

# Building Resilience through Inclusive Education Systems: Mid-Term Report

Peer-learning activities to develop a tool  
to support educational resilience



**EUROPEAN AGENCY**  
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



# **BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS: MID-TERM REPORT**

**Peer-learning activities to develop a tool  
to support educational resilience**



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## TERMINOLOGY AND ABBREVIATIONS

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**Agency/European Agency:** European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.

**BRIES:** [Building Resilience through Inclusive Education Systems](#).

**Cluster:** The BRIES country cluster consists of six countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Ireland and Sweden. These countries are the activity's main participants and are involved in all discussions, reflections and peer-learning activities.

**Digital literacy:** Digital literacy can be related to skills 'to use online systems, email, online messaging or video calling and recent technologies' and to the 'ability to use search engines for information (e.g. news and topics) and resource retrieval' (European Agency, 2022a, p. 49). It also encompasses skills like the 'establishment and management of web services based on social networking', the 'ability to recognise, respect and deal with one's own and others' feelings and beliefs in a supportive way', and 'digital personal development and empowerment to express one's own voice' (ibid., p. 50).

The Agency's report on [Inclusive Digital Education](#) (European Agency, 2022a) analysed digital competences mentioned in various publications. It found that competences 'in the areas of communication and collaboration and safety' were more important than other competences (ibid., p. 51). 'This may indicate the particular importance of digital communication and collaboration competences, as well as digital safety issues for inclusion in digital education' (ibid.).

**Effective communication:** In the BRIES activity, the term 'effective communication' is used in relation to a dialogic structure. Having used a dialogic structure as a method in multi-level stakeholder discussions, it was later applied to the process of developing a final tool related to effective communication. Hence, effective communication interpreted in the context of a dialogic approach is relational and has a fundamental orientation to the other. This means it emphasises listening to and correctly understanding others' contributions, rather than adding one's own comments. The aim is to develop trusting relationships and counteract power imbalances in dialogues among different levels of stakeholders.

Using the example of a classroom, Siry states: 'A dialogic classroom environment is reciprocal, as teachers and children listen to each other and exchange meanings, recognizing that meanings are contextualized and multiple' (2020, p. 349).

Effective communication enables all involved in and contributing to inclusive education systems to identify and communicate needs early. It supports the possibility to work proactively and preventatively; it keeps negative consequences of crises and the need for interventions low.

**Focus group discussion:** The focus group discussions take place online. For the first round of peer-learning activities, there were two focus group discussions in same-level stakeholder groups and in multi-level stakeholder groups. Additionally, there are general exchanges among the participating countries and stakeholders for reflection.



**Learning loss:** A decline in learner knowledge and skills. Learning loss occurs when educational progress does not occur at the same rate at which it has compared to previous years (Pier et al., 2021).

**Milestones:** There are three milestones throughout the lifetime of the BRIES activity. These milestones describe important points in the activity where decisions define a concrete way forward:

- **Milestone 1:** Deciding on topics (A and B) for peer-learning activities
- **Milestone 2:** Deciding on design of round 2 based on round 1
- **Milestone 3:** Continuation after activity.

**PAG:** Project Advisory Group. The PAG consists of the six country representatives from the cluster countries. The PAG meets to advise the Agency's activity team before important decisions are made. The PAG is an advisory body, not a decision-making body.

**PLA:** Peer-learning activity. In BRIES, there are two rounds of PLAs. The PLAs consist of different kinds of exchanges on different levels. Most of these will be focus group discussions.

**Round 1/round 2:** The BRIES activity consists of two rounds of PLAs and exchanges among participating countries. The first round ran from May 2022 to February 2023. The second round takes place from March 2023 to October 2023. In each round, while PLAs are taking place, other meetings to reach the pre-defined BRIES goals (developing robust tools to enable education systems to be resilient in times of crisis) are also organised.

**Topics A and B:** The six cluster countries are divided into two groups of three countries. In the first round of PLAs, one group worked on Topic A (Mental health and socio-emotional needs) and the other on Topic B (Learning loss). These two groups were merged for round 2 of the PLAs.

**Well-being** at school:

Well-being is a state in which pupils are able to develop their potential, learn and play creatively. Concretely, well-being at school means feeling safe, valued and respected; being actively and meaningfully engaged in academic and social activities; having positive self-esteem, self-efficacy and a sense of autonomy; having positive and supportive relationships with teachers and peers; feeling a sense of belonging to their classroom and school; feeling happy and satisfied with their lives at school. Pupils who experience well-being can build and enjoy positive relationships with others and feel belonging to their school community (European Commission, no date).





# 1. INTRODUCTION

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This report is the result of the first round of peer-learning activities (PLAs) within the [Building Resilience through Inclusive Education Systems](#) (BRIES) activity. It addresses policy-makers and other stakeholders in the field of education. It focuses on the methodology, processes and results of the PLAs that were implemented between May 2022 and February 2023.

The BRIES activity's main aim is to support policy-makers in the field of education to identify and address the needs of learners vulnerable to exclusion and other education stakeholders in times of crisis. To produce a tool that is meaningful for all stakeholders, it was essential to include these stakeholders throughout the activity.

In April 2022, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (the Agency) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) co-organised a webinar on fostering stakeholder dialogue on legislation and policy. The webinar report highlights three key messages:

1. **'Stakeholder dialogue does not just happen – it must be actively prepared for'**. Policy-makers must make an effort to support and include stakeholder dialogue in policy development and decision-making.
2. **'The process of meaningful stakeholder dialogue must be understood as a marathon, not a sprint'**. Stakeholder dialogue is not a one-off event; it is an on-going process and stakeholders should be involved at every stage.
3. **'Dialogue must aim at long term stakeholder commitment'**. Engaging stakeholders in decision-making processes encourages their support for and 'ownership of policy implementation and outcomes' (UNESCO and European Agency, 2022, pp. 10–11).

The BRIES activity began in 2021. From 2022 onwards, six Agency member countries were involved in the PLAs. The participation of stakeholders from different levels was planned from the very beginning, through various focus group discussions and participation in online and in-person meetings. The first round of BRIES PLAs took place in 2022 and early 2023. The second round takes place from March to October 2023.

Before detailing the organisation of the PLAs, it is necessary to clarify that BRIES addresses multiple crises that may challenge (inclusive) education systems. These include climate catastrophes, armed conflict and health-related crises, such as pandemics.

The first PLAs consisted of various focus group discussions and exchanges involving different stakeholders. The groups of stakeholders chosen correspond to the levels of the Agency's [ecosystem of inclusive education systems](#): individual (learners), school (teachers), community (parents) and national/regional (policy-makers).

For the first round of discussions, all these stakeholders were invited to engage with their peer group. Hence, learners, parents, teachers and policy-makers exchanged their perspectives in different groups online. These were same-level discussions, meaning that, for example, parents from one country met parents from other participating countries.



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The BRIES team moderated the discussions and guided the participants according to the main topics that were defined initially (see [section 2](#) for further information).

In the second round, stakeholders came together in their countries and engaged in multi-level discussions. These discussions were moderated by the Agency country representatives or nominated moderators.

The third and last exchange with stakeholders from different levels in the round 1 PLAs was implemented in-person in two groups. This took place in a multi-level and multi-country setting: stakeholders from different levels and different countries discussed the content developed in the previous rounds.



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## 2. PLANNING AND ORGANISING THE FIRST ROUND OF PEER-LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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This section presents the process of planning and organising the PLAs for the first round (2022/2023) of the BRIES activity. The decisions taken on main topics and group composition, etc., were based on the answers to a BRIES questionnaire from autumn 2021, as outlined in more detail below. They were furthermore supported by a [literature review](#) on publications from 2020 related to COVID-19 and inclusive education in general (European Agency, 2021).

### 2.1 Analysis of the BRIES questionnaire

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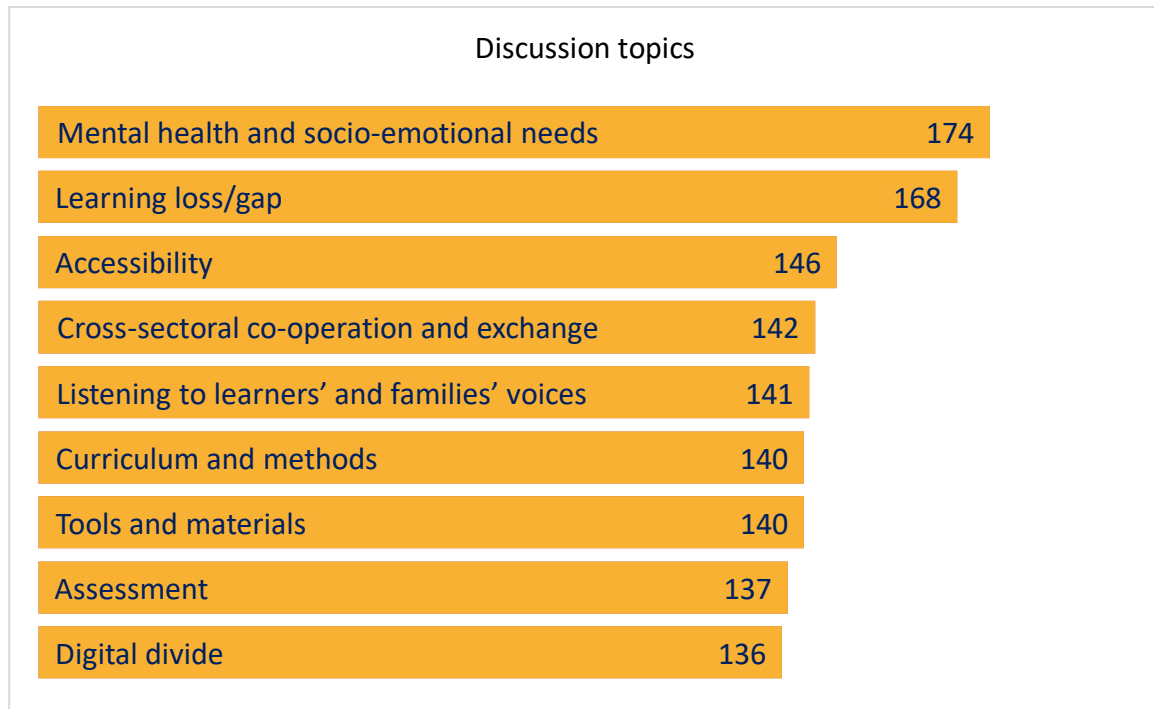
The BRIES questionnaire was sent to the Representative Board members (RBs) of all Agency member countries in October 2021. There were 14 questions relating to inclusive education and the pandemic, the organisation of PLAs and the country situation. Twenty-three countries responded. Eleven were open to participating in the BRIES activity and completed the questionnaire. Ten countries completed the questionnaire but had not decided on further participation in the activity. Two countries chose not to participate further. Please see the section on [participating countries](#) below for further information.

As a first step towards the organisation of the PLAs, the BRIES team analysed the replies to the questionnaire. The following sections detail the results and conclusions that were drawn based on this analysis.

#### Defining topics for peer-learning activities

One of the questions in the BRIES questionnaire asked countries to rank suggested PLA topics by importance. They were asked to decide which of the topics were most essential for their countries in the context of inclusive education in times of crisis.

The topics were selected from the [BRIES literature review](#) (European Agency, 2021) and COVID-19 related answers from the Agency's 2021 country survey. Figure 1 shows the ranking.



**Figure 1. Discussion topics ranked by importance**

The numbers in the bars of Figure 1 indicate the sum of the values (1–9) countries chose for the respective topic. The figure shows that – unsurprisingly – all topics are relevant to countries to a certain extent. However, two stand out: ‘mental health and socio-emotional needs’ (hereafter, Topic A) and ‘learning loss/gap’ (hereafter, Topic B). On a scale from 1 to 9 (from least to most important), the average value chosen for Topic A was 8.2. For Topic B, it was 8. All other topics ranged between 6.5 and 6.9.

The topics ‘mental health and socio-emotional needs’ and ‘learning loss/gap’ were supported by the findings of the [literature review](#) on publications from 2020 (European Agency, 2021) and confirmed by the [analysis of key publications from 2021](#) (European Agency, 2022b). Therefore, the BRIES team decided to organise two peer-learning groups on these thematic focuses: ‘mental health and socio-emotional needs’ (Topic A) and ‘learning loss/gap’ (Topic B).

The decision on the two highest ranked topics does not exclude other aspects that countries saw as essential. Rather, the PLAs aim to cover the main topics from different perspectives, encompassing several important aspects.

Countries also had the option to add topics they considered were missing. These **missing topics** are:

- Individualisation/support for learners
- Attendance
- Teacher competences/training
- Health and safety standards.



All of the remaining topics were allocated to Topics A and B, depending on their relevance to one or the other. Table 1 presents the final topic bundles.

**Table 1. Topic bundles**

Topic A: Mental health and socio-emotional needs	Topic B: Learning loss/gap
Cross-sectoral co-operation and exchange	Accessibility
Listening to learners' and families' voices	Assessment
Tools and materials	Digital divide
Missing topic: Teacher competences/training	Curriculum and methods
Missing topic: Health and safety standards in times of crisis	Tools and materials
–	Missing topic: Attendance
–	Missing topic: Individualisation/support for learners
–	Missing topic: Health and safety standards in times of crisis

### **Participating countries and group composition for peer-learning activities**

The BRIES questionnaire gave countries the option to volunteer to lead on certain topics. Five countries volunteered to lead on two to three topics each. The BRIES team approached the only two countries that had volunteered for Topics A and B to be the leading countries.

#### *Identifying participating countries per topic*

Six Agency member countries were invited to join the BRIES country cluster. This was based on their interest and availability, as well as their input on their countries' measures during the pandemic and previous participation in Agency activities. The country cluster is defined as the group of countries that participates in the PLAs.

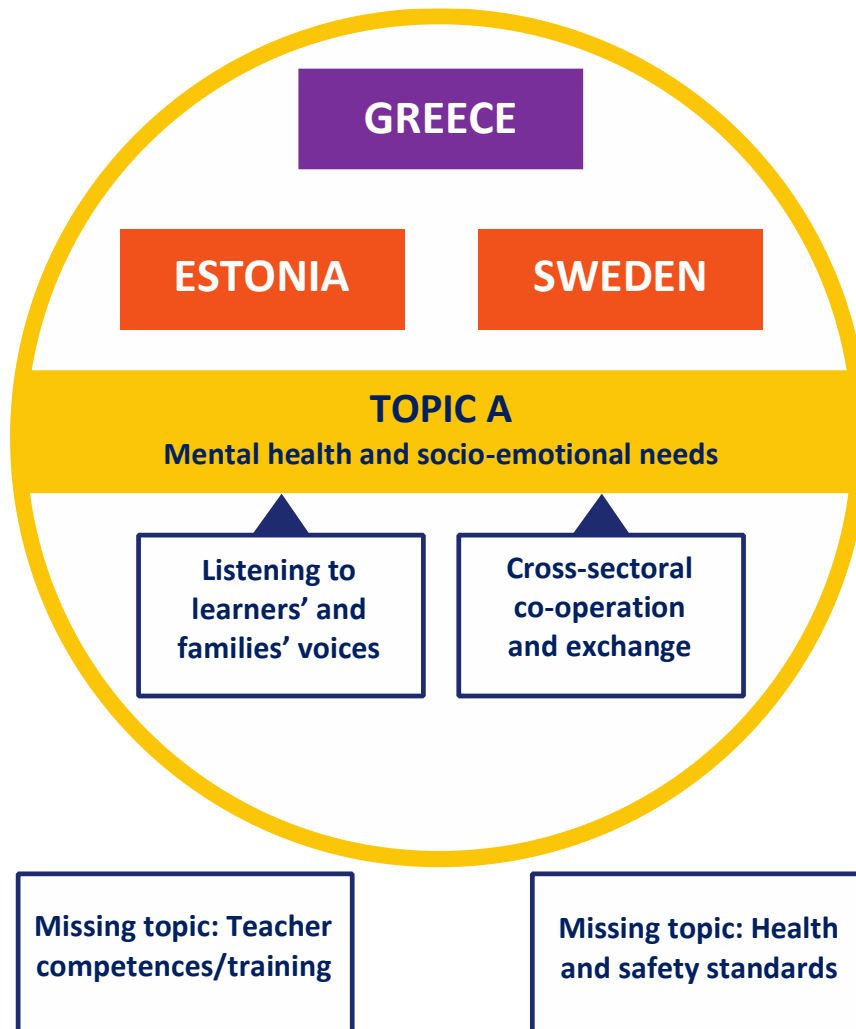
The cluster was divided into two working groups of three countries each, as presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3. Each group worked on one of the identified topics (A or B). Other countries interested in the activity were offered the role of giving further input, especially during the second round of PLAs.

#### *Topic A: Mental health and socio-emotional needs*

'Mental health and socio-emotional needs' (Topic A) was identified as a priority through the countries' choices in the BRIES questionnaire. Greece led the peer-learning activity, as the only country that volunteered to take the lead on this topic. Based on countries' measures and interest, Estonia and Sweden were invited to join Greece in working on Topic A. Both countries accepted and participated in discussions on the topic in the first round of peer-learning exchanges.



The topic of ‘mental health and socio-emotional needs’ is accompanied by ‘listening to learners’ and families’ voices’ and ‘cross-sectoral co-operation and exchange’. Additionally, the missing topics ‘teacher competences/training’ and ‘health and safety standards’ were considered to complement Topic A.

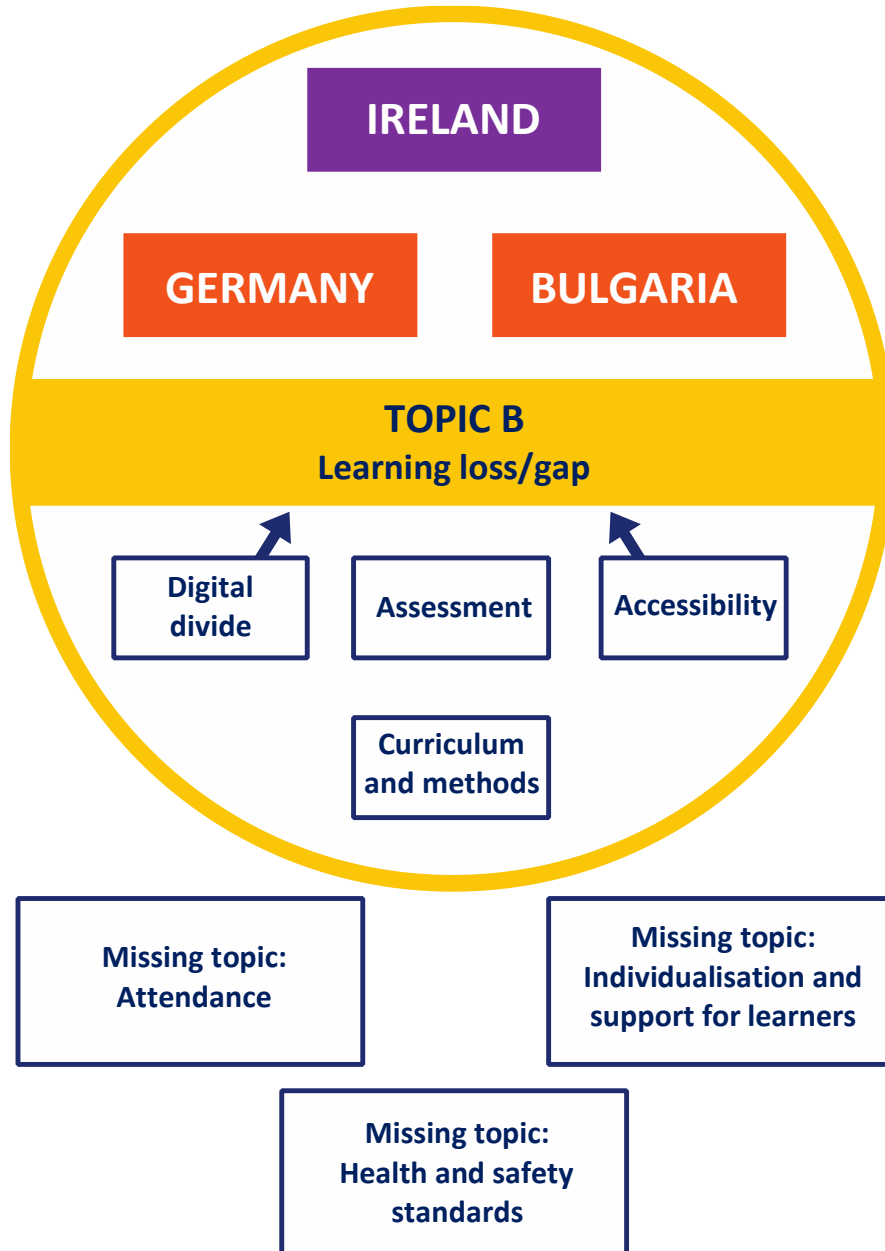


**Figure 2. Topic A countries and topics**

*Topic B: Learning loss/gap*

As the second priority in the countries’ ranking of essential issues regarding inclusive education in times of crisis, ‘learning loss/gap’ was discussed in Topic B. Ireland volunteered to lead this topic. Germany and Bulgaria accepted the invitation to join Ireland in working on Topic B in the first round of peer-learning exchanges.

Aspects that are closely related to learning loss and learning gap include ‘digital divide’, ‘curriculum and methods’, ‘accessibility’ and ‘assessment’. The missing topics identified by countries that complement the planned exchange around Topic B are ‘attendance’, ‘individualisation/support for learners’ and ‘health and safety standards’.



**Figure 3. Topic B countries and topics**

All topics mentioned are interrelated and connected. For example, assessment and accessibility issues can also be related to mental health and socio-emotional needs. This is a dynamic picture of linked topics. However, as mentioned earlier, the first round of PLAs served to confirm essential aspects and needs from multi-stakeholder perspectives **and** country-specific needs.

During the PLA meetings, it became clearer that the topics needed to be merged at a certain stage of the activity. As a result, concrete steps and procedures for round 2 of the PLAs were defined.



### *Group composition in peer-learning activities*

Countries were asked about their preferences for group composition in the PLAs. Homogenous groups contain same-level stakeholders (teachers, or parents, or learners, or policy-makers). Heterogenous groups contain multi-level stakeholders (a mix of stakeholders from different levels in the same group).

Countries mostly voted for heterogenous groups (11) or both heterogenous and homogenous groups (8). Only two countries indicated they would prefer to work only in homogenous groups. One suggestion in this context referred to the importance of being able to work in different group compositions at different stages of the process; homogenous groups should deal with the more detailed professional issues, whereas heterogenous groups should work on communication and co-ordination matters.

The BRIES activity envisaged a multi-stakeholder approach from the beginning. As most countries agreed to both forms of co-operation and exchange, the peer learning had different phases with different compositions of discussion groups: **multi-level stakeholder groups** and **same-level stakeholder groups**.

## **2.2 Peer-learning activities process and meetings overview**

Table 2 gives an overview of the first round of the PLA process and the involvement of countries and different stakeholders from March 2022 to February 2023.

**Table 2. Meetings in round 1**

<b>When</b>	<b>Where/How</b>	<b>What &amp; Who</b>
March/April 2022	Preparation: bilateral talks online	Bilateral meetings (Agency–country) after confirmation of participation.
Step 1, May 2022	In-person kick-off meeting at the Agency bi-annual meeting, Athens, Greece	Six countries met. Introduction of the peer-learning topics and the participating countries. Discussion of Step 2.
Step 2, May/June 2022	Online focus group discussions (Topics A and B)	Exchanging experiences from different countries on <b>same stakeholder</b> levels, e.g. teachers from country 1, country 2 and country 3 discussed mental health.
Step 3, September 2022	Online/in-person exchange in each country (only participants from that country)	Exchanging results among different stakeholder levels in the <b>same country</b> , e.g. RBs, teachers, parents and learners from country 1 discussed mental health.





When	Where/How	What & Who
Step 4, November 2022	Project Advisory Group meeting at the Agency bi-annual meeting, Sofia, Bulgaria	RBs and/or National Co-ordinators from the six cluster countries and Lithuania discussed the suggestions for tools and materials resulting from the stakeholder discussions in September, using a 'world café' approach <sup>1</sup> .
Step 5, January/February 2023	In-person reflection, Athens, Greece (Topic A) and Dublin, Ireland (Topic B)	The RBs and one stakeholder from each country reflected in their groups (Topics A and B) on the PLAs and discussed the way forward, e.g. RB and teacher from country 1 with RB and learner from country 2 and RB and parent from country 3.

As Table 2 indicates, each of the six countries from the country cluster participated in different online exchange sessions and in-person meetings in round 1. All participating stakeholders discussed their experiences related to the pandemic in two groups (Topics A and B) consisting of three countries each.

### **Preparation: Bilateral meetings**

Each of the six participating countries was invited for a first bilateral online meeting with the BRIES team. This enabled all participants to address challenges and to exchange on open questions and considerations. It also supported the preparations for the kick-off meeting in May 2022.

### **Step 1: Kick-off meeting**

The country cluster met before the first round of peer exchange. This gave countries the opportunity to briefly introduce themselves and their country situation to the others and to take final decisions on content and dates for the first peer-learning exchange.

### **Steps 2–4: Exchange sessions**

Steps 2–4 focused on the stakeholder exchange meetings on the same and different levels.

### **Step 5: Reflection**

Step 5 concluded round 1 of the BRIES activity. During this period, the focus was on milestone 2 of deciding on the concrete steps for round 2.

The round 2 PLAs have been left open in terms of content and organisation, as this depended on the outcomes of round 1. In their role as the Project Advisory Group (PAG), the cluster countries were directly involved in planning round 2.

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<sup>1</sup> The 'world café' approach enables participants to contribute to different focuses/topics on posters. During several rotations, small groups visit each poster. The host explains the poster's content and the previous groups' discussions. The new group then adds input to the poster.



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## 2.3 Quality assurance

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Internal quality assurance takes place through presentations and discussions related to the general BRIES activity process and concrete PLAs. Additionally, the PAG is part of the BRIES activity. It consists of the representatives from the six cluster countries, as well as Lithuania which declared a special interest in the context of the Ukrainian crisis. The PAG members have an advisory role and critically reflect on the activity's process in general.

Between round 1 and round 2, the BRIES team prepared an online presentation focusing on the results of the first round of PLAs for Topics A and B. Both working groups (A and B) participated in this online meeting. This allowed for joint reflection and mutual exchange between the two groups. As usual in Agency work, final activity outputs will be circulated among all Agency member countries for comments and approval.



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## 3. SAME-LEVEL STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS

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This section presents the aim, methods and results of the same-level stakeholder discussions on the topics of mental health and socio-emotional needs (Topic A) and learning loss (Topic B) in more detail. It is therefore divided into two sections: the results of focus group discussions for Topic A and the results for Topic B.

### 3.1 Aim of same-level stakeholder discussions

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The aim of including participants from different countries in same-level discussions was to identify priority areas from the perspective of a certain group of stakeholders. At the same time, the intention was to go beyond the national level and broaden views by including perspectives from stakeholders from other European countries. This led to the identification of certain issues and challenges to be addressed more closely in the next step of the PLAs: the multi-level stakeholder exchanges at country level.

### 3.2 Participants, content and methods

---

To better understand the exchanges that took place among stakeholders, this section gives an overview of who participated and how the online discussions were implemented.

#### Participants

It was considered essential to involve stakeholders from all levels of the inclusive education ecosystem, i.e. learners, teachers, parents and policy-makers (see [Figure 4](#)).

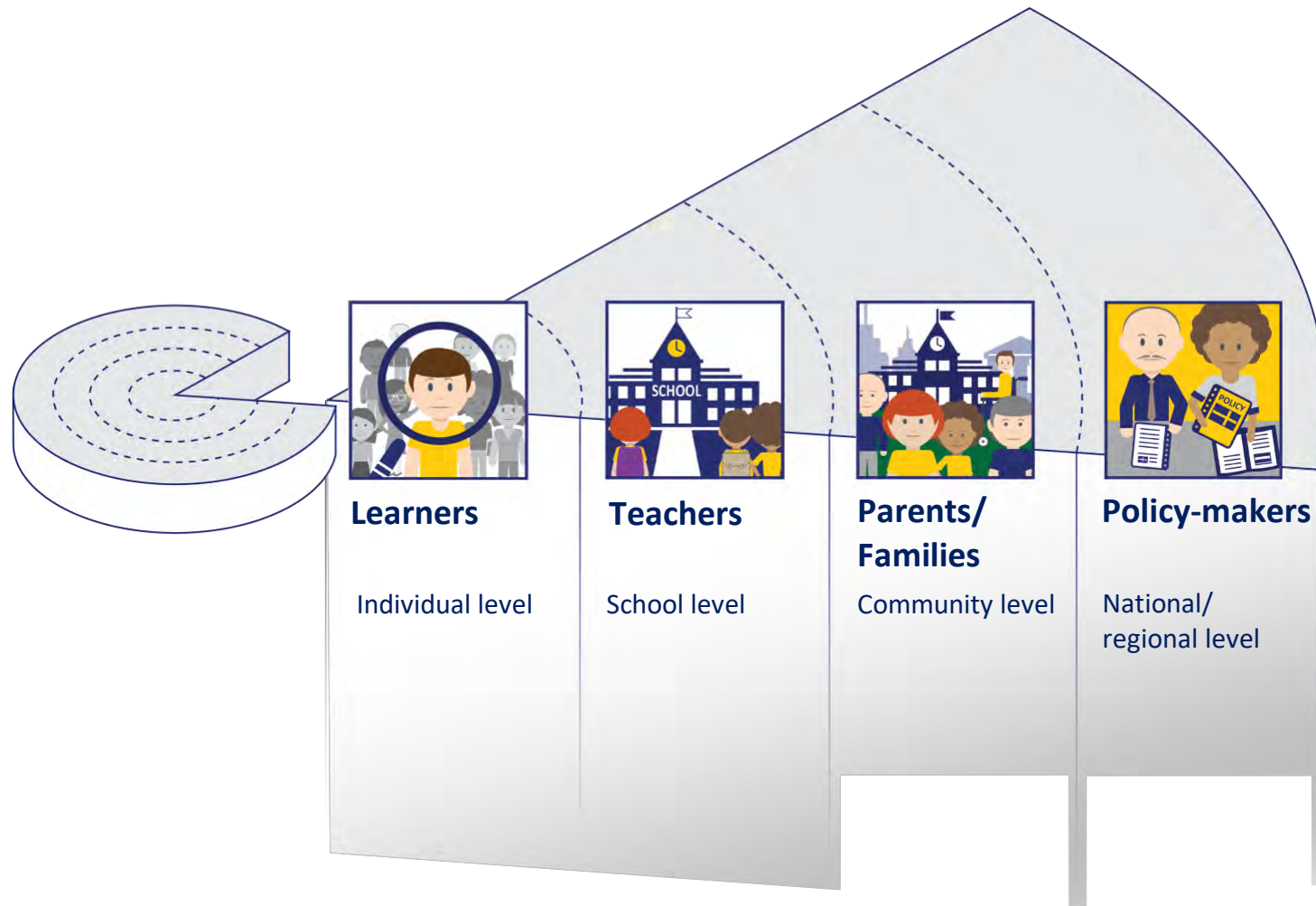


Figure 4. Ecosystem of inclusive education systems



The countries participating in the BRIES activity were responsible for organising participants from their countries. The guidelines for selecting participants were as follows:

Learners:

- Try to include learners **vulnerable to exclusion** only.
- Learners should be from **upper-secondary school** level.
- Learners in the final years of **lower-secondary school** can be invited.
- Learners can also be from a **vocational education and training** institution (if this is the case, please make sure the second learner is attending a non-vocational school).

Parents:

- Parents can be **parents of learners from any school level**.
- Parents do not have to be the parents of the learners chosen to join the activity.
- Parents should be parents of **learners vulnerable to exclusion**.
- It can be helpful to have parents who are also members of **parents' associations**, as they might be able to represent more parents. However, this is not mandatory.

Teachers:

- Teachers should have a background in **working with learners vulnerable to exclusion**.
- RBs can invite **support/resource teachers**. If this is the case, please make sure that the second teacher is a **regular/mainstream teacher**.
- The teachers can be school leaders but should be teaching in a classroom setting.
- It is not important in which school a teacher works.
- Teachers can be members of teacher associations.

Policy-makers:

- If the Representative Board member (RB) and/or National Co-ordinator (NC) are not participating, a colleague from a **decision-making level** should be chosen.

It was not always possible to find interested participants who fulfilled all the above-mentioned criteria. As such, some participants were invited even if they did not exactly fit the requirements. In some cases, learners or parents were also representing a learners' or parents' association; this was considered beneficial, as more members of a certain group were represented.

To overcome potential language barriers, the BRIES team organised interpreters for all languages in co-ordination with the country cluster.

### **Content and method for implementing the focus group discussions**

The BRIES team prepared the content and questions for the focus group discussions. Key findings from the [Inclusive Education and the Pandemic – Aiming for Resilience](#) report (European Agency, 2022b) were a main resource for preparing the discussion questions.



The BRIES questionnaire also served as input for the content of the discussions. The BRIES team prepared this content for learners/parents/teachers/policy-makers individually and shared it with the participating countries in advance.

The prepared questions were available to all participants before the discussions took place. Participants signed an informed consent form, written in clear language, before the discussions started.

During the discussions, the BRIES team explained and guided participants towards challenges that had already been identified through research during the two years of the pandemic. Therefore, the focus group discussions did not focus on the participants' general experiences but started on a different level, relying on previously acquired knowledge.

Towards the end of the focus group discussions, participants defined priority areas they would like the BRIES activity to focus on. The next section presents these priority areas and challenges identified by the learners, parents, teachers and policy-makers.

### **3.3 Results of same-level stakeholder discussions on 'Mental health and socio-emotional needs' (Topic A)**

---

The BRIES PLAs started in May 2022. The first focus group discussions took place on 13 May 2022, bringing together teachers in the morning and learners in the afternoon. The focus group discussions among parents and policy-makers took place on 31 May 2022.

All four groups had intense discussions on the topic of mental health and socio-emotional needs in the context of education and the pandemic. These discussions helped in defining the previously mentioned priority areas, which provide the basis for the further steps in the BRIES activity.

#### **Summary of results from same-level stakeholder discussions on mental health and socio-emotional needs**

The priority areas that emerged from learner, parent, teacher and policy-maker focus group discussions give a first impression of what stakeholders identified as relevant issues for discussion during the further steps in the BRIES activity. This summary of intermediary results gives a short overview of the information which is explained further in the next section.

The different stakeholder groups discussed:

- **Training** on mental health and well-being for all involved in the teaching-learning process (on how to support oneself and others).
- **Curriculum:** include mental health and well-being in the curriculum, both for teacher education and in schools.
- **Co-operation, communication and networking:** reinforce exchange on all levels (parents–teachers, teacher–teacher, school management, policy-makers–schools, etc.).



- **Psycho-social support:** services in and out of school, including psychologists, etc., in school teams.

## Results

This section, grouped according to learner, parent, teacher and policy-maker inputs, presents the results of the focus group discussions from spring 2022.

### *Learners' perspectives*

The participants in the learners' discussions were aged 14 to 19. There were two female and two male participants. This group identified the following **priority areas** for developing resilient education systems:



- **Socio-emotional training** as part of the **curriculum**.
- **Psychological support** would be necessary either in peer groups or outside the school setting.
- **Communication with teachers and parents.** It would be good if teachers communicated internally and came together to exchange.

A selection of comments the learners made express their views in more detail:



'Paying attention during class was difficult. It was difficult to focus. When I had difficulties with the computer I could not follow anymore or respond to the teacher.'

'It would be important to have good stress management and a positive mentality. Not being able to act as normal affected me.'

'Group sessions, talking to peers, and about problems, with teachers, have the possibility to anonymously write about problems, etc. This would all help.'

'We need a mental health counsellor, online questionnaires about well-being, a programme where you can write and find someone you can trust.'

'After online learning stopped, learners seem to have less motivation to study in the classroom.'

'I was missing normality, the regular life. I was worried whether I had learned enough.'

### *Teachers' perspectives*

The participants in the teachers' focus group discussion on mental health and socio-emotional needs were all female. They were special needs education teachers and



teachers from mainstream settings. One was teaching in early childhood education and the others taught in lower- and upper-secondary schools. One was nominated by her country's teachers' union. The teachers identified the following **priority areas** in relation to developing resilient education systems:



- **Supervised collaboration** at all levels (parents, teachers, learners), maybe including a psychologist.
- Training on **managing teachers' personal and work lives**.
- **Lifelong training** for teachers.

The teachers made the following comments, among others, during the discussion, which express their views in more detail:



'We learned that it is important to adjust. "Home" and "co-operation" were just words before the pandemic. They gained meaning during the pandemic.'

'The vision to have a safe environment for the learners was threatened.'

'The world became a scary place overnight. The role of parents had a massive impact on mental health.'

'More attention should be turned to socio-emotional competences. We need to change the curriculum.'

'Teachers co-operated and built networks of support. It became obvious how much we need each other.'

'Team participation/work is important, to look at learners' problems from a general level.'

'I want to have access to learners and families. I need to be in contact.'

### *Parents' perspectives*

Four mothers participated in the parents' discussions. They were all parents of learners vulnerable to exclusion. Their children's diagnoses included autism and learning





disabilities. In discussing what to focus on when developing resilient education systems, the following priority areas emerged:



- Reinforce **co-operation between families and schools**. Co-operation needs to be **meaningful** and all need to feel that they are heard and listened to.
- Prepare to **keep schools open**. Maintain the schools' role of socialisation and provision of knowledge.
- Include **mental health in the curriculum**.
- **Trustworthiness** is important. We need to overcome suspicion towards public service. Develop a central European guidance instrument.
- **Networking** bodies and agencies (experts on mental health and education) are needed.
- **Teacher training**: the number of learners in classes is too high. Equip teachers with tools to reach all learners (time to listen). Burnout in teachers is a dangerous threat. The burden for teachers should be reduced.

The following examples from the parents' discussion on mental health, socio-emotional needs and well-being in general give more insight on their perspectives:



- 'The biggest problem was that the children had difficulties to adapt to the situation. This was especially hard when all activities closed (e.g. for autistic children).'
- 'The family routine had to change.'
- 'It was difficult to keep the children motivated.'
- 'It is important that teachers and parents are able to listen.'
- 'The school is important for socialising. Nothing can replace this.'
- 'The community's role is important. Parents can exchange.'
- 'Private bodies reacted to provide training (how to assist learners). It was not possible to co-operate with public schools because of the bureaucracy (even now).'



### *Policy-makers' perspectives*

In the focus group discussion among policy-makers, four female participants shared their perspectives. Towards the end of the exchange session, policy-makers defined the following priority areas for developing resilient education systems:



- **Fund** inclusive education and **revise legislative frameworks**.
- Focus on **early interventions**.
- Enhance **parents' role**.
- **Assess institutions** (focus on inclusive mindsets).
- Find a good **balance between scoring good results and socio-emotional well-being**.
- **Include socio-emotional competences in the curriculum**. Build resilience by developing learners' competences. Focus on **socio-emotional empowerment**. Add psychological and social workers.
- **Availability of services** and help at community level.
- **Keeping schools open** is the most important goal.

Excerpts from the policy-makers' discussion show further considerations and emerging aspects in the context of mental health and the pandemic:



'We realised how important education is. Education holds society together.'

'There was a big push to the digital environment but not all [the energy] was used.'

'The biggest shift in our mindset was that the focus was put more on well-being and not on study results.'

'During the pandemic, flexibility rose at all levels.'

'The pandemic was a pretext for establishing skills workshops focusing on social life skills, resilience, empathy, digital skills, and mediation skills.'

## **3.4 Results of same-level stakeholder discussions on 'Learning loss' (Topic B)**

The first focus group discussions on the topic of learning loss took place on 23 May 2022, bringing together teachers in the morning and learners in the afternoon. The focus group discussions among parents and policy-makers took place on 2 June 2022.



These group discussions on learning loss were very fruitful. They led to the identification of more priority areas that were used to define further steps for the BRIES PLAs.

### Summary of results from same-level stakeholder discussions on learning loss

The priority areas that emerged from learner, parent, teacher and policy-maker focus group discussions give a first impression of what stakeholders identified as relevant issues for the BRIES activity. This summary of intermediary results gives a short overview of the information which is further elaborated upon in the following section.

The different stakeholder groups highlighted:


- **Communication and training:** enhancing communication among all those involved in the teaching-learning process. Training for parents and teachers on how to support learners during online or blended learning phases. Get support from outside school.
- **Participation and co-operation:** involve teachers, learners and parents in designing online learning processes. Create a feeling of belonging (confidence). Create an online environment of togetherness.
- **Access and equipment:** ensure accessibility by providing adequate resources, training and competences and providing technical equipment to all involved.

### Results

This section, grouped according to learner, parent, teacher and policy-maker inputs, presents the results of the focus group discussions from spring 2022.

#### *Learners' perspectives*

The participants in the learners' discussions were aged 15 to 17. There were four female and two male participants. This group identified the following **priority areas** while discussing ways towards resilient education systems:

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- There needs to be **more and improved contact** with other peers, teachers and parents and between parents and teachers. This was missing, especially for learners who were not able to follow online lessons.
  - **Having a routine** is important, especially for learners who are not so autonomous.
  - **Coming back to school** also **posed problems** (having to wear face masks, lack of facial expression, fear of getting infected, etc.).
  - **Access and equipment:** in remote areas, devices were not available; internet connection was sometimes difficult.



- **Teachers** need to be **better prepared**.
- **Improve online lessons** (they felt very boring sometimes). Motivate learners, use creative means for teaching online and make sure you keep the learners' attention.

A selection of comments the learners made express their views in more detail:



'Digital learning allowed more focus on studies. Some learners could get better organised with digital learning.'

'The social contact was missing.'

'It was better with the school closed: there were assignments each week. Classes were organised in smaller groups.'

'Some were lazy; they had the feeling there was no school. They did not feel like going to school.'

'There need to be interesting projects, so classes become more interesting.'

'I felt trapped at home. It was not nice not being able to see friends.'

'Those who had difficulties with technology did not follow and had bad grades.'

'Learners could not be tracked; they could do whatever they wanted when they switched off the camera.'

### *Teachers' perspectives*

The participants in the teachers' focus group discussion on learning loss were five female and one male teacher. They were special needs education teachers and teachers from mainstream or inclusive settings. The teachers defined the following **priority areas** in relation to resilient education systems:



- The **biggest learning loss** occurred in the **socio-emotional area**.
- **Ensure** all (learners and teachers) have **access** to devices (equipment). There need to be **inclusive structures** in place.
- **Ensure adequate training** so all have basic skills to use IT tools.
- More **continuous assessment** and **other ways of assessment (take off pressure); change learning culture**. Focus on project-based learning.



- **Get support from outside:** psychologists, experts, social workers, agencies, etc.
- Teach learners how to be **responsible for their learning**.
- **Develop guidelines for useful ways of online learning**.
- **Exchange** with colleagues (issues around teaching-learning, well-being, etc.).
- There needs to be **more equity among professionals** (e.g. payment).
- **Multi-professional teams** need to be strengthened.

The teachers made the following comments, among others, which express their views in more detail:



'There was a lack of facial expression which led to barriers. There was a difficulty in social interaction and a fear of stating incorrect things.'

'The self-confidence of learners suffered. It will take them a long time to recover.'

'A routine is vital: online meetings every second period. All lessons online would be too much.'

'We need to ensure that vulnerable students can also access apps and use them appropriately.'

'Distance learning is not an obstacle. It needs a change of view. This can be an opportunity to enter a new world. Education needs a fundamental change. Online learning is no substitute but a useful practical form of learning (an addition).'

'Learners were worried and afraid in case they had to change to secondary school (transition).'

'The variety of needs was the biggest issue. These increased through the pandemic. We could not handle it anymore.'

'It is essential to strengthen and better equip multi-professional teams. Schools need to have appropriate equipment and support.'

'Regarding the pressure on grading, we need a new learning culture. A strong focus on grades is not good as it puts pressure on families.'

### *Parents' perspectives*

Six mothers participated in the parents' discussions. They were all parents of learners vulnerable to exclusion. Their children's diagnoses included Asperger's syndrome, autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities. In



their discussion on developing resilient education systems, the following priority areas emerged:



- **Collaborate more with parents:** schools did not allow parents to have input because of data protection issues. **Inform (and train) families** and learners about the online teaching/learning process in advance. **Direct communication with families.**
- **Inform/train teachers** better about learners' needs (not wanting to turn the camera on is fine).
- Focus on developing **skills and on well-being.**
- Develop **appropriate material for learners.** Create **regular timetables** and transparent teaching/learning processes.
- **Learners need to participate** in designing learning environments and processes. Develop a feeling of **belonging.**
- **Prepare learners** for what will happen. Convey the importance of school.
- **Facilitate access** to supportive measures. 'We need relief.' **Family services** need to be improved in number (quantity) and quality.
- **Offer a service line** to call with a focus on online teaching/learning (for families and teachers).

The following examples from the parents' discussion on learning loss give more insight on the parents' perspectives:



'Anxiety levels rose during the pandemic and the children faced very hard situations (e.g. on public transport if people did not wear masks).'

'The children needed structure and routines and they missed that. At home it is very hard to provide and implement this structure; they (especially children with special needs) could not understand it.'

'In addition, it is very difficult to cope with this as a single parent with three children. The good thing was access to emergency day care.'

'In my experience with a child with dyslexia, our school had a very hands-on approach, and the children learned a lot in class.'

'The children felt that they fell behind socially, emotionally and academically.'



'I would wish for more flexibility to the options of inclusion in the case children happen to miss school, possibility of home learning, or blended learning.'

'It is important to give some training on how to use technology to children, parents, teachers, so they can be prepared in case it happens again.'

### *Policy-makers' perspectives*

In the focus group discussion among policy-makers, five female and one male participant shared their perspectives. Towards the end of the exchange session, policy-makers defined the following priority areas for developing resilient education systems:



- **Advisory calls** to schools. Regular school check-ins.
- **Safety and confidence**: developing a feeling of confidence in school (parents and learners). Create a safe space. This is passed from teachers to learners and parents.
- **Motivate learners** to engage in modern learning (online) and **encourage teachers** to use digital methods.
- **Improve teachers' abilities** and competences. Be more inclusive and **avoid dropout**.
- Continue to **work with parents**. Make them understand their role in online learning.
- **Professional monitoring** of school development processes (support).
- **Listen** to school leaders'/management's and teachers' needs. Encourage them to speak up.
- **Check on emotional (and mental) well-being** of staff and school management.



Excerpts from the policy-makers' discussion show further considerations and emerging aspects in the context of learning loss and the pandemic:



'The teachers found themselves quite isolated.'

'They didn't know if their job was effective enough, as they could not easily retrieve feedback from parents or from the assessment, which made them anxious.'

'According to recent national media, during the first year of the pandemic, a high number of students dropped out.'

'The big difficulty was among children who come from families that do not value education very much; educational mediators helped a lot in preventing school dropout.'

'Another problem is the families and the fact that they have different levels of competences. Some are not skilled in technology; some are not used to working with technology and some do not have high-speed internet available at home.'

'Teachers need to constantly improve their qualifications so they can react adequately when working with vulnerable students. Needs have increased, especially with new students from Ukraine.'

This section has provided a more detailed insight into the key issues that emerged during the same-level stakeholder discussions. The following section focuses on the next step in the BRIES activity: the multi-level stakeholder discussions in participating countries.





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## 4. MULTI-LEVEL STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS

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The multi-level stakeholder exchanges took place in September 2022. Each cluster country organised its respective exchanges individually. One aim of this next step was **exchanges among multi-level stakeholders who already participated in the same-level discussions**. Hence, the results of the same-level meetings were the basis for starting this exchange. Related to this aim, the meetings encouraged participants to identify tools that cover the previously established priority areas.

Countries organised gatherings to work on tools that focused on the priority areas that emerged from the same-level discussions. The BRIES team **developed a guideline** with specified methods to support fruitful and power-balanced discussion in these meetings. This was especially successful using a dialogic structure.

The dialogic approach is relational and has a fundamental orientation to the other (Siry, 2020; Alozie & Mitchell, 2014). This means the focus is on listening to and correctly understanding others' contributions, rather than adding one's own comments. It aims to develop trusting relationships and avoid power imbalances in dialogues among different levels of stakeholders.

Additionally, the BRIES team prepared a **template** for the countries to collect information on possible tools. This template contained fields for suggestions, end user/target audience, content and steps to reach the suggested tools.

To ensure all stakeholders were as well-prepared as possible, the **results** of the same-level stakeholder discussions were translated into the participating countries' languages and made accessible for all the stakeholders.

The outcomes of the multi-level stakeholder discussions provide a meaningful basis for the decisions on the tool to be developed in the second year of the BRIES activity. Therefore, the country representatives (or their delegates) and the other stakeholder groups **defined and agreed on concrete suggestions** for tools to be developed.

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### 4.1 Analysis of countries' suggestions

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The multi-level stakeholder discussions resulted in 15 different suggestions. These included tools, general ideas, principles and other materials to support a resilient inclusive education system for future times of crisis. The BRIES team used the ATLAS.ti data analysis program to analyse the suggestions, content, aims, etc. In this way, the suggestions could be coded, grouped and related to each other. Furthermore, they were transformed from different ideas into suggestions for concrete tools.

The 15 suggestions were sorted into four working groups. These also contained aims and content the countries had produced for each suggestion:

- A. [Digital online teaching and learning](#)
- B. [Well-being training and crisis management protocol](#)



- C. [Effective communication](#)
- D. [Community support](#).

### **Working Group A: Digital online teaching and learning**

This group focused on guidelines for digital literacy training and on building capacity in digital literacy among all education stakeholders. Looking at the aims countries identified in their suggestions, the following aspects were important in this group:

- Ensuring equality of access to hardware and software
- Building the ability to maximise use of digital platforms
- Using a balanced approach, building skills as a continual process that aligns with teacher professional learning
- The possibility of using regional education centres to provide training, as upskilling facilities for all (wider than school)
- Providing active support to local teams.

### **Working Group B: Well-being training and crisis management protocol**

This group focused on mental health and socio-emotional needs (well-being). The suggested training and crisis management protocol for school communities aims to:

- create safe and secure psycho-social environments;
- create specific protocols for courses of action addressing challenging psycho-social emergencies;
- enable stakeholders to be proactive and feel prepared for psycho-social emergencies;
- address the needs of learners vulnerable to exclusion early;
- facilitate psychological recovery from stressful situations;
- provide active support for local teams;
- identify different instruments for measuring well-being;
- review schools' mental health capacities.

### **Working Group C: Effective communication**

A working group on the topic of effective communication emerged from the countries' suggestions. The overarching tools that were suggested were **guidelines for joint work in school teams** and a **framework for effective communication**. In this context, the following important aspects were identified:

- Support groups (efficient bodies with experience and advisory functions)
- Handbooks and compendia of promising practices
- Building on effective communication systems (e.g. webinars)



- Establishing a helpful and fruitful feedback culture for teachers in teaching and counselling situations
- Social workers with advisory functions providing direct contact between families and social services.

### **Working Group D: Community support**

Community support was another working group that emerged from analysing the countries' input. The suggested concrete tool was to develop guidelines for activating community support. These guidelines should address the following issues:

- Communities that provide respite and mitigate burnout for families most in need
- Creating supportive links in the community around learners and families
- Importance of home-school liaison support
- Parents have a say in what support they need, who they need it from, etc.
- Raising awareness.

After analysing the countries' input from their multi-level stakeholder meetings, the BRIES team held an online bilateral meeting with each country. In these meetings, the results were briefly discussed, and countries reported their experiences of the multi-level stakeholder discussions. It became evident that the results of the same-level stakeholder discussions greatly supported the participants in preparing for the multi-level discussions. Also, the implementation of a dialogic structure was welcomed and seemed to have worked very well.

In general, participants reported to the countries that they were happy with the process and asked to be informed about further results and next steps. In response to this request, the BRIES team produced an information flyer for stakeholders summarising all the results so far (see [Annex](#)). Additionally, the team provided a timeline to help participants orientate themselves in the BRIES activities.

## **4.2 Project Advisory Group meeting**

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The PAG meeting took place during the Agency's bi-annual meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, in November 2022. The RBs and/or NCs of the six BRIES cluster countries participated together with the RB from Lithuania. The BRIES team gave input, an Agency team member presented the Agency's [Voices into Action activity](#) and the Lithuanian RB discussed including Ukrainian refugees in the Lithuanian school system.

Using a 'world café' approach, participants held discussions in small groups, focusing on the importance and feasibility of the suggested tools. Each participating country chose two working groups for discussion. Choosing different topics already indicated a certain ranking: the most chosen was Topic B (well-being), followed by C (effective communication), D (community support) and then A (digital/online). Furthermore, many overlapping issues emerged in the discussions of working groups C and D (effective communication and community support). These two groups were therefore merged.



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Additional outcomes of the discussions were that accessibility needs to be considered as a major aspect that relates equally to well-being and learning loss. The group also identified well-being as a concept that needs to be clarified in more detail (e.g. referring to the [European Commission's definition](#)). The country representatives also suggested collecting promising examples from member countries.

It was clear from the very beginning that the two original areas related to mental health and learning loss are interwoven and overlap a lot. The group therefore decided to merge these issues in the second round of the BRIES PLAs.

All results were then brought back to the stakeholders and discussed in person in multi-country and multi-level settings.



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## 5. MULTI-COUNTRY/MULTI-LEVEL STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS

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In May 2022, the BRIES activity started with a focus on mental health/socio-emotional needs (Topic A) and learning loss (Topic B). During the first two PLAs (same-level and multi-level stakeholder discussions), Topic A was transformed into ‘well-being’, encompassing both mental health and socio-emotional needs. Topic B evolved to ‘digital literacy’, as this – together with accessibility – has been identified as a major variable causing learning loss.

In early 2023, the six participating countries met in the smaller groups of Topic A and Topic B countries for a third exchange among stakeholders. The leading countries (Greece and Ireland), which were designated in early 2022, hosted the in-person meetings in Athens and Dublin, respectively. Stakeholders from each level were invited to each meeting. This means that, in both groups, at least one learner, one parent and one teacher were present, along with the policy-makers.

Both meetings started with an evaluation of all the input collected so far in same-level and multi-level stakeholder discussions, as well as the feedback from the PAG meeting. Based on the analysis of this material, the BRIES team suggested working collaboratively with all stakeholders on the topic of effective communication. This would feed into issues related to well-being first of all, but also to digital literacy and accessibility.

### 5.1 Towards a tool for effective communication that supports well-being and digital literacy

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This section elaborates on how effective communication feeds into the other two main issues that emerged from the stakeholder discussions, namely well-being and digital literacy.

Effective communication can support well-being and digital literacy, as it enables stakeholders to communicate and address needs early and to develop strategies to respond to those needs.

Taking a closer look, in their focus group discussions, stakeholders identified three basic needs to address challenges in times of crisis:

- Receive adequate **training** in digital literacy, well-being and crisis management, and effective communication
- Improve and extend **communication** possibilities in general
- Receive **support** from different levels.

To be able to respond to the needs of learners vulnerable to exclusion in times of crisis, stakeholders need **training**, multi-disciplinary co-operation for **support**, and **communication** and exchange. Thereby, training and communication can help:

- teachers to support learners and families;



- communities to take care of their members;
- school teams to support teaching staff in challenging times;
- learners to support their peers;
- families to support their children, etc.

In the discussions with different stakeholders, it became clear that effective communication is key to identifying needs early and ensuring well-being. Also, the stakeholders' experiences during the pandemic demonstrated how important digital literacy and accessibility are to enhance well-being. Effective communication supports a rapid identification of needs in these areas in times of crisis. Finding rapid responses to needs enables learners vulnerable to exclusion to participate successfully in education during challenging times.

**In summary, effective communication, well-being and digital literacy** are interlinked in the following ways:

- In times of crisis, well-being in an educational environment particularly depends on digital literacy and effective communication (address learners' needs early, recovery from stressful situations).
- Learning loss can be prevented if education systems invest in digital literacy and effective communication. This supports learners', families' and teachers' mental health and well-being.
- Effective communication enables early identification of digital literacy and accessibility needs.
- Digital literacy supports effective communication by opening new ways to communicate and educate.
- Effective communication involves communities to mitigate burnout and create networks around learners and families.

## **5.2 Process and method of multi-country/multi-level stakeholder involvement**

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Before starting the exchange, the BRIES team provided the participating stakeholders with a [summary of results](#) from the discussions they had been involved in so far. Furthermore, participants were introduced to the possible content and options of a tool for effective communication. Effective communication had been identified as an enabling factor that facilitates both well-being and digital literacy.

Three countries participated in each meeting:

Group A: Greece, Estonia and Sweden

Group B: Ireland, Bulgaria and Germany.

At least one parent, one learner, one teacher and three policy-makers attended each group. Using different methods to work with content, discuss issues and present results,



the participants collaborated in different sets of smaller groups, using methods like the previously mentioned ‘world café’, ‘poster walk’<sup>2</sup>, etc. This facilitated a high level of exchange among all stakeholders and helped them reach consensus about the need for effective communication to contribute to well-being and digital literacy.

The stakeholders were provided with existing examples of tools related to challenges in education in times of crisis. The BRIES team focused on examples from the [Strengthening Rapid Education Response Toolkit](#), developed by the Global Education Cluster in partnership with the European Commission Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. The Toolkit aims ‘to empower country or field-level Education teams to ensure education’s inclusion in first phase humanitarian responses, to strengthen rapid education response capacities’ (Global Education Cluster, 2022, p. 5).

From a BRIES perspective, this toolkit was used as an inspiring example, providing elements and ideas from the grass-roots level that can inform a tool for effective communication at policy level. Three tools from this toolkit were presented at the in-person meetings to give participants an idea of different approaches:

- The ‘[Education Cannot Wait Risk Assessment Matrix](#)’, which helps assess crises’ risk levels and mitigating measures
- The ‘[Strengthening Rapid Education Response Emergency Preparedness Plan Template](#)’, which is a guideline to put key emergency actions into practice
- ‘[5W Matrix: Who, Where, What, When, for Whom](#)’, which provides a guide to monitor emergency interventions in the education sector.

In addition, existing tools from the participating countries were presented in the discussions (e.g. Ireland’s ‘[Looking at our School 2022](#)’ quality framework). At the Dublin meeting, the head of the National Educational Psychological Service in Ireland presented its strategies to support well-being during a crisis. In Athens, there was a presentation on Greece’s initiatives to support learners vulnerable to exclusion. These examples inspired and enriched ideas around the development of a tool for effective communication.

### **5.3 Results of multi-country/multi-level stakeholder discussions**

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The discussions in both country groups led to highly valuable inputs for developing a meaningful tool.

Among the identified aims that effective communication must address, all participants highlighted the following as being essential:

- Addressing learners’ needs early
- Being able to act proactively, feeling prepared for psycho-social emergencies
- Creating safe and secure psycho-social environments

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<sup>2</sup> The ‘poster walk’ is a simple method to introduce different presentations at the same time to small groups, who rotate from poster to poster.



- Creating supportive links in the community around learners and families (networks around learners vulnerable to exclusion).

These results are considered the main aims of a potential tool for effective communication to be developed in round 2 of the PLAs.

Regarding the implementation of this second round, stakeholders contributed different ideas and possibilities on how they wanted to be involved in developing the potential tool. This gave the BRIES team important information about their interest in further involvement. It also confirmed the stakeholders' availability and readiness to provide input, including by offering to consult their wider networks if needed.

[Section 6](#) focuses on the general conclusions from round 1 of the BRIES PLAs and on the outlook for round 2.





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## 6. CONCLUSIONS OF ROUND 1 PEER-LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND OUTLOOK ON ROUND 2

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The PLAs that took place in 2022 and early 2023 led to the decision to develop a tool for effective communication to enable countries' education systems to proactively and resiliently address the challenges of future crises.

### 6.1 Conclusions of round 1 PLAs

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The added value from the PLAs is the continuous involvement of stakeholders from four different levels and six different countries. This allows the consideration of different perspectives throughout the activity. The involvement of learners', parents', teachers' and policy-makers' voices in issues concerning different countries' education systems is essential in a process towards inclusive education. Enabling stakeholder participation in policy development processes is something that countries are increasingly identifying as an important step for their own education policy-making. In this context, the first round of BRIES PLAs implemented one way of including stakeholders in policy-level discussions; it modelled, and thereby encouraged, stakeholder involvement.

The BRIES round 1 PLAs enabled participants to make their voices heard. Throughout the activities, the issues raised and priority areas identified were integrated into the process of developing a tool to improve and support inclusive education systems in times of crisis. The three-step process of same-level stakeholder, multi-level stakeholder and multi-country/multi-level stakeholder discussions was very successful. The dialogic structure (Siry, 2020; Alozie & Mitchell, 2014) used in the multi-level discussions helped to reduce the power imbalance among stakeholders.

In a reflection round after the third exchange in Athens and Dublin, stakeholders committed to being further involved in developing a tool. This demonstrated the development of a feeling of ownership that emerged during the stakeholder discussions. By suggesting using their networks, the stakeholders became gatekeepers for quality assurance processes in the BRIES activity, e.g. by offering to reflect on the tool in their networks and give feedback on possible challenges and considerations.

### 6.2 Outlook on round 2 PLAs

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The second round of PLAs in the BRIES activity focuses on developing a tool for effective communication. This tool is envisaged to support education policy-makers in responding to the needs of learners vulnerable to exclusion in times of crisis.

Participants in the round 1 PLAs had the following suggestions for a potential timetable for round 2:

- February/March 2023: Collect promising practices on effective communication from the six BRIES countries as a first step



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- February/March 2023: BRIES team to develop a draft tool for effective communication
  - March/April 2023: Collect stakeholders' feedback and input through online meetings or by email. Thereby, stakeholders were interested in teaming up with the participants from Topic A (Greece, Estonia, Sweden) and Topic B (Ireland, Bulgaria, Germany) countries, respectively.
  - Early May 2023: BRIES team to include stakeholder feedback and input in the draft tool
  - End of May 2023: Reflect on the tool/finalise comments in a smaller group: a workshop will be organised, including country representatives/experts from the six BRIES cluster countries
  - June 2023: BRIES team to finalise the tool, if possible, with final feedback from all stakeholder levels
  - September/October 2023: Receive approval from all Agency member countries
  - November 2023: Final meeting with six BRIES cluster country representatives/experts and preparation for dissemination event in 2024.



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## UPDATE FOR PARTICIPATING STAKEHOLDERS

This flyer summarises the results of the two peer learning activities (PLAs) that took place in 2022 as part of the BRIES activity, including perspectives from different stakeholders (learners, parents, teachers and policy-makers):

1. Same-level stakeholder discussions (between countries)
2. Multi-level stakeholder discussions (within countries)

### Same-level stakeholder discussions

During the same-level stakeholder discussions, groups from different countries met: learners spoke with learners, parents with parents, teachers with teachers and policy-makers with policy-makers.

Participants discussed their experiences related to education and the COVID-19 pandemic, and defined priority areas.



Related to **well-being** (mental health and socio-emotional needs), four groups with participants from Greece and Estonia identified the following priority areas:



Training on mental health and well-being	Curriculum	Co-operation, communication and networking	Psycho-social support
for all involved in the teaching learning process (on how to support oneself and others).	include mental-health and well-being in teacher education and school curricula.	reinforce exchange on all levels (parents with teachers, teacher with teacher, school management, policy-makers with schools, etc.).	services in and out of school, including psychologists, etc., in school teams.



Related to **learning loss**, four groups with participants from Ireland, Germany and Bulgaria identified the following priority areas:

Communication and training	Participation and co-operation	Access and equipment
enhance communication among all those involved in the teaching-learning process. Training for parents and teachers on how to support learners during online or blended learning phases.	involve learners, parents and teachers in the design of online learning processes. Create a feeling of belonging. Create an inclusive online environment.	ensure accessibility by providing adequate resources, training, competences and equipment to all.



## Multi-level stakeholder discussions

During the multi-level stakeholder discussions, learners, parents, teachers and policy-makers from the same country met to discuss the results of the same-level stakeholder discussions.

Participants worked on suggestions for tools and materials they would like to be developed within the second year of the BRIES activity. These suggestions were summarised and grouped into four working groups.

### Working Group A: Digital/online teaching and learning

**Guidelines for digital literacy training.** Build capacity in digital literacy across all education stakeholders:

- Ensuring equality of access to hardware and software
- Building the ability to maximise use of digital platforms
- Developing skills as a continual process that aligns with teacher professional learning
- Using regional education centres to provide training for all
- Providing active support to local teams.



### Working Group B: Well-being training and crisis management

**Well-being/mental health training and crisis management protocol** for teachers and school communities:

- Creating safe and secure psycho-social environments
- Creating specific protocols of courses of action to address challenging psycho-social emergencies
- Acting proactively, feeling prepared for psycho-social emergencies
- Addressing needs of learners early
- Supporting psychological recovery from stressful situations
- Providing active support for local teams.

**Further tools suggested in relation to Working Group B and well-being:**  
**INTERNATIONAL REVIEW** on well-being measuring instruments.  
**SELF-REVIEW** tool for schools on their mental health capacities.

### Working Group C: Effective communication and joint work

**Guidelines for joint work** in schools, **operational framework on effective communication:**

- Creating support groups with experience and advisory functions
- Producing handbooks and promising practices building on effective communication systems (e.g. webinars)
- Establishing a helpful and fruitful feedback culture for teachers in

- teaching and counselling situations
- Working with social workers with advisory functions involving direct contact with families and social services.

## Working Group D: Community support

### Guidelines for activating community support:

- Providing respite and mitigating burnout for families most in need
- Creating supportive links in the community around learners and families
- Understanding the importance of home school support
- Listening to parents in what support they need and who they need it from
- Raising awareness.

These results will be discussed with stakeholders from different levels in early 2023. The aim is to reduce the working groups by merging them and identifying the most pressing topics. This will prepare the way forward for the second year of BRIES activities and the development of concrete materials.

Find our more by visiting:

[www.european-agency.org/activities/BRIES](http://www.european-agency.org/activities/BRIES)

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