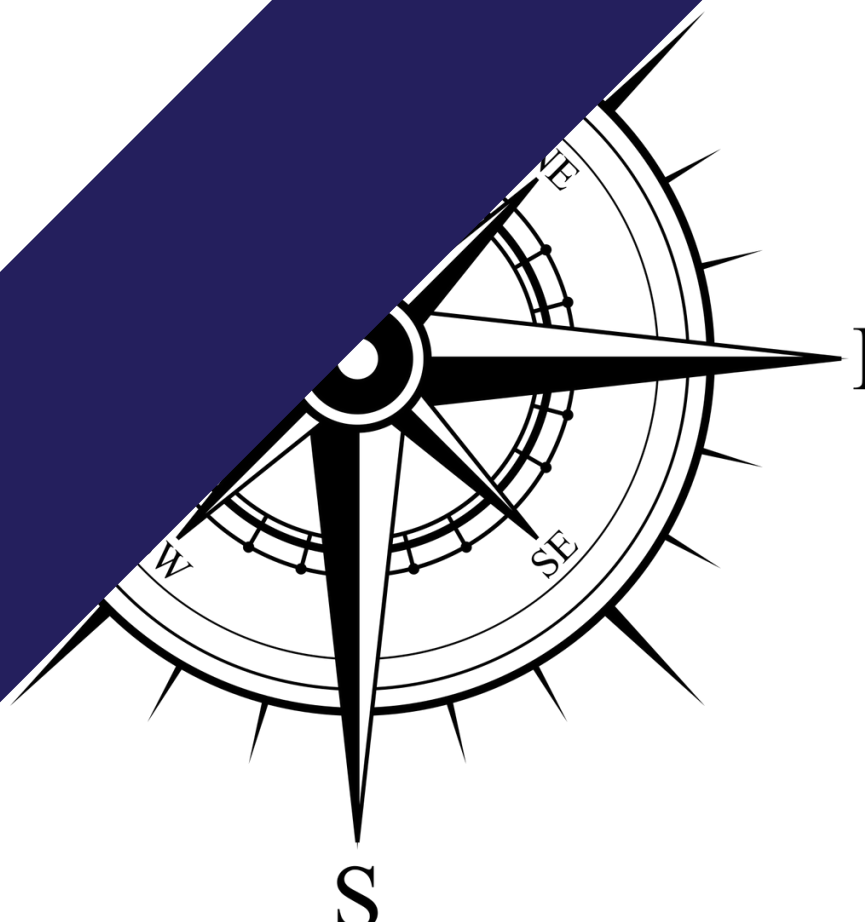




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MY COMPASS

Enabling students' agency in their route to the future

Erasmus+ project n. 2023-1-IT-KA220-SCH-000156174

Methodological Toolkit

ATTACHMENT 2 - Guidelines on how to take care of
specific vulnerabilities



Each school was called to focus on the type of vulnerability (e.g. low socio-economic status, migrants, disabled, members of LGBTQIA+ community, etc.) that was most common for them, whose students face more difficulties in planning their professional paths. Teachers were asked to produce a document including a literature review on the selected vulnerability and a section with guidelines and practical suggestions to tackle that vulnerability, based on scientific indications and on best practices already tested in their schools

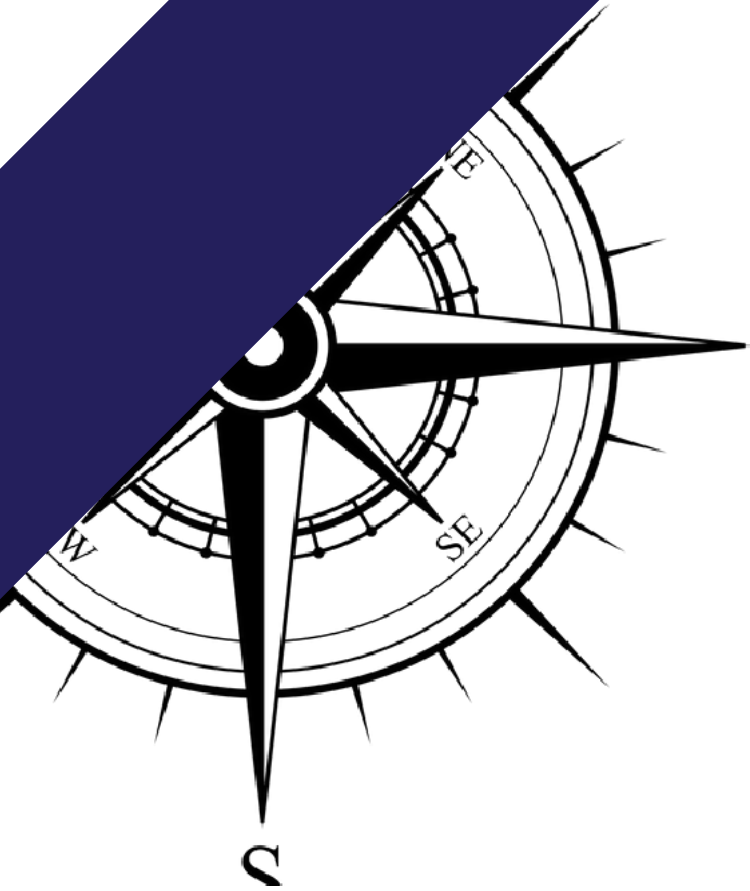
The guidelines are intended to reach a twofold result: to raise teachers' awareness of the impact of vulnerable conditions on career choices and to transfer to them some guidelines to take charge of the main vulnerabilities, in order to prevent the transmission of existing inequalities.

In the following pages you will find the document produced by each school, in particular:

- Liceul Teoretic "Ovidius" – Costanta, Romania: **Socio-economic vulnerabilities – PG. 3**
- 53rd Lyceum of Athens - Athens, Greece: **Students living in low-income families – PG. 27**
- I.O. Orte – Orte, Italy: **Immigration and Foreign Students – P. 36**
- Agrupamento de Escolas José Saramago - Palmela, Portugal - **Low socio-economic status – PG. 58**



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Erasmus+ project n. 2023-1-IT-KA220-SCH-000156174

**Vulnerabilities which impact negatively
students' ability to define and select
a future professional path.
The situation in Romania.**



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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present how low socio-economic background affects students' career choices in Romania. It is undeniable that precarious financial conditions will impact negatively the overall development of a young person: their school performances, their social and emotional skills, their personal health and well-being, their future paths, all these will be affected adversely by the absence of resources. However, this paper focuses mainly on how low socio-economic conditions limit (and in some cases, block) young people's access to career choices suitable for their skills and competences. Although alleviating such conditions is the task of the government, some steps can be taken to ensure that all students can be assisted in designing their future paths in life. Which is why this paper includes suggestions on guidance and counselling activities which can be carried out in schools in order to mitigate the adverse effects low socio-financial background can have on students' professional development.

Students' access to adequate guidance and counselling services can be affected by a number of factors or vulnerabilities. Some of the most common **vulnerabilities** present in Romania's social tapestry are (in order of their presence/strength of impact): low income background, geographical placement (rural vs urban), ethnic groups / minorities, gender, etc. Generally, these factors coexist, i.e. a student can be from a low-income family, living in a rural area and belonging to a minority group. It is both impossible and impractical to try and analyze such vulnerabilities independently. However, low-income families exist in both settings – urban and rural – and their limited resources affect children's access to all available academic or professional paths.

Socio-economic vulnerabilities and their impact on children's future

The UNICEF Report "The State of Children in the European Union" (2024) mentions "child poverty (UNICEF, 2024)" as a determining factor affecting the academic and professional development of children throughout the EU.

"Too many children in the EU face **persistently high rates of poverty and social exclusion**, mental health challenges, and environmental dangers such as air pollution.

[...] [The EU] will also need to adapt to the multiple and often intertwining challenges

and **crises facing children in the EU today** in its new strategies, policies, plans and budgets – from mental health to climate change, **the cost-of-living crisis** to digital transformation.”

According to this report, **child poverty** is caused not only by low salaries of the family members, but also by a series of connected factors¹ such as living arrangements (single parent families), effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (lower employment stability), rising inflation and the effects of the war in Ukraine on local economies. All these conditions lead to a *new type of low-income families: families that can afford the day-to-day necessities but forego making long-term plans, including investing in their children's future, because of economic uncertainties.*

Socio-economic vulnerabilities in Romania and their impact on children's future

In 2016 the *Educated Romania* project began a multi-year national consultation led by the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis, to discuss key challenges for education in the country and identify objectives for 2030. The project was based on findings of a national analysis of all components of the educational system. These findings show that in 2017 Romania's **early school leaving rate** was at 18.1%, nearly double the EU average (10.6%) of that year (OECD, 2020). This percentage includes both underage students who abandon studies because of **insufficient financial resources** and young adults who drop out of vocational education courses. In 2017, 15.2% of young adults (15-24 year-olds) in Romania were not in education, employment or training (NEET), one of the highest rates among EU countries (European Commission, 2019). It is also closely linked to the manner in which children move from one schooling stage to the next.

*“Several factors can contribute to early school leaving. These might relate to household issues, such as a **family's low income level, negative or low perceptions of the benefits and prospects associated with education**, or individual factors, such as the child being involved in seasonal work, having to care for younger siblings or having health related issues.”* (MNESR, 2015) and (OECD, 2020)

¹ “Since 2021, as countries began to recover from the pandemic, inflation has once again become a challenge for European economies, while at the same time **eating into the household budgets of families.**” (UNICEF, 2024)

Additional pressures to socio-economic vulnerabilities in Romania

In addition to the pressures created by limited financial resources, Romanian students must also face the challenges created by Romania's **early tracking system**. At the end of their 8th grade (ages 14-15), all Romanian students take the *National Exams* (in Romanian and Mathematics). Students are then distributed to high schools (9th grade) based **solely on these exam results**. These *high-stakes examinations* at such an early age have a series of cumulative negative effects:

- 1) → private tutoring is widespread for students preparing to take exams in Grade 8, increasing **systemic inequalities** by providing advantaged students with an advantage that their peers from lower income groups may not be able to access.
- 2) → as students prepare for examinations, they begin to resist classroom practice they see as irrelevant to test preparation; this leads to **disengagement** and a considerable **reduction in motivation** for learning since students will choose to focus only on the two subjects tested and, at the same time, hide or ignore gaps in their understanding of other subjects so as not to affect their general grades.
- 3) → the distribution to high schools happens in decreasing order of the average grade in the National Exams. If a student underperforms (because of exam anxiety, lack of preparation, etc.), his or her average grade will not provide them with sufficient chances to access a “better school”. This may lead to students finding themselves in schools or specializations which they would not have otherwise chosen, further deepening the disengagement with their own education and raising the chances of early school leaving.
- 4) → a “better school” is usually a theoretical high school. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds (most of them from low-income families who could not afford either private tutoring or simply transportation costs to school) will underperform in the National Exams and will find themselves in lower or vocational tracks at a very young age. This type of “early tracking” makes it increasingly difficult for a disadvantaged student to change tracks later, further limiting their future professional and life choices (OECD, 2020).
- 5) → although results in the National Exams are anonymized, the fact that students are “ranked” entirely based on their performance in the exam leads to a negative learning environment. Students who underachieve in these exams are often stigmatized or judged as inadequate, even

by themselves. This lowers their self-esteem and undermines their self-management competences. In the long run, they are more likely to become low-functional literates or to abandon school altogether.

6) → because of these *high-stakes exams* and the existing ranking system, vocational education is viewed as inadequate, marginalized and disconsidered because it is students with lower entrance grades that are sent to vocational schools. In addition, technological and vocational education is still in need of development and appropriate governmental support.

Romanian students aged 15 to 19 are usually enrolled in a 4-year stage of high-school (upper secondary) which can be theoretical, technological or vocational. Although compulsory education in Romania ends after grade 10, most students will complete the 11th and 12th grade and take the baccalaureate, a national exam consisting of exams in three subjects. The grade 12 baccalaureate exam selects students for academic tertiary programmes and currently sets very different expectations for learning compared to the curriculum (OECD, 2020).

Counselling and guidance in Romania

Counselling and guidance services are offered to Romanian students **in their schools** throughout their education (until grade 12) by their teachers and, occasionally, by a school counsellor. In 2006, “Counselling and orientation” was included in the national curriculum (national curriculum for grades 1 to 4 was published in 2013, for grades 5 to 8 in 2017 and for vocational schools in 2014 (World Bank, 2023)); at present this ‘subject’ is delivered to students in a distinct class.

Between grades 1 and 8, students have a compulsory class each week titled “Counselling and orientation”. This class is held by the teacher designated as “diriginte” (a liberal translation would be “form teacher”, “class tutor” or “class mentor”), irrespective of the teacher’s specialty subject. The ‘diriginte’ will plan and organize activities with the whole class intended to help students “learn to learn”, develop their self-awareness and self-management skills, and plan for their academic future.

In high school (grades 9 to 12, ages 15 -19) the “counselling and orientation” class is no longer compulsory; students can choose not to attend it with no effects on their grades or general evaluation. This class is also held by a teacher designated as ‘diriginte’. The purpose here is to help

students choose and plan their future professional or academic path, but with attendance not compulsory and in combination with the fact that any counselling is done with the **whole class**, this “counselling and orientation” is, at best, only partially effective. Those students who choose to attend may opt not to discuss publicly their issues, so the ‘counselling’ part is usually limited to generalities and non-specific general advice.

There are several drawbacks to this system of counselling and orientation:

1) the counselling and orientation services are not offered by an adult fully specialized in such services. Most teachers who are designated as ‘diriginte’ rely on their pedagogical training and common sense. These teachers have access to a **limited offer of free training courses** (World Bank, 2023)² in the field of career counselling, orientation or psychological support; moreover, time constraints and financial limitations prevent them from taking on additional training in these fields (most courses are held *during the school year* when teachers must focus on teaching their subject, student assessment, preparation of classwork and teaching materials, etc.).

2) helping students in lower secondary school (grades 5 to 8) determine their future academic path is considered pointless even by their teachers, considering that the choice of school will be determined by the students’ average grades in the National Exams in the 8th grade and not by their wishes or potential. Furthermore, the National Exams are in only two subjects which means the average grade, or ‘high school entrance grade’, **completely disregards students’ overall academic performance, their results in other subjects or areas and even their interests.**

3) each Romanian school should have a *School Counsellor* that is a fully trained child psychologist. However, this is partly true and usually only in urban settings. Schools located in rural areas generally do not have a full-time School Counsellor because of limited funds allocated by the Ministry of Education but also because there is a lack of specialists in child psychology.

4) the schools where there is a full time School Counsellor can have anywhere between 300 and more than 1000 students³. This makes the School Counsellor’s job nearly impossible: keeping track of so many students’ needs and offering personalized feedback and assistance is, to say the least, extremely challenging and demanding. In addition, the specialist support is delayed

² “Ministry of Education data (2022) show that an insufficient number of accredited free CPD courses are available for teachers (e.g. 8% in school year 2021-2022, which addressed COC topics), [while teachers’] initial training only includes an optional course on Counseling (psycho-pedagogical module).” (World Bank, 2023)

³ On average, in the 2022-2023 school year one school counsellor was responsible for 966 students and preschoolers, of which 570 in the middle and secondary cycle and 396 pre-school and primary pupils. (Ministry of Education data)

because of the sheer number of cases a School Counsellor needs to address.

5) high schools are divided into **theoretical**, **technological** and **vocational**, which means the “Counselling and Orientation” class is already limited by the specialization in which students find themselves. Students in *theoretical* high schools will seek advice and counselling only in areas related to their specialization (‘mathematics and informatics’, ‘natural sciences’, ‘social sciences’ or ‘philology’). Students in *vocational* settings are already limited in their choice of professional paths by the field in which they receive schooling and training.

In 2005, the **County Centers of Resources and Educational Assistance** have been created in order to provide specialized support to schools (for student orientation services, special needs resources, career counselling, etc.) or to disadvantaged groups (specific educational needs, psychological evaluation and psycho-pedagogical counselling, therapies addressing students diagnosed with various health/mental issues, etc.). However, these are **county** centers (usually in urban settings) and their staffing is below 50 specialists, which means their support is limited by the reduced number of human resources and time constraints.

There is a noticeable resistance to using the specialist services offered by the **CCREA**, mainly because there is an unmotivated fear of being labeled as unstable or inadequate if referred to a psychologist. Because of this unsubstantiated fear, parents are reluctant to heed the advice of teachers directing them to these specialists in child psychology and students prefer to mask or ignore their inadequacies lest they should have to face more pressure in their academic endeavours. This resistance is fuelled by the fact that the educational system encourages teachers to focus on top-performing students in view of their high-stakes exams and less on students who struggle in academic standardized tests or summative assessments (Kitchen & et.al., 2017)⁴.

Proposed and planned changes in the Romanian career orientation and guidance system

The *Educated Romania* project has already initiated several steps to address the issues listed above⁵. Romania has adopted a *National Strategy to Reduce Early School Leaving* and is

⁴ “Students who do less well in academic tests **tend to receive less support** and are directed towards vocational programmes independent of whether this meets their learning interests and goals.” (Kitchen & et.al., 2017)

⁵ See project report page at <http://www.romaniaeducata.eu/rezultatele-proiectului/> and project page at <https://proiecte.pnrr.gov.ro/#/home>

developing an early warning system to identify **at-risk students**. For example, Romania has introduced after-school remediation programmes, integrated services in schools and second chance education programmes; however, the reach of these initiatives is limited (usually to urban settings) and some are yet to be fully implemented (due to reduced financial governmental support and a lack of specialists and human resources to man these programmes).

In 2017 a Joint Order (MM, MH, & ME, 2017) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education set the legal basis for the Pilot Project ***Integrated Community Services (ICS)***, an approach which functions on principles similar to the principles of **case management** and which is intended to prevent social exclusion and reduce poverty. The ICS includes services of school orientation and career counselling and addresses the needs of **vulnerable young people** (i.e. young people from low-income families) irrespective of their geographical setting (urban or rural). The methodologies created to support the functioning of *Integrated Community Teams* mention specifically the need to offer access to **sufficient career conversations with students in grades 8 and 12** because of their demonstrated efficiency in preparing young people for life.

Representatives of the **National Students' Council** have highlighted a number of issues which need to be addressed by the system:

- the large number of students assigned to a school counselor;
- the guidance time (the "Counselling and Orientation class") is devoted to other issues, usually administrative or organizational;
- students do not realize the need for counseling (World Bank, 2023).

Among the solutions they suggested is that **every student should attend at least one individual career counselling session** (the first solution on their list of proposals) (World Bank, 2023).

We find this proposal demonstrates what is perhaps the biggest flaw of School Orientation and Career Counselling in Romania: the fact that students (vulnerable or not) have little access to **individual counselling**. And the fact that students themselves feel the need for **individual conversations** with a professional equipped to guide them in their orientation process. While **whole class counselling** has its merits in that it promotes open discussions encouraging collaboration and communication which in turn creates a positive learning environment, it is undeniable that individual guidance sessions / career conversations would offer more effective support for young people in their search for their future paths in life.



To this end we will propose in the following section of this paper a series of activities which may contribute to a meaningful orientation process within the framework of the “Counselling and Orientation” classes as they happen at present in the Romanian system of education.

Furthermore, the suggested activities can be adapted to fit the constraints of **any formal system of education** since their purpose is to provide teachers with ideas they can modify as they see fit **according to the needs of their students**.

Practical suggestions for school orientation and career guidance sessions

The following suggestions for school orientation and career guidance sessions are for teachers who hold counselling classes with the whole class as part of their weekly schedule. We will also include suggestions for individual counselling activities. The purpose of these activities is to help teachers support all their students (not only those from challenging socio-economic backgrounds) in their journey of self-discovery. Hopefully, these activities will encourage students to plan for their future life paths in an informed manner. Although we are aware of the benefits of organizing career conversations individually with students, we must consider the time-constraints teachers face when dealing with whole classes. Furthermore, the following suggestions were created on the basis that the teacher is not a professional counsellor, and they are presented with the intention to help teachers save time in planning counselling classes.

Teachers' role

There are numerous approaches to counselling designed to help teachers coordinate whole class guidance sessions, each with its own merits. But before we delve into these, we must make it clear what teachers must understand about their role when they act as counsellors.

First and foremost, teachers must understand that when counselling a student they **do not teach**. They facilitate, they empower and they support. As **facilitators**, they help students become self-aware by encouraging them to discover their strengths, their qualities & flaws, their potential. They **empower** students by giving them space for thinking and understanding, by helping them discover and acknowledge their resources. They **support** students by being open-minded, unbiased and actively listening.

A teacher as counsellor

- asks open-ended questions **and resists answering them** for the student
- does not fix problems and does not take charge
- allows the student to **make decisions for themselves**
- develops **planning skills** and provides **accountability**; promotes long-term planning

- **is aware of** their own social and cultural biases or assumptions and resists them
- **actively listens** and **builds confidence** (without building false hope)
- promotes a **positive / growth mindset**

Students must understand that, during a guidance session, they must not expect answers from the teacher; teachers will only assist, support and guide them towards an answer.

Remember: this is not about teaching or learning. What students need to do is ask a lot of questions: ask their teacher, their peers, themselves. Counselling is a journey of self-discovery, and teachers as counsellors must make it clear to their students that it is their job to try and find answers or solutions in themselves.

Students must also understand that, during a guidance session, they must be honest about themselves. They must resist giving answers which they believe are expected of them. Low-performing students especially may be susceptible to providing answers which they believe are *acceptable answers*, out of fear of judgement or prejudice against them or their condition. Which is why the teacher's role as **supporter** is paramount.

Whole class activities

Most of the activities suggested here are intended to be carried out with the whole class. The first two (GROW and WOOP) are designed to be used whenever the teacher / counsellor feels his or her students need an opportunity to focus on their study paths and / or on themselves. The next suggestions were created on the succession of three natural stages in the guidance process: ENGAGE – EXPLORE – EXPERIENCE. While the first two can be carried out with the whole class, the last stage is recommendable to be performed in individual discussions teacher – student.

GROW

“GROW” is a model whose development is attributed to John Whitmore⁶. The acronym stands for “Goal, Reality, Obstacles/Options, Way forward”. For example, a student's **goal** would be to raise his or her grade in Mathematics. The **reality** is the current grade the student has in Mathematics; “reality” also includes the student's *honest assessment* of why their grade is at that level (he/she does not understand lessons; he/she does not allocate enough time, etc.) and also

⁶ John Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance*, 1992

their assessment of *how far they are from the set goal*. Once “reality” is defined (by the student), **obstacles** are easier to identify and nominate; e.g. ‘I don’t ask questions during classes’ or ‘I don’t spend more time studying’. It is important to note that the **obstacles** to be identified must be **internal**, that is they are caused by the student themselves and not by external factors (such as ‘The teacher does not explain clearly enough’). This, in turn, leads to **options**: the student makes a list of actions they can perform in order to deal with the identified obstacles. Out of the list of options, the student defines the **way forward**, that is the action steps they will take.

In class, GROW can be used as a strategy through which the teacher helps students discover what their limitations (obstacles) are in their journey to success. However, it must be noted that this strategy works better if the whole-class discussion is on a specific topic. **The more specific the goal, the more effective the strategy**. If the discussion is kept in abstract, general terms, it will be very difficult for teenagers to properly and honestly identify the **obstacles** and **options** available to them. For example, if the **goal** is “to be able to score highly in the National Exams”, the **obstacles** can range from personal preferences (e.g. ‘I don’t like the subject’) to personal circumstances (e.g. ‘I cannot afford private tutoring’).

As an activity, completing a GROW worksheet⁷ can take between 15 minutes and 50 minutes, depending on how open students are willing to discuss about their goals and obstacles. This activity can be followed by **individual discussions** with the students identified as ‘at-risk’ or ‘disengaged’ or ‘disadvantaged’. By carrying out the activity with the whole-class, the teacher will avoid singling out those students who are at risk or disadvantaged. At the same time, it will give the teacher a foundation on which to carry out individual discussions with those students.

WOOP

WOOP is a coaching tool created by Gabriele Oettingen, designed as a behaviour-change intervention on the psychological principle of “mental contrasting” (NYU). The acronym stands for **wish, outcome, obstacle, plan** and differs from the GROW model in the focus it places on the **emotional engagement** of the participant. WOOP⁸ relies on the student expressing a very specific wish, on visualizing both the outcome and the obstacle and on designing a “when-then” plan (“when = specific time, then I will do Y”).

⁷ See Annex 1

⁸ Visit www.characterlab.org/woop for more information

As a whole-class activity, WOOP can help students better identify their resources because it asks for very specific details in the planning part. WOOP was created as a tool intended to bring about positive changes in one's behaviour and attitude, encouraging a growth mindset and including an accountability factor. If the **wish** is not fulfilled, students must understand that it is their **plan** they need to focus on and follow. Also, because it focuses on specific wishes and (ideally) lists specific habits to be adopted, it empowers students: it is their own actions that will create the positive outcome they wish for.

Ask students to WOOP, i.e. complete the table⁹ at the end of a study chapter or at the beginning of a school period (school term / semester). This activity is better suited for specific subjects, not necessarily for counselling classes, because it asks students to clearly identify their wishes in relation with a learning situation and it allows them to follow plans more easily and, at the same time, it provides them with accountability.

ENGAGE THE CLASS

It is very important for the teacher / counsellor to help students discover themselves. Although at a subconscious level students might be aware of their strengths, skills and values, it is very important to assist them in this journey of **self-discovery**. To begin with, **self-awareness** is a quality which allows students to make more realistic plans for the future, in line with their preferences and skills. To this end, the teacher / counsellor can organize whole-class activities enabling students to learn about themselves.

At the same time, such journeys of discovery can help disadvantaged students understand that there are opportunities for growth which they may not know about or which have been presented to them in an unfavourable light. For instance, most schools encourage students to become high-achievers, measuring their success in exam grades or subject grades. As a result, students' expectations (OECD, 2012) can be dictated by their own results which means low-performers may be encouraged to **expect less** from themselves and/or to disengage with school altogether¹⁰. This also leads to an underestimation of students' potential by their teachers.

In order to engage all students in their learning process and help them discover their

⁹ See Annex 2

¹⁰ See points 5) (page 5) and 2)(page 7) in this paper

potential, one activity that can be performed with the whole class is asking students to complete readily available questionnaires¹¹ which will reveal their strengths (VIA), their values (PVQ) and their interests (RIASEC). Based on the results of these questionnaires, the teacher / counsellor can choose to conduct individual guidance sessions with students who identify themselves as low-performers or who have unrealistic expectations from themselves.

Completing the questionnaires can be done in three successive counselling classes under the supervision of the teacher / counsellor. At the end of each questionnaire, students will make a record of their results which they can present to the teacher if/when asked. It is essential that students understand the importance of trying to provide honest answers and it is here that the teacher / counsellor must monitor as closely as possible how students approach the questionnaires.

EXPLORE WITH THE CLASS

Once students have completed their journey of self-discovery, they must now embark on an **exploration of opportunities**. The most accessible form for such an exploration is by keeping a **diary** with very specific chapters. In Annex 3 we have suggested a possible outline of these chapters with a short description for each, but teachers can adapt and adjust this tool to suit their class's needs and possibilities.

A chapter which students may find fun to develop is the "Network" chapter. Each of us is part of different networks based on our needs. Students must be made aware of the diversity of personal connections they have already made and, by describing them in their diary, turn these connections into supporting networks. The Personal Network is made up of all very close friends and family members who the student knows he or she can trust to help them with personal matters. Some students may choose to list here their best friends or their grandparents or an aunt/uncle, depending on the type of relationship they have with their family and circle of friends. The teacher / counsellor should not expect students to list here parents first, especially teenagers, considering that this is also the age when parents can be perceived as too possessive or narrow-minded.

¹¹ <https://calling.lmsformazione.it/>

The Educational Network can include names which are different from the names listed with the Social Network, simply because the latter includes people from outside the school environment. At this point, teachers / counsellors should explain students that they must explain in writing / describe why they have included a name in one of the lists or other. For instance, a complete entry could read *“John Smith, because he helps me with my Physics homework every time I ask him.”*

In addition to asking students keep a diary, teachers may want to periodically ask students to fill in quick **diagnostic surveys**. Annex 4 contains suggested questions which can be included in a Google Form. The results to these surveys can help teachers identify students who struggle or are disengaged with school and, consequently, decide on a course of action for these students in particular. As a whole-class activity, completing such quick diagnostic surveys can create an atmosphere of openness and trust between teachers and students, promoting collaboration and empathy. Furthermore, this tool can help teachers regulate their teaching and adapt to the needs of the whole class.

Individual counselling activities

EXPERIENCE

Teachers / Counsellor should initiate individual discussions, particularly with at-risk students based on their completion of the previously suggested activities. With students engaged in their journey of self-discovery and self-assessment by means of completing their **diary**, the teacher has sufficient information and a good base to initiate one-on-one discussions with a student in order to help him or her better understand what their future path might be. In the **Experience** stage, students actively contribute entries to their diary and use these as a basis for their guidance sessions with their teacher. In turn, the teacher can refer to the student's entries and comments, helping him or her find solutions, make commitments and account for their progress. It is essential at this stage that the teacher **resists making judgments** or **providing solutions**. It is the student that needs to be guided towards finding an answer themselves, which means the teacher must be able to ask open-ended questions based on their actively listening to the student's feedback.

At this stage it is up to the teacher to decide on how to plan the individual counselling



session, how much time they can allocate for each student and how they can keep track of each student's progress. We must point out that the vital element here is **accountability**. Each student must decide on individual and very specific accountability measures; for instance, *'If I do not complete the planned action step, I will extend the timeframe allocated by one month.'* The teacher must be ready to help the student reframe his or her plan and design realistic expectations, but again must resist the temptation to provide the students with ready-made adjustments.

Conclusion

All students must be encouraged to complete such journeys of self-discovery. Once they become aware of their own skills, qualities and interests, students will be better equipped to take decisions about their future career (professional or academic). Their decision will be reinforced by their self-awareness and will be anchored in the reality of their own potential. Furthermore, having completed the steps outlined above, students will have a more positive outlook towards their choices and will be able to deal more effectively with whatever obstacles they face.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1 – GROW

Ask students to fill in the following table. They must try to provide **honest answers**; insist that the more honest the answer, the faster (and better) they will find a solution.

Students should keep this worksheet in their **personal diary** and consult it periodically, checking on how successful their description of the **way forward** is.

It is recommendable that periodically, **after** students have completed the GROW worksheet(s), teachers should invite students individually to show them their GROW worksheets and openly discuss with them on the effectiveness of their solutions and on how close or far they are from their set goal.

GOAL	<i>What is your goal? What do you want to achieve? Be very specific</i>
REALITY	<i>What is the reality? How far are you from your goal? (describe the situation as objectively as possible; no one will judge you). Write 2 – 3 sentences.</i>
OBSTACLE	<i>What are the interior obstacles preventing you from reaching the goal? Write 2 – 3 sentences about yourself (e.g. I am (not) ... / I do (not) ...)</i>
OPTION	<i>What can you do to deal with your inner obstacles? List as many options as you want; it will give you a wider choice of actions that can help you.</i>
WAY FORWARD	<i>What 2 action steps will you take to clear the obstacles and reach your goal?</i>

Annex 2 – WOOP¹²

W	WISH What is one specific wish that you want to accomplish in relation to _____ (school subject)	<u>My wish is:</u> <i>for example: 'My wish is to get the maximum grade in the next Math test paper.'</i>
O	OUTCOME If you accomplish your wish, how will you feel? What will the best outcome be? Pause and really imagine the outcome	<u>I will feel / The best outcome is:</u> <i>for example: 'I will feel proud of myself.' or 'My parents will appreciate my efforts.'</i>
O	OBSTACLE What is the main obstacle inside you that might prevent you from accomplishing your wish? Be honest. Pause and really imagine the obstacle	<u>My obstacle is:</u> <i>for example: 'I procrastinate studying.' or 'I prefer spending time on social media to working at Math.'</i>
P	PLAN What is an effective, real action you can take to deal with the obstacle? Make a 'when – then' plan.	<u>When (what time):</u> <i>for example: 'every day, from 2pm to 2:30pm'</i> <u>Then I will:</u> <i>for example: 'solve 4 exercises from the textbook'</i>

¹² Adapted from <https://characterlab.org/activities/woop-for-classrooms/>

Annex 3 – Diary

Chapter I Who are you? *... for each open-ended question students must provide an expected result, consequence or action they plan to take while also specifying a reasonable / realistic time-limit.	Student's presentation: Name – Age / School – Class Your strengths (VIA) are: Your values (PVQ) are: Your interests (RIASEC) are: * What are your plans and wishes for the near-future? * What are your family's plans and wishes for you? * What would you like to change about yourself? * What are your assets / skills? * What are you passionate about? * ...
Chapter II Who do you rely on? NETWORKS	What networks do you have in place? - Personal network (e.g. who are your closest friends / family members, people you trust to help you on personal matters?) - Social network (e.g. who are your friends or acquaintances you are on speaking terms with and who can supply you with information when you need it?) - Educational network (e.g. who are the colleagues and/or teachers you can rely on to help you with your schoolwork or your studies?) - Recreational network (e.g. who are your friends or acquaintances with whom you enjoy having fun with and with whom you engage in spare time activities / hobbies / pursuits?) - Professional network (e.g. who are your friends or acquaintances who can help you grow professionally or who can clarify aspects which are work related?)



Chapter III Action steps What steps do you plan to help you grow? What is the timeline set for these steps? How do you plan to stay motivated?	- GROW worksheets - WOOP worksheets <u>Accountability measures – Stay motivated</u> <i>What motivates you?</i> <i>What rewards work best for you / do you expect?</i> <i>What changes will you make to ensure you will reach your goals?</i> <i>How do you plan to stay in charge and focus on your goals?</i>
Chapter IV What are your resources?	List here the places / websites / resources you (can) use to help you find answers or solutions to your questions. <i>Where can you find out more about future schooling opportunities?</i> <i>Are there financial obligations to meet? If so, which and how can you answer them?</i> <i>What scholarships or grants are available in your area for people of your age?</i> <i>What online courses can you attend to help you understand more on a specific subject?</i> <i>Are you available for full-time or part-time commitment to additional schoolwork / optional courses? Why (not)?</i> <i>Who – from your list of Networks – can give you guidance or provide you with answers related to your future career / path? When do you plan to ask them for help?</i>
Chapter V What are your successes?	<u>Celebrate!</u> List here all the small changes you made which enabled you to reach your goals. You can make this in the form of a checklist, celebrating every small victory in your journey to success.

Annex 4 – Quick diagnostic survey

Copy-paste these questions in a Google Form and give it a **fun title** (e.g. "How are you today?").

Ask your students to access the link and answer the questions. Expected completion time: 5 min.

1. Today I feel (*a score of 3 means neutral*)

Awful 1 2 3 4 5 Great

2. Why are you feeling this way? (optional)

3. Usually at school I feel (*a score of 3 means neutral*)

Awful 1 2 3 4 5 Great

4. What types of activities do you enjoy at school? (*Choose multiple options / all that apply*)

small group activities

whole group activities

independent time

lunch

getting outdoors

sports

one-on-one time with teachers

other (please specify)

5. What can your teacher do to better support you? (*Choose multiple options / all that apply*)

Check in on my emotional well-being

Provide mental health resources

Address my concerns about the workload

Encourage more peer collaboration (group projects/discussions)

Provide academic guidance

Make more space for questions and discussions

Provide clearer instructions / explanations

6. What ideas do you have for ways to feel more supported by and connected to your teachers and classmates? (name any activities you want your teacher to try)

7. I wish my teachers knew ... (*What do you want to tell your teachers?*)



8. Do you need support today?

Yes

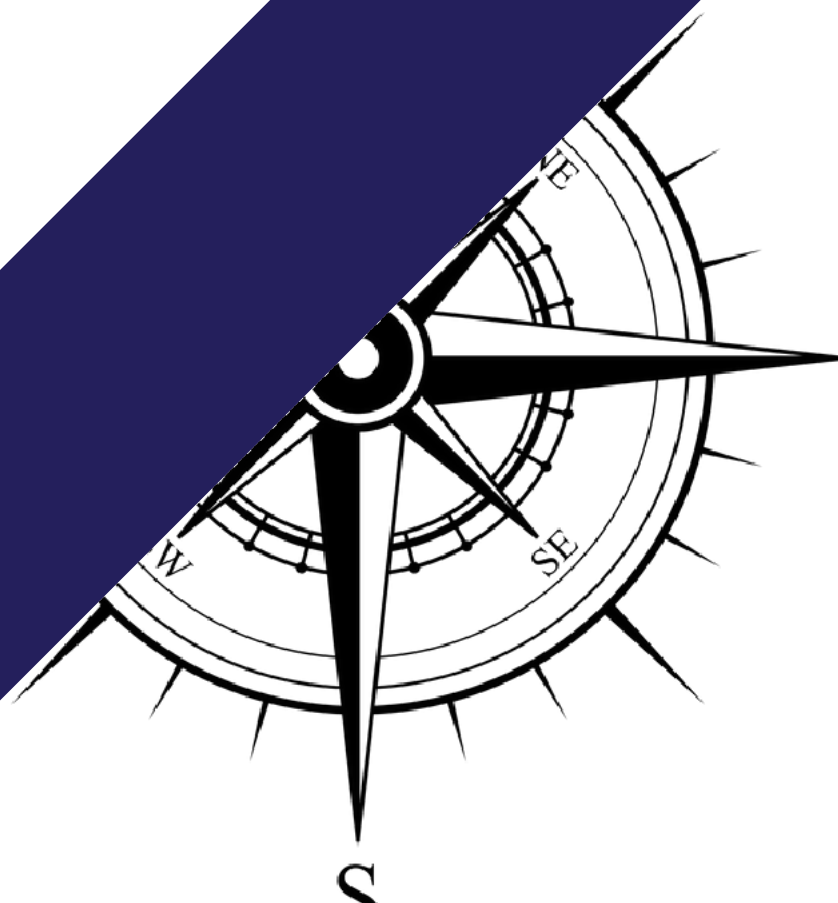
No

9. Is there anything else you want to share with me? Concerns, questions, comments, wonderings?

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MY COMPASS

Enabling students' agency in their route to the future

Erasmus+ project n. 2023-1-IT-KA220-SCH-000156174

**Vulnerable students at 53rd
Lyceum of Athens, Greece**
A brief analysis



1. Introduction

This paper aims to present the characteristics of one of the vulnerable groups of students of the 53rd Lyceum of Athens and to link this vulnerability to the students' career guidance counselling. Firstly, the identity of one of the most important categories of vulnerability, that of students facing severe financial difficulties, will be presented. Subsequently, it will be analyzed how this negatively affects students' future careers. Good practices for the inclusion of this group of students will then be proposed with regard to their career guidance. Finally, conclusions will be drawn on the importance of successful career guidance counselling for the vulnerable social group of students facing financial difficulties.

2. Vulnerability: Students living in very low-income families

One of the basic characteristics of the social identity of the families of the students of the 53rd Lyceum of Athens is that the majority of them belong to the low-income social class. This means that many students have grown up in a deprived economic environment which has a decisive impact on their educational and, more broadly, on their cultural profile.

More specifically, these pupils are in a family environment in which the parents have very low incomes, either because they are employed in low-paid jobs or because they are affected by unemployment or underemployment (part-time, seasonal employment, etc.).

Thus, students and their families are part of this vulnerable social group that suffers social and educational inequalities with great intensity (Kyridis, Tourtouras, & Thanos, 2017). Indeed, it is indicative that social mobility for these families is very limited. Students, usually, continue to live in the same social environment as their parents even after graduating from school, so that they



cannot decisively improve their living standards or achieve a social change that would alter their living conditions (Saragatsi, et. al, 2024).

It is worth noting that the above students have mostly immigrant or refugee backgrounds, but there are also several non-migrant families belonging to the same social group. This is also due to the fact that, according to Greek legislation, each school is required to be attended almost exclusively by pupils living in the district where each school is located. In other words, the right to choose a public school in Greek General Education is not given. The district in question, Sepolia, has a population of mainly low-income/very low-income class families (workers, craftsmen, employees, semi-employed and unemployed). Therefore, the image of the students is representative of the social reality of this particular district of Athens.

3. The negative impact of financial difficulties on students' vocational orientation

Social research has shown that the financial problems faced by students have a negative impact not only on the enrichment of their cultural capital but also on the choices they make in their adult lives about their future working life (Kyridis, Tourtouras, & Thanos, 2017). Students who grow up in an environment of economic deprivation, uncertainty and volatility are variously vulnerable to economic instability, financial crises and social marginalization (Saragatsi, et. al, 2024).

It is no coincidence, therefore, that it is predominantly these students who face the dilemma of career orientation: one choice is long-term university studies that will potentially lead them in the long run to better paid work, economic security and social change, i.e. social advancement and social class change (Saragatsi, et. al, 2023), and their other option is a fast entry into the labour market, as early as 17-18 years old, with poor formal qualifications, in low-paid



jobs with no job security guarantees and, usually, in semi-employment or seasonal employment.

For the most part, we observe that students of lower economic classes are forced to turn to the second option, i.e. to enter the labour market hastily in order to earn some personal income to contribute to the poor family budget. Even if these students have entered university at a very high financial cost to the family, through examinations, it is very common for them to work in parallel, even in day jobs.

Thus, research shows that the social position of students from low-income families has a decisive influence on their career orientation and, to a large extent, prescribes their career choices (Saragatsi, et. al, 2024). The same applies to the career choices of the students in our school in relation to the social position of the family and its economic and cultural capital. Most of the students in this social group seek fast income in low-paid jobs (workers, craftsmen, employees in the catering sector or in local private enterprises, seasonal employees in tourism, semi-employed).

4. Good inclusion practices for career guidance for school students from low-income families.

In order to be able to enrich the career guidance of students belonging to the vulnerable social group described above, we will need to apply some good practices that are both realistic and appropriate for the specific school and social environment. Obviously, schools cannot provide solutions that will solve the financial problem of families, but they can provide services that will alleviate some of the financial burden in the education sector and act as a compensatory policy.

First of all, free career guidance counselling is essential during the school year. The school will establish the institution of "Career Guidance Days" during





which students, especially from vulnerable groups, will be able to have free personal career guidance sessions with trained teachers. The emphasis is on the free provision of services as in Greece families usually turn to companies that provide paid counselling services, which puts a strain on the family's finances. In particular, the good practices applied in the Erasmus+ My Compass programme will be used.

In addition, emphasis will be placed on learning support for vulnerable pupils with free lessons in the evening hours. Already in the Municipality of Athens, the institution of the Social Care Centre for families is operating for pupils of low-income families that cannot afford the burden of private lessons to enhance the learning performance of their children. In the Social Care Centre, pupils attend free lessons in the afternoons by volunteer teachers in order to review the school curriculum.

The school could therefore provide, twice a week, additional afternoon supplementary teaching classes to children with a learning profile such as the one we describe. This action would compensate for the disadvantage faced by this group and would be one means of bridging educational inequalities, because pupils would boost their performance and have better prospects of succeeding in the examinations leading to universities.

In addition, emphasis will be placed on the enrichment of students' cultural capital according to the social theory of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. The latter had observed that a distinctive difference between the working class and the upper class in the field of education is that students of the former come to school with a cultural capital that is not directly related to what is projected and required by the school (Bourdieu, 1973). This is a fundamental cause of these students' failure at school, through no fault of their own.

53rd Lyceum of Athens already implements policies to enhance the cultural capital of all students in accordance with the requirements of the formal





educational policy. This means that year-long educational programmes and targeted actions are organised in the fields of culture, environmental awareness, Erasmus+, career guidance, volunteering, active citizenship, etc.

The emphasis will be on persuading families and students of this particular social group to participate in as many of these free activities as possible in order to enrich their cultural capital and thus not be disadvantaged in this area compared to other students (Bourdieu, 1973). If this is achieved, it will bridge the gap that forces them to start from a very different level in terms of their professional orientation and will give them the motivation and confidence to strengthen their own identity, to improve their standard of living and make more successful career choices.

Another strategy to enhance students' career guidance has to do with student-teacher relations. Social education research shows that students from vulnerable social groups are motivated to participate in career guidance activities at school and to trust teachers when the relationships between them are characterized by mutual trust, support, respect and honesty (Schmid, Jørstad, & Stokke Nordlie, 2021). Creating an educational climate that empowers students from vulnerable groups and provides them with equal opportunities for learning and career guidance is key for these students to set goals that match what they want to do in life rather than what they are forced to do due to economic hardship (Cummins, 2005).

5. Conclusions

This study, carried out to identify the characteristics of the vulnerable group of economically disadvantaged students, the impact of vulnerability on their orientation and to propose policies to empower them, interesting conclusions came out regarding the implementation of the Erasmus+ My Compass programme





at the 53rd Lyceum of Athens.

First of all, it was found that the vulnerable social group pupils of low-income families is clearly disadvantaged in terms of its orientation and professional choices compared to other pupil groups. The reason is that economic hardship has a negative impact on students' career and academic choices. This can be mediated to some extent by making use of the Erasmus+ My Compass project. This programme offers tools to focus on students' multiple identities and skills and provide career choices that fit them.

In addition, suggestions were made to implement good practices to support students and their families fitting the profile in order to relieve some of the financial burdens related to education. Emphasis is placed on the free provision of supplementary teaching lessons and career guidance and the enrichment of pupils' cultural capital to enable them to meet the demands of formal education and the demands of a successful career.

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Thank You

53rd Lyceum of Athens

23, Grammou str., Athens,

Attica, Greece

mail@53lyk-athin.att.sch.gr



REPORT ON VULNERABILITIES IN I.O. ORTE: IMMIGRATION AND FOREIGN STUDENTS

Report on the Challenges Faced by Foreign Students in the Italian School System with focus on I.O. ORTE, and Psychological and Educational Techniques Used to Overcome These Challenges and to Promote Integration into the Workforce.

A brief overview of immigration and the Italian approach to foreign students

Migration is a phenomenon that fundamentally characterizes the era we live in, and today more than ever, with the constant increase in the flow of people crossing national borders, there is a need to rely on accurate data and numbers to avoid distorting reality or, worse, creating climates of strong hostility towards foreigners.

For more than twenty years, Italy has been grappling with the phenomenon of international migration, but it is especially in the past two years that our peninsula has become, among European countries, the primary landing spot for many people fleeing war, persecution, and famine. [1]

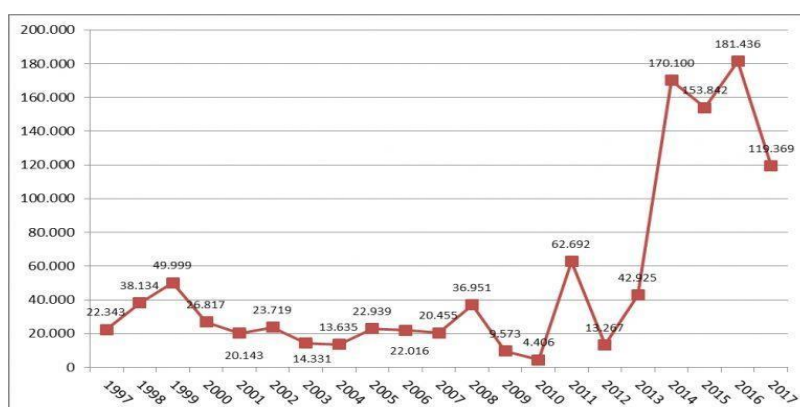


Figure 1: Migrants landed on Italian shores, from 1997 to 2017.

During the 1990s, the landings of migrants, especially Albanians and Kosovars, reached peaks of 50,000 people (in 1999), but it was particularly in the 2000s that arrivals on Italian shores became a continuous and constant flow, averaging 23,000 people per year.



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The following years, from 2008 to 2013, were the most unstable: 2011 and 2013 saw the highest landings, with 63,000 people in 2011 and 43,000 in 2013, both years marked by significant historical events in North Africa and the Near Middle East. From 2014 to 2017, a new phase of migratory flows opened, and Italy came to receive over 600,000 migrants (170,000 in 2014, 153,000 in 2015, 181,000 in 2016, and 120,000 in 2017), more than were received in the previous twenty years. [1]

In recent years, European countries, including Italy, have adopted a strategy to extend compulsory education as much as possible, aiming to provide students with a longer and more enriching educational experience. This approach seeks to elevate educational levels and ensure that the investment in education translates into valuable skills for the job market.

Despite these efforts, the rate of early school dropouts remains high, especially among foreign students who struggle with integration. These students often face challenges such as language barriers, social isolation, and general difficulties in adapting to the educational system.

As of August 31, 2021, data from the Italian Ministry of Education shows that 9.7% of the school population is of foreign origin. Italian schools overall have 8,664,000 students, with approximately 842,000 of them being of non-Italian origin. Among these 842,000 students, 63.1% were born in Italy. The majority of foreign students in Italian schools are second-generation immigrants, children born in Italy from foreign parents.

This shift indicates that we have moved from implementing intercultural initiatives for first-generation migrants to establishing an intercultural system that embraces second-generation immigrant children, whose parents themselves have experienced the Italian educational system. Foreign students often encounter significant challenges when adapting to the Italian school system. These difficulties can arise from language barriers, cultural differences, and varied educational backgrounds. This report outlines the primary challenges faced by these students and the psychological and educational techniques employed to help them overcome these obstacles and integrate into the workforce. [1]



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Challenges Faced by Foreign Students: a Literature Review

Cultural Differences: The first and most common challenge international students encounter in their study countries is sociocultural. These challenges have been linked to increased stress levels among international students [2] especially in the first and second years of arrival in their host country.[3]. Homesickness, loneliness, and isolation[4], stress [5], absence of cultural food [6], social living conditions, climate and environmental differences unequal treatment, and language discrimination [7] are some common sociocultural challenges international students face. Meanwhile, these challenges are different for domestic students. Compared to their international counterparts, domestic students can quickly adapt to higher education since they usually have a support system. Whereas international students live in a foreign land with different cultures, have little knowledge of the way of life, and barely know people in the new destination.

Language Barriers: One of the most significant challenges is the language barrier. In fact, many immigrant-origin students do not possess adequate knowledge of the Italian language, have limited familiarity with the education system, have difficulties in interacting with teachers and peers, and experience problems related to prejudice and discrimination. The Ministry of Education has tried to address the challenge posed by foreign students by promoting intercultural education in schools. However, the results achieved so far have not always been satisfactory. One factor responsible for this has been the speed with which the immigrant school population has grown in a rather short time. School managers and teachers have therefore been taken by surprise by the arrival of the new challenges brought by this population. In addition, most school staff had to deal with foreign students without being adequately trained and qualified. Empirical evidence has however shown that many effective good practices have flourished thanks to the personal initiative of a number of teachers sensitive to the school and social integration of foreign students. The main limitation of these good practices, however, is that it is difficult to export them to other schools. One of the main challenges facing students of immigrant origin is undoubtedly the acquisition of Italian as a second language (L2). The acquisition of Italian as L2 is also one - though not the only one - of the main factors responsible for the low academic performance of immigrant-origin students. [8]

Educational Backgrounds: Variations in prior educational experiences can result in gaps in knowledge or different levels of academic preparedness, making it difficult for students to keep up with the curriculum. [9] International students struggle more during their first year as they get to know their new learning environment.



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This is also when the realization of a new life dawns on them. As a result, being in a new country and navigating a new school system increases alienation thoughts among international students. [10]

In particular, students studying in non-English-speaking countries have more language difficulties. A study on non-English speaking international students [11] in their first year at a Russian university showed that studying in a non-English-speaking country is even more tedious, and students must devote their first year to learning Russian. This phenomenon is common in most European universities, where students must learn the host nation's language to qualify for tuition-free education. The implication is that these students must learn a new language from scratch to a certain proficiency level within a limited time before starting their academic journey.

Social Integration: Integrating into a new social environment can be challenging. Although international students can predict sociocultural challenges such as language and loneliness, they may still face unexpected challenges such as discrimination, racism, and culture shock. For instance, a study [12] investigated racial discrimination against international students, and respondents reported that they had experienced racially motivated verbal and physical assault. Likewise, Ge et al. (2019) found cultural bias and discrimination against Chinese international students in Canada. These students reported being prejudiced based on their identity (language use, skin color, and cultural practices). Such negative labels hinder students' adaptation and academic success in the long run [13]. One apparent solution to this issue would be enabling a social relationship between domestic and international students. However, international students find it difficult to form friendships with domestic students in their host countries [14] since they mostly gravitate toward their fellow international students of the same ethnicity.

A very recent paper (2022) has connected the mentioned challenges through a study on the Educational Problems of Immigrant Students conducted on 20 immigrant students and 15 educators. The data, obtained as a result of the interviews with the participants, have shown that the theme of Academic Problems Experienced by Migrant Children was mainly concentrated in two different categories. These are language related problems and problems related to course success. Findings related to the problems experienced in these categories are given in **Table 1**. [15]



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Table 1 Academic Problems of Migrant Children

Categories	Student	Educator	Total
Problem Related to Language			
Having problems because they cannot understand Turkish properly	17	15	32
Inability to understand the question asked	13	6	19
Inability to communicate with teachers and friends	9	5	14
Friends laughing because they can't pronounce words	7	4	13
Afraid of taking the floor and saying the wrong thing in the lesson	6	4	10
Lack of academic support due to the family not knowing the language	3	3	6
Lack of support from friends due to language barrier	3	2	5
Not wanting to take a lesson they can't understand	2	2	4
Not wanting to go to school because of not knowing Turkish	3	0	3
Problems Related to Course Success			
Inability to ask questions that are not understood because of being afraid	17	10	27
Inability to express oneself	14	4	18
Having time problems in the questions asked	6	4	10
Having trouble reading and writing	4	5	9
Being evaluated under the same conditions as other students	5	3	8
Teachers not paying enough attention	5	1	6
Being alienated from school due to poor performance	3	2	5
Home environment being distant from school culture	0	3	3
Not having a target and ideal	0	2	2
Learning slowly relative to the class	0	2	2
Not able to find an empty seat in the school bus due to being immigrants	1	0	1

*n student = 20, n educator = 15

This study points out the importance to investigate the educational problems that immigrant children experience, because elimination of them may contribute to an easier integration of these children into society. Indeed, children whose educational problems have been resolved and brought to school will live next to their teachers, they are protected from the negativities, illegality and early school leaving.

Psychological and Educational Techniques for Overcoming Challenges

On the basis of the challenges discussed in the previous paragraph, the recent researchers are focusing the interest in international students' mental health because of the psychological, physical, and mental stress associated with migration.



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According to Dovchin (2020), language discrimination leads to an inferiority complex, social withdrawal, anxiety, and self-esteem issues for international students.

In order to help foreign children in their integration process both in the Italian social context and in the Italian school, a number of strategies [16], [17] can be implemented, for example:

1. **Language Support Programs:** Schools implement language support programs, such as Italian as a Second Language (ISL) classes, to help students improve their language skills. These programs often include additional tutoring and language workshops.
2. **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Educators receive training on cultural sensitivity to better understand and support the diverse backgrounds of their students. This training helps create an inclusive and respectful classroom environment.
3. **Individualized Education Plans (IEPs):** Schools develop IEPs tailored to the specific needs of foreign students. These plans may include personalized learning goals, additional resources, and modified teaching methods to address individual learning gaps.
4. **Psychological Counseling Services:** Schools provide access to psychological counseling to help students cope with the emotional and psychological challenges of adapting to a new environment. Counselors work with students to build resilience and develop coping strategies.
5. **Peer Mentorship Programs:** Pairing foreign students with local peers through mentorship programs can facilitate social integration. Mentors offer guidance, support, and friendship, helping newcomers feel more connected and less isolated.
6. **Extracurricular Activities:** Encouraging participation in extracurricular activities allows foreign students to engage with their peers outside the classroom, fostering social bonds and a sense of belonging.
7. **Career Counseling and Work Integration Programs:** Schools collaborate with local businesses and organizations to offer career counseling and job placement programs. These initiatives help foreign students gain work experience, understand the job market, and develop skills necessary for successful integration into the workforce.



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HOSTING PROTOCOL

On the basis of the Italian guidelines for the school integration of foreign children issued by the Ministry of Education, the school has drawn up a reception protocol which contains guidelines to promote the integration of foreign students whose sections are schematized in **Figure 2**.

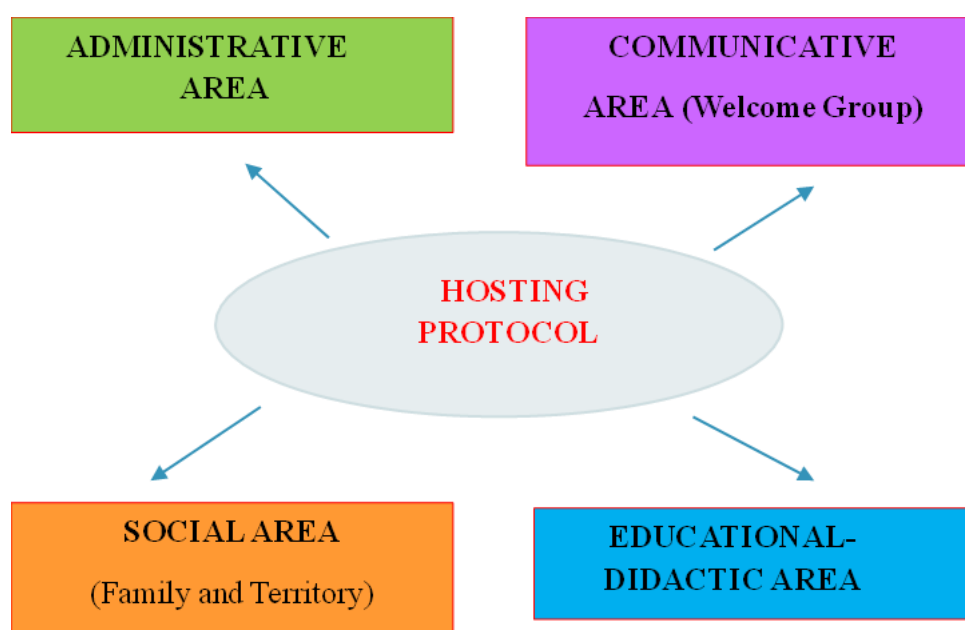


Figure 2. Schematic representation for the Hosting Protocol sections in the I.O. of Orte.

The details of the four sections are reported below:

1. ADMINISTRATIVE AREA

- ENROLLMENT AND DOCUMENTATION (Tasks of the Secretariat)

This step represents the first stage of welcoming the foreign student and their family and is managed by the Secretariat Office.



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The enrollment process for foreign students is handled by the Head of the Didactic Area, who is responsible for facilitating the necessary procedures for the families. It is specified that enrollment can be requested at any time during the school year and that students in an irregular situation are enrolled pending regularization.

The Secretariat will maintain a dedicated list of foreign students and update it based on new enrollments, along with other useful information.

Tasks of the Secretariat:

- Enroll the student using the school's forms, bilingual if necessary.
- Acquire self-certification of personal data;
 - Obtain the certificate confirming the class or school attended in the country of origin, translated and validated by the Italian Consulate in the country of origin;
- Gather information regarding the student's previous educational path;
- Obtain health documents certifying completed vaccinations (translated into Italian).
- Obtain the option to attend or not attend Catholic religious instruction;
- Provide families with initial information about the school's organizational structure.
- Notify the School Principal for an initial contact with the school;
 - Convene the Welcome Group for the next phase (initial introduction) and transmit the collected material to the committee;
 - Notify the Head of the school order and the assigned school site for the student's welcome;

Documentation:

- Personal documents;
- Health documents;
- School documents.



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2. COMMUNICATIVE - RELATIONAL AREA

INITIAL INTRODUCTION (Tasks of the Welcome Group)

In this phase, the school creates an environment of meeting and exchange, pays attention to the needs of the student, and gathers information about the student's personal and educational background, family situation, interests, skills, and competencies.

This phase is managed by the Welcome Group, which consists of:

- The School Principal or a collaborator;
- The Teacher Responsible for Intercultural Affairs;
- Three teachers: one for Italian, one for mathematics, and one for a foreign language;
- A teacher from the proposed section or class for placement.

The members of the Welcome Group are appointed by the School Board.

Tasks of the Welcome Group:

- Meet with the student and their family;
- Gather information about the linguistic biography and educational background of students;
- Provide additional information to the family about the school's organization;
- Inform the family about the criteria for class placement adopted by the school;
- Establish a collaborative relationship with the family;
- Conduct an interview with the student using non-verbal techniques;
- Assess the skills and competencies possessed by the student;
- Write a report on the findings.

After the interview, teachers assess skills and competencies using prepared forms.

For students enrolled before the start of the school year, the group meets in September after calling in the parents and students.



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Materials:

- School handbook;
- Forms for assessing linguistic and mathematical skills;
- Sample report template.

3. EDUCATIONAL-DIDACTIC AREA**CLASS ASSIGNMENT (Criteria for Class Assignment)**

School Organization: Types of Interventions for Italian Language Instruction; Necessary Resources for Such Interventions; Evaluation of Foreign Students; Intercultural Education
The Reception Group proposes the placement in the class to the School Principal, who determines the assignment, taking into account:

- the criteria approved by the Teaching Staff Council;
- the situation of the hypothetical reception class;
- the documentation received by the Secretariat Office;
- the data collected during the meeting with the family and the student;
- the results from the assessment of competency levels.

Materials:

- Information sheets of the educational systems of the countries of origin;
- Sheet used in the interview;
- Sheets for the assessment of linguistic and mathematical skills.

Annex I: criteria for class assignment

In the placement of foreign students into classes, the correspondence between the class and the student's age is prioritized; based on prudently evaluated information regarding previous schooling and the educational system of the country of origin, information provided by the family, and verified skills and competencies, placement in a lower or higher level class may be arranged, depending on the potential benefits.



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The number of students with non-Italian citizenship in each class shall generally not exceed 30% of the total enrolled students (Circular Letter No. 2 of 08/01/10);

The reception group considers the composition of the class in terms of the number of students (priority is given to classes or sections with fewer students), the presence of other foreign students, and the characteristics of the group regarding the complexity of situations;

Newly arrived students belonging to the same linguistic group are placed in small groups not exceeding 3 or 4 to facilitate mutual assistance in communication and limit the perception of uprooting and loss of identity;

In some cases, a 30-day observation period in the class corresponding to the student's age is foreseen, at the end of which the reception group, in agreement with the class teachers, will evaluate the confirmation of enrollment in the aforementioned class or a lower class.

The class coordinator receives information from the welcome group, specifically:

- The report on the initial assessment, particularly regarding linguistic and mathematical skills.
- A copy of the student's educational qualifications and/or the courses taken in their country of origin, including, where possible, the subjects studied and corresponding grades.

The class coordinator informs the Class Council about the new placement. The on-duty teacher welcomes the new student and introduces them to the class.

The class teachers:

- Jointly facilitate the student's integration into the class, fostering relationships with adults and peers, including identifying student-tutors of the same nationality or Italian;
- Identify specific learning needs and develop a personalized educational plan to achieve the minimum objectives outlined in the curriculum;
- Formulate an individualized path that may temporarily exclude certain subjects to allow attendance of literacy or language consolidation activities during school hours (C.M. No. 2 of 08/01/10);
- Maintain contact with the Italian language teacher;
- Identify methods for simplifying or facilitating language use in each subject;



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- Systematically reinforce the use of Italian by involving the student in class activities.

Annex II: School Organization

Organization of Italian as a Second Language (L2) Study

Based on available resources, the school prepares the following interventions: Activation of intensive Italian L2 courses, literacy and enhancement modules, structured for groups of students in 2-hour sessions, drawing on internal professional and economic resources (hours exceeding the teaching schedule);

Activation of targeted interventions for the consolidation of the Italian language or as support for subject learning (support teacher hours or teachers with available hours); Activation of literacy and educational support courses using external professional resources available in the area (volunteer associations and local entities).

Teachers organizing the literacy courses use:

- Entry test sheets;
- Sheets with instructions for teaching Italian language courses (intensive literacy and enhancement courses);
- Specific texts for learning the Italian language available at the school; Simplified texts for subject support available at the school.

Intercultural Education

The school organizes activities that promote daily dialogue, communication, understanding, and collaboration, aiming for mutual enrichment.

These activities are carried out within the curricular and laboratory framework, integrating the theme of citizenship with interculturalism according to paths and methods suitable for the various school realities and orders, and with the human and financial resources available.



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Evaluation

The evaluation of foreign students, particularly those who can be defined as newly arrived, presents various issues, from evaluation methods to certification, and the need to consider the individual learning path.

In this context, the need to prioritize formative evaluation over "certifying" evaluation is emphasized, taking into account the student's path, the progress made, motivation, and commitment. Since the difficulties encountered are mainly linguistic, it is necessary to evaluate abilities regardless of these difficulties. When evaluating learning, some aspects related to the native language that may have specific consequences, such as spelling errors, should be gradually corrected; therefore, in written production, the content should be considered rather than the form.

In particular, when deciding on the transition from one class to another or from one educational level to the next, a variety of elements should be considered. Therefore, for mid-year evaluation, it is decided to:

Provide an evaluation that takes into account the arrival date of the student and the information collected, their abilities, the path taken, commitment, and academic knowledge. Specifically, if sufficient linguistic proficiency has not yet been reached to handle learning even simplified content, an evaluation with motivation is given: the evaluation refers to the learning path undertaken since the student is in the initial phase of Italian language literacy.

The work done by students in literacy courses becomes an integral part of the Italian evaluation; Prioritize the practical aspect of certain subjects such as physical education and the arts.

For the end-of-year evaluation, it is decided to provide an evaluation in all subjects. For the middle school diploma exams, it is decided to:

- Propose "stepped" written exam tests that identify various levels for foreign languages and mathematics;
- Propose written exam tests with "broad" content for Italian so that each student can find the most appropriate way to demonstrate their competencies;
- Evaluate according to the established regulations for exams and the State exam at the end of the first cycle of education based on the indications provided at the end of the year for carrying out all written tests and the multidisciplinary interview.



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4. SOCIAL- RELATIONSHIP AND COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNITY AND

FAMILIES (Tasks of the Integration Support Staff, of the Cultural Mediator and Memorandum of Understanding with Cultural and Volunteer Associations, the Municipality, and Parents)

Relationships with the families of foreign students are fundamental to developing an effective integration project; therefore, they must be clear, collaborative, and consistent. To facilitate communication, the following measures are put in place:

- Distribution of bilingual informational material for school-family communications;
- Regular contact between the school and the family throughout the year;
- Activation of a consultancy service by the Municipality;
- Participation of parents in the School Integration Group;
- Participation in adult courses organized by local volunteer associations.

COLLABORATION WITH THE TERRITORY

The integration process of foreign students is not limited to welcoming them, teaching the new language, and communicating with parents; it is also necessary to promote the relationship with the territory for the implementation of an integrated project. Participatory planning aims to improve a situation through understanding and is based on the active involvement of everyone, drawing on their proposals, ideas, desires, and needs.

Therefore, the school:

- Identifies the Intercultural Function Representative;
- Establishes a School Integration Group;
- Activates, based on available resources, a Listening Desk for parents of all school levels with a cultural mediator to identify difficulties, provide information, support, guide, and welcome proposals and suggestions;
- Promotes meetings with parents, Municipality representatives, and local volunteer and cultural associations to facilitate information sharing with the school, planning, and evaluation;



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- Informs and collaborates on the activation of homework help and extracurricular laboratory activities by the Municipality and social promotion associations;
- Designs forms of integration with volunteer associations: adult training courses, literacy courses, and educational support for foreign students;
- Requests the Municipality to provide free services for students in economic difficulty or other forms of support;
- Participates in intercultural initiatives proposed by local authorities, cultural and volunteer associations present in the territory.

Attachment III

To achieve the project's integration, in alignment with the themes that have always defined the PTOF of the Omnicomprehensive Institute of Orte: competence, citizenship, and diversity, various figures and working groups with different functions are identified and established at multiple levels:

Instrumental Function for the area concerning integration with the aim of promoting the integration of foreign students; integration at various levels: school, community, families.

School Integration Group composed of:

- School Principal;
- Intercultural Instrumental Function
- Heads of school buildings
- Local authority representative
- Representatives of Italian and foreign parents
- ATA representative
- Representatives of cultural and volunteer associations
- Representatives of Italian and foreign students to design and verify the integration process.

Intercultural Commission composed of:

- Intercultural Instrumental Function;
- School level representatives: Kindergarten, Primary, Lower Secondary, and Upper Secondary;
- Whose functions will be determined according to needs, year by year.



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Welcome Group:

whose tasks and members have already been listed in the section regarding the initial acquaintance.

Volunteer and cultural associations present in the area:

- for informational activities regarding what has been prepared by the Institute;
- for mediation activities with families;
- to translate informational materials;
- to participate in the integration group;
- to organize literacy and Italian culture courses for adults;
- to organize intercultural education activities and academic support for students.

Cultural mediator identified according to needs and resources, who is required to:

- Conduct relationship activities through the activation of a listening desk for parents and students, in a manner compatible with the needs of the interested parties, the school, and the parents, to identify difficulties, support, guide, and welcome proposals and suggestions;
- Intervene with foreign students in class to provide linguistic mediation and intercultural activities.



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A VIEW ON I.O ORTE

The Orte institute is an Istituto Omnicomprensivo, this implies that it contains school grades from kindergarten to secondary school. The latter includes two Licei and two Technical Institutes for a total of four addresses: Liceo delle Scienze Umane (LSU), Liceo Scientifico (LS) both Traditional and with Biomedical curvature, Amministrazione Finanza e Marketing (AFM) and Costruzioni Ambiente e Territorio (CAT).

SCHOOL GRADE	Native Students	ForeignStudents	% Foreign/Native
TOTAL INSTITUTE	1595	381	24%
HIGH SCHOOL	747	108	15%
LICEI	440	54	12%
TECNICI	307	44	14%
SECONDARY SCHOOL	240	56	23%
PRIMARY SCHOOL O.S.	173	87	50%
PRIMARY SCHOOL O.C.	224	45	20%
KINDERGARTEN O.S.	92	59	64%
KINDERGARTEN O.C.	119	26	22%

Table 2. Total number of native and foreign students attending the I.O. of Orte based on the school grade.

Our school is attended by 1595 students, whose 24% are foreign students (**Table 2**). This high concentration of foreign students is mainly due to the fact that Orte is the principal railway junction of the Viterbo province, at about 50 minutes by train from Rome, a multiethnic metropolitan city which offers more job opportunities to immigrants. In particular, there are students from Africa, Bangladesh, India, South America, Romania, Albania, Morocco and other countries. The higher rate of immigrant students attend the kindergarten, the primary school and the junior high school and tends to decrease in the high-school.

In our school, the general evaluation of the students is carried out in two phases: the first phase takes place in February (first quarter) and the second phase occurs at the end of the school year, in June (second quarter).



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The following tables summarize the deficiencies found in the two phases for foreign students in the first and second quarters.

1° QUARTER	Native Students	Foreign Students	% Foreign Students with deficiency
Secondary School	57	18	32 %
1° class	23	6	26%
2° class	16	6	38%
3° class	18	6	33%

Table 3. Foreign students attending the I.O. of Orte secondary school with deficiency in the first quarter school period.

At the secondary level, the interim assessment shows that 32% of foreign students have insufficient marks, especially in the second class (38%). The most critical subjects are Mathematics, Science and English.

1° QUARTER	Native Students	Foreign Students	% Foreign Students with deficiency
High School	109	69	63%
AFM	31	19	61%
CAT	24	18	75%
LS	23	10	43%
LSU	31	22	71%

Table 4. Foreign students attending the I.O. of Orte high school with deficiency in the first quarter school period.

At the intermediate assessment, 63.30% of foreign students at the high school achieved a failing mark. In particular, CAT is the school with the highest number of deficiencies (75%). The subject with the highest failure rate is mathematics.



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In the final assessment of the secondary school, only the 4% of the foreign students achieved insufficient marks, and the 2% have not met the academic requirements for the second quarter of the school year, and therefore have not been promoted to the next class.

2° QUARTER	Native Students	Foreign Students	% Foreign Students with deficiency	Foreign students not admitted to next class	% Foreign students not admitted to next class
secondaryschool	56	2	4 %	1	2%
1° class	22	1	5%	/	/
2° class	16	/	/	1	6%
3° class	18	1	6%	/	/

Table 5. Foreign students attending the I.O. of Orte secondary school with deficiency in the second quarter school period and those who fail the year.

2° QUARTER	Native Students	Foreign Students	% Foreign Students with deficiency	Foreign students not admitted to next class	% Foreign students not admitted to next class
High School	108	31	29%	19	18%
AFM	30	14	47%	4	13%
CAT	24	5	21%	5	21%
LS	22	4	18%	3	14%
LSU	32	8	25%	7	22%

Table 6. Foreign students attending the I.O. of Orte high school with deficiency in the second quarter school period and those who fail the year.



According to **Table 6**, the final evaluation shows that the 29% of the foreign students had , at least, an insufficient mark. In particular the 18% of them achieved more than three insufficient marks, resulting in their exclusion from the subsequent class. Furthermore, the AFM course exhibited the highest failure rate (47%), while the Human Science Liceo had the highest proportion of foreign children not admitted (22%). In addition, Mathematics was identified as the most critical discipline.

In order to overcome the challenges faced by foreign students I.O Orte promotes activities designed to facilitate linguistic and cultural integration such as:

- Literacy courses have been devised for foreign pupils who are experiencing difficulties with the English language in all school grades. These courses are delivered in both curricular and extracurricular time, with the latter being allocated to teachers.

- Individual Mentoring and Discipline Skills Support Courses (PNRR Project: "Stop Scolastic Dispersion" Ministerial Decree 170/2022), designed for foreign and Italian students from the fifth grade of Primary School to the fifth grade of High School (in curricular time for students and extracurricular time for teachers).

- The Discipline Skills Enhancement Courses (PNRR Project: "Stop Scolastic Dispersion" Ministerial Decree 170/2022), designed for foreign and Italian pupils in Grades I and II of Secondary Schools (in extracurricular hours for students and teachers).

These efforts aim to create a supportive and inclusive environment and to enhance the academic success and well-being of foreign students but also to promote their smooth integration into society and workforce.



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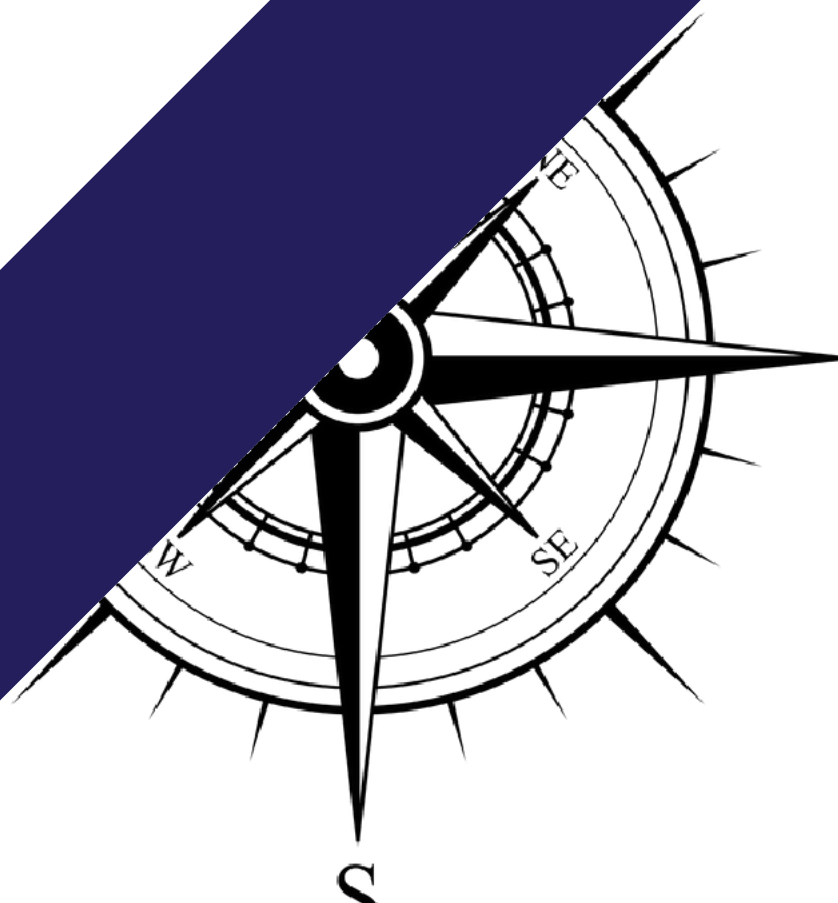


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MY COMPASS

Enabling students' agency in their route to the future

Erasmus+ project n. 2023-1-IT-KA220-SCH-000156174

Vulnerabilities in Career Guidance

Agrupamento de Escolas José Saramago



Vulnerabilities in Career Guidance

1. Objective

Vulnerabilities are a reality in Career Guidance. With this work it is intended that teachers need to be aware of the impact of vulnerable conditions on their occupational choices and to transfer to them the ways in which they can be taken care of to prevent the transmission of inequalities.

The **aim** of this work package is to:

- inform and raise awareness on the specific vulnerability you chose, describing how it impacts the guidance process and in general the career development of students;
- provide practical suggestions on how to provide support to students with the vulnerability in question.

2. Vulnerabilities in career guidance: AEJS specific vulnerability

The most common vulnerability in our school cluster, whose students face more difficulties in defining their professional paths is: low socio-economic status.

2.1. Reasons for socio-economic status vulnerability

- The Agrupamento de Escolas José Saramago is in Poceirão, belonging to the municipality of Palmela, district of Setúbal.
- The schools are in a rural environment, and this is characterized by a socio-cultural isolation that decisively conditions the participation of its population in the most diverse cultural and artistic manifestations.
- The training acquired by students in these areas is only offered or disseminated at school.
- The local dominant activity is linked to the primary sector and in particular agriculture and viticulture.



Map for parishes of Poceiro and Marateca. (2016, Câmara Municipal de Palmela)

- There are numerous deficiencies in terms of infrastructure basic sanitation, transport, school network, leisure activities, among others.

- The educational qualifications of parents or guardians are in majority the basic education.
- The resident population is now faced with a significant lack of employment and empirical knowledge leads us to believe that the impoverishment of families living here is becoming more and more pronounced, something that is proven by a growing percentage of students covered by the Ação Social Escolar (School Social Aid).

2.1.1. What is Ação Social Escolar (School Social Aid)?

Ação Social Escolar (ASE) / School Social Aid is a measure to support families with school-age children, that reimburses school expenses for students belonging to families with lower resources.

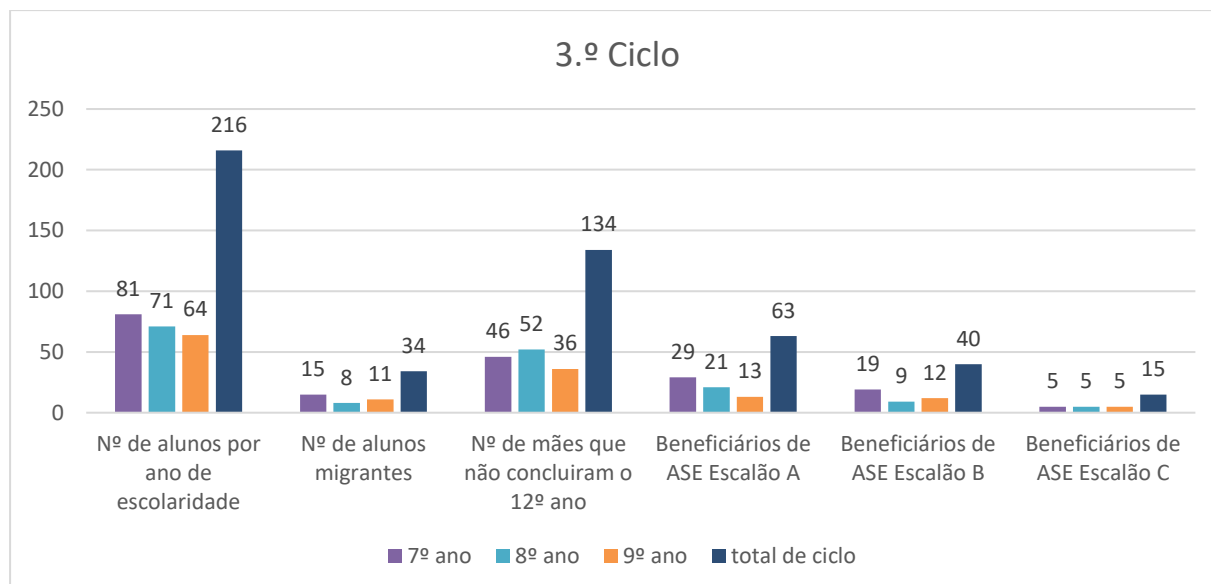
The "ASE" includes three brackets (A, B and C), which are defined according to the annual household income, based on the value of the Indexante dos Apoios Sociais (IAS) / Social Support Index.

- Ação Social Escolar (School Social Aid) Brackets (in 2022 the IAS was 443,20 €)

Escalão	Rendimento de referência	Rendimento em 2022
A	igual ou superior a $0,5 \times IAS \times 14$	até 3.102,40€
B	Superior a $0,5 \times IAS \times 14$ e igual ou inferior a $1 \times IAS \times 14$	mais de 3.102,40€ até 6.204,80€
C	Superior a $1 \times IAS \times 14$ e igual ou inferior a $1,7 \times IAS \times 14$	mais de 6.204,80€ até 9.307,20€

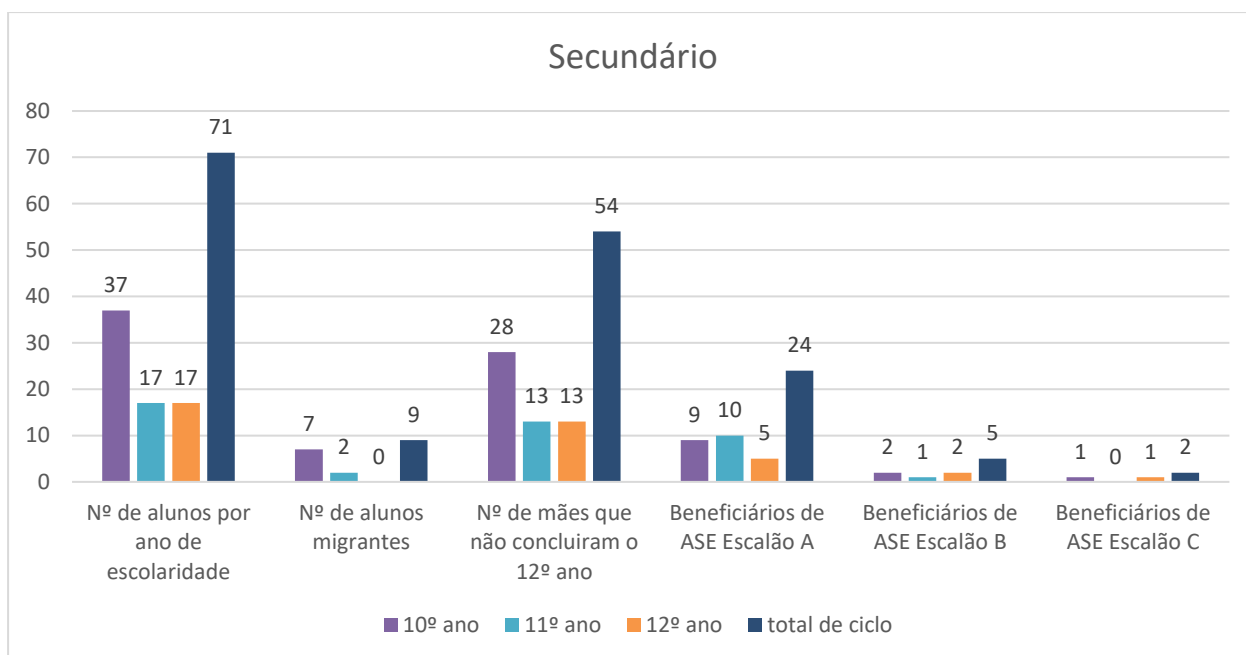
Next we show the rate of students in our school who have ASE.

ASE: 3ciclo / Middle school stats



Analyzing the graph, we can see that most students who have ASE benefit A and B. Of the 216 students in the 3rd cycle, 134 mothers do not have the 12th grade.

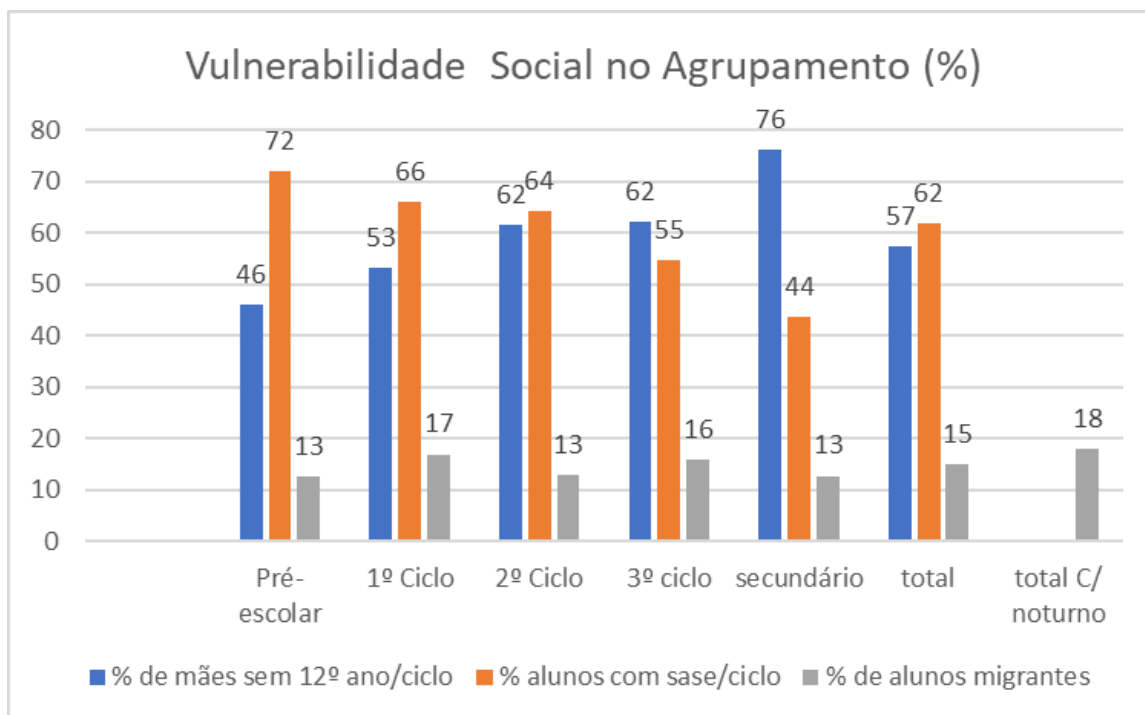
ASE: Secondary school stats



Analyzing the graph, we can see that most students who have ASE benefit A. Of the 71 students in the secondary school, 54 mothers do not have the 12th grade.

2.2. Vulnerability rate

The combination of these various factors makes the vulnerability rate of our school cluster very high.



The social vulnerability of the school cluster, using the formula provided by the Ministry of Education, is 49%.

3. Impact on career guidance/professional

- Career guidance for socially disadvantaged students is essential to promote equal opportunities and help them reach their potential;
- Socio-economic challenges can lead to lower self-esteem and self-efficacy, affecting students' aspirations and confidence in achieving career goals;
- To help break the cycle of poverty, it is critical to adopt an approach that involves action in multiple areas.

3.1. Vulnerabilities in career guidance

In our school:

- Students with low social status face challenges in their career decision-making and overall success;
- Students have poor expectations for the future and little aspirations;
- Students struggle to make informed choices about their future when choosing a career path.

3.2. Strategies to address vulnerabilities in career guidance:

There are several strategies to combat vulnerabilities in career guidance. The educational strategies used in our school:

- Apply for the Ministry of Education program TEIP (Programa Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária) - Educational Territories of Priority Intervention (1)



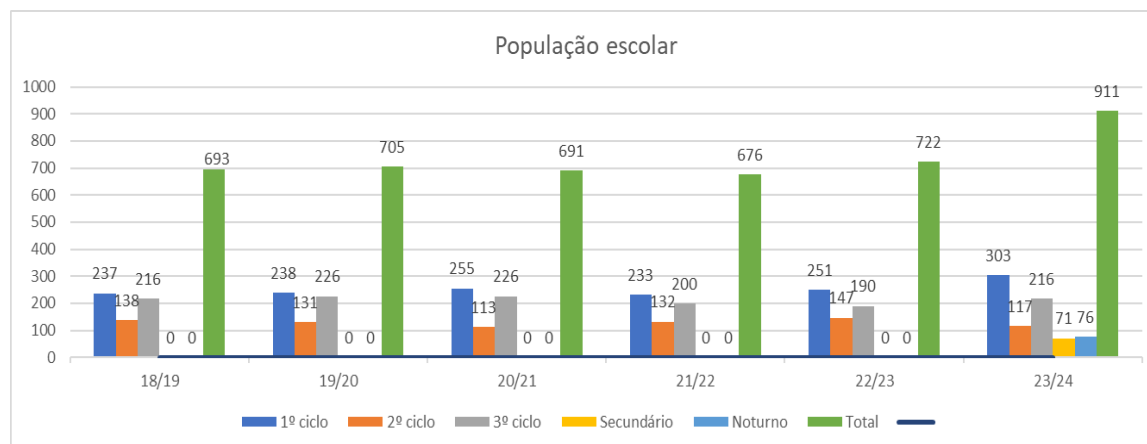
- Provide students with in-school experiences they don't have in their families:
 - like visits to museums, cultural and artistic exhibitions, theatre, science centers, theme parks, big city trips, participation in ERASMUS mobility
 - equipping the school with special classrooms and materials: STEAM Lab, greenhouse, vegetable garden/vineyard, and teaching kitchen.
- Offering training and career-oriented programs that align with local labor market needs can enhance employability for students such as:
 - professional courses in secondary school in the primary and tertiary sector:
 - Gardening and green spaces
 - Viticulture / Wine making
 - Bar & Restaurant
 - night school for adults so they can get their middle/high school diploma.

(1) TEIP is an educational policy measure aimed at school clusters located in territories with a high number of children and young people at risk of social vulnerability, aiming to ensure educational inclusion and success, and improve the quality of learning and combat school dropout.

3.3. Outcome:

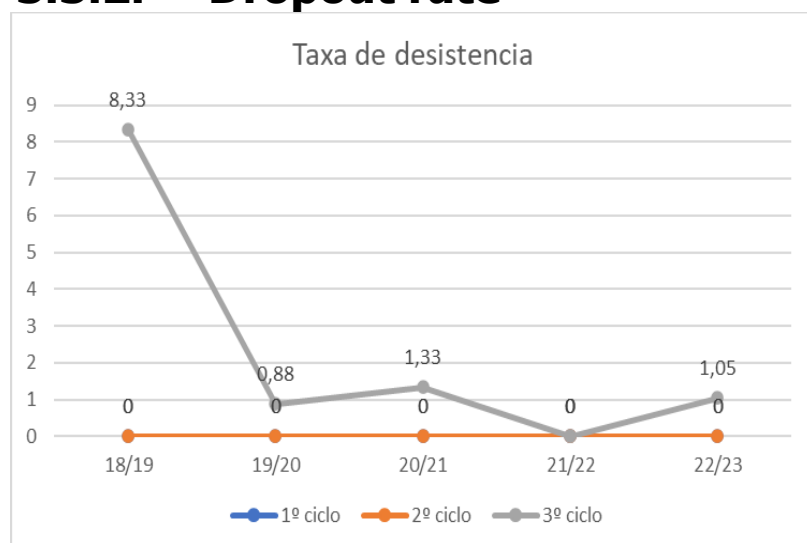
3.3.1. School population

The educational strategies used in our school result in:



The increase in the school population from the 22/23 school year to the 23/24 school year is due to the implementation of professional secondary courses & night school.

3.3.2. Dropout rate



Sharp drop in dropout rate



4. Educational strategies used in our school:

- In parents-teacher meetings with educate parents about the educational system planning to empower them to support their children's aspirations and career path decisions.
- Every 9th grade student gets counseling with the School Psychologist - Orientação vocacional - to provide personalized career guidance to each student, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds;
-

4.1. Orientação vocacional / Career guidance with the School Psychologist

Vocational guidance is a process that takes place throughout an individual's life, from childhood right through to old age (Super, 1980; Balbinotti, 2003; Freeman, 1993). Adolescence is by excellence a phase of development understood as a transitional stage. Overlapping the vocational valence, where there is uncertainty about vocational preferences, given the little exploration of the self in relation to the school and professional world (Taveira, 1999), deciding on the school and professional future becomes a challenging task both for the adolescent and for the entire educational system that surrounds them. The intervention in the area of vocational counselling benefits adolescents in terms of transition issues, as a basis for security, guidance and a source of information (Taveira, 2000). In this sense, vocational guidance programmes are designed to promote the development of knowledge, attitudes and skills for career management and development throughout life (Pocinho, 2011).

In short, the vocational guidance process is mostly based on personal, school and professional exploration, in order to develop vocational decision-making.



In our school, through the vocational guidance programme for 9th graders, we are trying to meet a need felt by the students, parents/guardians, teachers and anyone else who is committed to improving the quality of our education system. The aim of these sessions is to provide support to students at this transitional stage in the process of identifying their future field of study and/or choosing a profession.

This process begins at a meeting with the class directors of the students involved in the process, with the objective of engaging them and familiarising them with the different stages, as well as explaining their role in the process to the students.

This is followed by group sessions with the introduction of self-knowledge dynamics and the completion of questionnaires.

A briefing session is held on possible school courses after the 9th grade. The process is usually conducted over four sessions (in some cases more may be needed) where, through the use of different structured or semi-structured tests, the individual's vocational profile is drawn up. The aim of the tests is to assess the young person's interests, which tells us what areas will be most motivating for them, and their aptitudes, i.e. what interests, aptitudes (which indicates their preferred cognitive style) and values are needed to undertake a certain type of task.

Every year there is a careers fair called "Futurália", in which students (supervised by their class directors and the psychologist) attend in order to find out about all the available educational opportunities.

Through interaction dynamics between young people and the dialogue with the psychologist and their teachers, the students gradually build up their journey, resulting in a portfolio.

At the end of the process, a report is submitted containing the graphical construction of the individual's profile. In the individual interview, an academic and/or professional project is outlined, in which courses, training and/or areas of study that are more compatible with their vocational profile are suggested.

Summary Table:

SESSIONS	STEPS
1	Meeting with the Class Directors of the students involved in the Vocational Guidance process
2	Group session involving self-knowledge dynamics and the completion of questionnaires relating to interests and motivations.
3	Clarification of possible school careers after the 9th grade
4	Individual questionnaires - Aptitudes Battery
5	Individual questionnaires - Aptitudes Battery, Conclusion
6	Exploring values "The target of values"
7	Application of vocational guidance tests - Professional Interests and Preferences Test - IPPR
8	Study visit to Futurália 2024
9	Presentation of the educational offer in the area/other schools
10	Individual interviews with analysis of reports and informed support in the decision-making process

5. Conclusion

Addressing social economics vulnerability in the guidance process requires a multi-faceted approach that includes enhancing resources, building supportive networks, and providing targeted interventions;

By implementing these strategies, educational institutions can help level the playing field and ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, have the same opportunity to succeed in their chosen careers.



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Thank You

Raquel Ribeiro - Teacher

Sandra Santos - Psychologist

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