

**DIALECT 5: “Addressing intersectional stereotypes and activating students to build inclusive and tolerant primary schools through physical education”**

**DELIVERABLE D.2.1.**

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT**

**Advancing Inclusion and Combating Racism and  
Discrimination through Physical Education in Primary Schools  
in four EU countries (Italy, Hungary, Greece, Serbia)**

EU GRANT AGREEMENT  
ERASMUS-SPORT-2025-SCP  
ERASMUS - LS  
Project 101245442— DIALECT5

**EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE  
AGENCY (EACEA)  
EACEA/A/03**

**National Centre for Social Research (EKKE)  
Athens, June 2026**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

## CONTENTS

|                                                                                                                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>                                                                                                       | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2. SYNOPSIS OF DESK RESEARCH.....</b>                                                                                          | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>3. DESIGN OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, QUESTIONS, AND TOOLS.....</b>                                                               | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>4. ONLINE SURVEY TARGETING PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS AT PRIMARY EDUCATION LEVEL.....</b>                                | <b>10</b> |
| 4.1. METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE PROFILE .....                                                                                         | 10        |
| 4.2. SCHOOL AND PE CLASS CONTEXT .....                                                                                            | 12        |
| 4.3. SCHOOL CLIMATE, CONFLICTS AND EXCLUSION IN PE .....                                                                          | 14        |
| 4.4. STUDENTS, GENDERED PARTICIPATION AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS .....                                                            | 18        |
| 4.5. PHYSICAL EDUCATION, INCLUSION, DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM .....                                           | 20        |
| 4.6. TEACHERS' PREPAREDNESS, TRAINING AND SUPPORT NEEDS.....                                                                      | 23        |
| 4.7. INCLUSIVE PE PRACTICES, MAIN CHALLENGES AND INTEREST IN THE DIALECT5 METHODOLOGY...                                          | 26        |
| 4.8. CONCLUSIONS .....                                                                                                            | 30        |
| <b>5. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES .....</b>                                                              | <b>31</b> |
| 5.1. PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE .....                                                                                                  | 31        |
| 5.2. POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSION AND EQUALITY IN EDUCATION .....                                                               | 31        |
| 5.3. THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PROMOTING SOCIAL VALUES .....                                                              | 35        |
| 5.4. INCLUSION CHALLENGES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS .....                                                                                | 37        |
| 5.5. TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS .....                                                              | 38        |
| 5.6. SPORT-BASED INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR INCLUSION.....                                                                         | 40        |
| 5.7. POLICY INTEGRATION AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT .....                                                                           | 42        |
| 5.8. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON RELEVANT ISSUES/RECOMMENDATIONS NOT ADDRESSED. ....                                                   | 43        |
| <b>6. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH SCHOOL STAKEHOLDERS.....</b>                                                                   | <b>44</b> |
| 6.1. PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE .....                                                                                                  | 44        |
| 6.2. SCHOOLS' PROFILE .....                                                                                                       | 45        |
| 6.3. DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS: ROLES, PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES .....                                           | 45        |
| 6.4. PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN 9-12 YEARS OLD .....                                                      | 51        |
| 6.5. PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AS A TOOL TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVE SPORT VALUES .....                                      | 55        |
| 6.6. SUGGESTIONS FOR EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO COMBAT STEREOTYPES AND PROMOTING TOLERANCE...                                         | 57        |
| 6.7. VIEWS ON INTEGRATING A METHODOLOGY DESIGNED TO PROMOTE EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN THE SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME ..... | 58        |
| 6.8. ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED.....                                                                                                    | 59        |
| <b>7. INTERVIEWS WITH PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AGED 9-12 FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS .....</b>                                        | <b>60</b> |
| 7.1. PROFILE OF PARTICIPATING STUDENTS .....                                                                                      | 60        |
| 7.2. PE CLASS, CHILDREN'S PREFERENCES AND FEELINGS .....                                                                          | 60        |
| 7.3. INCLUSION (FEELING OF BELONGING).....                                                                                        | 61        |
| 7.4. PARTICIPATION & GROUP DYNAMICS (HAVING YOUR VOICE HEARD) .....                                                               | 62        |
| 7.5. RESPECT, FAIRNESS, TEAMWORK.....                                                                                             | 64        |
| 7.6. FOLLOWING THE RULES .....                                                                                                    | 65        |
| 7.7. REFLECTIONS ON STUDENTS PE EXPERIENCES – SUGGESTIONS AND CHALLENGES.....                                                     | 67        |
| <b>8. CONCLUDING REMARKS – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>                                                             | <b>68</b> |
| <b>9. ANNEX.....</b>                                                                                                              | <b>77</b> |

## 1. Introduction

---

This Report titled *“Needs Assessment Report: Advancing Inclusion and Combating Racism and Discrimination Through Physical Education in Primary Schools in four EU countries”* is the Deliverable D2.1 of the Work Package 2: Needs Assessment for Integrating the DIALECT Methodology into Physical Education in Primary Schools in Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia of the DIALECT5 project **“Addressing intersectional stereotypes and activating students to build inclusive and tolerant primary schools through physical education”**.

The present Needs Assessment Report entails results from primary and secondary research including desk research, online surveys with PE professionals, focus groups with educational authorities and the school community, and interviews with students aged 9-12 years. The final aim of the Report is to provide evidence-based recommendations for adapting DIALECT5 training material.

The Report consists of seven chapters, five of which present the results of the tasks defined under WP2 of the Grant Agreement. These are:

T2.1 Desk research on the relationship between discrimination and physical education in primary schools at the European level.

T.2.2 Design of research methodology, questions, and tools

T.2.3 Online survey targeting physical education professionals at primary education level

T2.4 Focus groups with Educational Authorities and School Stakeholders

T2.5 Interviews with primary school students from diverse backgrounds

The *Needs Assessment Report on Advancing Inclusion and Combating Racism and Discrimination through Physical Education in Primary Schools in Four EU Countries* was compiled and edited by N. Spyropoulou (EKKE). The Desk Research Synopsis and the Full Report were authored by C. Varouxli (EKKE). The Research Protocol was compiled by J. Tsiganou, while the chapter on the online survey results was authored by N. Klironomos (EKKE). The remaining chapters were compiled by N. Spyropoulou (EKKE), drawing on the national reports prepared by the project partners: AAI (Italy), MESE (Hungary), Football Friends (Serbia), AUTH (Greece), and EKKE (Greece). J. Tsiganou, Research Director of EKKE, served as Scientific Supervisor for all tasks carried out under Work Package 2 (WP2) of the DIALECT5 Project.

## 2. Synopsis of Desk Research

---

This desk research<sup>1</sup> forms a core contribution to the DIALECT5 project, building upon knowledge generated through previous DIALECT initiatives and adapting it to the context of primary school physical education (PE). The research investigates the relationship between discrimination, racism,

---

<sup>1</sup> The Full Desk Research Report can be found in Annex.

social exclusion, and physical education within primary schools across Europe, with particular attention to the four partner countries: Serbia, Italy, Hungary, and Greece. The research seeks to establish a shared conceptual framework connecting physical education with issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, and intersectionality. It examines how PE can move beyond its traditional focus on physical development and become an educational tool for addressing stereotypes related to ethnicity, culture, migration background, gender, disability, religion, and socioeconomic status. Through a review of academic literature, European and international policy documents, and reports from organizations such as UNESCO, OECD, and the European Union, the study identifies ways in which PE can contribute to reducing structural discrimination and promoting inclusive school environments.

The desk research on the relationship between discrimination and physical education in primary schools at the European level, with emphasis on the four partner countries (T2.1), focuses on reviewing existing academic literature, policy papers and reports of European and International Organizations in order to identify and analyse the correlation of physical education in primary schools with stereotypes about ethnic, cultural diversity as well as gender roles and their interrelation under the lens of intersectionality. The research focuses on the EU and the case of the four partner countries and investigates how a pedagogical approach for physical education can be oriented towards educational equity, reducing structural discrimination.

Desk research within DIALECT5 project is drafted with a view to establishing a common understanding of the field of discrimination and racism with that of physical education in primary schools, in order to integrate previous DIALECT projects knowledge to the primary school context under the lens of intersectionality. Considering the educational outcomes, physical education lessons provide a low cost/high impact opportunity for governments. By fusing physical, mental and social learning domains, engagement in physical education curricula exposes students to a dynamic range of experiences which build on educational outcomes related to literacy and numeracy. Students participating in physical education, delivered using creative, values-based teaching and learning practices, are empowered to think critically and equipped to communicate effectively. These are skills which are vital to recovery, future proofing and the uprooting of pervasive social inequalities. In conclusion, physical education has an important role to play in the development of a world where no one is left behind and where citizens are healthy, resilient and equipped with the socio-emotional skills needed to navigate life transitions. Physical literacy and critical thinking are key complements to numeracy and literacy. Accordingly, the return on capital investment and the broad-based educational outcomes of participation in physical education, which is inclusive, child-centered and supported by specialized educators should be reflected in national resilience and recovery plans.

Building upon the findings of previous DIALECT projects, the literature emphasizes that physical education (PE) in primary schools represents a unique and influential environment for promoting inclusion, combating discrimination, and fostering democratic values among children. While PE has traditionally been associated with physical development and sports participation, contemporary research increasingly recognizes its broader social and educational role. Physical education can

either reinforce existing inequalities and discriminatory attitudes or become a transformative tool that promotes respect, diversity, social cohesion, and equal opportunities for all students.

The importance of this issue becomes particularly evident during childhood, when attitudes toward race, ethnicity, disability, gender, religion, and other social identities begin to take shape. Research shows that prejudice, intolerance, and discriminatory attitudes are often learned at a very early age through interactions with family members, peers, teachers, media, and wider community influences. Consequently, schools—and especially physical education classes—have a critical role to play in shaping children's perceptions of diversity and inclusion.

During middle childhood (ages 9–11), children begin to understand social norms surrounding race and discrimination. They become more aware that racism and prejudice are socially sensitive issues, yet they are still developing the cognitive and emotional skills necessary to critically evaluate discriminatory beliefs and behaviors. At this stage, children are particularly influenced by messages received from teachers, peers, media, sports, entertainment, and family members. Because these attitudes are still forming, primary school represents a crucial intervention period during which inclusive educational practices can positively influence children's beliefs, behaviors, and values.

Literature demonstrates that physical education occupies a unique position within primary education as both a potential site of discrimination and a powerful mechanism for inclusion. While PE can unintentionally reproduce racial, cultural, gender, disability-related, and socioeconomic inequalities through hidden curricula, biased practices, and structural barriers, it also possesses extraordinary capacity to foster tolerance, respect, empathy, social cohesion, and democratic citizenship.

Physical education in primary schools is a compulsory or widely provided subject across most European primary school systems and is increasingly viewed as part of a whole-child approach to health, wellbeing, and social development. It serves as a crucial, actionable tool to combat discrimination and intolerance by promoting inclusion, empathy, and mutual respect among children. By fostering an environment of belonging, primary school PE can transform perceptions and foster a more inclusive, tolerant society from a young age. For instance, participation in sports activities promotes social interaction, teamwork, and healthy competition, cultivating values such as respect, ethical decision-making, and fair play. Additionally, physical activity is associated with improved self-esteem and self-efficacy. Physical activities in physical education and sport environments can influence children's behavior, fostering moral development, social integration, and character building. Notably, these activities enhance children's inhibitory control, aiding impulse regulation and supporting moral decision-making and sportsmanship. By implementing inclusive, modified, and cooperative, play-based activities, teachers can break down social, racial, and gender barriers. Effective strategies include focusing on team building, promoting fair play, and directly challenging stereotypes. Physical education (PE) in primary schools acts as a critical, interactive, and practical tool to fight discrimination by fostering inclusion, teamwork, and empathy. It breaks down racial, gender, and ability-based barriers, promoting mutual respect, reducing stereotypes, and improving social bonds among children. Through inclusive, adapted, and cooperative activities, PE teachers can actively challenge prejudices and cultivate a safe, respectful environment.

The literature highlights that inclusion differs fundamentally from assimilation. Inclusive education seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of their differences, are accepted as equal and valued members of the educational community. This requires more than positive attitudes; it demands continuous professional development, intercultural competence, and practical strategies that enable teachers to create meaningful learning experiences for diverse student populations. Teachers must develop the ability to communicate effectively across cultures, manage diversity positively, and create learning environments where all students feel respected and included.

Within sports and physical education, diversity management presents particular challenges. If differences among students are poorly managed, discrimination can manifest through scapegoating, stereotyping, exclusion, and the formation of antagonistic in-groups and out-groups. Such dynamics may lead to social tensions, verbal aggression, and even physical conflict. However, when diversity is managed effectively, it can become a valuable resource that strengthens teamwork, cooperation, mutual understanding, and collective performance. Successful coaches and PE teachers create environments where all participants feel safe, respected, and valued regardless of their backgrounds.

The increasing cultural diversity of European societies has further highlighted the importance of intercultural competence among PE teachers. Multicultural classrooms often involve differences in values, communication styles, traditions, and expectations that may create challenges for educators. Research indicates that many PE teachers feel inadequately prepared to address these challenges and lack sufficient training in intercultural education. Areas such as cultural understanding, stereotype management, physical contact norms, and inclusive activity design require greater attention within teacher education programs. Consequently, scholars advocate for culturally responsive pedagogy and specialized training that equips PE teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach effectively in diverse environments.

Researchers identify several key principles underlying inclusive PE. These include recognizing and valuing diversity, providing equitable participation opportunities, adapting activities and equipment to meet diverse needs, implementing differentiated instruction, fostering positive classroom relationships, and promoting accessibility. Inclusive practices may involve modifying games, adjusting rules, using adapted equipment, applying trauma-informed teaching methods, and emphasizing cooperation over competition.

The literature strongly supports the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion within PE. Diverse and inclusive learning environments help students develop empathy, critical thinking, cultural competence, and social awareness. They also promote social justice by challenging stereotypes, reducing discrimination, and ensuring equal opportunities for participation. Moreover, inclusive PE contributes to students' social and emotional development by encouraging teamwork, communication, cooperation, and mutual respect.

Research further demonstrates that physical education is particularly effective in promoting multicultural understanding. PE provides opportunities for students to interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds in meaningful and cooperative ways. Through games, sports, dances, and other physical activities, students learn about different cultures while developing the social

competencies necessary for positive intercultural relationships. Studies indicate that learning-oriented and cooperative motivational climates are especially effective in fostering mutual respect, reducing prejudice, and supporting harmonious interactions among students from different ethnic groups.

Creating inclusive PE environments requires more than policy commitments; it demands comprehensive action involving curriculum reform, teacher education, intercultural competence development, equitable assessment practices, accessible extracurricular opportunities, and strong anti-discrimination measures. When diversity, equity, and inclusion become central organizing principles, physical education can help children develop not only physical skills but also the social, emotional, and civic competencies necessary for living in diverse democratic societies. Ultimately, inclusive physical education contributes to healthier individuals, stronger communities, and more equitable societies by ensuring that every child—regardless of background, identity, or ability—has the opportunity to participate, belong, and thrive.

The updated bibliography and desk research within DIALECT5 project is complementary to the existing literature review of the previous DIALECT projects and is adapted to lead towards implementation for kids 9-12 years old in primary school context. The bibliographic sources provide valuable insights into understanding and addressing the above-mentioned topics and delve into various aspects of inclusion, racism, intolerance and predominant values among children aged 9-12 in primary school context. They also provide insights into how physical activity choices of children aged 9-12 influence these values, particularly within the European contexts and social settings. The sources provide a variety of tools, initiatives, data and materials tailored to address these critical issues among children aged 9-12 and focus on creating inclusive educational settings on issues of diversity and discrimination at an early age. They come from international and European organizations, academic institutions and NGOs, and provide valuable insights into how these critical issues are addressed. Furthermore, they range from government policies to NGO initiatives, academic research, and reports, all of which can be used to support educators, parents, and policymakers in promoting inclusion and combating discrimination through physical education in primary school context.

In conclusion, the desk research positions physical education as far more than a school subject focused on sport or physical activity. It demonstrates that PE is a powerful educational platform for promoting inclusion, combating discrimination, and developing the social and emotional competencies necessary for democratic citizenship. For the DIALECT5 project, the findings provide a strong evidence base for designing educational interventions for children aged 9–12 that integrate anti-discrimination principles with physical activity. The research supports the development of inclusive pedagogical approaches that use PE as a vehicle for reducing prejudice, fostering respect for diversity, and ensuring equal opportunities for all learners. Ultimately, the research argues that quality, inclusive, and child-centered physical education can help build healthier, more resilient, and more equitable societies where every child feels valued, respected, and included.

### 3. Design of research methodology, questions, and tools

---

EKKE was responsible for the design of the research methodology, defining the research questions, related protocols, including ethical considerations and mitigation measures, as well as for developing evidence collection tools. These tools include:

- (a) an online survey questionnaire targeting primary PE professionals (T2.3),
- (b) two focus group guides, one for educational authorities and one for local school stakeholders (T2.4), and
- (c) one interview guide designed for primary education students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds (T2.5).

The research methodology design, questions and tools were based on the desk research findings (see previous chapter and Annex) and served for the implementation of the following research tasks:

#### *T2.3: Online survey targeting physical education professionals at primary education level*

A survey, based on an online questionnaire, was developed by EKKE to assess the competencies, awareness, and current practices of PE professionals in primary schools in integrating inclusive practices, democratic values and intersectionality into their teaching methods, while also identifying challenges and gaps in implementing these values. The on-line questionnaires were translated into the partners' national languages. The survey was disseminated in the four intervention countries—Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia—focusing on primary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. It was disseminated through various ways, including official education networks in cooperation with Directorates of Primary Education, and public educational authorities when possible, mailing lists, and partners communication channels. Upon completion of data collection, EKKE led the analysis, synthesizing key findings and identifying patterns regarding the role of PE in fostering social and civic engagement, social cohesion, and inclusive education in primary schools in the four intervention countries.

#### *T2.4: Focus groups with Educational Authorities and local School Stakeholders*

A total of eight (8) focus groups were conducted in the four intervention countries, with two (2) focus groups per country. The focus groups were coordinated by project partners in each respective country, targeting two key stakeholder groups: a) Educational Authorities, including representatives from ministries of education, regional education directorates, and policy-making bodies responsible for curriculum development, b) Local school community representatives, including primary school principals, PE professionals, and community-based organizations (CSOs) working in the field of sports, non-discrimination and inclusion. The first focus group, consisting of educational authorities, aimed at documenting the policy framework for inclusive education in PE curriculum at primary schools. It examined how existing physical education curricula promote participation, diversity, and active citizenship, while identifying policy gaps and areas for improvement. In Greece, this activity had been implemented by EKKE. The second focus group, consisting of school community representatives, focused on the practical challenges faced by PE teachers and school administrators

in integrating inclusive and democratic values into PE in primary schools, addressing issues such as social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and handling discrimination in sports settings. Participants were expected to share best practices and strategies currently employed at the school level. In Greece, AUTH implemented this activity. EKKE was responsible for the analysis of evidence and key findings.

#### *T2.5. Interviews with primary school students from diverse backgrounds*

This activity involved conducting semi-structured interviews with primary school students 9-12 years old from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds in the four intervention countries to gain insights into their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to inclusion, participation, and democratic values in physical education (PE). Primary education students were interviewed from different ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, including migrant, refugee, and locals, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how PE environments influence social inclusion, intercultural interactions, and active citizenship. Special attention was placed on gender dynamics, exploring whether and how boys and girls experience equal opportunities and participation in sports in primary schools.

In terms of methodology, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach will be adopted, actively involving primary education students and school community representatives in the research process. Additionally, data collection will focus on primary schools in areas with high poverty and unemployment rates, weak social networks, and limited access to opportunities, as well as regions with increased support towards extremist and populist political parties, incidents of racism and intolerance, and a significant presence of migrant populations, including newcomers. This approach ensures that the research captures the perspectives and experiences of primary education students 9 -12 years old and school communities in vulnerable contexts in the four intervention countries.

The quality of the proposed activities & deliverables is guaranteed under the condition that all partners abide with the methodology rules and processes designed primarily by EKKE, amended by the leader and co - partners and in accordance to the research protocol. The adherence to ethical guidelines, will be met if all actions involving persons abide to the code of ethics of EU, EKKE and AAH's Child Protection Policy Framework. In any case, relevant national and EU legislative frameworks will be respected, with GDPR as a common framework of reference for participating countries, as well as the right to respect for private and family life and the protection of personal data (Article 8 ECHR, Articles 7 and 8 of the EU Charter).

## 4. Online survey targeting physical education professionals at primary education level

This chapter presents the results of an online survey conducted among Physical Education (PE) teachers at primary education level in the four DIALECT5 intervention countries: Greece, Hungary, Serbia and Italy.

### 4.1. Methodology and sample profile

#### *Survey design and fieldwork*

The survey was designed to assess PE teachers' competencies, perceptions, current practices and support needs in relation to inclusive education, democratic values, tolerance, conflict management and intersectionality in Physical Education. The target population consists of Physical Education teachers working at primary education level in the four intervention countries. The unit of analysis is the individual Physical Education teacher. Each completed questionnaire corresponds to one PE teacher's responses regarding their professional profile, school context, perceptions of students, views on inclusive and democratic PE, preparedness, teaching practices and interest in the DIALECT5 methodology. Data collection was carried out online and simultaneously in the four participating countries between 1 April 2026 and 18 May 2026<sup>2</sup>. The questionnaire was self-administered and distributed through a convenience sampling approach. More specifically, the survey link was disseminated online through known contacts, professional networks and communication channels reaching individuals identified as Physical Education teachers at primary education level. As a result, the sample should be understood as a non-probability sample. Therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as statistically representative of all PE teachers in the four countries. Instead, they provide descriptive and comparative evidence on the experiences, perceptions and needs of the participating teachers. The median time required to complete the questionnaire was 16 minutes and 11 seconds, indicating that the questionnaire length was broadly manageable for respondents.

#### *Sample distribution by country*

The final analytical sample consisted of 243 PE teachers. More than half of the respondents came from Greece, while the remaining respondents were distributed across Hungary, Serbia and Italy.

**Table 1. Sample distribution by country**

| Country | N   | %    |
|---------|-----|------|
| Greece  | 141 | 58.0 |
| Hungary | 44  | 18.1 |
| Serbia  | 31  | 12.8 |

<sup>2</sup> A short interruption in the fieldwork occurred between 28 and 30 April 2026, due to technical problems affecting the infrastructure hosting the survey server. After this interruption, the survey remained available until the end of the fieldwork period.

|              |            |              |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Italy        | 27         | 11.1         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>243</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

The size of the national subsamples should be taken into account when interpreting country-level comparisons. In particular, the Greek subsample is considerably larger than the other national samples, while the Italian and Serbian subsamples are smaller. For this reason, country-level differences are treated descriptively throughout the report.

### *Respondent profile*

Overall, the sample was relatively balanced by gender, with women representing 54.3% and men 45.7% of respondents. However, gender composition varied across countries. Women formed the majority of respondents in Hungary and Italy, while men were slightly more represented in Serbia. In Greece, the sample was almost evenly divided between women and men. The sample was generally experienced. Overall, 57.6% of respondents were aged 51 or above, while 49.0% reported more than 21 years of teaching experience. However, this pattern was strongly shaped by country differences. In Greece, two thirds of respondents reported more than 21 years of teaching experience, while in Italy the sample was much younger in terms of professional experience, with two thirds reporting up to five years of teaching experience. In terms of educational level, half of the respondents held a Master's degree, while 38.8% held a Bachelor's degree. A small proportion held a Ph.D. The distribution varied considerably by country, with Master's degrees particularly common among respondents in Italy and Hungary. Most respondents were permanently employed. Overall, 77.8% reported permanent employment, while 14.4% were substitute teachers and 7.8% were employed on a fixed-term basis. Permanent employment was especially common among respondents in Greece and Hungary. A relevant finding for the purposes of the DIALECT5 project concerns prior exposure to training on inclusive and democratic values through PE. Only 33.7% of respondents reported that they had attended a relevant seminar or training during the previous five years, while 66.3% had not. This suggests that a substantial share of PE teachers had not recently received structured professional development in this area.

**Table 2. Respondent profile by country**

| Indicator                | Greece | Hungary | Serbia | Italy | Total       |
|--------------------------|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------------|
| N                        | 141    | 44      | 31     | 27    | <b>243</b>  |
| Female (%)               | 50.4   | 70.5    | 41.9   | 63.0  | <b>54.3</b> |
| Aged 51+ (%)             | 78.7   | 40.9    | 35.5   | 0.0   | <b>57.6</b> |
| Master's/PhD (%)         | 50.0   | 68.2    | 22.6   | 92.6  | <b>54.5</b> |
| Permanent employment (%) | 82.3   | 86.4    | 61.3   | 59.3  | <b>77.8</b> |

| Indicator                                      | Greece | Hungary | Serbia | Italy | Total       |
|------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------------|
| 21+ years teaching experience (%)              | 66.0   | 36.4    | 32.3   | 0.0   | <b>49.0</b> |
| Attended relevant training in last 5 years (%) | 39.0   | 20.5    | 19.4   | 44.4  | <b>33.7</b> |

*Note: Percentages are calculated within each country. For educational level, the total valid N is 242 due to one missing response. The Italian figures should be interpreted with particular caution, as the institutional framework for specialist PE teaching in Italian primary schools is more recent than in the other national contexts.*

The profile of respondents indicates that the survey captured the views of a professionally experienced group of PE teachers, particularly in Greece, Hungary and Serbia. At the same time, the Italian subsample differs from the others, as it includes a higher proportion of teachers with fewer years of experience and a higher share of Master's degree holders. This difference should be interpreted in light of the recent institutional introduction and consolidation of specialist Physical Education / motor education teaching in Italian primary schools. Consequently, differences observed for Italy in relation to years of teaching experience, recent training or school-level implementation should not be read only as sample characteristics, but also as reflecting a different stage of institutional development of PE in primary education. The relatively low proportion of teachers who had attended recent training on inclusive and democratic values through PE is particularly relevant for the objectives of the DIALECT5 project. It indicates that, although many respondents have substantial teaching experience, recent specialised training in inclusive and democratic PE is not widespread. This finding provides an important background for interpreting teachers' reported preparedness and their interest in learning about or piloting a methodology designed to promote equity and inclusion in Physical Education.

## 4.2. School and PE Class Context

This chapter presents the main school and Physical Education (PE) class characteristics reported by respondents. The aim is not to provide an exhaustive description of all school-level variables, but to identify contextual conditions that may affect the implementation of inclusive PE practices. These include school location and size, PE class size, the adequacy of sport facilities, the availability of specialized support staff, and selected indicators of student composition.

### *School location, size and PE class size*

Respondents worked in schools located in different types of areas. Overall, 45.3% of respondents reported working in urban schools, 25.1% in suburban schools and 29.6% in rural schools. The distribution varied across countries. Greece included a relatively high proportion of rural schools (37.6%), while Italy and Serbia were more strongly represented by urban and suburban school contexts. Hungary showed a more balanced distribution across urban, suburban and rural locations. School size also differed considerably across countries. Overall, most respondents worked in small or medium-sized schools: 73.7% reported working in schools with up to 300 students. However, this overall pattern mainly reflects the Greek sample, where only 5.0% of respondents worked in schools

with more than 300 students. Larger schools were much more common among respondents from Hungary (61.3%), Italy (59.2%) and Serbia (45.2%). In terms of PE class size, most respondents reported relatively moderate class sizes. Overall, only 7.8% of respondents reported an average PE class size of 26 students or more. However, this proportion was higher in Hungary (27.3%) and Serbia (22.6%), while no respondents from Greece or Italy reported PE classes of 26 students or more. This is relevant for the interpretation of later findings, as larger PE classes may make it more demanding to ensure equal participation, adapt activities to different needs, and manage conflicts or exclusion during team-based activities.

**Table 3. Selected school and PE class context indicators by country**

| Indicator                                                               | Greece | Hungary | Serbia | Italy | Total |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| Urban schools (%)                                                       | 47.5   | 31.8    | 48.4   | 51.9  | 45.3  |
| Schools with 300+ students (%)                                          | 5.0    | 61.3    | 45.2   | 59.2  | 26.3  |
| PE classes with 26+ students (%)                                        | 0.0    | 27.3    | 22.6   | 0.0   | 7.8   |
| Facilities adequacy index, mean 1–5                                     | 2.88   | 3.03    | 3.19   | 2.49  | 2.90  |
| Schools with specialized staff services (%)                             | 94.3   | 86.4    | 93.5   | 62.5  | 89.6  |
| Classes with 6%+ migrant-background students (%)                        | 26.6   | 2.3     | 16.1   | 37.0  | 22.0  |
| Classes with 16%+ low socioeconomic background students (%)             | 23.1   | 26.1    | 6.5    | 44.0  | 23.7  |
| Classes with 6%+ students with identified special educational needs (%) | 38.1   | 62.9    | 16.1   | 88.8  | 45.4  |

*Note: Percentages are calculated within each country. The facilities adequacy index ranges from 1 = not adequate at all to 5 = fully adequate. For specialized staff services, the valid total is N = 240 due to missing responses. Student composition indicators are based on teachers' approximate estimates of the composition of their classes.*

### *Sport facilities and support structures*

The adequacy of sport facilities was assessed across six dimensions: indoor facilities, outdoor facilities, equipment quantity, equipment quality, safety conditions, and the possibility for simultaneous participation of students from several classes. The overall Facilities Adequacy Index was 2.90 on a 1–5 scale, suggesting that respondents evaluated sport facilities as slightly below or around a moderate level of adequacy. Among the individual facility dimensions, safety conditions received the highest mean score (3.12), followed by equipment quantity (3.09) and equipment quality (3.05). The weakest dimension was indoor facilities, with a mean score of 2.48. Outdoor facilities and the possibility for simultaneous participation both had a mean score of 2.84. The internal consistency of the six facility items was good, with a Cronbach's alpha of .802, supporting the use of a composite facilities index. Country differences were also observed. Serbia had the

highest Facilities Adequacy Index (3.19), followed by Hungary (3.03) and Greece (2.88). Italy had the lowest score (2.49). These differences should be interpreted descriptively, especially given the more recent institutional consolidation of specialist PE teaching in Italian primary schools. The lower Italian score may therefore reflect not only school-level material conditions, but also the fact that PE provision at primary level is still being integrated into school structures and routines. More broadly, the findings suggest that PE teachers across countries may not operate under equally supportive material conditions. Specialized staff services were reported by a large majority of respondents. Overall, 89.6% of valid responses indicated that the school offered specialized staff services, such as a psychologist, social worker or individual support teacher. This proportion was high in Greece (94.3%), Serbia (93.5%) and Hungary (86.4%), but lower in Italy (62.5%). The availability of specialized support is particularly important for inclusive education, as PE teachers' ability to address diversity, conflict, exclusion and students' psychosocial needs depends not only on their own professional skills, but also on the wider support framework available within the school.

#### *Student composition and implications for inclusive PE*

Teachers also reported on the approximate composition of students in their classes. The results show that many respondents teach in classrooms with diverse social and educational needs. Overall, 45.4% reported that students with identified special educational needs represented at least 6% of their classes. This proportion was particularly high in Italy (88.8%) and Hungary (62.9%), while it was lower in Greece (38.1%) and Serbia (16.1%). Socioeconomic disadvantage was also present across the sample. Overall, 23.7% of respondents reported that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds represented at least 16% of their classes. This was especially common in Italy (44.0%), followed by Hungary (26.1%) and Greece (23.1%). Migrant-background students were also reported by a notable share of respondents: 22.0% indicated that non-refugee migrant-background students represented at least 6% of their classes, with higher proportions in Italy (37.0%) and Greece (26.6%). Other student groups were less widely reported overall, but with relevant country-level variation. For example, at least 6% Roma-background students were reported by 17.8% of respondents overall, with the highest proportion in Hungary (34.1%). Refugee-background students were less frequently reported, with only 5.8% of respondents overall indicating that they represented at least 6% of their classes. Taken together, these findings indicate that PE teachers work in diverse school contexts, marked by differences in school size, class size, facilities, support structures and student composition. In the case of Italy, these contextual findings should also be read against the more recent institutional development of specialist PE provision in primary schools. These contextual conditions are important for the DIALECT5 project because inclusive PE cannot depend only on teachers' attitudes or willingness. It also requires adequate facilities, manageable class conditions, support structures and practical pedagogical tools that respond to the actual diversity of students in primary school classrooms.

### **4.3. School Climate, Conflicts and Exclusion in PE**

This chapter examines whether schools and PE classes already include activities related to inclusion and tolerance, and what types of problematic behaviours or exclusionary dynamics are observed by

PE teachers. The analysis distinguishes between the general school environment and the PE lesson, as Physical Education may make peer relations, competitiveness, exclusion and unequal participation particularly visible.

#### *Inclusion and tolerance programmes in schools and PE*

Most respondents reported that their schools had implemented at least some programmes or actions promoting inclusion and tolerance during the previous five years. Overall, 78.1% reported at least one such school-level programme or action, while 21.9% reported none. The most common response was 1–3 programmes/actions (59.1%), while fewer respondents reported more extensive activity, with 12.0% reporting 4–6 programmes/actions and 7.0% reporting 7 or more. PE-specific programmes or actions were less widespread. Overall, 63.9% of respondents reported at least one PE programme/action promoting inclusion and tolerance during the previous five years, while 36.1% reported none. Again, the most common response was 1–3 actions (49.8%), while only 14.1% reported 4 or more PE-specific actions. This difference between general school-level activities and PE-specific initiatives suggests that inclusion and tolerance may be present as broader school priorities, but are not always systematically embedded in Physical Education. This finding is relevant for DIALECT5, as the project aims to support PE teachers in translating inclusive and democratic values into concrete PE activities.

**Table 4. Inclusion and tolerance programmes/actions during the last five years**

| Indicator                                                   | Greece | Hungary | Serbia | Italy | Total |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| At least one school-level inclusion/tolerance programme (%) | 83.0   | 74.4    | 54.8   | 85.2  | 78.1  |
| At least one PE-specific inclusion/tolerance programme (%)  | 70.7   | 44.2    | 58.1   | 66.7  | 63.9  |
| Four or more school-level programmes/actions (%)            | 24.1   | 11.6    | 6.4    | 18.5  | 19.0  |
| Four or more PE-specific programmes/actions (%)             | 18.6   | 9.4     | 3.2    | 11.1  | 14.1  |

*Note: Percentages are calculated within each country. “At least one” combines the response categories 1–3, 4–6, and 7 or more. “Four or more” combines the response categories 4–6 and 7 or more.*

Country-level differences should be interpreted descriptively. Greece and Italy reported relatively higher levels of both school-level and PE-specific activity, while Hungary reported a larger gap between general school-level initiatives and PE-specific programmes. Serbia had the highest proportion of respondents reporting no school-level inclusion/tolerance programme. In the case of Italy, these findings should also be read in light of the more recent institutional consolidation of specialist PE teaching in primary schools, which may affect how PE-specific activities are understood and reported.

#### *Problematic behaviours in the wider school environment*

Respondents were also asked how often they observe different types of problematic behaviour among students at school. Verbal aggression was the most frequently reported behaviour: 46.1% of

respondents reported observing verbal aggression often or very often. Physical aggression was reported often or very often by 18.5% of respondents. Forms of exclusion and discrimination were reported less frequently, but they were still present. Social exclusion or isolation of certain students was reported often or very often by 14.8% of respondents, while discriminatory behaviours based on gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, appearance, social status or similar grounds were reported often or very often by 11.1%. These findings indicate that, at school level, verbal aggression is the most visible form of problematic peer behaviour. However, the presence of social exclusion and discriminatory behaviours, even at lower levels, shows that schools continue to face challenges related to tolerance, peer relations and inclusion.

#### *Dynamics observed during PE lessons*

During PE lessons, the most frequently reported problematic dynamic was over-competitive behaviour. Overall, 44.1% of respondents reported observing over-competitive behaviour often or very often during PE lessons. Verbal conflicts were also relatively common, reported often or very often by 36.3% of respondents. Other dynamics were reported less frequently but remain important for inclusive PE. Unequal participation (students participating less in PE) was reported often or very often by 18.4% of respondents. Exclusion from teams was reported often or very often by 13.3%, while physical conflicts were reported often or very often by 10.6%.

**Table 5. Problematic behaviours and PE-class dynamics observed often/ very often**

| Behaviour or dynamic                         | % Often/Very often |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Verbal aggression at school                  | 46.1               |
| Physical aggression at school                | 18.5               |
| Social exclusion/isolation at school         | 14.8               |
| Discriminatory behaviours at school          | 11.1               |
| Over-competitive behaviour during PE lessons | 44.1               |
| Verbal conflicts during PE lessons           | 36.3               |
| Unequal participation during PE lessons      | 18.4               |
| Exclusion from teams during PE lessons       | 13.3               |
| Physical conflicts during PE lessons         | 10.6               |

The PE lesson therefore appears as a setting where competitive and participation-related dynamics become particularly visible. While physical conflicts and explicit team exclusion were less frequently reported than verbal conflicts or over-competitiveness, they are still directly relevant to inclusive PE. Over-competitive behaviour, unequal participation and exclusion from teams point to the need for structured activities that promote cooperation, shared participation, inclusive grouping and non-

exclusionary forms of competition. Country-level differences were especially visible for some PE-class dynamics. Exclusion from teams was reported often or very often most frequently in Italy (25.9%), followed by Greece (13.6%), Hungary (9.3%) and Serbia (6.7%). Unequal participation was also reported more frequently in Italy (25.9%) and Hungary (25.6%) than in Greece (17.9%) and Serbia (3.3%). Over-competitive behaviour was particularly common in Italy (55.5%), Hungary (48.9%) and Greece (46.4%), while it was lower in Serbia (16.6%). These differences should not be overinterpreted, especially given the smaller national subsamples. Nevertheless, they suggest that the intensity and form of PE-class challenges may vary across national and school contexts. In Italy, higher reporting of exclusion from teams, unequal participation and over-competitive behaviour may partly reflect the recent institutional integration of specialist PE teaching in primary schools, as PE practices, routines and expectations are still being consolidated.

### *Main grounds of exclusion or discriminatory behaviour*

Respondents who had observed exclusion or discriminatory behaviour were asked to identify the main ground on which it occurred. By far the most frequently reported ground was skill level, selected by 69.1% of respondents. This was followed, at a much lower level, by nationality, ethnicity or cultural background (9.1%) and gender (8.6%). Other grounds, including appearance, religion and other reasons, were reported less frequently. This is a particularly important finding for the DIALECT5 project. It suggests that exclusion in PE is strongly linked not only to broader social identity categories, such as gender or ethnic/cultural background, but also to sport-specific hierarchies. Skill level appears to be a central mechanism through which students may be included, excluded, valued or marginalised during PE activities. For this reason, inclusive PE methodologies should not only address stereotypes and discrimination in a general sense. They should also focus on how games, teams, rules and tasks are organised so that students with different skill levels can participate meaningfully. This includes adapting rules and equipment, rotating roles, avoiding fixed hierarchies between “strong” and “weak” players, and designing activities where cooperation and collective success are valued alongside physical performance.

### *Implications for DIALECT5*

The findings from this chapter point to a clear need for PE-specific inclusive methodologies. Although many schools have implemented some inclusion or tolerance-related actions, PE-specific initiatives are less widespread. At the same time, PE teachers report that competitive behaviour, verbal conflicts, unequal participation and exclusion from teams are present in PE lessons. The fact that skill level is by far the most frequently reported ground of exclusion is especially relevant. It shows that inclusive PE cannot be limited to general awareness-raising about diversity. It must also address the everyday structure of PE activities: how students are grouped, how teams are formed, how success is defined, how rules are adapted, and how less skilled or less confident students are supported to participate. Overall, the results support the need for practical, classroom-ready PE methodologies that help teachers transform competitive or exclusionary dynamics into cooperative and inclusive learning experiences.

#### 4.4. Students, Gendered Participation and Socio-emotional Skills

This chapter focuses on teachers' perceptions of students' sport preferences, gendered patterns of participation and socio-emotional skills during PE-related activities. The aim is to identify whether students are perceived as ready to participate in inclusive and cooperative activities, and whether gendered or skill-based patterns may limit equal participation.

##### *Gendered patterns in team sports and football participation*

A majority of respondents reported observing differences between boys and girls in their preferences for team sports such as basketball or football. Overall, 56.4% reported observing such differences often or very often, while 30.0% reported observing them sometimes. Only 12.7% reported that they rarely or never observe such differences. Country-level differences were visible. Gendered preferences for team sports were reported often or very often by 67.5% of respondents in Hungary, 59.2% in Italy, 58.9% in Greece and 30.0% in Serbia. In Serbia, the most common response was "sometimes" (43.3%), suggesting that gendered sport preferences may be perceived as less consistently visible than in the other countries. No meaningful difference was observed by respondents' gender. Female and male PE teachers reported almost identical levels of frequent observation of gender differences in team sport preferences, at 56.9% and 56.7% respectively. For this reason, respondent gender is not treated as a major explanatory factor in this part of the analysis. A different pattern emerged when teachers were asked how often girls and boys play football together in their spare time. Only 22.2% reported that girls and boys play football together often or very often, while 43.3% reported that this happens rarely or never. This suggests that although gendered preferences in team sports are widely observed, mixed football participation does not appear to occur spontaneously or systematically outside structured PE settings.

**Table 6. Gendered patterns in team sports and football participation**

| Indicator                                                                 | Greece | Hungary | Serbia | Italy | Total |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| Observe gender differences in team sport preferences often/very often (%) | 58.9   | 67.5    | 30.0   | 59.2  | 56.4  |
| Girls and boys play football together often/very often (%)                | 31.2   | 16.3    | 0.0    | 11.1  | 22.2  |
| Girls and boys play football together rarely/never (%)                    | 30.5   | 58.1    | 63.3   | 66.6  | 43.3  |

The gap between the frequent observation of gendered sport preferences and the relatively limited mixed participation in football is important for DIALECT5. It suggests that gender inclusion in PE should not rely only on students' spontaneous choices or informal peer interaction. Instead, structured activities may be needed to create safe, balanced and inclusive opportunities for boys and girls to participate together in sports that are often gendered in practice, such as football.

##### *Students' socio-emotional and inclusive skills*

Teachers were also asked to assess students' socio-emotional, cooperative and inclusive skills during group activities, games and physical tasks. The ten items formed a reliable scale, with a Cronbach's alpha of .867. The overall Student Socio-emotional and Inclusive Skills Index had a mean of 3.00 on a 1–5 scale, indicating a generally moderate assessment of students' capacities. The highest-rated items concerned students' ability to name their emotions during group activities (mean = 3.27), their understanding of their physical strengths (mean = 3.22) and their tendency to verbally support peers who need extra help (mean = 3.15). However, even for these more positively evaluated items, agreement was not overwhelming. For example, 45.3% agreed or strongly agreed that students are able to name their emotions, while 41.6% agreed or strongly agreed that students understand their physical strengths. The lowest-rated item was students' ability to manage frustration when activities do not proceed as expected (mean = 2.55). Only 12.7% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while approximately half of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Other relatively low-rated areas included students' ability to adjust their style of play to ensure that all peers can participate (mean = 2.85, 23.8% agree/strongly agree) and their persistence when facing difficulties during games or physical tasks (mean = 2.93, 28.4% agree/strongly agree).

**Table 7. Highest and lowest rated student socio-emotional and inclusive skills**

| Student skill                                                            | Mean | Agree/Strongly agree (%) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------------|
| Students are able to name their emotions during group activities         | 3.27 | 45.3                     |
| Students show a clear understanding of their physical strengths          | 3.22 | 41.6                     |
| Students verbally support peers who need extra help                      | 3.15 | 39.5                     |
| Students persist when facing difficulties during games or physical tasks | 2.93 | 28.4                     |
| Students adjust their style of play to ensure all peers can participate  | 2.85 | 23.8                     |
| Students manage frustration when activities do not proceed as expected   | 2.55 | 12.7                     |

*Note: The table presents the highest- and lowest-rated items based on mean scores. Percentages combine "agree" and "strongly agree"*

A notable feature of the results is the high proportion of neutral responses across several items. For example, neutral responses were observed for students' effective communication with peers (43.2%), verbal resolution of disagreements (41.2%), awareness of peers' emotional discomfort (40.3%) and persistence when facing difficulties (39.1%). This suggests that teachers may not view these capacities as clearly absent, but neither do they consistently observe them as well-established among students. Country differences were also observed in the overall index. Serbia had the highest mean score (3.21), followed by Greece (3.10), while Italy (2.74) and Hungary (2.67) had lower scores.

These differences should be interpreted descriptively. In the case of Italy, the lower index may partly reflect the more recent institutional consolidation of specialist PE teaching in primary schools, as teachers, students and schools may still be developing shared routines and expectations around PE activities.

#### *Interpretation and implications for DIALECT5*

The findings suggest a mixed picture. On the one hand, teachers recognise some positive socio-emotional capacities among students, especially in relation to emotional expression, awareness of physical strengths and verbal support for peers. On the other hand, students are seen as less capable of managing frustration, adapting their play to include others and persisting when activities become difficult. This is directly relevant to the findings presented in the previous chapter. Teachers reported that over-competitive behaviour, verbal conflicts, unequal participation and exclusion from teams are present in PE lessons. The results in this chapter help explain why such dynamics may emerge: students may have some cooperative and communicative capacities, but they may need structured guidance to apply them in competitive or team-based situations. For DIALECT5, this means that inclusive PE activities should focus not only on raising awareness about diversity and stereotypes, but also on developing concrete socio-emotional skills. These include frustration management, peer support, inclusive communication, role rotation, cooperative problem-solving and the ability to adapt play so that students with different skill levels can participate meaningfully.

### **4.5. Physical Education, Inclusion, Democratic Values and the National Curriculum**

This chapter examines how PE teachers understand the role of Physical Education in promoting inclusion, democratic values, equality and respect for diversity. It also explores how teachers assess the national PE curriculum in relation to inclusive education, social or citizenship-related objectives and curriculum flexibility. The chapter therefore connects teachers' normative views about PE with the institutional framework within which they work.

#### *PE as a space for inclusion and democratic education*

Respondents expressed strong support for the role of Physical Education in promoting democratic and inclusive values. A large majority agreed or strongly agreed that PE should enhance students' understanding of democratic citizenship (84.2%), that inclusive PE improves the overall learning experience for all students (86.4%), and that PE contributes to promoting equality and respect for diversity among students (86.2%). Responses to the negatively worded statements confirm this positive orientation. Most respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that PE plays only a minor role in fostering social inclusion in primary schools (75.9%). Similarly, 81.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed that promoting democratic values is not part of their professional responsibility as PE teachers.

**Table 8. Teachers' views on the role of PE in inclusion and democratic values**

| Statement | Disagree / Strongly disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Agree / Strongly agree (%) |
|-----------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
|           |                                  |             |                            |

|                                                                                           |      |      |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| PE should enhance students' understanding of democratic citizenship                       | 2.9  | 12.9 | 84.2 |
| PE plays a minor role in fostering social inclusion in primary schools                    | 75.9 | 10.0 | 14.1 |
| Inclusive PE improves the overall learning experience for all students                    | 3.3  | 10.4 | 86.4 |
| Promoting democratic values is not part of my professional responsibility as a PE teacher | 81.7 | 13.3 | 5.0  |
| PE contributes to promoting equality and respect for diversity among students             | 2.1  | 11.7 | 86.2 |

Note: Percentages are valid percentages. For the two negatively worded statements, disagreement indicates stronger support for the inclusive and democratic role of PE.

The five items formed a reliable index of teachers' orientation towards PE as a space for inclusion and democratic education, with a Cronbach's alpha of .771. The overall PE Inclusive Role Index was high, with a mean score of 4.26 on a 1–5 scale. This confirms that respondents generally endorsed the view that PE has a meaningful role in promoting inclusion, equality, respect for diversity and democratic values. Country differences were observed, although they should be interpreted descriptively. Greece recorded the highest score on the PE Inclusive Role Index (4.56), followed by Italy (4.34) and Hungary (3.92). Serbia had the lowest mean score (3.29). The lower Serbian score appears to be linked less to strong disagreement and more to a higher proportion of neutral responses in several items. For example, in Serbia, 53.3% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that PE should enhance students' understanding of democratic citizenship, and 56.7% were neutral on whether inclusive PE improves the overall learning experience for all students. Overall, the findings suggest that PE teachers largely accept the educational and civic role of their subject. However, the presence of neutral responses in some countries indicates that this role may not be equally consolidated across all national contexts or professional cultures.

#### *National curriculum: support and constraints by country*

Teachers were also asked to evaluate the national PE curriculum for primary school. The results show a more mixed picture than the previous set of questions. While respondents strongly endorsed the role of PE in inclusion and democratic education, their views on whether the curriculum provides sufficient support for this role were more cautious. Overall, 51.0% agreed or strongly agreed that the national PE curriculum clearly defines objectives, while 58.8% agreed or strongly agreed that it includes social or citizenship-related objectives. A higher proportion, 65.1%, agreed that the curriculum allows flexibility in content selection. However, only 31.5% agreed or strongly agreed that the curriculum provides adequate information for promoting inclusive PE. This is an important finding, as it suggests that curriculum flexibility may exist, but practical guidance on inclusive PE may be perceived as limited. The two constraint items also show a degree of ambiguity. Overall, 38.4% agreed or strongly agreed that assessment requirements restrict flexibility in addressing social

issues, while 34.3% agreed or strongly agreed that required content leaves limited room to address emerging classroom needs. In both cases, neutral responses were high, above 40%, suggesting that many teachers may not have a clear or uniform view of how far curriculum requirements restrict inclusive or socially responsive PE teaching.

**Table 9. Agreement with national PE curriculum statements by country**

| Curriculum statement                                                                      | Greece | Hungary | Serbia | Italy | Total |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| The national PE curriculum clearly defines objectives                                     | 53.9   | 45.3    | 51.7   | 44.4  | 51.0  |
| The curriculum includes social or citizenship-related objectives                          | 64.6   | 45.2    | 43.3   | 66.7  | 58.8  |
| The content of the PE curriculum provides adequate information for promoting inclusive PE | 29.1   | 25.6    | 36.6   | 48.1  | 31.5  |
| The curriculum allows flexibility in content selection                                    | 73.1   | 44.2    | 46.7   | 77.8  | 65.1  |
| Assessment requirements restrict flexibility in addressing social issues                  | 38.9   | 47.6    | 31.0   | 29.6  | 38.4  |
| Required content leaves limited room to address emerging classroom needs                  | 29.3   | 53.5    | 27.5   | 37.0  | 34.3  |

Note: Percentages combine “agree” and “strongly agree”. Percentages are calculated within each country.

The country-level findings indicate several relevant differences. Greece and Italy reported the highest levels of agreement that the curriculum includes social or citizenship-related objectives and allows flexibility in content selection. In Greece, 73.1% agreed or strongly agreed that the curriculum allows flexibility, while in Italy the corresponding figure was 77.8%. Italy also had the highest agreement that the curriculum provides adequate information for promoting inclusive PE (48.1%), although this still means that fewer than half of Italian respondents gave a positive assessment on this item. Hungary showed a different pattern. Hungarian respondents were less likely to agree that the curriculum allows flexibility in content selection (44.2%) and more likely to agree that required content leaves limited room to address emerging classroom needs (53.5%). This suggests that Hungarian PE teachers may experience the curriculum as more constraining than respondents in the other countries. Serbia showed relatively high levels of neutrality across several curriculum items. For example, 44.8% of Serbian respondents were neutral on whether the curriculum clearly defines objectives, 46.7% were neutral on whether it includes social or citizenship-related objectives, and 65.5% were neutral on both assessment-related restrictions and required content. This suggests uncertainty or ambivalence rather than a clearly positive or negative assessment of the curriculum. The curriculum items were also summarised into two indices. The Curriculum Support Index, based on the first four items, had acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .777. The overall mean score was 3.39 on a 1–5 scale. Greece had the highest score (3.48), followed by Italy (3.44), Serbia (3.37) and Hungary (3.09). The Curriculum Constraint Index, based on the last two

constraint items, had a lower but still usable level of internal consistency for descriptive purposes, with a Cronbach's alpha of .655. The overall mean score was 3.17, indicating a moderate perception of curriculum constraints. Hungary had the highest score (3.30), followed by Serbia (3.25), Italy (3.19) and Greece (3.11).

#### Interpretation and implications for DIALECT5

The findings show a clear distinction between teachers' values and their assessment of curriculum support. On the one hand, PE teachers strongly endorse the role of Physical Education in promoting inclusion, democratic citizenship, equality and respect for diversity. On the other hand, they are less convinced that the national curriculum provides adequate information for promoting inclusive PE. This gap is important for DIALECT5. It suggests that the main challenge may not be convincing teachers that PE has an inclusive and democratic role. Rather, the challenge is to provide practical and curriculum-compatible ways to implement this role in everyday PE lessons. The particularly low agreement with the statement that the curriculum provides adequate information for inclusive PE indicates a need for concrete pedagogical guidance. Teachers may support inclusive values in principle, but still require examples of activities, rule adaptations, grouping strategies, conflict-resolution techniques and ways to address skill differences, gender stereotypes and unequal participation. Country-level variation should also be taken into account. In countries where teachers perceive higher curriculum flexibility, the DIALECT5 methodology may be introduced as a practical enrichment of existing PE teaching. In contexts where teachers perceive stronger curriculum constraints, it may be more effective to present the methodology as a flexible tool that can be integrated into existing requirements without adding excessive workload. In the case of Italy, findings should continue to be interpreted in light of the more recent institutional consolidation of specialist PE teaching in primary schools.

### 4.6. Teachers' Preparedness, Training and Support Needs

This chapter examines PE teachers' self-assessed knowledge, sources of learning, preparedness to address inclusion-related issues, and satisfaction with institutional support and training provision. The findings help identify the areas where teachers may need more structured support in order to translate inclusive and democratic values into everyday PE practice.

#### *Self-assessed knowledge and sources of learning*

Most respondents expressed confidence that they have the necessary knowledge and training to develop democratic values and fight discrimination through PE. Overall, 74.8% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while 21.4% neither agreed nor disagreed and only 3.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Country differences were visible. The highest level of agreement was recorded in Greece (84.8%), followed by Italy (74.1%) and Hungary (65.1%). Serbia differed from the other countries, with only 43.3% agreeing or strongly agreeing and a majority (53.3%) choosing the neutral category. This suggests that Serbian respondents may be less certain about whether they have the necessary knowledge and training to address democratic values and discrimination through PE. Recent training appears to be associated with somewhat higher self-reported confidence. Among teachers who had attended a relevant seminar or training during the last five years, 82.7% agreed

or strongly agreed that they had the necessary knowledge and training. Among those who had not attended such training, the corresponding figure was 70.7%. Although this is a descriptive association and should not be interpreted causally, it suggests that recent professional development may contribute to teachers' perceived preparedness. At the same time, responses show that inclusive PE knowledge is often acquired informally or experientially rather than through formal education or structured training. The most common source of knowledge was practical experience in schools (49.6%), followed by personal involvement and reading (23.3%). Only 14.8% reported training seminars as their main source of knowledge, while 8.5% reported that this knowledge was mostly acquired during their studies. This pattern suggests that many PE teachers build their understanding of inclusion and diversity through everyday professional practice. While practical experience is valuable, it may also mean that teachers do not always have access to shared, systematic or evidence-informed pedagogical tools for inclusive PE.

#### *Preparedness to address diversity, conflict and intersectionality*

Teachers generally reported relatively high levels of preparedness across the five areas examined. The strongest area was communicating effectively with students, where 86.9% felt well or fully prepared. Preparedness was also relatively high for crisis and conflict management (72.2%). However, preparedness declined when the issues became more complex or specialised. 64.5% felt well or fully prepared to manage students' diversity, while 60.8% felt well or fully prepared to handle culturally sensitive situations. The lowest level of preparedness concerned introducing intersectional ways of conducting PE lessons, where only 53.8% felt well or fully prepared. The five preparedness items formed a reliable scale, with a Cronbach's alpha of .882. The overall Preparedness Index had a mean score of 3.82 on a 1–5 scale. Greece had the highest mean score (3.90), followed by Hungary (3.80), Serbia (3.71) and Italy (3.55). The lower Italian score should be interpreted in light of the more recent institutional consolidation of specialist PE teaching in Italian primary schools.

**Table 10. Teachers' preparedness and support needs**

| Indicator                                                                                                                            | %    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Agree/strongly agree they have the necessary knowledge and training to develop democratic values and fight discrimination through PE | 74.8 |
| Well/fully prepared to manage students' diversity                                                                                    | 64.5 |
| Well/fully prepared for crisis and conflict management                                                                               | 72.2 |
| Well/fully prepared to communicate effectively with students                                                                         | 86.9 |
| Well/fully prepared to handle culturally sensitive situations                                                                        | 60.8 |
| Well/fully prepared to introduce intersectional ways of conducting lessons                                                           | 53.8 |
| Satisfied/very satisfied with information from educational authorities on inclusive education                                        | 19.0 |

|                                                                       |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Satisfied/very satisfied with cooperation and support from colleagues | 57.8 |
| Satisfied/very satisfied with the provision of training seminars      | 26.6 |

*Note: Percentages combine the two most positive response categories for each item.*

Country-level patterns confirm that communication with students is the strongest area across all countries. However, more demanding areas such as culturally sensitive situations and intersectional teaching show clearer needs for further support. For example, only 30.8% of Italian respondents and 44.8% of Serbian respondents felt well or fully prepared to introduce intersectional ways of conducting PE lessons. The corresponding figures were higher in Greece (61.6%) and Hungary (48.8%), but still indicate room for improvement. These findings point to an important distinction. Teachers may feel generally competent in everyday classroom communication and conflict management, but less prepared to address more complex dimensions of inclusion, such as culture, intersectionality and the overlapping effects of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, skill level and special educational needs.

#### *Institutional support and training provision*

The results on satisfaction with institutional support were more cautious than teachers' self-assessments of preparedness. Respondents were most satisfied with cooperation and support from colleagues: 57.8% were satisfied or very satisfied, while only 13.9% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. By contrast, satisfaction with information and support from educational authorities was much lower. Only 22.4% were satisfied or very satisfied with information provided by educational authorities on general educational matters, while 19.0% were satisfied or very satisfied with information on inclusive education specifically. In both cases, the most common response was neutral. Satisfaction with the provision of training seminars was also limited. Only 26.6% were satisfied or very satisfied, while 27.4% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and 46.0% were neutral. This suggests that training provision may not be perceived as sufficiently available, relevant or systematic by a large share of PE teachers. Country differences were again visible. Satisfaction with information on inclusive education from educational authorities was highest in Serbia (43.3%) and much lower in Greece (15.9%), Hungary (14.3%) and Italy (15.3%). Satisfaction with the provision of training seminars was also highest in Serbia (56.7%), followed by Hungary (34.9%), Greece (19.6%) and Italy (15.4%). These differences should be interpreted descriptively, especially given the smaller national subsamples. Overall, the findings suggest that PE teachers rely more on peer support and professional experience than on systematic institutional guidance. This is consistent with the finding that practical experience is the most common source of knowledge on inclusion and diversity.

#### *Implications for DIALECT5 training*

The results of this chapter suggest that teachers are not starting from a position of low confidence. Most respondents believe they have the necessary knowledge and training to promote democratic values and address discrimination through PE, and many report feeling well prepared in areas such as communication and conflict management. However, the findings also reveal important training needs. Preparedness is lower for culturally sensitive situations and especially for intersectional ways of conducting PE lessons. Moreover, teachers' knowledge is mostly acquired through practical

experience rather than formal training, and satisfaction with training provision and information from educational authorities is limited. For DIALECT5, this means that the training offer should be practical, targeted and directly applicable to classroom realities. It should not only present general principles of inclusion, but provide concrete tools for handling diversity, adapting activities, managing conflicts, addressing skill-level hierarchies, and designing PE lessons that respond to intersecting forms of disadvantage or exclusion. The results also suggest that peer learning could be an effective component of the training approach. Since teachers report relatively high satisfaction with cooperation and support from colleagues, DIALECT5 training could build on collaborative formats, exchange of good practices, peer reflection and practical demonstration of inclusive PE activities.

#### 4.7. Inclusive PE Practices, Main Challenges and Interest in the DIALECT5 Methodology

This chapter examines the practices that PE teachers report applying in their classes, the pedagogical goals they prioritise, the main challenges they identify for creating inclusive schools, and their interest in learning about and piloting a PE methodology designed to promote equity and inclusion.

##### *Inclusive practices in PE classes*

Respondents reported using several inclusive or participatory practices in PE classes. The most frequently applied practice was helping students talk through and resolve conflicts during games: 89.9% reported doing this often or most of the time. A similarly high proportion reported modifying rules, equipment or group formations to promote equal participation (85.8%). Other practices were also relatively common, though less widespread. 73.4% reported integrating discussions about respect, diversity and inclusion into physical activities often or most of the time, while 67.9% reported involving students in decision-making processes, such as choosing activities or setting rules. 66.9% stated that they often or most of the time adapt the curriculum in ways that promote social justice and inclusion. Lower levels were observed for practices that require more explicit pedagogical planning around stereotypes or student leadership. 54.2% reported providing opportunities for students to lead parts of the lesson often or most of the time, while 50.4% reported intentionally designing activities that challenge gender stereotypes in sports. Differentiating sports activities according to gender was less common (19.3% often or most of the time), and this item is treated separately because it may reflect different pedagogical meanings depending on context.

**Table 11. Inclusive PE practices applied often or most of the time**

| Practice                                                                   | Often / Most of the time (%) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Help students talk through and resolve conflicts during games              | 89.9                         |
| Modify rules, equipment or group formations to promote equal participation | 85.8                         |

| Practice                                                                              | Often / Most of the time (%) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Integrate discussions about respect, diversity and inclusion into physical activities | 73.4                         |
| Involve students in decision-making processes                                         | 67.9                         |
| Adapt the curriculum in ways that promote social justice and inclusion                | 66.9                         |
| Provide opportunities for students to lead parts of the lesson                        | 54.2                         |
| Intentionally design activities that challenge gender stereotypes in sports           | 50.4                         |
| Differentiate sports activities according to gender                                   | 19.3                         |

*Note: Percentages combine “often” and “most of the time”. The item on differentiating activities according to gender is not included in the Inclusive Practice Index, as it is not necessarily an inclusive practice in itself.*

The eight inclusive practice items, excluding the item on gender differentiation, formed a reliable scale, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .802. The overall Inclusive Practice Index had a mean score of 3.83 on a 1–5 scale, indicating that respondents generally report applying inclusive practices relatively often. Country differences were visible. Greece had the highest Inclusive Practice Index (4.08), followed by Italy (3.68), Hungary (3.55) and Serbia (3.24). Greece also stood out in relation to activities challenging gender stereotypes: 71.7% of Greek respondents reported applying such activities often or most of the time, compared with 42.3% in Italy, 13.3% in Serbia and 11.9% in Hungary. Differences were also observed in practices related to equal participation and conflict resolution. Modifying rules, equipment or group formations was reported often or most of the time by 95.0% of respondents in Greece, 88.4% in Hungary and 84.6% in Italy, but by only 40.0% in Serbia. Similarly, helping students resolve conflicts was very common in Greece (94.3%), Hungary (93.0%) and Italy (96.3%), but lower in Serbia (60.0%). These results suggest that many teachers already apply practices that support inclusive PE, especially in relation to conflict resolution and equal participation. However, practices addressing gender stereotypes and student leadership appear less systematically embedded. This is important because previous chapters showed that gendered sport preferences, over-competitive behaviour, unequal participation and skill-based exclusion remain visible in PE contexts.

### *Pedagogical priorities*

Respondents placed strong emphasis on broad educational and psychosocial goals in PE. The highest priority was the development of teamwork, cooperation, respect and acceptance of diversity, with 94.6% reporting high or very high emphasis. This was followed by creating positive attitudes toward lifelong exercise (91.7%), developing psychosocial skills (77.0%) and developing students’ self-regulation skills (72.3%). These findings confirm that PE teachers attach importance not only to physical activity and sport performance, but also to broader developmental and social goals.

However, when compared with the practice items, a gap becomes visible: while almost all teachers place strong emphasis on cooperation, respect and diversity, fewer report frequently designing activities that explicitly challenge gender stereotypes or provide student leadership opportunities. This suggests that teachers may value inclusive and psychosocial goals, but may still need practical tools to translate them into systematic classroom strategies.

### *Main challenges for creating an inclusive school*

Respondents were asked to select up to three main challenges for creating an inclusive school that promotes tolerance and equity for all students. The three most frequently selected challenges were the lack of teachers' specialised knowledge around inclusion, the absence of a support framework for integrating new techniques and activities, and family disengagement.

#### Box 1. Top three challenges identified by PE teachers

1. Lack of teachers' specialised knowledge around issues of inclusion -- 50.0% of cases
2. Absence of a support framework for the integration of new techniques and activities -- 38.3% of cases
3. Family disengagement -- 34.6% of cases

These findings are consistent with the results on training and support needs. They suggest that the main barriers to inclusive education are not only located at the level of teachers' attitudes, but also concern professional knowledge, institutional support and the wider relationship between school and families.

The prominence of specialised knowledge and support framework as challenges is particularly relevant for DIALECT5. It indicates that teachers may be willing to promote inclusion, but need concrete methods, institutional backing and practical resources to do so effectively.

### *Interest in the DIALECT5 methodology and willingness to pilot*

Interest in learning about a PE methodology designed to promote equity and inclusion was very high. Overall, 89.2% of respondents were either quite interested, very interested or already familiar with such a methodology. Only 10.8% reported low interest. Country differences were notable. Interest was very high in Greece (96.4%), Italy (96.3%) and Hungary (95.4%), while Serbia showed a much lower level of interest (40.0%). In Serbia, 60.0% of respondents reported being not at all or only slightly interested. This difference should be interpreted cautiously due to the smaller national subsample, but it suggests that uptake strategies may need to be more strongly tailored in the Serbian context. Among respondents with at least some interest or prior familiarity, willingness to pilot the methodology was also very high. Overall, 97.2% of valid respondents said they would be willing to pilot it, either because they were ready to incorporate new techniques and activities into their lessons (58.6%) or because they saw it as a good opportunity to benefit from (38.6%). Only 2.8% expressed reluctance.

**Table 12. Interest in and willingness to pilot the DIALECT5 methodology**

| Indicator                                                       | %    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Quite/very interested or already familiar with the methodology  | 89.2 |
| Low interest: not at all or slightly interested                 | 10.8 |
| Willing to pilot the methodology among eligible respondents     | 97.2 |
| Strong willingness to incorporate new techniques and activities | 58.6 |
| See piloting as a good opportunity to benefit from              | 38.6 |
| Sceptical or unwilling to change teaching plan                  | 2.8  |

Among those with low interest, the most common reasons were lack of time for extra professional development and lack of interest in alternative PE methodology, each reported by 50.0% of cases. A smaller share, 34.6%, stated that they did not feel they needed additional training. These results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents in the low-interest group. Recent training attendance was associated less with willingness to pilot in general, which was high in both groups, and more with the intensity of willingness. Among those who had attended relevant training in the previous five years, 70.5% selected the strongest positive response, stating that they were willing to incorporate new techniques and activities into their lessons. Among those who had not attended such training, the corresponding figure was 51.8%. This suggests that prior exposure to relevant training may increase teachers' readiness to actively adopt new inclusive PE techniques.

#### Implications for DIALECT5

The findings from this chapter are encouraging for the implementation of DIALECT5. Many PE teachers already report using inclusive practices, especially conflict resolution and adaptations that promote equal participation. They also place strong emphasis on cooperation, respect, diversity and psychosocial development. At the same time, the results show where the methodology can add value. Practices that require more intentional design, such as challenging gender stereotypes, creating student leadership opportunities and systematically embedding inclusion into PE activities, are less widespread. The main reported challenges also point to the need for specialised knowledge and a support framework for integrating new techniques. Interest in the DIALECT5 methodology is high, and willingness to pilot is very strong among eligible respondents. This creates favourable conditions for uptake. However, the methodology should be presented as practical, time-efficient and easy to integrate into existing PE lessons. It should provide concrete examples of activities, rule adaptations, grouping strategies and reflection tools, helping teachers move from positive values and broad pedagogical priorities to systematic inclusive PE practice.

## 4.8. Conclusions

The survey findings show that PE teachers in the four DIALECT5 countries generally recognise the potential of Physical Education to promote inclusion, democratic values, equality and respect for diversity. Across the sample, teachers strongly endorsed the idea that PE can contribute to democratic citizenship and improve the learning experience when it is inclusive. This provides a positive basis for the development and implementation of the DIALECT5 methodology. At the same time, the findings also show that inclusive PE cannot be taken for granted. Teachers work in diverse school contexts, with differences in school size, class size, sport facilities, support structures and student composition. These contextual conditions affect how easily inclusive activities can be implemented. Facilities were assessed as only moderately adequate overall, and some countries reported more challenging conditions than others. Although specialized staff services were available in many schools, support structures varied across national contexts. The survey also indicates that PE lessons are spaces where peer dynamics become highly visible. Over-competitive behaviour and verbal conflicts were among the most frequently reported issues during PE lessons. Unequal participation and exclusion from teams were less frequent but remain highly relevant for inclusive PE. Importantly, skill level was by far the most frequently reported ground of exclusion or discriminatory behaviour. This suggests that exclusion in PE is not only linked to social identity categories such as gender, ethnicity or cultural background, but also to sport-specific hierarchies between more and less skilled students. Gendered patterns of participation also remain visible. A majority of teachers reported observing differences between boys and girls in their preferences for team sports, while mixed football participation in students' spare time was relatively limited. This suggests that gender inclusion should not be expected to emerge spontaneously. Instead, PE lessons need structured activities that create safe and balanced opportunities for boys and girls to participate together, especially in sports that are often gendered in practice. Teachers' perceptions of students' socio-emotional and inclusive skills were moderate rather than strongly positive. Students were seen as relatively more capable of naming emotions, understanding their physical strengths and verbally supporting peers. However, they were assessed less positively in relation to managing frustration, adapting their play so that all peers can participate, and persisting when activities become difficult. This finding helps explain why conflicts, over-competitiveness and unequal participation may emerge in PE classes. It also shows that inclusive PE should support not only physical participation, but also socio-emotional learning. A key finding concerns the gap between teachers' values and available guidance. Teachers strongly support the role of PE in inclusion and democratic education, but they are less convinced that the national curriculum provides adequate information for promoting inclusive PE. While curriculum flexibility was reported in several contexts, practical guidance on how to implement inclusive PE appears more limited. Country differences were particularly relevant in relation to curriculum perceptions and should be taken into account when adapting the DIALECT5 methodology. In the case of Italy, findings should be interpreted in light of the more recent institutional consolidation of specialist PE teaching in primary schools. Teachers generally expressed confidence in their knowledge and preparedness, especially in communication and conflict management. However, their preparedness was lower for culturally sensitive situations and, especially, for intersectional ways of conducting PE lessons. Moreover, their knowledge on inclusion and diversity was most often acquired through practical

experience rather than formal studies or structured training. Satisfaction with training provision and information from educational authorities was limited, while support from colleagues was evaluated more positively. This suggests that teachers rely strongly on experiential and peer-based learning. The findings on practices are encouraging. Many PE teachers already report using inclusive practices, particularly helping students resolve conflicts and adapting rules, equipment or group formations to promote equal participation. However, practices requiring more intentional pedagogical design, such as challenging gender stereotypes and providing student leadership opportunities, were less widespread. This points to a practical implementation gap: teachers may value inclusion, cooperation and diversity, but still need more structured tools to embed these goals consistently in PE activities. The reported challenges confirm this interpretation. The three most important challenges identified were the lack of teachers' specialised knowledge around inclusion, the absence of a support framework for integrating new techniques and activities, and family disengagement. These findings show that barriers to inclusive PE are not only attitudinal; they are also professional, organisational and relational. Interest in the DIALECT5 methodology was high, and willingness to pilot it was very strong among eligible respondents. This creates favourable conditions for implementation. However, the methodology should be practical, time-efficient and clearly connected to teachers' everyday classroom needs.

## 5. Focus Group Discussions with Educational Authorities

---

### 5.1. Participants' profile

In total 20 participants took part in four focus group discussions held in Greece, Italy, Serbia, and Hungary, through face-to-face, online and hybrid meetings, depending on national conditions. In addition, one individual interview was conducted in Greece with a representative of the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), who couldn't attend the focus group discussion, increasing the total number of participants to 21 persons. The population that participated comprised of 7 men and 14 women, with the majority of participants having university-level education and professional in education, sport, school leadership, municipal governance, and educational administration. Most participants were professionals with more than 10 years of experience in their respective fields, ensuring a high level of expertise and institutional insight.

### 5.2. Policy framework for inclusion and equality in education

#### *Current policy framework for promoting inclusion, equality and non-discrimination*

Despite differences and variations between countries, experts from all four countries generally agree that national frameworks and policies formally do support the promotion of equality and non-discrimination in primary education with the use of varying instruments such as legislation, curriculum reforms, support services for vulnerable students, initiatives for etc. However, they also

commonly recognize that there is a gap between policy and everyday school practice. Problems are identified in the actual successful implementation of this framework, which depends on factors such as local and economic resources, school conditions, as well as the initiative of individual educators.

In particular, looking at each country separately: In Greece, significant efforts have been made in recent years with the current educational policy framework aiming at ensuring equal opportunities for all students, while particular attention is given to vulnerable groups. Institutional initiatives such as the “Skills Workshops” and “Active Citizenship Actions” are considered by a participant as important policy instruments supporting inclusive education. However, implementation varies considerably across schools and regions. As a result, participants view inclusion not only as a policy objective, but as a challenge in terms of governance, coordination, and institutional support. In Hungary, national and regional policies formally emphasize integration and inclusion of all students in the PE class. However, in practice heterogeneous classes can also create opportunities for discrimination. While earlier policies focused on Roma inclusion, today bullying and exclusion stem from material differences or socioeconomic status rather than other grounds (such as ethnicity). Despite the 2013 regulation on acceptance of physical differences, appearance-based discrimination persists. In addition, segregated schools still exist in some areas and broader structural inequalities remain visible in everyday school life. In Italy, the educational, social and wellbeing promoting value of sport was only recently recognised (September 2023) under Article 33 of the Italian Constitution. However, compulsory physical education currently applies only to the fourth and fifth grades of primary school, while access to sport remains strongly influenced by the socioeconomic conditions of the families. It was suggested therefore that physical education should be further introduced into the school system to address inequalities in access to sport, which affects particularly children from low-income families. Experts also highlighted that Naples is the European City of Sport 2026, which has increased funding and has enabled structural interventions and upgrading of school and local sports facilities. Finally, in Serbia there is a clearly defined normative framework for inclusion, equality, and non-discrimination in primary education. However, consistent application at the local level remains challenging, especially in resource-limited communities. In addition, it was underlined that practical application of policies to prevent discrimination and support vulnerable children remains underdeveloped. Experts emphasized the need for concrete tools, methodologies, and continuous teacher training.

*Policies addressing racism, xenophobia, stereotypes and discrimination among children (including vulnerable children)*

According to participants from all four countries, the national education policies acknowledge the importance of promoting inclusion, equality, and non-discrimination. In Greece, Hungary and Serbia they explicitly refer to the inclusion of the needs of vulnerable groups (such as migrants, refugees, Roma students, and children with disabilities), while in Italy participants focused on gender stereotypes, disability inclusion, and inequalities in access to educational and sporting opportunities. Nevertheless, it was commonly highlighted that these policies are not always fully reflected in everyday school practice. In other words, there is a gap between policy goals and implementation. Participants stressed that tackling racism, stereotypes, xenophobia, and exclusion

requires not only legislation, but also adequate resources, teacher training, practical tools, and continuous support for schools. Furthermore, participants noted that inclusion challenges are widening and concern not only ethnic or cultural diversity, but also disability, learning difficulties, behavioural challenges, and socioeconomic disadvantage.

Looking separately at each country:

In Greece, the successful implementation of the formal framework is affected, among others, by the persistence of stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes within the broader society influencing often school environments. Experts suggested that efforts should focus on continuous educational strategies and not on fragmented interventions. Schools need support in responding to multiple and intersecting dimensions of diversity, while delays in teaching material and lack of systematic training may have a bearing on transforming inclusion targets to school practice. In Hungary, practical monitoring and enforcement of the national and regional policies that address racism, xenophobia, stereotypes, and discrimination are largely missing. While the policy framework promotes inclusion, teachers experience a significant gap between written directives and everyday reality. As a result, the effectiveness of these policies depends heavily on individual schools and teachers rather than on systematic oversight or support. In Italy, policies mainly discussed referred to addressing gender stereotypes and the inclusion of students with disabilities rather than racism or xenophobia. The *Coscienza Comune* project was presented as a positive initiative aimed at challenging gender-based stereotypes. Participants also highlighted barriers faced by students with disabilities, including some practices that unintentionally isolate these students from the wider class group. Unequal access to sports activities, school trips, and competitive sports opportunities, was also mentioned particularly for students with disabilities and non-citizen foreign minors. In Serbia, policies recognize the need to prevent discrimination and support vulnerable groups, including Roma students, children with disabilities, and migrant or refugee children. However, implementation of these policies remains underdeveloped and often lacks practical support mechanisms.

### *Defining “democratic values” in the context of primary education*

Participants from all four countries define or link democratic values in primary education with concepts such as: respect for human rights and diversity, equality in participation, inclusion, tolerance, and active citizenship. It has been also been commonly suggested (especially in Greece, Hungary and Serbia) that children should learn democracy primarily through experiencing democratic practices in everyday school life rather than solely through classroom teaching.

An important element of democratic values, which was highlighted especially in Greece and Serbia is the creation of opportunities for the children to be heard, to participate and to contribute to shaping the educational environment. In particular, looking at each country separately, in Greece democratic values were associated with opportunities for expressing their opinions and participating in the decision-making processes. Also, the development of responsibility, autonomy, empathy, and active citizenship were mentioned as prerequisites of democracy in schools. In Hungary, democratic values meant that all students—regardless of age, gender, background or ability—can take part in

the same quality learning activities, have access to the same equipment, and feel equally supported by teachers.

In Italy, sport was described as a privileged space for building inclusive relationships and for transmitting ethical, community-based, and democratic values. However, it was also underlined that in the absence of adequate pedagogical and educational guidance, sporting practices can also become contexts in which discriminatory dynamics, symbolic violence, sexism, and social exclusion are reproduced, as illustrated by examples of aggressive behaviours, gender stereotypes, and forms of marginalization during sporting activities—particularly football in areas characterized by high levels of social vulnerability.

In Serbia, they emphasize that schools shape these values not only through curriculum content but also through everyday interactions, transparency, student participation, and a culture of dialogue. Democratic values are understood as lived experiences rather than abstract concepts.

#### *Effective practices, approaches, or mechanisms for promoting democratic values in primary schools.*

In all countries, it was emphasized that in primary schools Physical Education is one of the best environments for practicing and promoting democratic values. It was also commonly agreed that practices that actively promote the involvement of students in decisions regarding deciding rules, choosing captains, or leading parts of the game fosters their experience in shared decision-making.

Looking at the experts' feedback per country, in Greece participatory teaching methods that involve students in decision-making and experiential learning approaches are considered very effective for promoting democratic values. The creation of inclusive and supportive school environment is also considered a prerequisite for promoting democratic values. In addition, it was mentioned that democratic values should be promoted as an integral part of everyday school practices, and not only through dedicated lessons or activities.

In Hungary, participants mentioned several practices that reinforce respect and cooperation, such as Fair-play routines (i.e. shaking hands before and after games, helping weaker players, or rewarding fair behaviour with “fair-play points”) and also external tools and programmes that promote democratic values, such as The Olympic Values School Program (OVEP: Olimpiai Értékek Iskolai Program) that teach Olympic values through playful activities, the *Aktív Magyarország* program where children can propose ideas for school sport events, and project weeks or camps built around cooperation and inclusion (e.g., in Veszprém's “Aktív Iskola” initiative).

In Italy, participants identified as effective practices for promoting democratic values the investment in: a) infrastructure and resources (improvement of school gyms and facilities, use of school facilities after school hours, increase of funding to local communities), b) cooperation for establishing partnerships and local networking, and c) inclusive and participatory methodologies, sports activities and initiatives addressing gender stereotypes (including Paralympic sports). The DIALECT5 project was also mentioned as an initiative that helps bridge the gap between the institutional framework and the needs of the local communities. Experts also highlighted important implementation challenges, such as inadequate sports infrastructure, limited public investment, and

insufficient teacher training on inclusion, which continue to undermine the effectiveness of these practices.

In Serbia, effective practices that were mentioned include participatory and democratic school practices (experiential learning methods, strengthening student participation and parliaments), teachers' capacity building (ongoing teacher training on inclusion and human rights, provision of practical tools), creation of partnerships (involving families, communities and external organizations). In addition, strong implementation and support systems are considered essential for monitoring and evaluating policy implementation, strengthening schools' capacity and ensuring coordination and support among relevant authorities. Lastly, it is also important that the policy framework can be adapted according to the prevailing situation. Regularly updates and changes in policies and practices, are necessary in order to address the needs of students and school communities in real time.

### **5.3. The role of physical education in promoting social values**

*The role of physical education and sport play in promoting tolerance, respect and social cohesion among students*

Participants from all four countries agree that Physical Education (PE) and sport can and should play an important role in promoting tolerance, respect, inclusion, and social cohesion. PE has been unanimously described by all participants as a context in which students interact, cooperate, work toward shared goals, and develop relationships with peers from different backgrounds. Participants emphasized that activities, as those exercised during PE, requiring teamwork, communication, mutual support, and shared participation help children develop respect for others, a sense of belonging, and an appreciation of diversity. At the same time, a common finding in all countries was that these positive outcomes are not automatic, in the sense that sport and physical activity do not promote inclusion by default. Participants stressed that the role of PE and its educational value depends largely on the teachers' pedagogical approaches (how the lesson and its activities are organised and guided by teachers). When priority is placed on values such as cooperation, participation, and fair play, PE can foster respect and social cohesion. In contrast, when emphasis is placed on excessive competition and performance, then it may lead to exclusion, inequalities, and/or stereotypes.

Looking at the opinions of experts per country, in Greece and Italy, participants explicitly described PE and sport as a "universal language" capable of bringing together children from different cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds and develop positive relationships. In other words, participants viewed PE as a valuable but context-dependent tool for promoting democratic values. In Italy, participants highlighted also that access to sport continues to depend heavily on families' socio-economic conditions. In this context, the importance of school-based PE and sport was emphasized in ensuring that children from economically disadvantaged families have equal access to physical activity regardless of their household resources. In Serbia, participants consider PE and sport a

vehicle for developing discipline, responsibility, self-control, fair play, and the ability to cope constructively with success, failure, and frustration. In this context PE was viewed as “a powerful platform for social learning and relationship-building”. In Hungary, participants described PE as “one of the most effective environments” for promoting respect and social inclusion. They stressed that PE classes often foster stronger group cohesion and lower levels of teasing than regular classes, while also noting that this also depends greatly on teacher guidance and the wider school culture.

*Existence of educational initiatives/ programmes using sport to foster inclusion or intercultural dialogue in schools*

In Greece, participants acknowledged that various educational initiatives and programmes have been developed over recent years, however no specific reference was made on specific programmes. Nevertheless, participants highlighted that the effectiveness of the various initiatives depends on their sustainability, practical applicability, and integration within broader school policies and practices. They also stressed that successful initiatives should provide concrete tools and guidance for educators while fostering cooperation, participation, and mutual respect among students.

In Hungary, only a few initiatives that use sport to foster inclusion and intercultural dialogue in schools exist. Participants mentioned a university course during Physical Education studies on the *physical cultures of different nations*, where each lesson introduces the movement traditions of a specific country and explores how these can be applied today. Also, a programme titled “*Népek tánca*” (Dances of Nations) has been used in Veszprém, a disadvantaged area where many students from diverse background go to school. This programme aims to bring cultures together through shared movement and learn about one another’s backgrounds in a playful, non-verbal way.

In Italy, among several initiatives mentioned by the experts, the programme “*Coscienza Comune*” stands out as a project aimed at countering gender stereotypes through participatory educational activities and methodologies. Another innovative practice highlighted by participants is the “*Baskin*” (inclusive basketball), which is considered as a concrete example of an inclusive sporting methodology engaging students with different abilities, while the “*Paralympic workshops*” in schools are also valued positively, for normalizing the presence of disability within sporting practice and for promoting a culture of inclusion and accessible participation for all. Participants also placed emphasis on initiatives developed in the areas of Scampia and the Eighth Municipal District, where sport is used as a tool to counter social marginalization, educational disengagement, and violence.

In Serbia, participants acknowledged that various initiatives and programmes exist that use sport as a tool for promoting inclusion and intercultural dialogue. Some of these programmes provide valuable examples of how structured, intentional use of physical activity can promote empathy, cooperation, and respect. Nevertheless, participants stressed that most of these initiatives are project-based and time-limited and as a result it is difficult to ensure their sustainability and long-term impact.

## 5.4. Inclusion challenges in primary schools

### *Challenges Faced by Schools in Addressing Diversity and Preventing Social Exclusion among Children Aged 9–12*

According to participants from all four countries, addressing diversity and preventing social exclusion among children aged 9–12 is a complex and ongoing challenge that all schools face. It has been commonly observed that there is a growing heterogeneity of students in classrooms, where differences related not only to culture or language, but also to learning abilities, behavioural and emotional needs, disability, and levels of social participation must be addressed simultaneously within the same learning environment. This complex situation is very demanding for teachers, who are expected to manage highly diverse classrooms while promoting at the same time inclusion, cooperation and equal participation for all students.

Another challenge mentioned in all four countries, is the persistence of subtle forms of exclusion and stereotyping among peers which probably originate from outside school but are reproduced within peer interactions and often lead to unequal participation, teasing, or low expectations rather than explicit discrimination. Despite the fact that national policy frameworks in all countries formally support inclusion and equality in schools and PE classes, participants highlight a gap between these policy goals and everyday school practice. This gap is further widened by structural barriers such as large class sizes, limited time, insufficient resources, and a lack of specialised support staff, which reduce schools' capacity to respond effectively to individual needs. Following from above, participants view inclusion as an ongoing process that depends heavily on teachers' practices and school-level conditions.

Looking at the country level, in Greece participants stressed that in the Physical Education class the challenges are even greater, because differences in performance, participation, and confidence make existing inequalities more apparent. In Italy, schools additionally face infrastructural and organisational limitations that directly affect inclusion, while there are persistent issues of unequal access to sport and the marginalisation of students with disabilities in some contexts. In Hungary, a key challenge lies in managing hidden peer dynamics and bullying, which are not always visible to teachers, as well as in overcrowded classrooms that limit opportunities for individual attention and differentiated support. Finally, in Serbia, the pressure on teachers and schools to build inclusive environments with inadequate support (large class sizes, specialized staff, limited material resources, lack of flexibility etc) was highlighted.

### *Support and Guidance Provided to Schools by Educational Authorities for addressing these challenges*

Participants in all countries (Serbia, Greece, Italy, and Hungary), agreed that schools receive a combination of formal policy frameworks, institutional guidelines, and targeted support measures aimed at promoting inclusion, equality, and the management of diversity. These include legal regulations, curriculum guidance, professional development opportunities, and access to specialised services such as pedagogical or psychological support. In all countries, participants acknowledge that such structures provide an important foundation and an institutional commitment to inclusion. However, a common finding is that this support is characterized as fragmented, uneven, and

insufficiently practical, with a gap between policy intentions and everyday classroom implementation. As a result, schools frequently rely on the initiative of individual teachers and internal school resources to respond to complex and evolving needs.

Looking at participating countries, in Serbia, a solid legal and institutional framework exists, while schools cooperate with pedagogical and psychological services. Manuals and professional training opportunities also exist, although these are often described as general and not linked to classroom realities. However, operational support in everyday teaching is sometimes limited. Another key challenge is the lack of sustained and continuous professional development, as training is frequently project-based and does not always lead to sustained improvements in practice. In Greece, support is similarly found in national policy frameworks and curriculum provisions, alongside some access to professional development and support structures. The introduction of the new curricula in Physical Education, along with initiatives such as Skills Workshops, is viewed positively. Nevertheless, participants stress that implementation support remains inconsistent, and that schools often depend heavily on individual initiative. Participants suggested more systematic mentoring, stronger collaboration between stakeholders, mechanisms for sharing good practices among schools and educators and more practice-oriented professional development focused on inclusive pedagogies and diversity management to bridge the gap between policy and school reality. In Italy, institutional support is described as particularly uneven across regions and highly dependent on local initiatives. While some funding opportunities exist, participants underline the absence of stable national coordination and long-term investment. Support mechanisms are often project-based rather than structural, and teacher training on inclusion is considered insufficient. Although coordination initiatives such as the GLIR (Inter-institutional Regional Working Group) are seen as positive steps, their impact is still viewed as partial and in need of further consolidation.

Finally, in Hungary, schools are supported by pedagogical service centres that provide assessments and specialist assistance for students with special educational needs. Methodological guidelines and materials remain theoretical, while professional trainings and informal knowledge-sharing networks among educators contribute to knowledge sharing. Some formal mechanisms exist, such as mandatory reporting systems and segregation-reduction plans in certain disadvantaged schools, but overall support is described as fragmented, with many schools lacking internal guidelines which participants believe should be developed in the future.

## 5.5. Training and support for physical education professionals

### *Physical education teachers' training or support for addressing diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination in PE classes*

Participants in all four countries agree that Physical Education teachers receive a basic foundation in diversity, inclusion, and equality through their initial university education. However, they highlight a gap between theoretical preparation and the practical demands that PE teachers face in increasingly diverse school environments. While most PE teachers are generally familiar with the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination, many struggle to translate these principles into everyday teaching

practices, particularly when dealing with complex classroom situations, diverse student needs, or discriminatory behaviours. As a result, the quality of inclusive teaching often depends on individual experience, personal initiative, and access to further training rather than on a systematic and coherent support framework. In all countries, participants emphasized the need for continuous and more practice-oriented professional development, together with stronger guidance and support mechanisms that help teachers implement inclusive approaches in Physical Education.

In Hungary, PE teachers acquire knowledge from university studies in sports sociology (working with diverse groups and learning about social inequalities) as well as in pedagogy (learning how to help newly arrived migrant students), while during teaching practice they gain some real-life experience. Nevertheless, many PE teachers feel they need more training on-site and strategies for managing diversity and preventing exclusion. Similarly, in Greece participants agreed that PE teachers possess a solid professional and pedagogical foundation, including knowledge and competencies to respond to diverse population and promote inclusion. Nevertheless, initial training is considered not enough for applying these principles in complex classroom situations or in dealing with new challenges. Therefore, additional and more specialized support is required to strengthen teachers' confidence, competence, and capacity.

In Italy, teacher training is not yet fully consistent or systematic. Many teachers, especially younger ones, are more sensitive to inclusion, gender equality, and diversity issues, introducing more open and participatory educational practices, while others with less exposure to updated training programmes, may face greater difficulties in adopting structured inclusive methodologies. Consequently, quality of inclusive practice often depends on individual initiative and personal sensitivity rather than on a fully consolidated and mandatory training system.

In Serbia, participants recognized that clear, structured support and access to sufficiently developed methodological tools and step-by-step guidance for teaching practices is missing, leading to uncertainty and inconsistency on how inclusive principles should be implemented in classrooms. As a result, PE teachers' response to students' needs varies and depends heavily on individual motivation, prior experience, and personal creativity.

#### *Additional skills, tools or pedagogical approaches that could help PE teachers better promote inclusive and tolerant school environments*

Participants in all four countries agreed that in order to better promote inclusive and tolerant school environments, PE teachers need additional training to strengthen their interpersonal skills (including empathy, communication, conflict resolution and management, recognising discriminatory behaviour, and cooperation) as well as their pedagogical approaches (such as differentiated instruction, adapting activities to diverse student needs, and designing inclusive learning experiences). Participants also emphasize the need for practical and continuous support to create inclusive and tolerant learning environments. Rather than additional theoretical knowledge, they emphasized the importance of concrete, practical, classroom-oriented pedagogical tools that can be readily applied in everyday practice. These include adaptable lesson plans, modification of activities (differentiated), methodological guidance, examples of inclusive teaching and practices, as well as concrete strategies that can be directly implemented in everyday teaching.

It was also broadly agreed that professional development should become more experiential and collaborative, through workshops, mentoring, peer learning, collaboration with specialists and opportunities to exchange good practices. Finally, participants stressed the importance of introducing pedagogical approaches that prioritise cooperation, active participation, empathy, dialogue, and mutual respect over competition and sports performance.

Looking at proposals across participating countries, in Greece particular emphasis was placed on moving toward systematic classroom practices that actively engage students in democratic and participatory learning experiences. Participants also stressed that strengthening teachers' confidence and self-efficacy is essential for responding effectively to increasingly diverse classrooms.

In Hungary, training with real-life scenarios, provision of ready-to-use lesson plans as well as involvement of specialists were proposed for strengthening the PE teachers' skills. In addition, teaching with participatory methods involving students was suggested, together with reducing the number of students which would improve the overall target of an inclusive environment.

In Italy, the need for training on disability inclusion was stressed, together with diversity management and deconstruction of gender stereotypes. Emphasis was also placed in introducing participatory, flexible, and non- competitive teaching methodologies, together with intersectional perspectives. In addition, collaboration among teachers, support staff, social workers, community organisations, and external experts was viewed as a key resource for strengthening inclusive practice.

Finally, in Serbia participants placed particular emphasis on shifting the educational focus of Physical Education, from sporting performance and competitive outcomes to healthy social relationships, cooperation, emotional development, and mutual respect. They also stressed the need for training on concrete models of inclusive lesson organisation, and structured opportunities for reflection at the end of the lesson, allowing students to discuss their experiences, develop empathy, and strengthen social learning. These changes require the strengthening of teachers' "soft-skills" for upgrading them to key facilitators and role models. The need for a systemic support through continuous mentoring, the creation of professional learning communities for exchanging practices, and stronger links between initial teacher education, schools, and ongoing professional development is considered essential.

## **5.6. Sport-based innovative approaches for inclusion**

*Participants' perspectives on participatory sport methodologies that promote dialogue, cooperation and fair play among students.*

Participatory sport methodologies are considered by all four countries' participants as effective for promoting dialogue, cooperation, fair play, and inclusion within Physical Education. As it has been repeatedly stated, these approaches shift the focus away from individual performance and excessive competition towards collaboration, mutual support, shared responsibility, and active participation. More analytically, methodologies that involve cooperative activities, collaborative problem-solving, shared decision-making, and fair-play practices help students develop empathy, respect for others, communication skills, and a stronger sense of belonging, while at the same time reduce exclusionary

behaviours. Participatory sports methodologies give students also the opportunity to experience democratic values in practice by listening to different perspectives, negotiating, contributing to common goals, and taking collective responsibility within the group. However, participants also agreed that the effectiveness of these methodologies depends on well-planned activities, clear structures, appropriate support, as well as teacher's appropriate guidance. Without these conditions, participatory approaches may fail to fulfill their intended inclusive goals.

In Greece and Hungary particular emphasis was placed on the role of the teacher in facilitating participatory learning. Cooperative activities are effective only when they are carefully designed and guided to ensure meaningful participation, equitable involvement, and positive interactions among students. In Hungary, participants also suggested the use of brief reflective discussions before or after lessons, allowing students to share experiences, discuss team dynamics, and reinforce the values of fairness, mutual support, and respect. In Italy, participatory methodologies were seen as a useful tool, among others, to counteract aggressive and violent sporting models, which are still present in some local football practices.

In Serbia, the need of future teachers for better training on working with diverse groups, including stronger training in inclusion, social skills, and interdisciplinary teaching approaches was highlighted. It was also noted that participatory methods remain underused because they require teachers to adopt a facilitative rather than directive role and to carefully structure activities so that all students participate meaningfully and dominant students do not overshadow quieter peers.

*Participants' views on how sport-based approaches could interact with other subjects or school activities to strengthen democratic values and inclusion.*

Participants from all four countries agreed that sport-based approaches are most effective when they are connected to other school subjects and activities through curricular and extracurricular integration, interdisciplinary connection and broader school initiatives rather than being implemented separately. In other words, sport-based approaches are most effective when integrated and used in the wider educational framework of the schools. Participants agreed that sports through experiential learning can promote democratic values such as cooperation, respect, fairness, participation, inclusion, and shared responsibility by complementing for example areas such as civic education, social and emotional learning and ethics.

Examining experts' views per country, in Greece, participants proposed linking sport with citizenship education, social-emotional learning, intercultural education, and whole-school strategies promoting active participation and inclusion, highlighting that values become meaningful when experienced in practice rather than only discussed. In Italy, participants also connected sport to civic education, anti-stereotype programmes, artistic and workshop-based activities, proposing a structured interdisciplinary model. In addition, territorial cultural projects, such as the "Coscienza Comune" project is seen as an example of a cross-curricular learning experience, which ideally should be supported by national-level coordination. In Hungary, sport-based learning is considered most effective when combined with drama and role-play in language subjects, ethics lessons focused on rule-making and fairness, homeroom activities for community building, visual arts for expressing values, and student council initiatives (DÖK) that promote participation through organising sport-

related events; additionally, structured programmes such as the Olympic Values School Program are used to link sport with geography and broader cultural learning. In Serbia, participants highlight a more practice-oriented interdisciplinary approach, where sport is linked mainly to civic education and social skills development, and where school sports events and sports days are used as key spaces for promoting inclusion and community-building, although they note that such cooperation is often dependent on individual teachers rather than systematically embedded in the curriculum.

## 5.7. Policy integration and institutional support

### *Conditions and Policy Measures facilitating the Integration of Inclusive Sport Methodologies into Physical Education Curricula and School Practices*

Participants in all four countries suggested as main issue the need for stronger and more systematic teacher education and training, which will include both initial and continuous professional development, and will focus on practical, hands-on training rather than pure theory. A second condition commonly highlighted by participants was the importance of providing accessible practical guidance for teachers, such as concrete lesson models, adaptable activities, and examples of good practice that can support implementation of inclusive sport methodologies in everyday school settings. A third condition that needs to be satisfied is that there is adequate institutional and policy support, so that inclusive sport approaches are present and their application is foreseen within coherent curricular frameworks, and at the same time these are supported through clear policy directions, and don't rely solely on individual teacher initiative. Another condition mentioned in most countries was the adequacy of structural and material conditions in schools. Participants highlighted that adequate allocation of resources, equipment, and appropriate learning conditions are necessary for inclusive methodologies to be effectively implemented. Finally, collaborative school culture involving cooperation between teachers, school leadership and educational stakeholders is also considered important for facilitating the integration of inclusive sport methodologies wider and in a sustained way.

Looking at conditions or policy measures per country, in Greece, professional development opportunities, accessible educational resources and practical tools, as well as institutional support and alignment between curriculum objectives, educational policies, school priorities and available resources are considered important, while cooperation between relevant actors also contribute to its effectiveness.

In Hungary, the local curricula provide for the essential flexibility and autonomy to incorporate approaches such as fair-play methods, cooperative games and Olympic values, although their implementation is left to the discretion of schools and teachers. Integrating inclusive sport methodologies into everyday school practice would require clear curricular recognition, practice-oriented teacher training and adequate resources and policy backing to support this.

In Italy, a strong emphasis was placed on the need to increase structural investments both in funding allocated to education but also in school sports facilities. The establishment of a collaboration

between schools, local communities and social services was also proposed, while the role of local governments and municipal initiatives is considered crucial.

In Serbia, it was stressed that inclusive sports methodologies should be clearly embedded in the education system, through concrete descriptions in curricula. Continuous practical training, mentoring and supervision are also considered important, together with reflection and feedback opportunities. Finally, improvements in structural deficiencies (overcrowded classrooms, administrative workload, unequal material conditions) would also facilitate the promotion of inclusive sports methodologies.

*Contribution of initiatives such as DIALECT5 in shaping future education policies or guidelines on inclusion and equality in schools.*

Participants from all four countries commonly agreed that initiatives such as DIALECT5 have the potential to contribute in future education policies on inclusion and equality through the translation of general policy objectives into practical, evidence-based approaches that can be implemented in primary schools. It has been highlighted that such initiatives are expected to generate outcomes such as tested methodologies, practical tools, and educational resources, including handbooks, methodology, ready-to-use teaching materials, implementation guidance, and examples of good practice, that will help teachers to apply inclusive approaches with greater confidence. In other words, projects like DIALECT5 can strengthen teachers' professional capacity in implementing inclusive methodologies by providing opportunities for learning and increasing educators' confidence. The importance of dissemination and transferability of successful initiatives, was also discussed noting that future educational policies, curriculum development, and ministerial guidelines on inclusion and equality could benefit from already tested methodologies and initiatives.

Nevertheless, the impact of such initiatives depends on collaboration among schools, local communities, institutions, and other educational stakeholders, with participants from different countries emphasising different aspects of this cooperation. In Hungary, participants highlighted that inclusive sport practices should become accessible to all teachers and not only to those directly involved in the projects. In Greece, participants proposed better utilization of existing institutional partnerships and collaborative structures to facilitate implementation. In Italy, emphasis was placed on the contribution of specialised external practitioners, whose practical expertise and experience are expected to enrich school-based implementation while strengthening links between schools and local communities. In Serbia, participants argued that projects such as DIALECT5 should not remain isolated pilot initiatives; instead, strategies and mechanisms are needed to systematically transfer the knowledge and practices developed through the project into the wider education system, linking them with educational policies, development plans, and institutional mechanisms to ensure their long-term sustainability and institutional integration.

## **5.8. Participants' views on relevant issues/recommendations not addressed.**

Apart from the issues discussed above, participants identified additional considerations and recommendations for promoting tolerance, equality, and social inclusion through physical education in primary schools. These are found below per country.

In Serbia, emphasis was placed on the need for more flexible assessment approaches that do not prioritize physical performance and measurable results but value effort, progress, engagement, and collaboration, which would help creating a more supportive environment and shift physical education towards holistic student development. Participants also highlighted the importance of integrating emotional and social dimensions of sport more intentionally, for example through short reflective activities after sports tasks, allowing students to discuss their feelings, cooperation, and challenges, contributing to a more inclusive classroom culture. Furthermore, strengthening parental and community involvement in school efforts was also considered essential as challenges to inclusion extend beyond the school and are shaped by broader social and cultural influences. Another recommendation was to increase the currently limited visibility and strengthen dissemination of good practices in inclusive methods by establishing platforms and professional learning networks that will enable teachers to share experiences, teaching materials, and effective strategies. In this context, schools should cultivate a culture of continuous professional reflection, encouraging peer observation, collaborative planning, and structured dialogue on challenges, successful practices, and areas for improvement.

In Italy, the recommendations included firstly increasing public investment in school sport and educational infrastructure, along with the expansion of physical education as a structural component of primary schooling, secondly the introduction of compulsory training pathways on inclusion for all teaching staff and thirdly, the systematic strengthening of cooperation networks between schools, local administrations, and the third sector.

Finally, in Greece, educational authorities raised the issue of limited investment and financial resources in infrastructure, human resources, and educational support services, which are perceived as structural barriers that affect the successful implementation of inclusive policies and practices across schools. Furthermore, the gap between educational legislation, curriculum design and effective implementation in everyday school practice is considered a longstanding challenge in the Greek educational system that needs to be addressed.

## 6. Focus Group Discussions with School stakeholders

---

This chapter presents the results from the focus groups in the four countries and focuses on the practical challenges faced by PE teachers and school administrators in integrating inclusive and democratic values into PE in primary schools, addressing issues such as social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and handling discrimination in primary schools.

### 6.1. Participants' profile

The four focus groups comprised of a total of 29 participants – representatives from the school community (Physical Education teachers, Primary School Directors etc) from four different national contexts (Greece, Hungary, Italy and Serbia). Out of the total number of participants, 14 were female and 15 were male guaranteeing a gender balanced approach. Nevertheless, gender differences

occurred per country. Male participants represented the majority in the Hungarian and the Greek focus groups, while females represented the majority in the Serbian and Italian focus groups. The focus groups discussions were carried out through face-to-face meetings in Italy, Greece and Serbia with eight, ten and five participants respectively, while in the case of Hungary the focus group was conducted online and included six participants.

Despite our intention to invite participants with varying levels of experience in schools in order to capture different opinions and perceptions, the majority of those who participated were highly experienced, with professional experience exceeding 10 years. On the other hand, this resulted in contributing valuable expert perspectives to the discussions.

## 6.2. Schools' profile

The participants of the focus groups work in schools with varying characteristics. In Hungary and Greece participants work in medium sized primary schools, with a size population of approximately 170 – 270 pupils. On the other hand, participants from Italy and Serbia work in bigger schools that include also lower secondary or kindergarten with approximately 1100 – 1500 pupils.

The schools do not present a uniform picture as regards the students' cultural and socioeconomic characteristics. There are schools with predominantly local populations and schools working with large numbers of students from migrant or socially vulnerable backgrounds (especially in Italy). With regard to the quality and availability of sports facilities, although it differs considerably, all schools provide opportunities for physical activity through a combination of indoor and outdoor spaces.

Describing schools per country, participants from Greece work in medium-sized urban primary schools in the Thessaloniki area serving mostly local student populations with a smaller number of students from migrant or vulnerable backgrounds. Their schools face important infrastructure limitations, nevertheless have relatively good sports equipment. Participants from Italy represent schools from different areas of Naples characterized by considerable social, economic, and cultural diversity. Several schools served large numbers of students with migrant backgrounds and operate in contexts affected by educational vulnerability, while benefiting from extensive collaborations with community organizations and sports associations.

All participants from Serbia work in a large urban school serving approximately 1,100 students, with access to a gymnasium, basketball hall, sports field, and outdoor activity areas. Finally, participants from Hungary work primary and secondary schools with comparatively well-developed sports infrastructure, including gymnasiums, outdoor sports fields, a swimming pool, an ice rink, and newly developing sports facilities, serving student populations ranging from around 200 to 400 students per educational level.

## 6.3. Democratic values and inclusion in schools: Roles, practices and experiences

*Participants' views on "education for all" and "education that promotes democratic values"*

Participants across the four countries demonstrate a strong transnational consensus that “education for all” entails more than simple access to schooling. It is associated with inclusion, fairness, respect for diversity, and the creation of supportive educational environments. Despite the common ground, participants’ responses varied slightly in the way inclusion was conceptualized and prioritized. In particular:

In Hungary, “education for all” is strongly linked to equal access to high-quality educational experiences and infrastructure. It is understood as an environment where every student—regardless of age, gender, or socioeconomic background—can take part in the same high-quality learning activities. In participants’ view, every child receives equally strong educational support and benefits from the same infrastructure, ensuring fairness, equal opportunity, and a shared sense of belonging within the school community.

In Italy, “education for all” is perceived on a more humanistic and community-oriented way. It is defined as an educational model based on equal opportunities, accessibility, and the removal of barriers that limit the participation of students. It was associated with the creation of school environments capable of listening, welcoming, and valuing differences, while fostering positive relationships and a sense of belonging

In Greece it is perceived as an overarching inclusive philosophy that guarantees equity in participation and personal development for every student, irrespective of their neurodiversity, ethnic background, or socio-economic status

In Serbia, participants most often describe “education for all” as an approach that ensures that every child has an equal opportunity to participate in the educational process, regardless of their physical abilities, socioeconomic status, gender, health condition, or any other personal characteristic.

#### *Promotion of inclusive education in schools*

Most participants believe that schools formally promote inclusion and democratic values through curricula and strategic documents. For example, in Greece, respondents claimed that their schools actively promote education for all and democratic values through a combination of formal structures and everyday practices, including various initiatives, external partnerships and utilization of university-led projects and international frameworks. In Italy, Naples in particular, the school climate is generally perceived as welcoming and inclusive and it was stated that schools foster inclusion through projects, collaborations, extracurricular activities, educational workshops etc.

However, as it was also highlighted by some respondents, that implementation of inclusive education in practice is often inconsistent. Participants from Hungary mentioned that while the intention to promote equal access exists, the actual conditions vary depending on each institution’s infrastructure and capabilities. This was confirmed also by Serbian respondents who mentioned that the realization of these principles largely depends on the personal motivation and sensitivity of teachers, as well as the support provided by school leadership.

Another issue, reported by Italy, is that the contemporary school structure in Italy is highly performance-driven, judgmental and outcome-oriented and this model can conflict with the goals

of inclusion and well-being, as many students experience school as a space of constant evaluation that produces emotional distress and thus limiting student well-being particularly among more vulnerable adolescents.

#### *Participants view on their role in relation to promoting inclusion and education for all*

Participants from all countries perceive their role as highly significant and central in the construction of inclusive school environments that respect differences, attributing importance to creating spaces for listening, relationships, and trust for students. In Greece, participants view themselves as active social engineers and systemic facilitators. They view their responsibility in creating the necessary conditions -structural, psychological, and social - to ensure that "Education for All" is a functional reality rather than a theoretical goal. In Italy, it was highlighted that many teachers go beyond their formal professional role in order to support students and families. In Hungary respondents see their role as leading by example and ensuring that no child is treated differently. This was also supported by the Greek participants, who described how a school director's respectful and proactive engagement with the guardians of two Roma children generated a "ripple effect" that positively shifted the attitudes of the entire parent community.

With regard to school directors, most perceive their role as being the primary bridge between the school and the community. In Greece, participants feel that their duties should not be limited to internal management but they should actively work to counteract social prejudices. Directors see themselves as coordinators and promoters of synergies and collaborations ensuring that the school is an open, democratic ecosystem. In addition, a shift in directors' role from a punitive authority to a mentor promotion of student agency was mentioned. In Serbia, their role includes establishing clear rules, supporting teachers, and providing resources that enable inclusive practices. They also stress the importance of continuously improving school policies and fostering a culture of respect and equality at the level of the entire school.

Physical education teachers, consider sports to be a privileged tool for fostering inclusion. In Serbia, PE teachers particularly emphasize their responsibility to adapt activities to students' diverse abilities so that everyone can participate and feel equal. In Greece, the role is redefined from "knowledge provider" to "personality architect" and the PE teachers view their role as facilitating "inclusion in society" through movement. In addition, PE teachers consider their responsibility to "improvise" and adapt (e.g., using ropes for nets) to ensure that lack of infrastructure never results in the exclusion of a student. In Hungary, teachers consider their responsibility to fully uphold the curriculum and the school's code of conduct, while everything beyond that—such as personal sensitivity, empathy, and inclusive attitudes—comes from the teacher's own background and values.

#### *Phenomena of exclusion, discrimination and conflicts observed in the school environment and the PE class*

Participants reported that incidents of conflict, exclusion, and, to a lesser extent, discrimination do occur within the school environment. These incidents take the form of exclusion of certain students from activities, ridicule, verbal conflicts, as well as more subtle forms of ignoring or marginalization.

Incidents are generally described by participants as low-intensity, everyday conflicts rather than severe or systematic forms of discrimination. Participants in Greece emphasized that these incidents tend to occur mainly during less structured situations (e.g. breaks or informal play), but can also appear during PE classes in activities where competition, teamwork, and physical interaction are involved. According to Hungarian respondents, competition is constant among younger students — shouting things like “I’m first, you’re only second” — yet these conflicts rarely escalate.

In Italy, they argued that in more socially deprived contexts children tend to be more respectful and supportive of one another, however students who experience conditions of material and educational poverty are significantly affected in their relational and emotional well-being. The most common grounds for discrimination, according to Serbian respondents, are physical abilities, gender, social status, as well as certain personal characteristics or behaviours of students. Similarly, Greek respondents link these behaviours to interpersonal dynamics among students, differences in abilities (e.g. athletic performance), social background, and, in some cases, family influence and upbringing. Hungarian respondents, emphasized the gender dimension, stating that in PE, gender-based tensions are frequent, attributing it to the fact that “*boys are focused on winning, girls often are not, and when girls are less skilled, conflicts arise*”. Also, in some cases, participants felt that confrontational parental behaviour could explain certain students’ behaviour.

As an exception to the incidents described above, the Hungarian respondents also referred to more serious conflicts that have emerged in schools, where students target others based on background. In such cases, the police are called two or three times a year, as teachers are not trained to handle such escalations.

### *Participants’ experiences in managing discrimination and exclusion*

In all countries, incidents of discrimination and exclusion are primarily managed within the school through internal processes. In particular, in most cases, the initial intervention is carried out primarily by the classroom teacher or the teacher present during the incident. Depending on the case it could also involve multiple other relevant actors. Greek respondents explained that, if needed, the issue is further addressed with the involvement of the school director, as well as other staff members such as psychologists, social workers, or special education teachers. In Italy, participants explained that schools generally have protocols and disciplinary regulations in place to guide the management of problematic behaviors, including incidents of discrimination, bullying, and cyberbullying. In Serbia, participants most often mention that they manage these situations through discussions with students, attempts at mediation, and the application of existing school rules as primary strategies. In some schools, there are defined protocols for handling cases of discrimination and violence, but it is noted that their implementation is not always consistent or sufficiently effective.

Similarly, in Greece, several schools follow structured internal procedures for handling such cases, however there are not always strictly formalized or universally applied protocols. Typical procedures

include investigation of the incident, collection of information from all involved parties (students, teachers), mediation between those involved, and communication with parents. The same is true for Hungary, where no official school-wide protocol is in place. In some schools, staff address such incidents through case discussions and the involvement of child protection services, while in others teachers themselves develop rules and strategies to maintain fairness and resolve conflicts, managing these situations as effectively as possible with the (limited) resources available.

According to the participants, the effectiveness of the approach in handling such incidents is largely linked to their experience and training. The need for systematic training has been raised from participants from all countries. For example, in Hungary, some participants noted that gender conflicts would be avoided if PE lessons were separate for boys and girls. On the other hand, it was also emphasized that in primary school, tensions between boys and girls during PE can often be addressed without separating them, provided that teachers are sufficiently trained in order to introduce different goals and expectations that go beyond simply winning. In Serbia, some teachers and principals had no opportunity to undergo specialized training in the fields of inclusion, conflict management, and discrimination prevention, which further complicates adequate responses to incidents. In Greece, participants rely heavily on experience, personal skills, and collaboration, however, as stated there is a need for more systematic training, especially in conflict management and communication. Experienced school directors reported feeling more confident in handling such situations, while highlighting that less experienced colleagues may face greater difficulties without additional support.

In Hungary, teachers do take part in mandatory professional development, and a few colleagues are specifically sent to trainings related to these issues, but overall, the available training and institutional backing remain limited. In Italy, some teachers reported having developed their skills mainly through practical and extracurricular experiences rather than through structured, specialized training programs.

### *Critical skills, competences, and support needs for promoting Inclusive Education*

Participants from all four countries identified a common set of interpersonal and emotional competences as fundamental for the effective implementation of inclusive education. Empathy was consistently described as a core element, together with strong communication and listening skills, patience, emotional intelligence, and the ability to understand and respond to students' individual needs. The importance of building trusting relationships within the school community, managing conflicts fairly and constructively, and approaching challenging situations with sensitivity and flexibility were also highlighted as key requirements for professionals, together with personal responsibility and commitment.

In addition to the common skills and competences, participants in each country highlighted several more specific skills and perspectives. In Greece, particular emphasis was placed on fairness, objectivity, leadership ability, and the capacity to reconcile diverse perspectives, especially in interactions involving students and parents. Hungarian participants stressed the importance of

avoiding simplistic interpretations of conflicts, while they also underlined that teachers with personal experiences of adversity may demonstrate greater sensitivity and understanding. Serbian participants particularly highlighted the ability to adapt teaching methods and content to diverse learners and emphasized the value of flexibility in teaching practice. Finally, Italian participants expressed the need for training on specific methodological competences in the field of inclusive physical education. and stated that many teachers have developed these skills individually, mainly through extracurricular experiences, specialized courses, and collaborations with associations and territorial networks.

Regarding support needs, participants from all countries agreed that inclusive education requires continuous support and professional development. It was also agreed that experience alone is not sufficient and that educators need targeted training, practical tools and ongoing opportunities to strengthen their competences, particularly in relation to areas such as communication, conflict management, inclusion practices, emotional education, and the handling of sensitive or complex situations. Participants also highlighted the importance of collaboration and the need for exchange of experiences, and access to practical examples of good practice that can support everyday educational work.

Examining the needs per country, participants in Greece highlighted the lack of systematic training, particularly for less experienced school leaders, in areas such as management of diversity-related issues, conflict resolution and communication with parents. Participants from Hungary highlighted the need for better preparation in inclusive education during university studies, since current programs focus mainly on subject-specific knowledge rather than pedagogical and inclusion-related skills. They also expressed the need for structural changes through greater flexibility in the curriculum, grading, and assessment systems. In addition, they placed emphasis on the importance of supportive professional networks and cooperation with external specialists and services, which are not fully effective. Serbian participants highlighted the need for practical workshops and concrete examples that could be directly applied in school settings, while in Italy, participants stressed the importance of further support and training in areas connected to adolescent distress management, discrimination, and cooperative methodologies in physical education.

Summing up, it has been commonly acknowledged that inclusive education requires a combination of various factors the main being professional commitment, personal qualities, and strong support systems.

### *Collaboration with local Community Stakeholders in inclusion initiatives*

According to our participants, schools in all countries are involved in collaborative inclusion initiatives with local community stakeholders such as parents' associations, local municipalities, sports clubs, but also with other organizations (such as universities, NGOs). These collaborations take the form of organization of joint events, sports activities, educational projects or workshops, participation in EU and national funded programmes and (afternoon) extracurricular activities related to students' well-being and social inclusion.

At the same time, participants noted that the extent, frequency and quality of these collaborations often differ from one school to another, depending on various factors, the most important being the decisions and the priorities of the school director who can either facilitate or limit participation in collaborative initiatives. Other factors include the availability of networks, local conditions, the willingness of local organisations to cooperate, and the level of parental participation. In several cases, collaboration between relevant actors was described as occasional rather than systematic.

A common concern highlighted in Greece and Hungary is the relatively limited involvement of parents in school activities and inclusion initiatives. Hungarian participants further noted that parents are generally difficult to engage and usually contact the school only when problems arise. In Serbia, participants believe that collaboration with local stakeholders would benefit from better organisation, clearer planning, stronger coordination, and more systematic and stable long-term partnerships with relevant stakeholders rather than isolated activities or short-term initiatives, while in Italy the need for stronger collaboration between schools and community-based educational services was identified, as many adolescents would benefit from synergies between school and community intersectional services. Lastly, some Italian participants noted that schools are often overloaded with responsibilities and administrative demands, making it difficult to maintain continuous collaboration with local partners.

## 6.4. Physical Education in Primary Schools for children 9-12 years old

### *Addressing Stereotypes, Discrimination, and Inclusion in the PE Curriculum*

It has been commonly acknowledged by participants in Serbia, Italy and Greece that the physical education curriculum for students aged 9-12 recognizes the importance of inclusion and equality to some extent, but that these goals are often formulated in general terms and are not sufficiently operationalized. Although values such as cooperation, respect for diversity, and equal opportunities are mentioned in official documents, there is a lack of concrete guidelines on how to apply these values in everyday teaching practice. As a result, inclusion in practice largely depends largely on the individual approach of teachers, their experience, motivation, and their sensitivity, rather than on a clearly structured support system or mandatory curriculum guidelines. Participants highlight that these should be more visible and more consistently implemented in practice. In Serbia, teachers attempt to promote inclusive values through specific sports activities, games, and competitions, and give particular emphasis on avoiding stereotypes, such as the perception that boys are more successful in sports than girls.

In Greece, participants described the curriculum as largely theoretical (goals remain common for all children and lack specific guidance) and disconnected from the realities of the school environment. They identified inadequate infrastructure and personnel instability as key factors limiting its effectiveness. More specifically, many of the proposed activities are considered impractical because they assume the availability of facilities and equipment (e.g., courts and sports materials) that many

schools lack. Participants also noted that efforts to build a democratic and inclusive culture are often disrupted, as many PE teachers are substitutes and may be replaced the following school year.

Similarly, in Italy, the physical education curriculum includes general references to inclusion, participation, and cooperation; however, structured teaching practices are not consistently embedded. Teaching practices in primary schools often remain quite traditional and performance-oriented, while the current framework appears to be less inclusive than the National Guidelines of 2012.

On the other hand, in Hungary, participants mentioned that curriculum highlights cooperation, communication, and practical mutual support, however, they do not recall any explicit curriculum targets specifically aimed at combating stereotypes, discrimination, or promoting inclusion.

*Participants' views on the characteristics of students aged 9–12 (in terms of empathy, agency, maturity, aggressiveness)*

Participants from all countries described students aged 9–12 as a group being in a transitional period, where emotional, social, and behavioural characteristics are still developing and considerable variations exist even between children within the same class. Empathy, maturity, autonomy, and aggressive behaviour were seen as strongly shaped by external influences such as family environment, peer interactions, school experiences, and, increasingly, social media and digital exposure. Participants consistently reported that students at this age still need support in managing emotions, cooperating with others, and understanding the consequences of their actions. Verbal conflicts, impulsive reactions and low frustration tolerance were also mentioned by participants.

In Italy, participants emphasized students' emotional fragility, anxiety, and the need for listening and personal recognition. They also noted that children in socially deprived areas often demonstrate stronger empathy, solidarity and inclusion than those from more advantaged contexts.

In Hungary, 9–12-year-old students are described as a highly mixed group with many showing strong empathy, yet also frequently seeking conflict and test boundaries, while early hormonal changes are already visible in some. A few have low frustration tolerance and verbal aggression is common. However, it is considered one of the best age groups to work with in PE because they are enthusiastic and require no motivation to move.

In Greece, participants focused on the influence of overprotective parenting and the high exposure to social media, which they associated with non-take up of leadership roles, lower autonomy, reduced accountability, and increased aggressive and anxious behaviour compared to the past. They also noted that students have difficulty to put themselves in another person's shoes. Parenting and social media were also highlighted by participants in Serbia as factors that negatively affect students in terms of empathy, autonomy and responsibility. As it was mentioned, teachers try to empower students through the PE lessons. Finally, according to Serbian respondents, aggressiveness is usual at this age but it can be channelled into positive behaviours if proper guidance is provided.

*Gender-differences observed in terms of participation in PE class*

Gender differences are observed in the age group 9-12 in most of the countries (Hungary, Italy, Serbia). These differences are particularly obvious in PE classes for girls aged 11-12, who tend to limit their participation, while in younger students this is less common. Also, some participants observe gender differences in relation to self-confidence and interest, with the role of stereotypes to be acknowledged as negatively affecting gender equality and the role of PE teachers to be considered central in creating an inclusive and collaborative environment.

In Italy, participants observe gender differences stating that many girls tend to self-exclude from sports activities, especially when they feel pressure related to competition and judgment, also linked with stereotypes regarding the body, sport, and gender roles. However, this is less pronounced in the age group 9-12. Nevertheless, participants highlighted that school is one of the few environments where sports participation is genuinely mixed and shared between boys and girls which gives the opportunity to PE teachers to challenge stereotypes and foster more balanced gender relations.

Gender differences in PE classes are also observed by Serbian participants: Boys tend to engage more frequently, display higher levels of confidence, and show a stronger inclination toward competition, while girls may sometimes demonstrate insecurity or less interest in certain activities particularly those perceived as “male-oriented.” Social stereotypes are also seen as influencing both the choice of activities and the level of engagement.

In Hungary, participants observe that younger students (9–10 years old) generally participate and cooperate similarly regardless of gender, while gender differences usually emerge among students aged 11–12, in attitudes towards PE and levels of engagement. Changing PE teachers in the fifth grade, accompanied by a more task-focused approach, negatively affects the participation of girls who begin avoiding activities.

On the other hand, participants from Greece believe that gender does not act as a barrier to participation in Physical Education (PE) for the 9–12 age group, since all children, regardless of gender, “adore” and are eager to attend. It was also stated that activities are kept common for all students, based on the pedagogical understanding that children at this developmental stage possess similar physical capabilities. Nevertheless, it was mentioned that gender-based behavioral differences typically appear later, in older age groups.

#### *Teaching strategies and flexibility in reference to the teaching curriculum.*

PE teachers from all countries use various teaching strategies in their classes. Most of them stated that the curriculum allows room for adjustment and they use it so that lessons can match the class’s abilities and interests, as well as each schools’ infrastructures. For example, as mentioned in Serbia, classes may be organized through games and more relaxed activities depending on students’ mood or external factors such as previous lessons or tests. In Hungary, teachers may add activities if the class progress is quick, even if it was not originally scheduled. In Greece, teachers do not follow the curriculum rigidly, as many of its elements are not applicable in practice. They stressed that effective teaching in PE relies on teacher autonomy, experience, and continuous adjustment. Similarly, Italian respondents mentioned that flexibility largely depends on the individual teacher’s sensitivity, personal experience, and the opportunity to collaborate with external projects, community

educators, and sports associations. Many teachers integrate methodologies acquired through extracurricular experiences and territorial networks that promote inclusive sport.

#### *Management of students' non-participation*

Participants in all countries use various strategies to increase student participation in physical education classes. The participants emphasized that difficulties in participation may stem from multiple factors, including insecurity, emotional distress, motor difficulties, or fear of judgment. In Italy, non-participation is addressed mainly through dialogue, observation, and the adaptation of activities. In Greece, non-participation is managed through psychological encouragement, strategic inclusive rules, and clear boundaries. For, example, to combat the marginalization of less-skilled students in ball games, they use rules that foster inclusion such as 5–6 passes between different teammates before anyone is allowed to score. In Hungary, non-participation is rare in the lower grades, but becomes more common after 11 years old, especially in swimming where the curriculum requires a full semester, but participation falls often starting with refusal to change clothes—girls feeling embarrassed in front of boys, while boys turn it into a power struggle. In Serbia, sometimes, students are given roles such as leading a group, acting as a “coach,” or supporting a team, in order to encourage their involvement and sense of belonging.

#### *Management of students' failures, success and conflicts.*

In Serbia, participants emphasize that failure should be presented as a natural part of the learning process rather than a reason for judgment or withdrawal. They encourage students to develop persistence and a positive attitude toward mistakes. Success is valued not only through results, but also through effort, progress, and cooperation with others. Conflicts are most often addressed through discussion and mediation, with students actively involved in finding solutions. Similarly, in Greece teachers deliberately shift the focus away from winning or losing and instead emphasize effort, participation, and personal improvement. Conflict management is considered necessary in PE classes. Strategies such as using a Yellow/Red card system to manage on-court friction and resolve conflicts was mentioned. Yellow cards are used as a 2-minute “time-out” and red card for a serious conflict or aggressive behavior when the entire class stops and moves to a circle or the classroom to discuss the incident, emphasizing that individual actions have collective consequences.

In Hungary, participants manage students' successes, failures, and conflicts primarily through communication, encouraging children to resolve issues among themselves while the teacher guides the process when necessary. In Italy, success and failure in sports activities are primarily managed through the teacher's relational attention and educational sensitivity. However, it was highlighted that, not all teachers possess adequate tools to effectively manage situations of conflict, exclusion, or emotional distress. For this reason, a strong need emerged for specific training in inclusive methodologies, group management, and educational sport practices.

## 6.5. Physical Education in Primary Schools as a tool to promote inclusive sport values

*Incorporation of practices that promote tolerance and democratic values in the PE class.*

Most participants stated that PE lessons can be organized in ways that emphasize collective achievement rather than individual dominance, encouraging students to support and motivate one another. In Italy, participants mentioned that sports activities are often used as an opportunity to educate students in emotional regulation, respect for shared rules, and conflict mediation. Methodologies such as Football3, experimented in one school, are considered particularly effective, as they allow students to jointly discuss rules, autonomously manage certain game dynamics, and value fair play beyond sporting performance. In Greece, PE class is also considered a space for cooperation rather than just athletic competition, teaching students to value each peer's contribution regardless of their skill level. An example of encouraging student agency and leadership is assigning them roles such as "assistant gym teachers" or "class responsibility leaders." In Hungary, participants mentioned simple practices that promote tolerance and democratic values such as giving students limited choices and letting the majority decide the activity for the lesson, while emphasizing that the outcome must be accepted by everyone. In Serbia, discussions after sports activities are used, allowing students to share their impressions, point out perceived unfairness, and suggest more equitable solutions. Students may also vote on certain aspects of activities, with majority decisions being respected, which contributes to the development of democratic values and a sense of fairness.

*Incorporation of practices that challenge gender stereotypes and social discrimination in the PE class*

In most countries, gender-based separation of students is avoided and equal participation of boys and girls is encouraged in all types of activities, including those traditionally associated with one gender (e.g. football). As the Italian participants highlighted, school is one of the few spaces for structured mixed-gender sport participation. Practices that challenge stereotypes are present, although these are not structured and variations exist in the way teachers apply these.

In Greece, participants reported that they consciously design activities that include all students regardless of skill level or background, ensuring that no student is excluded or marginalized. In Hungary, variations exist among schools. Respondents from one school shared that they do not include explicit practices aimed at challenging gender stereotypes or social discrimination, while respondents from the second school occasionally adapt rules to balance gender differences and discrimination behaviours. In Serbia, this is often done spontaneously rather than through structured strategies. Sometimes teachers intentionally assign roles or tasks that counter stereotypes, for example by giving girls leadership roles or involving them in more physically demanding activities, while boys may engage in exercises focused on coordination and cooperation. Nevertheless, participants note that more structured guidance and training would be beneficial, as stereotypes are often deeply rooted and reinforced outside the school environment.

### *Collaboration with other teachers or school staff aiming at combating stereotypes and promoting inclusion through PE*

Collaboration among educational staff varies across schools and countries. In Hungary, it occurs primarily between class teachers and PE teachers, with frequent involvement of school psychologists and less so of special education staff. In Italy, collaboration with other teachers, educators, and school staff occurs fairly frequently, particularly in schools that are more open to local networks and interdisciplinary educational projects. In Serbia, collaboration is generally occasional and depends largely on individual initiative. It most often takes place through the exchange of experiences, joint problem-solving related to specific classroom situations, or participation in broader school projects aimed at promoting inclusion. In the context of physical education, collaboration is more pronounced during preparations for competitions and events, while it is less structured in everyday teaching, leading participants to conclude that it should be more systematic and consistent across the school. Similarly, in Greece collaboration with school staff is described as selective, informal, and focused more on behavioral management than on structured common projects for combating stereotypes. Collaboration is strongest between the PE teachers themselves, as they often share the school yard at the same time and organize common actions, joint tournaments and activities.

### *Main challenges identified in PE classes*

Participants described a variety of challenges that they face in PE classes related to a) institutional/school conditions, b) student diversity, and c) students' social and emotional development. In particular, teachers frequently referred to inadequate facilities, a lack of equipment. Teachers in Italy and Serbia also referred to large class sizes and the difficulty of providing individual support, while in Greece, the curriculum was often commented for not reflecting the real school settings. Challenges were also stated, related to student diversity, including wide differences in motor abilities (due to participation in organized sports associations outside school), varying levels of participation and motivation, and difficulties in engaging less confident or self-excluding students (Italy, Serbia). Participants also reported challenges related to students' behaviour and emotional well-being (conflicts, aggression, low tolerance for failure, and low self-confidence). These issues were often associated with the influence of social media, family environments, and limited opportunities for children to develop autonomy and responsibility. As a result, PE teachers frequently find themselves balancing teaching responsibilities with the need to support students' social and emotional development.

### *Difficulties and shortcomings in promoting democratic values and non-discrimination through the physical education class*

Participants identified a number of factors that make it difficult to promote democratic values and non-discrimination through PE. In Greece, Italy, and Serbia, teachers often referred to a gap between official educational goals found in the national curricula and what can realistically be achieved in everyday school practice. Although inclusion and equality are emphasized in policy documents, participants felt that there is often a lack of clear guidance, practical tools, and systematic support

for implementing these principles. Many teachers also highlighted the need for further training in areas such as inclusive teaching, conflict resolution, and emotional education. Family influences, social media, and wider social stereotypes were seen as additional challenges, sometimes reinforcing attitudes that conflict with the values promoted at school. Participants from Italy and Serbia additionally emphasized that performance-oriented cultures and assessment practices can unintentionally disadvantage some students by privileging physical ability over effort, progress, and cooperation and make inclusive participation more difficult.

Limited time, resources, and large classes were also described as barriers to consistently applying inclusive practices. In contrast, Hungarian participants generally viewed PE as a context in which democratic values are already promoted successfully and reported few concerns regarding discrimination or exclusion.

## 6.6. Suggestions for empowering students to combat stereotypes and promoting tolerance

### *Effective PE Practices for Promoting Tolerance and Inclusion: Participants' Experiences and Knowledge of Best Practices*

It was unanimously agreed that tolerance and inclusion are promoted most effectively when PE lessons are not performance-oriented but put emphasis in cooperation, participation, and respect for individual differences. Teachers highlighted the importance of intentionally structuring groups to encourage interaction among students with different abilities, genders, and social backgrounds (Italy, Serbia, Hungary), while adapting activities and rules to ensure that all students can contribute meaningfully, shifting the focus from individual competition to a shared goal. Examples given by participants include differentiated tasks (Greece, Italy) and the *Mandatory Pass Rule* (Greece, Serbia), which limits the number of ball touches for more dominant players, requiring the involvement of multiple teammates before a goal can count. Participants also emphasized the value of giving students responsibility through rotating leadership roles (Serbia), such as the *Class Responsible* system (Greece) or through student-led games without a referee (Hungary), and creating opportunities for dialogue and reflection through practices such as *Closing Circles* (Greece, Serbia, Hungary, Italy). Additional examples included personalized support for students with motor difficulties, while the use of *Football3*, was viewed by Italian respondents as a particularly effective approach for promoting dialogue, shared responsibility, and fair play.

### *Suggestions for empowering primary students to fight discrimination and stereotypes and built an inclusive and tolerant environment through PE activities*

Participants generally agreed that discrimination and stereotypes are more effectively addressed through everyday experiences of cooperation and participation than through direct teaching about these issues. Greek and Serbian participants particularly emphasized activities in which students depend on one another to achieve a common goal, helping them appreciate different abilities and understand how their behaviour affects the group. They also highlighted the value of involving students in leadership roles, classroom rules, and discussions about conflicts and relationships. Greek participants additionally stressed the importance of adapting activities and game rules so that

less confident or marginalized students can take an active role and experience success. In Italy, participants focused more on the role of teachers and argued that promoting inclusion requires greater awareness of stereotypes and stronger preparation in areas such as inclusive teaching, emotional education, and conflict management. Hungarian participants highlighted teamwork, regular mixing of groups, and opportunities for students to lead activities as ways of developing fairness, responsibility, and respect for others. All participants emphasized the importance of creating a supportive environment where effort is valued, students feel safe to participate, and inclusive values are reinforced both within and beyond PE lessons.

### **6.7. Views on integrating a methodology designed to promote equity and inclusion in the school physical education programme**

Participants from all four countries expressed positive views on the introduction of alternative PE methodologies within the physical education curriculum, particularly those aimed at promoting democratic values, inclusion, cooperation, and respect for diversity. Greek and Hungarian participants emphasized that any new approach should be practical, adaptable, and compatible with the realities of everyday school life. In Greece and Serbia, some teachers noted that many of the underlying principles have been already applied in their daily practice to manage conflicts and promote inclusion through strategies such as rule adaptations, restorative dialogue, and an emphasis on participation rather than performance. Nevertheless, they felt that a more structured framework could provide greater consistency and support. Italian participants strongly supported the introduction of such methodologies, supporting that PE should move beyond traditional performance-oriented models and place greater emphasis on student well-being, participation, cooperation, and the recognition of differences. Similarly, Serbian participants stated that inclusion should not be treated as an additional component of PE, but as a principle that shapes the entire lesson and guide interactions among students. In all countries, participants believed that such methodologies could strengthen social relationships, increase student engagement, and contribute to a more inclusive and democratic school culture, provided that they are supported by appropriate training and adapted to local educational contexts.

When asked whether they would be interested to include such a methodology in the context of a physical education lesson, participants from all the four countries unanimously expressed interest in incorporating in their PE lessons an alternative methodology that aims at promoting democratic values, cooperation, inclusion, and respect for diversity. They emphasized however, that several conditions should be met for its successful implementation, taking into consideration, among others, the local realities and the student's needs. In particular, participants in Greece and Hungary emphasized the need for flexibility and adaptability, highlighting that any new methodology should respond to the realities of the different school contexts and class dynamics, with Hungary suggesting not to be applied as a mandatory, one-size-fits-all model. Participants in Greece mentioned that such an approach is largely consistent with the educational and social objectives they already pursue in informal ways in the PE lessons. They stressed that the methodology should be simple to implement, work under everyday school conditions, and preserve students' enjoyment of play. Serbian

participants stressed that such methodologies should not be treated as a separate activity but it is most effective when inclusion is present throughout the lesson and therefore it should be integrated into everyday teaching practice. They also stated that the content of such a methodology should include and guide opportunities for cooperation and mixed groups, shared responsibility, student participation in decision-making and reflection opportunities. Italian participants believe that alternative and inclusive methodologies are strongly needed to respond to students' educational, relational, and emotional needs. This type of approach is expected to encourage participation, improve relationships among students, and create a more supportive classroom climate, particularly for those who are less confident or less likely to engage in activities, emphasizing its potential to further strengthen the inclusive role of the subject. On the other hand, it was also emphasized that successful implementation of such a methodology would require appropriate teacher training, ongoing methodological support, opportunities for collaboration, and sufficient time for implementation and testing. Participants highlighted the importance of creating learning environments through such methodologies, where effort is valued, students take responsibility for their actions, while respect, fairness, and cooperation are experienced in practice and not only in theory. Finally, participants agreed that the successful use of such methodologies would depend not only on teachers' commitment but also on appropriate support, training, and opportunities to exchange good practices.

## 6.8. Issues not addressed

Apart from the issues discussed in previous sections, participants highlighted several broader factors affecting the role of physical education in promoting inclusion and democratic values. A common concern in Greece and Serbia was the limited recognition of PE within the school system and by parents, despite its important contribution to students' social and emotional development. Participants in Serbia and Italy also referred to teachers' workload, administrative demands, and organizational pressures, which often limit opportunities to implement innovative and inclusive practices. Participants in Greece, highlighted the importance of staff stability in building long-term relationships and inclusive school cultures. Another issue mentioned, particularly in Serbia and Italy, was the importance of stronger collaboration beyond the PE classroom, including cooperation with families, community organizations, professional support services, and networks of educators. In particular, a need was expressed for more concrete, practice-based examples and greater opportunities to exchange experiences with colleagues from other schools, networking among teachers, as well as the organization of professional meetings, workshops, and peer-learning spaces, in order to strengthen teaching quality and support the implementation of inclusive practices. The need for continuous professional development, clearer policy guidance, and better coordination and support with psychologists and pedagogical staff was also emphasized by Serbian participants, while Italian participants placed particular emphasis on the broader social and cultural role of schools and PE, being important tools for community engagement and social inclusion.

## 7. Interviews with primary school students aged 9-12 from diverse backgrounds

---

This chapter presents the results from the face-to face Interviews with primary school students, 9 to 12 years old, focusing on their experiences, perceptions, and challenges in relation to Physical Education (PE) classes. Through the interviews we aim to understand how the PE framework influences social inclusion, intercultural interaction, and active civic participation.

### 7.1. Profile of participating students

A total of 49 students aged 9–12 years from diverse educational and social contexts participated in the interviews in the four countries (Greece, Hungary, Italy and Serbia). In terms of gender, the total student population consisted of 24 boys and 25 girls and was relatively balanced. Examining the student population per country, in Italy, 14 students participated (7 boys and 7 girls), mostly aged 11 years ( $n = 9$ ), with four students aged 12 and one aged 10. Two students had a migrant background (Ukraine, Russia), while the rest were of Italian origin. In Hungary, 10 students participated (5 boys and 5 girls), aged between 9 and 11 years; nine were Hungarian and one had a Ukrainian background. In Greece, 15 students participated (7 boys and 8 girls), evenly distributed across the age range of 9–12 years. Some of the students had a migrant background (Egypt, Rumania), while two were Greek Roma and one Pomak. In Serbia, 10 students participated (5 boys and 5 girls), out of whom six students aged 9 (3 boys and 3 girls) and four students aged 10 (2 boys and 2 girls). All children interviewed attended schools in classrooms with cultural, national and gender diversity, although varying in levels per classroom, school and country.

### 7.2. PE class, children's preferences and feelings

Physical education is described as one of the most enjoyable lessons in the school. Students aged 9-12 have a very positive opinion about the PE class, mainly linked with feelings such as: fun, joy, freedom, movement, social interaction, and opportunities to spend time with friends. Their most favourite games are dodgeball, football, volleyball and basketball, with football being mostly chosen by boys (in Greece and Serbia) and volleyball by girls (in Italy, Greece and Serbia). Dodgeball-type games are also very popular for both boys and girls. Gender differences have been noted in some cases in preferences with boys enjoying competitive games the most, showing enthusiasm when talking about matches, scoring goals, “run a lot,” and “compete”, while girls enjoy more games that involve cooperation, communication and group participation.

The vast majority of students have positive feelings (“feeling happy”, “excited” or “good”) about PE. These feelings relate to cooperation, good peer relationships and fair play. On the other hand, students mention that sometimes negative feelings (such as feeling nervous, feeling sad, feeling insecure) also emerge during PE class, in particular when highly competitive tasks are assigned, or phenomena of teasing, exclusion and unfair behaviour take place (such as lack of respect for the rules, cheating etc).

Looking separately at each country, in Greece, students mostly value in the PE class the time attributed to free play and to spending time with friends. Their responses also show that they are aware that respecting the rules and cooperating are essential for the smooth conduct of the lesson. In Hungary, PE is considered a welcome break from academic subjects helping them move freely, release tension, and spend time with friends, while students often referred to enjoyment deriving from competition, which was generally viewed positively (including excitement of team selection, leadership roles, and being chosen as team captain).

In Italy, the children often link the sport activities with social values such as cooperation and team spirit: *“I like volleyball and basketball because we are united and we work together.”* They also place importance in the overall climate of the lesson often explaining that *“the best day is when nobody argues”*.

Similarly, in Serbia, most students stated that they feel happy, excited, and relaxed during physical education classes, especially when participating in games and activities that encourage teamwork and social interaction. At the same time, a smaller number of students expressed feelings of insecurity or discomfort mainly during highly competitive activities or being afraid of making mistakes. Children in Serbia generally responded more positively to activities that emphasize participation, teamwork, and enjoyment rather than only competition and performance. Based on the interviews, highly competitive situations occasionally create tension, disappointment, or exclusion among some students, particularly when certain children dominate the activity or when winning becomes the primary focus.

### 7.3. Inclusion (feeling of belonging)

#### *Children’s perceptions, experiences, and challenges from PE activities*

Children interviewed in the four countries agreed that good relationships, cooperation and feelings of acceptance are the most important elements for enjoying the PE lesson. In other words, supportive peers, opportunities for participation for all and teamwork were considered important for a successful PE lesson. Fairness was also considered an essential characteristic for an enjoyable and inclusive PE class, relating to both students’ and teachers’ behaviour and interactions, but also to setting and following the rules. In Hungary, the best teammate was described as someone who helps others—by passing the ball, catching it to bring a teammate back into the game, offering comfort when someone is hurt, or simply behaving calmly and respectfully, showing that emotional safety matters. In Greece, the best teammates were described as those best skilled and cooperative. Similarly, in Italy some children said they would pick *“their best friend,” “the strongest one” or “the nicest one”*, while others would show more empathy and inclusiveness saying *“I’m fine with whoever is with me” or “I often play with the less skilled ones”*.

As regards students’ perceptions in relation to group belonging and the choice of favouring small groups or large groups during the PE activities, these were characterized by a mixed approach. On the one hand, many children (particularly in Serbia, Italy and Greece) opted for the large-group

activities, where the whole class participates, supporting a feeling of fun and a sense of belonging. For example, in Serbia students felt safer when participating with their class and also expressed more positively in cases of co-creating rules etc. On the other hand, many students opted for the idea of smaller groups comprised with close friends, stating that they feel more comfort and trust to play with friends in smaller groups (particularly in Hungary and Greece). For example, in Hungary, many children prefer being grouped with friends, due to stronger communication, trust, and shared strategies. Friendship plays a major role in feeling included. In Greece, some children appeared divided between the goals of “inclusion” and “competitiveness”. On the one hand, they appear willing to have less skilled peers in their team, on the other hand they feel that less skilled peers would disrupt the game and prefer to exercise separately. In Italy, the main issues raised were firstly the exclusion of children considered less skilled or agile, and secondly the tendency of some classmates to monopolize the game.

Gender stereotypes were evident in all countries, mostly when discussing about football and boys’ and girls’ sporting abilities. For example, in Italy, some children stated that *“boys are stronger”*. Interesting is the fact that some Greek students prioritize skills and “winning” over gender when responsible for their team formation. As a boy stated *“girls could also participate in our football team — girls who are fast”*, while in Serbia some students point out that certain girls play football equally well, or even better than some boys. Overall, most students generally view mixed participation positively and do not support strict gender separation in PE activities, even though in practice they often have separate activities.

As far as the role of the PE teacher is concerned, it has been acknowledged to be very important in shaping students’ experiences and this is reflected in their views and perceptions about the PE class. Students describe the PE teacher as the regulator of the class. In Serbia, it was also considered significant the fact that in lower grades of primary school, the class teacher is also the physical education teacher, which helps students develop a relationship of trust and feel safer and more comfortable during activities.

Students from all countries highly appreciate teachers who are fair, supportive, understanding, calm and also have the abilities to manage conflicts, to form balanced teams and to ensure participation for all children. This approach is perceived as fairer: *“it’s better to have mixed teams because otherwise the team is unbalanced if we are playing boys against girls”*. In addition, in Italy, students report that in most cases the teacher decides the groups, but often asks for their opinion: *“the teacher asks us what we prefer and sometimes follows our choices.”* Nevertheless, some students, express complaints about the PE teacher, when they observe situations of unequal treatment among peers or ineffective classroom management. For example, a boy from Greece stated: *“When a girl misbehaves, the teacher doesn’t scold her, but if we [the boys] do the same, the teacher scolds us.”*

## 7.4. Participation & Group Dynamics (Having your voice heard)

### *Student Participation and Team Formation in PE*

According to students, the PE teacher is the one that usually leads the team formation in Greece, Italy and Hungary by forming teams or by appointing rotating “captains” who follow strict guidelines, such as balancing gender ratios etc. The latter encourages student participation, offering a chance for taking initiative and responsibility under the supervision of the teacher. On the contrary, in Serbia students often form teams themselves, particularly when activities involve pupils from different classes. In all four countries, children generally perceive teacher involvement as a way to ensure fairness, balance abilities, and prevent conflicts or exclusion.

In all countries, students believe that teacher-led team formation is fairer and this is connected to the distribution of abilities and the prevention of exclusion. In Hungary, students believe that teachers create balanced teams and also help them to make new friendships, while in Italy, a student stated that *“I like that the teacher makes balanced teams because then we don’t fight”*, while another one placed emphasis on their own difficulties in forming the teams *“if we do it, we argue.”* In Greece, students also tend to accept teacher-led grouping and often view it as necessary because *“... we can't figure things out on our own...”*. In Serbia, students reported that teacher intervention was particularly helpful when working within their own class, ensuring that everyone had an opportunity to participate. In this sense, teachers were mostly seen as facilitators, providing a safe environment so that all students can participate. Similarly, in Italy, the teacher’s presence appears crucial in ensuring fairness, regulating behaviour and promoting inclusion, acting as a mediator between individual preferences, group dynamics and the need to maintain a respectful and participatory environment, especially in situations of possible conflict or high competitiveness.

However, students also value being heard and included in decision-making processes during physical education classes. In Serbia, it was concluded that when students are given opportunities to express preferences, choose activities, or contribute ideas, they become more engaged and motivated. On the other hand, in Hungary students rarely influence the choice of activities.

When students were asked about the criteria, they use, for selecting team members themselves, many children expressed a preference for choosing friends or skilled classmates, especially in Greece, Hungary and Italy, with the selection being highly associated with friendships and winning. For example, in Hungary, children mentioned *“I choose my friends,” “I pick the good ones first”*. Similarly, in Italy, they select *“my best friend, the strongest one, and the nicest one”*, while in Greece, winning is often prioritized revealing that for some students the PE lesson has a highly competitive orientation. Indicative is the statement of a boy below:

*“We choose the best players so that we can win... (I) usually pick the very best ones first, the strongest players, and then I choose my friends. Yes... first you start with those who are the best, and afterwards, if there are still places left, you choose your friends as well.”*

In all countries, there seems that skilled students tend to enjoy higher visibility and greater influence during games, although many children simultaneously expressed support for including less confident or less skilled classmates (particularly in Hungary).

Gender stereotypes exist in all four countries, especially linked to football and skills. Boys were associated to football and male competence, while girls were more commonly linked to volleyball or cooperative activities. In particular, in Hungary students noted that boys often chose football

while girls preferred volleyball, leading to informal gender separation despite generally positive attitudes toward mixed participation. Similarly, in Serbia students often divide themselves spontaneously according to their interests, with boys most commonly choosing football, while girls more often select activities such as volleyball. Nevertheless, when participating together in activities, Serbian students generally viewed mixed participation as normal and reported few barriers to cooperation between boys and girls.

As regards the concept of fairness, students aged 9-12, associate it with equal opportunities to participate, balanced teams, following the rules, and having their voice heard. In particular, in Serbia, students expressed a great interest in co-creating the rules, while then accepting their own rules more easily. In Italy, fairness was linked with balanced teams and equal participation, although exclusion from games was also proposed for those not following the rules.

Inequalities were also recognized by students. In Greece, teachers were criticized for being unfair when dealing with disciplinary issues, especially between boys and girls. In such cases students admitted to have not followed teacher's instructions and misbehaved. Similarly, in Italy some students perceive an imbalance in treatment, feeling that disciplinary measures are not always applied equally and that the teachers tend to protect vulnerable students or girls more than others. Students' sporting ability was also highlighted for generating inequalities within the PE class, with less skilled classmates sometimes experiencing exclusion, reduced participation etc.

Discussions after the PE activities are common between students, but these usually involve comments on performance, joking about tactics or occasionally complaining about classmates (Hungary, Greece). It seems that opportunities for systematic reflection and dialogue between PE teachers and students after the lesson are limited and, in some cases, entirely absent. As noted, taking into account the students' responses in Greece, although collaborative participation is encouraged, there seems to be limited pedagogical mediation to cultivate empathy, emotional reflection, respect, and democratic values related to fair play and inclusion.

## 7.5. Respect, Fairness, Teamwork

### *Students' Perspectives on democratic Values and Group Dynamics in Physical Education class*

Students in all four countries generally show a good understanding of respect, fairness, teamwork, and cooperation in PE classes and consider it important for everyone to participate and have positive relationships. Most children view mistakes as something normal, being part of the game and the learning procedure, particularly when peers and teachers provide encouragement rather than criticism. Children often described helping, encouraging, or defending classmates who struggled or made mistakes.

Disagreements and conflicts are sought to be solved through dialogue first, and when peer negotiation fails, then the teacher intervenes. Students generally trust teachers to mediate conflicts and ensure equal participation, although some Greek students question teachers' decisions, when they perceive unequal treatment. It was also recognised that competitive situations sometimes generate tension, teasing, exclusion, or emotional reactions, particularly among boys and in football-

related activities, while the presence of unfair behaviours such as cheating, monopolising the game, or insulting classmates was also identified. Nevertheless, most students consider themselves as being respected and as equal members in the PE class.

Children believe that a “good team” should include cooperation, communication, helping one another, and fair participation. Nevertheless, many students also value performance and success, revealing a dilemma between collaborative participation and competitive achievement (particularly in Greece and Serbia).

As regards gender differences, boys were found to be more competitive and emotionally investing in sporting outcomes, while girls more frequently emphasized cooperation, emotional support, and conflict resolution.

Looking at students’ opinions per country, in Greece the teacher’s role is considered dominant in correcting mistakes, managing disagreements, and organising teams fairly. Notwithstanding the above, children also take part in resolving conflicts between classmates though negotiation, apologies, and informal mediation. For example, one girl described a friend who acted “like a psychologist” because she helped her classmates resolve disagreements. Mistakes are considered as part of the game, but reactions depend on the action: selfish play, refusing to pass, or cheating are often criticized more by classmates. Also, in Greece many students prioritise competitiveness (winning, skilled players, and effective team performance) to cooperation and “playing all together”. Gender differences included girls “talking too much” or boys being more aggressive in games.

In Hungary, harmony, trust, mutual aid and sportsmanship are considered essential for a good team. Regarding fairness there seems to be a strong sense of equality, with most students stating there is “no child who can play more or less”. Students from Hungary state that “everyone makes mistakes” and usually try to fix it with the help of the teacher or peers. Sometimes unfair play occurs and conflicts arise, which sometimes – in the absence of the teacher- remain unsolved.

In Italy, students support their classmates when they make mistakes, saying things like “next time it will go better,” although they also acknowledged that some peers insult or over-criticise others during games. For Italian students, a well-functioning group is one that “stays together without arguing too much and passes the ball,” highlighting the importance of cooperation and peaceful interaction. The teacher is widely seen as a protector of vulnerable students and a mediator who helps to maintain a respectful and cooperative climate within the group. In Serbia, in case of mistakes, students most often react emotionally and don’t feel comfortable. However, they don’t give up and see mistakes as an opportunity for improvement, while students offer support to classmates who lack confidence or experience difficulties. When asked about the elements of a good team, students state that it is important for them to be listened to, while they respond more positively when team spirit is encouraged and when the success of the group is valued more than individual achievement for example with activities that include elements of play, shared tasks and mutual assistance.

## 7.6. Following the rules

### *Students’ Perceptions of Rules, Fairness, and Participation in Rule-Making*

Children in all four countries view rules as an essential component of enjoyable, safe, and fair physical education activities. In all countries, students associate rules with maintaining order, preventing conflicts, ensuring equal participation, and creating a positive playing environment. They also express greater acceptance of rules when they understand their purpose, the rules are clear, and are equally applied to everyone.

From the interviews, a common finding was that children are more willing to accept and follow rules when they feel that their opinions are heard and when they could participate, at least partially, in shaping them, for example by contributing to rule-making or by suggesting modifications to games (Serbia, Greece, Italy). At the same time, many students recognised that student-led interventions in rules, might lead to disagreements, confusion, or unfair advantages for particular players (Greece, Hungary, Italy). Nevertheless, in Serbia students try to resolve disagreements through discussion before asking from the teacher to intervene. A common observation in all four countries is that students who value participation, inclusion, and teamwork are also more likely to support modification of rules that increases opportunities for everyone to be equally involved.

With regard to age, younger students (particularly in Greece and Serbia) tend to view rules as necessary and non-negotiable conditions for enjoyable play, whereas older children are more likely to consider modifying or co-creating rules. No major gender differences prevail as regards students' views about the rules. Nevertheless, in Serbia, boys are more likely to try change rules during play for the improvement of competitive outcomes, whereas girls accept the rules and act mostly with cooperation and consensus. This was also true for competitive students from Italy who expressed the desire for less rigid rules during competitive moments: *"I don't like rules like when I score while offside and the goal gets cancelled."*

Looking at each country separately, in Serbia students see rules as essential for making games fair and enjoyable, contributing to students' sense of security and fairness, as they help them better understand what is expected of them during games. When rules are not clearly defined or when certain students do not follow them, disagreements and conflicts among peers occur more frequently. The role of the teacher is very significant in making students feel safer and in reacting consistently in situations involving unfair behaviour.

In Hungary, rules were seen as important for preventing injuries, avoiding conflicts, and helping students develop sporting skills. Students were more sceptical than the rest of the countries in the idea of co-creating rules, fearing that, although interesting, this could lead to confusion, lengthy negotiations, or unfair advantages for certain players. A student stated that without the teacher's involvement, they might simply "fight" or end up with "no rules" at all.

In Italy, rules are perceived as necessary: *"rules make games more fun because everyone knows what to do and respects turns."* Most children admit that without rules there would be more chaos and arguments. Also, a linkage was detected in students' views between rules and fairness. In the eyes of some Italian students, rules should guarantee fairer distribution of play within teams and more inclusive ways of participation for all, stating that *"it's not fair when the same people always touch the ball."* In Greece, students related rules to appropriate behaviour, participation in activities, avoidance of conflict, and compliance with the teacher's instructions: *"Don't fight, don't argue, listen*

to the teacher". Similar to Italian students, Greek students also used the word "chaos" to describe what they believed would happen if students were allowed to create and follow their own rules. In practice, most students had not experienced creating their own rules, while in a case where this happened, they consistently selected the most skilled players while excluding the rest. Despite the rules, Greek students also acknowledged that incidents of cheating, aggression, and disputes continue to occur.

## 7.7. Reflections on students PE experiences – suggestions and challenges

### *Students' Suggestions for Strengthening Belonging, Inclusion and Democratic Values in PE*

Students in all four countries highlighted cooperation, inclusion, fairness, and equal participation as the main conditions for strengthening a sense of belonging and for promoting democratic values in PE. They suggested that the activities should be designed in ways so that everyone would have more opportunities to participate, contribute, and feel accepted, regardless of sporting ability or popularity. Many students suggested that teams should be mixed more often, so that classmates can interrelate with one another and experience different group dynamics, while activities should be designed so that everyone contributes to a common goal. Positive PE experiences were also associated with a less competitive environment that gives more emphasis in teamwork, mutual support, and shared enjoyment rather than winning. Most felt that exclusion, mocking, cheating, and frequent conflicts undermine group cohesion and that respect should be shown to all classmates and the teacher. The teacher is considered to have a key role in creating a positive and democratic climate by encouraging cooperation, ensuring fairness, resolving conflicts, and listening to students. In this respect, the teachers should pay more attention to students who are left out, encourage quieter pupils to participate and value more cooperation and peer support than sporting performance. Another issue raised, was that the teacher should give students a stronger voice in the PE class, by encouraging them to participate more in the lessons through the provision of opportunities for co expressing their opinions, helping to establish rules, and contributing to decisions about activities, group formations etc.

As regards gender, although boys expressed a preference in competitive sports and girls in cooperative activities, most students supported mixed gender participation, suggesting that boys and girls should play together. As regards age, it has been observed that older students were more likely to suggest democratic practices such as shared decision-making, rule negotiation, and collective responsibility, while younger children focused more on suggesting direct forms of solidarity and inclusion, such as helping classmates, inviting others into games, and preventing teasing.

Looking at students' experiences and suggestions per country, students in Greece, mainly suggested increasing the amount of time devoted to PE and creating more opportunities to play together as a whole class. As it was characteristically stated by a 12-year-old girl: "We should all play together as one group...". They also emphasized that they should spend more time with different classmates

rather than remaining within small friendship groups *“we should accept all children for who they are and where they come from.”* Older students also proposed greater participation in decision-making, suggesting that students should *“speak our minds, respect everyone’s opinions, and make decisions together.”*

In Italy, students mainly requested more PE lessons, more outdoor activities, and a greater variety of sports and games. At the same time, they highlighted the importance of creating opportunities for the whole class to collaborate and socialize, while ensuring that no student is excluded from activities.

In Hungary, students placed particular emphasis on democratic participation within PE lessons. Several proposed voting procedures or collective discussions to decide activities, with one student suggesting that every child should be able to propose activities in order to reach a “common agreement.” Hungarian students also suggested concrete strategies for inclusion, such as passing the ball to everyone, inviting students who remain on the sidelines to join the game, and encouraging classmates who lack confidence instead of criticizing them.

In Serbia, students focused strongly on creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. They suggested more cooperative games, more mixed teams, a wider variety of activities to accommodate different interests and abilities, and greater teacher support for students who are less active or confident. They also emphasized the importance of valuing effort, participation, and peer support over performance and results. In addition, they underlined that mistakes should be accepted and treated as a normal part of learning rather than as reasons for students being ridiculed or excluded.

## 8. Concluding Remarks – Key findings and recommendations

---

The present Needs Assessment Report, drafted by EKKE, entails the analytical findings from the research activities that had been implemented in the framework of the Work Package 2 of the DIALECT5 project. EKKE held responsibility for this Work Package, entailing the desk review, the design of methodology for the activities, the development of the research tools, as well as for the coordination of the research tasks. In particular, these included: desk research, an online survey addressed to PE Professionals working in primary schools across Greece, Hungary, Italy and Serbia, two focus groups per country, one with representatives from Educational Authorities and one with the school community representatives, as well as face-to-face interviews with primary school students 9-12 years old across the four countries. With regard to the research tools, EKKE, with the valuable feedback from all project partners, developed four research tools namely a) an online questionnaire for PE teachers in primary schools, b) two focus group guides c) an interview guide for students 9-12 years old. All research tools were translated to national languages and each country was responsible for conducting its own research activities under the supervision of EKKE. The national findings from the research activities informed the current Needs Assessment Report through a synthesis of the findings.

Below, the key findings from each research activity are presented, followed by recommendations where applicable.

The **desk research** identifies the ages 9–11 as a critical developmental period for shaping children's attitudes towards diversity, prejudice, and democratic values, highlighting primary school as an important setting for early intervention. It further shows that physical education occupies a dual role: while it may unintentionally reproduce inequalities and discrimination, it also has considerable potential to promote inclusion, empathy, respect, teamwork, fair play, and social cohesion through meaningful interaction among students. Achieving these outcomes depends on the implementation of inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogical practices, including equitable participation, cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, and the adaptation of activities to meet diverse needs. It also emphasizes the pivotal role of PE teachers in creating safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments, while highlighting the need for stronger preparation and ongoing professional development in intercultural competence and inclusive teaching. These findings support the design of DIALECT5 educational interventions for children aged 9–12 that integrate anti-discrimination principles into physical education, while they also underscore the importance of equipping PE teachers with practical resources and training to implement inclusive, child-centred pedagogies that promote respect for diversity, reduce prejudice, and ensure equal participation for all learners.

The **online survey findings** show that PE teachers in the four DIALECT5 countries generally recognise the potential of Physical Education to promote inclusion, democratic values, equality and respect for diversity. Across the sample, teachers strongly endorsed the idea that PE can contribute to democratic citizenship and improve the learning experience when it is inclusive. This provides a positive basis for the development and implementation of the DIALECT5 methodology. At the same time, the findings also show that inclusive PE cannot be taken for granted. Teachers work in diverse school contexts, with differences in school size, class size, sport facilities, support structures and student composition. These contextual conditions affect how easily inclusive activities can be implemented. Facilities were assessed as only moderately adequate overall, and some countries (e.g. Italy) reported more challenging conditions than others. Although specialized staff services were available in many schools, support structures varied across national contexts. The survey also indicates that PE lessons are spaces where peer dynamics become highly visible. Over-competitive behaviour and verbal conflicts were among the most frequently reported issues during PE lessons. Unequal participation and exclusion from teams were less frequent but remain highly relevant for inclusive PE. Importantly, skill level was by far the most frequently reported ground of exclusion or discriminatory behaviour. This suggests that exclusion in PE is not only linked to social identity categories such as gender, ethnicity or cultural background, but also to sport-specific hierarchies between more and less skilled students. Gendered patterns of participation also remain visible. A majority of teachers reported observing differences between boys and girls in their preferences for team sports, while mixed football participation in students' spare time was relatively limited. This suggests that gender inclusion should not be expected to emerge spontaneously. Instead, PE lessons need structured activities that create safe and balanced opportunities for boys and girls to

participate together, especially in sports that are often gendered in practice. Teachers' perceptions of students' socio-emotional and inclusive skills were moderate rather than strongly positive. Students were seen as relatively more capable of naming emotions, understanding their physical strengths and verbally supporting peers. However, they were assessed less positively in relation to managing frustration, adapting their play so that all peers can participate, and persisting when activities become difficult. This finding helps explain why conflicts, over-competitiveness and unequal participation may emerge in PE classes. It also shows that inclusive PE should support not only physical participation, but also socio-emotional learning. A key finding concerns the gap between teachers' values and available guidance. Teachers strongly support the role of PE in inclusion and democratic education, but they are less convinced that the national curriculum provides adequate information for promoting inclusive PE. While curriculum flexibility was reported in several contexts, practical guidance on how to implement inclusive PE appears more limited. Country differences were particularly relevant in relation to curriculum perceptions and should be taken into account when adapting the DIALECT5 methodology. In the case of Italy, findings should be interpreted in light of the more recent institutional consolidation of specialist PE teaching in primary schools. Teachers generally expressed confidence in their knowledge and preparedness, especially in communication and conflict management. However, their preparedness was lower for culturally sensitive situations and, especially, for intersectional ways of conducting PE lessons. Moreover, their knowledge on inclusion and diversity was most often acquired through practical experience rather than formal studies or structured training. Satisfaction with training provision and information from educational authorities was limited, while support from colleagues was evaluated more positively. This suggests that teachers rely strongly on experiential and peer-based learning. The findings on practices are encouraging. Many PE teachers (especially in Greece) already report using inclusive practices, particularly helping students resolve conflicts and adapting rules, equipment or group formations to promote equal participation. However, practices requiring more intentional pedagogical design, such as challenging gender stereotypes and providing student leadership opportunities, were less widespread. This points to a practical implementation gap: teachers may value inclusion, cooperation and diversity, but still need more structured tools to embed these goals consistently in PE activities. The reported challenges confirm this interpretation. The three most important challenges identified were: 1) the lack of teachers' specialised knowledge around inclusion, 2) the absence of a support framework for integrating new techniques and activities, and 3) family disengagement. These findings show that barriers to inclusive PE are not only attitudinal; they are also professional, organisational and relational. Interest in the DIALECT5 methodology was high, and willingness to pilot it was very strong among eligible respondents. This creates favourable conditions for implementation. However, the methodology should be practical, time-efficient and clearly connected to teachers' everyday classroom needs.

Based on the above online survey findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. First, DIALECT5 training should focus on practical classroom tools rather than only general principles of inclusion. Teachers need ready-to-use examples of activities, rule adaptations, grouping strategies and reflection exercises.

2. Second, the methodology should directly address skill-based exclusion. Activities should be designed so that students with different ability levels can contribute meaningfully, avoiding fixed hierarchies between “strong” and “weak” players.
3. Third, gender inclusion should be explicitly integrated into PE activities. The training should include ways to challenge gender stereotypes, encourage mixed participation and create inclusive forms of team sport.
4. Fourth, socio-emotional learning should be embedded in PE practice. Activities should help students manage frustration, communicate during play, resolve disagreements verbally and adapt their behaviour so that peers can participate.
5. Fifth, the methodology should include guidance on culturally sensitive and intersectional teaching. Teachers need support to recognise how gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, disability, migrant/refugee background and skill level may overlap in shaping participation.
6. Sixth, implementation should build on peer learning. Since teachers value support from colleagues, training formats should include exchange of practices, collaborative reflection and peer demonstration.
7. Finally, DIALECT5 should remain flexible across national contexts. In countries where curriculum flexibility is perceived as higher, the methodology can be introduced as enrichment. Where curriculum constraints are stronger, it should be presented as an adaptable tool that supports existing requirements without adding excessive workload.

**The focus group with Educational Authorities** confirmed that most national frameworks and policies formally do support the promotion of equality and non-discrimination in primary education with the use of varying instruments such as legislation, curriculum reforms, support services for vulnerable students, initiatives for etc. However, a gap is identified between inclusive policy frameworks and everyday school practice. As a result, the actual successful implementation of this framework, depends on factors such as local and economic resources, school conditions, as well as the initiative of individual educators. In other words, while national policies formally promote inclusion and equality, their implementation is constrained in practice by structural barriers such as large class sizes, limited time, insufficient resources, and a lack of specialised support staff. At the same time, classrooms are increasingly heterogeneous, with differences in learning abilities, behavioural and emotional needs, disability, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and levels of participation that teachers must address simultaneously. Participants stressed that the role of PE and its educational value depends largely on the teachers’ pedagogical approaches. Participants highlighted that strengthening PE teachers’ competences is a prerequisite for fostering inclusive, equitable, and tolerant learning environments. They emphasized that professional development should combine the enhancement of teachers’ interpersonal and pedagogical competences with practical, classroom-oriented support and collaborative learning opportunities. It was commonly agreed that although Physical Education teachers receive basic knowledge in diversity, inclusion, and equality, many struggle to translate these principles into everyday teaching practices in increasingly diverse school environments.

Participatory sport methodologies that involve cooperative activities, collaborative problem-solving, shared decision-making, and fair-play practices were considered as effective for promoting dialogue, cooperation, fair play, and inclusion within Physical Education as they help students develop empathy, respect for others, communication skills, and a stronger sense of belonging. However, the effectiveness of these methodologies depends on well-planned activities, clear structure, appropriate support, and effective teacher guidance, without these conditions, they may fail to achieve their intended inclusive goals. It was also emphasized that sport-based approaches are most effective when integrated and used in the wider educational framework of the schools and not just in PE class. Five conditions were highlighted that would facilitate the integration of inclusive sport methodologies within physical education curricula or school practices. These are: 1) more systematic initial and continuous professional development, 2) providing accessible practical guidance for teachers such as concrete lesson models, adaptable activities, 3) adequate institutional and policy support, 4) adequacy of structural and material conditions in schools and 5) collaborative school culture involving cooperation between teachers, school leadership and educational stakeholders. Finally, it was supported that projects like DIALECT5 can strengthen teachers' professional capacity in implementing inclusive methodologies by providing opportunities for learning, while at the same time future educational policies could benefit from already tested methodologies and initiatives, such as DIALECT5.

Based on the key findings from the Focus Group with Educational Authorities, the following were proposed:

***1. Strengthening teacher capacity and professional development.***

- a) Enhancement of teachers' interpersonal skills (e.g. empathy, communication, conflict resolution, recognising discriminatory behaviour, and collaboration) through continuous professional development on inclusion, intercultural competence, and inclusive pedagogies.
- b) Provision of practical, classroom-ready resources, including adaptable lesson plans, methodological guidance, differentiated **activities**, and inclusive teaching strategies for everyday PE lessons.
- c) Establishment of professional learning networks to facilitate the exchange of resources and good practices through peer observation, collaborative planning, and professional dialogue on inclusive PE.

***2. Promoting inclusive pedagogical and assessment practices in PE class***

- a) Adoption of holistic and flexible assessment approaches that value students' effort, progress, engagement, and collaboration, rather than primarily focusing on physical performance.
- b) Opportunities to introduce social and emotional reflection into PE lessons to foster empathy, cooperation, self-awareness, and an inclusive classroom climate.

***3. Fostering collaboration beyond the school*** by strengthening partnerships between schools, families, local authorities, and community organisations to promote tolerance, equality, and social inclusion through coordinated action and shared responsibility.

**4. Strengthening systemic support and mechanisms for inclusive physical education** by increasing investment in school sport, educational infrastructure, human resources, and support services, while ensuring that legislation and curriculum frameworks are effectively translated into everyday school practice through adequate resources, implementation mechanisms, and sustained support for schools.

Key findings from the **focus group with representatives of the school community** show that although schools are considered as places that promote inclusion and democratic values, implementation of inclusive education in practice is often inconsistent. Participants from all countries perceive their role as highly significant and central in the construction of inclusive school environments, while PE teachers in particular, consider sports to be a privileged tool for fostering inclusion. Incidents of discrimination and exclusion exist, mostly taking the form of exclusion of certain students from activities, ridicule, verbal conflicts, as well as more subtle forms of ignoring or marginalization. Physical abilities and gender are the most common grounds of these incidents. With regard to the effectiveness of confronting such incidents, this is largely linked to their experience and training. Among the necessary skills that one should have, empathy was consistently described as a core element, together with strong communication and listening skills, patience, emotional intelligence, and the ability to understand and respond to students' individual needs. The importance of building trusting relationships within the school community, managing conflicts fairly and constructively, and approaching challenging situations with sensitivity and flexibility were also highlighted as key requirements for professionals, together with personal responsibility and commitment.

As regards PE in primary schools, the importance of inclusion and equality is recognized in the physical education curriculum to some extent, but goals are often formulated in general terms and are not sufficiently operationalized. As a result, there is a lack of concrete guidelines on how to apply these values in everyday teaching practice. Students 9-12 years old were described as in need for support in managing emotions, cooperating with others, and understanding the consequences of their actions. At the same time, they were regarded as one of the most favourable age groups to work with in PE as they are typically enthusiastic and need no further motivation to engage in physical activities. Gender differences are observed in the age group 9-12, particularly for girls aged 11-12, who tend to limit their participation in PE classes. Social stereotypes were also seen as influencing both the choice of activities and the level of engagement. Nevertheless, participants highlighted that school is one of the few environments where sports participation is genuinely mixed and shared between boys and girls which gives the opportunity to PE teachers to challenge stereotypes and foster more balanced gender relations. With regard to teaching practices, participants mentioned various teaching strategies depending on conditions such as the class's abilities and interests, as well as each schools' infrastructures. However, it was noted that effective teaching in PE relies on teacher autonomy, experience, and continuous adjustment. Not all teachers possess adequate tools to effectively manage situations of conflict, exclusion, or emotional distress. For this reason, a strong need emerged for specific training in inclusive methodologies, group management, and educational sport practices.

According to participants, PE lessons can promote tolerance and democratic values through cooperative learning, shared responsibility, and student participation in decision-making, including voting on activities, reflective discussions after practice, and assigning rotating leadership roles, with structured approaches such as Football3 also highlighted for fostering dialogue, fair play, and emotional regulation. Mixed-gender participation is generally encouraged and inclusion of all students regardless of ability or background is widely promoted; however, practices addressing gender stereotypes and discrimination remain largely informal and inconsistently applied. Collaboration among teachers and school staff is overall limited and mostly ad hoc, occurring more frequently within PE departments or in specific activities such as events and competitions, with more systematic interdisciplinary cooperation reported only in some contexts. The main challenges identified relate to: 1) managing increasing classroom diversity, including wide differences in abilities, motivation, and socio-emotional needs, 2) structural constraints such as limited resources, large class sizes, and 3) curriculum misalignment with school realities, which together complicate inclusive teaching. Finally, participants highlighted a persistent gap between policy goals and everyday practice in promoting democratic values and non-discrimination, further reinforced by insufficient practical guidance, limited teacher training, performance-oriented assessment cultures, and external social influences, making inclusion a complex and ongoing challenge in most contexts.

As regards their suggestions, participants agreed that the most effective approaches for promoting tolerance and inclusion in PE are those that shift the focus away from performance and towards cooperation, participation, and respect for individual differences. These approaches include structuring heterogeneous groups, adaptation of activities and rules to ensure meaningful participation for all students, and designing cooperative task that require shared responsibility to achieve common goals. Specific examples that were mentioned refer to differentiated tasks, the Mandatory Pass Rule, rotating leadership roles such as class responsibility systems and student-led games, as well as structured reflection practices such as closing circles. Participants also highlighted the importance of involving students in decision-making, rule-setting, and conflict reflection, alongside adapting activities to enable less confident or marginalised students to experience success. A supportive environment that values effort and consistently reinforces inclusive values is seen as essential for empowering students to challenge stereotypes and develop more inclusive attitudes.

Finally, participants expressed a positive attitude in introducing an alternative physical education methodology that promotes democratic values, inclusion, cooperation, and respect for diversity. However, they emphasized that such an approach should be practical, flexible, and adaptable to different school contexts, while remaining simple to implement in everyday PE lessons. They also stressed that the methodology should not be treated as a separate component, but incorporate in the PE lessons building on existing informal practices already used by teachers while providing a more structured and consistent framework.

Following from the above, key conditions for successful implementation of alternative methodologies include:

1. Integration into everyday practice, ensuring inclusion, cooperation, and democratic values are embedded across all PE activities rather than treated separately.

2. Practical and adaptable design, suitable for diverse school contexts and aligned with real classroom conditions.
3. Active student participation, including cooperative learning, mixed-group activities, shared responsibility, decision-making, and reflection.
4. Simplicity and usability, ensuring the methodology is easy to apply without reducing student enjoyment of PE.
5. Teacher training and support, including initial and ongoing professional development, methodological guidance, and opportunities for collaboration and exchange of good practices.

Finally, **interviews with students 9-12 years old** revealed that physical education is considered one of the most enjoyable school subjects and is valued primarily as a space for play, socialisation, cooperation, and emotional well-being. Most students described a generally positive and supportive class climate, where helping classmates, working together, and accepting mistakes were common experiences. Friendships played a central role in shaping participation, with students often preferring to work with their friends and, in many cases, forming same-gender groups, although mixed and inclusive activities were generally welcomed when appropriately organised. Students also recognised the importance of rules and teacher guidance in ensuring fairness and safety, while appreciating supportive responses to mistakes and opportunities to cooperate with their peers.

At the same time, the findings revealed several barriers to inclusion, including competitive behaviours, unequal participation based on sporting ability, gender stereotypes, and the exclusion of less confident or lower-skilled peers. Winning often remains an important goal, but students also expressed a preference for teamwork, fair play, and mutual support over excessive competition. The PE teacher emerged as a key figure in creating balanced teams, managing conflicts, ensuring fairness, and supporting vulnerable students. Although students generally trusted teachers to establish and enforce rules, they also expressed a desire for greater involvement in decision-making, rule-setting, and opportunities to voice their opinions. Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening democratic values in PE requires moving towards more participatory and inclusive pedagogical approaches that foster student agency, equal participation, mutual respect, appreciation of individual differences, shared responsibility, and a stronger sense of belonging for all students. Central to this shift is the role of the PE teacher, whose ability to create psychologically safe learning environments, facilitate cooperation, manage conflicts fairly, adapt activities to diverse needs, and actively involve students in decision-making and in more participatory and reflective pedagogical approaches is essential for translating democratic values into everyday classroom practice.

Following from above, suggestions reflecting students' opinions for a more inclusive PE class include:

- 1) Increasing PE hours and opportunities for cooperation and shared participation, ensuring that all students are actively involved regardless of their sporting ability.

- 2) Creating more mixed and inclusive groups, encouraging classmates to support rather than exclude one another and designing activities where everyone contributes to a common goal.
- 3) Reducing the emphasis on competition by prioritising teamwork, enjoyment, effort, and mutual encouragement over winning.
- 4) Providing greater support for less confident or excluded students, with teachers actively encouraging quieter pupils to participate and recognising cooperation and helping behaviours alongside sporting performance.
- 5) Strengthening their (student) voice in PE, by encouraging them to express their opinions, establish class rules, and contribute to decisions about activities.
- 6) Creating opportunities for systematic reflection and dialogue between PE teachers and students after the lesson.

## 9. Annex

---

### Contents

|                                                                              |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>PART 1: DESK RESEARCH REPORT .....</b>                                    | <b>78</b>  |
| 1. INTRODUCTION.....                                                         | 79         |
| 2. BUILDING ON EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE .....              | 80         |
| 3. DISCRIMINATION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS .....            | 97         |
| 4. CONCLUSIONS .....                                                         | 126        |
| 5. DESK RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION TO THE DIALECT5 PROJECT.....                   | 127        |
| 6. BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES.....                                             | 128        |
| <b>PART 2: RESEARCH PROTOCOL AND TOOLS .....</b>                             | <b>131</b> |
| 1. DIALECT5 PROJECT'S SUMMARY .....                                          | 132        |
| 2. WP2 OBJECTIVES, TARGET POPULATIONS AND EKKE'S CONTRIBUTION .....          | 138        |
| 3. RESEARCH PROTOCOL AND TOOLS .....                                         | 142        |
| <i>Methodology and Research Design .....</i>                                 | <i>142</i> |
| <i>Research populations.....</i>                                             | <i>142</i> |
| <i>Research tools.....</i>                                                   | <i>143</i> |
| <i>Research questions .....</i>                                              | <i>145</i> |
| <b>RESEARCH TOOLS .....</b>                                                  | <b>156</b> |
| TOOL 1: ON-LINE QUESTIONNAIRE.....                                           | 156        |
| TOOL 2 & 3: FOCUS GROUP GUIDES .....                                         | 166        |
| TOOL 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS 9-12 YEARS OLD .....     | 170        |
| GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWS WITH CHILDREN & INTERVIEWER'S EVALUATION FORM..... | 182        |
| <b>DATA PROCESSING TEMPLATES.....</b>                                        | <b>190</b> |

## **PART 1: Desk Research Report**

---

T2.1: Enhanced desk research on the relationship between discrimination and physical education in primary schools at the European level

**Christina Varouxí**

**EKKE**

## 1. Introduction

According to the Grant Agreement, DIALECT5 builds upon a well-established pan-European ecosystem, developed through six years of implementing the DIALECT methodology in disadvantaged communities in Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia. Using gender and ethnically mixed football teams, the initiative has fostered inclusive communities by promoting tolerance, equality, and non-discrimination. DIALECT5 unlocks the potential of physical education professionals as key drivers of tolerance in schools, adapting and transferring the DIALECT3<sup>3</sup> methodology -piloted in Greek lower secondary schools- as well as the DIALECT4<sup>4</sup> methodology -piloted in younger children aged 10-12 years old- to primary schools in four partner countries. Through physical education, DIALECT5 tackles stereotypes early, promoting inclusion among children (9-12 years old) with fewer opportunities, including migrants, refugees, Roma, girls, and boys. It aligns with Erasmus+ priorities on “Inclusion and Diversity” and “Promoting equality and EU values through sport”.

Within this framework, WP2 objectives are to adapt and integrate the DIALECT methodology into primary school physical education across Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia, reinforcing democratic values and inclusion through an intersectional approach. The need for this early-age intervention at primary school level is well-documented through the previous DIALECT Needs Analysis in Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia.

The project in WP2 and Task T2.1 provides for an enhanced desk research on the relationship between discrimination and physical education in primary schools at the European level with emphasis on the four partner countries. More specifically, building on the existing desk research conducted in DIALECT3 on the interrelation between racism based discrimination and physical education, focusing on Greek lower secondary schools, as well as the desk research conducted in DIALECT4 focusing on the topic of cultivation of values of intolerance in children aged 10-12 and its interconnectedness with sports and media in the four European countries (Greece, Italy, Hungary, Serbia), this study extends the analysis to primary schools.

Drawing from academic literature, policy papers, and reports from European and international organizations, it further explores the relationship between physical education in primary schools and stereotypes related to ethnic and cultural diversity, to physical appearance, as well as gender roles, while incorporating a democratic values perspective. This includes examining principles such as students' activation on equality and

---

<sup>3</sup> See Dialect 3 project: ADdressing intersectionAL stEreotypes, building sChool communities of Tolerance through physical education. [ACTIVITIES / RESULTS - Dialect](#)

<sup>4</sup> See Dialect 4 project: Enlarging DIALECT's communities of Tolerance through Football, focusing on Younger Children. [Outcomes - Dialect](#)

nondiscrimination challenges within schools and at everyday life, and children participation in decisions that affect them, intersect with physical education, an aspect that has not been previously explored in DIALECT projects. Additionally, the study reviews existing primary school PE curricula, with emphasis on partner countries, to assess the extent to which inclusive pedagogical approaches are integrated and to identify gaps and opportunities for further enhancement. It also evaluates how DIALECT values, enhanced with democratic principles, can be effectively incorporated into PE curricula and extra curriculum sport activities, fostering a more socially responsible learning environment in primary schools. The findings serve as a foundation for designing the project's research methodology on needs assessment, including the development of targeted research questions and tools.

## 2. Building on existing knowledge and research experience

Literature findings during the implementation of previous DIALECT projects<sup>5</sup> have demonstrated that aspects of racism, intolerance and discrimination were identified all over Europe as well as in the four partner European countries (Greece, Italy, Hungary, Serbia). Desk research has reaffirmed that racism is strongly based on values of intolerance, defined as the unwillingness or refusal to accept beliefs, views, practices or behaviors that differ from our own and that intolerance can take various forms, ranging from avoidance to acts of hate and physical harm of people who differ. Xenophobia, as a form of intolerance, entails strong negative emotions, such as hostility or hatred towards foreigners. It is, most often directed towards members of other ethnic, religious, political or sexual orientation. Research is piling up evidence on continuous racist attacks increase in xenophobic sentiments and discrimination against migrants and refugees across Europe.<sup>6</sup> By synthesizing existing knowledge in these domains, the literature review will establish a solid foundation essential for tailoring the DIALECT5 training toolkits, ensuring it meets the unique characteristics and learning needs of this age group in primary schools.

In the following lines, we present main aspects of the desk research/literature review in DIALECT3 and DIALECT4 projects which provide valuable insights into understanding and addressing the above mentioned topics and delve into various aspects of inclusion, racism, intolerance and predominant values among children aged 9-12 at primary school level across Europe. They also provide insights into how physical activity choices of children aged 9-12 influence these values, particularly within the European context in the partner countries and social settings. The research provides a variety of tools, initiatives, data and

---

<sup>5</sup> See outcomes of previous DIALECT projects available at [Main Page - Dialect](#)

<sup>6</sup> See indicatively Racist Violence Recording Network (2024). *Annual Report 2023*.

materials tailored to address these critical issues among children aged 9-12 and focus on creating inclusive educational settings on issues of diversity and discrimination at an early age. They come from international and European organizations, academic institutions and NGOs, and provide valuable insights into how these critical issues are addressed. Furthermore, they range from government policies to NGO initiatives, academic research, and reports, all of which can be used to support educators, parents, and policymakers in promoting inclusion and combating discrimination through sports.

As **DIALECT3** desk research revealed<sup>7</sup>, racism, intolerance and xenophobia are reinforced throughout Europe and Greece as well. Literature review also reaffirmed that racism is strongly based on values of intolerance, defined as the unwillingness or refusal to accept beliefs, views, practices or behaviors that differ from our own and that intolerance can take various forms, ranging from avoidance to acts of hate and physical harm of people who differ. Bibliographic findings reveal that many European institutions have called for the immediate attention by member states to issues of increasing racism, the rise of populist parties and intolerant political discourse, reaffirming the fundamental importance of freedom of expression and opinion, tolerance and respect for the equal dignity of all human beings for a democratic and pluralistic society. At the same time research is piling up evidence on continuous racist attacks increase in xenophobic sentiments and discrimination against migrants and refugees across Europe.

The serious impact of discrimination and intolerance in the school environment has been highlighted by educators, school communities and European and international organizations. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) emphasizes that students who are discriminated against can develop a sense of isolation, fears, negative feelings and other reactions. Discrimination and intolerance in schools may have a particularly negative impact on individuals, since school is supposed to be a safe place where students have the opportunity to develop their skills, capacities and personalities. Students subject to discrimination or intolerance in schools have been reported as developing a number of negative effects, including low self-esteem, self-segregation, internalized oppression, disengagement from school activities, not fulfilling their potential, attraction to violent extremist ideologies, drop out or school refusal, health problems, depression and suicidal thoughts.<sup>8</sup>

DIALECT3 bibliographic findings also confirm the rising need to address racism, intolerance and xenophobia, especially among young people, through educational initiatives in the

---

<sup>7</sup> See Tsiganou, J., Kondyli, D., Varoux, Ch., Spyropoulou, N., Vezyrgianni, K., Tsevreini, M. and Savva, K. (eds) (2025). *ADdressIng intersectionAL stEreotypes, building sChool communities of Tolerance through physical education*. Athens: NCSR. ISBN: 978-960-6834-55-4. [EKKE.GR](https://www.ekke.gr) – [Εθνικό Κέντρο Κοινωνικών Ερευνών](https://www.ekke.gr)

<sup>8</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, Council of Europe and UNESCO, (2011).

context of formal, non-formal and informal education. In protecting children against racism, intolerance, xenophobia and radicalization, literature review reveals the significance of the role of education “[...] We need soft power such as education. In particular, we need relevant, inclusive and equitable quality education. UNESCO’s Education Sector is seeking to build the capacities of key education stakeholders, namely education policymakers, teachers, school staff and actors working in non-formal educational settings”.<sup>9</sup>

As OECD reports regarding equity in education, equitable education systems are those that ensure the achievement of educational potential is not the result of personal and social circumstances, including factors such as gender, ethnic origin, immigrant status, special education needs and giftedness). This assumes the role of education systems in achieving equity is to provide equality of opportunities, so each individual reaches his/her education potential. Overall, “achieving greater equity in education is not only a social-justice imperative, but also a way to use resources more efficiently, and to increase the supply of knowledge and skills that fuel economic growth and promote social cohesion. Moreover, in operationalizing equity in education, OECD distinguishes between horizontal and vertical equity. While horizontal equity considers the overall fair provision of resources to each part of the school system (providing similar resources to the alike), vertical equity involves providing disadvantaged groups of students or schools with additional resources based on their needs. Both approaches are complementary and play an important role in the process of inclusion of marginalized groups of students.”<sup>10</sup>

As UNESCO points out «informal and non-formal educational initiatives complement formal education. Such inter-group interactions organically broaden youth’s understandings of other belief systems and help confront prejudices and assumptions. [...] sports can build bridges between diverse cultures and religions. Sports activities can be used to promote intergroup cooperation and unite diverse individuals in achieving a common goal. Repeated experiences of intergroup contact or, more simply, interactions with the “other” contribute to building more inclusive societies and more empathetic, mindful citizens. They foster values such as teamwork, leadership, and goal setting. [...] Participation in sports provides young people with a sense of inclusion and purpose, reducing isolation from the larger community. In addition to building stronger communities, sports provide benefits to the individual, including improved self-esteem, leadership skills, greater academic achievement, and longer attention span. Such advantages improve the resilience of young people and increase the probability that they will better handle challenges, rebound more quickly from disappointments, and maintain a healthy sense of community engagement» (UNESCO, 2017).

---

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO (2017)

<sup>10</sup> OECD (2020).

The potential of physical education and sports to create a climate of tolerance and respect for diversity has long been confirmed by academics, researchers, educators, sports professionals and a plethora of international organisations. Sport plays an important role in building cohesive societies and can be a driving factor in the development of tolerant attitudes and democratic values. Sport can be a means of transmitting positive values and developing a climate of tolerance and mutual understanding. It teaches respect and understanding of diversity, while promoting social skills in young people. Sport provides positive experiences such as a sense of belonging, belief in achieving a common goal, trust and mutual support, cooperation, understanding, tolerance and acceptance among participants from different backgrounds. Sport can become a powerful tool for promoting the social inclusion of marginalized or at-risk young people, strengthening social cohesion.

The Council of Europe recognizes that sport and physical education have great potential to educate respect for diversity and mutual understanding of diversity, and that physical education and sport have real potential to engage young people, provide easily accessible learning opportunities and develop social skills. «Physical education and sport policies can include learning objectives that support the development of an inclusive society which respects diversity and improves tolerance and mutual understanding of its members. Diversity is a natural aspect of human communities and modern societies, and physical education and sport can play an important role in supporting people to learn how to live together in different communities» (Council of Europe/EPAS, 2015, 2018). At the most fundamental level, well-designed activities that incorporate the core values of physical education and sport — self-discipline, respect, fair play, teamwork, and adherence to mutually agreed upon rules — help individuals to build the values and communication skills necessary to prevent and resolve conflict in their own lives (UNESCO, 2015).

Moreover, sport is an integration platform with real potential to engage young people and manages to integrate those who feel disconnected from the community or school system. It provides easily accessible learning opportunities, challenges stigma and transcends stereotypes and provides positive experiences such as a sense of teamwork and identity, a sense of belonging, belief in achieving a common goal, trust and mutual support, cooperation, understanding, tolerance and acceptance among participants from different backgrounds. It also enhances personality with self-esteem, leadership skills, and other life skills that improve young people's resilience and increase their likelihood of maintaining a healthy sense of belonging to the community. Sport also provides opportunities to build collective identities and strengthen social cohesion, especially in times of uncertainty. Finally, it serves as a platform for integration, acting as a deterrent to polarization, violence and crime.

Educational tools that raise young people's awareness of discrimination and encourage them to promote diversity and equality, particularly in football, are produced and evaluated. Studies on how to integrate diversity and anti-discrimination into football's organizational structures and activities are devoted to football since, as contested, by eliminating discrimination from the game, football will become more attractive for players, spectators, TV viewers and users of social media. Football is valued as a social space, where community and identity construction are taking place with increased relevance and significance for the youth. Football communities indeed provide the opportunities for the construction of collective identities, although professional football was and has increasingly been politicized. This is so, especially due to the fact that football provides an opportunity in order to build collective identities, in times of frustration and uncertainty (i.e., increased migration, economic crisis, covid pandemic). Young people are extremely attracted by football and shaped by values surrounding it.

Furthermore, within the EU, RAN emphasizes that institutions of formal education are key actors in preventing racism, intolerance, xenophobia and radicalisation. They foster shared values and critical thinking and help students develop basic life skills and social competencies that are essential for active citizenship in democratic societies (generic prevention). Educating by teaching democratic values and empowering youngsters to understand and handle life in pluralist social environments is crucial for boosting resilience against social polarisation and radicalisation. Yet schools do not just cultivate the communicative, cognitive and behavioral skills required for democratic life; they are also places where early signs of radicalisation can be noticed, and where early responses can be initiated (secondary prevention). In many cases, teachers are the first to become aware of changes in appearance, thinking and behaviour, and to offer counsel and support for youngsters in their quest for orientation. The empowerment of teachers as individuals and of schools as institutions is a precondition for the empowerment of students against the offerings of (violent) radical ideologies and milieus. To this end the following recommendations are proposed:

- Teachers and schools do not have to reinvent the wheel to develop effective strategies of prevention. They have ample experience in handling difficult situations and conflicts, and this can serve as a useful starting point for the prevention of radicalisation.
- Schools and teachers might reproduce discrimination and stereotypes. Teachers should be encouraged to critically reflect on their own attitudes and reconsider the messages they convey to their students.
- No student is invulnerable to radicalisation. Teachers hence bear a particular responsibility to notice early signs of alienation and retreat, and to respond appropriately. They should be trained in the relevant procedures and response structures to cases of (violent) extremism.

- Teaching is a powerful means to foster students' identification with society; it should reflect the diversity of students and their different biographical, cultural and religious backgrounds and provide inclusive alternatives to 'us-versus-them'- narratives. This includes representing histories of migration as 'standard' facets of modern European history.
- Democracy is not primarily about knowing the constitution. Rather, it is built on the experience that one's interests matter and that they are represented in public debate. Encouraging student participation in schools is a means to foster bonds to the institution and to prevent frustration and alienation.
- Schools provide ideal settings to empower students against discrimination and marginalisation, and to encourage critical thinking about controversial and sensitive issues (i.e., identity, religiosity, gender roles and international conflicts). While these topics might provoke strong emotions and heated debates, schools allow students to be introduced to various perspectives and experiences that would otherwise go unheard. Providing students with alternative messages is a means of challenging easy answers and ideological claims promoted by violent extremist actors.
- The use of social media, first-hand accounts and peers have proven important strategies to reach students, to change perspectives and to provide alternative narratives to extremist propaganda.
- Clear procedures, effective support structures and strong local networks are key to handling cases of radicalisation. However, it takes time to build and sustain such networks. It is important to establish these structures prior to any cases of violent extremism, and to inform and train teachers on how to use them.<sup>11</sup>

With regard to physical education, PE is not limited to training in physical skills but has also a societal worth that has been expressed in various documents. Physical education can contribute crucially to the personal growth of young people in helping them to develop physical awareness and belief in their own physical abilities, along with a general feeling of bodily well-being and thus greater self-confidence and self-esteem. Physical education also develops their willpower, sense of responsibility, patience and courage. At the same time, it helps them to be realistic about their physical and other capabilities and in their decisions and actions, so that they both learn to accept themselves and tolerate differences in others (European Commission, 2013). As UNESCO acknowledges in a world-wide survey of school physical education (2014), there is evidence of increased consideration being given to equity issues with gains made but with some underlying issues and concerns remaining. Actually, there are indications that now there is greater consideration of the issue of inclusion,

---

<sup>11</sup> Nordbruch G. (2016). *The role of education in preventing radicalization*. Radicalization Awareness Network, European Commission.

antidiscrimination legislation fostering deeper awareness of inclusion and disability issues, and advocacy of inclusive practices in participation in physical education programmes for pupils with disabilities. However, in some countries operational problems exist. In many lower income countries and regions, neither legislation nor policies are in place. Globally, there are many examples of countries reporting inadequate infrastructure (including policy), availability of, and access to, facilities and adapted equipment and lack of qualified teachers and ‘special needs’ support personnel/ assistants, lack of teacher confidence, low levels of integration, lack of monitoring procedures and poor institutional collaboration as being barriers to disability inclusion. Whilst these deficiencies are predominantly evident in low income regions/countries, they are also seen in higher income countries across the regions. The problem of a lack of specialist or trained teachers is a significant barrier to inclusion. A recent additional barrier is the erosion of inclusive practice by financial cutbacks in the education sector due to austerity measures. On a more positive note, a range of progressive and improved inclusive practices in promotion of, and provision for, physical education in schools for children with disabilities/special needs can be identified. In recent years, a number of countries have brought about change in inclusion and disability policy and practice, epitomized in entitlement to physical education, inclusion, integration, employment of support assistants, differentiated teaching methods, use of adapted equipment etc. Nonetheless, persistent barriers continue to undermine the drive for a more holistic and inclusive physical education environment for children with disabilities and these barriers are not limited to any one country or region: they are globally widespread (UNESCO, 2014).

With involvement in many physical activities come knowledge and insight centered on principles and concepts such as the rules of the game, fair play and respect, tactical and bodily awareness, and social awareness linked to personal interaction and team effort. Goals that extend beyond PE and sport – such as good health, sound personal development and social inclusion – give further weight to the importance of this subject in the school curriculum. Literature findings reveal that there are different ways of thinking about physical education (PE).<sup>12</sup> For example, PE can be thought of as ‘education of the physical’ and as ‘education through the physical’. Although ‘education of the physical’ is important, thinking of PE as ‘education through the physical’ allows the potential for developing life

---

<sup>12</sup> According to UNESCO world-wide survey of school physical education (2014), legal and perceived actual status of physical education and its teachers is a contentious issue: the former can be subject to ‘local’ interpretations and/or implementation and the latter to variable perceptions. Globally, and for the most part regionally, in actual practice physical education is considered to have lower status than other subjects, testimony to which is a higher frequency of cancellation of physical education lessons than other subjects. In around a fifth of countries, physical education teachers do not enjoy the same status as other subject teachers. In some countries, there is an element of ambivalence in physical education teacher status; in some other countries, it is an issue of identity and inequality.

skills in PE. Life skills include aspects such as ‘behavioral (communicating effectively with peers and adults) or cognitive (making effective decisions); interpersonal (being assertive) or intrapersonal (setting goals)’. As such, this definition of life skills includes social skills, and PE might be an important context for learning such skills. Physical education can be a context in which students are ‘educated through the physical’, which includes the possibility to learn social inclusion as an important life skill and contributor to the greater good of society.

The potential of physical education<sup>13</sup> in creating a climate of tolerance and diversity within the school context, has long time ago been reaffirmed by academics, researchers, school educators, sport and physical education professionals as well as a plethora of international organizations. PE and sport play an important role in building and maintaining society and communities. In particular, they are tools to raise awareness of democratic and human rights and develop relevant attitudes. Co-operation among various sectors of society, particularly between sport and education, is very important if sport is to achieve its highest potential impact in promoting these values of democratic and human rights. PE and sport are also an important economic factor, not only as physical investment, but also the psychological, mental, social and intellectual capital of citizens and can be used to develop “physical literacy” and civic engagement, combining and connecting physical abilities with learning based on values and communication, and enhancing cognitive processing. These benefits allow us to question prevailing prejudices and stereotypes related to sport, which is a great start to lifelong civic participation and physical health (Council of Europe/EPAS,2018). The Council of Europe recognizes that:

- sport and physical education have great potential to educate on the respect of diversity and mutual understanding of difference,

---

<sup>13</sup> Physical education is a statutory area of the school curriculum, concerned with developing pupils' physical competence and confidence, and their ability to use these to perform in a range of activities. Whilst the performance of physical skills forms a central and characteristic feature of the subject, like all other areas of the curriculum, it is fundamentally concerned with knowledge, skills and understanding. In the words of a position paper for the World Summit on Physical Education, the subject ‘involves both “learning to move” and “moving to learn”. In other words, physical education is concerned with learning the skills and understanding required for participation in physical activities, knowledge of one's own body and its range of and capacity for movement; and it is also a context for and means of learning a wide range of outcomes which are not inherent to physical activity, but which are valuable extrinsic educational lessons, such as social skills, aesthetic judgement, literacy and numeracy. (Bailey, 2005). As UNESCO acknowledges **Quality physical education (QPE)** is distinct from physical education. The main differences relate to frequency, variety, inclusivity and value content. Quality physical education is about peer-led learning and rounded skill development which can enhance educational and employability outcomes. It is also about whole body health which includes physical and psycho-social wellbeing. QPE supports students to develop the physical, social and emotional skills which define healthy, resilient and socially responsible citizens. [Promoting Quality Physical Education Policy | UNESCO](#)

- physical education and sport have real potential to involve young people, provide easily accessible learning opportunities, and develop social and civic skills,
- physical education and sport policies can include learning objectives that support the development of an inclusive society that respects diversity and improves tolerance and mutual understanding of its members,
- physical education and sport play an important role in building and maintaining society and communities,
- all practitioners who are working in sport and physical education can be further empowered and educated to contribute to the change sport can offer in relation to social cohesion, diversity and tolerance<sup>14</sup> among people of different identities,
- physical education and sport are tools to transmit these values and can develop the relevant attitudes,
- diversity is a natural aspect of human communities, and modern societies and physical education and sport can play an important role in supporting people to learn how to live together in diverse communities.
- co-operation among different sectors, especially between sport and education, is very important for maximizing the potential impact of sport as a tool that promotes these values,
- physical education and sport play an important economic factor that is not only a physical investment, but also psychological, mental, social, intellectual capital of citizens,
- physical education and sport improve physical literacy and civic engagement, it may combine body and physical competence with value-based learning and communication; it also improves cognitive processing, it is a platform of inclusion that can challenge stigma and overcome stereotypes, and it is an excellent entry to lifelong participation and physical wellbeing,
- learning in and through physical education and sport should be pedagogically fostered and improved,
- learning competences in physical education and sport can happen as physical education and sport implicitly provide opportunities for learning, but these new social skills and competences may stay within the sport community and are not transferred automatically

---

<sup>14</sup> In the context of sport and physical education, diversity should be referred to as the difference among people regarding their looks, physical conditions, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, cultural identity, language, ethnic belonging, religious identity, or any other characteristics that they have, or they are identified with. Tolerance should, in this context, mean a mutual understanding of difference but at the same time equality among the members of the community.

to everyday life, thus they may not become civic competencies that may result in social change (Council of Europe/EPAS, 2015).

Physical Education (PE) consists of several dynamic processes that include the interactive and interdependent engagement of participants. One way of describing the difference between traditional PE or sport and the new holistic approach distinguishes learning to move and moving to learn. “Learning to move” includes the skills, techniques and understanding required for participation in physical activities: knowledge and control of your own body, its range and/or its ability to move. “Moving to learn” puts PE into the context of resources for learning: for example, participation in physical activities; social skills; management of competition and co-operation; implementation of strategies and tactics; troubleshooting; application of moral and aesthetic judgment; knowing when to employ these different procedures and appropriate behaviours, and why; and the effective relationships between exercise, the participants’ own health and the well-being of the environment. In the dissemination of new thinking about sport teaching, we can see the distinctions between “sport education” and the traditional approach to teaching sport, related to curriculum structure, content and focus, and pedagogical approaches with their relationship to learning objectives. Sport education emphasizes greater depth of content by extending the time spent on one sport and expanding the curriculum goals. These usually include movement technique and tactical understanding, personal/social skill development, and cultural and social understanding. The model includes opportunities for learning not just for players but also for other roles in sport, such as coach, manager and referee. In this context, PE and sport need qualified and competent teachers and coaches in schools and sport activities. PE teachers are indispensable in schools and should work together with the classroom teachers to connect physical activity with other content. Education policy and curricula should reflect the fact that PE is a core subject in schools, just like reading, writing or numeracy. Physical education, together with arts subjects, should represent the key to promoting civic education and democratic and human rights. The PE and sport sections of curricula should have objectives that include social competences as standard and combine theoretical with practical knowledge. The wall between the classroom and the gym should be destroyed (Council of Europe/EPAS,2018).

Literature findings reveal that for many children, especially those from less advantaged backgrounds, physical education provides their only regular sessions of physical activity.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> According to HBSC/WHO survey (2018) with regard to adolescents in Greece, research findings highlight the need to strengthen the role of the school (especially the public one) as a central body for promotion of physical activity and physical exercise in adolescent-students both within school building as well as outside school hours. The benefits of frequent physical activity of teenagers are not limited only to the teenagers themselves and their families but are reflected back to the school helping to improve academic performance and generally the quality of life at school. [Πανελλήνια έρευνα για τις συμπεριφορές που συνδέονται με την υγεία των εφήβων μαθητών \(Έρευνα HBSC/WHO\) \(epipsi.gr\)](http://epipsi.gr)

Schools offer the only compulsory opportunity in most countries for young people to take part in and learn about physical activity through education programmes in formal settings. Unlike many other social institutions, they have a captive audience because of required school attendance. Thus, schools are a prime institutional agency with considerable potential to significantly influence the lives of young people and physical education can play a vital role in shaping positive attitudes towards habitual physical in out-of-school and post-school settings. Thus, given the pivotal role of schools in empowering young people in physical activity participation experiences, developments should also emanate from school links with integrated school, 'outreach' and wider community (i.e., inter-sectoral) policies and services and involving pooling of resources where appropriate (UNESCO, 2014).

This further emphasizes the need for children to receive their entitlement of quality physical education (QPE)<sup>16</sup> within school curricula. Therefore, an overarching inclusive strategy for education is required to combat all forms of disadvantage and discrimination, including socio-economic status, gender, geography, ethnicity, sexual identity and special needs. Inclusive education – differentiated to meet the full range of needs across geographic location, gender, economic or ethnic background, or disability status – is the primary mechanism to break the structural inequalities that impede sustainable development and prevent social cohesion. The outcome of QPE is a physically literate young person, who has the skills, confidence, and understanding to continue participation in physical activity throughout their life-course. As such, physical education should be recognized as the basis for an inclusive civic participation continuum over the full life-span.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, in order to maximize the contribution of physical education to the development of positive lifelong habits, curricula should be flexible, and open to adaptation, so teachers are empowered to tailor provision to suit the diverse needs of the young people they are working with. This should be done through consultations with young people to ensure their interests and needs are reflected, and to strengthen broader civic engagement through physical activity. An inclusive approach to curriculum development should have in-built flexibility that enables adjustment to different needs, ensures that everyone benefits from a commonly agreed level of quality education, and that gives the teacher freedom to adapt their working methods to achieve maximum impact and relevance within their specific

---

<sup>16</sup> Quality Physical Education (QPE) is the planned, progressive, inclusive learning experience that forms part of the curriculum in early years, primary and secondary education. In this respect, QPE acts as the foundation for a lifelong engagement in physical activity and sport. The learning experience offered to children and young people through physical education lessons should be developmentally appropriate to help them acquire the psychomotor skills, cognitive understanding, and social and emotional skills they need to lead a physically active life. Quality physical education is distinct from physical education. Critical distinctions relate primarily to frequency, variety, inclusivity and meaning or value content. Quality physical education places emphasis on peer-led learning and rounded skill development. UNESCO (2015 & 2021).

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

classroom context. In addition to this, a flexible approach to school organization and pupil assessment is required. Such flexibility allows for the development of a more inclusive pedagogy, shifting the focus from teacher-centered to child-centered, and embracing more diverse learning styles. Accessible and flexible curricula, equipment and learning materials can serve as the key to creating inclusive schools. Furthermore, adequately trained professionals are vital to the implementation of inclusive curricula, and it is important that teachers have a full and accurate understanding of the needs of all learners so that they can deploy a range of skills to promote achievement. Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, girls, and learners from minority groups, who might be at risk of under-achievement due to various socio-economic factors, depend on teachers to manage their learning and provide support.

In conclusion, DIALECT3 desk research and literature review show that the potential of physical education and sport in creating a climate of tolerance and respect for diversity has been confirmed by academics, researchers, sports professionals and numerous international organizations. Physical education and sport play an important role in building and cohesion society and can be a factor in promoting tolerant attitudes and democratic values. At a time when discrimination, intolerance and social and political polarisation are a fact, leading people, especially young people, to extreme behaviour and extremism, physical education and sports can become a tool for strengthening social cohesion and respect for human rights. In conclusion, physical education and sports have an important role to play in the development of a world where no one is left behind and where citizens are healthy, resilient and equipped with the socio-emotional skills needed to navigate life transitions.

As **DIALECT4** desk research/literature reveals<sup>18</sup>, in the four European participating countries (Greece, Italy, Hungary, Serbia), children aged 10 to 12 face growing exposure to bullying, discrimination, and the influence of digital and sports environments, all of which shape their development in increasingly complex ways. Desk research highlights a range of social challenges affecting children between the ages of 10 and 12, particularly surrounding bullying, discrimination, digital behavior, and social inclusion through sports and education. While cultural and systemic differences exist, the research across these countries converges on several key findings regarding children's developmental needs and the risks they face during this critical pre-adolescent stage. More specifically, as far as characteristics of the developmental stage are concerned, at age from 7 to 11, children are in the developmental stage Piaget, the developmental psychologist, refers to as "concrete operations". During this stage, their thinking is concrete, and while they can use logic, it applies only to tangible

---

<sup>18</sup> See Dialect 4 project, Needs assessment report & Guidelines for adapting the DIALECT training toolkits for children aged 10-12. [needs-assesment-and-guidelines.pdf](#)

objects. They are still unable to think abstractly. As egocentric thinking gradually diminishes, children begin to distinguish between their own point of view and that of others. They start to understand the difference between right and wrong, become more creative, and show interest in games and text-based content. It becomes very important to them what impression they make on others. This is also the stage where puberty starts to emerge, so it's essential for parents to remain patient and respond openly to every question, without hesitation or taboo.

Children at this age are in the stage of "formal operations", which is the final developmental phase, lasting from the age of twelve into adulthood. Young people in this stage have the ability to think about possibilities, not just reality. They belong to what is known as Generation Z, having been born into the digital world. They are self-taught when it comes to media, show little interest in television, are focused on their own ideas and opinions, and have little patience for "philosophizing." They value freedom, dislike restrictions and obligations, and are rebellious (largely influenced by hormones)<sup>19</sup>.

In **Hungary**, according to a national level study of 3000 students between 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in 50 schools, 15% of students are bullied at least 1 time per week. This number is considered low compared to rates in other countries across Europe. Verbal bullying is the most frequent, which is followed by online and physical forms. Students evaluate those maladaptive behaviors that are more frequent, such as verbal bullying, less severe than those which are rare (i.e. online or physical forms).<sup>20</sup>

A study focusing on coping mechanisms in interpersonal conflicts among Hungarian students, revealed that underprivileged children, particularly 12-year-olds in socially homogeneous schools, display more negative coping mechanisms in conflict situations, as these environments limit their exposure to healthier strategies. With regard to racism, studies conclude that Hungarian primary school students have no stable and consistent negative attitude towards peers with different ethnical or religious backgrounds. However, the observation of the assimilation of third-country students in primary schools in Hungary shows that they build closer relationships with peers having the same origin. Acceptance of immigrant students in primary schools by their Hungarian peers is more likely in case they show high performance either in studies or sports. In addition, most Hungarian students, who were asked about free-time activities spent with third-country national students, referred to free-time sport activities, such as football as the most popular.

<sup>19</sup> Martinoli, A., & Mirković, A. (2021). Handbook of Media and Information Literacy for Parents.

<sup>20</sup> Simon Dávid, Zerinváry Barbara, Velkey Gábor (2015): Iskolai agresszió, online és hagyományos zaklatás vizsgálata az iskolai közérzet alakulásával és az alkalmazott pedagógiai és konfliktuskezelési eszközökkel összefüggésben. Online kérdőíves vizsgálat elemző tanulmánya. OFI, kézirat. In: Buda Mariann (2015): Az iskolai zaklatás - A kutatások tükrében. Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó

One important way to foster inclusion and equality among children leads through their school and school programs, including sport activities. However, sport-based inclusion is hindered by self-funded after-school programs, which makes the accessibility difficult for underprivileged children. These sport activities, especially those offered by sport coaches of sport clubs dominantly recognise competitive values and support children with exceptional abilities, skills and determination which contradicts values of inclusion and tolerance.

A study investigating teachers' view in Budapest on migration and multicultural educational practices conclude that on the first place teachers highlight the importance of building knowledge about other cultures' traditions. After that, they also name values such as tolerating and accepting others. Values, such as equality, cultural exchange and multicultural pedagogical practices showed up less frequently. When it comes to tackling stereotypes, some teachers even expressed that there is a need to reduce only "unnecessary" stereotypes.

Not every school, city or even region is impacted by the challenges of integrating third country nationals, because immigrants are not equally represented across the country. There are schools which have implemented inclusive pedagogical practices to support migrant students in the last decade, however, many institutions, who have just recently faced these challenges lack external resources and try to rely on existing internal practices of integrating underprivileged children. They often rely on NGO or university support due to limited governmental aid. Inclusive efforts often end with project funding, leaving sustainability issues.

In recent years, several **Italian** studies have examined the growing issue of hate speech, discrimination, and bullying among children, particularly those aged 10 to 12, within school settings and their connection to broader social influences such as sports and media. This developmental stage is crucial as children begin to solidify motor and cognitive skills and gain awareness of group dynamics and social identity. According to a 2014 ISTAT report, over 50% of Italian adolescents experienced disrespect or violence, with 19.8% facing bullying regularly. Children aged 11–13, particularly girls and foreign students, were more affected.<sup>21</sup>

The rise of racism and intolerance in primary schools has emerged as a troubling trend, threatening the emotional and social development of young people. A number of interrelated factors contribute to this situation, including deeply ingrained stereotypes and prejudices often passed down through families, the media, and social contexts. Additionally, both direct and indirect experiences of racism at school or in the community can lead to internalized discrimination or feelings of alienation among children. Media and social platforms also play a powerful role, often perpetuating negative portrayals of minority

---

<sup>21</sup> ISTAT, IL BULLISMO IN ITALIA: COMPORTAMENTI OFFENSIVI E VIOLENTI TRA I GIOVANISSIMI Anno 2014 <https://www.istat.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Bullismo.pdf>

groups and exposing young users to violent or discriminatory content. The lack of school curricula focused on civic education, cultural diversity, and inclusion further exacerbates these issues, leaving children without the necessary tools to recognize and challenge intolerance. Family environments also exert a strong influence, especially when they reflect or promote discriminatory views.

As desk research revealed, access to physical education is uneven across the country, with only about 41% of schools equipped with adequate sports infrastructure and significant regional disparities, especially in southern regions like Calabria and Campania. Educational responses increasingly emphasize the role of physical education teachers in creating inclusive spaces, adapting activities, and building children's self-esteem, alongside calls for broader reforms in curricula, infrastructure, and family engagement. Within this environment, sports present both risks and opportunities. When managed inclusively, they foster respect, cooperation, and social integration. Yet, without proper oversight, competitive sports environments—particularly football—can reflect and reinforce societal prejudices:

- Sports can both combat and reinforce discrimination: when managed inclusively, sports teach respect, teamwork, and dedication. However, without proper oversight, sports environments may foster exclusion and discrimination, especially in football, reflecting broader societal issues.
- Inclusive physical education requires adapting activities to student abilities, ensuring accessibility of equipment and facilities and collaboration among teachers, families, and specialists. However, access to sports is unequal: socio-economic barriers and lack of public facilities limit participation.

In conclusion, a coordinated effort involving schools, families and institutions is necessary to foster inclusion, promote critical thinking, and ensure that sports become tools for education and emotional support, not exclusion.

**Serbia's** landscape reveals parallel challenges. Over the past decade, research has focused on children's digital habits, the risks of online violence, and the broader context of how children are raised in the digital age. Digital media is integral to children's lives, but it also poses risks, particularly as entertainment and social interaction dominate their online activities, while educational engagement remains low. In response, Serbia launched a national platform in 2021, which addresses digital violence by educating and empowering families and schools. Nevertheless, violence against children remains widespread within families, schools, and broader social settings.

Furthermore, Serbia faces persistent challenges with physical and psychological violence, both at home and in schools, despite legal bans on corporal punishment. The widespread

nature of violence against children is a major concern. Research supported by UNICEF and conducted by the University of Belgrade and the Institute for Mental Health has documented physical, psychological, and even sexual abuse, as well as neglect, child labor, and child marriage. Family environments, instead of offering safety, often become the primary sites of violence. Despite legal bans, corporal punishment remains culturally ingrained, with more than two-thirds of parents admitting to using psychological aggression and over 60% reporting physical punishment at some point. The use of violence is more frequent among younger parents and is often justified as necessary discipline, particularly in response to disobedience or perceived danger. Mothers report higher levels of psychological aggression, while physical punishment, although slightly declining in use overtime, remains prevalent.

Schools are also sites of verbal, physical, and gender-based violence, with many boys holding attitudes that justify violence against women. Gender-based violence is particularly prominent, with both elementary and high school students reporting high rates of such abuse. Alarming, a significant number of boys are more inclined to justify violence against women, suggesting deeply rooted gender norms and attitudes.

Discrimination is deeply entrenched among marginalized communities, notably the Roma. Roma children face higher levels of abuse, limited access to early education, and alarming rates of child marriage. Psychological aggression is common, particularly among mothers. The Roma community remains especially vulnerable, with children facing higher rates of abuse, poor access to early education, child labor, and early marriage. Only 27% of Roma children are disciplined non-violently, compared to 50% in the general population.

In terms of physical activity, although academic studies are few, recent initiatives in schools promote sports as key to combating obesity, improving emotional regulation, and supporting academic success. Physical activity is recognized as vital to children's holistic development—supporting physical health, mental well-being, and emotional regulation. Schools have begun expanding physical education, but structural support for inclusive, broad-based participation remains limited. Still, access and sustained participation remain uneven.

Overall, the well-being of children in Serbia is shaped by a multifaceted interplay of developmental psychology, family dynamics, digital engagement, violence exposure, and educational opportunity. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts across families, schools, and institutions. Promoting digital literacy, inclusive education, physical activity, and open, respectful communication can help mitigate the risks children face and support their healthy development. Targeted interventions are especially needed for vulnerable populations, such as the Roma community, to close gaps in education, health, and protection from violence and discrimination.

In **Greece**, children aged 10–12 can become susceptible to developing intolerant attitudes, influenced by both sports culture and media exposure, which together shape norms around exclusion, aggression, and hate. A growing presence of hate speech and discriminatory content online has a particularly impactful role. The Greek Safe Internet Center (SaferInternet4Kids) reports that around 34% of teenagers aged 12–18 have encountered hate speech online, though younger children are also increasingly exposed, but incidents among children aged 10–12 are likely underreported and emerging in school environments.<sup>22</sup> Social media platforms normalize aggression and reinforce exclusionary norms, while football fandom and broader sports culture sometimes serve as channels for performative aggression and xenophobic behavior. Schools are not consistently effective at combating bullying—many students feel their institutions do not sufficiently teach anti-bullying values, and minority students face more frequent and harsher harassment. Promising educational efforts, such as workshops on confronting hate in classrooms, aim to equip teachers with the tools to promote democratic values and critical reflection, but these remain fragmented.<sup>23</sup>

With regard to sports culture in Greece, it presents a contradictory space: while initiatives organized by national and European bodies, aim to promote Olympic values and non-violence among youth,<sup>24</sup> football culture often conveys aggressive or xenophobic messaging, shaping young people's attitudes through fan behavior and peer influence. Within schools, surveys show that one in three children experiences bullying, with many expressing doubt that schools effectively discourage it.<sup>25</sup> Minority students suffer disproportionately, both emotionally and socially, highlighting the persistence of exclusionary peer dynamics.<sup>26</sup>

In conclusion, children aged 10 to 12 across Greece, Italy, Hungary and Serbia face mounting pressures related to bullying, exclusion, discrimination, and digital exposure during a critical stage of their development. Bullying, discrimination, and digital exposure are not isolated issues but are deeply embedded in family dynamics, school practices, media environments, and sports cultures. While physical activity, inclusive education, and media literacy are widely recognized as protective factors, their implementation is uneven—often limited by economic constraints, lack of infrastructure, or policy gaps. Although sports hold potential for fostering inclusion and positive identity formation, they can also amplify existing

---

<sup>22</sup> [SaferInternet4kids | SaferInternet4kids](#)

<sup>23</sup> See indicatively: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/74a8c773-23e2-4f17-a6cd-9bf90ee4a226/S4I> - The Inclusive Education Guidelines - Greek.pdf , [edypo cab en low.pdf](#), [INSCHOOL](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Doc. 14842 - Report - Working document](#)

<sup>25</sup> [School violence and bullying on the rise in Greece – Eurochild](#)

<sup>26</sup> [School bullying and minority identity as a menace to mental well-being of students in Greece | BJPsych International | Cambridge Core](#)

inequalities and toxic behaviors if not responsibly managed. School systems are increasingly aware of these dynamics, but responses remain fragmented, often dependent on external initiatives or limited infrastructure. To foster well-being, inclusion, and resilience, coordinated efforts are needed that bring together educators, families, institutions, and digital platforms. Special attention must be paid to vulnerable groups—such as minority and underprivileged children—whose experiences highlight the urgency of systemic reform in education, social policy, and youth engagement. Research reveals that a comprehensive and coordinated approach—engaging schools, families, media, and public institutions—is essential. Emphasizing inclusive education, media literacy, safe online practices, and equal access to physical activity can help create safer, more supportive environments for children during this pivotal life stage.

### **3. Discrimination and physical education in primary schools**

Building on the above body of knowledge acquired within the framework of previous DIALECT projects, in the following lines we focus on primary school physical education provided with the aim of activating pupils to build an inclusive school setting.

Attitudes regarding race, intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, and reprisal are established in the early years of youth through families, friends, and members of the community. Children are substantially influenced by environmental messages that shape beliefs and judgements about others. In the preschool years (age 3 to 5), numerous studies have displayed children's tendency towards implicit and explicit bias towards members of other races. At the ages of 7 to 9, children show a strong propensity to correlate non-White faces to a diminished position in the social hierarchy and lower status. It is not until middle childhood (ages 9–11) that race is understood as a taboo topic and social guidelines on what is considered culturally sensitive vs. intentional discrimination are navigated. Youth exposure to race and racism occurs through teachers, peers, media, entertainment, community interactions, and family.<sup>27</sup>

According to UNESCO, despite historic breakthroughs, racism and discrimination remain pervasive and deeply entrenched worldwide. Data indicate that a continuum of harm, from verbal abuse (34% of cases) to physical attacks (18%) to systematic discrimination (25%) emerges, with individual actions that are magnified by systems and structures. In one in every five cases, overlapping identities compound vulnerabilities and intensify discrimination: 60% of intersectional instances involve race, 33% religion, 28% gender, 20%

---

<sup>27</sup> Culp (2024).

disability and 18% age. Institutions, including workplaces, schools, and law enforcement, account for 27% of discrimination cases. The prevalence of institutional discrimination emphasizes the importance of designing and implementing policies addressing racism and discrimination biases in education, employment, and law enforcement, among others. **Schools and workplaces, in particular, emerge as critical sites for intervention, with the potential to disrupt cycles of exclusion and marginalization.** The overlapping nature of discrimination compounds its impact, particularly for individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups. Intersectionality reveals how race, gender, class, and other identity markers interact to create unique vulnerabilities. This compounded discrimination often leads to exclusion, reduced access to opportunities, and disproportionate harm.<sup>28</sup>

Research findings show that physical education (PE) has the potential to serve as an environment to combat racism, but it can also perpetuate and (re)produce racist attitudes and behaviors. A systematic review of literature on racism in PE shows that while PE can perpetuate stereotypical attitudes and structural discrimination, it also has the potential to challenge these patterns when inclusive practices are intentionally implemented. PE curricula often reflect dominant cultural norms that can marginalize students of minority backgrounds, unless educators explicitly work toward equity and inclusion. Many articles feature students' experiences of racism in physical education. Examples of racial discrimination include microaggressions, name-calling, insults, and exclusion. The observation that there seems to be a hidden curriculum is present. Intersectional connections between forms of discrimination were also present. Students affected by racism face racist stereotypes and incidents in PE from their peers and teachers. Stereotypes impact racialized individuals in schools, leading to lower school involvement and increased disconnection. These effects may extend to physical education. Structural racial discrimination is evident in a hidden curriculum. The findings emphasize the importance of considering intersectional perspectives on discrimination patterns.<sup>29</sup>

As society, schools, and the athletic pursuits connected to schools are inextricably linked, it would be neglectful to ignore how racism is created, perpetuated, and sustained in physical education and youth sport. Physical education has long been assumed as an area where democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, and respect for diversity has existed. However, numerous commentaries regarding the experiences of LGBTQ+, Muslim, Black, Asian, and immigrant populations have shown that equality is far from being realized. Dehumanizing practices, aggressive behaviours, restrictive policies, exploitations, and related systems of domination and oppression have combined to undermine the promise of justice in physical education. Research suggests that teachers, teacher educators, and

---

<sup>28</sup> UNESCO (2024a).

<sup>29</sup> Abel et al. (2024). See also Flintoff et al. (2008).

students are comfortably impartial when encountering issues dealing with structural racism and discrimination in physical education. A significant contributing factor to this problem is the prevalence of the ‘hidden curriculum’ that transmits unstated norms, values, and beliefs through each school and classroom. Overwhelmingly, curriculum reflects White, Eurocentric, and Western perspectives normalized through physical education pedagogy, assessment, conceptualizations of physical culture, and what bodies should be valued and promoted.<sup>30</sup>

Discrimination can occur in almost any aspect of school life, from the attitudes and expectations of teachers to school rules and codes of conduct, selection and grouping practices, curricula, teaching methods and materials, changing facilities, career guidance, canteen food and the physical school environment. Whatever form it takes – whether it be parallel school systems for different ethnic groups, concentrations of minority or disadvantaged children in the same school, or differential access to educational provision, it means a lower quality of educational experience for the students being discriminated against. **Schools can tackle discrimination by promoting democracy, respect for human rights and citizenship.** Tackling discrimination is not simply a duty laid on schools by the European Convention of Human Rights, it is also important for student well-being and educational success. Children and young people who are treated unfairly or discriminated against are more likely to have:

- negative attitudes to school
- lower levels of motivation and academic achievement
- a higher risk of dropping out of formal education
- experience of bullying
- mental health problems.

Feeling different or ‘less’ than others can be an isolating experience. Over time it undermines an individual’s capacity for participation in society, e.g., their sense of self-efficacy, openness to other cultures and beliefs, tolerance of ambiguity and flexibility and adaptability - all of which lie at the heart of the Council of Europe [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#). Lack of opportunity due to discrimination in school also damages society. It intensifies social divisions, fuels xenophobia and intolerance and undermines social cohesion.<sup>31</sup>

At European level, the European Commission promotes **diversity and inclusion in European schools** by fostering inclusive environments for all learners, particularly those vulnerable to

---

<sup>30</sup> Culp, *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Council of Europe, [Tackling discrimination - Democratic Schools for All](#)

disadvantage or discrimination, such as students with special needs, migrants, and minorities. Key initiatives include creating supportive learning environments, enhancing teacher training, and implementing policies to combat discrimination.<sup>32</sup> However, much evidence shows that there are persistent differences in equity of educational access, experience and outcomes when looking at students with different personal and social characteristics, related to their sex, gender, ethnicity, migration background, religion, disability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, etc. People with certain characteristics may face more barriers to accessing resources, such as quality mainstream education, and they may be discriminated against. Discrimination can be structural (e.g. segregation policies or a lack of resources to meet specific needs); it can be compounded by prejudice (both intentional and unintentional), and it can be multifaceted (e.g. bullying of LGBTIQ+ students in schools, which might be compounded if teachers are not adequately trained on how to react). It is important to take a holistic intersectional approach when addressing inequity and discrimination. For example, a refugee student may be seen only through that lens, and in school be offered additional support only in learning the language of schooling, and not in other subjects. Inclusive policies and measures thus need to consider the specific, multifaceted needs of each learner.<sup>33</sup>

The needs of today's school system constitute the inclusive approach a one-way street in education. Inclusion is not related to assimilation, and consists of two dimensions, the social and the pedagogical. The social, as well as the educational, aim is for all students without exception, even those considered different, to be treated as equal members of the educational community. The value that the Education of Inclusion promotes is the procurement of equal opportunity for all students, as well as the acceptance and respect of the equality and difference among all children/students. No child can be considered "unable to be educated" in the classroom. Within this framework it is not only required of the teacher to have the appropriate knowledge on teaching techniques and psycho-pedagogical interventions, or a positive attitude toward difference. There has to be the will for self-improvement and continuing opportunities for professional development in the field, so that the teacher improves his or her intercultural skills. These skills relate to the experience of a communicative relation to the diverse students and the complete acceptance of difference through practical procedures. This comes with experience and a deep knowledge of dealing with multiculturalism, which can be acquired through experiential situations and practices, by which the teacher improves his or her behavior toward different students.

In regard to an **inclusive education through sports and physical education**, the European Parliament emphasizes that sport is a driver of social inclusion, equality and the promotion

---

<sup>32</sup> See European Commission, (2023) <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/798464>. See also [Social inclusion - Sport](#)

<sup>33</sup> See European Commission, Eurydice report (2023)

of EU values and calls on the Member States to develop inclusive sports policies with the appropriate funding to ensure that sport is accessible to all, regardless of ethnicity, race, disability or socioeconomic background. It insists on a zero-tolerance approach to racism, hate speech, violence and other racist behaviour in sport.<sup>34</sup>

In today's globalised world, managing diversity within a PE class or a sports team is a challenging task for all teachers and coaches. Several problems can occur in a team if the coach fails to successfully manage heterogeneity and tackle discrimination, such as internal conflicts and tensions. These conflicts might include 'scapegoating' of people who are different, and in-group – out-group divisions. Scapegoating refers to situation where a team is not performing well, and people who are 'different' get blamed for that. This is associated with stereotypes and prejudice within a team, and in periods of crisis (or bad performance) might even result to verbal and physical attacks to minority individuals. In-group – out-group divisions refers to the separation of the team members into smaller (and often antagonistic) groups. Personal characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, and age stimulate the determinations for in-group and out-group membership. In general, in order to perform well, a sports team requires cooperative interdependence and a positive atmosphere in which all feel welcome and safe. Diversity can be a valuable asset for a team when a coach knows how to use and take advantage of (cultural, physical, and other) individual differences and has the leadership skills to facilitate a co-operative and discrimination-free environment.<sup>35</sup>

**Physical education (PE) in schools**—the first and sometimes the only organizational framework of sports with which children in general and young people from refugee backgrounds in particular come into contact. Thus, PE plays a significant role in socialization processes into sports and the formation of the sports biographies of young people. However, PE is not only a mirror of the out-of-school sports system but also a bridge and steppingstone into it, if properly managed. PE introduces young people to a wide range of physical activities, and it is these experiences that shape and encourage participation and involvement in out-of-school sports. On the other hand, negative experiences in PE may discourage young people from refugee backgrounds from becoming involved in other areas of sports outside school—for example, as active club members or in club management. PE, therefore, has a key and guiding function in the sports-related socialization of young learners from refugee backgrounds and has an impact on their further sporting careers outside school. For those without a migrant background, PE can be a formative field for the perception of the status of persons from refugee backgrounds in sports. In other words, school sports can be a significant and formative force for the positioning of people from

---

<sup>34</sup> European Parliament, 2022.

<sup>35</sup> Kavvoura (2016).

refugee backgrounds in sports as well as for their perception and recognition in sports-related society.

Consequently, PE teachers have a special opportunity to support students from refugee backgrounds in discovering their sport-related interests and to encourage them to deepen these interests beyond school, in line with PE curricula that formulate the goal of lifelong physical activity and health. However, this can only succeed if PE teachers, who are usually part of the majority culture and thus occupy privileged social positions, meet students from refugee backgrounds without prejudice and give them the opportunity to develop freely. Such an unbiased encounter can be hindered by the likelihood that many students from refugee backgrounds have little experience with sports, are not familiar with Western sports culture, or have not received any education in sports in their home country.<sup>36</sup>

Many European countries have been experiencing a large influx of new migrants because of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015. Subsequent changes in the demographic composition of European societies provide opportunities, challenges and potential for disruption across all spheres of society. Physical Education (PE) and sport are valuable tools to manage these opportunities and challenges. Sports represent an inherently social and interactive activity that promotes tolerance and fosters intercultural skills across groups. Policymakers acknowledge the potential of sport to contribute to social integration and the development of diverse social groups. Particularly, school-based PE encourages social inclusion by inherently connecting motor, emotional, cognitive and social skills. The role of PE is vital, as schools can prepare future citizens for peaceful co-existence in an increasingly diverse and changing society. Yet, numerous challenges impede the inclusive potential of PE. Multicultural school classes are often characterized by differences in habits, beliefs and norms within or between staff and pupils, which may create a “cultural gap”. Notably, many PE teachers do not feel confident about dealing with multicultural classes and may often receive inappropriate training. In particular, developing cultural understanding, using appropriate activities, guiding reflection processes, managing physical contact issues and handling stereotypes represent prominent challenges for PE teachers in multicultural settings. This is why PE teachers are in educational need to effectively respond to multicultural classes. Teachers’ training needs to focus on the improvement of intercultural competence and sensitivity through a form of “intercultural education” or “culturally responsive pedagogy”. Indeed, PE teachers trained in intercultural education carry better knowledge and competences to teach in multicultural settings. There is a need for continued, context-specific design and evaluation of Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs/ courses/ trainings.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Bartsch, 2020. See also Azzarito, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Papageorgiou et al. 2023.

Another study shows that migration within and from outside the European Union has significantly increased over the last 20 years. In turn, the resulting increase in cultural diversity has presented both challenges and opportunities. To maximize the opportunities, the successful, positive social integration of new groups is paramount. Sport has become more and more recognised as a tool to promote the social integration of diverse groups. As a result, sport educators are tasked with supporting social cohesion and intercultural education, but they often lack the skills or tools to do so and there is a limited picture of the opportunities or challenges faced in intercultural sport education.<sup>38</sup>

A study exploring primary school teachers' perceptions about refugee children inclusion in Greek schools, focusing on how teachers construct their discourse while talking about refugee students and their intercultural competencies as agents of inclusion and social justice in the context of Inclusive Pedagogy, showed that teachers consider cultural pluralism to have a positive influence on the socialization of all students and their interaction to positively affect the acceptance of difference. However, many of them refer to the lack of infrastructure and teacher training on issues of intercultural education, but also to teachers' willingness to engage in the pedagogical practices for the integration of refugee children and blame the government for not being prepared and for its incapacity to educate and train teachers. Therefore, they feel insecure to deal with the new educational multicultural environment and include refugee children in their classrooms, while they discuss the need to give refugee children equal educational opportunities.<sup>39</sup>

Although in most European countries, physical education teachers and coaches work with cultural, ethnically and linguistically diverse groups, sport educators are not well-prepared to seize the opportunities presented by increasing diversity. Indeed, research indicates that many physical education teachers and coaches have not received formal training on working with diverse groups and lack professional competences in the area of intercultural education. Moreover, initial education (pre-service) and continuing professional development (in-service) do not provide physical education teachers and coaches with the necessary knowledge, skills, competences or tools to maximize the opportunities presented by diverse and intercultural groups.

As a survey of 174 European youth sport coaches from five European countries shows, focusing specifically on the experiences of coaches when witnessing and reporting discrimination, as well as their perspectives on what needs to be done by various stakeholders to combat issues of discrimination in sport, 25% of coaches report witnessing discrimination monthly and that fans or spectators are viewed as the most common perpetrators. Yet, most coaches are hesitant to report discrimination, with 65% witnessing

---

<sup>38</sup> Moustakas et al., 2022.

<sup>39</sup> Kipouropoulou, 2019.

but not reporting incidents, most often either because they did not know how to report it or felt it would not lead to anything. Indeed, only one-third of the coaches had received anti-discrimination training or information, highlighting a clearly missed opportunity for sport associations, clubs, and academies to educate coaches on how to recognise, deal with, and report discrimination. This points to a significant need for more training to support coaches in preventing, identifying, and reporting discrimination, as well as a need for robust effective reporting mechanisms to be in place.<sup>40</sup>

Reflecting the importance of education and training in this field, the survey lastly asked the participants about the most important content to include when developing a training program for youth coaches and staff about inclusion and fighting discrimination. According to the survey, the most important items to include were specific training activities and general awareness of discrimination and diversity and content on specific marginalized groups, such as women, LGBTQIA+, or people with disabilities. As one Irish coach put it, there is a need for “a person-centred approach. One size doesn’t fit all. Every person has a place in the community.”<sup>41</sup>

**Inclusive physical education (PE)** is a fundamental aspect of education that aims to create an environment where all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, can participate, learn, and thrive. It embodies the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to engage in physical activity and develop essential skills in a supportive and accessible learning environment. The importance of inclusive PE cannot be overstated. It not only promotes physical health and fitness but also fosters social inclusion, emotional well-being, and academic success among students. By embracing diversity and accommodating the needs of all learners, inclusive PE programs contribute to the holistic development of students and promote a culture of acceptance and respect the key principles and strategies for creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment in physical education. It highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing diversity, providing equitable opportunities for participation, and implementing inclusive practices that meet the needs of all students, various strategies and approaches for promoting inclusivity in PE, including modifications to activities, adaptations to equipment, differentiated instruction, trauma-informed teaching practices, and fostering a positive classroom climate. By incorporating these strategies into PE programs, educators can ensure that every student feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed in physical education and beyond.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are foundational principles that are essential for creating a supportive and enriching learning environment in physical education (PE). These

---

<sup>40</sup> Kalina & Moustakas (2024).

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

principles not only promote social justice and equality but also contribute to the overall success and well-being of students. Here's why diversity, equity, and inclusion are crucial in PE:

- **Reflecting Real-World Diversity:** In today's diverse society, classrooms are composed of students from various cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, and ability backgrounds. Embracing diversity in PE helps students see themselves represented and valued, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion.
- **Providing Equal Opportunities:** Equity in PE ensures that all students have access to quality physical education experiences and resources, regardless of their background or abilities. This includes providing accommodations, adaptations, and support services to ensure that every student can participate and succeed.
- **Promoting Social Justice:** PE is a powerful platform for promoting social justice and equity by challenging stereotypes, biases, and discrimination. By creating inclusive learning environments, PE teachers can help combat systemic barriers and promote equality of opportunity for all students.
- **Enhancing Learning Outcomes:** Research shows that diverse and inclusive classrooms enhance learning outcomes for all students. By engaging with diverse perspectives and experiences, students develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and cultural competence, which are essential for success in an increasingly globalized world.
- **Supporting Social and Emotional Development:** Inclusive PE environments provide opportunities for students to develop social skills, build relationships, and cultivate empathy and understanding towards others. By promoting teamwork, cooperation, and mutual respect, PE contributes to students' social and emotional well-being.
- **Fostering Positive School Climate:** A commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in PE helps create a positive and welcoming school climate where all students feel valued, respected, and supported. This, in turn, leads to higher levels of engagement, motivation, and academic achievement among students.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential principles that underpin effective and meaningful physical education. By embracing these principles, PE teachers can create inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity, promote equity, and empower all students to reach their full potential.<sup>42</sup>

Research confirms that sport and physical education have an important role in the promotion of adaptive multicultural environments for children. Body language, knowledge of games, sports and dances and social interaction in physical activity contexts vary widely

---

<sup>42</sup> Dubey, 2024.

across ethnicities. This variation might create difficulties in class management and student learning in multicultural classes. On the other hand, it is also a unique educational setting for practicing social competences that are required for effective interaction with individuals from diverse cultures. Accordingly, an important purpose of contemporary physical education is to increase students' awareness about the values and customs of other cultures and to integrate socially desirable values and customs with students' ethnic identity. Furthermore, findings imply that a high learning and low performance oriented climate creates the appropriate substratum to base specific teaching strategies for the promotion of cooperation and mutual respect among children of different ethnicities. The cultivation of task oriented students, the promotion of learning oriented physical education classes and the decrease of social evaluation seem to facilitate the aims of cross-cultural education. This motivational climate seems appropriate for harmonious integration of high achievement and good social relations among individuals from different ethnic backgrounds, which are considered implicit values of sport in most of the modern world.<sup>43</sup>

Within this context, research also acknowledges that football acts as a powerful, inclusive tool to fight discrimination by fostering teamwork, empathy, and respect across diverse backgrounds. Football connects children from different backgrounds, breaking down barriers and fostering a sense of belonging, especially through mixed-gender and inclusive teams. Through initiatives like football3, mixed teams and dialogue-based play break down racial, gender, and ability-based stereotypes, teaching children to challenge prejudice and embrace equality. These initiatives aim to turn the football pitch into a classroom for social change, fostering a more tolerant and inclusive atmosphere in primary education.<sup>44</sup>

At European level, **discrimination in school physical education (PE)** is addressed through a combination of fundamental and child rights, EU equality and non-discrimination law, inclusive education obligations, and sport anti-discrimination norms.<sup>45</sup> Literature shows that PE can either reproduce exclusion—through inaccessible environments, biased expectations, segregation, and stigma—or become a powerful inclusion tool when teacher education, curriculum design, assessment, and school climate are aligned with equity goals. System levers that influence whether PE becomes inclusive or exclusionary:

- **Curriculum design and taught time:** When PE has marginal status or limited time, classes can become more competitive and less differentiated, increasing exclusion risks.
- **Teacher education and professional development:** Inclusion requires practical competence: adapting tasks, managing mixed-ability groups, and preventing

<sup>43</sup> Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> See previous Dialect projects outputs, op. cit.

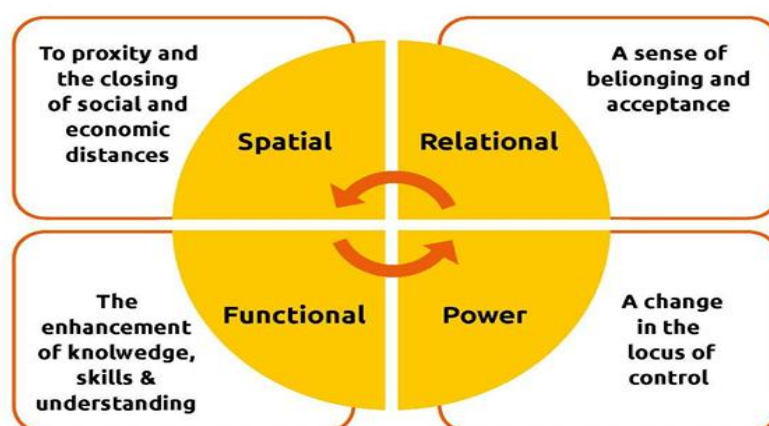
<sup>45</sup> See EDU Pact [Intercultural Education through Physical Activity, Coaching and Training](#).

discriminatory peer dynamics. Teacher education is a core area of PE policy across Europe.

- **Assessment and grading practices:** Overemphasis on performance norms can disadvantage pupils with disabilities, chronic health conditions, or limited prior sport exposure. More inclusive approaches assess progress, participation, and diverse competencies.
- **Extracurricular sport access:** When extracurricular sport is tied to fees, transport, or selective trials, it can reinforce socioeconomic and ethnic inequalities. Eurydice includes extracurricular provision in its PE mapping.

Within most European school systems physical education is increasingly viewed as part of a whole-child approach to health, wellbeing, and social inclusion. Positive experiences and inclusive practices for all students in PE across the school system and in communities, will contribute to a more just society and equitable access to resources and opportunities to reap the benefits of sound educational practices. Taking responsibility for healthy and informed lifestyle choices is a positive investment for quality of-life outcomes associated with PA and sport participation across the life span.<sup>46</sup>

The dimensions of social inclusion that can be generated through PE where valued capabilities and competencies translate into ‘community capital’ and serve to aid the development of community cohesion and civic pride.



Source: Bailey, R. (2018). Sport, physical education and educational worth.

<sup>46</sup> See Bailey (2018) and UN, SDP TOOLKIT MODULE: PHYSICAL EDUCATION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT (PEPAS).

As Bailey points out, the Human Capital Model (HCM) draws together a comprehensive evidence base of benefits of physical activity. These benefits are not autonomous, independent, or disconnected. They reinforce each other and their true value can only be properly appreciated from a broad holistic perspective. Underlying the HCM is an assertion that personal competencies, knowledge, and other attributes can be acquired through participation in physical activity, and that these activities produce value that is realized in increased quality of life, educational achievement as well as economic value.

The following targeted outcomes are substantiated by existing evidence in the field.

- **Physical capital outcomes** – improvement of motor skills, functional fitness, muscular strength, bone health, immune system functioning, nutrition and sleeping patterns.
- **Emotional capital outcomes** – improved fun, satisfaction, self-esteem, self-efficacy, body image, mood and internal motivation.
- **Social capital outcomes** – improved (positive) social norms, social relationships, inclusion, acceptance, trust and equality; reduce anti-social behaviors such as drug use, smoking, teenage pregnancies and juvenile delinquency.
- **Individual capital outcomes** – improved activity, social skills, time management, goal setting, honesty, respect, responsible behavior, self-discipline, and self-efficacy.
- **Intellectual capital outcomes** – improved educational attainment, school engagement, academic performance, and learning.
- **Financial capital outcomes** – improvement in job success, productivity; reduction in health care cost and absenteeism.

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an influential and compatible framework to the Human Capital Model that entails the perspective of similar assets or competencies (cognitive, social, emotional, and intellectual). Through opportunities provided in PE, PA and sport should provide opportunities to develop key competencies and life skills through the interaction with important others in the family peer, school, and community settings.



Source: Bailey, R. (2018). Sport, physical education and educational worth.

Inclusive PE aims to ensure *meaningful participation* of all pupils, with appropriate adaptations (rules, tasks, equipment, communication, and assessment), and a learning climate that actively prevents stigma and exclusion. UNESCO frames “Quality Physical Education” as a rights-based approach emphasizing inclusion and equal opportunity.<sup>47</sup>

The findings of the UNESCO-NWCPEA Project’s Physical Education Survey suggest that whilst some improvements in gender- and disability-related inclusion policies and practices supported in many countries by state legislation can be identified, barriers to equal provision and access opportunities for all still remain; for school children and young people with disabilities in particular, persistent barriers to full inclusion comprise inadequate infrastructure, insufficiencies in supply of appropriately qualified teaching personnel and support assistants, shortages in adapted facilities and equipment as well as learning and teaching materials. Indeed, as far as inclusion and gender is concerned, the survey confirms that barriers to equality do remain and also of continuing shortfalls in achieving full gender equality of access and availability of opportunities in the domain of physical education and sport. As far as inclusion and disability is concerned the study confirmed that in recent years, a number of countries have brought about change in inclusion and disability policy and practice, epitomized in policies related to entitlement to physical education, inclusion, integration, employment of support assistants, differentiated teaching methods, use of adapted equipment etc. Nonetheless, persistent barriers continue to undermine the drive for a more holistic and inclusive physical education environment for children with disabilities.<sup>48</sup>

Across UNESCO’s QPE survey findings, some socio-cultural issues were noted as a challenge for equality. UNESCO data indicate that countries with well-established gender equality in PE programmes see significantly lower primary education dropout rates and no gender disparity in dropout rates. This indicates that inclusive and appealing PE activities for girls can help to reduce dropout rates and promote gender equality in education. Furthermore, schools offering mainstream PE classes that accommodate students with disabilities show lower dropout rates in primary education for both girls and boys. This reinforces the importance of QPE in promoting inclusive education and reducing dropout rates among students, regardless of their level of ability. Among priorities for action is to promote an equitable and inclusive physical education. That is to promote more inclusive educational environments, ensure that PE implementation is gender equitable and accessible to students with disabilities, and embed these principles into curriculum development. This

---

<sup>47</sup> op. cit.

<sup>48</sup> UNESCO (2014).

contributes to reduced dropout rates, lifelong engagement in physical activity, and overall educational equity.<sup>49</sup>

OECD research evidence confirms that appropriate physical education provision can have a strong, positive effect on students' social skills and social development. Strong social skills are set to emerge as critical in the world of tomorrow. Even today, some of the biggest social challenges we face include social isolation or bullying in schools, for which social skills are important mediators. Research shows that physical education is a crucial forum for promoting face to face social interactions among students. Trust, a sense of community, empathy, cooperation and positive attitudes towards school are some of the social outcomes where physical education has been shown to play an important role.<sup>50</sup>

Social skills encompass a broad set of behaviours that are essential for effective face to face communication between individuals. This includes, for instance, cooperation, relationships with others, showing respect for teachers and neighbours, reduced social anxiety, social functioning, social interaction and integration, fair play, social connectedness and teamwork. These social skills are central for children and young people to successfully operate in a community setting, including at schools, clubs and societies, as well as within families and among friends. Nurturing them is crucial for promoting students' social well-being, which encompasses the quality of relationships both inside and outside of school, including with teachers, friends and family, as well as students' feelings about their social life both inside and outside of school.

Research suggests that socially oriented physical activities, such as team sports, are suitable for teaching social skills. Cooperative, rather than competitive, and student focused teaching methods, rather than teacher directed approaches, are almost support the development of social skills. The social and interactive nature of physical activity lends itself to the promotion of pro-social skills. These effects also seem to last overtime. Some longitudinal evidence suggests that participation in team sports – specifically school teams – is associated with lower levels of social isolation later on in life, compared to other “prosocial” school based activities such as the arts. The effects of team membership in this sense appear as important.

Research evidence also confirms that physical education is likely to help students to develop a sense of belonging and acceptance, promote friendships and empower vulnerable groups, so that marginalized groups develop greater autonomy and control. Actually, a well-planned PE programme can fulfil a number of markers of social inclusion, including bridging social and economic gaps between students.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, physical education in school settings

---

<sup>49</sup> UNESCO (2024b).

<sup>50</sup> OECD (2019).

<sup>51</sup> OECD (2017).

can help reduce inequalities in engagement with physical activity for disadvantaged students and girls, contributing thus to better equity and inclusiveness. OECD research evidence shows that the share of disadvantaged students who report not engaging in moderate or vigorous physical activity outside of school is 4.5 percentage points higher than the share of advantaged students who reported doing so. For many of these students, physical education presents the only opportunity to engage in supervised, structured physical activity.

If PE wants to be a driver of inclusivity, it is important that the implementation of the PE curricula ensures participation opportunities and access for the diverse range of students (e.g. appropriate content and focus on types of activity, adequate forms of deliveries, diverse teacher profiles for PE, etc.). This way, PE could become a more attractive learning area for those students who are currently less engaged in the subject. Similarly, it is important that PE includes gender and disability guidelines together with a relevant choice of activities that facilitates student participation and avoids the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and gender biases.<sup>52</sup>

Evidence proves that an intercultural physical education program (IPEP), in comparison to the typical physical education program (TPEP), has significant effect on students' social skills learning. Study findings not only highlight the need for including intercultural education elements in physical education curriculums but also dictate an immediate and substantial change in the standard curriculum on a permanent and constant basis. Such curricular changes could eliminate students' stereotypes and prejudicial views which often give rise to feelings that negatively affect their attitudes towards 'others' in a multicultural social setting. According to the study, students learned to interact appropriately, to provide rewards and help, and to have better relations with their peers, independently of their origin. It seems that the IPEP can have a significant impact on learning certain social skills by all students involved in it. Actually, the IPEP assisted students in learning and demonstrating appropriate peer interactions and relations during the physical education lesson. The learning outcomes of the IPEP both for all students and its foreigners show that by actively participating in teams, students of different ethnic backgrounds reduce racial discriminations and stereotypes, construct positive relations, cooperate more efficiently, and ultimately achieve the course goals. Students at risk also displayed greater ability to set a long-term goal and persist in achieving it, higher tendency to cooperate, greater need to show and gain respect, and higher willingness to treat others as equals.<sup>53</sup>

As studies show, Physical Education (PE) classes play a crucial role in fostering various social aspects of students such as teamwork, social inclusion, and communication. These classes

---

<sup>52</sup> op. cit. OECD (2019).

<sup>53</sup> Derri, et al. (2014).

offer opportunities for students to collaborate toward common goals, such as completing team-based activities, and the interactive environment in PE makes learning enjoyable for both students and teachers. Simultaneously, it is essential that PE lessons are tailored to cater to the diverse needs of students, including those with varying skill levels and special needs. A study examining how primary and middle school students perceived PE classes, with a focus on collaboration, well-being and enjoyment, teacher behavior, the inclusion of nondisabled and disabled students, and general class behavior, confirmed that primary school tends to be more inclusive than middle school. In addition, the primary school setting is often characterized by a greater degree of collaboration compared to the middle school environment. Results indicated higher well-being and enjoyment perception (e.g., enjoyment in participation in PE classes and staying together with classmates) for primary school students compared to middle school students and for younger compared to older students in middle schools. Furthermore, males reported a higher well-being than females. Possible reasons for this finding include the greater amount of time primary school teachers spend with their students, allowing for more personalized attention and support, and the generally more inclusive and collaborative nature of primary school environments. Additionally, younger students may naturally have higher levels of well-being due to less academic pressure and more opportunities for play and physical activity.<sup>54</sup>

**Physical education in primary schools** is a compulsory or widely provided subject across most European primary school systems and is increasingly viewed as part of a whole-child approach to health, wellbeing, and social development. It serves as a crucial, actionable tool to combat discrimination and intolerance by promoting inclusion, empathy, and mutual respect among children.<sup>55</sup> By fostering an environment of belonging, primary school PE can transform perceptions and foster a more inclusive, tolerant society from a young age. For instance, participation in sports activities promotes social interaction, teamwork, and healthy competition, cultivating values such as respect, ethical decision-making, and fair play. Additionally, physical activity is associated with improved self-esteem and self-efficacy. Physical activities in physical education and sport environments can influence children's behavior, fostering moral development, social integration, and character building. Notably, these activities enhance children's inhibitory control, aiding impulse regulation and supporting moral decision-making and sportsmanship.<sup>56</sup> By implementing inclusive, modified, and cooperative, play-based activities, teachers can break down social, racial, and gender barriers. Effective strategies include focusing on team building, promoting fair play, and directly challenging stereotypes.

---

<sup>54</sup> Russo et al. (2024).

<sup>55</sup> Papageorgiou et al. (2021)

<sup>56</sup> Russo et al. (2025)

Physical education (PE) in primary schools acts as a critical, interactive, and practical tool to fight discrimination by fostering inclusion, teamwork, and empathy. It breaks down racial, gender, and ability-based barriers, promoting mutual respect, reducing stereotypes, and improving social bonds among children. Through inclusive, adapted, and cooperative activities, PE teachers can actively challenge prejudices and cultivate a safe, respectful environment.

**Key roles of physical education in fighting discrimination include:**

- **Promoting Inclusion and Diversity:** PE programs, particularly those adapted for children with disabilities, increase social skills and empathy, reducing the fear of differences.
- **Developing Social Skills:** The interactive nature of sports promotes essential life skills such as teamwork, cooperation, and empathy.
- **Challenging Prejudices:** Sport can be used to disrupt stereotypes regarding gender, race, and physical ability, providing equal access to activities.
- **Creating a Safe Environment:** PE helps tackle bullying and discrimination, with teachers serving as role models to build a positive atmosphere.
- **Preventing Aggression:** Regular, well-structured physical activity can reduce anti-social behavior, violence, and discrimination.

To be effective, teachers must adopt inclusive pedagogies, such as focusing on mastery rather than performance to avoid embarrassing students with lower motor skills. Furthermore, PE teachers should intentionally teach:

- **Respect**
- **Fair play**
- **Anti-bullying behaviors**
- **Bystander intervention**
- **Inclusive language**

Furthermore, PE initiatives should connect with:

- **Citizenship education**
- **Anti-bullying campaigns**
- **Diversity celebrations**
- **Parent engagement.**

As bibliography shows, combatting racism and discrimination through physical education (PE) in primary schools is both powerful and practical. PE naturally promotes teamwork, communication, respect, and shared goals — making it an ideal environment to foster

inclusion from an early age. Physical education (PE) plays a critical, yet often overlooked, role in the fight against racism by acting as a site for social interaction where stereotypes can be dismantled and inclusivity promoted.

### Key Roles of Physical Education in Combating Racism

- **Dismantling Stereotypes and Bias:** PE provides a platform to challenge unconscious biases and negative stereotypes about racial minorities in sports. It helps deconstruct the "hidden curriculum" (unspoken, often prejudiced norms) that historically marginalized non-white students.
- **Fostering Inclusion and Social Interaction:** Team sports and cooperative activities in PE act as powerful drivers of social inclusion, uniting students from diverse backgrounds. It serves as a, "social equalizer" where students can interact, build relationships, and develop empathy,
- **Promoting Culturally Relevant Experiences:** Educators are encouraged to move beyond traditional Western sports to include diverse physical activities that reflect the backgrounds of all students, thereby validating their cultural identities.
- **Empowering Students and Developing Critical Awareness:** Anti-racist PE encourages students to critically examine societal injustices, including racism, and gives them tools to challenge discrimination.
- **Creating Safe Spaces:** PE can be structured to provide safe, inclusive environments where students of color feel supported and free from microaggressions or exclusion.

### Strategies for Implementing Anti-Racist PE

- **Racial Literacy and Training:** Teachers need to improve their own racial literacy and undergo anti-racism training to address their own biases and understand the mechanisms of systemic racism in sports.
- **Inclusive Curriculum Design:** Implementing, "social justice physical education" (SJPE) that focuses on equity, diversity, and inclusion rather than just competition.
- **Highlighting Diverse Role Models:** Showcasing athletes from various backgrounds helps to send a message that talent is universal.
- **Restorative Practices:** Using restorative rather than merely punitive approaches to address incidents of racism or exclusion between students.
- **Intersectional Approach:** Addressing how race intersects with gender, class, and ability to ensure a comprehensive approach to inclusivity.

However, while PE in primary schools has the potential to fight racism, it currently faces barriers such as the "white, male-dominated" nature of the profession, a, "hidden curriculum" that reinforces Western norms, and lack of teacher training in addressing racial

inequalities. By transforming traditional curricula into inclusive, anti-racist spaces, PE can foster empathy, teamwork, and critical awareness of cultural diversity.

As evidence shows, a **primary physical education (PE) curriculum** usually focuses on developing fundamental movement skills, physical literacy and positive health attitudes in children aged 5–11. Key areas include games, gymnastics, dance, athletics and outdoor activities aiming to build strength, balance, coordination, and team-based social skills.

### Key Components of Primary PE Curriculum

- Fundamental Movement Skills (Lower Primary): Development of core, non-locomotor, and manipulative skills such as running, jumping, throwing, catching, and balancing.
- Games and Sports (Upper Primary): Introduction to modified competitive games (e.g., football, basketball, e.tc.) focusing on basic rules, tactics for attack/defense, and team-building.
- Gymnastics: Development of control, coordination, and balance through floor exercises and apparatus work.
- Dance: Movement patterns, exploring rhythm, and expressing feelings through music.
- Athletics: Running, jumping, and throwing techniques for speed, height, and distance, often including preparation for sports day.
- Outdoor and Adventurous Activities: Problem-solving, orienteering, and team-building challenges.
- Health and Fitness: Understanding the benefits of exercise, maintaining personal fitness, and healthy habits.

### Typical Progression

- Key Stage 1 (Ages 5-7): Focus on mastering basic movements and applying them in simple, creative, and imaginative ways.
- Key Stage 2 (Ages 7-11): Increasing complexity, incorporating tactics, better teamwork, and refining techniques in specialized activities.

- **Core Objectives**

- Competence: Developing physical skills.
- Confidence: Building self-assurance in movement.
- Cognition: Understanding rules, tactics, and health benefits.
- Character: Fostering sportsmanship, fair play, and cooperation.

Within this framework, the **Physical Education Curricula for primary schools in DIALECT5 participating countries**, in wide terms, focus on fundamental motor skills, cooperative skills, health awareness, social, emotional, and moral development and the development of positive attitudes toward physical activity. Key components of the participating countries PE curricula are outlined in the following lines:

**Serbia** has a National Physical Education curriculum for schools. Physical and Health Education is included as a compulsory subject within the national curriculum framework approved by the Ministry of Education and defined through national plans and programs that outline its content, objectives, and weekly teaching hours for primary and secondary education.

**The aims of the curriculum are to:**

- Promote healthy growth and development of children and young people through regular physical activity.
- Develop physical abilities and motor skills (strength, endurance, flexibility, coordination, speed).
- Encourage lifelong participation in physical activity and sport, and the adoption of an active, healthy lifestyle.
- Improve health awareness and health-related knowledge, including understanding the role of exercise, hygiene, nutrition, and injury prevention.
- Support social, emotional, and moral development, fostering cooperation, fair play, responsibility, respect for others, and self-discipline.
- Develop positive attitudes toward physical activity, teamwork, and personal effort.
- Contribute to overall educational goals, supporting students' cognitive, emotional, and social development alongside physical development.

**Learning objectives aimed at combating racism and xenophobia, as well as promoting the development of social and life skills:**

Physical and Health Education in Serbia does not typically include explicit, separate learning objectives that specifically mention combating racism or xenophobia within the subject's official curriculum documents. However, the curriculum does include aims and objectives that promote the development of social and life skills — such as cooperation, respect for others, teamwork, moral behavior, discipline, and tolerance — which support inclusive behavior and positive social interaction. These social and personal competencies help create

an environment that indirectly contributes to countering discrimination and fostering inclusive attitudes and are consistent with broader national goals in education to respect diversity and promote social cohesion.

### **How it is taught (lesson plan, didactic scenario, e.tc.):**

In Serbia, Physical and Health Education is usually taught as a regular subject twice per week in the standard national curriculum for primary and secondary schools. Each lesson typically lasting about 45 minutes. Physical Education (Physical and Health Education) in Serbia is taught according to nationally prescribed curricula, but with methodological autonomy for teachers. Teaching is based on an annual and monthly plan, derived from the national curriculum, and implemented through individual lesson plans. Lessons follow a didactic structure typical for PE:

- Introductory/warm-up part → main activity part → concluding/cool-down part.
- Instruction is practice-oriented and activity-based, using exercises, games, sports, and movement activities adapted to students' age and abilities.
- Teachers use demonstration, guided practice, group and team work, and differentiation to include all students.
- Assessment focuses mainly on participation, effort, progress, motor skills, and attitudes, rather than competitive performance.

**Suggested activities/sports/football:** The Serbian national PE curriculum suggests a range of activities and sports, including athletics, gymnastics, rhythmic activities, and team sports — with football (soccer) commonly included under sports games in class. Schools are expected to organize these into yearly plans and blocks (e.g., athletics in spring; gymnastics in winter; sports games including football spread throughout the year) rather than following a detailed, centrally-mandated monthly or weekly sequence. Teachers create lesson units and cycles within the annual plan based on local conditions, facilities, and seasonal variation.

### **Guidelines for student assessment:**

PE assessment is conducted within the national student assessment framework, which requires continuous, criterion-referenced assessment tied to the curriculum's learning outcomes. Teachers assess students' participation, physical fitness, motor skills, effort, and attitudes through varied methods such as observations, performance tasks, and standardized fitness testing integrated into PE classes. Results are translated into numerical grades (1–5) that reflect overall achievement in the subject.

Finally, in Serbia, primary education begins at about age 7 (children must be between approximately 6.5 and 7.5 years old to start 1st grade), lasts for eight years, and ends at approximately age 14–15. It includes grades 1 through 8.

As far as **Italy** is concerned it has a National Physical Education curriculum for schools.

**The aims of the curriculum:**

There are National Guidelines for the Curriculum (*Indicazioni Nazionali per il curricolo*), updated in 2012 and supplemented in 2018. The specific learning objectives for Physical Education in primary school are divided into four core areas:

- The body and its relationship with space and time
- Body language as a communicative and expressive modality
- Games, sports, rules, and fair play
- Health and well-being, prevention and safety.

More specifically, the learning objectives for each core area include:

- Coordinating and using different motor patterns, initially in sequence and later simultaneously
- Recognising and evaluating trajectories, distances, execution rhythms, and temporal sequences of motor actions, organising one's movement in space in relation to oneself, objects, and others
- Using expressive and bodily modalities in an original and creative way, including through dramatization, while conveying emotional content
- Developing and performing simple movement sequences or simple individual or group choreographies
- Knowing and applying execution methods of different sports games
- Using numerous games from popular traditions, applying their rules and guidelines
- Actively participating in various forms of games, including competitive ones, collaborating with others
- Respecting rules in sports competitions, accepting defeat with balance, experiencing victory with respect for opponents, accepting diversity, and demonstrating a sense of responsibility
- Adopting appropriate behaviours for injury prevention and safety in different life contexts
- Recognising the relationship between nutrition and physical exercise in relation to healthy lifestyles
- Developing awareness of physiological functions (cardio-respiratory and muscular) in relation to physical exercise.

**Learning objectives aimed at combating racism and xenophobia, as well as promoting the development of social and life skills:**

The national physical education curriculum does not include specific objectives explicitly labelled as “combating racism and xenophobia.” These themes are addressed transversally and depend on the didactic autonomy of individual teachers. However, it is important to emphasise that through games and sports and the application of the principle of fair play—which inherently conveys values such as solidarity, loyalty, honesty, and respect—physical education actively promotes respect for others, group cooperation, conflict management, self-esteem, and a sense of responsibility. These values and competencies are closely connected to issues of diversity, racism, and xenophobia. Furthermore, Law 92/2019 introduced the transversal teaching of Civic Education (*Educazione Civica*) in primary schools, within which topics related to active citizenship, civil coexistence, and respect for diversity are widely addressed. Among the learning objectives of this curriculum are:

- Respect for the principles of solidarity and equality
- Understanding the Constitution and human rights
- Development of conscious approaches to the exercise of civic competence.

Therefore, combating racism and xenophobia is not treated as a standalone objective, but rather integrated into broader educational pathways and entrusted to the didactic autonomy of individual teachers. Since Civic Education is a transversal subject across all disciplines, the physical education teacher is specifically required to dedicate three hours per year per class to this subject, addressing it through physical and sports activities.

#### **How it is taught (lesson plan, didactic scenario, e.tc.):**

In Italy Physical Education is taught two hours per week for each class. Each lesson lasts approximately 60 minutes or 55 minutes, depending on the school, including time needed to move to the gym and any clothing changes in the changing rooms. Each teacher follows the physical education curriculum with the aim of achieving the established learning objectives. At the beginning of the school year, teachers develop an annual plan and rely on their didactic autonomy and personal experience in proposing educational activities. Therefore, there is no single, standardised model for teaching physical education.

Overall, in primary school the focus is mainly on games and sports; activities are predominantly playful, and the sports proposed usually involve simplified rules (for example, mini volleyball instead of standard volleyball). Teachers may also design Learning Units (Unità di Apprendimento – UDA), which are interdisciplinary educational pathways aimed at developing competencies through the creation of a final product.

#### **Suggested activities/sports/football:**

The National Guidelines provide general competence goals but do not impose a rigid list of sports. However, games and sports are the core of primary school physical education. Activities mainly focus on team games. Football (often proposed as “mini-football” with

simplified rules) is certainly included, alongside disciplines such as mini-volleyball, mini-basketball, and athletics. There is no standardised ministerial timeline organised by weeks or months. The distribution of activities is entrusted to teachers' autonomy. At the beginning of the year, teachers develop an annual plan and can freely decide which and how many sports to address, dividing them between the first and second semester.

### **Guidelines for student assessment:**

Assessment in primary school uses descriptive judgements, ranging from Excellent (Ottimo) to Insufficient (Non sufficiente), avoiding numerical grades. Each assessment is accompanied by a description referring to the four core areas of physical education, detailing the level of mastery achieved by the pupil. Each school develops specific assessment grids for each subject, based on ministerial criteria but adapted to the local and school context. For example, in physical education, a pupil assessed as "Excellent" will receive the following description: "The pupil is able to coordinate effectively within a space in relation to objects and people; correctly knows and applies execution methods of movement games autonomously; is able to organise increasingly complex motor behaviours by coordinating various movement patterns in a precise and coordinated manner; is able to know, use, and respect the rules of different forms of games in a precise, correct, and responsible way. The pupil recognises and names different parts of the body, classifies information from sensory organs, and knows the fundamental elements of nutrition and healthy lifestyles in a complete and correct manner."

Finally, in Italy primary education generally begins at the age of 6 and ends at the age of 11. It lasts five years and includes five grades (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade). It should be specified that specialist Physical Education teachers (holding a degree in Physical and Sports Activities) were introduced into Italian primary schools by Law 234 of 30 December 2021 only for 4th and 5th grades. Grades 1, 2, and 3 carry out physical activity with generalist classroom teachers. To compensate for the lack of specialised figures in this age group, schools frequently promote collaboration projects with National Sports Federations, which provide external experts to support teachers. However, this practice is not uniformly guaranteed across the country: the activation of such projects depends on individual school autonomy, and the presence of experts often covers only part of the total annual hours, leaving the remaining portion to be managed directly by classroom teachers.

**Hungary** has a National Core Curriculum (Nemzeti Alaptanterv – NAT 2020), which includes a full Physical Education (Testnevelés) curriculum.

### **The aims of the curriculum:**

According to analyses of the 2020 curriculum, PE aims to:

- Develop basic motor skills and physical literacy.

- Promote health-conscious behavior, physical fitness, and lifelong physical activity.
- Strengthen social skills, cooperation, responsibility, and fair play.
- Support holistic development, including emotional, cognitive, and social competencies.

### **Learning objectives aimed at combating racism and xenophobia, as well as promoting the development of social and life skills:**

The Hungarian PE curriculum does not explicitly mention racism or xenophobia as PE-specific learning objectives. However, NAT 2020 emphasizes:

- Openness,
- Cooperation,
- Respect for others,
- Social responsibility,
- Fair play,
- Inclusive behavior,

as part of the general educational goals and the PE subject's social-emotional development aims. These indirectly support anti-racism and anti-xenophobia education, but there are no PE-specific anti-racism objectives.

### **How it is taught (lesson plan, didactic scenario, e.tc.):**

Hungary mandates daily physical education ("mindennapos testnevelés"). This means: 5 PE lessons per week in all grades of primary school. This is a nationwide legal requirement. The duration of each lesson is 45 minutes.

PE is taught according to:

- The National Core Curriculum (NAT),
- The Framework Curriculum (Kerettanterv),
- School-level annual plans and teacher-created lesson plans.

Typical structure of a PE lesson:

- Warm-up
- Skill development / main activity
- Games or applied practice
- Cool-down and reflection

Teachers are free to choose methods but must follow the curriculum's required content areas (motor skills, sports, health education, etc.).

### **Suggested activities/sports/football:**

In grades 1-4 no specific rules of ball games are taught, rather activities, specific movements with the ball are practiced. In grades 5-6 football (soccer) is explicitly included as one of the core team sports. There are 70 hours recommended for team sports (handball, basketball, football, volleyball) all together. There is **no national requirement** for “X weeks of football” or similar.

#### **Guidelines for student assessment:**

Assessment in PE is based on:

- Developmental assessment: The improvement and effort of the student
- Skill-based assessment: motoric skills, coordination tasks, team-sport fundamentals
- Social/behavioural assessment: cooperation, fair play, following rules.

Finally, in Hungary the age at which primary education begins and ends, as well as the grades is as follows:

| Grade | Typical age |
|-------|-------------|
| 1     | 6-7         |
| 2     | 7-8         |
| 3     | 8-9         |
| 4     | 9-10        |
| 5     | 10-11       |
| 6     | 11-12       |
| 7     | 12-13       |
| 8     | 13-14       |

Last but not least, **Greece** has a National Physical Education curriculum for schools.

#### **The aims of the curriculum:**

In the Greek Physical Education Curriculum of primary education emphasis is given in the acquisition of lifelong habits of physical activity for the promotion of health, the

improvement of quality of life and social well-being, through the formation of physically literate students.

Four main aims are defined for the PE lessons: a) Motor: students demonstrate competences in a range of sport and movement skills that are useful for lifelong exercise for health and quality of life, b) Cognitive: learners understand and become able to apply science concepts and knowledge that contribute to lifelong physical activity for health and quality of life, c) Experiential/Behavioral: students participate regularly in physical activities and maintain or develop an appropriate level of physical fitness for health, and d. Moral/Social/Emotional: learners demonstrate responsible behaviors, respect for diversity and has developed social and emotional skills that contribute to lifelong exercise for health and quality of life. Each of these sectors is more analyzed for every school age and is also enriched with relevant activities.

**Learning objectives aimed at combating racism and xenophobia, as well as promoting the development of social and life skills:**

One of the aims, that seems most relevant is the 4th Aim “Moral/Social/Emotional”. To achieve this aim students are expected to gain positive experience from the course, reflect, cultivate, and develop psychosocial and life skills that contribute to the adoption of positive attitudes and behaviors towards lifelong exercise for health and quality of life, and develop teamwork, cooperation, respect, and acceptance of other people with different characteristics and abilities, skills that are important for personal and social fulfillment. However, there is no reference on combating racism and xenophobia.

In more details, Emotional Skills Objectives:

- Develop self-perception, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-confidence.
- Control, express, and assess emotions and situations (regarding oneself and others).
- Engage in self-expression, creative movement, and recreational enjoyment.
- Social Skills (and Application of Values) Objectives:
- Achieve individual and team goals – managing personal challenges both within and outside the school environment.
- Demonstrate personal responsibility within and outside the school environment.
- Demonstrate social responsibility and interaction within and outside the school environment.

**How it is taught (lesson plan, didactic scenario, e.tc.):**

Physical Education is taught 2-3 times per week, and the duration of each lesson is 40-45 minutes. The teaching method is didactic scenario.

### **Suggested activities/sports/football:**

There are suggested activities as follows:

Recommended Annual Teaching Hours for Physical Education:

Grades 1 to 4 (Primary Education): 96 hours annually

Grades 5 to 6 (Primary Education): 64 hours annually

More specifically:

#### **Grades 5 & 6**

Basketball (8 hours)

Volleyball (8 hours)

Soccer/Football (8 hours)

Handball (8 hours)

Gymnastics (8 hours)

Track and Field / Athletics (10 hours)

Greek Traditional Dances (10 hours)

Intramural Tournaments of Adapted Ball Games (4 hours)

#### **Grades 3 & 4**

Psychomotor Education (22 hours)

Music and Movement Education – Dances (20 hours)

Games: Team, Individual, and Traditional (8 hours)

Gymnastics – Artistic Gymnastics (10 hours)

Introduction to Ball Games and Track and Field (Soccer, Volleyball, Basketball, Handball) (20 hours)

Introduction to Non-Traditional Sports and Para-sports (Sports for People with Disabilities) (4 hours)

Introduction to Physical Activities, Health-related Sports, and Recreation (4 hours)

Intramural Tournaments of Adapted Ball Games (4 hours)

Assessment and Feedback of Motor Skills (4 hours)

Swimming (10 double periods in Grades 3 & 4)

Note: When the swimming program is implemented in Grades 3 and 4, the hours from the other thematic units are reduced proportionally.

It is noted that the instructions provided above constitute a general framework for action in Physical Education (P.E.), offering broad guidelines to assist educators in setting goals, as well as designing and selecting lesson content that is essential for students and suitable for their specific school conditions. Each school unit essentially has the flexibility to adapt the P.E. Curriculum based on its needs, logistical infrastructure, and the specific characteristics of its student body.

Furthermore, teachers can find significant information in the 2003 National Curriculum (APS & DEPPS) for Physical Education across all educational levels (Government Gazette 304, Issue B/13-3-2003). Additional resources are available in the educational material developed for the "Olympic Education," "Kallipateira," and "Paralympic Games" programs.

### **Guidelines for student assessment:**

**Assessment Domains** (What is being assessed): Assessment in upper Primary school grades extends across three main pillars:

- **Motor Domain:** Improvement of sport-specific skills (e.g., passing, shooting) and development of physical fitness components.
- **Cognitive Domain:** Knowledge of game rules, understanding of tactical strategies, and comprehension of health and nutrition topics.
- **Affective/Social Domain:** Demonstration of Fair Play, cooperation, personal and social responsibility, and respect for diversity.

**Assessment Methods and Tools:** The curriculum encourages the use of modern tools beyond traditional grading:

- **Systematic Observation:** Teachers record progress using rubrics or checklists during game play.
- **Self-Assessment:** Students use journals or questionnaires to reflect on their effort and emotional management (e.g., "How did I handle frustration after a loss?").
- **Peer-Assessment:** Students evaluate their teammates on cooperation and teamwork, enhancing their social awareness.
- **Student Portfolio:** A collection of work, self-set goals, and reflections that document the student's overall journey throughout the year.

### **Key Assessment Criteria:**

- **Individual Improvement:** The primary criterion is not comparison with peers, but the progress made relative to the student's own starting point.
- **Participation and Effort:** Active engagement in the lesson and perseverance in achieving

goals are heavily weighted.

- Social Behavior: Adherence to rules, supporting classmates, and promoting inclusion while avoiding marginalization (othering).

**Formative Feedback:** Assessment in Grades 4-6 is primarily diagnostic and formative. Its goal is to provide students with constructive feedback, so they understand their achievements and areas for improvement, thereby strengthening their self-efficacy.

Assessment in Swimming (Grades 3-4): For the specialized swimming program, assessment focuses on water safety, the mastery of basic swimming strokes, and the building of confidence in the aquatic environment.

Finally, in Greece primary education lasts from 6-12 years old and includes 6 grades.

Summarizing the research findings of the above section, it is clear that primary school physical education is not merely about movement or sport, but it is a formative social arena. When intentionally designed and supported, it becomes a powerful mechanism for combating discrimination, fostering democratic values, and ensuring that no child is left behind.

## 4. Conclusions

In conclusion, physical education within the school context, as a compulsory and widely accessible subject, provides a low-cost, high-impact intervention space where children can develop not only physical literacy but also social, emotional, and civic competencies. Inclusive, child-centered, and values-driven PE can promote democratic culture, reduce dropout rates, empower marginalized students, and contribute to long-term social cohesion. To realize this potential, systemic reforms are required, including enhanced teacher training in intercultural and anti-racist education, inclusive curriculum redesign, equitable assessment practices, and policy alignment with human rights frameworks. When strategically supported, physical education can move beyond its traditional role and function as a powerful engine for social justice, resilience, and equitable development—helping to build a society in which no child is left behind.

Moreover, primary school physical education is particularly significant because it often constitutes children's first structured encounter with sport and may shape lifelong attitudes toward physical activity. For children from refugee or migrant backgrounds, PE can serve as both a mirror and a bridge—reflecting societal norms while also providing entry into broader sports participation. Positive experiences can encourage long-term engagement while negative ones can reinforce marginalization. Effective inclusive PE requires systemic alignment across curriculum design, teacher education, assessment practices, and

extracurricular access. Overemphasis on performance-based grading can disadvantage students with disabilities or limited prior experience. Inclusive alternatives emphasize progress, participation, and diverse competencies. Intercultural physical education programs demonstrate measurable improvements in social skills, reduction of racial stereotypes, enhanced peer relations, and increased cooperation compared to traditional programs. Restorative practices, anti-racist curriculum design, diverse role models, inclusive language, and explicit teaching of respect, fair play, and bystander intervention are identified as key strategies.

## **5. Desk Research contribution to the DIALECT5 project**

As already stated, an enhanced desk research on the relationship between discrimination and physical education in primary schools at the European level with emphasis on the four partner countries (T2.1) focuses on reviewing existing academic literature, policy papers and reports of European and International Organizations to identify and analyse the correlation of physical education in primary schools with stereotypes about ethnic, cultural diversity as well as gender roles and their interrelation under the lens of intersectionality. The research focuses on the EU and the case of the four partner countries and investigates how a pedagogical approach for physical education can be oriented towards educational equity, reducing structural discrimination.

The present report is drafted with a view to establishing a common understanding of the field of discrimination and racism with that of physical education in primary schools, in order to integrate previous DIALECT projects knowledge to the primary school context under the lens of intersectionality. Considering the educational outcomes, physical education lessons provide a low cost/high impact opportunity for governments. By fusing physical, mental and social learning domains, engagement in physical education curricula exposes students to a dynamic range of experiences which build on educational outcomes related to literacy and numeracy. Students participating in physical education, delivered using creative, values-based teaching and learning practices, are empowered to think critically and equipped to communicate effectively. These are skills which are vital to recovery, future proofing and the uprooting of pervasive social inequalities. In conclusion, physical education has an important role to play in the development of a world where no one is left behind and where citizens are healthy, resilient and equipped with the socio-emotional skills needed to navigate life transitions. Physical literacy and critical thinking are key complements to numeracy and literacy. Accordingly, the return on capital investment and the broad-based educational outcomes of participation in

physical education, which is inclusive, child-centered and supported by specialized educators should be reflected in national resilience and recovery plans (McLennan, 2021).

In the following lines, we list an updated bibliography which is **complementary** to the existing literature review of the previous DIALECT projects and is adapted to lead towards implementation for kids 9-12 years old in primary school context. The following sources provide valuable insights into understanding and addressing the above mentioned topics and delve into various aspects of inclusion, racism, intolerance and predominant values among children aged 9-12 in primary school context. They also provide insights into how physical activity choices of children aged 9-12 influence these values, particularly within the European contexts and social settings. The sources provide a variety of tools, initiatives, data and materials tailored to address these critical issues among children aged 9-12 and focus on creating inclusive educational settings on issues of diversity and discrimination at an early age. They come from international and European organizations, academic institutions and NGOs, and provide valuable insights into how these critical issues are addressed. Furthermore, they range from government policies to NGO initiatives, academic research, and reports, all of which can be used to support educators, parents, and policymakers in promoting inclusion and combating discrimination through physical education in primary school context.

## 6. Bibliographic References

Abel, L., Galle, A.C., Ziehmman, L. and Vogt, T. (2024) Students' perspectives on racism and anti-racism in physical education: a systematic review. *Frontiers in Sociology* 9:1374277. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2024.1374277>

Azzarito, L. (2016). "Permission to Speak": A Postcolonial View on Racialized Bodies and PE in the Current Context of Globalization. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 87(2), 141–150. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2016.1166474>  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2016.116647420230228-1-1uqtm97-libre.pdf>

Bailey, R. (2018) Sport, physical education and educational worth, *Educational Review*, 70:1, 51-66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1403208>

Bartsch, F. and Rulofs, B. (2020). Intersections of Forced Migration and Gender in Physical Education. *Frontiers in Sociology* 5:539020. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2020.539020>.  
[Frontiers | Intersections of Forced Migration and Gender in Physical Education](https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2020.539020)

Culp, B. (2024). *Race/Racism PE and Sport Youth*. DOI:[10.4324/9780367766924-RESS102-1](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367766924-RESS102-1)

Derri, V., Kellis, I., Vernadakis, N., Albanidis, E., & Kioumourtzoglou, E. (2014). The effect of an intercultural physical education program in comparison to the typical one on student's social skills learning. *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise*, 9(1), 91-102. [\(PDF\) The effect of an intercultural Physical Education Program in comparison to the typical one on students' social skills learning](#)

Dubey, A. (2024). Inclusive Physical Education: Strategies for Creating an Accessible and Supportive Learning Environment. *Innovations in Sports Science*, 1(2), 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.36676/iss.v1.i2.7>

European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Promoting diversity and inclusion in schools in Europe*, Eurydice Report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/443509>

European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Tackling different forms of discrimination in and through education and training – Working group on equality and values in education and training (2021-2025) – Issue paper*, Donlevy, V.(editor), Driel, B. v.(editor) and Komers, S.(editor), Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/798464>

European Network of Sport Education *EDU:PACT Module Handbook Teaching and Learning Guidelines on Intercultural Education through Physical Activity, Coaching and Training. EDUPACT Module Handbook English.pdf*

European Parliament (2022). *Role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism*. European Parliament resolution of 8 March 2022 on the role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism (2021/2057(INI) P9\_TA(2022)0057 [Texts adopted - Role of culture, education, media and sport in the fight against racism - Tuesday, 8 March 2022](#)

Flintoff, A., Fitzgerald, H. and Scraton, S. (2008). The challenges of intersectionality: Researching difference in physical education. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 18 (2). 73- 85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620210802351300>

Kalina, L. & Moustakas, L. (2024). Discrimination in Youth Sport: Exploring the Experiences of European Coaches. *Youth*. 4. 618-627. [Discrimination in Youth Sport: Exploring the Experiences of European Coaches | MDPI](#).

Kavvoura, A., Kokkonen, M. and Siljamäki, M. (2016). Tackling discrimination in grassroots sports: A handbook for teachers and coaches. [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/4d2f699d-69b9-459d-8767-9a68f734e338/Handbook\\_EN.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/4d2f699d-69b9-459d-8767-9a68f734e338/Handbook_EN.pdf)

- Kipouropoulou, E. (2019). Primary school teachers' perceptions about refugee children inclusion in Greek schools: Are teachers prepared? *Sino-US English Teaching*, 16(6), 240-248. DOI:[10.17265/1539-8072/2019.06.003](https://doi.org/10.17265/1539-8072/2019.06.003)
- Kouli, O. & Papaioannou, A. G. (2009). Ethnic/cultural identity salience, achievement goals and motivational climate in multicultural physical education classes. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, 10(1), 45-51. DOI:[10.1016/j.psychsport.2008.06.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2008.06.001)
- Moustakas, L., Papageorgiou, E. and Petry, K. (2022). Developing intercultural sport educators in Europe. In *Education in Sport and Physical Activity*; Petry, K., de Jong, J., Eds.; Routledge: London, UK, 2022, pp. 206–215. DOI:[10.4324/9781003002666-22](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003002666-22)
- OECD (2019), *Making Physical Education Dynamic and Inclusive for 2030: International Curriculum Analysis*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/7abe6b02-en>.
- OECD (2017), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en>
- OSCE/ODIHR, Council of Europe, UNESCO (2011). *Guidelines for educators on countering intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. Addressing Islamophobia through Education*. Poland. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/84495?download=true>
- Papageorgiou, E., Krommidas, C., Digelidis, N., Moustakas, L., Papaioannou, A.G. (2023). An online PETE course on intercultural education for pre-service physical education teachers: A non-randomized controlled trial. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 2023, 121, 103920. [An online PETE course on intercultural education for pre-service physical education teachers: A non-randomized controlled trial - ScienceDirect](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.103920)
- Papageorgiou, E., Digelidis, N., Sympas, I., Papaioannou, A. (2021). A needs assessment study on refugees' inclusion through physical education and sport. Are we ready for this challenge? *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research* 2021, 91, 21–33. <https://doi.org/10.2478/pcssr-2021-0016>
- Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) (2024). *Annual Report 2023*. Athens. [2023-RVRN-Annual-Report eng-v fn.pdf](https://www.rvrn.eu/2023-RVRN-Annual-Report-eng-v-fn.pdf)
- Russo, G., Paganelli, V. & Ceciliani, A. (2025). Building respect, fairness, and collaboration through physical education: A primary school intervention. *Acta Psychologica* 258. 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105187>
- Russo, G., Masini, A., Dallolio, L., Ceciliani, A. (2024). Primary and middle school students' views on inclusive physical education: Perceptions, practices, and future directions, *Heliyon*, Vol.11, 1, e41232, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e41232>.

Tsiganou, J., Kondyli, D., Varoux, Ch., Spyropoulou, N., Vezyrgianni, K., Tsevre, M. and Savva, K. (eds) (2025). *ADdressing intersectionAL stEreotypes, building sChool communities of Tolerance through physical education*. Athens: NCSR. ISBN: 978-960-6834-55-4. [EKKE.GR](https://ekke.gr) – Εθνικό Κέντρο Κοινωνικών Ερευνών

UNESCO (2014). *World-wide survey of school physical education: final report*. ISBN: 978-92-3-100048-5. [World-wide survey of school physical education: final report - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

UNESCO (2017). *A Guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education*. Paris: UNESCO publishing. [A Guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

UNESCO (2021). *Quality Physical Education Policy Project: analysis of process, content and impact*. [Promoting Quality Physical Education Policy | UNESCO](#)

UNESCO (2024a). *Global outlook on racism and discrimination*. Paris, UNESCO. [Global outlook on racism and discrimination - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

UNESCO & Loughborough University (2024b). *The Global State of Play: Report and Recommendations on Quality Physical Education*. Paris, UNESCO. [The global state of play: report and recommendations on quality physical education - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *SDP TOOLKIT MODULE: PHYSICAL EDUCATION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT (PEPAS)*. [Microsoft Word - SDP Module Physical Activity and Education Final.docx](#)

World Health Organization (2022). *Promoting physical activity through schools: policy brief*. ISBN 978-92-4-004956-7. [Promoting physical activity through schools: policy brief \(who.int\)](#)

## PART 2: Research protocol and tools

---

### T2.2. Design of research methodology, questions, and tools

#### Research protocol and tools

**Tsiganou Joanna**

in co-operation with

Dimitra Kondyli, Natalia Spyropoulou, Katerina Vezyrgianni, Christina Varouxli,  
Magdalini Tsevreni, Nikolaos Klironomos

## **1. DIALECT5 Project's summary**

DIALECT5 builds upon a well-established pan-European ecosystem, developed through six years of implementing the DIALECT methodology in disadvantaged communities in Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia. Using **gender and ethnically mixed football teams**, the initiative has fostered **inclusive communities by promoting tolerance, equality, and non-discrimination**.

DIALECT5 unlocks the potential of physical education professionals as key drivers of tolerance in schools, adapting and transferring the DIALECT3 good practice—piloted in Greek lower secondary schools—to primary schools in four partner countries.

Through physical education, the project tackles stereotypes early, promoting inclusion among children (9-12 y.o.) with fewer opportunities, including migrants, refugees, Roma, girls, and boys. It aligns with Erasmus+ priorities on “Inclusion and Diversity” and “Promoting equality and EU values through sport”.

DIALECT5 will train 100 primary school physical education professionals in the four intervention countries on the DIALECT methodology. Meanwhile, 1,010 children will enhance their values of equality and non-discrimination through mixed football teams in physical education classes. Student-led initiatives will further strengthen democratic participation, empowering students to make their voices heard.

The project’s impact assessment results will contribute to policy recommendations, supported by the Greek Ministries of Social Cohesion and Family and of Migration and Asylum, as well as UEFA Foundation for Children and Common Goals (Associated Partners).

These efforts aim to drive policy change toward integrating sports for inclusion within **physical education curricula at the EU level**.



### ***Partners' List***

DIALECT 5 is implemented by the following partners:

| Number | Role | Short name  | Legal name                                                                   | Country | PIC       |
|--------|------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| 1      | COO  | AAH         | ACTIONAID HELLAS ASTIKI MI<br>KERDOSKOPIKI ETAIRIA                           | EL      | 931941954 |
| 2      | BEN  | AUTH        | ARISTOTELIO PANEPISTIMIO<br>THESSALONIKIS                                    | EL      | 999895692 |
| 3      | BEN  | EKKE        | ETHNIKO KENTRO KOINONIKON EREVNON                                            | EL      | 999525831 |
| 4      | BEN  | AAIT        | ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL ITALIA ETS                                           | IT      | 947194137 |
| 5      | BEN  | MESE 2.0    | MASODIK ESELY SPORTEGYESULET                                                 | HU      | 946412996 |
| 6      | BEN  | FF          | FOND FOOTBALL FRIENDS ZA<br>UNAPREDENJE SPORTSKOG OBRAZOVANJA<br>KROZ FUTBAL | RS      | 927962044 |
| 7      | AP   | MoSCF       | Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family                                       | EL      | 880428552 |
| 8      | AP   | MoMA        | YPOURGEIO METANASTEFSIS KAI ASYLOU                                           | EL      | 889911757 |
| 9      | AP   | Common Goal | Common Goal GGMBH                                                            | DE      | 938974551 |

#### Background information and rationale

Previous DIALECT projects and the desk research of the present DIALECT 5 project have reaffirmed that the rise of violence, racism, extremism, xenophobia, discrimination, and intolerance has posed serious challenges to European societies. Research findings also have reaffirmed that **intolerance is rooted in an unwillingness or refusal to accept beliefs, views, and practices different from one's own. This intolerance manifests in various ways, ranging from social exclusion and avoidance to acts of hate, discrimination, and even physical violence, often targeting individuals based on ethnicity, religion, political ideology, or sexual orientation** (as in DIALECT3 project, 2023).

**Adolescents and children are particularly susceptible to extremist rhetoric**, as they are in a crucial phase of identity formation and are often influenced by peer groups, social media, and societal narratives. Studies indicate that young people who experience social exclusion, discrimination, or marginalization are at a higher risk of being drawn into radicalized communities, where they seek a sense of belonging and purpose. Xenophobia, a prominent form of intolerance, is particularly directed toward foreigners and minority groups and is often fueled by hostility, misinformation, and deeply ingrained prejudices. **In school environments, ethnic and cultural divisions, bullying, and exposure to extremist narratives online can further reinforce exclusionary attitudes, making young people vulnerable to manipulation and radicalization.** Beyond individual prejudice, social and political polarization has intensified divisions within societies, further deepening conflicts between groups with differing political, cultural, or ideological perspectives. The growing influence of misinformation, populism, and divisive rhetoric in political and media discourse has contributed to an "us vs. them" mentality, eroding trust in institutions and weakening social cohesion. Political polarization not only exacerbates intolerance but also creates an environment where extremist

ideologies can flourish, as marginalized youth seek validation and community within radicalized networks. The increasing prevalence of these challenges highlights the urgent need for proactive measures to counter radicalization, intolerance, and social division, particularly among younger populations.

Among the most effective strategies is education, which has long been recognized as a powerful tool for promoting inclusion, social cohesion, and democratic values. Children and adolescents must be equipped with the ability to think critically, navigate misinformation, and resist extremist narratives. International organizations stress the importance of fostering intercultural understanding, strengthening resilience against extremist rhetoric, and encouraging active participation in democratic life as essential approaches to combating intolerance and bridging societal divides.

**Education** must go beyond imparting knowledge—it should cultivate a culture of respect, dialogue, and civic engagement, equipping individuals with the skills to critically assess information, challenge divisive ideologies, and build resilience to radicalization. Only through a holistic, inclusive, and youth-centered approach to education can societies effectively address the root causes of radicalization, intolerance, and political division, ensuring that future generations grow up in an environment of respect, equality, and active civic participation.

The role of education in addressing intolerance is critical, as schools are intended to be safe spaces where students develop skills, capacities, values and personalities. School as a microcosm of society is the right place to instill children with values of equality, respect and non-discrimination, which will then be transferred and applied at community level (DIALECT2 and DIALECT3 research findings). At the same time, research shows that school segregation and discrimination persist in many European countries. Discriminated students often experience low self-esteem, self-segregation, internalized oppression, and in extreme cases, attraction to violent extremist ideologies, school dropout, depression, and suicidal thoughts. An intersectional approach to diversity recognizes that students can embody multiple dimensions of identity—such as ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status—that subject them to various forms of discrimination. This understanding is crucial for creating inclusive classrooms where every student is valued and supported.

International Agencies like UNESCO, UNICEF, and the OECD, stress the importance of inclusive education, which focuses on adapting educational systems to students rather than expecting students to conform to rigid structures. This shift in approach fosters an environment where all learners, regardless of background, can thrive and participate fully in educational and social life. Furthermore, inclusive education must promote active participation in democratic processes, ensuring that students are not only recipients of knowledge but also engaged contributors to their communities. Schools should encourage students to voice their opinions, participate in decision-making, and engage in dialogue that fosters mutual understanding. Through student-led initiatives, collaborative learning, and exposure to democratic practices, young people can develop a sense of agency and responsibility in creating a more tolerant and cohesive society. By integrating democratic values and active participation into the educational framework, schools can equip students with the

skills needed to challenge intolerance, advocate for equality, and strengthen the foundations of a just and inclusive democracy.

Sports in general and football in particular, have been increasingly recognized as powerful tools for promoting social inclusion and countering radicalization. Participation in sports fosters a sense of belonging, loyalty, and teamwork while teaching essential values such as cooperation, respect, and discipline. However, while sports have the potential to promote inclusion, they can also reinforce exclusion if not structured inclusively. Competitive dynamics in sports can foster an unhealthy "cult of victory", where winning becomes the sole focus, leading to hostility and even violence. Extremist groups have exploited these dynamics to recruit young individuals by leveraging identity-based rivalries. It has been widely recognized that to counter these risks, sports initiatives must be carefully designed to emphasize ethical principles, social cohesion, and intercultural dialogue.

To this end, as the literature review conducted in the framework of the present DIALECT5 project, **physical education within the school context**, as a compulsory and widely accessible subject, provides a low-cost, high-impact intervention space where children can develop not only physical literacy but also social, emotional, and civic competencies. Inclusive, child-centered, and values-driven PE can promote democratic culture, reduce dropout rates, empower marginalized students, and contribute to long-term social cohesion. To realize this potential, systemic reforms are required, including enhanced teacher training in intercultural and anti-racist education, inclusive curriculum redesign, equitable assessment practices, and policy alignment with human rights frameworks. When strategically supported, physical education can move beyond its traditional role and function as a powerful engine for social justice, resilience, and equitable development—helping to build a society in which no child is left behind.

Moreover, **primary school physical education is particularly significant** because it often constitutes children's first structured encounter with sport and may shape lifelong attitudes toward physical activity. For children from refugee or migrant backgrounds, PE can serve as both a mirror and a bridge—reflecting societal norms while also providing entry into broader sports participation. Positive experiences can encourage long-term engagement while negative ones can reinforce marginalization. Effective inclusive PE requires systemic alignment across curriculum design, teacher education, assessment practices, and extracurricular access. Overemphasis on performance-based grading can disadvantage students with disabilities or limited prior experience. Inclusive alternatives emphasize progress, participation, and diverse competencies. Intercultural physical education programs demonstrate measurable improvements in social skills, reduction of racial stereotypes, enhanced peer relations, and increased cooperation compared to traditional programs. Restorative practices, anti-racist curriculum design, diverse role models, inclusive language, and explicit teaching of respect, fair play, and bystander intervention are identified as key strategies.

The **DIALECT projects** have addressed these issues and have shown the power of *Sport Values* in building communities of tolerance by means of the implementation of football3 methodology and rational.

### ***DIALECT 5: Filling the gaps***

The DIALECT methodology is based on the globally tested football3 approach, which emphasizes teamwork, respect, gender equality and negotiation rather than competition, creating gender-mixed football teams at community level in disadvantaged areas. Unlike traditional football, football3 does not have referees; instead, players engage in dialogue to set rules based on the values of respect and equality, and resolve conflicts, fostering communication, cooperation and intercultural understanding.

The DIALECT 5 initiative is based on the success of all previous DIALECT projects. To ensure a holistic early-age intervention and drawing from the very promising results of DIALECT3 intervention in low secondary schools in Greece, which demonstrated that schools as a microcosm of society is the right place to instill children with EU values, **DIALECT5 aims to promote inclusive education and combat structural discrimination within schools in 4 EU countries (Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia), by adapting and integrating the DIALECT methodology into the primary school level through physical education.**

**DIALECT5** is fully aligned with the “inclusion and diversity” horizontal priority of the Erasmus+ Programme, and the sports priority of “promoting equality and European values in and through sport”, as the project utilizes football as a transformative tool to foster social inclusion, equality, and European values, ensuring that all students (9-12 years old) —including those from marginalized backgrounds, migrants, and those in rural or remote areas—have equal access to opportunities for personal and social development. Leveraging on partnership’s success on creating a pan-European community of practice with six years of experience in implementing the DIALECT methodology at community level, as well as at secondary schools in Greece, DIALECT5 builds upon the proven impact achieved in previous projects in combating racism, xenophobia, and intolerance among adolescents. Expanding these efforts, the project introduces its innovative approach to primary schools in Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia, integrating an intersectional perspective into physical education to address structural discrimination and social exclusion from an early age.

Beyond combating discrimination, DIALECT5 fosters European values, civic engagement, and active participation. By developing social and intercultural dialogue skills, the project strengthens students’ resilience against discrimination and xenophobia. Through student-led initiatives, children engage in peer discussions, inclusive activities, and leadership roles, gaining early experience in forms of democratic participation. This empowers them to become responsible, engaged citizens, advocating for inclusion, respect, and equity throughout their lives.

DIALECT5 builds upon six years of experience in implementing the DIALECT methodology across disadvantaged communities in Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia, fostering inclusive communities by combating intolerance and discrimination through gender and ethnically mixed football teams. Over this period, the partnership has established a strong pan-European ecosystem, engaging and training 700 youth and 75 mediators in the DIALECT methodology. In Greece, the approach has been successfully introduced to 134 representatives of sports associations and social workers, as well as 44 physical education professionals across 29 secondary schools. These efforts have laid the foundation for DIALECT5, which now expands into primary schools at the EU level, targeting younger

children (9-12 years old) to instill inclusive values early, before stereotypes and exclusionary attitudes become deeply ingrained.

However, beyond the need to combat intolerance and discrimination, DIALECT5 directly addresses the urgent necessity to strengthen democratic values in education. Findings from previous DIALECT projects and broader research indicate that political and social polarization, hate speech, and extremist rhetoric have significantly influenced young people's identity formation, leaving them vulnerable to manipulation, misinformation, and divisive ideologies. As societies across Europe face increasing institutional distrust, social fragmentation, and the normalization of discrimination, education and schools as a microcosm of society must play a proactive role in reinforcing democratic principles, social cohesion, and civic engagement. By integrating sports-based education with democratic values, DIALECT5 ensures that children develop a sense of agency, responsibility, and active participation in their communities, equipping them with the critical thinking and resilience needed to challenge intolerance and uphold the fundamental values of equality, respect, and inclusion. The need for this early-age intervention at primary school level is well-documented through all previous DIALECT projects.

***The present research protocol is based on the findings of the literature review to be annexed*** conducted as an initial task with a view to establishing a common understanding of the field of discrimination and racism with that of physical education in primary schools, in order to integrate previous DIALECT projects knowledge to the primary school context under the lens of intersectionality.

#### **DIALECT5 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

To ensure a holistic early-age intervention and drawing from the very promising results of DIALECT3 intervention in low secondary schools in Greece, which demonstrated that schools as a microcosm of society is the right place to instill children with EU values, DIALECT5 aims to promote inclusive education and combat structural discrimination within schools in 4 EU countries (Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia), by adapting and integrating the DIALECT methodology into the primary school level through physical education.

## **2. WP2 objectives, target populations and EKKE's contribution**

As stated at the project's Grant Agreement the objectives of WP2 are to adapt and integrate the DIALECT methodology into primary school physical education across Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia, reinforcing democratic values and inclusion through an intersectional approach.

**Thus, Work Package 2: Needs Assessment for Integrating the DIALECT Methodology into Primary School Physical Education** led by EKKE includes research on discrimination and intolerance in primary school physical education in Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia. It involves research, online

surveys with PE professionals, focus groups with educational authorities and the school community, and interviews with students, providing evidence-based recommendations for adapting DIALECT5 training material.

EKKE, being a research centre and a partner organization, it has been designed to be in charge of the scientific research design and research activities' supervision of the project. EKKE's respective duties for the implementation of WP2 are the following:

### **Work Package 2 (WP 2): Objectives and tasks ahead**

T2.1: Enhanced desk research on the relationship between discrimination and physical education in primary schools at the European level

**Objectives:** Building on the existing desk research conducted in DIALECT3 on the intersection of racism-based discrimination and physical education—focusing on Greek lower secondary schools—this study will extend the analysis to primary schools at the European level. Drawing from academic literature, policy papers, and reports from European and international organizations, it will further explore the relationship between physical education in schools and stereotypes related to ethnic and cultural diversity, to physical appearance (obesity, height), as well as gender roles, while incorporating a democratic values perspective. This includes examining how principles such as students' activation on equality and non-discrimination challenges within schools and at everyday life, and children participation in decisions that affect them, intersect with physical education, an aspect that has not been previously explored in DIALECT projects. Additionally, the study will review existing primary school PE curricula, with emphasis on partner countries, to assess the extent to which inclusive pedagogical approaches are integrated and to identify gaps and opportunities for further enhancement. It will also evaluate how DIALECT values, enhanced with democratic principles, can be effectively incorporated into PE curricula and extra curriculum sport activities, fostering a more socially responsible learning environment in primary schools. The findings will serve as a foundation for designing the project's research methodology on needs assessment, including the development of targeted research questions and tools.

T2.2: Design of research methodology, questions, and tools

**Objectives:** This activity involves defining the research questions, methodology, and related protocols, including ethical considerations and mitigation measures, as well as developing evidence collection tools. These tools include: (a) an online survey questionnaire targeting primary PE professionals (T2.3), (b) two focus group guides for educational authorities and local school stakeholders (T2.4), and (c) one interview guide designed for primary education students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds (T2.5). In terms of methodology, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach will be adopted, actively involving primary education students and school

community representatives in the research process. Additionally, data collection will focus on primary schools in areas with high poverty and unemployment rates, weak social networks, and limited access to opportunities, as well as regions with increased support towards extremist and populist political parties, incidents of racism and intolerance, and a significant presence of migrant populations, including newcomers. This approach ensures that the research captures the perspectives and experiences of primary education students 9 -12 years old and school communities in vulnerable contexts in the four intervention countries.

#### T2.3: Online survey targeting physical education professionals at primary education level

**Objectives:** A survey, based on an online questionnaire, will be developed by EKKE to assess the competencies, awareness, and current practices of PE professionals in primary schools in integrating inclusive practices, democratic values and intersectionality into their teaching methods, while also identifying challenges and gaps in implementing these values. The survey will be disseminated in the four intervention countries—Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia—focusing on primary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. It will be disseminated through official education networks in cooperation with Directorates of Primary Education, and public educational authorities when possible, mailing lists, and partners communication channels. If necessary, the questionnaire will be translated into the partners' national languages. Once data collection is completed, EKKE will lead the analysis, synthesizing key findings and identifying patterns regarding the role of PE in fostering social and civic engagement, social cohesion, and inclusive education in primary schools in the four intervention countries.

#### T2.4: Focus groups with Educational Authorities and local School Stakeholders

**Objectives:** A total of eight (8) focus groups will be conducted in the four intervention countries, with two (2) focus groups per country. These sessions will be coordinated by project partners in each respective country. The focus groups will engage two key stakeholder groups: a) Educational Authorities, including representatives from ministries of education, regional education directorates, and policy-making bodies responsible for curriculum development, b) Local school community representatives, including primary school principals, PE professionals, and community-based organizations (CSOs) working in the field of sports, non-discrimination and inclusion. The first focus group, consisting of educational authorities, will document the policy framework for inclusive education in PE curriculum at primary schools. It will examine how existing physical education curricula promote participation, diversity, and active citizenship, while identifying policy gaps and areas for improvement. In Greece, EKKE will implement this activity. The second focus group, consisting of school community representatives, will focus on the practical challenges faced by PE teachers and school administrators in integrating inclusive and democratic values into PE in primary schools, addressing issues such as social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and handling discrimination in sports settings. Participants will also share best practices and strategies currently employed at the school level. In Greece, AUTH will implement this activity. EKKE will be responsible for the analysis of evidence and key findings.

## T2.5. Interviews with primary school students from diverse backgrounds

Objectives: This activity will involve conducting semi-structured interviews with primary school students 9-12 years old from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds in the four intervention countries to gain insights into their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to inclusion, participation, and democratic values in physical education (PE). The interviews will target primary education students from different ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, including migrant, refugee, and locals, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how PE environments influence social inclusion, intercultural interactions, and active citizenship. Special attention will be given to gender dynamics, exploring whether and how boys and girls experience equal opportunities and participation in sports in primary schools.

## T2.6. Evidence-based adaptation of DIALECT toolkits for physical educators in primary schools in 4 EU countries

Objectives: Building on the findings of the previous research activities, AUTH with input from all partners, will lead the adaptation of the DIALECT toolkits to better equip PE professionals at primary education level, ensuring they are adaptable to the identified needs of each intervention country. The aim is to provide PE professionals with the competencies and tools needed to create an engaging, socially responsible, and inclusive environment through PE for primary school students. The DIALECT5 toolkit builds on the DIALECT3 Guidelines—which integrate the DIALECT methodology in Greek lower secondary schools to combat racism and discrimination—and incorporates insights from the DIALECT4 Training Toolkits for Promoting Social Inclusion and Preventing Children's Radicalization Through Community-Based Sports, particularly regarding age-appropriateness. Specifically, DIALECT5 will: a) align with primary school settings at a European level in the four intervention countries, and b) integrate democratic values and principles—such as engaging students in equality and non-discrimination challenges both within schools and in everyday life and involving children in decisions that affect them—which were not previously included in the DIALECT toolkits. This enhancement aims to promote social responsibility and active citizenship in an era when democratic values are at stake, ensuring that primary PE professionals can effectively foster socially aware learning environments and contribute to the development of socially responsible citizens. The adaptation process will also ensure that the primary students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds in the four intervention countries can effectively engage with the content and benefit from its application in physical education activities in primary schools. The DIALECT5 will guarantee that the content, language, and educational approach are age-appropriate, inclusive, and effective in addressing the specific needs of the kids' target population.

### ***Ethical guidelines:***

The quality of the proposed activities & deliverables will be met if all partners abide with the methodology rules and processes designed primarily by EKKE, amended by the leader and co-partners and in accordance to the present research protocol. The adherence to ethical guidelines, will be met if all actions involving persons abide to the code of ethics of EU, EKKE and AAH's Child Protection Policy Framework. In any case, relevant national and EU legislative frameworks will be respected, with GDPR as a common framework of reference for participating countries, as well as

the right to respect for private and family life and the protection of personal data (Article 8 ECHR, Articles 7 and 8 of the EU Charter). In particular: a) potential vulnerabilities of participants should be taken into account. Emphasis will be given in migrant's involvement in the activities, taking into consideration their potential multiple vulnerabilities. b) The right to protect family and private life should be taken seriously into account. c) Protection of personal data (anonymity, filling of informed consent forms by all participants based on an appropriate detailed explanation of the process and use of information). Relevant documents subject to modification by partners will be issued by the Leader. In any case relevant national and EU legislative frameworks will be respected and participants will be treated without any kind of violation of personal data. d) Activities involving directly kids and adolescents will be conducted only by persons already experienced to work with youths or authorized to work with youths. Staff of partners' organisations to be involved in these activities must be trained on children rights and the child protection policy of their organisation, be checked about their criminal background and have support for any ethical issues encountered. All participants will be asked for their informed consent to participate, based on an appropriate, detailed explanation of the process and use of information. e) Guidelines will be shared on how project's activities should be carried out as well as how hate speech or racist reactions should be handled.

### 3. Research protocol and tools

#### 3.1. Methodology and Research Design

As stated in the GA, ***in terms of methodology, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach*** will be adopted, actively involving primary education students and school community representatives in the research process. Additionally, data collection will focus on primary schools in areas with high poverty and unemployment rates, weak social networks, and limited access to opportunities, as well as regions with increased support towards extremist and populist political parties, incidents of racism and intolerance, and a significant presence of migrant populations, including newcomers. This approach ensures that the research captures the perspectives and experiences of primary education students 9 -12 years old and school communities in vulnerable contexts in the four intervention countries.

#### Research populations

##### A) Educational Authorities and local School Stakeholders

DIALECT5 is targeting key stakeholder groups:

- a) Educational Authorities, including representatives from ministries of education, regional education directorates, and policy-making bodies responsible for curriculum development,

b) Local school community representatives, including primary school principals, PE professionals, and community-based organizations (CSOs) working in the field of sports, non-discrimination and inclusion.

#### **B) Primary PE professionals**

DIALECT5 is also targeting primary schools' physical education (PE) professionals.

#### **C) Primary education students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds**

DIALECT5 is also targeting primary education students from diverse sociocultural backgrounds.

The selection process involves the participation of kids (children indeed) 9 -12 years old from Greece, Italy, Hungary and Serbia, focusing on the ones at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including members of local ethnic and cultural social groups (i.e., migrants, refugees, Roma etc.). It is to be expected that the selection process might also engage kids from the DIALECT football3 pool, namely vulnerable kids coming from socio-economically disadvantaged, and ethnic and cultural minority backgrounds. It also to be noted that the DIALECT project's implementation according to its original rationale involves kids and adolescents (boys and girls alike) from target areas / communities specified according to the following selection criteria, common in all four countries: a) increased levels of poverty and social exclusion, b) presence of migrant and non-migrant populations, c) identified cases of hate speech focusing on xenophobia d) enhanced sports culture and e) presence of extremist groups.

The objective is to directly gather kids' opinions, understanding, and feedback on the concepts discussed in DIALECT sports for inclusion program, such as nondiscrimination, equality, radicalization, democratic values etc. This can help identify aspects that align well with DIALECT training toolkits and areas that may need modification or simplification.

### **Research tools**

The process of developing the research tools involves defining the research questions, methodology, and related protocols, following an annotated literature review, including ethical considerations and mitigation measures, as well as developing evidence collection tools.

Thus, the above process includes five Key components

- a. Literature Review (all partners)
- b. Research Protocol and tools for:
  - Interviews with Children (9-12 years old) - (all partners)
  - Focus Groups with Educational Authorities and local School Stakeholders - (all partners)
  - On-line questionnaire for PE professionals
- c. Guidelines for the adaptation of toolkits - (all partners)

a. Literature review

Partners forward to EKKE their own Literature Review (Annotated Bibliography) to locate and analyze key data on the topic of cultivation of values of intolerance in children aged 9-12 and its interconnectedness with sports. EKKE will synthesize existing knowledge in these domains and the literature review will establish a solid foundation essential for tailoring the DIALECT training toolkits, ensuring it meets the unique characteristics and learning needs of this age group.

The report drafted in English (EKKE) will be annexed to the Deliverable of WP2.

b. Research Protocol and tools

EKKE will draft and design the research protocol and tools for use by all partners (present report). This present report will be annexed to the Deliverable of WP2.

These tools include:

- (a) an online survey questionnaire targeting primary PE professionals,
- (b) two focus group guides for educational authorities and local school stakeholders and
- (c) one interview guide designed for primary education students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds.

**All tools are Annexed to the present report**

(a) **A survey, based on an online questionnaire,** will be developed by EKKE to assess the competencies, awareness, and current practices of PE professionals in primary schools in integrating inclusive practices, democratic values and intersectionality into their teaching methods, while also identifying challenges and gaps in implementing these values. The survey will be disseminated in the four intervention countries—Greece, Italy, Hungary, and Serbia—focusing on primary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. It will be disseminated through official education networks in cooperation with Directorates of Primary Education, and public educational authorities when possible, mailing lists, and partners communication channels. If necessary, the questionnaire will be translated into the partners' national languages. Once data collection is completed, EKKE will lead the analysis, synthesizing key findings and identifying patterns regarding the role of PE in fostering social and civic engagement, social cohesion, and inclusive education in primary schools in the four intervention countries.

(b) **A total of eight (8) focus groups** will be conducted in the four intervention countries, with two (2) focus groups per country. The focus groups will engage two key stakeholder groups: a) Educational Authorities, including representatives from ministries of education, regional education directorates, and policy-making bodies responsible for curriculum development, b) Local school

community representatives, including primary school principals, PE professionals, and community-based organizations (CSOs) working in the field of sports, non-discrimination and inclusion. The first focus group, consisting of educational authorities, will document the policy framework for inclusive education in PE curriculum at primary schools. It will examine how existing physical education curricula promote participation, diversity, and active citizenship, while identifying policy gaps and areas for improvement. In Greece, EKKE will implement this activity. The second focus group, consisting of school community representatives, will focus on the practical challenges faced by PE teachers and school administrators in integrating inclusive and democratic values into PE in primary schools, addressing issues such as social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and handling discrimination in sports settings. Participants will also share best practices and strategies currently employed at the school level. In Greece, AUTH will implement this activity. EKKE will be responsible for the analysis of evidence and key findings for all countries. ***It is expected that each focus group will be comprised from at least 5-6 persons per country. In the case of non-availability of important informers personal in-depth-interviews might be conducted.***

(c) This activity will involve conducting semi-structured interviews with primary school students 9-12 years old (***at least 10 interviews per country***) from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds in the four intervention countries to gain insights into their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to inclusion, participation, and democratic values in physical education (PE). The interviews will target primary education students from different ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, including migrant, refugee, and locals, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how PE environments influence social inclusion, intercultural interactions, and active citizenship. Special attention will be given to gender dynamics, exploring whether and how boys and girls experience equal opportunities and participation in sports in primary schools.

### Research questions

For each category of research population specific research questions were formulated in order to couple the objectives of each research task as follows:

#### Population group: kids

The personal interview's themes and questions were designed to address:

- Kids' needs and values.
- Kids' potential level of anticipation of discriminatory practices faced in the school and local community environments.
- Challenges met and anticipated in terms of racist incidents and points of dispute with their peers as well as equality issues including gender issues.
- Specific emphasis is placed on issues of influences especially considering anticipation of radical and intolerance views and practices.
- Kids' level of anticipation of aspects of racism, intolerance and xenophobia promoted against the acceptance of "otherness" and multiculturalism at school and broadly in community level.

- Kids level of anticipation of existing stereotypes and prejudice hindering social inclusion facilitating hate intolerance.
- Kids stance and attitudes towards football in general and football3 in particular as a means to bridge cultural differences in school, community and social environments.

#### **Population Groups: educational authorities and local school stakeholders**

- To what extent the above population groups are cognizant of their own stereotypical perceptions and prejudices.
- To what extent the above population groups are qualified enough to help combating youth radicalization and increase resilience to extremist values and
- To what extent they beliefs through sports and more particularly football and football3. think intercultural dialogue and conflict resolution in the football field are feasible.
- To what extent they believe that societies can educate kids on how to recognize and be resilient to extremist narratives that promote messages of racism and xenophobia.
- To what extent they believe that using football/ football3 trainings may empower kids in combating intolerant beliefs and attitudes and form active citizens.
- How important is tolerance, non-discrimination, and gender equality, for the representatives of the above groups.
- To what extent they believe that societies can educate kids on values and skills to be used in their everyday life inside and outside the football field.
- In what ways societies may help kids understand and be resilient to extremist narratives and behaviors inside and outside the football field.
- To what extent they believe that using football trainings may empower kids in forming active citizens.
- How ready they are to promote relevant messages to the broader community.

#### **Population Group: PE professionals**

Questions are mainly designed to assess the competencies, awareness, and current practices of PE professionals in primary schools in integrating inclusive practices, democratic values and intersectionality into their teaching methods, while also identifying challenges and gaps in implementing these values. Also, the following research questions are designed to address specific issues:

- To what extent the above population group are cognizant of their own stereotypical perceptions and prejudices.
- What the above population group think about school responsibility [to educate for tolerance].
- To what extent they think that there is a positive approach to ethnicity at primary schools
- To what extent they think that they are have learn to think inclusively.

- To what extent PE professionals at primary schools are integrating intercultural education in their work plans and program
- To what extent PE professionals at primary schools are focusing on similarities during their professional practice
- To what extent PE professionals at primary schools believe that using football/ football3 trainings may empower kids in combating intolerant beliefs and attitudes and form active citizens.
- To what extent PE professionals at primary schools believe that the school program promotes kids empowerment in combating racism on a broad front.
- What PE professionals at primary schools think that helps in creating a positive school atmosphere.

### **Tools design and implementation - Concepts and Indices**

In order to clarify empirically the research questions the research design involves the operationalization of the concepts relevant to the DIALECT5 project through a number of working definitions and indices. According to the DIALECT 5 design the core concepts of all research tasks include the theoretical items of non-discrimination, equality, radicalization, tolerance and democratic values.

The operationalization of the concepts of racism, hate intolerance and discrimination will follow identical indices to those used in previous DIALECT projects with a view to produce research material suitable to toolkits adaptation to fit the needs of kids aged 9-12 years. Thus, in the DIALECT 5 project we have decided to use identical concepts to those included in all previous DIALECT projects.

By repeating conceptualizations of racism, hate intolerance and discrimination suffice is to mention herein that racism can enter people's lives in a number of ways.. It may be based on "race"/ethnicity, religion, or nationality and combine with other negatively stereotyped aspects of identity to produce experiences of multiple discrimination. It may be experienced directly though interpersonal discrimination or perpetuated via an institution's discriminatory policies. But whereas racism has repeatedly been shown to be associated with at least part of the socioeconomic disadvantage of many people from ethnic minority groups, tangible exploration is required to fully understand how racism affects people's lives.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Indicatevely, see Saffron Karlsen and James Yzet Nazroo MEASURING AND ANALYZING "RACE," RACISM, AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, [https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/30220584/social\\_epidemiology\\_methodology.pdf](https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/30220584/social_epidemiology_methodology.pdf)

In an ideal identification and measuring scheme of intolerance and racist discrimination “*an intolerant schema measure*”,<sup>58</sup> one should be cognizant not only of the conceptual issues influencing analyses of “race,” racism, and racial discrimination, but must also be mindful of the various measurement issues. Measuring and Analyzing “Race,” Racism, and Racial Discrimination as well as Interpersonal (Individual) Racism the major problem associated with measuring relevant incidents concerns recognition, both for those exploring issues of racism and for its victims. Defining exactly what does and does not constitute racism is complex, and this often leads to inconsistencies in data collection. Thus, questions and measurement scales should not be vague or general exploring, for example, experiences over the past year or a lifetime or the frequency with which someone is generally exposed to racism.

Certain issues however in “*an intolerant schema measure*”, fruitful to identify and address racism, hatred and discrimination may include, indicatively, the following:

**Forms of disrespect** such as:

- *being treated with less courtesy or respect than other people;*
- *receiving poorer service compared with other people;*
- *people acting as if they think you are not smart;*
- *people acting as if they are afraid of you;*
- *people acting as if they think you are dishonest;*
- *people acting as if they think they are better than you are;*
- *being called names or insulted;*
- *being threatened or harassed;*
- *being followed while shopping.*

**Forms of discrimination** such as:

- *people insult other people,*
- *make fun of them*
- *treat them unfairly because they belong to a certain racial/ethnic group, or who speak another language, or look different.*
- *People are hit or handled roughly;*
- *are insulted or called names;*

---

<sup>58</sup> As in Allison C. Aosved, Patricia J. Long, Emily K. Voller (2009), Measuring Sexism, Racism, Sexual Prejudice, Ageism, Classism, and Religious Intolerance: The Intolerant Schema Measure”, Journal of applied Psychology Vol. 39, Issue 10, First published: 01 October 2009, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2009.00528.x>

- *are treated rudely; treated unfairly;*
- *are threatened;*
- *are refused services in a store or restaurant*
- *are subjected to delays in services;*
- *are excluded or ignored at school, in games, at jobs in the neighbourhood.*

Forms of racist discrimination, hatred and intolerance, in exploring issues such as:

- *ever having been unfairly fired, not hired, or denied promotion;*
- *ever having been unfairly stopped, searched, questioned, physically threatened, or abused by the police;*
- *ever having been unfairly discouraged by a teacher or advisor from continuing education;*
- *ever having been unfairly prevented from moving into a neighbourhood because the landlord or a realtor refused to sell or rent you a house or apartment;*
- *ever having moved into a neighbourhood where neighbours made life difficult for you or your family;*
- *ever having received poorer service, compared with others, from a plumber or car mechanic.*

However, it is important to distinguish between what have been called “major” or “life” events, “chronic stressors,” and “daily hassles”. Daily hassles, also called “everyday discrimination” are chronic or episodic events considered part of everyday life, the impact of which is perceived to be minor and relatively short-term: negative treatment or hostility that is not seen as serious enough to constitute “racial harassment.” Unlike more “major” experiences, information regarding daily hassles is often not collected in surveys. There is evidence, however, that racially motivated daily hassles may have a greater impact than other forms of daily hassles, as they can evoke painful memories relating to past racist experiences and communal histories of prejudice in a way that other daily hassles may not. Racially motivated daily hassles may have more of a cumulative effect or combine with other racist experiences to produce more severe consequences. Ignoring these aspects of experience may, then, seriously underestimate the impact of racism on people’s lives. Thus, the identification of intolerance should be based on information which is direct and address the multiple facets of discrimination, ask about distinct types of unfair treatment in particular situations and locations, and avoid global questions about experiences or awareness. Also important are assessments of the domain in which the racism occurs, the magnitude and temporal characteristics of the event, the associated threat, and the impact of other individual characteristics and stressors.

At the same time, it has been argued that unlike other unlawful acts, racism need not have been experienced personally for it to produce a sense of threat, interpersonal incidents being viewed as “an attack on the community as a whole”. As it has been stated, *the distinguishing feature of racial violence and harassment is not simply that it involves members of different racial groups or ethnic*

groups; it is that the action is racially motivated. Racially motivated behaviour, therefore, is not an attack aimed at a person purely as an individual, but an attack on a member of a category or group. This may be seen in findings that suggest that those living with the threat or fear of racism are more numerous than those reporting actual personal experience of racism.<sup>59</sup> To explore this, some studies also ask about respondent knowledge of other people's (in this case, family members') experiences of racism. Other studies have asked more directly about people's concerns about being the victim of racism. Measuring only an individual's actual experience may fail to explore the effects of the threat produced by knowledge of racism in a community if this is not reflected in the actual experience of those asked.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, based on the desk – literature research outcomes, DIALECT findings and in accord with each research task objectives of the DIALECT5 project, the following definitions and indices have been adopted in order to operationalize research items and questions:

Following UNESCO<sup>61</sup> and in order to identify tolerant or intolerant beliefs and behaviors we have decoded the meaning of '**tolerance**' in accord with certain conceptual components:

- Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.
- Tolerance is not concession, condescension or indulgence. Tolerance is, above all, an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. In no circumstance can it be used to justify infringements of these fundamental values. Tolerance is to be exercised by individuals, groups and States.
- Tolerance is the responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), democracy and the rule of law. It involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism and affirms the standards set out in international human rights instruments.
- Consistent with respect for human rights, the practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means

<sup>59</sup> J. Michael Oakes Jay S. Kaufman (2006) eds, METHODS IN SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Pp. 114 ff.

<sup>60</sup> For more see National Research Council. 2004. *Measuring Racial Discrimination*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/10887>. "Attitudinal and Behavioral Indicators of Discrimination" pg. 162 ff.

<sup>61</sup> 1994 UNESCO preliminary version of a longer, more comprehensive guide which will be published during the United Nations Year for Tolerance, 1995. UNESCO Declaration of Principles of Tolerance, Proclaimed and signed on 16 November 1995. In UNESCO (1995) *Tolerance the threshold of peace* - Unit 1- pp 127

accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behavior and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others.

We have also adopted the rational of the principles for the practice of tolerance in schools.<sup>62</sup>

1. School responsibility [to educate for tolerance].
2. Positive approach to ethnicity.
3. Learning to think inclusively.
4. Integrating intercultural education.
5. Focusing on similarities.
6. Combating racism on a broad front.
7. Creating a positive school atmosphere.

Following the work done in the DIALECT project we have also adopted certain conceptual connotations relevant to the identification of intolerance: for example, there are aspects of the relationship between ethnicity and social position that have been generally ignored in literature research. For example, measures of social position often fail to account for both the accumulation of disadvantage over the life course and/or the role of ecological effects produced by the concentration of ethnic minority groups in deprived residential areas. Another aspect of the above relationship ignored by many approaches is the effect of being a victim of racism, in terms of its effect on group social identity, social status, and socioeconomic position. As a consequence, the investigation of the way in which social and economic disadvantage may structure the experiences of different ethnic groups has remained relatively superficial. Discrimination has been shown to occur in almost every facet of public and private life—from the “daily hassles” experienced when going about one's normal life to major events, such as being the victim of a racist physical attack. For example, there is widespread evidence of intolerance toward immigrants and asylum seekers across Europe. This can be seen in the growth of far-right electoral parties across some countries of Europe since 1990s.

Also, from our research experience in DIALECT project kids' and adolescents' behavioural change involves aspects of their **social inclusion**, like social capital, sense of belonging, group cohesion and an individual's new communications, socialization and life skills. We have adopted *both, a narrow concept which defines social inclusion in terms of an individual's social capital (i.e. social relationships) and sense of belonging and the holistic concept which defines social inclusion as the process of improving: (1) the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society, and (2) the*

---

<sup>62</sup> If schools are to be such places, they will need principles and guidelines for tolerance. The following is a list of the 'ingredients' of anti-racist education as it is being developed by the Anne Frank Foundation (the Netherlands). It provides an excellent list of principles for education for tolerance:

*ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity to take part in society.*

Important to the above, were research questions destined to decode the following:

- Inclusion (Kids Feeling of Belonging)
- Participation & Group Dynamics (Kids Sense of Having Their Voice Heard)
- Respect, Fairness and Teamwork (kids' behavioural merits)
- Following the rules (Kids' moral alignment to normativity)

Also, based on literature, main indices used included the following pillars:

### **Pillar 1: Self-awareness**

'I get to know myself and my body'

1. [Physical-Emotional Awareness]: I can immediately tell from my body (e.g., tightness, fast heartbeat) when I start getting anxious or angry.
2. [Impact Recognition]: I know that when I feel frustrated, the way I play can become abrupt or unfair to others.
3. [Self-Efficacy/Mindset]: I believe that even if I'm not good at an exercise right now, I can improve a lot if I try.
4. [Strategy]: When I'm struggling with a move, I feel capable of finding my own way to make it work.
5. [Breaking Stereotypes]: I understand that whether I play well doesn't depend on being a boy or a girl, but on my effort.
6. [Awareness of Privileges]: Sometimes I feel like I have to try harder to prove that I deserve to play with them because of where I come from.

### **Pillar 2: Self-Management**

"I control my actions and I don't give up"

1. [Self-Regulation]: When I feel wronged or angry during the game, I can calm myself down before reacting abruptly.
2. [Moral Autonomy]: I follow the rules and play fairly, even when the teacher isn't watching.

3. [Grit]: I keep trying on a difficult exercise or in the game, even if I feel tired.
4. [Growth Mindset]: If I don't get a move right the first time, I don't get discouraged but try it again until I learn it.
5. [Error Management]: If I make a mistake (e.g., miss a pass), I don't give up, but I focus immediately on the next play.
6. [Resilience in Defeat]: I can accept a loss without blaming my classmates or myself, recognizing the effort we put in.

### **Pillar 3: Social Awareness**

"I care about others and about what is fair"

1. [Deconstructing Otherness]: I try not to divide my classmates into "good" and "weak" players, but to see what each person can contribute.
2. [Eliminating Prejudices]: If I catch myself thinking negatively about a child because of their background, I try to change that thought.
3. [Pluralism]: When we talk about the game, I make sure that everyone's opinions are heard, not just those of the "strongest" kids.
4. [Encouragement]: If I see a classmate staying quiet or on the sidelines, I encourage them to share their opinion or join in the decision.
5. [Equity]: I understand that being 'fair' means giving more help or opportunities to classmates who are struggling more.
6. [Solidarity]: I feel that it's my duty to support a classmate if I see them being teased or unfairly criticized by others.

### **Pillar 4: Relationship Skills**

"I communicate well and make others feel like part of the team"

1. [Empathetic Communication]: When a classmate talks to me, I listen carefully to understand not just what they are saying, but also how they feel.
2. [Support/Encouragement]: I give encouragement and actively support my classmates, even when they make mistakes in the game.
3. [Conflict Resolution]: When there is a misunderstanding or an argument, I try to find the cause of the problem rather than who is to blame.

4. [Restorative Justice]: If my behavior hurt someone or messed up the group, I apologize and try to fix our relationship.
5. [Sense of Belonging]: I feel that my classmates accept me just as I am, and I feel safe to express myself in the group.
6. [Inclusion Responsibility]: I actively make sure that no child is left out or alone during play.

### **Pillar 5: Initiative & Social Action**

"I take the initiative to make things better"

1. [Co-ownership]: I feel that the rules of the game are mine too, because I helped make or change them.
2. [Initiative for Change]: I suggest new ideas or changes in the game that will help all my classmates play more fairly.
3. [Team Autonomy]: I help my team organize itself (e.g., to divide roles fairly) without always waiting for instructions from the teacher.
4. [Collective Mobilization]: If I see that a group or a classmate is being treated unfairly, I try to get others involved so we can find a solution together.
5. [Ethical Leadership]: I use my power (e.g., when I'm the leader or the most experienced player) to help others shine, not just myself.
6. [Critical Intervention]: I speak up and step in when I see behaviors that exclude kids because of their gender, appearance, or background.

Annexed are:

- 1) The tools (4 distinct tools)
- 2) The instructions issued to partners
- 3) The data processing templates

## QUALITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION DRIVES INCLUSION



Source: UNESCO (2015), Quality Physical Education

## RESEARCH TOOLS

---

### TOOL 1: On-Line Questionnaire

|                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Primary School Physical Education Teachers' on line Questionnaire -DIALECT5 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|



#### The Role of Physical Education in Primary Schools

The Physical Education Teachers' DIALECT5 questionnaire was developed by the EKKE project team, for conducting an online survey within the DIALECT5 project entitled "Addressing intersectional stereotypes and activating students to build inclusive and tolerant primary schools through physical education". The project is funded by the ERASMUS-SPORT-2025-SCP programme of the European Commission - European Education and Culture Executive Agency. It is being implemented in 4 countries (Greece, Italy, Hungary and Serbia) by a consortium which consists of ActionAid Hellas (Leader), the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) in Greece, ActionAid Italy in Italy, Second Chance Sports Association (MESE 2.0) in Hungary and Football Friends (FF) in Serbia.

The questionnaire is addressed to **Physical Education Teachers working in public Primary Schools**, who are invited to complete it to contribute to the achievement of the project's objectives. All questionnaire information will be kept anonymous and confidential and will be treated in accordance with the Principles of the Personal Data Protection Regulation and the Regulation of the Ethics and Deontology Committee (EHDE) of EKKE, which is responsible for data collection, data processing and analysis.

**COUNTRY:** Greece – Hungary - Italy - Serbia

#### A. PERSONAL INFORMATION OF RESPONDENT

- 1) Gender
  - Female
  - Male
  - Non-binary/ Other
- 2) Age
  - 22-30
  - 31-40
  - 41 -50
  - 51-60

- 61+

3) Highest educational level acquired

- Bachelors
- Master's degree
- Ph.D.
- Other

4) What is your Employment status

- Permanent
- Fixed-term
- Substitute

5) Total years of teaching experience

- Up to 5 years
- 6- 10
- 11 -15
- 16-20
- 21+

6) Years in current school

- 0–2
- 3–5
- 6–10
- 11+

7) Have you attended any seminar/training for promoting inclusive and democratic values in school through Physical Education during the last 5 years?

- Yes
- No

## B. SCHOOL UNIT INFORMATION

8) The school location is:

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

9) How many students are there in the primary school you work?

- Up to 150
- 150 – 300
- 300 – 500
- 500- 1000
- 1000+

10) What is the average number of students per PE class?

- <15
- 15–20
- 21–25
- 26–30
- 31+

11) How would you evaluate school's sport facilities:

Scale: 1 = Not adequate at all-2 Slightly adequate-3 Moderately adequate -4 Very adequate– 5 = Fully adequate

1. Indoor facilities
2. Outdoor facilities
3. Equipment quantity
4. Equipment quality
5. Safety conditions
6. Possibility for simultaneous participation of students from several classes

12) Does your school offer:

1. Reception classes for newly arrived students - YES/NO
2. Remedial/support classes – YES/NO
3. Specialized staff services (Psychologist, Social worker, Individual Support teacher) – YES/NO

13) What is the student composition in your classes.

For each group, indicate the approximate proportion:

Scale:

- 0%
  - 1–5%
  - 6–15%
  - 16–30%
  - 31%+
1. Roma background
  2. Refugee background
  3. Migrant background (non-refugee)
  4. Low socioeconomic background
  5. Identified special educational needs

### C. INFORMATION ON SCHOOLS & PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES

14) How many programmes and/or actions for promoting inclusion and tolerance have been implemented in your school over the last 5 years;

- None .....
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7 and more

15) How many Physical Education programmes/actions for promoting inclusion and tolerance have been implemented over the last 5 years?

- None .....
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7 and more

16) At school, do you observe among students:

1. Verbal aggression (insults or offensive language)
2. Physical aggression
3. Social exclusion or isolation of certain students
4. Discriminatory behaviours (as those above) based on gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, appearance, social status etc.

Scale:

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

17) During PE lessons, do you observe among students:

1. Verbal conflicts
2. Physical conflicts
3. Exclusion from teams
4. Over-competitive behaviour
5. Unequal participation (students who participate less in PE)

Scale:

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes

- Rarely
- Never

18) If you have, on what ground is it mainly?

- Gender
- Nationality/Ethnicity/Cultural background
- Religion
- Skill level
- Appearance
- Sexual orientation
- Other, please specify\_\_\_\_\_

19) Have you observed differences between boys and girls in their preference for team sports (e.g., basketball, football)?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

20) According to your experience, how often do girls and boys play football together in their spare time?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

21) To what extent do you agree with each statement based on what you observe in your classes.

1. Students are able to name their emotions during group activities
2. Students show a clear understanding of their physical strengths.
3. Students are able to manage frustration when activities do not proceed as expected.
4. Students persist when facing difficulties during games or physical tasks.
5. Students adjust their style of play to ensure that all peers can participate.
6. Students support verbally peers who need extra help to achieve a task.
7. Students demonstrate awareness of their peers' emotional discomfort
8. Students communicate effectively with peers during group or team activities.

9. Students are able to resolve disagreements verbally during play or physical interaction.
10. Students manage to play successfully without requiring teacher intervention.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree – 5 = Strongly Agree

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

22) Do you agree with the following statements for Physical Education?

1. PE should enhance students' understanding of democratic citizenship
2. PE plays a minor role in fostering social inclusion in primary schools
3. Inclusive PE (PE that includes everyone) improves the overall learning experience for all students.
4. Promoting democratic values is not part of my professional responsibility as a PE teacher.
5. PE class today contributes to promoting of equality and respecting diversity among students.

Scale:

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

23) Do you agree with the following statements about the national curriculum for primary school?

- 1) The national PE curriculum clearly defines objectives.
- 2) The curriculum includes social or citizenship-related objectives.
- 3) The content of the PE curriculum provides adequate information for promoting an inclusive Physical education
- 4) The curriculum allows flexibility in content selection.
- 5) Assessment requirements restrict flexibility in addressing social issues.
- 6) Required content leaves limited room to address emerging classroom needs.

Scale:

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

#### D. PE Professionals' opinions and perceptions

24) Do you feel you have the necessary knowledge and training to develop democratic values and fight discrimination through PE class?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

25) My knowledge on promoting inclusion and acceptance of diversity among students was mostly acquired:

- During my studies
- In the context of training seminars
- Through my practical experience in schools
- Through my personal involvement and reading about these issues
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

26) Do you feel adequately prepared to address the following issues in your PE classes?

1. Managing students' diversity
2. Crisis and conflict management
3. Communicating effectively with students
4. Handling culturally sensitive situations.
5. Introducing intersectional ways of conducting the lessons

- Not at all prepared
- Slightly prepared
- Moderately prepared
- Well prepared
- Fully prepared

27) How much are you satisfied with:

1. The information provided by educational authorities on educational matters
2. The information provided by educational authorities on issues of inclusive education
3. Cooperation and support from colleagues
4. The provision of training seminars

- Very Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied

- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

### E. Practices in Physical Education course.

28) How often do you apply the following in Physical Education classes?

1. I intentionally design activities that challenge gender stereotypes in sports.
2. I involve students in the decision-making process (e.g., choosing activities, setting rules)
3. I modify rules, equipment, or group formations to promote equal participation
4. I integrate discussions about respect, diversity, and inclusion into physical activities
5. I differentiate sports activities in class according to gender.
6. I take pedagogical initiatives beyond prescribed content of curriculum.
7. I have the flexibility to adapt the curriculum in ways that promote social justice and inclusion.
8. In case of conflicts during games, I help students talk through and resolve their differences.
9. I provide opportunities for students to lead parts of the lesson (e.g., warm-ups, tactical discussions, or refereeing) and reflect on their leadership impact.

Scale:

- 1 – Almost never
- 2 – Rarely
- 3 – Sometimes
- 4 – Often
- 5 – Most of the time

29) How much emphasis do you place on achieving the following goals in your class:

1. Development of self-regulation skills of students' behaviour
2. Development of psychosocial skills
3. Creating positive attitudes for lifelong exercise
4. Development of teamwork, cooperation, respect and acceptance of diversity
  - No emphasis at all
  - Low emphasis
  - Moderate emphasis
  - High emphasis
  - Very high emphasis

### E. Main Challenges

30) In your opinion, what are the most important challenges for creating an inclusive school that will promote tolerance and equity for all students? (Choose the 3 most important)

- The reproduction of stereotypical perceptions (about gender, diversity etc) in the school environment (for example boys are better at math; girls are better at literature)
- The lack of a clear national guidance on inclusion
- The absence of a support framework for the integration of new techniques and activities
- The lack of teachers' specialized knowledge around issues of inclusion
- Cultural or linguistic diversity challenges
- Family disengagement
- Teachers' limited engagement in this approach
- Insufficient provision of training in inclusive practices
- Teachers' reluctance to adopt inclusive practices
- Rigid national curriculum
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- No significant challenges identified

#### F. Interest in modified sports

31) Would you be interested in learning about a Physical Education methodology designed to promote equity and inclusion for all students?

- Not at all interested – go to 31b
- Slightly interested – go to 31b
- Quite interested – go to 31c
- Very interested – go to 31c
- I already know – go to 31c

31b) If slightly/not at all please explain why:

1. I don't have time for extra professional development
2. I don't feel I need additional training
3. I'm not particularly interested in alternative PE methodology.
4. Other \_\_\_\_\_

31c) Would you be willing to pilot this methodology in the physical education class?

- Yes, of course. I am willing to incorporate new techniques and activities into my lessons
- Yes, it seems like a good opportunity to benefit from.
- No, I am skeptical with untested activities and techniques
- No, I don't usually change my teaching plan

Thank you for participating in the survey!

If you're interested in joining the DIALECT5 project and taking part free of charge in a training and pilot testing with your primary school PE classes, please click **here** to submit your contact details. We'll get in touch with more information.

## TOOL 2 & 3: FOCUS GROUP GUIDES

Project DIALECT 5 “Addressing intersectional stereotypes and activating students to build inclusive and tolerant primary schools through physical education”

### Focus Group with Educational Authorities

#### FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

##### Purpose

The focus group aims to collect **policy and institutional perspectives** on how physical education and sport-based approaches can contribute to **promoting inclusion, equality and tolerance in primary schools**, particularly among children aged 9–12.

The discussion will explore the existing policy framework, institutional practices, challenges faced by schools, and the potential integration of innovative sport methodologies such as the DIALECT approach.

##### Thematic Axes and Key Questions

#### 1. Policy framework for inclusion and equality in education

1. How are inclusion, equality and non-discrimination currently addressed in national or regional policies for primary education?
2. To what extent do these policies address racism, xenophobia, stereotypes or discrimination among children, including the inclusion of vulnerable groups (e.g., migrants, refugees, Roma students, children with disabilities)?
3. How do you define “democratic values” in the context of primary education?
4. What practices, approaches, or mechanisms do you consider effective for promoting democratic values in primary schools?

#### 2. The role of physical education in promoting social values

1. In your view, what role can physical education and sport play in promoting tolerance, respect and social cohesion among students?
2. Are there existing educational initiatives or programmes using sport to foster inclusion or intercultural dialogue in schools?

### 3. Inclusion challenges in primary schools

1. What are the main challenges schools face in addressing diversity and preventing social exclusion among children aged 9–12?
2. What types of support or guidance do schools currently receive from educational authorities in addressing these challenges?

### 4. Training and support for physical education professionals

1. To what extent are physical education teachers trained or supported to address diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination in their classes?
2. What additional skills, tools or pedagogical approaches could help PE teachers better promote inclusive and tolerant school environments?

### 5. Sport-based innovative approaches for inclusion

1. What is your perspective on participatory sport methodologies that promote dialogue, cooperation and fair play among students?
2. In your view, how could sport-based approaches interact with other subjects or school activities to strengthen democratic values and inclusion?

### 6. Policy integration and institutional support

1. What conditions or policy measures would facilitate the integration of inclusive sport methodologies within physical education curricula or school practices?
2. How could initiatives such as DIALECT5 contribute to shaping future education policies or guidelines on inclusion and equality in schools?

For **closing** the discussion

Is there any additional issue or recommendation you would like to highlight regarding the promotion of tolerance, equality and social inclusion through physical education in primary schools?

## DIALECT5

Addressing intersectional stereotypes and activating students to build inclusive and tolerant primary schools through physical education

### Focus Group Discussion with school community representatives

#### Focus Group Guide

**Aim:** This Focus Group will focus on the practical challenges faced by PE teachers and school administrators in integrating inclusive and democratic values into PE in primary schools, addressing issues such as social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and handling discrimination in primary schools. Participants will also share best practices and strategies currently employed at the school level.

#### Thematic fields – Issues for discussion

##### 1. Introduction, welcoming and tour de table

##### 2. Description of schools, sports facilities and students

Please describe your school, the synthesis of student population and the sports facilities.

##### 3. The role of the school director and the physical education teacher as regards democratic values and education for all - Experiences of discrimination and social exclusion

3.1. What do you perceive as “education for all” and as “education that promotes democratic values”?

3.2. Does your school promote such an education? In what ways?

3.3. What is your role in relation to promoting inclusion and education for all?

3.4. Do you observe phenomena of exclusion, discrimination and conflicts in the school environment and the PE class? On what ground? To what extent do they occur and under what circumstances? What are the main characteristics of such behaviours?

3.5 How do you manage any incidents of discrimination and exclusion? Are there specific protocols? How effective you believe that you are in confronting such incidents? Have you been trained on these issues?

3.6 What are the critical skills and competences one must possess in order to perform his/her role in relation to inclusive education? Do you consider that you need any support and what kind (e.g. training)?

3.7 Does your school encourage collaboration with local community stakeholders (e.g. parents’ associations, municipalities, sports clubs) in inclusion initiatives? If yes, in what ways?

##### 4. Physical Education in Primary Schools for children 9-12 years old

4.1 Does the PE Curriculum for students 9-12 years old include targets for combating stereotypes and discrimination and for promoting inclusion?

4.2 How would you describe students aged 9-12? (In terms of empathy, agency, maturity, aggressiveness)

4.3 Do you observe any gender-differences in terms of participation in PE class?

4.4 How do you teach the class (choice of teams, choice of sports, etc.)? Is there flexibility in reference to the teaching curriculum? Provide examples

4.5 How do you manage students' non-participation? Please provide examples

4.6 How do you manage students' failures and success and conflicts? Please provide examples

### **5. Physical education in primary school as a tool to promote inclusive sport values**

5.1 Do you include practices that promote tolerance and democratic values in the PE class? Provide examples

5.2 Do you include practices that challenge gender stereotypes and social discrimination?

5.3 How often do you collaborate with other teachers or school staff for combating stereotypes and promoting inclusion through PE?

5.4 What are the main challenges you face in PE classes?

5.5 What are the difficulties and shortcomings in promoting democratic values and non-discrimination through the physical education class?

### **6. Suggestions for empowering students to combat stereotypes and promoting tolerance**

6.1 From your experience, what works best in PE classes for promoting tolerance and inclusion among students? Are you familiar with any best practice?

6.2 How could you empower primary students to fight discrimination and stereotypes and built an inclusive and tolerant environment through PE activities? What do you suggest?

### **7. Views on integrating a methodology designed to promote equity and inclusion in the school physical education programme**

7.1 What do you think about the introduction in the physical education curriculum of an alternative PE methodology that promotes democratic values and a culture of acceptance of student heterogeneity, equity, diversity, cooperation, etc.?

7.2 Would you be interested in including such a methodology in the context of a physical education lesson?

### **8. Issues not addressed**

Is there anything else you would like to add to the discussion?

## TOOL 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS 9-12 YEARS OLD

### Semi-structured Interview Guide for primary school students

The interview guide has been designed with the aim of gaining insights into children's experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to inclusion, participation, and democratic values (i.e., respect, fairness, and teamwork) within the Physical Education (PE) class.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Date                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |
| Partner country                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |
| Interviewer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |  |
| <p>Interviewer Check List</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Before conducting the interview, the parent or guardian must read and sign the Consent Form (including recording permission).</li> <li>2. Before conducting the interview, please read carefully the interview guidelines.</li> <li>3. Encourage detailed, narrative responses by using thoughtful probing questions.</li> <li>4. Focus in fully exploring each thematic area rather than systematically ask every question listed.</li> <li>5. Leave some paper and markers on the interview space for the children to use during the interview, if they wish to do so.</li> </ol> |  |

## 1. Introduction (Building trust/Setting the rules)

- We are here to talk about your Physical Education (PE) class.
- There are no right or wrong answers - I just want to know what you think and how you feel.
- If there is a question you don't want to answer, that's totally okay

Socio-cultural qualities

|     | Questions for the child | For the Interviewer                            | Notes                                                                                                                                              |
|-----|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|     |                         |                                                | During or after the interview. In this section we can note the non-verbal elements of interview, if any (e.g., face expressions, hesitation, etc.) |
| 1.1 | –                       | Gender:<br>Girl ____<br>Boy ____<br>Other ____ | If during the interview the kid identifies themselves in a non-binary way, then please select "Other".                                             |
| 1.2 | How old are you?        | Age:                                           |                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1.3 | Where do you come from? | Country of birth<br>Country of origin          |                                                                                                                                                    |

|     |                                                                      |                                     |  |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1.4 | Which class do you go to?                                            | School Grade                        |  |
| 1.5 | In the classroom are there more boys, girls, or about the same?      | More boys<br>More girls<br>Equal    |  |
| 1.6 | In the classroom are there many kids from different/other countries? | Explain<br>(e.g., which countries?) |  |
| 1.7 | Do you hang out more with boys, with girls, or with both?            | Boys<br>Girls<br>Both               |  |
| 1.8 | Do you hang out more with kids from your own country?                | Explain<br>(e.g., which countries?) |  |

## 2. Warm-up Questions

|  |                         |                    |                                                                                                                                                    |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Questions for the child | Possible follow-up | During or after the interview. In this section we can note the non-verbal elements of interview, if any (e.g., face expressions, hesitation, etc.) |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                       |                                                      |                                                |  |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--|
| 2.1                                   | Do you like your PE class?                           | Why?                                           |  |
| 2.2                                   | What is your favourite game or activity in PE class? | What do you like about it?                     |  |
| 2.3                                   | How do you usually feel when you have a PE class?    | Bored/Excited/Happy/<br>Uncomfortable/... Why? |  |
| Notes (during or after the interview) |                                                      |                                                |  |

### 3. Inclusion (Feeling of Belonging)

|     |                                                                              |                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|     | Questions for the child                                                      | Possible follow-up                                                                                                          | During or after the interview. In this section we can note the non-verbal elements of interview, if any (e.g., face expressions, hesitance, etc.) |
| 3.1 | In your opinion who is a good teammate in PE class?                          | Why do you think that happens?<br><br>Can you tell me a little more about that?<br><br>(Do you want to give me an example?) |                                                                                                                                                   |
| 3.2 | In PE class, do you usually play together or do you split into small groups? | Which one do you prefer?<br><br>Why?                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                   |

|                                       |                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                      |  |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 3.3                                   | Do you usually play boys against girls, or do you play all together? (mixed teams)                                                                                          | Which one do you prefer?<br><br>Why?                                                                                                 |  |
| 3.4                                   | So, tell me:<br><br>Is there something you don't like in the PE class?<br><br>Is there any specific difficulty in participating in your PE class? How do you feel about it? | Do you have good and bad days in PE?<br>Can you describe a good or a bad day in PE?<br><br>Does that happen often or just sometimes? |  |
| Notes (during or after the interview) |                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                      |  |

#### 4. Participation & Group Dynamics (Having Your Voice Heard)

|     | Questions for the child                                                                                                            | Possible follow-up                                                                                                                                                                    | During or after the interview. In this section we can note the non-verbal elements of interview, if any (e.g., face expressions, hesitation, etc.) |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4.1 | <p>In PE class, who forms the teams?<br/>(e.g., PE teacher or students or both)?</p> <p>And when you choose, how do you do it?</p> | <p>How do you feel about that? Is the formation of teams fair?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>If you had to choose, which teammates would you prefer?</p> |                                                                                                                                                    |
| 4.2 | <p>Is the formation of teams fair?</p>                                                                                             | <p>Do you want to tell me more about that?</p>                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                    |

|     |                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                   |  |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 4.3 | Do you think everyone gets a fair chance to play?                                                                                  | <p>Are there times when a child finds it hard to join a team?</p> <p>How do you think that made them feel?</p> <p>Can you give me an example?</p> |  |
| 4.4 | In PE class, do you feel like you get enough time to play and be part of the game or you 're mostly waiting for your turn to come? | Can you tell me more about that (who gets more attention, why, how do you feel)?                                                                  |  |
| 4.5 | Do you have a saying in what games or activities you do in PE class?                                                               | Does the teacher/ trainer ask what you or your classmates prefer to do?                                                                           |  |
| 4.6 | Do you and your classmates talk about your PE games or activities (e.g., about scoring, teams etc.)?                               | Do you discuss how the game went or if the players were good?                                                                                     |  |

Notes (during or after the interview)

## 5. Respect, Fairness and Teamwork

|       | Questions for the child                                                              | Possible follow-up                                                                                                               | During or after the interview. In this section we can note the non-verbal elements of interview, if any (e.g., face expressions, hesitation, etc.) |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5.1.1 | When someone makes a mistake, what happens?                                          | <p>What do you usually do?</p> <p>What do other kids do?</p> <p>What does the teacher do?</p> <p>Can you give me an example?</p> |                                                                                                                                                    |
| 5.1.2 | In case you make a mistake, how do you feel about it?                                | <p>In that case how do you react?</p> <p>In that case, how your teammates react?</p>                                             |                                                                                                                                                    |
| 5.1.3 | And when a dispute/disagreement/difference of opinion comes up, how do you solve it? | <p>Can you give me an example?</p>                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                    |
| 5.2.1 | Does everyone follow the rules of the PE class?                                      |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                    |

|       |                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                          |  |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|       |                                                                              | <p>Does everyone follow the rules of the physical activities &amp; the games?</p> <p>Can you give me an example?</p> <p>How does that make you feel?</p> |  |
| 5.2.2 | Are there students in the PE class who do not play fair?                     | <p>What do you think about it?</p> <p>Provide some examples</p>                                                                                          |  |
| 5.2.3 | Are there children who for some reason get to play more or less than others? | <p>If any, can you tell me more about it?</p> <p>Can you give me an example? How does that make you feel?</p>                                            |  |
| 5.3.1 | Do you enjoy being part of a team in PE class?                               | <p>Why?</p> <p>What is your favourite thing about it?</p>                                                                                                |  |
| 5.3.2 | What's the secret to a great team?                                           |                                                                                                                                                          |  |

## 6. Following the rules

|                                       | Questions for the child                                                                  | Possible follow-up               | During or after the interview. In this section we can note the non-verbal elements of interview, if any (e.g., face expressions, hesitation, etc.) |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6.1                                   | Do the rules in PE make it more fun or less fun?                                         | Why? Can you give me an example? |                                                                                                                                                    |
| 6.2                                   | Do you think that a game is more fun when rules are made by the team members (students)? | Why is that?                     |                                                                                                                                                    |
| Notes (during or after the interview) |                                                                                          |                                  |                                                                                                                                                    |

## 7. Closing

|                                       | Questions for the child                                                              | Possible follow-up                                                                                                                               | During or after the interview. In this section we can note the non-verbal elements of interview, if any (e.g., face expressions, hesitation, etc.) |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7.1                                   | Is there anything that you wish to change in the PE class?                           | Why?                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                    |
| 7.2                                   | How would everyone feel part of the team?                                            | How would everyone feel part of the PE class/the class/school community?                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                    |
| 7.3                                   | Is there anything else you would like to tell me about PE class?                     |                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                    |
| 7.4                                   | Would you like to draw something about this talk we had? and ask leave it as a gift? | Can you describe it?<br><br>Could you leave it as a gift? (After the interview, write the gender and the age of the kid on the back of the paper |                                                                                                                                                    |
| Notes (during or after the interview) |                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                    |

## Guidelines for Interviews with Children & Interviewer's Evaluation Form

### Interview Guidelines

Read the guide carefully to prepare for the kids interview

The interviews will be conducted with primary school students 9 to 12 years old from diverse ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, including migrants, refugees and locals, with a special focus to gender dynamics, in order to understand how the physical education framework promotes social inclusion, intercultural interaction, and active civic participation.

Interview with kids from that age group needs careful preparation and special attention, particularly in this context where we investigate experiences, perceptions, and challenges with abstract concepts and ideas that children understand only in an operational and experiential level.

Making the connection between experience and abstract ideas, is a work that will follow after the interviews (see Report Template). Take into account that when children in this age group say that they have a good time in physical education class because they play with other children, they are actually talking about participation and inclusion; or, if they say that they don't like the PE class because they are not usually selected for team activities, then they probably feel left out, and we need to investigate the reason.

Thus, in order to explore the values of inclusion, participation and democratic principles, facilitate the interviews, and ensure a smooth process, keep some general rules in mind:

- Avoid questions that are answered in one word.
- Encourage detailed, narrative responses by using thoughtful probing questions. Focus in fully exploring each thematic area rather than systematically ask every question listed.
- Don't give answers if the child hesitates, it's better to say the question again, in other words, or change the question.
- Do not insist on a question if you think that the kid's answer is not satisfactory. It is enough that they respond in their own way.
- The topics and the concepts we are exploring are interconnected, and the boundaries between the following sections may not always be clear. Don't be surprised if some responses seem better suited to a different section. You will organise everything when completing the final report.
- If the child uses an expression that you do not understand, ask them to explain what they mean.
- Adjust the interview time according to the time each child needs to respond. Some children open up and talk immediately, while some others need more time.
- Try not to show your feelings or express your opinions during the interview even if something sounds wrong, extreme, right, etc.
- Leave some paper and markers on the interview space for the children to use during or after the interview, if they wish to do so. It's optional for the present interview, but

it is also a way to visual express their complex emotions in relation to specific events/experiences, and valuable evidence to accompany the research findings.

### **Instructions for conducting the interview:**

#### **A. Interview environment**

The interview should take place in a neutral, calm, and safe space, free from unnecessary distractions. Allow a few minutes (2–3) for the child to explore the setting and become familiar with the environment. If the child appears uncomfortable or wishes to drink water, use the restroom, or change position, allow them to do so.

Ideally, sit at the same level so that the child can look you in the face without lifting their head up. If the child is designed to sit on the floor, sit down too. If the child is designed to sit at a table, sit on their side, not opposite the child. Sit close to the child, but not too close, they must have their own personal space.

Allow as few people as possible into the ‘interview room’. Ideally, the interview should be conducted by a person specially trained for this purpose and there could be another observer somewhere in the room to take notes.

Leave papers and markers on the table or floor, if the child wants, they can draw or scribble during the interview. Keep the papers afterwards if the child chooses to use them. If they ask whether they can use them, you can allow them to do whatever they want.

Interviews with children are highly unpredictable and the interviewer must follow the kid’s pace. It is recommended for the interviewer to be familiar with the interview themes and if needed to improvise. It is preferable to follow the kid’s interest, than to interrupt and change the discussion direction. Thus, be prepared, a kid’s interview can last from 20 minutes to 1 hour. Let the kid lead the way!

#### **B. First contact**

##### **1. Introduction (Building trust/Setting the rules)**

Welcome the child by their first name.

Be open, kind-hearted, patient and friendly.

Introduce yourself by your first name and introduce any other person in the room and explain what you will do:

“We are here to talk about your Physical Education (PE) class.

There are no right or wrong answers – I just want to know what you think and how you feel.

If there is a question you don’t want to answer, that’s totally okay”

In addition to the child’s responses, observe non-verbal cues such as posture and signs of nervousness, embarrassment, or hesitation.

Listen to the way the child speaks and adjust your speaking style accordingly.

Start the conversation with questions about the child’s daily life, school, classmates:

“How old are you?

[Where do you come from?](#) (Here we are interested in the origin of the child)

Which class do you go to?

In the classroom are there more boys, girls, or about the same?

In the classroom are there many kids from different/other countries?

Do you hang out more with boys, with girls, or with both?

Do you hang out more with kids from your own country?”

## 2. Warm-up Questions

Start with open-ended questions with the aim of getting the child to talk:

“Do you like your PE class? Why or why not?

What is your favourite game or activity in PE class? What do you like about it?

How do you usually feel when you have PE class?”

Feelings may include excitement, boredom, happiness, etc. If needed, support the child by offering examples and allowing time to respond. They can also give an example of a good or bad day in PE class.

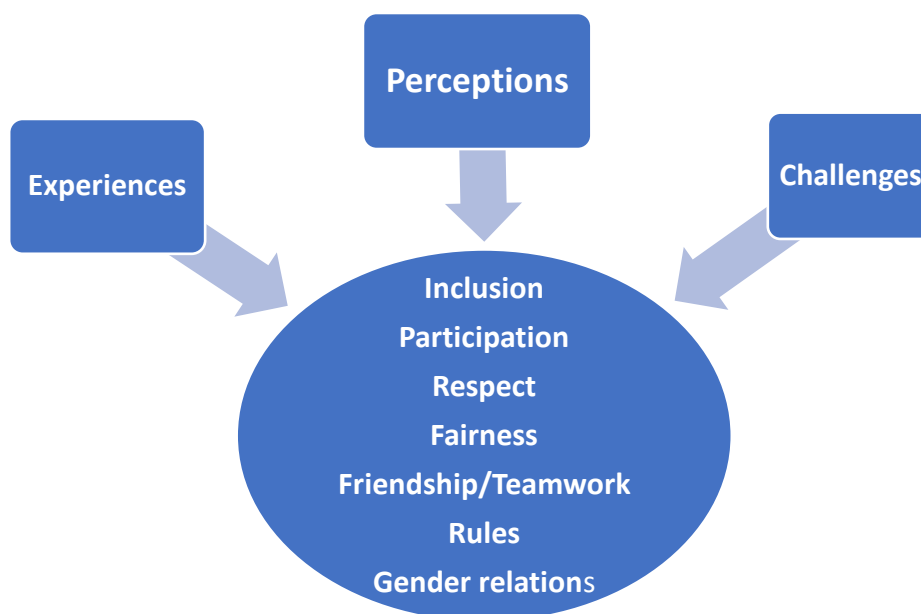
If you think you need to help the child to elaborate, say: "[tell me more about it](#)" or "[how are you doing when you play...](#)" Show curiosity, so that they need to explain to you.

Anytime the conversation seems to get stuck, you can ask for an example or you can name some emotions to motivate the kid:

- Can you give me an example?
- Is it exciting? Is it boring? Is it embarrassing?

## C. Exploring Key Concepts

At this point, after establishing an initial connection between the interviewer and the kid, we proceed to explore the concepts of inclusion, participation, respect, fairness, friendship, rules, and relationships with classmates.



### 3. Inclusion (feeling of belonging)

In this section we want to understand if the kid feels included in the wider group. We want to know if the kid feels comfortable in a wider community, or if they feel better in small groups. We want to detect their understanding of the qualities that constitute a well-functioning group.

Below you will find unfinished sentences to be completed by the kid, and questions related to their lived experience.

Start by saying: “**In your opinion who is a good teammate in PE class?**” and leave the question hanging, waiting for the kid to reply. (We can see here characteristics/values that the kid attributes to a good community/social group).

If the kid cannot say much, ask “Can you tell me a little more about that?”, or “Why do you think that happens?”

Next, ask “**In PE class, do you usually play all together or do you split into small groups?**” and when the kid elaborates on that, ask “**Which one do you prefer?**” (add “**why**” if the kid hasn’t already explained). (We can detect here if kids feel good in a wider community or if they are not yet ready to enter wider groups).

For special emphasis on gender/peers’ relations, and if the kid hasn’t already mentioned something relevant, you can ask “**Do you usually play boys against girls, or do you play all together?**”, and you can add “**Which one do you prefer?**” and “**Why**” (You can focus on possible inequality, or even negative stereotyping).

This section can close with another unfinished sentence: “So, tell me, is there something you don’t like in the PE class?” You can help the kid elaborate by asking: “Do you have good and bad days in PE? Can you describe a good or a bad day in PE?” (We might detect here possible exclusion experiences).

You can also investigate further if you detect some difficulty. Ask: “Is there any specific difficulty in participating in your PE class?”. Stay calm even if what you hear is difficult to handle. Questions like “How do you feel about it?” and “Does that happen often or just sometimes?” can help the kid express themselves.

#### 4. Participation & Group Dynamics (Having your voice heard)

In this section we want to understand how the kid feels into the group. We want to understand if they feel that they participate equally, that they are legitimate participants, that they have a saying both in the formation and the functioning of the group.

Start by asking:

“In PE class, who forms the teams?” We want to know if the teams are formed by the teacher/trainer, or by the classmates, and based on which criteria/skills the kids create their teams (e.g., boys vs girls; best friends; best players, etc.) with: “And when you choose, how do you do it?”. If the kid is hesitant to reply, ask “If you had to choose, which teammates would you prefer?”. Help the discussion with questions like “Do you like that?” or “How do you feel about that?”

When you sort out how the teams are formed, you can ask, “Is the formation of teams fair?”, so that we could understand if the kid thinks that this particular way of forming a group is fair or unfair. If the kid hasn’t already explained, ask “Why?” or “Can you tell me more about that?”, as we try to understand if the kid can justify why something looks fair or unfair.

Continue the conversation on group dynamics by asking: “Do you think everyone gets a fair chance to play?”, to understand how the team works and the kid’s perception on their collaboration with their teammates, and their tolerance to diversity. Help the kid present their thoughts by asking “Are there times when a child finds it hard to join a team?” and help them elaborate further with questions like “How do you think that made them feel?” or “Can you give me an example?”

In this section we care about the idea of participation, of equal opportunities, and how the kid understands itself inside a group. Questions of playing time, or participating can be formed in a simple way, so as to be understood by the specific age group. Ask: “In PE class, do you feel like you get enough time to play and be part of the game or you’re mostly waiting for your turn to come?”. (Here, we can detect possible exclusion feelings or experiences). Help the kid elaborate by asking: “Can you tell me more about that (who gets more attention, why, how do you feel)?”.

Participation in a wider group presupposes developing relationships in many directions. Proceed by asking: “Do you have a saying in what games or activities you do in PE class? (We want to see the relationship with the teacher, thus elaborate by asking “Does the teacher/trainer ask what you or your classmates, prefer to do?”) and “Do you and your classmates talk about your PE games or activities (e.g. about scoring, teams, etc.)?” (We want to explore the relationship with the classmates during or after the game/PE class).

#### 5. Respect, Fairness, Teamwork

In this section we proceed in the examination of the core democratic values. The first set of questions focus on the broad understanding of respecting oneself, their teammates and the group in general. We want to understand the kid's reactions in a difficult situation, such as making a mistake. **"When someone makes a mistake, what happens?"**. If the kid is reluctant to reply, ask: **"What do you usually do?"** and **"What do other kids do?"**, **"What does the teacher do?"**. To make the conversation easier, ask for the kid's experience: **"Can you give me an example?"**.

To focus on the specific feelings and emotional reaction, as much as their emotional development, ask: **"In case you make a mistake, how do you feel about it?"** If you feel like there is more to be said on the matter, ask: **"In that case how do you react?"** or **"In that case, how your teammates react?"**. If you feel that the kid can respond to a slightly more complex situation, ask: **"And when a dispute/disagreement/difference of opinion comes up, how do you solve it?"**. If the kid feels that this is a difficult question, ask for an example.

The second set of questions focus on fairness. Start by asking: **"Does everyone follow the rules of the PE class?"** and let the kid talk. You can facilitate the conversation by asking: **"Does everyone follow the rules of the physical activities and the games?"** and then asking more specifically **"Are there children in the PE class who do not play fair?"**. Follow up by asking children's opinion (**"What do you think about it?"**). To further explore the possibility of unfair behaviours, ask: **"Are there children who for some reason get to play more or less than others?"**. Don't forget to ask for lived experiences (**"Can you give me an example?"**) and the kid's emotional understanding (**"How does that make you feel?"**).

The final set of questions on democratic values refers to the idea of teamwork. In the context of PE, participation and group formation are essential, as engagement in team activities lies at the core of the subject. Here, we are interested in identifying how the child responds within a group. Ask: **"Do you enjoy being part of a team in PE class?"** and encourage elaboration by asking: **"What is your favourite thing about it?"**

This section concludes by aiming to understand the general picture; child's perspective on what constitutes the essential characteristic of a well-functioning community. Ask: **"What's the secret to a great team?"** (Here, responses are expected to focus on two main ideas: 'having fun together' and 'helping each other').

## 6. Following the rules

Finally, what is of crucial importance is the kid's understanding and ability to follow specific rules. In order to examine their disposition, we focus on the rules that they have to follow in PE activities and the broader hierarchies that arise in PE. Ask: **"Do the rules in PE make it more fun or less fun?"**. Follow up by seeking specific lived experiences: **"Can you give me an example?"**. To explore their level of understanding, ask: **"Do you think that a game is more fun when rules are made by the team members (students)?"** (If a child expresses doubt about a rule or a hierarchy, do take the opportunity to discuss this further and make a note of it).

## 7. Closing

Just before closing the interview, ask the child to develop any kind of thoughts and ideas on PE class in general by asking: “Is there anything that you wish to change in the PE class?”

To give them a chance to talk about their aspirations on inclusion processes and possible challenges, and to finally inquire more on their ideas on group dynamics, we can also ask: “How would everyone feel part of the team?”, and further investigate with “How would everyone feel part of the PE class/the class/school community?”

To close in a satisfying and amicable environment, don’t forget to thank the kid for their effort and before goodbye, always ask: “Is there anything else you would like to tell me about PE?”

If the kid drew something during the interview, ask them whether they want to talk about this (or to describe it) and ask them to leave it as a gift! (After the interview, write the gender and the age of the kid on the back of paper).

### Interviewer Evaluation Form

After the interview is over and you have taken your notes, please fill in the following sections for each one of the interviews:

Age:

Gender:

Inclusion (Feeling of Belonging)

Please complete the following scale, where 1 = sense of inclusion not at all developed and 5 = sense of inclusion fully developed

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Participation & Group Dynamics (Having Your Voice Heard)

Please complete the following scale, where 1 = the child prefers not to participate in group activities and 5 = the child wants even more participatory activities

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Respect, Fairness and Teamwork

Please complete the following scale, where 1 = the child barely understands the concepts and 5 = the child fully understands the concepts

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Following the rules

Please complete the following scale, where 1 = the child is not interested in the rules and 5 = the child is willing to help create the rules

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Please include here in English a small description of the school class environment as given by the student (e.g., balance of genders in the classroom, diversity of nationalities/ethnicities, relationships among students, relationships between students and the PE teacher)

## DATA PROCESSING TEMPLATES

---

Project DIALECT 5 “Addressing intersectional stereotypes and activating students to build inclusive and tolerant primary schools through physical education”

## DATA PROCESSING TEMPLATE

### FOCUS GROUP WITH EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES

ONE FOCUS GROUP PER PILOT COUNTRY

(Italy, Hungary, Greece, Serbia)

It is recommended that each partner fills the following form – template for comparative and synthetic data processing by EKKE.

Each partner should deliver their country report by filling the following template by **6<sup>th</sup> May** the latest.

Interim reports will be no less than 10-12 pages long. Exceeding the 12 pages limit will be of added value if the research material is rich and will be handled by EKKE accordingly.

## Focus Group Discussions with Educational Authorities

Provide summary comments on each one of the sections below

### Participants' profile

Provide a short paragraph with date, location and country of the focus group implementation, number of participants and the participants' socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, profession etc.).

### 1. Policy framework for inclusion and equality in education

We are particularly interested in participants' knowledge and opinions about the current policy framework for promoting inclusion and equality in primary education. We are also interested in the specific context of these policies and the level of their success in addressing racism, xenophobia and discrimination against vulnerable groups. Finally, we are interested in exploring the concept of democratic values in primary education and in highlighting effective practices that promote democratic values in primary schools.

- Provide paragraphs with results in each one of the following items.
  1. How are inclusion, equality and non-discrimination currently addressed in national or regional policies for primary education?
  2. To what extent do these policies address racism, xenophobia, stereotypes or discrimination among children, including the inclusion of vulnerable groups (e.g., migrants, refugees, Roma students, children with disabilities)?
  3. How do participants define "democratic values" in the context of primary education?
  4. What practices, approaches, or mechanisms do participants consider effective for promoting democratic values in primary schools?

### 2. The role of physical education in promoting social values

We are particularly interested in participants' views on the contribution of physical education in promoting respect and social cohesion among students. We are also interested in existing initiatives that aim at combating discrimination (include details of these initiatives).

- Provide paragraphs with results in each one of the following items.
- 3. In participants' views, what role can physical education and sport play in promoting tolerance, respect and social cohesion among students?
- 4. Are there existing educational initiatives or programmes using sport to foster inclusion or intercultural dialogue in schools?

### 3. Inclusion challenges in primary schools

We are particularly interested in identifying the main challenges that primary schools face today in addressing diversity and the support or guidance provided by the State.

- Provide paragraphs with results in each one of the following items.
- 1. What are the main challenges schools face in addressing diversity and preventing social exclusion among children aged 9–12?
- 2. What types of support or guidance do schools currently receive from educational authorities in addressing these challenges?

### 4. Training and support for physical education professionals

We are particularly interested in participants' opinions on how well physical education teachers are trained or supported to address inclusion and anti-discrimination, and what additional tools or approaches could improve inclusive school environments.

- Provide paragraphs with results in each one of the following items.
- 1. To what extent are physical education teachers trained or supported to address diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination in their classes?
- 2. What additional skills, tools or pedagogical approaches could help PE teachers better promote inclusive and tolerant school environments?

### 5. Sport-based innovative approaches for inclusion

We are particularly interested in participants' opinions on whether participatory sport methodologies can promote dialogue, cooperation and fair play, and how and how sport-based approaches can support democratic values and inclusion across school activities.

- Provide paragraphs with results in each one of the following items.
- 1. What are participants' perspectives on participatory sport methodologies that promote dialogue, cooperation and fair play among students?
- 2. In participants' view, how could sport-based approaches interact with other subjects or school activities to strengthen democratic values and inclusion?

### 6. Policy integration and institutional support

We are particularly interested in participants' views on the policy conditions that support the integration of inclusive sport methodologies in schools, and how initiatives like DIALECT5 could inform future policies on inclusion and equality.

- Provide paragraphs with results in each one of the following items.
  1. What conditions or policy measures would facilitate the integration of inclusive sport methodologies within physical education curricula or school practices?
  2. How could initiatives such as DIALECT5 contribute to shaping future education policies or guidelines on inclusion and equality in schools?

#### 7. Issues not addressed

We are particularly interested in participants' views on relevant issues not addressed. We are also very interested in any recommendations regarding the promotion of social inclusion through physical education.

- Provide paragraphs presenting any additional issues or recommendations that emerged from the focus group discussion.

Is there any additional issue or recommendation participants' would like to highlight regarding the promotion of tolerance, equality and social inclusion through physical education in primary schools?

**Project DIALECT 5 “Addressing intersectional stereotypes and activating students to build inclusive and tolerant primary schools through physical education”**

## **DATA PROCESSING TEMPLATE**

### **FOCUS GROUP WITH SCHOOL COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES**

**ONE FOCUS GROUP PER PILOT COUNTRY**

**(Italy, Hungary, Greece, Serbia)**

It is recommended that each Partner fills the following form – template so that EKKE will be processing comparative and synthetic data.

Each partner should deliver their country report by filling the following template by **6<sup>th</sup> May** the latest.

Interim reports will be no less than 10-12 pages long. Exceeding the 12 pages limit will be of added value if the research material is rich and will be handled by EKKE accordingly.

## Focus Group Discussions with School Community Representatives

Please provide summary comments on each one of the sections below as indicated. Examples by participants or more analytical description of situations (e.g. discrimination phenomena in schools) are highly welcome to be included. When different opinions arise, please refer numbers of participants for each opinion.

### 1. Participants' profile & 2. Schools' profile

Provide a short paragraph with date, location and country of the focus group implementation, the total number of participants and the participants' socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, years of experience, job position etc.).

Also, provide a separate short paragraph with the basic characteristics of the schools that participants work. Include data on the synthesis of student population and the sports facilities.

### 3. Democratic values and inclusion in schools: Roles, practices and experiences

We are particularly interested in participants' views and opinions about their role (as school directors and physical education teachers) in promoting democratic values and education for all. We are also interested in their experiences and practices as regards discrimination and social exclusion within the school context.

Provide concise paragraphs summarizing findings on each of the following points.

- 3.1. What participants perceive as "education for all" and as "education that promotes democratic values"?
- 3.2. Do schools promote such an education? In what ways?
- 3.3. What do participants consider as their role in relation to promoting inclusion and education for all?
- 3.4. Do participants observe phenomena of exclusion, discrimination and conflicts in the school environment and the PE class? On what ground? To what extent do they occur and under what circumstances? What are the main characteristics of such behaviours?
- 3.5. How participants manage any incidents of discrimination and exclusion? Are there specific protocols? How effective they believe they are in confronting such incidents? Have participants been trained on these issues?
- 3.6. What are the critical skills and competences one must possess in order to perform his/her role in relation to inclusive education? Do participants consider that they need any support and what kind (e.g. training)?

- 3.7 Do schools encourage collaboration with local community stakeholders (e.g. parents' associations, municipalities, sports clubs) in inclusion initiatives? If yes, in what ways?

#### 4. Physical Education in Primary Schools for children 9-12 years old

We are particularly interested in participants' opinions on whether the PE curriculum for ages 9–12 actively promotes inclusion and challenges stereotypes, and how students at this developmental stage behave socially and emotionally. We are also interested in teachers' observations of gender differences in participation, as well as their teaching methods, flexibility, and strategies for handling non-participation, success, failure, and conflict in class.

Provide concise paragraphs summarizing findings on each of the following points.

- 4.1 Does the PE Curriculum for students 9-12 years old include targets for combating stereotypes and discrimination and for promoting inclusion?
- 4.2 How would participants describe students aged 9-12? (In terms of empathy, agency, maturity, aggressiveness)
- 4.3 Do participants observe any gender-differences in terms of participation in PE class?
- 4.4 How do participants teach the class (choice of teams, choice of sports, etc.)? Is there flexibility in reference to the teaching curriculum? Provide examples
- 4.5 How participants manage students' non-participation? Please provide examples
- 4.6 How participants manage students' failures and success and conflicts? Please provide examples

#### 5. Physical Education in Primary Schools as a tool to promote inclusive sport values

We are particularly interested on whether and how participants incorporate in PE class practices that promote tolerance, democratic values, and inclusion, including efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and discrimination. We are also interested in the key challenges and limitations teachers face in fostering these values through physical education.

Provide concise paragraphs summarizing findings on each of the following points.

- 5.1 Do participants include practices that promote tolerance and democratic values in the PE class? Provide examples
- 5.2 Do participants include practices that challenge gender stereotypes and social discrimination in the PE class?
- 5.3 How often do participants collaborate with other teachers or school staff for combating stereotypes and promoting inclusion through PE?
- 5.4 What are the main challenges that participants face in PE classes?
- 5.5 What are the difficulties and shortcomings in promoting democratic values and non-discrimination through the physical education class?

## 6. Suggestions for empowering students to combat stereotypes and promoting tolerance

We are particularly interested in participants' input on effective practices in PE class that successfully promote tolerance and inclusion among students, including best practices. We are also interested in any suggestions on how to empower primary school students to challenge discrimination and stereotypes and foster an inclusive, respectful environment through physical education.

Provide concise paragraphs summarizing findings on each of the following points.

- 6.1 From participants' experience, what works best in PE classes for promoting tolerance and inclusion among students? Are participants familiar with any best practice?
- 6.2 How could participants empower primary students to fight discrimination and stereotypes and built an inclusive and tolerant environment through PE activities? What do they suggest?

## 7. Views on integrating a methodology designed to promote equity and inclusion in the school physical education programme

We are particularly interested in participants' views on the introduction of alternative methodologies that promote equity and inclusion in PE classes. We are also interested on whether they would be willing to apply these methodologies in their classes.

Provide concise paragraphs summarizing findings on each of the following points.

- 7.1 What do participants think about the introduction in the physical education curriculum of an alternative PE methodology that promotes democratic values and a culture of acceptance of student heterogeneity, equity, diversity, cooperation, etc.?
- 7.2 Would they be interested in including such a methodology in the context of a physical education lesson?

## 8. Issues not addressed

Please include in this section any additional issues, comments, or experiences reported by participants that do not fit into the above sections.

Project DIALECT 5 “Addressing intersectional stereotypes and activating students to build inclusive and tolerant primary schools through physical education”

## DATA PROCESSING TEMPLATE

### Interviews with Primary School Students (9-12 y.o.)

Country Report for *(please select your country)*:

☐ Italy ☐ Hungary ☐ Greece ☐ Serbia

It is recommended that each Partner fills the following form – template so that EKKE will be processing comparative and synthetic data.

Each partner should deliver their country report by filling the following template by **15th May** the latest.

Number of interviews conducted: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\* When filling out this form, please follow the directions provided in the corresponding sections of the [Interview Guidelines](#) \*\*\***

## Interviews with primary school students (9-12 y.o.)

Please provide summary comments on each one of the sections below as indicated.

Examples by participants or more analytical description of situations (e.g., examples and incidents narrated by students) are highly welcome to be included. If you identify different patterns in students' attitudes, behaviors, and reactions, please try to indicate which ones are dominant and which are secondary.

### 1. General Information from the Interviews

Based on the students' experiences and their perceptions as revealed in the interviews, what are the most significant challenges/barriers that emerged from the discussion, and which key concepts of democratic values would you suggest should be reinforced? (From 150 to 300 words). Further observations can be included on emerging patterns among students and on the role of the PE teacher.<sup>63</sup>

### 2. Socio-cultural Qualities

**In this section we seek to understand the group and class ecosystem and to gather information** about the class ecosystem noting gender balance, nationalities, the particular preferences of the kids. Please provide a short paragraph describing any special characteristics of the schools and the PE classes, as well as the nature of student - student and student - teacher relationships. Include data on the composition of student population and any existing sports facilities.

Please complete the tables below with the interview details (sample size, demographics, origin) and the class ecosystem (gender balance, nationalities, preferences).

**A. Please note the number of boys/girls according to age and note the total (Interview Guide Questions 1.1-1.2).**

<sup>63</sup>On p. 3 of the Interview Guidelines, you can find the key concepts and democratic values as designed for the present research.

In case a kid is identified themselves as other, please note here the number/age:

\_\_\_\_\_

| Number of | Age 9 | Age 10 | Age 11 | Age 12 |
|-----------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Boys:     |       |        |        |        |
| Total =   |       |        |        |        |

| Number of | Age 9 | Age 10 | Age 11 | Age 12 |
|-----------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Girls:    |       |        |        |        |
| Total =   |       |        |        |        |

**B. Please note the countries of origin and countries of birth as reported by the kid during the interview (Interview Guide Questions 1.3)**

| No. | Country of origin | Country of birth |
|-----|-------------------|------------------|
| 1   |                   |                  |
| 2   |                   |                  |
| 3   |                   |                  |
| 4   |                   |                  |
| 5   |                   |                  |
| 6   |                   |                  |
| 7   |                   |                  |
| 8   |                   |                  |
| 9   |                   |                  |
| 10  |                   |                  |
| 11  |                   |                  |
| 12  |                   |                  |
|     |                   |                  |
|     |                   |                  |
|     |                   |                  |

**C. Please note the gender balance in the classroom (1st column) and other nationalities in the synthesis of the class (2nd column), note the preferences regarding the gender (3rd column) and the nationality of friends at school (4th column) as mentioned by the kid during the interview (Interview Guide Questions 1.4 – 1.8)**

| No. | More boys/More girls/Equal<br>(In the classroom) | Other Nationalities Mentioned<br>(In the classroom) | Gender Preference<br>(In school, I hang out with...) | Country Preference<br>All/My country/Selectively |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1   |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
| 2   |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
| 3   |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
| 4   |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
| 5   |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
| 6   |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
| 7   |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
| 8   |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
| 9   |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
| 10  |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
| 11  |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
| 12  |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
|     |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
|     |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |
|     |                                                  |                                                     |                                                      |                                                  |

### 3. Warm-up Questions

This section refers to PE class and children's preferences for games or activities carried out during PE, i.e., what they prefer and why, as well as their feelings (such as excitement, boredom, happiness, etc.). At this point, indicative examples or phrases are welcome. Note any of the children's statements to offer further insight into their perspective.

---

Please briefly describe the general trends that emerged regarding the children's attitudes toward physical education and how they explained their feelings.

#### 4. Inclusion (feeling of belonging)

This section examines whether children feel included in large groups or prefer smaller ones. We explore their perceptions of what makes a group function well, starting from the characteristics of a good teammate in PE class up to student-teacher dynamics. Additionally, we look at how groups are formed in class and the children's willingness to join wider social groups.

---

Briefly describe the trends regarding children's perceptions, experiences, and challenges from PE activities: Do children prioritize close friends or overall group inclusion? How do they interact within small versus large groups, and how do they navigate gender stereotypes? Finally, what was observed in their peer-to-peer relationships and their dynamic with the PE teacher?

#### 5. Participation & Group Dynamics (Having your voice heard)

In this section we want to understand how the children feel into the group. We want to understand if they feel that they participate equally, that they are legitimate participants, that they have a saying both in the formation and the functioning of the group. Special emphasis is placed on the sense of fairness inside the group and the student's willingness and eagerness to take action.

---

Describe how teams are formed and how this affects students' participation in PE class. Analyse if and how students understand fairness, whether they perceive inequalities or gender differences, and if they seem eager to take action. Specifically, what student patterns emerge regarding barriers or opportunities to participate, and how do the teacher's presence and actions influence this classroom dynamic? Provide indicative examples or phrases.

#### 6. Respect, Fairness, Teamwork

In this section, we proceed to examine core democratic values, with a special focus on concepts such as respect, fairness, and teamwork, which foster social awareness, responsibility, and the ability to work independently with others. We aim to understand the children's reactions to challenging situations, such as making mistakes or resolving conflicts and disagreements. Special attention is given to the students' perspective on the essential characteristics of a well-functioning community.

---

Briefly describe how students react when they have to resolve a disagreement or when they make a mistake, as well as how they observe their peers reacting in similar situations. Also,

comment on whether they feel that PE activities are conducted with respect for all and whether they experience themselves as equal members of the PE class community. Pay particular attention to the students' perspective on the key characteristics of a well-functioning group and note any emerging patterns (e.g. gender differences). Where relevant, also consider the role of the PE teacher in shaping these experiences. Provide indicative examples or phrases.

## 7. Following the rules

This section examines students' understanding and ability to follow specific rules in PE activities, as well as the broader hierarchies that arise. It encompasses listening and responding to instructions, playing safely, respecting others, demonstrating self-control, and being engaged in PE activities. Moreover, it explores the degree to which students are disposed to question the fairness of rules, as well as their ability to suggest alternative rules.

---

Briefly describe how rules and rule-making processes influence students' enjoyment and perceptions of fairness. Also indicate how willing students are to propose their own rules, and identify any emerging patterns (e.g., gender, age, or behavioural differences). Provide indicative examples or phrases.

## 8. Closing

This section captures students' reflections on their PE experiences, focusing on perceived opportunities for change, perspectives on inclusion (including aspirations and challenges), and their sense of belonging, with particular attention to group dynamics.

---

Briefly describe, what students suggest changing in PE class to reinforce the sense of belonging or other core democratic values. Note any emerging patterns (e.g., gender or age differences). Provide indicative examples or phrases.