, they are better equipped to handle academic challenges and perform their potential.

Considering the involvement of different actors in the SEAs, the sense of belonging and well-being has in many cases been expanded beyond those directly involved in the centres to the whole community. Likewise, results have been shown that active participation and social interaction further enhanced children's engagement, and academic motivation. In this regard, SEAs and MHPSS practices can horizontally support the development of a broader climate of cooperation, trust, respect, and encouragement. This translates into an inclusive education that promotes solidarity and active participation, inside and outside the classrooms, regardless of abilities.

Furthermore, the principles of egalitarian dialogue and equality of differences, promoted through the SEAs, have laid the foundation for children in vulnerable situations, like migratory and refugee backgrounds and learning difficulties, and their families to take a leading role, share their ideas and opinions, and improve academically.

The following section covers that which has worked well and have shaped the results of the project.

5. Lessons learned and best practices

As mentioned above, one thing that should not be overlooked is that the common thread running through the project is the dialogic process of co-creation. This entails not a common consultation of decisions to the beneficiaries but a real involvement of the community in the decision making in every phase of the project. This in turn has implied adjusting the actions foreseen in the project according to the needs and possibilities of each pilot project.

In this way, the REFUGE-ED dialogic process of co-creation is the first key aspect that has laid the groundwork for breakthrough ideas to flourish and produce a social impact among its beneficiaries, ultimately contributing to a current societal challenge: the inclusion of migrant and refugee children in Europe. On this basis, through an analysis of the actions implemented during the project as well as by taking stock of the results and critical issues, key actions have been identified that give rise to the shaping of lessons learned. Once the lessons learned from the

analysis have been identified, best practices are established as recommendations that will serve to reinforce the work carried out and for its replicability in other contexts. The most relevant ones at each stage are mentioned below:

5.1. Co-creation process

Context matters without hindering the core elements of SEAs and MHPSS. Due to the fact that each context is different, adaptations had to be made throughout the process. In this sense, the identification of needs through a dialogic process of co-creation, with the participation of the community, has been the key starting point to know how best to approach each stage of the project in each of the pilots. An important challenge that needs to be mentioned here is how to adapt to the context without changing the key elements of the SEAs and the MHPSS approaches. In both cases, while a set of aspects can be changed and adapted to the contexts, other crucial aspects might lead not to obtain the same good results as expected. An example very often found is the discussion around the choice of reading classical books in the Dialogic Literary Gatherings (DLG), if a centre chooses otherwise, it will not be a DLG and not obtaining the same results. However, how pilot sites organize the preparation of the DLG whether all together in class or after school program or as individual assignment or whether they organize it once a week or once a month, or as part of their language class or as an optional one would not alter the expected outcomes. It is important to mention that some Greek centres dropped out, due to the mobility of the refugee/migrant population caused by government decisions and policy changes, as they lacked a refugee/migrant population, leading to the Greek partner look for alternates.

Meaningful participation of the community in Decision Making. Related to the above, the involvement of the wider community and stakeholders led to more positive and effective outcomes, as in many cases they showed an increasing interest in participating in the activities and greater eagerness to come together as a team. In addition, through the dialogic co-creation process, the mobilisation of the schools' administration was achieved; in some cases, teachers and educators were motivated to also participate as volunteers in the project's activities. At this point it is also important to mention that some educators ask for a comprehensive guide and a schematic picture of the pilots' involvement at the beginning of the project, for them to have a more concrete idea on when and where they should put more effort.

Egalitarian dialogue in order to build trust and interest among all participants. Each of the points mentioned in this section resembles links in a chain. That is, they are interconnected, they are a result of the previous one. Knowing the needs through the main actors' contributions and bringing the scientific evidence of what works in education and MHPSS in each pilot project has been key in this process as they were both considered in equal footing. Thus, the egalitarian dialogue also

involved the inclusion of the community in the decision-making process which has cemented a relationship of trust, commitment and interest between the beneficiaries, the researchers and all the people involved in the project, which in turn has allowed the project to run smoothly. Without egalitarian dialogue, the trust and interest, the expected impact would not have been achieved. To sum-up, the continuous dialogue between science and society has been at the core of all the activities developed under REFUGE-ED.

Co-creative selection of practices. The selection of effective practices has been done collectively. Thus, through discussion between the parties, agreement has been reached on which of the selected practices (SEAs and MHPSS approaches) can best achieve the objectives. In the case of Ireland, the dotmocracy method was a useful way of involving the whole school community in selecting which of the priorities identified in the needs analysis should be addressed first. Members of the school community at all levels participated at a high level in this activity.

Setting up Communities of Practice and Learning (Co&PL). In each pilot site, a group of members of the educational community involved in the implementation of the practices was formed. This aspect has been key at each stage of the project. From the identification of needs to the construction of the Brokering Knowledge Platform. At this point, it is necessary to highlight that although the CoP&L were built in each pilot, in more advanced stages of the project spaces were opened so that they could be connected locally with other centres and, later, their transmutation towards a transnational network through the platform. In this way, the exchange and collective construction of knowledge is promoted at the same time as support networks are created, which might guarantee the sustainability of the actions once the project ends among those who have received the training and have implemented the actions.

Crossing the language barrier. During the process, especially in the need analysis, language was one barrier to overcome in order to promote participation of the community. The situation varied across pilots while informal translation networks were in place, in others no resources were available for translation making it challenging to include all parents and children during the co-creation process. For instance, in Ireland, site staff struggled in identifying needs of children who did not primarily speak English. Other experiences of implementing SEAs in similar contexts have shown that having people from the community who also speak the host language can help to improve communication. In some cases, the people of the community (mothers, fathers, members of nearby organisations etc.) can serve as a language bridge. Another recommendation for future projects would be suggest exploring translation options further with communities to better understand their translation needs and conduct an analysis of the available resources to see in which ways these needs can be better fulfilled. This could increase stakeholder engagement and help build trust and rapport between stakeholders and the research team.

Anyone can contribute to co-creation. Co-creation process implicates the involvement of all stakeholders along the project. It is not only a key requirement for all EU projects but also a step forward in the democratization of scientific research. This means that everyone can contribute to the collective construction of knowledge. Hence, the REFUGE-ED project is embedded in a community framework, and all the practices proposed for the pilot sites have involved community participation, using the communicative methodology to break down hierarchical interpretation gaps.

Training adjusted to every pilot site circumstances. In line with the dialogic co-creation process, the participatory aspect was further enhanced throughout the trainings, in the context of which the ways in which the trainings were arranged in each country and in each pilot. The flexibility offered by the combination of online and onsite trainings facilitated this process. Thus, trainings were also provided online and offline or they were delivered by specialists beyond the consortium. This was the case of Bulgaria where MHPSS was delivered by the OIM which was the responsible of one of the pilots' sites of the project.

Frequent and systematic follow-up meetings and visits. Formal and informal communication and coordination with the pilot sites' communities throughout the whole implementation period permitted the constant adaptation to each pilot needs and the creation of a path of action fitting the local context. In this way, teachers and educators felt very stimulated and encouraged, not only because they learned new effective practices for the inclusion of migrant children, but above all because it allowed them to update and get in touch with other peers and feel more part of a learning community.

Experiential training. It led to better understanding of the practices, along with the provision of additional material and resources upon the completion of the training. This type of training allows teachers and educators to observe how effective practices should be implemented but ultimately to observe the improvement of the school environment and how children's attitudes towards learning enhanced. For instance, in the case of Italy and Ireland, online training sessions were arranged in order to receive training of experienced educators in implementing SEAs. Similarly, in Spain, it has been also very important the arrangement of visits to schools that have a long experience in implementing SEAs for the professionals and unaccompanied minors of the pilot sites to see how they look like in practice.

Language-inclusive training. The training sessions were inclusive, allowing participants to express themselves in their preferred language, thanks to simultaneous or sequential translation, sometimes considering for two rounds. For instance, in the trainings delivered in Sweden on many occasions participants were speaking in Arabic being first translated into Swedish and then to English. In the case of Italy, part of the training was delivered into Spanish and translated into

Italian. Although it was a time-consuming effort, the translated presentation slides, exercise materials and evaluations exemplified the unwavering commitment to inclusiveness and were highly valued by the participants.

The need to provide training on MHPSS. Most educators and teachers have expressed the need for training in mental health aspects and the improvement of coexistence, especially when dealing with children of migrant backgrounds and socially diverse centres. In this sense, the effective practices in education and mental health that the project has made available have served to fill the gap identified in the centres.

Timing is fundamental. In the case of schools, conducting trainings (SEAs and MHPSS) at the beginning of the school year allows teachers and educators more time to organise the implementation and include the practices smoothly in their curriculum. Because the training of MHPSS took place later than the SEAs one, some teachers and educators had changed their placement, and they could not take part in the MHPSS training. In addition, while in some cases, members of the pilots expressed the training sessions were scheduled at inconvenient hours, extending long into weekends, others were grateful for having organized beyond their work. In the case of Sweden, both trainings MHPSS and SEAs were organized in a full agenda over the weekend, and participants were enthusiastic. In other cases, like Bulgaria, trainings were also organized in a concentrated way during two full days. Also, the abundance of training information presented in a condense format made more challenging for participants to retain crucial details, in these cases, it was positive the combination of presentations with debates among the participants and practical sessions.

Beyond evidence-based practices into those with evidence of social impact. Addressing the training, showing the uniqueness of the practices as well as their added value, allows the educational community to distinguish this initiative from other existing methods in schools. Being this, the main added value of the REFUGE-ED project that differentiates it from other initiatives.

High quality training. The SEAs and MHPSS trainings were led by highly skilled experts in the field who struck a commendable balance between theoretical concepts and hands-on experiential learning. At the same time, the training sessions were structured in a way that is easy and clear to follow, accompanied by reinforcement resources.

Follow-up training sessions. Ad hoc online sessions were organised to support the pilots in the SEAs and MHPSS. Teachers and educators reported that they were helped to reinforce the knowledge acquired in the initial training, although the pilots expressed the need for more training support during implementation. Some of them requested more personalised training and more practical support and examples of how to use effective practices in the classroom. In the case of schools,

teachers expressed the need for concrete examples of how SEAs can be used within the curriculum. For UM centres and refugee camps, educators expressed the need for more concrete examples of how to implement the practices in a context with so much turnover of children.

Training open to the whole community. An essential component of Successful Educational Actions is the involvement of the community in the teaching-learning process as well as in decision-making. In this sense, training is not only promoted and delivered to school staff and students but is also open to the community. In Spain, most of the pilot centres have implemented various actions in the framework of Family Learning (one of the SEAs). This has proven to have a positive impact on community empowerment and capacity building, as well as a better relationship between families and the school.

Continuous training. Apart from initial training, it has been essential to promote continuous training with teachers and educators. At this point, one of the Successful Educational Actions focuses precisely on engaging teachers and educators in comprehensive professional development based on scientific evidence under the principles of dialogical learning. Thus, the Dialogic training for teachers consist of collective reading and discussing meetings where participants build collective knowledge to transform their practice in education. This SEA has demonstrated its contribution to a reflective collaborative process. Its results, published in multiple indexed journals, confirm its positive impact not only on continuous teacher training but also, as a result, on the improvement of student learning and coexistence in the school. For this reason, it is part of the European toolkit for schools as one of the key actions for the improvement of the teaching-learning process in schools. [1] Moreover, the systematic and frequent implementation of this action has proven to have a positive effect on the sustainability of the other SEAs.

A growing Community of Practice and Learning (CoP&L). A number of bottom-up networks and resources have been created to provide support and guidance to new schools, encouraging them to implement the practices. This has undoubtedly allowed the implementation of the practices to take place in a more fluid process, where the community is empowered and connected to each other. Some of these are mentioned below:

- **SEAs:** Learning Communities in Latin America, Association for evidence-based education in Asturias, Euskadi, Valencia, Madrid, Cantabria to mentioned a few. In addition, the permanent support of the CREA research group. Today, these networks and others have ensured the sustainability of the implementation of SEAs in countless centres worldwide. More than 15,000 centres implement one or more SEAs worldwide.

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[1] For more information visit:

https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools/detail.cfm?n=5864

- **MHPSS:** The Resource Library of the PS Centre and the resources section of the MHPSS Collaborative bring together a wide range of materials and resources for those centres or individuals interested in implementing MHPSS practices. Besides, there is also a platform The Mental Health & Psychosocial Support Network, for connecting people, organisations, and even other networks, through which materials can be shared.

5.2. Implementation

Addressing educational and mental health needs at once. Through effective practices (SEAs and MHPSS) safe spaces were created in which children's psychosocial needs were addressed. Many of the discussions and themes emerged from reading and reflection at the Dialogic Gatherings (one of the SEAs). Although, as explained in the previous section, the training of the SEAs and MHPSS did not occur at the same time, it is necessary to make clear that the SEAs have demonstrated their contribution not only in the instrumental dimension of improved learning and academic performance, but also in the development of safe spaces where children feel confident to share their stories, in the reduction of conflicts in the centre, by promoting pro-social behaviours. Thus, the inclusion of the MHPSS approaches is totally aligned with the main features of the SEAs in terms of involving the all the community members. In this way, the results are the product of addressing education hand in hand with children's mental health.

Implementation tailored to the needs and realities of each pilot. As explained in the co-creation process as well as in the training, adaptations were done during the implementation phase. For instance, in the reception centres for unaccompanied minors where there is a high turnover, educators tend to prioritise literacy and language learning over educational development in other disciplines. Children are constantly moving in and out of the centre, which makes it difficult to implement a practice to address long-term educational needs. On this point, while in a school, students can read an entire book during the school year, working with articles or shorter classic stories in UM centres and refugee camps has been a good practice that has allowed the involvement of the children even though they have not participated in the project from the beginning.

Language and communication challenges. As in the case of the training phase, the language barrier added further complexity to implementation. However, although in some schools this gap made it difficult for children to fully collaborate with each other, in most cases, effective practices such as Dialogic Gatherings fostered language learning as well as the development of an inclusive environment where children help each other. The project results reveal how during the Interactive Groups and Dialogue Gatherings (SEAs) the host pupils help and encourage their peers who have difficulties with the language, also contributing to a good learning environment.

Turning difficulties into possibilities. Challenges in non-formal and informal settings. Despite the high turnover of children, as explained above, non-formal and informal settings (UMA centres and refugee camps) found it difficult to recruit volunteers. Unlike schools, where most volunteers are parents and family of children, in these settings' parental involvement is limited and, in some cases, non-existent. In this case, the participation of members of associations surrounding the centres, as well as administrative staff of the centres, was promoted. The vast experience of implementing SEAs and appealing to one of their principles (cultural intelligence) has shown that community participation, extended to everyone surrounding the centre, is useful and valuable. In many centres where SEAs are implemented, the volunteers are university students in need of internships, retired people, exchange students, etc.

5.3. Evaluation

High quality evaluation process. REFUGE-ED capitalised on the social impacts of prior EU research in the field of MHPSS and education, using the Supportive Process for the Inclusion of Children's Experience (SPICE) under the framework of the communicative methodology of research, as part of the dialogic co-creation process. It included diverse and complementary data collection methods, both qualitative and quantitative, which gave a more comprehensive understandings of the project's outcomes.

Research Ethics. In order to protect the dignity, rights and welfare of research participants, all the activities under the project have been carried out in compliance with ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and applicable international, EU and national law. The research has been reviewed by an ethics committee to ensure that the appropriate ethical standards are being upheld. Special attention has been paid regarding the participation of children and youth in the project.

Challenges in data collection. Overtime, sample dispersion is inevitable due to natural life transitions participants experience, such as moved to another centre, city, or country, thus, one of the main challenges of the evaluation process concerned the follow-up of participants over time. Many of the beneficiaries who participated in the baseline did not participate in the mid-term and final evaluation. In this vein, try to delimit the sample in such a way as to limit dispersion over time, could be recommended for future projects.

Effective research instruments. The tools comprised psychometric and sociometric elements that corresponding to SEAs and MHPSS actions. At the same time, the focus groups and interviews were adapted to each target group. For example, in the case of children, pictures were used to better explain the researched notions. However, some educators stated that the questionnaires were too long and that the children could not fill them in on their own.

Time allocation and Language. Along with the design of the instruments, adequate time allocation for end-users has been essential. Language barriers have been addressed using translators for effective communication. However, all the tools used were translated into local languages before being distributed.

Timetable consensual with the community: In Greece, some schools reported that the evaluation was carried out when they were unable to organise it, which led to difficulties in collecting the planned questionnaires and made it difficult for professionals, children and parents to complete them. In this sense, it is important to work on the development of a consensual timetable with the community in order to avoid this type of difficulty.

Rounds of evaluation. The evaluation process was made by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation and focused on new solutions so another phase of implementation and training could be done to incorporate the lessons learned.

5.4. Dissemination

Multiple channels of dissemination. The project and its practices were disseminated through official channels such as the website[2] and social media[3]; but also, they were introduced in some centre's newspapers, blogs, and websites. On the other hand, project's progress and outcomes have been disseminated through several events (congresses, seminars, webinars, roundtables, etc.).

The potential of social networks. Social media channels and the Brokering Knowledge Platform appear as a solid opportunity to connect educational staff from different countries who would exchange ideas and material, following the opportunity to explore the current mode of implementation of SEA and MHPSS through the provision of the Training Curriculum. However, space where opportunities to connect teachers from the partner countries should have been settled at early stages of the project given that the co-creation process among communities was a vital part of the project.

Ensuring that the results are clear to all. While the evaluation provides feedback from end-users and has a positive impact, it has been essential to return the project results to the community in all pilot sites in a clear way.

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[2] https://www.refuge-ed.eu/

[3] **Facebook:**

https://www.facebook.com/refuge.ed.project/?paipv=0&eav=AfZ3e5L_GKMIfOaWmg-JGptne3354W33U65othwawvAZBEyJwU3WzWrXZ-KcKB3WYU0&_rdr,

X (twitter):

https://twitter.com/ed_refuge?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

Brokering Knowledge Platform. The ultimate goal of the project is to put all the co-created knowledge on a platform that opens up SEAs and MHPSS resources and tools to pilots who want to strengthen their training or explore new practices, as well as to every teacher, educator or school looking for answers on how to properly integrate migrant and refugee children in diverse settings. In this way, the sustainability and scalability of the project is strengthened over time. In the same vein, the platform offers the possibility to interact with peers for the exchange of valuable material and experiences, continuing the process of co-creation of knowledge.

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Annex 1: Fieldwork in detail

The fieldwork in each of the centres throughout the project is described below.

A) Schools

Country	Pilot site	Evaluation method	Date	Topic/subject	No. of Participants
Spain	CEIP Sant Vicent Ferrer, Primary School	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	26
		SEAs Baseline evaluation	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Pre-assessment	38
		Midline evaluation focus group	23/02/2023	Project evaluation	5-10 participants
		Open assembly & wrap-up meeting	05/06/2023	Project evaluation	32 in the open assembly (families, students, teachers) and 15 teachers in the wrap-up meeting
	IPI Karmengo Ama, Primary & High School	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	23
		SEAs Baseline evaluation	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Pre-assessment	49
		Midline evaluation focus group	31/01/2023	Project evaluation	5-10 Teachers, students, families
		Wrap-up meeting	06/06/2023	Project evaluation	15
	CEIP República de Venezuela, Early childhood & primary education school	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	28
		SEAs Baseline evaluation	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Pre-assessment	47
		Midline evaluation focus group	08/02/2023	Project evaluation	5-10 participants
		Open assembly	08/06/2023	Project evaluation	28
	CEIP Bernat Calvó, Primary School	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	15
		SEAs Baseline evaluation	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Pre-assessment	18
		To be scheduled			
	CEIP Aranbizkarra, Primary School	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	13
		SEAs Baseline evaluation	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Pre-assessment	34
		Midline evaluation focus group	06/02/2023	Project evaluation	5-10 Teachers, students, families
		Wrap-up meeting	05/06/2023	Project evaluation	7
	Eibar BHI	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	22
		To be scheduled			
	IES Alfonso II, High School	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	24
		SEAs Baseline evaluation	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Pre-assessment	66
		Midline evaluation focus group	16/02/2023	Project evaluation	5-10 Teachers, students, families
		Interviews	Jun-Jul 2023	Project evaluation	22 (students, teachers, volunteers)
	IES Veles e Vents, High School	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	28
		Interviews with refugee minors	26/05/2023	Project evaluation	minors
		Open assembly	26/05/2023	Project evaluation	10 (students, teachers, parents)
	CEIP Martina García, Early childhood and primary education school	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	18
		SEAs Baseline evaluation	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Pre-assessment	95
		Midline evaluation focus group	31/01/2023	Project evaluation	5-10 Teachers, students, families
		Open assembly	07/06/2023	Project evaluation	40

Greece	2nd Primary School Redi	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	17
	1st Primary School Karditsa	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	14
	4th High School Karditsa	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	12
	ANKA	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	14
	2nd Elementary School of Pylaia	Interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	5
	METADRASI	Interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	6
	52nd elementary school of Athens	Focus groups, daily life interviews, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	14
		SEAs Baseline evaluation	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	14
		SEAs Endline evaluation	Jun 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	24
	21st primary school of Athens	Interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	12
		SEAs Baseline evaluation	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	24
		Midline evaluation Interview	13/02/2023	Evaluation of the practices and preliminary results	1
		SEAs Endline evaluation	Jun 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	12
	2nd elementary school of Agios Ioannis Rentis (Attika Region)	SEAs Baseline evaluation	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	13
		Midline evaluation Interview	13/02/2023	Evaluation of the practices and preliminary results	1
		SEAs Endline evaluation	Jun 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	24
	9th elementary school of Piraeus	SEAs Baseline evaluation	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	19
		Midline evaluation Focus Group	14/02/2023	Evaluation of the practices and preliminary results	2
		SEAs Endline evaluation	Jun 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	19
	6th intercultural elementary school of Kordelio	Interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	5
		SEAs Baseline evaluation	Jan 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	49
		SEAs Endline evaluation	Jun 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	47
		Interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	8

	13th elementary school of Abelokipi	SEAs Baseline evaluation	Jan-Feb 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	15
		Midline evaluation Focus Group	13/02/2023	Evaluation of the practices and preliminary results	3
		SEAs Endline evaluation	Jun 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	14
	1st Lyceum of Markopoulo (Attika Region), Greece	SEAs Baseline evaluation	Mar-Apr 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	53
		SEAs Endline evaluation	Jun 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	53
	9th elementary school of Piraeus & 2nd elementary school of Agios Ioannis Rentis (Attika Region), Greece	Open Assembly	13/06/23	SEA & MHPSS Implementation Evaluation	50+
	Pilot sites and cooperating organisations of Attika region, Greece	Open Assembly	23/06/23	SEA Implementation Evaluation	20
	Pilot sites of Thessaloniki region, Greece	Teleconference to report results of open assembly conducted at pilot sites' communities	27/06/23	SEA Implementation Evaluation	40+
	Stakeholders	Focus groups	05/2022	Need analysis	18
Bulgaria	74th School "Gotse Delchev" – Elementary and High School	Interviews	05/22	Need analysis	10
		Focus Group	13/02/23	Experience with the project & recommendations	5
		Paper evaluation forms - baseline	18-23/02/2023	Baseline evaluation for SEAs	79
		Paper evaluation forms- endline	20-24/06/2023	Endline evaluation for SEAs	40
	15th School "Adam Mitskevich" – Elementary and High School	Focus Group, interviews	/05/2022	Need analysis	7
		Focus Group	10/02/2023	Experience with the project and recommendations	7
		Paper evaluation forms - baseline	21/12/22-10/02/2023	Baseline evaluation for SEAs	49
		Paper evaluation forms - endline	12-28/06/2023	Endline evaluation for SEAs	Around 50
	66th School "Filip Stanislavov" – Elementary and High School	Focus Group, interviews	05/2023	Need analysis	7
		Focus Group	15/02/2023	Experience with the project and recommendations	4
		Paper evaluations forms - baseline	18-23/02/2023	Baseline evaluation for SEAs	55
		Paper evaluation forms - endline	20 – 29/06/2023	Endline evaluation for SEAs	Approx. 20
	74th School "Gotse Delchev", 15th School "Adam Mitskevitch", 66th	Open assembly	19/06/2023	Overall evaluation of the implementation of SEA and MHPSS practices	Over 40

	School "Filip Stanislavov", other stakeholders, Bulgaria				
Italy	1st Grade Secondary School "A. Volta", Italy	Focus group, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	22
		Focus group	13/02/2023	Mid-term feedback on the first period of implementation	5
		Wrap up meeting	13/06/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	5
	Primary School "Acate Centrale and Addario ", Acate (RG)	Focus Group, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	13
		Focus Group	17/02/2023	Mid-term feedback on the first period of implementation	7
		Open Assembly	05/06/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	79
	Istituto Comprensivo Vittoria Colonna, Italy	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	20
		Wrap-up meeting	18/05/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	24
	1st Grade Secondary School "Silvio Boccone" - Palermo	Focus group, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	19
		Wrap-up meeting	5/06/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	19
	Primary School "E. De Amicis" – Palermo+	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	16
		Wrap-up meeting	31/05/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	4
	Primary School "La Masa" - Palermo	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	12
		Wrap-up meeting	22/05/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	2
		Open Assembly	25/05/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	76
	1st Grade Secondary School "Archimede" – Palermo	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	14
		Focus group	10/02/2023	Mid-term feedback on the first period of implementation	4
		Open Assembly	25/05/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	23
	Primary School "Federico II" & ICSS Ferrara, Italy	Focus group	13/02/2023	Mid-term feedback on the first period of implementation	5
	Primary School "Federico II", Italy	+ 1st grade secondary school, focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	15
		Wrap-up meeting	23/05/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	3

		Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	27
	IISS Francesco Ferrara, Italy	Wrap-up meeting	24/05/2023; 31/05/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	14
		Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	23
	IISS Pietro Piazza, Italy	Wrap-up meeting	25/05/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	13
		Open Assembly	01/06/2023	Final feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	38
		Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	18
		Baseline REFUGE-ED Questionnaire	May-Jun 2022 & Dec 2022-Jan 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	46
		Midline Focus Group Discussions- staff	09/02/23-15/02/23	Reflection on the REFUGE-ED process	5
		Midline REFUGE-ED Questionnaire	March 2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	33
		MHPSS Pre-Training Evaluation	14/03/2023	Knowledge and confidence in MHPSS skills	4
Ireland	St. Joseph's Christian Brothers' School	MHPSS Post-Training Evaluation	15/03/2023	Knowledge and confidence in MHPSS skills	1
		MHPSS Weekly Monitoring Survey	01/04/23-30/06/23	Use of MHPSS training	0
		Endline REFUGE-ED Questionnaire	17/04/23- 19/06/23	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	33
		Endline Focus Group Discussions- staff	09/06/23 19/06/23	Perceived effects of SEAs, strengths of project, challenges or project, considerations for future implementation	6
		Endline Focus Group Discussions- students	13/06/23 19/06/23	Perceived effects of SEAs, strengths and challenges of the project, considerations for future implementation	8
		Endline Focus Group Discussions- parents	26/06/23	Understanding of project strengths and challenges of the project, considerations for future research	4
		Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	23
		SEAs pre-training evaluation questionnaires	15-16/10/2022	Teacher's knowledge of SEAs	34
Sweden	Mölndal/Åby	SEAs post-training evaluation questionnaires	15-16/10/2022	Newly acquired knowledge	2
		MHPSS pre-training evaluation questionnaires	11-12/03/2023	Assessment of teacher's knowledge of MHPSS	7
		MHPSS post-training evaluation questionnaires	11-12/03/2023	Assessment of the newly acquired knowledge	0

	Baseline evaluation children	11/12/2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	9
	Baseline evaluation children	05/02/2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	3
	Endline evaluation children	28/05/2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	12
	Focus group discussion	18/02/2023	Evaluation of the practices' implementation	2
	Wrap-up meeting	27/05/2023	Evaluation of the practices' implementation	10
	Showing video about evaluation	07/02/2023	Evaluation of the practices' implementation	25
	Baseline evaluation parents	11/12/2022	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	7
	Baseline evaluation parents	24/02/2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	1
	Baseline evaluation parents	25/02/2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	1
	Baseline evaluation parents	05/08/2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	1
Vänersborg Intercultural Centre	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	24
	Baseline evaluation children	27/01/2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	4
	Baseline evaluation children	02/02/2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	3
	Baseline evaluation children	03/02/2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	3
	Endline evaluation children	08/06/2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	7
	Endline evaluation children	09/06/2023	Well-being, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	8
	Focus Group Discussion	02/02/2023	Evaluation of the practices' implementation	7
	Wrap-up meeting	02/06/2023	Evaluation of the practices' implementation	6

B) Institutional care centres

Country	Pilot site	Evaluation method	Date	Topic/subject	No. of Participants
Spain	CEPAIM, Spain	Baseline questionnaires	Dec 2022-Feb 2023	Pre-assessment	20
Italy	Casa di Giuseppe, Italy	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	18
		Wrap-up meeting	7/06/2023	Feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	18
	Comunità Arcobaleno - "GAP Senegal - GAP Gambia" (cooperativa LiberaMente) , Italy	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	15
		Wrap-up meeting	30/05/2023	Feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	7
	CPIA Palermo 1, Italy	Focus Group, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	34
		Focus Group	13/02/2023	Feedback on first period of implementation	5
		Wrap-up meeting	29/05/2023	Feedback and insights about SEAs implementation and the whole project	10

C) Hotspots/Reception Identification centres

Country	Pilot site	Evaluation method	Date	Topic/subject	No. of participants
Spain	Centre d'Emergència el Pla de Santa Maria	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	26
		Baseline questionnaires	December 2022	Assessment of prior knowledge	14
		Focus group	07/02/2023	Project's evaluation and BKP	5
		Interviews with minors	12/05/2023	Expectations of migrant minors	5
		Wrap-up meeting	13/06/2023	Project's evaluation	4 educators
	Centre Orió	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	25
		Baseline questionnaires	December 2022	Assessment of prior knowledge	3
		Wrap-up meeting	19/06/2023	Project's evaluation	2 educators
	Centre Sirius	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	24
		Baseline questionnaires	December 2022	Assessment of prior knowledge	7
Bulgaria	RRC Sofia - Ovcha Kupel, Bulgaria	Baseline evaluation questionnaire	09/02/2023	Assessment of prior knowledge	13
	RRC Sofia - Voenna Rampa, Bulgaria	Baseline evaluation questionnaire	09/02/2023	Assessment of prior knowledge	7
		Endline evaluation questionnaire	05/05/2023	Wellbeing, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	5
		End of implementation interview with team and participants	30/04/2023	Wellbeing, sense of belonging, social support, academic motivation	5

Sweden	Restad Gård Asylum Accommodation Centre	Focus groups, interviews	05/2022	Need analysis	24
		Focus Group	02/02/2023	Evaluation of the pilot implementation	7
		Wrap-Up meeting	02/06/2023	Evaluation of the pilot implementation	6

Annex 2: Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key issues for the effective integration of mental health and psychosocial support approaches in education
December 2023

1. Introduction and background

REFUGE-ED aims to identify, implement, and evaluate evidence-based practices that can be transferred across diverse educational settings to promote the educational success, as well as mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), of refugee and migrant youth. REFUGE-ED followed the co-creative dialogic approach aimed at implementing evidence-based educational practices, namely Successful Educational Actions (SEAs). SEAs and MHPPS practices were implemented in 46 pilot sites (formal, non-formal and informal settings) in six European countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain, and Sweden.

First, the mapping and selection of effective education and MHPSS solutions with proven evidence of social impact was performed. Second, the development of the REFUGE-ED dialogic co-creation process in which Communities of Practices and Learning (CoP&L) consisting of children, families, local service providers, schools, civil society organisations and policymakers discuss the needs analysis conducted and based on that chose and recreate previously identified practices to their specific context. Third, the implementation of the practices through three main types of pilot sites, covering formal, non-formal and informal educational settings. Fourth, the evaluation, under the lens of two aspects (1) any changes of academic motivation (a key correlate of academic success), well-being, sense of social support, and sense of belonging in pilots and (2) learnings from the process of conducting REFUGE-ED. Finally, the development of the Brokering Knowledge Platform, which make effective education and MHPSS practices for migrant and refugee youth widely available for implementation across educational settings in Europe.

The implementation of MHPSS practices and SEAs aimed at targeting children from migrant and refugee backgrounds is yielding significant social impacts in three key areas: well-being, a sense of belonging, and academic success. Throughout every step of the project, the principles of dialogic co-creation have been followed, involving various actors in the process. These actors include children and families, communities, civil society organizations, local service providers, schools, teaching staff, and policymakers.

This policy brief therefore provides an overview of its approach, its main findings and lessons learned, the social impact achieved with the intention that it can serve as a guide for policy making, as well as for those working on the integration of migrant and refugee children and youth.

2. Dialogic Co-Creation: Community involvement and evidence of social impact

Building on the social impact of previous EU research in the field of education and MHPSS, through a dialogic process of co-creation every stage of the project was developed with the involvement of all members of the education community (i.e. children and families, civil society organisations and local service providers, schools, and teaching staff; including school counsellors or other focal points focusing on MHPSS needs in education; and policymakers working in different educational settings) and considering for the contributions from research, like the existing evidence of social impact. The importance of the dialogic co-creation process is the engagement of the entire communities as well as the consideration and recreation of those actions that have already shown to be effective in promoting educational success and well-being, those that have shown to have evidence of social impact.

3. Effective practices in education and mental health

As mentioned above, the starting point of REFUGE-ED focuses on mapping and selecting good educational and MHPSS practices that are evidence-based and have a demonstrated social impact, i.e. that generate improvements in society in relation to goals that enjoy broad consensus (e.g. the SDGs) and/or that have been set by democratically elected people. Therefore, these practices were selected based on the expertise of the project consortium to guarantee the feasibility of training and providing support to the implementation of the approaches and practices. In doing so, REFUGE-ED capitalizes on previous research experience of partner organisations in both fields.

4. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support approaches

MHPSS partners bring expertise from projects like H2020 FOCUS, H2020 STRENGTHS and H2020 RE-DEFINE[4]. The following practices in MHPSS were selected from the mapping:

1. Creating a Safe Space;
2. Capacity building;
3. Cognitive Behavioural therapy;
4. Expressive Therapy;
5. Psychological Staff in Schools.

5. Successful Educational Actions

Partners in the field of education have brought expertise from the identification of Successful Educational Actions (SEAs) in the FP6 INCLUD-ED, H2020 SALEACOM, Steps4SEAS or Enlarge

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[4] **For more information, visit:** FOCUS -addressing the challenges of forced displacement, STRENGTHS Project, Re-Define Project – Refugee Emergency: Defining and Implementing Novel Evidence-based psychosocial interventions

(Erasmus Plus), among others[5]. In accordance with the projects mentioned above, the six Successful Educational Actions are as follows:

1. Dialogic Literary Gatherings (DLG);
2. Interactive Groups (IG);
3. Educative Participation of the Community;
4. Family education;
5. Dialogic Pedagogical Education for teachers;
6. Model of dialogic prevention and resolution of conflicts.

6. Pilot sites

The effective practices have been implemented in 46 pilots in sites spread over six countries. Three types of setting were selected. First, reception and identification centres, refugee camps or alike that host migrant families and children in various situations (i.e. recently arrived, migrant families, asylum seekers, refugees, children who migrate alone) in a temporary or quasi-permanent basis. These educational arrangements are meant to be transitory non- formal educational programs while migrant children are not eligible to attend regular schools due to legal, socio-economic or medical reasons (need to be vaccinated) or alike. Second, inclusive schools of formal education, and other non-formal or informal social and learning environments, serving migrant and non-migrant students and families. Finally, residential care centres for the guardianship of unaccompanied minors and separated children.

7. Needs Analysis

In parallel to the selection of effective practices, data were collected and analysed in the sites, focusing on 1) identifying the main obstacles and challenges and 2) getting the pilot staff, community and other stakeholders' input and impressions on how to reverse them.

The fieldwork was based on the communicative methodology, so the fieldwork approach was flexible and adaptable in the different pilot sites, depending on the individual circumstances of each site. As a result of the analysis of the data collected, six key underlying issues of importance were identified in all pilot sites, which needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency:

• High educational expectations for all children, youth, and their families
• Protection against racism, discrimination, and race-related/Islamophobic bullying
• Need to include a comprehensive approach to MHPSS and prevention practices
• Transit (countries/places different from the country of origin, which a migrant passes through in order to enter a country of destination) as a normal reality
• Inclusion of the gender perspective in the design and implementation services
• Promoting dialogic participation of the communities and professionals

Once the main characteristics of the local socio-economic and cultural context were known and analysed, and the MHPSS and educational needs were identified, a dialogue was held **with** stakeholders from the pilot schools to share and discuss with them what kind of MHPSS approach and educational practices (already identified in REFUGE-ED WP1) can best serve and address these needs if implemented.

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[5] For more information, visit: Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from education | INCLUD-ED Project | FP6| CORDIS | European Commission (europa.eu) SEAs4all –Schools as Learning Communities in Europe, SEAs, 4all –Schools as Learning Communities in Europe, SALEACOM Project –SALEACOM Project (medishub.net); 13_INCLUD-ED_Book_on_SEA.pdf (schooleducationgateway.eu).

8. Training & Implementation

The training in the effective practices previously identified, was provided both for trainers and also for end-users and stakeholders through many different sessions and rounds, depending on the availability and demand of the pilot sites. In some cases, training was face to face in others was online or in an hybrid form.

All throughout, the Autonomous University of Barcelona (AUB) provided constant support for implementing SEAs through assistance sessions for the implementation partners to address better and attend to the pilots' needs in all countries but Greece. The PSC Centre and the MHPSS Collaborative also delivered a general online course on MHPSS but also onsite trainings to all countries except for Bulgaria. As a follow up of all the implementation, all consortium was providing support ad hoc to each of the pilots' sites upon their request.

9. Evaluation

The evaluation process of the project has been framed in a mixed methods approach within the communicative methodology. Figure 1 shows the data collection techniques, both qualitative and quantitative.

FIGURE 1 1. DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES
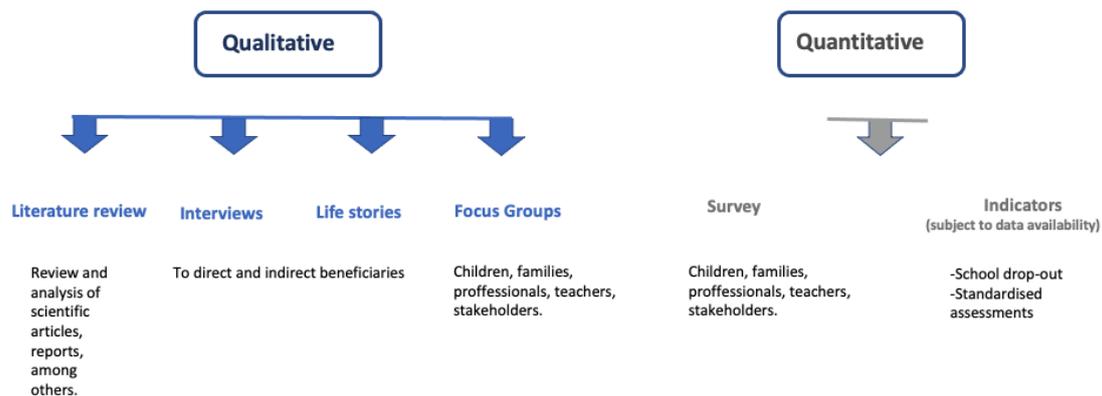
Once the tools for assessing MHPSS and children's education outcomes were developed, a three-point data collection plan was established, as shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE2 2. DATA COLLECTION PLAN

As can be seen in Figure 2, there is an overlap between the baseline and midline evaluation, as the training process had to be adapted to the needs and requirements of the centres (part of the co-creation process). For this reason, information was not collected for the midline evaluation in all centres[6].

10. Social impact

"It is not about success, it is about evidence of improving the lives of citizens" (Flecha, 2023)

The project's overall results, especially, showed a positive contribution in the academic success, sense of belonging and well-being, among other aspects. These elements are not only essential to all children's development, but they are also especially important for the successful dynamic integration in new homelands and communities. At the same time, the outcomes highlighted the interconnectedness of these pillars which altogether, can impact refugee and migrant children's integration with their environment. The enhancement of a sense of belonging promoted children's wellbeing which in turn supported their academic success. This means, that when children feel emotionally supported, they are better equipped to handle academic challenges and perform their potential.

Considering the involvement of different actors in the SEAs and MHPSS approaches, the sense of belonging and well-being has in many cases been expanded beyond those directly involved in the centres to the whole community. Likewise, results have been shown that active participation and social interaction further enhanced children's engagement, and academic motivation. In this regard, SEAs and MHPSS practices can horizontally support the development of a broader climate of cooperation, trust, respect, and encouragement. This translates into an inclusive education that promotes solidarity and active participation, inside and outside the classrooms, regardless of abilities.

Furthermore, the principles of egalitarian dialogue and equality of differences, promoted have laid the foundation for children in vulnerable situations, like migratory and refugee backgrounds and

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[6] For more information, read D3.3 Final Activity Report.

learning difficulties, and their families to take a leading role, share their ideas and opinions, and improve academically.

From this perspective, the social impacts of the project are shown below in at least 6 interconnected points. It is important to note that these points contribute directly to the three dimensions targeted by the project, i.e. well-being, sense of belonging and academic success.

> *"(...) a 16-year-old girl of Palestinian origin demonstrated many deficiencies and very serious behavioural problems. She was sabotaging and refusing any rules. NOW she is a mediator to resolve conflicts. This has happened in the last two months since she and her classmates participated in the SEAs. She now feels integrated and trusts the school community. The change in her behaviour has been noticed by all the teachers, including the principal. She has not failed any subject. Her participation in the Dialogic Literary Gatherings has given her confidence and she has also become more reflective in her actions. She realised that nobody ignored her or neglected her because of her background. On the contrary, they gave her opportunities, and she appreciated it",* (teacher from Bulgaria).

Improvement of academic outcomes

The impact of the effective practices in education and mental health implemented under REFUGE-ED has also been seen in improved learning and increased school engagement of children. As a result, many children have been able to develop communication skills, despite the language barrier. The contribution of Dialogic Literary Gatherings to the creation of a reading habit has been highlighted by children, families, teachers and professionals in different formal, non-formal and informal educational settings. It is important to highlight that there is a consensus on the impact of reading comprehension on academic success in all its dimensions. This means that reading is fundamental not only for literature-related subjects but also in mathematics and science (Akbasli, et al., 2016; Lee, 2017) as well as in fundamental aspects of life in general.

In this sense, this help in language acquisition is crucial for all children but especially for the adaptation of newly arrived children or the case of unaccompanied minors in the host country. The impact of Interactive Groups (IG) has also shown an improvement in learning, derived from an increased motivation to learn, the presence of volunteers promotes interactions between students, also a change of perspective regarding the creation of knowledge in the classroom, during interactive groups it is not seen as an individual process in which everyone must compete but as a collective process of mutual learning.

> *(Concerning children and youth in a centre for unaccompanied minors) "Some wanted to read more, and they would take other books from the library. The words that they did not know or understand they would go and ask them to the educators",* (Educator, from Spain).

It is essential to emphasise that when the improvement is sustained over time, the outcomes are maximised exponentially. Previous studies (de Botton, et al., 2014) (García-Carrión, 2020) have shown that the frequency and systematic implementation of Successful Educational Actions achieve striking results in a number of areas, including academic success. In this sense, the case of a secondary school in Spain that has been systematically applying the SEAs since 2019 and that is part of the project is mentioned: their drop-out rates have decreased, and the academic level of students has increased. At the end of the school year 2022-2023, the number of repeaters in the first year (1st ESO) is less than half of the previous year. Thus, a decrease in the number of repeaters can be observed in the four years since the beginning of the implementation of SEAs. This undoubtedly reflects the social impact of the practices over time, which is why it is essential to work on the sustainability of the practices in the future.

> *"(When we begin the day with Interactive Groups) I know the students are looking forward to it because they are ready. They are interested, they listen, and they get involved (...) they are so engaged, it's so much fun for them and they are learning all the time. It's amazing, I've seen the difference",* (teacher from Ireland)

Transforming places into safe spaces

Improving academic success and coexistence depends on creating safe spaces where children feel free to express themselves and learn, in this sense, REFUGE-ED's social impact has been seen in how effective practices in MHPSS and SEAs have contributed to creating these safe spaces, improving the well-being of children but also of the surrounding community. Particularly, Dialogic Literary Gatherings with children in formal, informal and non-formal educational settings have been shown to engage children and, in many cases, families in equalitarian dialogues about their journey as

migrants and/or refugees, including the challenges and opportunities in the host country; a coexistence between equals based on respect, empathy and solidarity, and as occurs in other contexts in which DLG are carried out, a discussion on the best way to prevent bullying in the centres. On a personal level, the impact of the Successful Educational Actions, particularly the Dialogic Literary Gatherings, is also reflected in an increase in self-esteem and self-confidence of the children, which translates into a general improvement in behaviour.

Transformation of relationships

A core aspect of the aforementioned practices (SEAs and MHPSS) is the involvement of the community in the educational centres, including in the decision-making process. This has been shown not only to improve, but also to completely transform the dynamics of the centre and, as a consequence, the relationships between everyone.

Through the Dialogic Literary Gatherings (DLG), but also through the Interactive Groups (two of the SEAs most widely implemented by schools), classroom relationships were transformed. The relationship between teachers and students are key for the learning process of children. In this regard, the project has impacted the way in which they relate to each other.

> The Interactive Groups have allowed me to know how my son is doing, to see who is sharing with him, how he is doing…. I recommend it to all mums", (mother from Spain).

> "The teacher-student relationship changed positively because the DLG are a positive space (the place of horizontal dialogue). It's coming out much more than we expected. There is a different vibe (relationship) between the children and me, even outside of the gathering, as if we were looking at each other with different eyes", (teacher from Italy).

Nonetheless, the impact is not only shown between the actors in a traditional classroom, i.e. teacher and student, but transcends the classroom, improving relationships between families and teachers and families with their own children.

In addition, this improvement was also observed in the relationships between children and professionals in non-formal and informal settings. Spanish educators explained that the MHPSS tools and resources have favoured their bonds with the children and the students' sense of belonging:

> "I remember this boy who couldn't speak at all. He was too shy. but he was always coming around and near the end he was able to speak to the rest and say, "I would like to do this...I would like to do that...I want to participate in this". And also, he came to speak to us, because at the beginning he was too shy to even speak. So, he came out of his shell", (a volunteer from Sweden).

> "…if you build a bond with them, they will develop some sense of belonging. I think one thing goes with the other", (Educator from Spain).

Higher expectations

During the need analysis at the beginning of the project, it was identified that educational pathways were not a priority in most of the reception centres. Although some children attended school classes or special training programmes aimed at UMA, the expectations of accessing quality or post-compulsory education, or of going to university, were low. Most of the children were unaware of the options available for accessing higher education. Through the REFUGE-ED process, educational trajectories have been prioritised. As a result, educators' expectations of children and their academic future have increased. **"What do I have to do to come here?",** was one of the questions asked by an unaccompanied minor during a visit to the Autonomous University of Barcelona, as part of the project. On the other hand, children are motivated by seeing how their family is involved in their learning process:

> *"One of the things that helped me get through it was that my mother participated in school. She came to Interactive Groups and Dialogic Gatherings, and she didn't know the language. Thanks to my mother, who is brave for me, I was not ashamed", (student from Spain)*

At the same time, the family participating in the centres are motivated to continue learning, raising expectations about their own future.

> *"(Since her participation in the SEAs) Now I feel more confident because I speak the language better. The children and all the teachers have confidence in me. Thanks to this, I am looking forward to validating my studies in Syria so that I can become a teacher here in Spain. Also, participating in the performances is helping me to study for my Spanish nationality exams and to get my driving licence. I have also started to encourage other women to join the dialogic gatherings -DG- (...) I have also thought about organising DG for*

Promoting a sense of community

It is fundamental to mention the impact of the project on the integration of children with migrant or refugee background. In this regard, the respect and solidarity have been common denominators in the interactions that take place in the safe spaces promoted by SEAs and MHPSS. been found in the integration of all students, including those with disabilities.

> *"The teacher gave the example of a child with autistic spectrum disorder, who has shown great progress, by asking questions, has positively altered the way he 'sits' and no longer needs a teacher to accompany him into the classroom. Another example was mentioned of a refugee child, who highlights his smooth integration in the classroom",*

> *"There is one child in particular that I was observing in the playground who has been very much on his own. He's not mixing with the class (...) And I could observe him in the [interactive] groups and he was talking (...) He's getting a little bit of an opportunity to work with other children", (teacher from Ireland).*

SEAs and MHPSS practices have also contributed to developing a sense of community in classrooms while strengthening social cohesion. For instance, according to a teacher in Bulgaria, such practices have reduced social and ethnic distancing between students and made migrant children feel better in the class teams and the class family due to the increased togetherness between students. The following testimony reflects this:

> *"During the implementation of Interactive Groups in Math class with 7th graders I was always forming the groups in the way that the two Ukrainian students in the class are part of two different groups. After one Interactive Group, together with volunteers supporting the implementation, we observed not only motivation and readiness in some of the Bulgarian students to help their Ukrainian peers with the tasks but also a dedication from their side to support the Ukrainian children in understanding better the material that is studied. A Bulgarian and a Ukrainian student stayed working together even during the break after the Math class was already finished", (Teacher from Bulgaria)*

Promoting friendships and positive school climate

REFUGE-ED has contributed to promoting a positive school climate. In this way, the schools' participation in the project has created spaces for reflection in which they have been able to question themselves and grow as professionals and as a community.

> With the coexistence assemblies and the Club de Valientes we solve our conflicts and highlight those courageous attitudes, such as always treating each other well, breaking the silence, telling the truth, and respecting everyone. Even if you don't agree, this helps us to be more tolerant (...) One of my wishes is that if we make the Club de Valientes huge, we will make everyone good. And if there was a Brave Club in every country, we would live in peace and without war", (Syrian refugee student, Spain).

> "There were many times that students came to me to suggest paintings, music or literature to work on because they wanted to share parts of their culture with their classmates or because they happened to see, hear or read something that they liked and wanted to express their feelings and exchange views with other students. To us, this was remarkable, as, formerly, many of these children were shy or talked and played only with specific children in the class. This form of participation is something we have rarely seen before", (Teacher from Greece).

Furthermore, the avoidance of any hierarchical position between teacher and students facilitated the creation of an atmosphere of respect and tolerance, and a key example of this is the Brave Club (part of the Dialogic Model of Conflict Prevention and Resolution - one of the SEAs), where several students explained how it contributed to the change of narrative around healthy relationships inside and outside the school. In terms of coexistence, there has been a decrease in disruptive behaviour but an increase in less serious incidents. The latter is explained mainly due to the fact that some classmates decide to report because they know they will be listened to, which leads to the prevention of more serious behaviour or situations.

> *"We had a problem in Argentina with my eldest son. He went to primary school in Argentina and the last two years he suffered from bullying (...) Neither he nor I were able to enjoy his childhood. So now I see Nicolás [the younger son who participates in the Interactive Groups] who is the brave one in the class. He is sure that his classmates like him the way he is: shy, quiet and respected. He is sure that they will be able to help him if he has a problem", (a mother from Argentina in Spain)*

11. Lessons learned

Identify areas for improvement, observe and analyse what works, document & share them

Changing the Narrative. The REFUGE-ED project has shown that it is possible to provide high-quality educational opportunities with special attention to well-being in any context a migrant or refugee children might be found. Thus, a culture of possibility has been promoted even in those contexts with the most barriers. This change of narrative has also been promoting showing that schools that are located in LSES areas and face many different challenges can turn around the trend of school failure, promoting educational success, if they start implementing those practices that showed to have social impact in other settings, like the SEAs.

Context matters without hindering the core elements of SEAs and MHPSS. An important challenge is how to adapt to the context without changing the key elements of the SEAs and the MHPSS approaches. In both cases, while a set of aspects can be adapted to the contexts, other crucial aspects might lead not to obtaining the same good results as expected.

Meaningful participation of the community in decision-making. Related to the above, the involvement of the wider community and stakeholders led to more positive and effective outcomes in academic learning, well-being and sense of belonging. Through the dialogic co-creation process, the mobilisation of the whole community was achieved, involving not only staff but also families, volunteers, and stakeholders, with the shared goal of improving the learning and well-being of all children. In doing so, it is crucial the informed involvement of the whole community in the key decisions, those that make a difference in their children or the minors' lives.

Building trust and commitment among all participants. The egalitarian dialogue involved the inclusion of the community in the decision-making process which has cemented a relationship of trust, commitment and interest between the beneficiaries, the researchers and all the people involved in the project, which in turn has allowed the project to run smoothly. Any participant needs to see that their voice and contributions are heard, to promote meaningful participation. The vast experience of implementing SEAs and appealing to one of their principles (cultural intelligence) has shown that community participation, extended to everyone surrounding the centre, is useful and valuable. In many centres where SEAs are implemented, the volunteers are university students in need of internships, retired people, exchange students, etc.

Anyone can contribute to co-creation. Co-creation process implicates the involvement of all stakeholders along the project, no matter their origin, language or academic preparation. This means that everyone can contribute to the collective construction of knowledge. Hence, the REFUGE-ED project is embedded in a community framework, and all the practices proposed for the pilot sites have involved community participation, using the communicative methodology to break down hierarchical interpretation gaps.

Turning difficulties into possibilities. Despite the high turnover of children and staff, non-formal educational settings (UMA centres and refugee camps) can be spaces where new learning opportunities and therefore well-being can be promoted. No matter all the challenges and obstacles faced (i.e. not knowing the language, short periods, paperwork, vaccinations), if the child participates in one Successful Educational Action, even if it is only once there, this is still worth doing so. One of the main lessons learned is that we can do much more, and turn all the difficulties into possibilities.
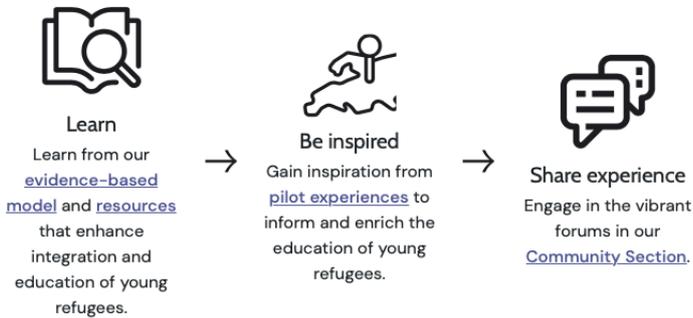
The Brokering Knowledge Platform
Hosting & promoting high quality innovative solutions tailored to the dynamic integration of migrant and refugee children

The Brokering Knowledge Platform (BKP) is designed to disseminate evidence-based actions and resources aimed at enhancing the integration and education of young refugees. It seeks to inspire new centres, educators, and researchers to contribute to and enrich the education of young refugees, as well as engage in forums that foster a sense of community. The BKP hosts a repository of practical, evidence-based resources that have proven effective in various contexts. These resources are organized by theme, topic, and target audience, making it easy to access the information you need.

The platform offers a space for professionals working in the field and community members to convene through online discussions. Within the BKP, you will find a wide array of resources, including courses, articles, toolkits, activities, inspiring stories, and forums. Thus, the BKP caters to those seeking to learn, those in search of inspiration, and those interested in sharing their experiences. That is the reason why we consider that the Platform for accessing materials and resources can be a useful tool for new educational settings that want to replicate the project.

What can I do in the REFUGE-ED Brokering Knowledge Platform?

Learn
Learn from our evidence-based model and resources that enhance integration and education of young refugees.

→

Be inspired
Gain inspiration from pilot experiences to inform and enrich the education of young refugees.

→

Share experience
Engage in the vibrant forums in our Community Section.

FINAL REMARKS

SEAs and MHPSS practices play a vital role in fostering a broader climate of cooperation, trust, respect, and encouragement among refugee children. They ensure active participation and social interaction within schools and communities. Inclusive education, a key facet of the REFUGE-ED project, promotes engagement both inside and outside the classroom.

About REFUGE-ED

www.refuge-ed.eu

Grant Agreement n°:	101004717
Project acronym:	REFUGE-ED
Project title:	Effective Practices in Education, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for the integration of Refugee Children
Funding Scheme:	H2020-MIGRATION-05-2018-2020: Mapping and overcoming integration challenges for migrant children
Project Duration:	2021/01/01 – 2023/12/31 (36 months)
Coordinator:	UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE BARCELONA (UAB)
Associated Beneficiaries:	UNIVERSITA DEGLI STUDI DI FIRENZE (UNIFI)
	NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY (NBU)
	KENTRO MERIMNAS OIKOGENEIAS KAI PAIDIOU (KMOP)
	THE PROVOST, FELLOWS, FOUNDATION SCHOLARS & THE OTHER MEMBERS OF BOARD OF THE COLLEGE OF THE HOLY & UNDIVIDED TRINITY OF QUEEN ELIZABETH NEAR DUBLIN (TCD)
	RED BARNET (STCD)
	DANSK RODE KORS (DANISH RED CROSS) (PSC)
	SUPPORT GROUP NETWORK (SGN)
	ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE COOPERAZIONEINTERNAZIONALE SID SUD (CISS)

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