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AGAINST SCHOOL AGGRESSION PARTNERSHIP

HANDBOOK OF IMPLEMENTATION HUNGARIAN CASE STUDIES



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INTRODUCTION

Conflicts are part of human interactions. However, the way we deal with them is key. The topic of violence and aggression in the school environment has been highly debated in recent years and has become a serious problem faced by many schools around the world. Aggression and bullying happen at all levels of education, from primary to tertiary, and throughout the years it has become a pervasive problem. School aggression and bullying cause significant deleterious effects on the physical, mental, and social well-being of youth, which place many children at risk of becoming juvenile offenders and subsequently end up in juvenile detention centres. Aggressive behaviour and bullying accompany the daily life of a large percentage of school children, leaving lasting consequences on their future development and social life.

Challenging social situations are learning opportunities and if they are treated with a restorative instead of punitive approach, they reinforce relationships within a community and can prevent the escalation towards aggression. Safe and positive environment is where learning can occur, enhancing social and emotional skills, preventing and treating aggression is key in schools.

ASAP - Against School Aggression Partnership is a project implemented and led by Partners Hungary Foundation, between October 2015 and August 2018, in collaboration with SOS Malta, Partners Bulgaria Foundation and Szolnoki Szolgáltatási Szakképzési Centrum (Szolnok Centre of Counselling Training) and funded by the Erasmus Programme of the European Union.

ASAP aims to create a safe, caring, responsible school environment in order to reduce school aggression and bullying, while establishing and strengthening the cooperation between different institutions that deal with the student community. A model program has been developed based on existing and approved methods, taking the form of a whole school approach. The program offers an accessible and easy to adopt tool, for the reduction of school violence and bullying, which was tested and further developed in 9 secondary schools, one from each participant country: Hungary, Bulgaria and Malta.

The project **promotes and provides alternative conflict resolution, management procedures and restorative methods** tailored for the school environment.

These practices help, on one hand, prevent conflicts and minimise the occurrence of aggression, bullying and other behaviours, as risk factors in terms of a potential criminal career, and on the other hand come as a support tool for teachers and students when it comes to tackling such cases. One of the reasons why the restorative approach is more successful on the long run is because all stakeholders participate in the processes that affect them – we can only make the school environment better if we share the responsibility, plan the activities together and carry them through consequently.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

In order to get familiar with our conceptual framework and the process-oriented, holistic approach, we highly recommend that you read our Model Program (separate booklet) first.

This handbook is a practical account of how the program was implemented in nine different school environments. This is not a ready-made recipe but it can give guidance on the possible use of elements. The elements can be used separately but they work best as part of the process. Our handbook is designed for those who want to implement a similar program in their schools: principals, teachers and other school-related professionals.

Since this handbook is a collection of case studies on how the model program was carried out in nine different schools, we try to facilitate reading it by clearly divided sections and icons signalling the areas of intervention.

Legend

Information for various audiences



Useful information for principals



Useful information for teachers



Useful information for school-related professionals
(school psychologists, councellors, social workers, etc.)



Useful information for parents

Legend for areas of intervention



Raising awareness



Social and emotional learning



Individual case management



Organisational development



Monitoring and evaluation

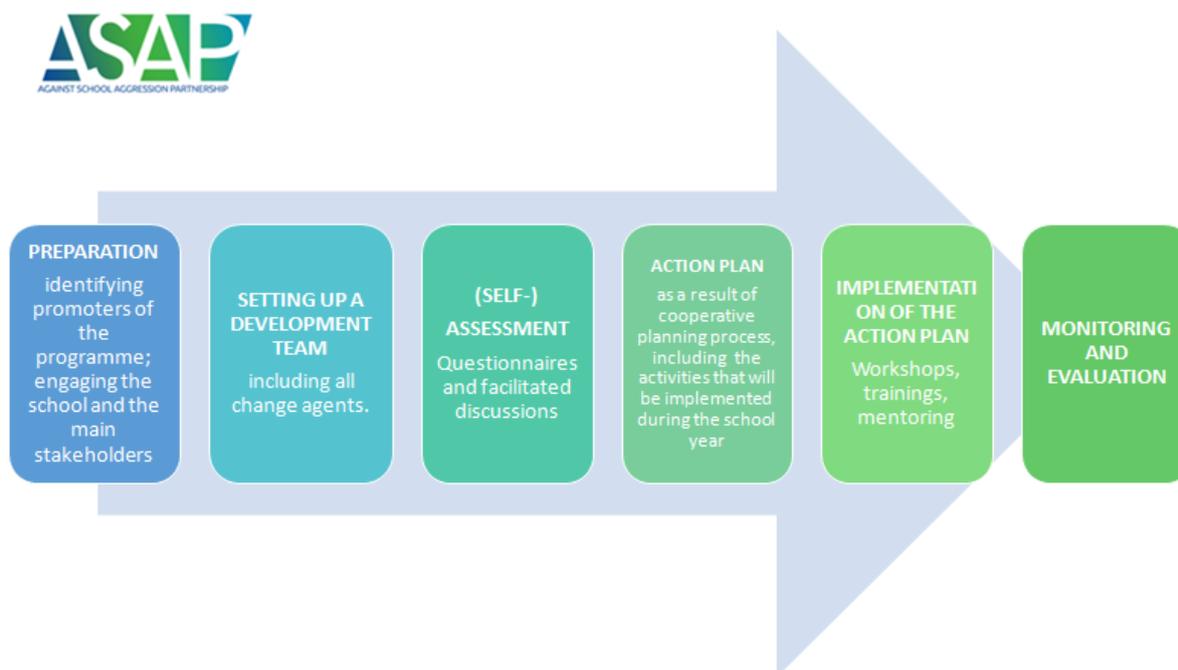
The case studies will guide you through the steps of the Model Program as it was done in the schools where the program was tested, namely:

- Szolnoki Szakképzési Centrum Vásárhelyi (Hungary)
- Szolnoki Szakképzési Centrum Ruhaihari (Hungary)
- Szolnoki Szakképzési Centrum Kereskedelmi (Hungary)
- Stefan Karadza Comprehensive School (Bulgaria)
- Cospicua Middle School Form 1s, St. Margaret College (Malta)
- Naxxar Middle School Form 1s, Maria Regina College (Malta)
- Santa Lucia Secondary Form 3s, St. Thomas More College (Malta)
- Pembroke Secondary Form 3s, St Claire College (Malta)

The Maltese and Bulgarian case studies are accessible in English at <https://www.partnershungary.hu/erasmus/>.



The process of „Against School Aggression Partnership” Model Program



The process of „Against School Aggression Partnership” Model program

The questions that will be covered in each of the six chapters are the following:

- ✓ What was the starting point?
- ✓ What was the method used?
- ✓ What were our expectations?
- ✓ What were the challenges we faced and how did we tackle them?
- ✓ How far did we get? What was the outcome?
- ✓ Recommendations, lessons learned.

CHAPTER ONE - PREPARATION

In this chapter you will read about how in each of the participating three countries the promoters of the program, the schools and the main stakeholders were identified.

WHAT WAS THE STARTING POINT?

In Hungary, Partners Hungary Foundation (PHF) already had experience in using mediation in the school environment. Within the National Crime Prevention Strategy, PHF trained more than 200 professionals (teachers, principals, school psychologists, social workers) and students and, being practicing professionals themselves, PHF representatives participate as mediators in resolving school conflicts peacefully. PHF had good relations with Szolnok municipality due to a mediation training held for municipality staff. One of the most committed trained mediators recommended us a school with a principal who was open for new approaches, alternative ways and was engaged in the topic of school aggression.

Since the school was found at a very early stage of the project, the coordinator (PHF) decided to include the school in the proposal as a partner, to promote involvement and empowerment. After the project contract was signed in October 2015, ambitious and open-minded teachers were delegated to the first transnational meeting, where they could find out more about the program and members of the international partnership. From April 2016, meetings were summoned in the Szolnok school for the teaching and other professional staff, open to all those interested.



These meetings were facilitated discussions where PHF tried:

- **to map what forms of aggression are present and how frequent they are**
- **to identify the teachers' needs and possibilities for handling the incidents**

As a preparation for the National Report on School Aggression, we started to gather the existing good practices and invited the school professionals to participate. The national report on the state of the Maltese, Bulgarian and Hungarian school aggression is accessible online: <https://www.partnershungary.hu/erasmus/>.

Because it is an international project, we had the possibility to organize international meetings, where the school professionals from Malta, Bulgaria and Hungary could exchange experiences on their good practices and could learn new methods from each other. Travelling is not the only way to implement a program successfully. It means a lot in itself if we can provide forums for the dialogue among the school professionals within the school. Often, it took a long time and energy to organize discussions and workshops for the teachers, but it was always rewarding, because the participants told us how much it meant for them to know they are not alone with their problems.



In September 2016, at the beginning of the school year, PHF representatives gave a presentation on the project in front of the whole school staff at the year-opening staff meeting, with the support of the principal. We tried to make it as visual and interactive as possible by showing a video and asking about personal experience to engage the audience. Even though we had limited time, it was an important event, as the principal said the program would have a crucial role in the life of the school.

METHODS USED



- **Facilitated bi-weekly discussions** with the school representatives. Our intended message with these regular meetings was to show that we started a professional process, opened a common learning path where all stakeholders took part on a voluntary basis and everybody could voice their opinion. **The key of facilitation is that one assigned person (facilitator) is leading the conversation, makes sure to collect the update topics and to prepare a time frame needed for each topic. During the discussion, she makes sure to focus on the given topic and provides help with open questions. In addition, it is useful to take notes about what was said at the meeting, making possible to trace back who undertook what task and the deadlines.**

Questions discussed:

- ✓ Who can be the key players in and around the school? Form teachers, school psychologist, school policeman, mental health expert assigned to the school.
 - ✓ What channels should be used for the effective communication of the project? Electronic teacher's diary (messaging system among teachers and parents, school documents, common school server, e-mail).
- Regular (bi-weekly) Skype meetings with the international partners.

EXPECTATIONS

At this stage we were hoping to find professionals in the school who were motivated to participate in an innovative program and could promote change in their environment. We were also aiming at mapping:

- the resistance of the staff against new tasks that require new approach;
- obstacles that might hinder the planned timeline of the project (see more in Challenges).



CHALLENGES



We faced the challenge of engaging the school leaders. The system of vocational training in Hungary changed from July 1 2015. Vocational training centers were formed, whose maintainer became the Ministry of National Economy. This meant that the vocational school complex and the member schools got new principals. The center had five member schools, from which we – following the original concept of the application – started work with three in the partnership. The heads of the Center and the member schools got their mandate for only one year and the procedures of the application for the positions were in process in the first phase of the program. This process brought changes in the principals of the schools taking part in the project. In the new system, the heads faced many other important tasks. This meant several months delay for the project. We had a meeting with the new principals as well, where they could share their experiences on school aggression-bullying-conflict. The ninety-minutes discussion was sufficient for them to give a brief account of the cases they witnessed during their career and acknowledge the importance of the program.

OUTCOME

By the end of this phase, **we had been in personal contact with the teachers and principals of all the three participating schools**, which was a solid base for the next steps. It was also good to have a clear vision of the questions, fears and oppositions of the school staff. Out of the whole staff, 5-10% was supportive, which was not bad for a start. **It was obvious that this would be a long process to gain trust and find time to introduce the new approaches and methods. We found promoters of the program who could be agents of change:** the lawyer of the school, who works closely with us and she has impact on the school; the leader of the form teachers' community; the principal of the school which has the biggest number of students with challenging behavior in need of new methods.

USEFUL TIPS

- *Flexibility and patience*

Coming from an NGO, where **voluntary participation and ownership** are very strong values, and given the current school system, where teachers' voices demand more freedom and flexibility, we assumed that the schools would appreciate the fact that they can choose the level of involvement. However, feedback from the school team showed that they needed stronger leadership and a very clear plan laid in front of them. To harmonize this demand with the model program where the action plan was to be drafted together to promote participation and ownership, we started a

discussion with the school staff interested in the program to see how we can bridge this gap.



Get the principals on board

Without the support of the school management, no project can survive. Our interactive lecture about the program in front of the whole school staff and the workshops for the teachers in the individual schools were made possible by the principals. They were also the people who could grant flexibility – when needed – in the timetable of teachers participating in the program.

- *Find the possible agents of change within the school staff*

Possible agents of change can be coming from the school board or they can be anyone having a strong voice within the community (coordinator of the form teachers' community, school psychologist, child protection professional, etc.). If the principal is resisting, the program won't work. If they are neutral, the program might work with people around her who are dedicated to the program and understand that this is a shared responsibility.



- *Organize events where the school staff can talk openly about their questions and doubts*

In the early phase, the commitment can be strengthened if the staff is given the chance to voice their opinion. Experience shows that first the principals then the teachers should be won for the case to be able to involve the students successfully. Open sessions about the possibilities and challenges of the program can result in the reduction of the opposition to change. These events can be built into the regular staff meetings. It might be a good idea to organize the chairs in a circle so that everybody can see each other. **Being able to talk about questions and doubts, the possible benefits and limitations of such a program can reduce resistance in itself.** It is beneficial to have two facilitators for the sessions: one leading the session, and one taking notes of the questions arising. We strongly advise to listen to every contributor with empathy, and the problems raised should not be minimized. This way we can create a safe environment, where real dialogue can open up space for change.

You can read about the workshops for the teachers in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO – SETTING UP A DEVELOPMENT/WORK TEAM

In this chapter you will read about what we did to include all change agents (the key members of school staff).

STARTING POINT



An operative and a professional work team needed to be set up to make sure that the bi-weekly meetings are started, open to every staff member from the participating schools. An invitation was sent out to all the staff but we put special emphasis on those members of the staff who often experience forms of school aggression.

At the first meeting, we informed the colleagues of the Centre about the actual state of the project (it was the mapping of good practices then). Those present confirmed that they face cases that would need effective tools to handle on a daily basis (verbal aggression among students, parental aggression at parents' meetings, conflicts among teachers, exclusion, cyberbullying among students),

After that, concerning the effective working of the project, we started thinking together about the following questions:

- ✓ Who are the key persons, though not present, who could contribute to the implementation? Vice principals, school psychologists, school policemen, form teachers' team leaders, mental health professionals.
- ✓ How could we communicate about the program effectively within the institute?

At the meeting we **mapped the already existing resources** (peer helper network, program against vandalism, teachers who had already taken part in restorative and mediation trainings). In addition, we **were looking for solutions that would help the implementation of the program in the overburdened workdays**: we were trying to find the realistic possibilities acknowledging the limits and blocks. Because there are very few forums for self-reflection and experiencing community feeling in the school, these meetings proved useful for this. We worked out the criteria of the successful implementation together, relying on the following local experiences:

- For the implementation, we need to set up an operative and a professional working group. The operative team is responsible for organisation tasks and the budget, the professional team for the content. There may be overlapping between the two teams, of course.
- Both the teachers and the students are overburdened. It is important that we don't do everything at the homeroom lessons, this is not realistic. The elements of the program should be distributed among different theoretical and practical lessons.

This should be agreed on by the teachers. The idea of a project day also came up, where it would be possible to involve a lot of students and topics intensively.

- A suggestion came that **all this should be included in the pedagogical programme, the school rules document, the classteachers' syllabus and the yearly work program.** (The school documents – being relatively permanent – can serve as a basic reference and give legitimation to the program and can help sustain it even after it is closed. For this, we need the cooperation of the principals and their vice principals, and the documents can be brought in front of the appropriate board – school staff, subject teams – for decision making.) It is important for the team heads and members to see the task distribution clearly.

METHODS USED

-  Regular **facilitated discussions.** At least one facilitator was leading the discussions. Her task was to prepare the list of topics to be discussed, set the time frame, (usually 60 – 90 minutes), to ensure that all topics are discussed at appropriate depth, to ask questions in connection with the implementation. In the first phase these questions were as follows:

- ✓ What should be done to make the program an integral part of the school?
- ✓ What changes should take place?
- ✓ Who should do what to make these changes sustainable?
- ✓ What effect can it have on the school? What will the teachers, students, the school environment sense from it?



In the working group, not only the teachers took part. Often, we were joined by the open-minded school policeman and the mediator of the Health and Family Department of the Mayor's Office, who was trained in 2009 and has been a committed follower of the method ever since.

-  **Workshops to raise awareness among the teachers** in the three member institutions.

As they are vocational schools, the teachers have not only morning but evening classes for adults as well, so our time frame was very tight. During the meetings with the new principals at the beginning of the school year, we asked for flexibility in connection with the organization of the events, and because the centre head was

supporting the programme, we were lucky to have the workshops at the time of the staff meetings. After accomplishing the administrative tasks, **workshops aiming at defining conflict – aggression-bullying could begin. In addition, it was important to have community events to create forum for connecting to each other, so that the participants can feel they are not alone: the others have similar difficulties, blocks in their everyday work.** The most important result of the workshop was the community feeling along with the acquired new information. The participants were also confirmed that conflicts leading to aggression are to be taken seriously, or else they will leave permanent scars both in the students and teachers. During the workshops with the teachers from the three schools, we tried to explore what they knew about the restorative approach and how much they apply methods based on cooperation. Besides, **we listened to their questions and concerns about the programme.**

EXPECTATIONS

The aim of the first two meetings was **to form a common basic knowledge of the project, and to map the needs and necessities that could help to fit the elements of the model programme into the local conditions.** We considered it important to indicate that, according to experience, **a project like this works well if all participants are actively involved in working out the elements of the project.**

This phase had another goal as well: to set up both a professional and an operative team in the school after the first 2-3 meetings. In face of all difficulties, we managed to do so. We could rely on about 12-15 permanent members from the three schools at our bi-weekly meetings. The school lawyer together with one of the class teachers' team heads took on the operative tasks (school budget, organising the meetings) but they also took part in the professional implementation.

CHALLENGES



The **system of vocational training has transformed** in Hungary. Vocational centres have been set up maintained by the Ministry of National Economy. Along with this, the heads have also changed. The setting up of the school development team was going on parallel with these changes, so it was a great challenge. Before the application procedures for the head of institutions positions were closed we could only talk with the colleagues from upwards initiative position. Although we thought it very important to win the heads of the member institutions, we had to realise that it was not possible at the moment. We continued to regularly communicate with the school colleagues who found the programme important and we used this period for learning about the present frame of the schools:

communicational channels, recording possibilities of the program in the school documents, preliminary needs.



During the workshops with the teachers from the three schools we tried to map what they knew about the restorative approach and how much they used methods based on cooperation. In addition, **we listened to their questions and concerns about the programme.** Many voiced their fears that one programme cannot change systemic problems. Both the teachers and the students are overburdened (too many lessons, administrative tasks often with tight deadlines, extra-curricular activities, substituting colleagues, the handling of the challenging behaviour of the growing number of students coming from difficult background). Besides, the teachers questioned the effectiveness of the restorative approach saying what other tools than punishment do they have in their strained everyday work? In general, we can say that **resistance against every change is normal: it demands time and effort, development is not linear, and success is not guaranteed.** Above all this, methods promoting partnership have roots neither in our school system nor in our society. If we do not know them well, the seemingly more lenient approach can appear more risky.

However, we have to note that **these workshops**, for all the initial resistance, **had great benefit, as it was unusual in itself to have the opportunity to talk about the challenges of everyday work in an accepting environment.** We considered it important for the participants to feel that we take their problems and ideas seriously. We also agreed that one program alone cannot answer all the problems of an overburdened system, and no method is a miracle but their consequent use in their everyday work can help a lot. Acknowledging the present situation, we also emphasised that **it is important to see the changes that are possible even in these poor conditions and that together we can find them. In addition to talking about what is not possible, we were trying to find what is possible.** We have to say, that the person who was initially the loudest resistant, after accomplishing the restorative training, became the most committed user and promoter of the approach.

OUTCOME

We mapped the most effective channels for communicating about the project. The teachers came up with the idea that both oral and written information flow would be needed. So we decided to have the regular staff meetings as the oral way and the school's inner information system and the electronic class journals as the written way. In addition, during the meetings it also emerged that **if the program is included in the school documents** (pedagogical programme, syllabus, school rules where the alternative approaches are also named), **it would promote the implementation.** We brought one of the elements of the situation assessment forward (it is part of the next stage): we made a resource map of the

already existing good school practices and earlier project results that can be used in the present project. **The form needed for this can be downloaded here:** <https://www.partnershungary.hu/erasmus/>.

USEFUL TIPS

- *Project coordinator*

Have a school coordinator who collects all the information

- *Framework agreement*

A framework agreement is needed for the working of the development team: who will summon the meetings, who will collect the topics, how to share the tasks. Because the teachers are overburdened, it is essential to share the practical tasks evenly. For this, we have to identify the motivated people, who can be involved, who can be addressed not only by their function but also by **personal competences**. It is worth considering that people should be involved not only by addressing them but also by personal **motivation**. We should also look around outside the staff. If the student community (self government, peer help) or the parent community is active, they, too, can be involved at the early stage. This was not relevant in our case.

Facilitator

A facilitator is needed at the meetings who helps to maintain the focus and the time frame, so the participants could feel their time is used effectively and usefully and they can leave the meeting satisfied.

CHAPTER 3 – CASE ASSESSMENT

In this chapter you will read about the course of the survey carried out at the beginning and the end of the program. In the opening survey, we asked the teachers, students and parents about the forms and frequency of conflicts, aggression, bullying. Based on the results of the opening survey, we set up the action plan tailored for the school. You can read about it in detail in Chapter 4. In the closing survey, we measured the results of the program (see Chapter 6).

STARTING POINT

Because school bullying is a very sensitive topic, we considered it very important to create a safe atmosphere, so we could get real answers. Our experiences from working with communities so far have shown that it is worth mapping the already existing resources as

they often have skills, methods, tools that can support the process of changes. We planned to have a survey both at the beginning and at the end of the programme to see if there was any change. The project was financed by Erasmus+, and had a time frame of 3 years. From this the school implementation took about 1,5-2 years and we chose years 9-10 to take part so that the same students will be in the opening and closing survey.



METHODS USED

-  **We made a resource map**, in which we asked about the following areas:
 - earlier projects focusing on the school community
 - completed methodological trainings that promote democratic processes (mediation, cooperative learning, differentiation, talent program)
 - infrastructure (safe environment where individual case handling or mediation can take place)

-  Who are the people within the school (teachers, school psychologist, mental health professional) who can be the prime agents of change and can promote the move from punishment – disciplining approach towards cooperative – restorative approach?

-  Before filling out the opening surveys **we had preparatory homeroom classes (altogether 35)** for the students involved so that they can feel the importance of the topic and take the survey seriously. Also, we wanted to form a common knowledge of the difference between conflict, aggression and bullying. During these lessons we built on involvement: situational activities involving movement helped the students to fit in the topic and express their ideas freely. The lessons were mainly held by the trainers of Partners Hungary Foundation plus one teacher from the school, who was in charge of child protection in the school and had already had practice in doing similar activities. The principal and the staff were really flexible in organising these lessons that took place in homeroom or other lessons. The parents got their surveys from the class teachers. Sometimes they were given additional oral information about the programme at the parents' meetings, in e-mail or in letter if needed.

- **It was worth the effort**, because from the students' answers it was clear that they took the survey seriously and answered all the questions. Besides, some students

even got talking about the topic with their parents at home in connection with their experiences in the lesson. In the lessons, they opened up easily during the activities, they were glad to be given the opportunity to talk about the topic and voice their opinion. It was up to the class teachers whether they wanted to be present at the lesson or not. If the answer was positive, we asked them to take part actively, because the presence of onlookers makes it difficult to express ideas freely. At the end of the lesson we reminded the students that they would be asked to fill in a survey about school aggression-conflict-bullying the following week. The survey is anonymous, no information will be given away about their answers, they will be assessed by one of our colleague who did not meet them. We emphasised that there was no wrong answer, we wished to hear their own opinion, ideas, experiences. **At the end of the conversations, we also emphasised that it is important for them not to remain alone with their social problems and listed the possible help they can get if they feel they can't cope.** We identified those school professionals who they trust. (It was different in different classes. Besides the class teachers, psychologists, mental health and child protection professionals, different teachers were mentioned. Those, who they are on good terms with, who pay attention and take them seriously.) In addition, we gave them the access to the biggest help line, the Blue Line and the Unicef Help App so they can see they have more options for asking for help in their narrower and wider environment.

The strongest experience concerning these lessons can be linked to a year-ten class. After a situational activity about exclusion, a student told us that she transferred to this school after being excluded by her peers in her former school. Although she feels ok in the present class, she is still bullied by the groups that used to bully her on online community pages, applications. The class teacher, who took part in the lesson, was shocked to hear this information. Although she was sceptic about the programme at the workshops, hearing the student's account, she admitted that she understood now the importance of these activities, since otherwise she would never have got this information.

-  **Anonymous, online questionnaire** about the forms of conflict aggression and bullying in the school for the teachers, students and parents. The opening questionnaires were filled in by the teachers, year nine and ten students and their parents from the three schools before the trainings and activities of the programme began. The students did the surveys in homeroom or IT lessons. The students were given their personal code in sealed envelopes by the teacher before they began work. The codes consisted of the initial letter of the school, the name of

the class and two numbers randomly attributed to each student. The 'coding' was done and sealed by a colleague doing administrative job at the Centre's base. She did not know the students or the online results, which was processed by a PHF colleague. The anonymity of the questionnaire was one of the the basic principles of the assessment. We only did the coding because, if from the answers the potential or concrete risk of a student emerges, she can be identified. No such case was found. So the students got their personal code and the link where they could enter the online surface in a sealed envelope. It took 20-25 minutes to fill in the survey. The teachers supervising the students' work were asked to inform the students that the questionnaire is anonymous and no personal data is given away. Also, that here was no wrong answer, we wished to hear about their own ideas, experiences. So they were asked to only pay attention to their own screen and not to disturb the others.

The teachers got the questionnaire through the inner mail system of the school, the parents in e-mail. They also got information about the programme with definitions like that of bullying, aggression, conflict. **In the classes where the teachers thought that e-mail was not very widely used among the parents, they got printed questionnaires.** The electronic recording of these surveys was done by the centre's employees who were not in connection with the students.

➤  **Following the filling out and assessing of the questionnaires, we informed all those involved about the final results of the survey.** We had briefings for the principals and vice principals of the schools, the staff and the classes involved each. The parents were informed in e-mail. We tried to be short and compact at the briefings highlighting the most important results:

- 80% of the students feel they are not respected by their peers or the teachers
- only 15% of the teachers feel prepared to be able to handle bullying cases.

Then the participants were given the chance to voice their opinion and ask questions. We drew their attention to the fact that we were setting up the action plan based on the results of the survey and they were all welcome to take part in the process of the planning. We also mentioned that they could read about the collected good practices in the national report and in the model program documents, and they would learn new methodology in trainings, among which there are accredited teacher refresher courses.



We had another 45-minute-activity for the students, after assessing the questionnaires, focusing on feeling respected, as this appeared to be the most

problematic area. At the lesson we used creative tools when talking about feeling respected and tried to find solutions together what they can do for each other in the community. **In this element of the program too, we wanted to show the participants that they had a say in their own situation and they should find ways of acting for themselves and their community even if the time frame and the tools were scarce.** We definitely asked the class teachers to be present and take notes at these events so that they would be able to talk about it and follow how the discussed topics went on in the class. Most students would have appreciated if they all greeted each other and used 'please' and 'thank you' more often, or if they got positive feedback both from each other and the teachers. To the question what feedback they would mostly appreciate from the teachers, the students said it would be minor things like a little praise if they are following the lesson or contributing. They would also like to have more time for student-teacher personal interaction, a couple of minutes – in the lesson even – per day would mean a lot. The students' opinion is in harmony with the restorative approach and mediation. Appreciation is an important tool in mediation, which often brings qualitative development in the communication. Also, one crucial element of restorative practices is the affective statement with the help of which we can talk about how we have been affected by a given situation, this way creating an atmosphere where good connections are created.

EXPECTATIONS

- We wished to get an exact picture of how the different agents of school life see the situation of conflict-bully-aggression in their school and how much they know about the phenomena and those involved;
- We wished to get a picture of the school climate;
- We wanted to map the main forms of the above mentioned phenomena;
- We wanted to find out what tools are at hand for those involved related to the problematic situation at present;
- We wished to identify the potentially endangered students (only risk can be an exception from anonymity, that's why we used codes and the matching names were known only by one person who was wown to keep it secret);
- We wanted to map the school scenes where the problematic situations occur;
- We hoped that more and more people would be touched by the topic and would take part in the elements of the programme that followed.

CHALLENGES

In the light of the 2016/679 general data protection regulation of the European Parliament and Council coming to force on May 25 2018, it is especially important that personal data



can only be handled with the definite consent of those concerned. According to this, a **consent declaration** was attached to the questionnaires of all the three target groups. Moreover, the parents were also asked to give their consent as far as their children's data were concerned.

In the overburdened workdays, it is a challenge to find time for new tasks. We planned the opening survey at the very beginning of the second term and the closing one in the first week after the spring holiday, before the final and vocational exams started.

About 200 questionnaires were distributed on paper to the parents to make sure they answer them. Their digitalisation needed human resources.

To assess the questionnaires methodological qualification is needed. In our case it was done by an education researcher colleague of the program coordinator.

OUTCOME

At the activities for the students the teachers were positively surprised that a lot more students took part actively and voiced their opinion than in the lessons in general. They found the students' opinions interesting and appreciated the discussions.

The opening survey was filled in by 566 students, 108 teachers and 290 parents, which was above expectations, especially among the parents. You can download the resource map, the questionnaires and the according lesson plans from <https://www.partnershungary.hu/erasmus/>.

We got the following feedback concerning the parent survey: many parents started talking about the topic with their children after filling in the questionnaire. The higher than expected number of completed surveys may be due partly to this.

We could set up the action plan based on the answers. You can read about it in detail in Chapter 4.



USEFUL TIPS

- *Finding the time frame*

It is good to find those two weeks when the activities can be implemented and the filling in the questionnaire is not hindered by bigger school holidays or programmes. It is also worth encouraging the staff to fill in the survey, as the more they do so, the more exact picture we can get of the situation of the school and the better we can tailor the programme to their needs.

- *Give feedback to those concerned*

A brief oral summary can promote the commitment to the programme of those involved, especially, if we give a chance for questions and reflections at the end.

CHAPTER 4 – SETTING UP THE ACTION PLAN



In this chapter you will read about how the results of the questionnaires were used to plan the common school programs.

STARTING POINT

Feedback was given on the results of the survey to everyone concerned in each school and we started to set up the program elements of the future action plan with the professional work team.

METHODS USED



We had bi-weekly working group meetings where we set up the timetable of the planned activities with the method of **collaborative planning**. By this time, each member had read the National Report, which describes the situation of school conflicts, aggression, bullying, along with the applied methods and good practices in the Hungarian context and we chose together from the listed methods as follows:

- mediation training for teachers;
- mediation training for students;
- restorative training for teachers;
- internet safety talk for teachers and students;
- homeroom lessons in restorative approach with the aim of mapping and utilising conversation, collaborative rule making, and community resources.

The programme coordinator (Partners Hungary Foundation) had a chance to provide help to the school in this process of change. **Tension is an inherent part of change, so inner and outer support can be of great help, be it about building new methods into the everyday work or handling emerging conflicts and resistance.**

EXPECTATIONS

We wanted to make a plan that is **detailed and flexible, tailored for the school and maintainable**, and the participants consider it their own and work in it with pleasure. The experiences gathered since the beginning of the programme helped the members a lot to



concentrate on what can be implemented and work on bridging the difficulties with all our energies. **The work team as a community meant a great resource, as everybody was committed to change and the regular meetings and the focussed discussions gave the feeling of progress.**

CHALLENGES

At first, it seemed impossible to find the place of the trainings and activities of the action plan. We left time to discuss when the trainings can be held. Finally, we agreed on some days between the school closing staff meeting and the first day of the summer holiday and the workdays preparing the new schoolyear following the opening staff meeting.

OUTCOME

- Strong community feeling in the work team, trust in the change.
- Sufficient information for the participants on how much time the trainings and activities would take and how they can be used.
- **Detailed school action plan can be downloaded from <https://www.partnershungary.hu/erasmus/>.**

USEFUL TIPS

- *Give possibility for questions and opinions*
During the planning process it is worth listening to the ideas and questions of the stakeholders – the more the participants feel that they can take part in forming the programme the more they will consider it their own and will be more committed to bridging the difficulties.
- *Thoughtful timing*
It is worth timing the trainings for the least busy periods, which can be different in various schools, but usually the beginning and the end of the schoolyear seem to be optimal periods as there are no lessons then. We planned the six-day student peer mediation trainings in three times two days blocks, on different days, to minimize the problems caused by the students being absent from the lessons.

CHAPTER 5 – THE SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

In this chapter you will read about how the programme elements were implemented in the school

STARTING POINT

After setting up the action plan the trainings and activities for the teachers and students could start.

METHODS USED



1. TRAININGS

1.1 Mediation training for school professionals

The alternative ways of conflict resolution including mediation represent the restorative approach. It centres around the idea of **conflict as a possibility to renovation**, to restore the lost balance. In fact, conflict, if handled properly, can be used for the benefit of our relationships. In mediation, ie. mediated negotiation, the parties involved try to discuss and resolve their conflict with the help of a third, neutral party - the mediator. **The parties of the conflict take part in the process equally, so the solution can be real restoration for everybody.**

Several trainings of Partners Hungary Foundation are **accredited teacher trainings** including mediation training. It was an advantage when the teachers applied, as the three modules of the mediation training meant 64 credits in the compulsory teacher refresher course. To ensure participation, the first three-day module of the training took place in the days right before the summer holidays started. For the same reason, the second module was right in the week preceding the beginning of the schoolyear. The last, half-day module was held at the end of September, when the teachers had finished their administrative and organisational tasks for the new schoolyear. The teachers reflected on the tested methods in **case discussion groups, which was a possibility for further development**

Before the training, the applicants were sent a survey asking about their expectations in connection with the training. Most answers were about learning new tools and practical

methods. The teachers also hoped that they would be able to develop their relationship with the students with the help of the acquired new knowledge. **The training made the techniques of consensus building and mediation tools practicable through examples adopted to school environment and situation practices.**

After the training was completed, the organisation in charge of the training, which was the coordinator of the program at the same time, provided mentoring for the trained mediators. You can read about it in detail in 'Mentoring'.

The greatest results of the training:

- **A shift in approach among the trained teachers**
- **Improving communication among the staff** and between the trained teachers and students. **New impulse for the workdays:** several participants said that they were starting the new schoolyear freshly, with more confidence, optimism.

1.2 Mediation training for students

We thought it important for the students to learn about mediation tools too, as **the role of peers among teenagers is very important. They share their problems primarily with each other, so we find it extremely significant that they get tools for handling their conflicts.** However, it is not realistic to expect them to mediate independently in conflict situations as these situations are extremely complex: there can be conflict coming from bullying, which can escalate to aggression or trauma. This is why we defined the role of peer mediators as follows:

- when noticing a conflict they can use mediation tools (open questions, summary, etc.);
- they should let a teacher know if help is needed to resolve the conflict;
- together with the teacher-mediator they can lead mediation sessions in student-student or teacher-student conflicts;

The working group collected the criteria along which the students could be involved in the trainings so that the method could be best utilised;

- interest, motivation are primary,
- relevant outside-lesson experience, eg. peer help can be an advantage,
- skills: good communication, team player, active, critical thinking in social situations
- to include years 9-10, so the knowledge gained can be maintained longer in the school.

The training took place in 3x2 days on different workdays in order to avoid too many missed lessons in the same subject. Because the programme is international, we had the chance to organise a mediation camp in English for the Maltese, Bulgarian and Hungarian students, where they could learn about the approach together and could build connections.

At the training, we worked with **interactive practices** **tailored for the students** to strengthen involvement and participation. In the course of the training it became obvious how important personal motivation is, as those students became returning members of the workteam who were really committed to the approach.

The peer mediation training's closing session was attended by the teacher-mediators as well in order to build mediation into the school's life together. The results of the work are summed up as follows:



What do we need to integrate mediation into the school's life and for the teacher-mediators and student-mediators to work together successfully?

Communication:

- Students: they should spread the word about the new approach as much as possible and not only in their own class. The student council can have an outstanding role in spreading the new method.
- Teachers: they should present the benefits of mediation at head meetings and among the staff as well.
- Posters with the photos and names of the mediators should be made and placed next to the timetable on the wall.
- There should be an option for asking for anonymous help, eg. a box in the corridor to put a notice in about occurring conflicts.
- The student-mediators and teacher-mediators could have short briefings about the approach in every class. Personal information promotes trust towards the approach and the mediators.

The criteria of successful cooperation between the student-mediators and teacher-mediators:

- There should be no personal tension between the mediators, they should work together willingly.
- They should support each other, they should be equal parties in the professional work.
- Everybody should be given the chance to get practice and they should have the possibility to practice without stake – through simulated case practices.
- It is preferable for the student-mediator to be the same age or older than the one taking part in the mediation as someone involved in the conflict.
- They should devote time for preparation. For example, they should agree on who would do the introduction beforehand.

- If a student sees a conflict, he should ask the parties if they are open for mediation. If the answer is positive, the student-mediator should contact the class teacher or the teacher-mediator available.

When and where can the mediation sessions be carried out?

- It is preferable to have them after the lessons, maybe in the 7th or 8th lesson if the teacher is not substituting and the student is not writing a test so that the mediator does not mean too much absence or reorganisation.
- The venue can be the secret room or the library but a 'Do not disturb' notice should be put on the door.

1.3 Restorative training for teachers

In restorative justice – the school methodology also comes from this – all stakeholders get together, talk about the effects of the problematic behaviour together, agree on common decisions and take responsibility for their future role and tasks. **Restorative practices – similarly to mediation – give the conflict back to the stakeholders. The aim of the restorative model is to create supporting communities and strengthen relationships**, this way providing possibility for the community to indicate, before the incident actually happens, that one of them is about to make a wrong decision. When this space and openness has been created, it is possible to put focus on restoring the harm done and on agreements regarding the future.

The application for the restorative training was done according to the scenario of the mediation training – relying on the motivation of the teachers and volunteer participation. Although at the time of the creation of this book – May 2018 – restorative training was not accredited as a teacher refresher course, the 277/1997. (XII. 22.) Govt. Regulation about teacher refreshment courses, teacher-qualification exams and fringes and benefits for those taking part makes it possible to accept it as 25% of the total 120 credits as a way of inner refresher course. Restorative training can fit in paragraph 5. § (3) point d).

During the 2x2 days of the training the teachers learned about the restorative approach and restorative practices that provide comprehensive solutions to preventing conflicts and handling serious offences. The training took place at the very end of the schoolyear, after the school closing ceremony, following the week of the mediation training.

Restorative practices or mediation?

Restorative practices and mediation are based on a similar approach, they complement each other. The given situation can decide which method would be preferable.

Mediation is advisable if there is suspected or real interest opposition behind the emotions of the parties and they intend to resolve the conflict.



Restorative circles can be used successfully in cases of breaking the rules and norms of a community. Intervention can be done if the offender admits the offence. The process relates to the whole community, and the involvement of each participant contributes to the feelings of the offenders and can promote positive change. Other, less formal restorative practices can be used in the everyday life.

Moreover, before the intervention the following viewpoints should be taken into account:

- The responsibility of peer mediators is limited: it is not their task to resolve the occurring conflict/aggressive-bullying situations independently. They should be involved after a grownup intervention has taken place.
- In case of serious bullying situations or deep conflicts going on for a long time where there is a risk of aggression, we should be especially careful because of the shifted balance between the bully and the victim. Beside the alternative approach, it is worth considering individual case handling with the help of a proper professional (mental health professional, school psychologist, social worker, etc.).

According to the teachers, **the students were looking forward to the circles** and they themselves arranged the chairs in circles before the second session already. The approach is used not only in homeroom lessons. Some teachers have circles for planning learning to promote the learning of more difficult topics.



2. FITTING THE ALTERNATIVE METHODS INTO THE SCHOOL DOCUMENTS

The legal background of the procedures is regulated as follows:

- The 2011 CXC law (Nkt.) about the national public education
- The 20/2012. (31 Aug.) EMMI regulation about the functioning of the educational institutions and the use of name
- The institutional background of the procedures is given by: the organisational and functional regulation of the public education institute and the school rules document.

Within the framework of the Against School Aggression Partnership, after the mediation and restorative training of the teachers of the Szolnok partner schools, the following passage (excerpt) was included in the school rules document from 1 Sept. 2017:

„Based on the 20/2012. (31 Aug.) EMMI regulation about the functioning and the use of name, it is possible to have a preliminary negotiation procedure (mediation or a procedure using restorative practices) before the disciplinary procedure, aiming at resolving and assessing the conflict and, according to this, reaching an agreement between the stakeholders in order to restore the harm done and prevent similar conflicts in the future.”

Naturally, we could not win everybody for the new approach. There are colleagues who don't believe in it because they don't know it, so they don't trust it and they do not approach the problematic behaviour in an alternative way. However, **more and more teachers get information about the successfully resolved cases.** It is also a great success, **that in one of the schools a trained teacher is in the disciplinary board so she can represent the importance of mediation and restorative practices.** In addition, working groups were formed in each school who give account of their work at the staff meetings, this way promoting the new methods and **encouraging the colleagues to be brave enough to ask for help from each other.**

The school coordinator got a useful tip from an outside member of the work team: „**We should be able to redefine the meaning of success, this can give new impulses when we feel stuck.**”

We should be able to acknowledge the results of the parties involved in the alternative conflict resolution process, even if they are just partial. We should not make preconceptions based on our own expectations for the outcome of a procedure, because it can easily lead to frustration. (We learn all this – to be neutral and impartial – at mediation and restorative trainings too, but this is also a learning process and takes time to build this outsider's status in ourselves.)

On the other hand, **on introducing a complex, new approach, not only the resolved cases can be considered success.**

It is also a success, if:

- a teacher, who does not trust the alternative methods very much, starts taking interest in the approach or asks for help from a trained colleague;
- after the restorative conference the parties involved report that even though they had been afraid of the conference, it was a positive experience that they could speak about the school incident in a fair procedure without being shamed;
- upon hearing the positive opinion of their colleagues, more and more principals, vice principals, teachers get interested in the approach;



3. INFORMING THE TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND PARENTS ABOUT THE USE OF THE ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES AS NEW METHODS

- The parents were informed about the integration of the alternative procedures in the school rules document, highlighting its benefits, at the first parents' meeting of the new school year.

- The teachers were informed about how the trainings were completed and the options of using the new methods from the account of the trained colleagues at the staff meeting.
- The students could learn about the alternative practices and the options of their implementation from the accounts of peer mediators.



4. ACTIVITIES

4.1 Internet safety lessons for students and teachers



Professionals of the organisations taking part in the Safer Internet Plus programme launched by the European Committee (International Children Safety Service, Blue Line Children Crisis Foundation, International Infocommunication ZRT) **give free talks on safe internet and mobile use** for students, teachers, parents, social workers etc. Beside providing information they would also like to let everybody know who to turn to if they have some kind of problem. The schools taking part in the programme took this opportunity. The school coordinator collected the needs of the interested class teachers, then referred them to the Safer Internet representatives who gave talks for the teachers and the students separately. Although in theory the students are aware of what information they can share on their online community pages, they usually face the dangers only when they get into trouble. On the feedback of the teachers, the talk for the grownups was followed by intense interest and they got a lot of new and useful information.



4.2 Students' day: watching a film and doing a follow-up discussion

*The US movie 'Wonder' was on at the cinemas at the beginning of 2018. It is about the change of an excluding school community and the inclusion of an excluded student with special needs. As a popular creation, it addresses big crowds of people, this is why the programme coordinators made a lesson plan for the follow-up discussion in restorative approach. **The film watching and the discussion** took place on students' day. During the day, the students also watched the short film on mediation made in the programme and discussed the benefits of the approach. Altogether 15 classes saw the film. Many students*

were moved by the filme, but those who less involved emotionally, were also ready to talk about the topic of exclusion.



4.3 Workshops for the teachers on giving a series of homeroom lessons in the programme

The coordinators of the programme set up a series of lesson plans for homeroom classes, consisting of 6 parts. It was meant primarily for year 9 and their class teachers, because **the new community is a good possibility for forming new norms where a well-functioning, good community can be created.** At the same time, these lesson plans were implemented successfully in years 10-11-12 as well. Experience shows that the best way of handling aggression and bullying is prevention, which is a longer process. This process consists of methods that support each other, and one element is the series of homeroom lessons. The lessons are built on each other providing a deeper and deeper knowledge, self-recognition and a community feeling for the students. It is worth having these lessons weekly or every other week. **The outcome of the series of lessons is a cooperatively formed set of community norms, which regulates the relationships within the class, preventing the escalation of conflicts.**

During these events, the students have a chance to think about the topics concerning their community (cooperation, communication, exclusion, etc.) together in a new way, which strengthens the relationship both between the peers and the teachers. Our experiences show that the rules worked out together are easier to follow, because we can feel: we have a say in the processes that concern us. By the end of the series of lessons, a set of norms can be made which was set up by the active participation of the members and reflects to their own needs. The teachers were prepared for having these lessons in a three-hour-workshop. It was held in the last week of August. **Although the extra task caused some resistance in the teachers, the safe and accepting atmosphere of the workshop gave a strong community feeling for the colleagues, some of them were even moved to tears and said that it was worth devoting the time.**



4.4 Homeroom classes in restorative approach

- On the suggestion of the workteam the set of six lessons was recorded in the curriculum to make sure the class teachers will devote time for them. Of course, we cannot be sure that each class teacher had these lessons, but **the team leaders and the workteam members, who are committed to the new methodology kept talking about their positive experiences to their colleagues and also offered help to have the lessons, and more and more teachers started to take the opportunity.**

- When a problem concerning the class as a community emerged, **the class teachers asked for help from the workteam members more often. Due to this, several restorative models were used during the lessons. Fitting the 45-90-minute-lessons into the timetable was done flexibly – through swapping lessons – by the teachers.**

4.5 An extra set of lessons for raising awareness and extra parents' meetings

- The colleague in charge of child protection in the Commercial Sister Institution revived an earlier well-functioning practice within the programme. She adopted the drug prevention programme called *Swimming lessons against the current* for the topic of conflict-aggression-bullying together with Partners Hungary Foundation. We piloted the lessons in two ten-year classes. *Swimming lessons* is a six-lesson event series for students and an extra parents' meeting. The lessons consist of community building practices, focusing on improving the quality of communication among the students. **Through the exercises, the students can formulate their own needs and commitments to make their class community better.** At the end of the series, in the closing circle, the students gave feedback on what experience these events meant for them.

Most of them said they were surprised to see that people can work together like this. Even those voiced their opinion who otherwise don't. **It was a great feeling to experience the power of the community.** Also, according to a student, by the end of the series, she solved a two-year-old problem with one of her classmates. A further outcome of the programme was that **we could involve the parents in a common event**, which is especially difficult with secondary school students these days. In the second part of the lesson series – together with the leader of the training – the class presented scenes where they could show the differences between the punishing-disciplining and restorative-cooperative approach through practical examples. They could also talk about how they are concerned by difficult social situations both at school and home. **It surprised us how willingly the students participated – due to the nature of the activities and the fact that they themselves could form the scenes – and the fairly high number of parents present, who were really moved by the personal tone of the presentation.**



5. MENTORING – SUPPORT FOR THE NEW PRACTICES TO BUILD INTO THE WORKDAYS

Time and practice is needed for the real and fluent integration of the knowledge acquired in the new trainings. In order to achieve this, the programme coordinator provided mentoring possibilities for the trained professionals, including the following events:

- We had professional discussions on the emerging conflict and bullying cases at the bi-weekly workteam sessions and **made decisions together on the method of the intervention and the persons in charge of the intervention.** In the school we encouraged the participants of the training to look for the possibilities of mediation cases and restorative circles, and PHF offered help with the procedures.
- We had **co-mediations and restorative reactive circles with double facilitation as well as formal restorative conferences together with the experienced representatives of PHF.** (Having kept the double facilitation, by now, the school's trained professionals can use their acquired knowledge without the help of PHF in urgent cases.)
- The regular working group discussion provided a good occasion for the methodological procession of the cases and to exchange experiences – of course all personal information must be kept confidential
- We held **workshops for teachers** concerning the homeroom class series. During this they could experience the community building power of the practices that were fit into the syllabus.
- **We organised discussions with the principals**, presenting the work done and the results achieved. The teachers could articulate their needs for further support from their principals in facilitated small-group discussions. We wrote down a summary of these meetings and the realization of the recorded items was ensured by follow-up discussions.

EXPECTATIONS

We wanted the methods to be implemented in all the three schools right after the schoolyear started. The timing of the trainings and the workshops gave a good impulse for this. We hope that the alternative practices will build into the everyday of the schools more and more, not only as a tool for conflict resolution but exploiting the community building power of the methods, the school atmosphere will improve too.

CHALLENGES

It is important for all the stakeholders (students, parents, school staff) to have a common knowledge of the accessibility of the new methods and events, so continuous valid briefing is inevitable.

Stronger support from the principals is needed so that the case is referred to the workteam and the parties involved be informed in time about the options. In a case where an opposing

teacher is involved in a conflict, the encouragement of the principal could be needed for the colleague to take part in the procedure.

During the schoolyear, acute problems needing quick intervention and chronic problems prevailing for a long time also occurred. Although these situations improved after one procedural event, **often more events and tight follow-up were needed to maintain the results.**

The teachers could arrange the mediation or reactive circles with a change in the timetable. For this, they needed the flexibility and support of the principals.

OUTCOME

The results in numbers:

- 23 trained teacher-mediators and 21 student-mediators, who help with the more effective handling of school conflicts.
- 18 trained restorative facilitators, who work for the good school communities day after day.
- 21 working group discussions with the committed professional school team.
- 78 homeroom lessons, where we could talk about the phenomena of school aggression with the help of playful practices based on personal experience.

- Handling 9 wholeclass problems with restorative practices.



The *RESULTS* as reflected in human relationships:

- According to the teachers' feedback, the trainings have **widened their methodological knowledge**; their communication skills have improved; they are able to turn to the problematic cases with **more empathy**, understanding better and being able to accept the many different viewpoints.
- As a result of the restorative conference, held instead of the usual disciplinary procedure, the incident – against expectations – was not referred to the police, and neither party involved had to leave the school.
- The success and sustainability of the mediations and restorative circles is different in each case and in each school. However, there is one thing we can be definite about: **in each case handled, the parties involved experienced improvement**, compared to the situation before the intervention.

- **Good news travels quickly:** our trained colleagues have been invited by other schools to give samples of the alternative conflict resolution tools. Some have even facilitated reactive circles in concrete cases in other schools.

The lesson plans and the activities are accessible free at <https://www.partnershungary.hu/erasmus/> the mediation short film can be viewed on the Youtube channel of Partners Hungary Foundation.

USEFUL TIPS

-  *Flexibility and support from the principals*
When conflicts emerge, we have to find the proper time frame for the alternative procedures in a relatively short time for both the professionals and the parties involved (students, teachers, parents). This needs flexibility and support from the school heads
- *Sharing the responsibility*
Double leading works well in practice - after acquiring the theoretical knowledge – both in mediation and restorative circles. The two professionals complement each other well. If there is some block one can help the other. They can also help each other with keeping neutrality and in analysing the case the different viewpoint of the partner can also be of use.
- *A careful definition of who can take part in the trainings/activities*
Because of the age-group specialities, it is especially important to define the competencies (see 1.2 Mediation training for students) that make them able to intervene and mediate in difficult cases.
Undoubtedly, the credits given for the teacher refreshment courses encourage the teachers for participation, but it is also important to have personal motivation, curiosity for the new. Several times, the colleagues said that the restorative approach had been part of their personality, but in the training they became more aware of it and got concrete tools.



It is worth involving in the trainings not only the school staff but also the committed professionals related to the school. In the trainings and workteam discussions of our programme the school policeman, the Mayor's office of Szolnok County, the Human Directorate, the trained mediator of the Health and Family Department also took part, supporting our work with their invaluable outsider viewpoints.

CHAPTER 6 – FOLLOW-UP AND ASSESSMENT



In this chapter you are going to read about the tools used for the assessment of the programme.

STARTING POINT

What was recorded in the action plan was implemented in all the three schools, only the programme elements were carried out at different pacing and with different intensity. The end of the programme is marked by the 31 Aug. 2018 closing of Erasmus+ (the programme is financed by the European Union), but actually, we hope that we are part of a process that is not going to end then. As an assessment of the road we have covered so far, we conducted a survey with the participation of the same students who were in the opening survey. We wanted to find out about the opinion of the school staff and the parents as well.

METHODS USED

We asked the now 10 and 11-year-students concerning the topic of school aggression-bullying in **online questionnaires**. They got the personal codes in sealed envelopes again. The same codes were used as in the opening survey. As opposed to the opening survey, the assessment was not preceded by a preparational homeroom class by PHF, since by this time the majority of the students had already met most of the programme elements. This assessment – just like the opening one – was also carried out in IT and homeroom classes.

- The parents were contacted electronically – the link was made accessible on the school’s homepage, in e-mail, or, if needed, in printed form, because at the time of the assessment the schools don’t usually have parents’ meetings
- The colleagues and the other school staff got the questionnaires electronically through the principals, and the members of the workteams kept emphasising its importance.

EXPECTATIONS

We hoped to see change, especially a shift in approach. Based on the active participation and positive feedback of the students during the programme elements, we expected greater trust from them towards the alternative procedures proposed for conflict resolution. As far as the teachers are concerned, we expected a move from the punishing-disciplining approach towards the cooperative-restorative approach. The professional team of the programme would not want the invested work to be wasted. The key to sustainability is to find new application resources. In order to find one, Partners Hungary Foundation and the Szolnok Centre have signed an intention statement about the possibilities of future cooperation concerning a new application. (It is now being evaluated.)



CHALLENGES

The proper time frame for the closing assessment had to be found. In the busy workdays we needed the support of the principals and, sometimes, a change in the timetable.

We have to be realistic in evaluating the results of the assessment. We should be aware of the fact that the members of a community who have been educated in a completely different approach cannot be sensitised towards the topic at once or with the same intensity. The programme and the change of approach is a road where the meaning of success is relative.



In the closing assessment 505 students, 103 teachers and 86 parents filled in the questionnaire. It is good news that **among the teachers we could already see a shift towards the new approach.** However, the basic trends of school aggression did not change in the schools involved in this short period. At the same time, **the majority of the students (60.71%) think that the events and the trainings of the programme were useful for them. Most of the teachers (79.61%) said that the model programme supported them in handling aggressive and bullying behaviour.** Last but not at least, **the majority (66.2%) of the parents said the activities of the programme had influence on how the teachers handle the school aggression and bullying cases.** [The closing survey can be downloaded from https://www.partnershungary.hu/erasmus/.](https://www.partnershungary.hu/erasmus/)

USEFUL TIPS



The implementation of the model programme –among other things – needs financial resources. Generally, the school's own budget cannot afford to finance it, so it is worth looking for other resources. Such options are offered by different EU applications, the National Crime Prevention Council or even the Maintainer.

Patience

We have to accept that the model programme is no magic wand (although it would be needed in many cases). To start the change is a hard and time-consuming process, but perseverant and consequent work brings success: good school communities, where all stakeholders – teachers, students, parents – can feel safe.