



# Policy Recommendations

## ***Project result 4***

*Coordinated by IHL,*

*Contributions by all partners and participants in Policy Lab sessions in*

*Croatia, Italy, Malta and Romania*

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## Introduction

**Arguing at School - Psycho-pedagogical Methods to help children (2-18) learn from arguing** aims to open a transnational discussion on the theme of quarrels and conflicts between peers, in the context of their life experience at school. The work of schools on this issue is limited, as teachers often address conflict among children in individual and even emotional ways. However, quarrelling is normal and important in the life of people of all ages, and it is an opportunity to develop relational skills and prevent the conflictual incompetence that characterises violent behaviours.

The project's overall aim is to fill the void of a generalised absence of a shared pedagogical strategy of reference for teachers, which may allow them to know how to intervene in the event of quarrels between peers at school, with what methods and through what tools. At the same time, there are consolidated and positive experiences that certify that the methods exist: the ordinary experience of a childhood quarrel can be transformed from an unexpected moment of disturbance into an opportunity to learn skills. It is about maintaining the centrality of the subjectivity of boys, girls, teenagers, accompanying them to develop the skills at the base of a functioning democratic life: knowing how to express themselves, to listen, to put themselves in others' shoes, to identify common problems and interests and to find effective ways to be better together, whether there is a shared agreement, or if there is no "solution" to the conflict. Soft skills can be developed by giving everyone, children and teenagers the opportunity to argue better, in a school context well equipped for those purposes. The project also acknowledges that children's behaviour in school is not separate from their personal lives. They bring with them their home environment, experiences from their community, and what they absorb through various information sources, including the increasingly pervasive influence of the Internet and its applications. Conversely, children also act as conduits, sharing the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and content they acquire in school. Ultimately, learning is shaped by the interactions between these interconnected channels and networks.

The partners are committed to establish a lasting network to ensure the sustainability of the project's outcomes: its innovative teaching methods could become accessible not only to school, but to the entire education sector, and are available for policymakers to promote.

The analytical and experimental work developed in the project has potential for dissemination especially in schools, but in order for these methods of positive conflict transformation to spread to schools, the process requires encouragement from the responsible authorities and a strong commitment to the training of teachers, both future and in-service, as well as in creating awareness among the public of families and the children

themselves. Achieving this commitment at a higher level requires the attention and involvement of policymakers in the public debate.

*The Policy Recommendations aim exactly to draw attention and commitment from the ministries, regional and local authorities, specialised media and of the representatives of relevant categories concerning concrete possibilities to turn a natural phenomenon such as quarrelling in favour of the educational experience.*

The Recommendations were elaborated from some conclusions of the pilot activity in the participating schools and gather comments from the local stakeholders from all categories involved, following the “Policy Lab” concept and method as developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, which involves the direct involvement of the ultimate beneficiaries and ground actors in the formulation of public policies, stimulating the expression freely of ideas, expectations and concerns of the different parties involved with respect to new public initiatives that may concern them.

This Project Result is structured as follows:

- first, the Policy Lab approach is presented in the context of the project;
- the Policy Labs held throughout the project are then analysed, and the recommendations which emerged from them are examined.
- Reports of the Policy Labs conducted in the different countries of the project are included as an annex to this document.

## The purpose and implementation of Policy Labs in *Arguing at School*

Making conflicts at school an opportunity for learning important transversal competences is the vision of the project, consolidated by many successful practices in schools. However, it is not, as such, a recognisable challenge for policy makers.

In order to achieve the aim of a broad awareness and mainstreaming of the “family of methods” proposed and positively contaminated during the project, a reflection was necessary on how to relate the project aims to existing policy challenges, and to explore, in each country, which existing policy challenges were most suitable to be connected to the project aim and results.

That is why, since the proposal writing phase, the project included a “result”, the Policy Recommendations, directed not to teachers and grassroots stakeholder who face daily challenges of managing (in the project everybody learned to say “positively transforming” or “settling”) conflicts among children/learners at school, but to people responsible of decision making at local, regional or national level. These recommendations, presented at the end of this document, have precisely the objective of mobilising decision makers and other relevant policy stakeholders towards the generalisation of school practices able to make the best out of the unavoidable and frequently useful conflicts at school.

The recommendations were not produced through a discussion among the partners, as it frequently happens in projects that have a focus on practice or research. They are the result of a participatory process that involved many more persons of different organisations in each of the four countries where schools were actively involved in the project: Croatia, Italy, Malta, Romania.

The specific model proposed to allow the emergence of recommendation is named Policy Lab and is part of a broader category of approaches to implement citizens engagement through participatory and deliberative democracy. It is based on three principles:

1. User-centeredness, meaning that the final beneficiaries of a policy are to be heard first and stimulated to express their concerns, their hopes and their fear as a way, for policy makers, to better understand, without mediation, how public services are perceived by their users.

2. Design Thinking applied to the public decision making, meaning that creative solutions to the perceived problems/challenges are co-created by all the participants through facilitation techniques which stimulate creative thinking. Thinking of creative solutions rather than incremental improvements is a typical feature of creative thinking.
3. Systemic approach to the role of the Public Administration, going beyond the administrative areas of competence to explore what might be done if these borders were temporarily removed.

## Analysis of Policy Labs implementation in the project

The experiment of using Policy Labs in the project produced substantially positive results, but some shortcomings are also to be considered. Here follows a synthesis of positive aspects and limitations.

The first positive aspect of the Policy Lab approach is the identification of a variety of stakeholders that bring substantially different experiences, know-how and perspectives on the problem of conflicts at school: this builds a more articulated understanding of the phenomenon and how it may be considered for all participants. Different ages, roles, experiences and mindsets involved in an open discussion are in themselves a learning experience and a training in understanding different approaches to the same problem

The second positive aspects of the Policy Labs was to put the issue of “How to learn from children quarrels” in the centre of debate not only for a limited set of experts already interested and “initiated”, but for a broader group of interlocutors, some completely new to the importance of the topic

The third positive aspects was related to the creative and solution-oriented character of the PL method, that pushed experts to reflect on ways to communicate with non-expert decision makers and to find appealing ways to improve the current “thematic illiteracy” of many stakeholders involved in decision making: addressing a well identified policy challenge by using the knowledge base that the project had gathered and structured. All partners were engaged in this process, not only those already familiar with policy making processes.

**In terms of lessons learnt from the process**, the first one is that Policy Labs require some specific training or “capacity building” for all the partners involved in their organisation and facilitation: in some countries, where the specific organisation and facilitation skills were not completely available, some shortcomings could be observed, such as the insufficient number



of children/students participating in the sessions or difficulties in identifying a “policy challenge” that might result interesting for policy makers, or the limited availability of policy makers to attend one or more workshops in the Policy Lab cycle. Nevertheless, the Policy Labs were run in Croatia, in Italy, in Malta and in Romania, and allowed not only to identify several important areas for policy intervention, but also a participatory practice to lead to decision making. The scarce attendance of children in some Policy Labs was compensated by a large and active participation of students in the final project event in Sanremo, where the Policy Recommendations draft was presented and many comments were added, especially by students.

**In terms of results**, the Policy Labs conducted in the project produced recommendations which have several points of convergence, but the reference to existing policy challenges is different from country to country. The following section presents two groups of recommendations, one showing a “summative” approach on common fields of interest among all countries (for example on supporting dissemination and awareness building and training of teachers), the other group pointing to more specific aspects that were emerging from one or two countries (e.g. citizenship education or migration policies).

The draft Recommendations were presented and submitted to a public debate on the occasion of the project Final Event on 25<sup>th</sup> October, then revised to include the feedback received. The final version of the recommendations is presented below.

## Policy Challenges and Recommendations

As a result of the participatory process conducted through the third year of the project, the following Recommendations are proposed for discussion, improvement and implementation. As anticipated in the previous section, the project had to identify **POLICY CHALLENGES** to refer to, since its aim -although very relevant- was not immediately perceived as relevant for policy makers. Therefore, five related policy challenges emerged from the discussions and are the basis for the Recommendations List that follows:

**PCh1: Renew Citizenship Education Directives**

**PCh 2. Make schools a safe place where to teach and learn**

**PCh 3. Address growing social, cultural and religious diversity among the school population**

**PCh4. Substantially renew the teaching profession, making teaching more attractive for young people**

**PCh5. Support the use of research results in education practice**

Each of these Challenges, that are already well identified by European and national policy makers, originated one main recommendation coming from the Policy Labs of the Arguing at School Project. It must be noted that the Recommendations are not exclusively directed to “policy makers” in the literal sense, but represent a “call for action” for many categories of stakeholders who see the importance of conflict as a learning opportunity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO SPECIFIC POLICY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN THE COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT AS RELATED TO ARGUING AT SCHOOL

**R1. Ministries of Education and other Education Authorities are encouraged to explicitly include the development of social and relational competences in the policy guidelines concerning citizenship education, and to allow sufficient flexibility to schools and teaching staff to experiment innovative pedagogical approaches to achieve these competences.**

Following the Paris Declaration of 2015, several countries have undertaken a reform of citizenship education, frequently based on **knowledge** of Constitutional principles, Sustainable Development Goals, Human Rights, Digital Citizenship, etc. . The specific reference to the value of children conflicts as an opportunity to develop the competences of living together, to understand one another, to respect diversity of views and to search for acceptable settlements are seldom or never mentioned. And the point that citizenship education learning objectives are **not so much cognitive, but more frequently value-based and behavioural**, is not clear enough in most of the public directives; the importance of **practising dialogue and conflict settlement** should be fully explored in CE directives, also making explicit reference to approaches that may work better at different age.

**R2. Education Authorities, including School Managers and School Leaders, are encouraged to make schools a place in which conflicts are properly addressed in the respect of everybody's legitimate interests and points of view, maintaining a constructive organisational climate and developing effective conflict transformation and setting practices. Multiplying the dialogic and debate practice, offering mediation opportunities, paying attention to emerging mental health signals are concrete measures suggested to improve school climate and well-being.**

In several policy labs sessions a non-constructive organisational climate at school was reported, affecting schools as a whole organisation, teachers-manager, teacher-parents, teacher-students and teacher-teacher relationship. These tensions among all categories of people meeting in schools have an influence on the school climate at large and affect the capacity of teachers and learners to effectively develop the capacity to positively process existing conflicts that are part of every day's life. If a school is not perceived as a safe place where to experiment innovative approaches to conflict mediation, transformation and settlement, the result will be to suppress conflict in an authoritarian manner. Little learning, or the wrong learning may come from this development.

**R3. Countries and schools that experience a quick grow of social, intercultural and interreligious diversity in their territory and school population should particularly focus on the competences of conflict transformation and settlement, as a condition for successful teaching and learning process, and a whole-school-approach involving all members of the school community.**

Increasing cultural diversity in the European population is more than proportionally represented at school, and often generates conflicts among children; other forms of diversity also stimulate conflicts that require the whole staff of schools to be able to respect and understand diversity in all aspects of school life. The approach to conflict transformation as an opportunity to develop transversal competences requires the commitment of the whole institution and its immediate local context, and it may play a very positive role in the surrounding community, starting from learners' families, the local administration and the civil society. Peace Learning Ecosystems may be created by initiative of schools and involve many stakeholders. Mediation services, also organised as School Mediation Clubs, are suggested to develop intercultural dialogue. Frequently children are better than adults in settling their quarrels. The younger they are, the faster they find a "clarification" of their quarrels. The intervention by adults may teach children about revenge, impositions, commands etc. So, looking at children quarrelling without violence with methods might have a positive influence on adults' beliefs in a community. One consideration to make is that the children's agency, as the capacity to make choices, is enhanced by the practice of conflict facing and settling.

### **TRANSVERSAL RECOMMENDATIONS EMERGING FROM ALL THE COUNTRIES AND APPLICABLE TO DIFFERENT POLICY CHALLENGES RELATED TO ARGUING AT SCHOOL**

**R4. Higher Education Institutions are encouraged to include specific components in initial teachers' education curricula, suitable to prepare them to face children's conflicts and to help develop transversal competences addressing the capacity to interact with others in a respectful and constructive way. Continuing Professional Development of Teachers and other School Staff should also urgently include specific training modules, helping teachers to face unexpected situations and be proactive in the positive transformation conflicts among children/learners at school. The role of informal networks of teachers is also very important to provide examples and instruments to design, implement and evaluate innovative learning models;**

This general and relatively obvious recommendation emerged from all project countries, usually associated with R1 and R3. It points to the fact that the majority of teachers have not been specifically prepared to deal with children's conflicts and tend to impose a conclusion

as soon as possible, so neglecting the opportunity for learning that conflicts constitute and giving examples of authoritarian or partisan behaviours, that negatively condition the development of social and relational skills by children.

**R5. Educational authorities at all institutional levels are encouraged to support the use of research results about conflicts at school by a large number of schools and school staff, to support research dissemination and generalised awareness of documented good practice. The use of institutional platforms is encouraged to make good practices visible and to encourage sharing of instruments and results.**

This recommendation may generate innovative communication and dissemination initiatives, such as the collection, diffusion and rewarding of bottom-up good practice, the creation of ad hoc school networks, awareness campaigns through mass media and social media, theatre representations of classic problematic situations, and many other initiatives able to reach and to convince a broad audience of teachers, learners, families and local communities. This recommendation is responding to the starting point of the reflection in the policy-oriented phase of the project: **how to make conflict transformation at school a priority beyond the relatively small circle of “initiated researchers, teachers and school leaders”, to permeate the school community with the awareness of the unexploited potential of conflicts at school. In particular, research results encourage the efforts to develop transformation capacity among children as soon as possible, and to use well trained professionals for this purpose.**

## Conclusive remarks

The work that the project has developed to produce the policy recommendations is more the beginning of an awareness building and policy development work that, in the partners' views, has to be highly participatory. The path to make everybody understand that conflicts among children have a high potential as learning opportunities is still long and difficult, but what was learnt in the last project year is a solid basis on which to build. The partners are convinced that building children's capacity to address conflicts is a key mission of education since early childhood, and that families and local communities may play an important role if they all understand and learn to apply this principle.

Teachers and teachers' training institutions are key to transforming this understanding in innovative practice, policy makers are called to support awareness building, research, and investment in teachers training.

Bottom-up practice may play an important role, but policy support is definitely needed.

## Annexes: Policy Labs reports

### ITALY

Italy - 21st October 2023



Project coordinator Elena Passerini introduced the project, its ten partners and some of the methods they use to approach quarrelling in their respective contexts.

The aim here is to go beyond the national dimension, using the strengths of international partners, starting with the Croatians, who have implemented the Litigare Bene method a lot in six years. One of the reasons is that Croatian public schools have a school pedagogist alongside the headmaster. Ensuring transferability requires simplifying the approach, as the Litigare Bene method does. This works quickly with young children and it shows a change in the adults' perspective on the phenomenon of quarrels. One of the objectives of the project is to go beyond the level of pedagogical teacher training to try to exert an influence on the school system. The Litigare Bene method by Daniele Novara works and is transferable also through the activation within the Erasmus system, reaching even Slovenia, which is not even a partner country, with the experience of a small mountain school involved in an Erasmus network: this is not an elite choice of specialised teachers, but a concrete operational possibility that brings relief to teachers and learning to children, taking advantage of the possibilities opened up by EU projects.

The next level involves a broader and more complex system, going beyond mere pedagogy and school practices, to send clear and useful messages to decision makers in the countries involved, at local and national level. For this, this lab gathers, among others, teachers implementing the Litigare Bene method, school heads, the ED.UMA.NA network, union representatives and a city councillor from Milan.

All the methods of the project, including Peer Mediation and the Maltese method, help reduce teachers' stress from work. This is an important issue: teacher malaise is well known, there are a thousand reasons why teachers are unwell. But this element of stress could be relatively easy to remove. You stop blaming the children who argue, you activate those settings and rituals that work, you trigger the learning of more evolved ways of arguing, because children want to go and play and they do, they clear up and they don't hold grudges.

There are many wonderful experiences in this context, but they do not have the critical mass needed to transform the entire education system, so Policy Recommendations were included

in this project, with the idea that these recommendations come out of a participatory process. A Policy Lab is very different from a Policy Workshop where we talk about public policy, and it is also different from consultation. It implies an awareness that our representative democracy has health problems, and that it is therefore important for democracy to be more participatory. In particular: the minorities who have little voice in the expression of public policy, who are hardly ever consulted, for example migrants, because they are marginal, because they are busy with other issues or are not interested in politics and do not go to vote, these people if they are interested in various issues are invited and made to speak first in a forum where there is not only the policy maker, but also all the other actors who are involved in that specific area

The different phases of the policy lab were presented, following the diamond scheme: exploration, convergence, experimenting and recommendations. The rules and principles were explained, with particular attention to the Chatham House Rule – anything said during the lab is not linked to a specific participant – and the concepts of design thinking and systemic thinking. When the partners met in Bucharest, they defined a policy challenge and three or four lines of action on which they want to make proposals. The theme that was agreed upon is enhancing conflicts at school, considering conflicts no longer as a curse to be quelled as soon as possible, but as an opportunity for growth and the development of skills to live together. Participants were then divided into four groups.

### Group 1

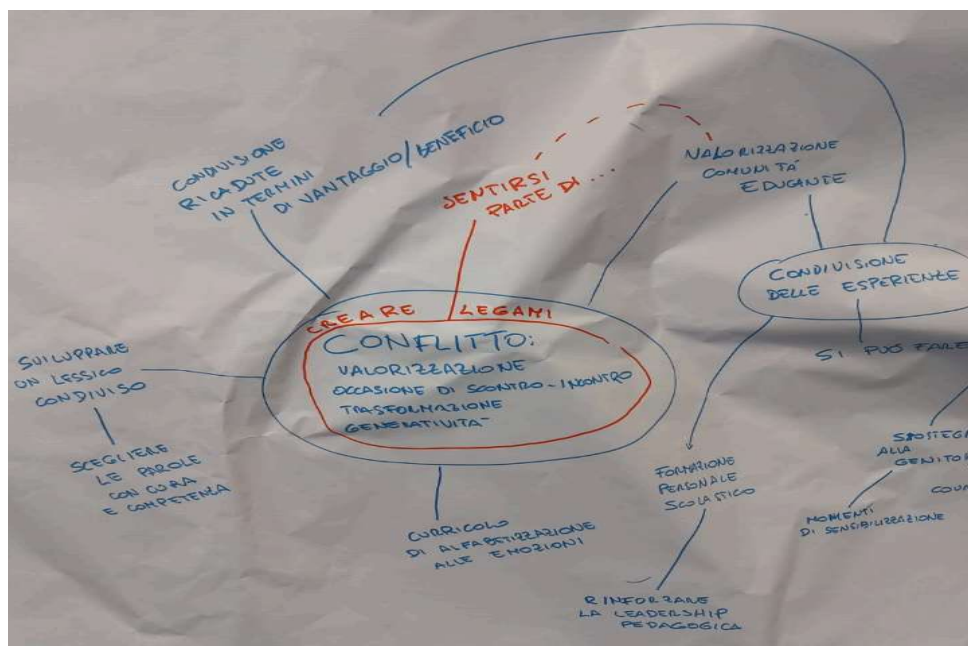
Observation: I should have the peace of mind necessary to reflect on the fact that conflict is a value from which to start, but if I arrive at school with my own personal situation of fatigue that depends on the organisation that the ministry has established, this tension pulls me out of those reflections because I have something more urgent to think about.





## Group 2

In our opinion, the problem is to give quarrel and conflict a new meaning. A new paradigm for quarrels removes their negative meaning: it is not something bad, the adult who has a conflict with his colleague is not bad or ugly but rather they are trying to express something on which the other does not agree. In the end, it is an expression of democracy that only begs to be recomposed.



We therefore need to work on individual and collective awareness and, through training, create a culture of violence prevention in the sense of providing tools to educating communities so that when there is a conflict or quarrel they adopt tools, rather than assign blame. Preventing it means nurturing the tools of dialogue and then processing them to transform it. We are not used to being in a condition of uncertainty, so the quarrel/conflict makes us uncomfortable and we would like to get out of it immediately. Instead, we have to get used to being in it, to understand it and to work out the reasons. Conflict is nothing more than an expression of different ideas and so everyone expresses their needs in a different way, both in terms of expression and content. This is where pedagogy comes in, education, training in the school environment is looked upon with a lot of distrust, there is always an attempt to reduce it, there is an attempt to compress everything into an insufficient training.

## Group 3

We focused on the issue of the civic education curriculum. As those who work in schools already know, for a couple of years now there has been a law to return to having a civic education curriculum in schools, this famous hour a week in all cycles of schools. It is a transversal teaching that all the teaching staff have to deal with, it has caused a bit of a stir, but it is a great opportunity. In our opinion, with respect to the issue of conflict appreciation, rethinking the civic education curriculum can be a very useful and effective tool. We liked the

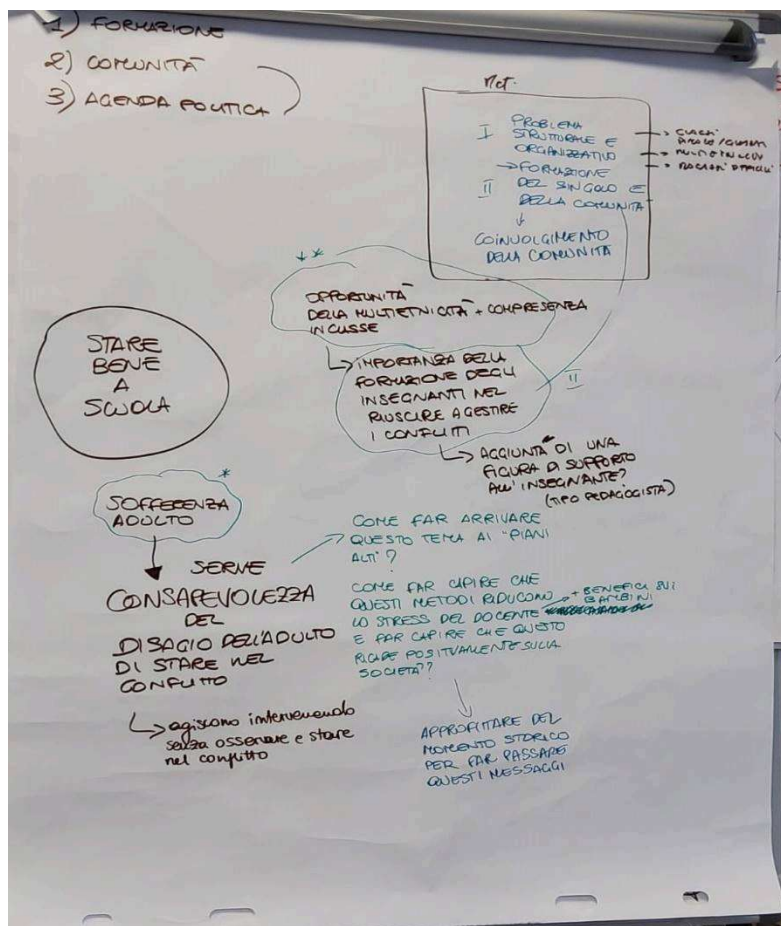
idea of working on this circularity, where children and young people are not the receivers of a teaching but an active part. So to have a reality that organises this initiative as a European project, a body competent on the subject and a public body sensitised of connection that can promote this mill, in which on the one hand there is the issue of the teaching staff and the educational school staff that must be somewhat empowered with respect to conducting civic education curriculum as a tool with respect to the valorisation of conflicts, and therefore by the working tools so that they can interpret the role and with respect to the subject so that boys and girls can be a vector to bring this model to the adult community (families, territorial sports agencies, oratory). If things come from the little ones they are interpreted in a less ideologised, politicised way, they are less prejudiced in accepting the message. Then there is circularity, and if everyone starts going in this direction, things then work better.



The dimension of children's agency, meaning that children are active subjects who can be stimulated since childhood to have their say, seems to be a strong idea that is unlikely to find any opposition. It is one of those ideas that are already somewhat permeating the general debate, in Italy but especially internationally. It should not be underestimated. From the growing awareness of the intentionality of being formed as citizens, boys and girls must begin to express themselves, they must know how and be able to do so, they are not objects to be formed or vases to be filled, but they are people to be turned on. Sometimes families are an obstacle to education for citizenship, to conflict transformation because families may have a culture of violence, of diversity, we need to work seriously on families. We must somehow manage to involve teachers in discussions about what is important about educating children. Parents understand that behaving as conscious and responsible citizens and gradually acquiring an ability to be in society is no less important than finding a job. Many times finding a job also depends on that: if one lacks transversal skills, especially social and interpersonal skills, one may well enter the world of work, but to stay there one needs to be able to cooperate, respect the opinions of others and be able to handle conflicts in a respectful manner.

## Group 4

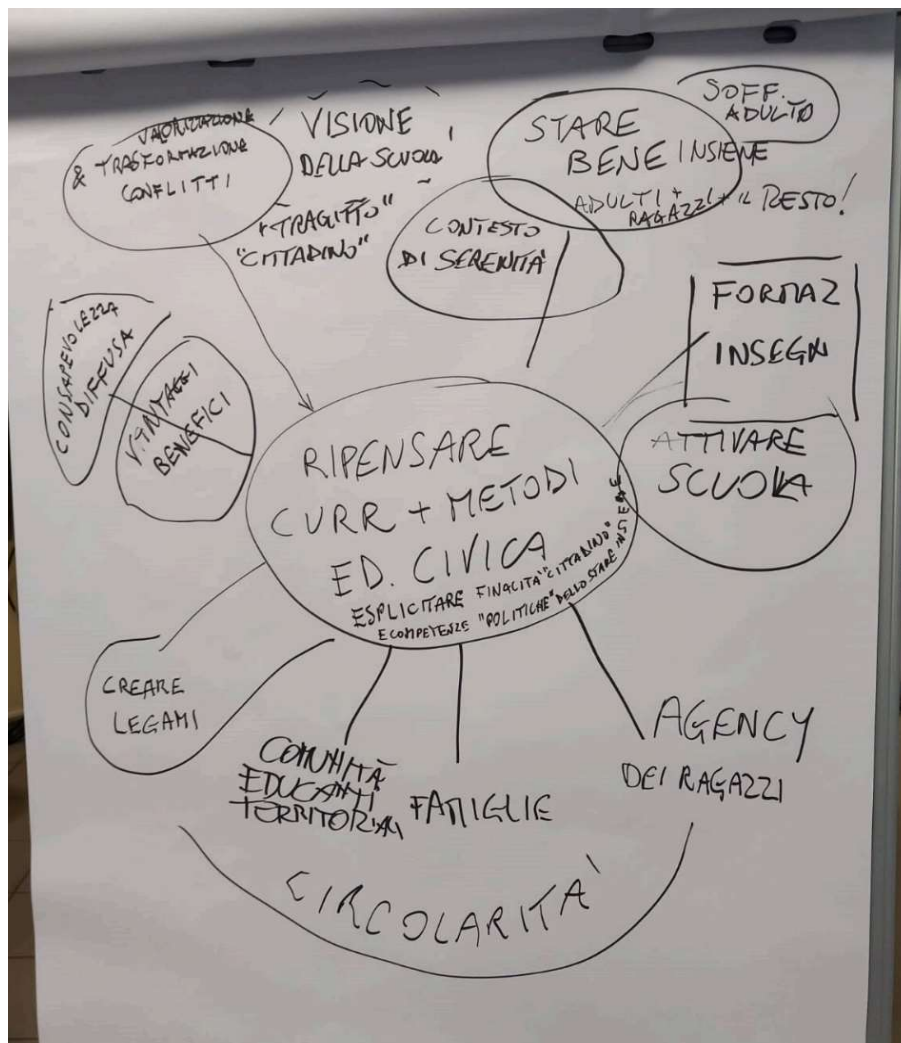
The theme of well-being at school brings us to the fact that school today is often a place of suffering and conflict. When I go to school, as a teacher, as a parent, as a child, I bring in conflicts, sometimes there are unresolved situations at home that then explode at school. If there is motivation, even in that environment I do my best, if there is not a context of serenity, of well-being, that also affects performance. If I am not well, I build my wall to protect myself.



Focusing on the difficulties that lead teachers to struggle in their role, there are structural and organisational conditions, the problems are manifold and solving them all is very difficult. We can introduce an element that brings confidence to teachers in their work: adopting appropriate methods to manage conflict in the classroom. The subject of pedagogical training is important. Pedagogy etymologically means guiding the child, taking him somewhere, we imagine that the child should be taken from the world of the family to the world of society. Leading a child to become a citizen means that he/she knows how to be in society by knowing how to count, by mastering the language but also by knowing how to be with other people even in difficulties.

The macro-diagnosis is quite clear: education of the citizen is the poorest part of our education; we train people to become competent workers, but not to become citizens. The socio-relational dimension is somewhat neglected. Following these discussions, four areas of work were identified to work on. The starting point as a policy challenge is to rethink the curricula and methods of civic education, to make the citizen's purpose and political competence of being together explicit.

## The policy challenge



We can divide the policy challenge into three parts, to work on in three groups:

- What can be done in the school that does not depend only on the ministry? In this area we need to highlight the benefits of pedagogical methods for arguing at school, think about the groups that can be talked to: teachers, students, parents and associations. For this it is necessary to create links, first there is a problem of raising awareness and then there is a problem of activating positive circuits on a local scale.

- Then another group can focus on how the school can become a pole in the community, looking at the children's agency, the territorial educational community, working with families for the conflict education project or rethinking civic education.
- Then there is this phase that focuses on the audience of teachers and other school staff on how to get along well together in the school context.

The aim is to shift discussions towards influencing the general context, educational and social policies, involve local actors and joint initiatives, even projects at European level that could be the successor of Litigare a Scuola. Civic education must remain the starting point for all groups.

Discussions in the groups brought some interesting reflections on the importance of acknowledging and drawing inspiration from existing practices on the territories, as well as on the importance of strengthening links between the school and local actors to address issues specific to a certain community. Starting from well-being, participants identified the school as an environment, as an agora, as a space for democratic participation. A constructive critique of the concept of curriculum was made, revealing a need to go beyond the idea of circumscribing this type of experience within a curriculum. We must overcome the rigidity of time, space and people involved in the implementation of a project. In order to have a vision of something feasible in the short term, it is necessary to start from an experimentation that cannot be an imposition from above, a research project that identifies on a voluntary basis a pedagogical team for the pre-school, a primary school team and a secondary school class council to share this pedagogical project, foreseeing also to initiate the cooperation council as a model. This then has a fallout effect on the whole board of teachers, creating a sort of contamination of positive effects to try to involve the wider school community. Furthermore, in the idea of a welcoming school, of being well at school, the school staff should also be involved. Communicating the results of the experimentation with parents and the wider community can lead to the dissemination of good practices to benefit the whole system. Participants then worked on another strand, that of the redefinition of physical spaces for both teachers, students and parents, both in terms of school furniture and for the construction of spaces for discussion, both for teachers and students: the school can ensure dialogue and confrontation. Moreover, through the involvement of the local community it is also important and necessary to identify outdoor spaces in which both teaching and extracurricular activities can take place in the short to medium term.

Italy - 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024



Elena Passerini introduced the second policy Lab, which took place in Milan on January 27th, 2024. Then, Claudio Dondi briefly summarised the Policy Lab methodology. He also briefly recapped what emerged during the Romanian workshop and during the first Policy Lab in Milan. Something particularly interesting that emerged during the first Policy Lab was the idea of re-introducing the issue of managing conflicts through Citizenship Education curriculum.

Then, the different proposed actions that emerged during the last Policy Lab were summarised:

- Promoting good practices
- Drama workshops
- Identifying new practices
- Improving preschool and elementary school
- Identifying a problem on the territory
- Feedback and materials
- Research-Action
- Redefining internal and external spaces

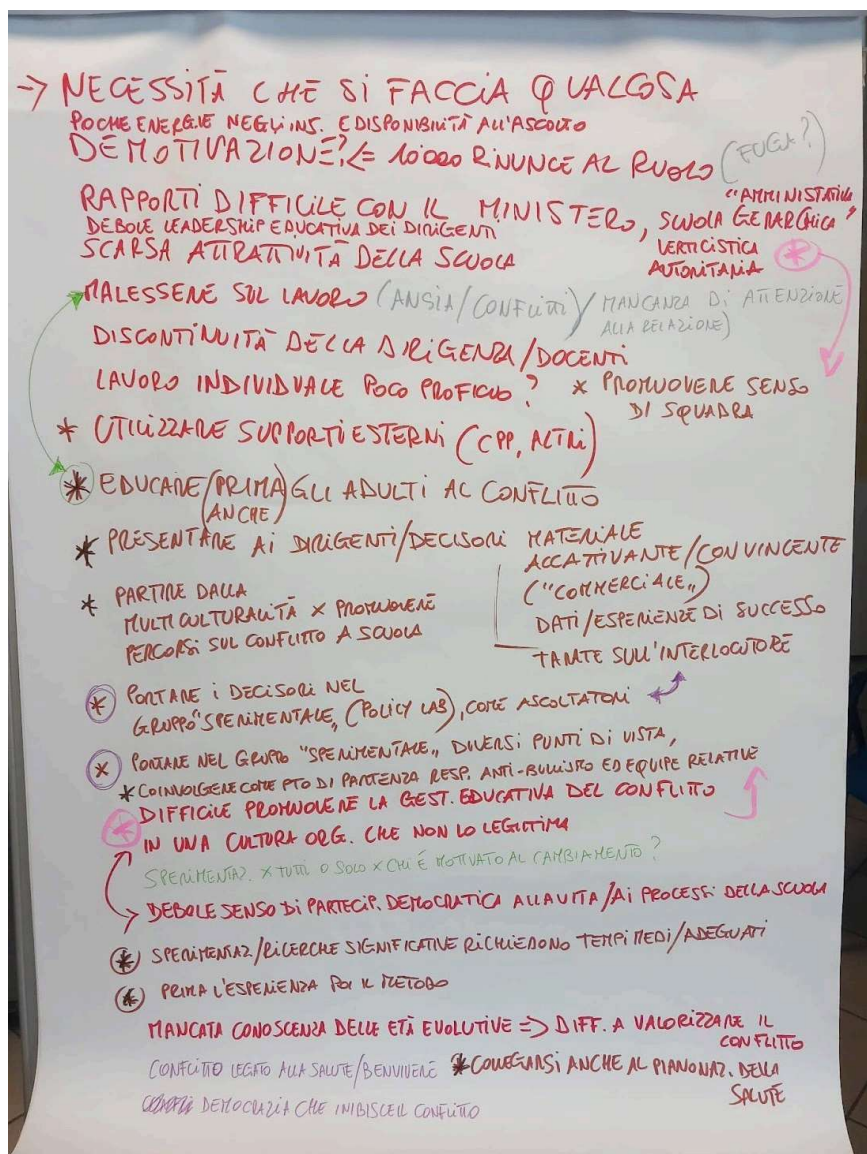
#### **Progress report on proposals - Feedback:**

- What I brought home: hope. The urgency is on adults and on how adults can deal with conflicts at school;
- Demotivation (linked to 10.000 renounces to the teachers' role in Italy 2023);
- Difficult relations with the Ministry;
- Increase of anxiety;
- Discontinuity of leadership;
- Individual work may not be the best
- Use of external support
- Idea of submitting questionnaires
- Laboratory for adults on conflicts management
- Offering exciting materials to headteachers
- Laboratory of Theatre
- To create a certain mentality between teachers
- Policy makers → a person to which certain data arrive → to put in condition of presenting his/her idea.
- Idea of a policy lab and have them in the group.

- Difficulty of promoting conflict management in a context where conflict is considered not legitimate.
- To activate participation
- Assessment: is it a power system or an improvement system?
- The use of "offences" should be stopped by the headteachers

The subject of conflict management must also be declined in terms of health: it activates a series of neurovegetative devices, closely connected to our primordial structure. What is done with the conflict management method is to deactivate the amygdala for a moment to make the higher structure work. It must necessarily be declined within the context of the school, both as citizenship and legality, and above all as an issue that impacts on health.

This method should be somewhat simplified and proposed as practice to the reference teachers for bullying, who are the only school personnel to be appointed by law, knowing that almost all conflict management is the responsibility of the school bullying and cyberbullying team. This approach should take advantage of the fact that in addition to training individual teachers, a dialogue should be opened with other levels of the system.



#### CONCERNS:

- teacher demotivation
- renunciation, flight
- little energy dictated by a bureaucratic system
- unwillingness to listen
- a ministry moving towards an increasingly administrative vocation
- weak pedagogical and educational leadership of managers
- malaise at work on the part of those in the system
- lack of attention to the relationship that calls for a fresh start from adults
- availability of the headmaster and the teachers
- individual work is not very fruitful
- limited readiness of individuals to bring stimuli into the system
  
- In this administrative, hierarchical and authoritarian school it is difficult to promote an educational culture of conflict, all of which generates a weak sense of democratic participation in the school and school processes
  
- lack of knowledge of the developmental stages (teachers, especially in secondary education, have not studied this but only their disciplines)
  
- difficulty in understanding that conflict can be a value and an opportunity (i.e. to distinguish between conflict and war, especially in Italian since the word conflict is used as a euphemism for war)

#### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

- taking advantage of external supports; the CPP can provide support activities, workshops in order also to present clear and convincing material capable of attracting attention from the other side, based on data and on the effective narration of positive experiences, customised rather than standardised
- not only producing top-down decision, but attracting downwards decision makers through the logic promoted by the horizontal policy lab, with the presence of a policymaker within such an experience of experimentation in terms of regulations and law suggestions
- starting with conflict education for children and youngsters, going towards education for adults
- starting from multiculturalism
- introducing this experimentation based on the theme of the national plan for health or bullying
- understanding where this strongly hierarchical normative system forces school operators to deal with it in the purpose groups
- starting from relevant topics to start a cultural dissection to arrive at experimentations



- experimentation and meaningful research often require adequate time, medium and long term focus

#### METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

- through the policy lab, bringing decision-makers to the level of others
- philosophical aspects to be communicated, to be cultivated when reflecting on democracy and, more generally, the political life of society
- investing in conflict positively as a resource
- conflict linked to the general theme of health and well living

#### **To summarise:**

- discussed in depth the system and its structural and conceptual difficulties
- identified some useful points to make sure we are heard on wider circuits, differentiation is also very useful,
- The first marketing principle is audience segmentation, hearing different things to be interested. Is there a way to speak to executives in their language, to stimulate them on certain issues that are already in their minds?
- Interculturalism and bullying: a strong theme with greater media coverage and less ideological load. This adds to general thoughts on civic education, an important discourse but the typical terrain where ideologies confront each other.
- To raise awareness: the global interest in wellbeing and well-living is ever increasing: pushing reasonings beyond only the economy or growth

#### POSSIBLE PATHS:

- Writing news and articles on the subject of conflict and well-being.
- Creating a network of schools united by conflict management.
- Using the network of schools linked to the Litigare Bene method which responds to 26 territorial trainers in Italy who go into schools for training and conferences.
- Making the approach less structured by starting from the schools that have already done the training, or that can become promoters within the school system. Giving the head of the lead school a small financial benefit would establish a different dialogue.
- Making it explicit that this is a quality product, which goes beyond life skills, the school includes life skills according to the WHO mandate, it is as if life skills were the generic drug and the plus is conflict management.
- In promotional terms, not only preventing problems, but promoting the capacity for a healthy-genesis so that one who is well can be better, acquiring the capacity to manage something that cannot be eliminated from this planet (conflicts).
- Before acting, one must have a defined plan, understand whether the method should be sold, presented to a politician etc. Without having defined what the product to promote is, one cannot act.

- The policy lab is a way to rejuvenate the consciousness of policy makers, by confronting a concrete problem, which allows them to understand things they don't understand at the party meeting.
- Marketing: we are immersed in the cultural soup of the market society, we take the good of this marketing concept but, let's not slavishly replicate it: we don't have to sell what we don't have, we have to learn to give value to what we do. We have to ask ourselves that at every step, every time I have to deal with a decision-maker, I have to be able to engage him on the basis of data, experiences, stories, values. We have to be convincing but not starting from what is not there.
- Investing in educational management can generate savings in resources at a social level (although sometimes social expenditure creates an inducement of work within municipalities)
- Possibility of interacting with the 'schools that build' network project (Piacenza),
- It is important to have a realistic view of the context, to know the interlocutor and to know the business logic.
- We must draw up recommendations that are not only the fruit of our discussion but also of groups of participants with respect to the public who can be made aware, open up 1 debate and raise the level of awareness.
- When we do not sell a product but have but sell an idea we talk about advocacy. Advocacy should be the result not the ingredient of a policy lab.
- Once we have established what can be done, then we need advocacy, if I in a policy lab only have advocates present a position. they don't negotiate it, they package it.

## CROATIA

29<sup>th</sup> February 2024



The event was held on February 29, 2024 in the Mance house in Vrbovsko. 36 participants took part: educators, professional associates and directors of preschool institutions from the area of Gorski Kotar.

In the first part of the event, the participants were introduced to the project *Arguing at school*, with a special focus on the results of the project. Tanja Jakovac and Viktorija Samsa presented to the participants 3 methods of nonviolent conflict management: Litigare bene, Peer Mediation and Friendship Cards. Also WSA is presented as an example of cooperation between Bambi Kindergarten and Ivan Goran Kovačić Vrbovsko Primary School.

After the introductory part, educators, professional associates and directors presented their experiences in working with children on emotions and conflict management. A few years earlier Vrbovsko school took part in the Erasmus project KA1 *Children can argue well*. Some participants of this Event, based on the knowledge gained at the dissemination events, formed Conflict corners and already started applying the Litigare bene method. They pointed out that in preschool institutions a lot of attention is paid to emotions as the key to the development of communication skills and conflict management skills. The problem arises when children move to schools where such themes are significantly reduced. That is why they were so interested in the example of cooperation between the Bambi kindergarten and Elementary School Vrbovsko, where a connection was made in education for managing conflicts between peers from the age of 3 to the age of 14.

The participants were divided into working groups, where they gave suggestions on how to systematically introduce education for nonviolent conflict management into the education system. They expressed their observations through posters.

**Research** that follows the introduction of new methods can be a significant argument for giving suggestions to educational policy makers for the introduction of conflict management in the education system. Gorski Kotar is a relatively small region and preschool and school institutions often cooperate. The participants suggested that the schools of this region

participate in the pilot project of introducing methods of nonviolent conflict management. It is important to monitor the implementation of the project through research into its effectiveness and feasibility, which could be the main argument for introduction into the educational system in Croatia and the EU.

The participants pointed out that systematic **education of educators, teachers and professional associates** is necessary in order to acquire competences in the field of nonviolent conflict management. In doing so, it is crucial to work on **changing teachers' beliefs**. First of all, teachers are not responsible for children's conflicts and should not be judges, but encourage the development of children's communication and emotional skills so that children are able to independently solve conflicts between peers in accordance with their age. It is necessary to conduct education for teachers of preschool education, primary and secondary schools. In doing so, it is important that 75-90% of teachers participate in education. Great value for this project is the previous project KA1, which created a Curriculum that can become a base for teacher education. The teachers also expressed their desire to organize the supervision and mentoring of experienced and expert teachers who would come to their institutions and provide them with professional support. Collecting practical examples of conflicts and their analysis is an important segment of education, but also **working on oneself** one's own beliefs and self-growth.

In the next phase of introducing the method, it is necessary to **educate children and parents**. It is extremely important that parents support and apply what children learn in kindergarten/school.

After the systematic introduction of nonviolent conflict management methods into institutions, they proposed working **meetings with AZOO** (Agency for Education), **MZO** (Ministry of Education) and cooperation with **universities** in order to introduce a course that would educate future teachers and educators in the field of nonviolent conflict management. All activities need to be promoted through **the media**.

To propose a new method, it is necessary to provide **documents**. Primarily, this refers to the previously mentioned **research** that would include the experiences of schools on the effectiveness of nonviolent conflict management methods. It is important **to analyse the evaluations and conclusions** of the held training and to create a collection of **practical examples**. Based on the above, it is important to make a **guideline for the National Curriculum**, which would include the goals and methods of nonviolent conflict management. The curriculum is the main document on the basis of which education is carried out in the Republic of Croatia.

8<sup>th</sup> May 2024

[Report by primary school of Ivan Goran Kovačić Vrbovsko]

The second event was held on May 9, organised by the Center for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights from Osijek. The primary school of Ivan Goran Kovačić Vrbovsko participated in the event with 1 teacher and 2 children. They presented the results of the research of pedagogue Tanja Jakovac. The aim of the research was to look at the attitude of students about conflicts.

### **Education program of the Faculty of Teacher Education and Philosophy in Rijeka**

On the basis of proposals that arose at events in Croatia, Tanja Jakovac created an education program for students of the University of Rijeka, which would include the contents of nonviolent conflict management. The letter was sent to the teachers' council on May 10, and at the session held on May 12, the council accepted the proposal. As part of the already existing course, a pilot project with 15 hours of education related to nonviolent conflict management will be held in the academic year 2024/2025. Below I am sending a letter addressed to the council:

*Over the years, in our school of Ivan Goran Kovačić Vrbovsko, we have implemented preventive programs for students called "Conflict is an opportunity".*

*Educators, teachers and preschool institutions are the first educational institutions that children and parents encounter. It is extremely important to start developing basic emotional and social skills in children through them as early as possible. Conflicts and arguments are a daily part of our lives that we cannot avoid, but we can teach children how to resolve them and use children's arguments as an opportunity for learning as a part of their personal growth and development. Instead of offering solutions, teachers direct children to a conversation through which children acquire the skills of recognizing and expressing emotions, active listening, expressing needs, negotiating and agreeing to resolve conflicts independently.*

*We educated 70 teachers from Gorski Kotar county and 30 kindergarten teachers from the city of Ogulin. As part of the Erasmus project, we educated teachers of 7 primary schools in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County. We transferred our experience to educators and teachers in the kindergarten and primary school in Pivka, Republic of Slovenia.*

*90% of our education participants declared that in their basic education they did not have the possibility of this kind of education that would help them work with children, and also give them greater competence in conflict management at school.*

*For this reason, in a preliminary conversation and with a sense of goodwill to show your students the same, we offer you a pilot project of approx. 15 hours in the*

*form that you determine (additional activities of one of the subjects, optional subject...).*

**Here is the program of the pilot project:**

1. **Introduction:** related to building relationships with other people; the power of empathy and the importance of showing and recognizing emotions in our students.
2. **Nonviolent communication** (power of verbal and non-verbal communication; I-you messages (snake language and giraffe language); recognition of active listening...)
3. **Conflict as an opportunity** – distinguishing conflict from violence and violent behaviour; how to deal with peer pressure...
4. **Methods of nonviolent conflict management**
  - **The Litigare Bene** method by Daniele Novara: for children from the age of two to nine (education for educators and classroom teachers, professional associates)
  - **Mediation and Peer mediation** – for students from the ninth year onwards (education for class and subject teachers and professional associates)
  - **Friendship card** – for all age groups of students and also for the future teachers
5. **Classroom management skills**
  - discipline, disciplining, restitution
  - what are the boundaries in upbringing and the importance of setting them
6. **How to talk to "demanding (difficult) parents"**
  - understand human behaviour
  - the importance of building relationships
  - Me as a professional
7. **Conclusion**
  - quiz with key terms
  - empathy and feelings
  - conflict, violence
  - nonviolent communication
  - methods of nonviolent conflict resolution

All of the above will be done exclusively through workshops based on examples from school practice.

The implementation of the activity would be carried out by two expert pedagogic associates with additional education in various psychotherapy fields, a professor of history and school librarian and a colleague from the Peacekeeping Studies Center of the Center for Peace and Nonviolence from Osijek, who is also a representative of the Forum of Peacebuilding Schools of the Republic of Croatia.

CROATIA

8<sup>th</sup> May 2024



The Policy Lab in Osijek was held by the Centre for Peace during the First Student Review in Croatia on May 8, 2024. The Student Review included 15 Croatian primary and high schools which are members of the Peacebuilding School Forum as part of the Peacebuilding School project that the CPO has implemented since 2015. Primary and high school students participated in workshops on topics such as nonviolent communication and nonviolent conflict resolution under the "Conflict as Opportunity - Nonviolent Conflict Transformation" program. Teachers of project partner - Ivan Goran Kovačić Vrbovsko Primary School participated in the event as well.

### **Contents of the Policy Lab**

Firstly, the participants were introduced to the Arguing at School project, its goals and current results. They were then presented with the Toolkit as they were introduced with the three methods of the project starting with the Litigare bene by Daniele Novara. We went through the analysis of [the Conflict diary](#) which they found innovative and interesting. We then analyzed the ritual tool used for make the method working: the Conflict Corner. Since the Ivan Goran Kovačić primary school participated, they were one of the ones who are familiar with this method. They were shown examples of how a Corner may look like and what it entails. They gave it the name: Peaceful corner. The teachers found this method great for younger generations, but questioned whether it would work with older students and brought up the question of physical violence in classrooms. Then we covered Friendship cards, which they were very interested in, and they were given the cards to look through in more detail. They asked a lot of questions regarding Friendship cards, where they can be found and how they're used with students in the school context. We also covered Peer mediation which they thought was intriguing and they wanted to know more about the method. We covered general principles and rules of Peer mediation and they were introduced to the videos done by Croatian students that can be found on the Interactive map of the project.

The presentation contained Qr codes for the Interactive map of the project; the Toolkit and the Curriculum for the Development of Emotions and Communication Skills in Children.

## Evaluation

At the end of the presentation, teachers were given questionnaires with six questions which were focused on their knowledge of the methods, their will to implement the methods into their classrooms (if they already aren't), as well as their thoughts for policy makers regarding this issue.

The questions were written in Croatian, but they translate to:

1. Have you ever heard of the methods: Litigare bene (Peaceful corner, Conflict diary), Friendship cards, and Peer mediation?
2. Do you think that there should be more informal education on this topic?
3. Are you open to applying or introducing nonviolent conflict resolution methods in your class?
4. In your opinion, what are the possible difficulties regarding the implementation of these methods in the educational system?
5. What would you say to policy makers regarding the implementation of nonviolent communication and nonviolent conflict resolution in the education system?
6. How much would it mean to you to introduce a program of nonviolent conflict resolution methods into the educational process (if they have not already been implemented)?

The teachers were very engaged during the presentation and had a lot of questions. We had a discussion about the role of the teacher in methods such as Litigare bene and Peer mediation as the teachers pointed out how sometimes it is necessary for them to intervene in student conflict and stop it before it escalates.

After the event, they asked me to send them my presentation so that they have an opportunity to further examine it. They were also given other materials, such as the Toolkit; the Curriculum for the Development of Emotions and Communication Skills in Children, the link to the Friendship cards website, and [the Interactive map of the project](#). Some of the teachers thanked us again via e-mail for our innovative insight into newer methods of working with children in a school environment.

The number of participants was lower than anticipated because of a last minute change in the program of the Student Review which divided both students and teachers into separate sessions.

## The results

Out of 22 participants, 11 teachers filled out the aforementioned questionnaire.

When it comes to the question regarding the knowledge of these methods, 5 participants said that they are familiar with them, 4 participants said that they are only familiar with peer mediation, while 1 participant said that they are aware that these methods exist and are used, but not precisely how and what they are, and another person said that they aren't



familiar with Litigare bene by Daniele Novara, but know of peer mediation and Friendship cards.

Regarding the second question of whether there should be more informal education on this topic, 9 participants responded positively saying that it is very much needed, while 1 participant pointed out how they approve of the methods if they are proven efficient through proper evaluation, and 1 person who said that not only is there a need for informal education, but formal as well.

On the topic of teachers being open to the implementation of these methods in their classrooms, 10 of them answered yes, while 1 teacher answered how it depends on the method.

Regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> question, 1 teacher responded how the possible difficulties regarding implementation could be that the Conflict diary is a huge responsibility and a load of work for already overworked teachers, 1 person said that it would be difficult to get the Ministry of Education to implement it on a national level. Similarly, 1 teacher answered how the system is too sluggish, and there is a need for further education in case of implementation, 5 participants didn't specify any difficulties. Furthermore, 1 participant pointed out how the educational programs are already jam-packed, and these methods require time and space, while another person said that it could prove to be inflexible to implement such methods and how they require lobbying. Another participant stated how there is a lack of time for an educational impact of teachers all with the already present pressure to conduct the existing part of the educational curriculum.

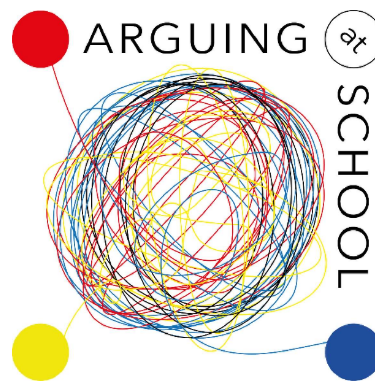
On the question of what they would say to policy makers on the case of the implementation of nonviolent communication methods into schools, 1 participant stated how it should be a college course, while 3 teachers stated that the methods should be urgently implemented. One teacher stated how anything regarding this topic should be supported, and another participant pointed out the need for funds to promote these methods, while 2 teachers stated that it needs to be legally regulated and implemented in the curriculum with mandatory further education for teachers. One teacher stated how there should be provided support for the professional associates who are the first ones to implement such programs, while another person similarly answered how there should be more engagement from associates of different backgrounds as well as teachers in the process of designing the programs. Lastly, 1 participant didn't specify what they would say to the policy makers.

Regarding the last part of the questionnaire which touches on the teachers' need for the implementation of these methods, 6 teachers stated that it is very much welcomed and needed, while another stated how it is urgent and should be implemented immediately. One teacher stated how the education on these methods should be a part of the college education, while another participant also pointed out the necessity to educate teachers, and 2 participants didn't answer the question.



## MALTA

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2024



The policy lab was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2024. A total of 16 participants attended this event. Participants included Teachers, Educational Officers, Heads of Schools, Social Workers and students' representatives.

The proceedings were opened by Ms. Claudine Muscat, Head of School. After a short introduction she asked each of the participants to introduce themselves, including their area of expertise. The participants were then asked to highlight the causes of conflict and how to deal and resolve such conflict. Once this was completed, Ms. Muscat summarised the salient features of the project "Arguing at School". She also informed the participants of the progress achieved so far.

The three conflict resolution methods were then explained in greater detail. The Friendship Card method was explained by Ms. Stephanie Farrugia and Ms. Maxine Gauci. This explanation was accompanied by a Power Point Presentation to facilitate assimilation by the participants. Mr Chris Mizzi and Ms Amanda Mizzi then presented the Litigare Bene method, also showing photos of how the method is used in school. Finally Mr Chis Borg presented the 3<sup>rd</sup> method of Peer Mediation.

After the presentation the participants were given the opportunity to try the methods in a hands-on session.

### **Evaluation**

Participants were then asked to split into smaller groups, and asked to prepare action plans on how resolving conflict in schools could be implemented as a whole school approach. The participants were asked to keep in mind the 4 stakeholders, namely: Policy developers, parents and the community, students, and educators. Discussions also led to how conflict resolving could be implemented at school curricular level.

### **Results**

The results of the workshop are in the following action plans.

**Group 1**

<b>School Development Action Plan 2024-2025</b>				
<b>KEY AREA: School Ethos</b>				
<b>Priority Development Target</b>	Resolving conflict in school			<b>Link to national policies</b>
<b>Success Criterion/Criteria</b>	•			Maltese National Youth Policy Managing Behaviour in Schools Respect for All Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Policy
<b>Implementation: (Whole School Approach)</b>				
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Steps to be taken</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Coordinator/s</b>	<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>
Students should be encouraged to create peer groups that practice the three methods to help create a democratic environment in schools.	Provision of support and formation. Inclusion in SSCP and recognition in the primary classes.	Few months	Educators trained in these methods. Students to students dynamics	Evidence of more serene schools
3 stakeholders – educators, parents & students.	Increased awareness amongst these 3 since friendship cards could serve as a basis for conflict resolution. School policies should incorporate the 3 methodologies in school policies. Activities for parents.	Few months	Availability of the 3 methods to all 3 stakeholders	Better communication between the 3 stakeholders
Conflict resolution should be a cross-curricular theme	Closer collaboration at the policy-making level including at the EO level.	Few months	EOs and SMT	Through resources that adopt these methodologies

## Group 2

<b>School Development Action Plan 2024-2025</b>				
<b>KEY AREA: School Ethos</b>				
<b>Priority Development Target</b>	Resolving conflict in school			<b>Link to national policies</b>
<b>Success Criterion/Criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To make the students aware of their emotions, be able to express themselves and autonomous.</li> <li>To enhance the wellbeing of all stakeholders.</li> </ul>			Maltese National Youth Policy Managing Behaviour in Schools Respect for All Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Policy
<b>Implementation: (Whole School Approach)</b>				
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Steps to be taken</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Coordinator/s</b>	<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>
<b>2. Cope session and external training regarding emotional literacy for educators</b>	Find speakers to deliver talks about emotional literacy	March	Ms Alexandra Ms Graziella	
<b>1. School environment conducive to strategies that promote friendship</b>	Friendship/conflict corner Use of friendship cards Nurture classes (better equipped) Special assembly to promote awareness.	April 4 <sup>th</sup> March	Ms Alexandra Ms Graziella	
<b>3. Activities for parents</b>	Parents are made aware of services being offered by the school e.g. social workers etc. Parent's open day	26 <sup>th</sup> March 24 <sup>th</sup> April	Ms Alexandra Ms Graziella	

Group 3

School Development Action Plan 2024-2025				
KEY AREA: School Ethos				
<b>Priority Development Target</b>	Educating students how to deal with conflicts constructively			<b>Link to national policies</b>
<b>Success Criterion/Criteria</b>	<p>By the end of the scholastic year students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify different types of conflicts and their root causes.</li> <li>• Recognize and manage their own emotions and reactions during conflict situations.</li> <li>• Learn how to use effective communication techniques, such as "I" statements and assertive language, to express their own needs and concerns without escalating the conflict.</li> <li>• Develop empathic skills so that they are able to understand other's emotions.</li> <li>• Learn how to utilize problem-solving and negotiation strategies to find mutually acceptable solutions to conflicts.</li> <li>• Contribute to a culture of collaboration, respect, and understanding within the school community and other communities outside the school.</li> </ul>			Maltese National Youth Policy Managing Behaviour in Schools Respect for All Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Policy
<b>Implementation: (Whole School Approach)</b>				
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Steps to be taken</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Coordinator/s</b>	<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>
1. <b>**Policy Development**</b> :	<b>Develop clear guidelines for managing conflicts within the school community. These policies should outline expectations for behavior, addressing conflict in a fair and consistent manner and the introduction of various conflict resolution techniques.</b>	1 year	All stakeholders (SLT teachers, Students and parents)	SLT

2. Professional Development	Provide training and professional development opportunities for teachers and staff to enhance their own conflict resolution skills and learn strategies for supporting students in managing conflicts.	1yr	SLT	SLT
3. Curriculum Integration	Integrate conflict resolution education into the school curriculum at from an early age. Teachers would incorporate conflict resolution themes into existing subjects such as social studies, languages, PSCD, religion/ethics and physical education.	1yr	Eos, teachers, HODs,	SLT
4. Student Leadership Programs	Empower students to take an active role in promoting constructive conflict resolution behaviour within the school community. Establish peer mediation programs or student-led conflict resolution teams trained to facilitate dialogue, mediation sessions, and restorative circles among their peers. Introduce the concept of conflict/friendship spaces and benches.	1yr	Teachers trained in various conflict resolution techniques	SLT
5. Parent and Community Involvement	Engage parents and community members in supporting conflict resolution efforts at school. Provide resources and workshops for parents on how to foster conflict resolution skills at home and encourage community partnerships to offer additional support and resources.	1yr	Teachers trained in various conflict resolution techniques And external entities like Relationships are forever foundation.	SLT

## Group 4

### School Development Action Plan 2024-2025

#### KEY AREA: School Ethos

Priority Development Target	Resolving conflict in school				Link to national policies
Success Criterion/Criteria					Maltese National Youth Policy Managing Behaviour in Schools Respect for All Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Policy
Implementation: (Whole School Approach)					
Actions	Steps to be taken	Timescale	Coordinator/s	Monitoring and evaluation	
Setup processes of conflict resolution methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check what is already in place</li> <li>Check / identify gaps</li> <li>Devise policy framework</li> <li>Implement and evaluate</li> </ul>	1 term	SLT + Educators	At end of term	
Policy sharing on conflict resolution and emotional literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disseminate policy framework + ask for feedback</li> <li>Receive feedback and evaluate+review</li> <li>Disseminate as a whole school community</li> </ul> <p>At student level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use PSCD lessons to learn about emotional literacy</li> <li>Year group meetings on emotional literacy</li> <li>Assistance of CLWs with meetings and terminology</li> <li>Parent meetings about the school approach to conflict resolution</li> <li>In-school and afterschool meetings with peers in the same college</li> </ul>	1 term	SLT + Educators	At end of term	



## Pilot Project and Second event 25<sup>th</sup> May 2024

The validity of the action plans were tested in a school for three months. The school focused on maximising the implementation of the action plans. Once the three months expired, the group evaluated and reviewed each of the three conflict resolution methods.

### Conclusion

#### The following targets were achieved:

- Introduction of the three methods in schools
- Dissemination and increased awareness of conflict resolution during special assemblies
- Special assemblies to promote awareness
- Parents Open Day to involve community
- Using PSCD (personal social and career development) lessons to learn about emotional literacy
- External training for educators regarding emotional literacy
- Creating conflict corners/zones
- More intensive collaboration at the policy-making level through networking with Education Officers.

#### Works-in-progress :

- A wider ownership at the school community level of the three conflict resolution methods through the engagement of the Community Liaison Workers
- The development of conflict resolution methods at the Curricular level
- Nurture classes in schools.



**Policy Lab Report: "The Conflict in School - From Concept to Valorisation"**

**Introduction**

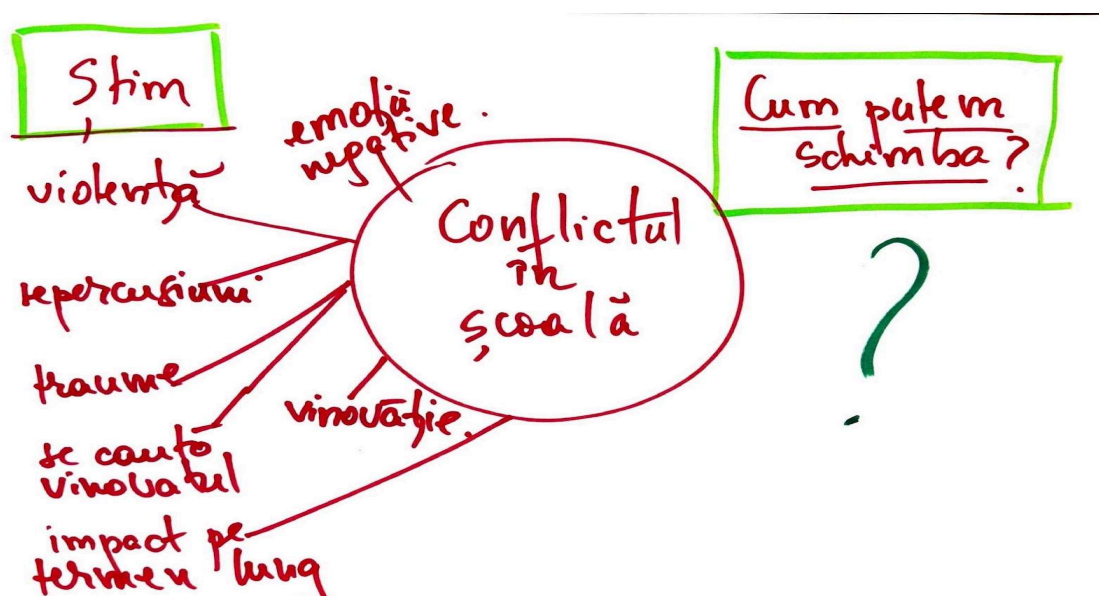
The Policy Lab titled "The Conflict in School - From Concept to Valorization" aimed to explore the multifaceted nature of conflicts in school settings and develop actionable strategies for addressing and valorizing these conflicts to create a positive and inclusive educational environment. The lab brought together educational two experts from the ministry of education, four psychopedagogical counselors, four teachers, three principals and seven students to discuss the root causes of conflicts, their impact on the school community and potential solutions.

**Morning Session - Key Outcomes**

Understanding the concept of conflict in schools

Types of conflicts: participants identified various types of conflicts prevalent in schools, including interpersonal conflicts among students, teacher-student conflicts and systemic conflicts arising from institutional policies and cultural differences.

Root causes: key causes of conflicts were identified, such as bullying, negative emotions,



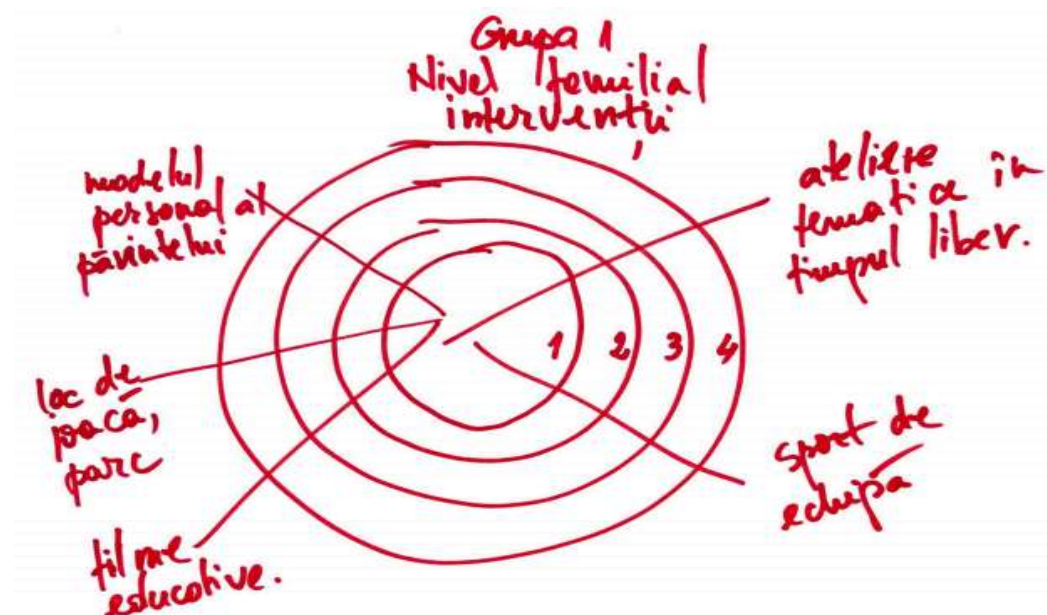
trauma, cultural and socio-economic disparities, academic pressure and communication gaps between students and teachers.

### 1. Strategies for Conflict Resolution at the Family Level – GROUP 1

Encouraging open and honest communication within the family to discuss school conflicts without judgment.

Teaching family members to empathize with the student's experiences and provide emotional support.

Conflict resolution skills: providing families with tools and techniques for resolving conflicts constructively, such as active listening, negotiation and compromise.



#### GROUP 1

"Encourage open communication within the family."

- "Organize workshops on conflict resolution and emotional intelligence."

"Promote empathy and emotional support for students."

- "Strengthen school-family partnerships."

"Equip families with conflict resolution tools (active listening, negotiation, etc.)."

- "Provide resources to help families navigate school conflicts."

#### Valorization of conflicts within families

Using school conflicts as opportunities for family discussions about important values, such as respect, empathy, and resilience. Parents can model positive conflict resolution behaviors,

setting an example for children. Viewing conflict resolution as a collaborative effort that can strengthen family bonds and foster a supportive home environment.

### Actionable recommendations

Schools should organize workshops for families focused on conflict resolution skills and emotional intelligence. Strengthening partnerships between schools and families to ensure a unified approach to handling conflicts. Providing support and resources for families to navigate school-related conflicts effectively.

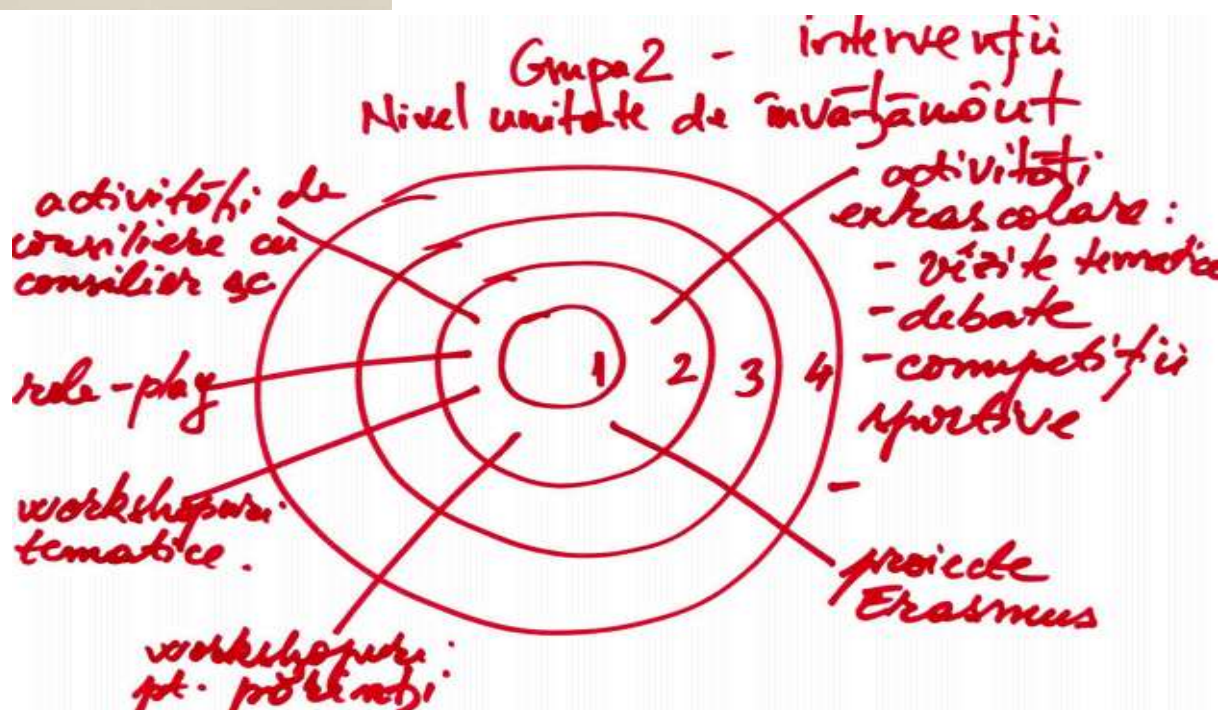
## 2. Impact of conflicts on the school community – GROUP 2

Student well-being: conflicts negatively impact students' mental health, leading to anxiety, depression, and a decrease in academic performance.



School climate: persistent conflicts create a hostile school climate, affecting overall morale and productivity.

Teacher burnout: teachers often experience burnout due to unresolved conflicts, leading to high turnover rates and a lack of continuity in the educational process.



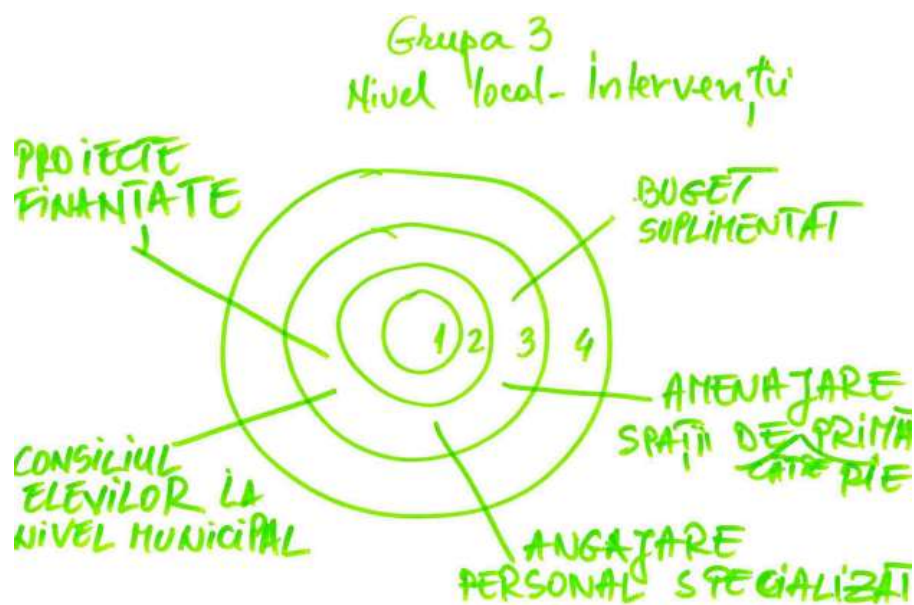
### GROUP 2

"Student Well-being: increased anxiety, depression, and decreased academic performance."

"School Climate: hostility affects morale and productivity."

"Teacher Burnout: high turnover due to unresolved conflicts."

### 3. Local policy development - GROUP 3



- schools should develop clear policies that address conflict resolution and valorization, ensuring they are integrated into the curriculum and daily practices.
- involving all stakeholders, including parents in conflict resolution initiatives to ensure a holistic approach.
- regularly assessing the effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies and making necessary adjustments to improve outcomes.

#### GROUP 3

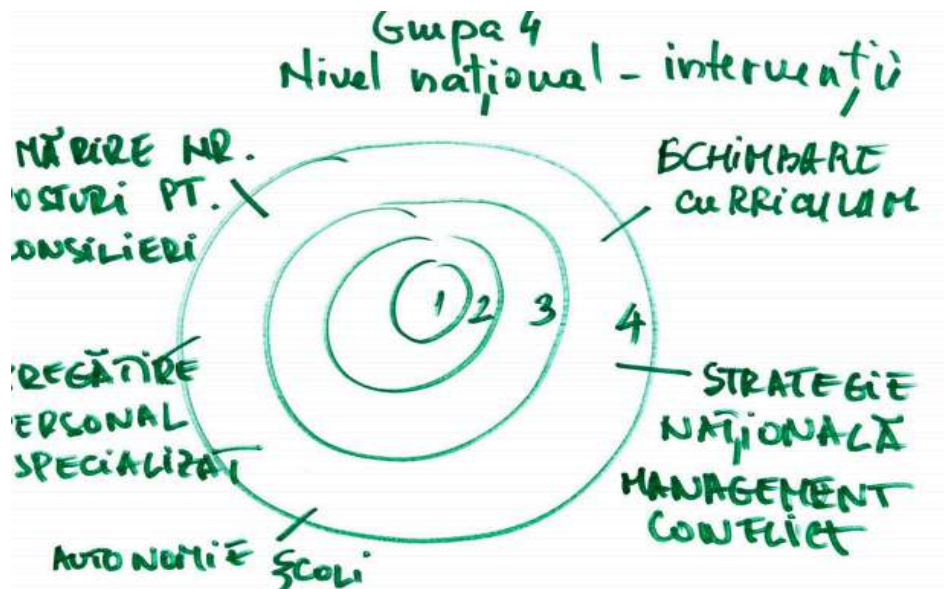
Educational opportunities: viewing conflicts as educational opportunities that can teach students valuable life skills such as negotiation, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

Student empowerment: encouraging student involvement in conflict resolution processes to empower them and promote a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Collaborative culture: fostering a collaborative school culture where conflicts are addressed openly and constructively, leading to a more cohesive and supportive community.

## Strategies for Conflict Resolution

**4. Conflict resolution programs – GROUP 4** - implementing structured conflict resolution programs that include mediation and peer counseling.



Training and development: providing teachers and students with training in communication skills, empathy, and emotional intelligence to handle conflicts effectively.

Inclusive policies: developing and enforcing policies that promote inclusivity, respect and understanding among the school community.

### **GROUP 4**

"Implement conflict resolution programs with mediation and peer counseling as a national strategy."

"Training for teachers and students in communication, empathy, and emotional intelligence."

"Develop inclusive policies to promote respect and understanding."

### **Conclusion**

The Policy Lab highlighted the importance of addressing conflicts in schools proactively and constructively. By understanding the root causes and impacts of conflicts and implementing strategic resolutions and valorization methods, schools can transform conflicts into opportunities for growth and learning. The collaborative efforts of educators, policymakers and students are crucial in creating a positive and inclusive educational environment.