



**COMAP**  
**ADVOCACY**  
**TOOLKIT**

MAP AND ENACT  
THE POWER OF ARTS  
IN LEARNING





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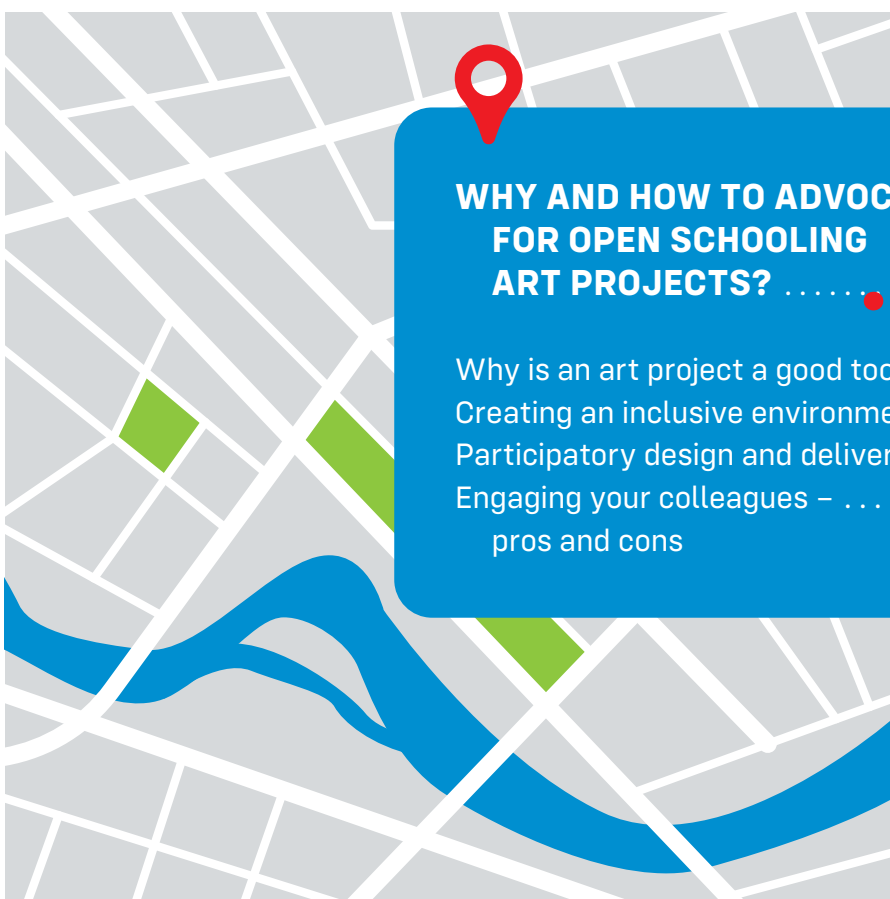
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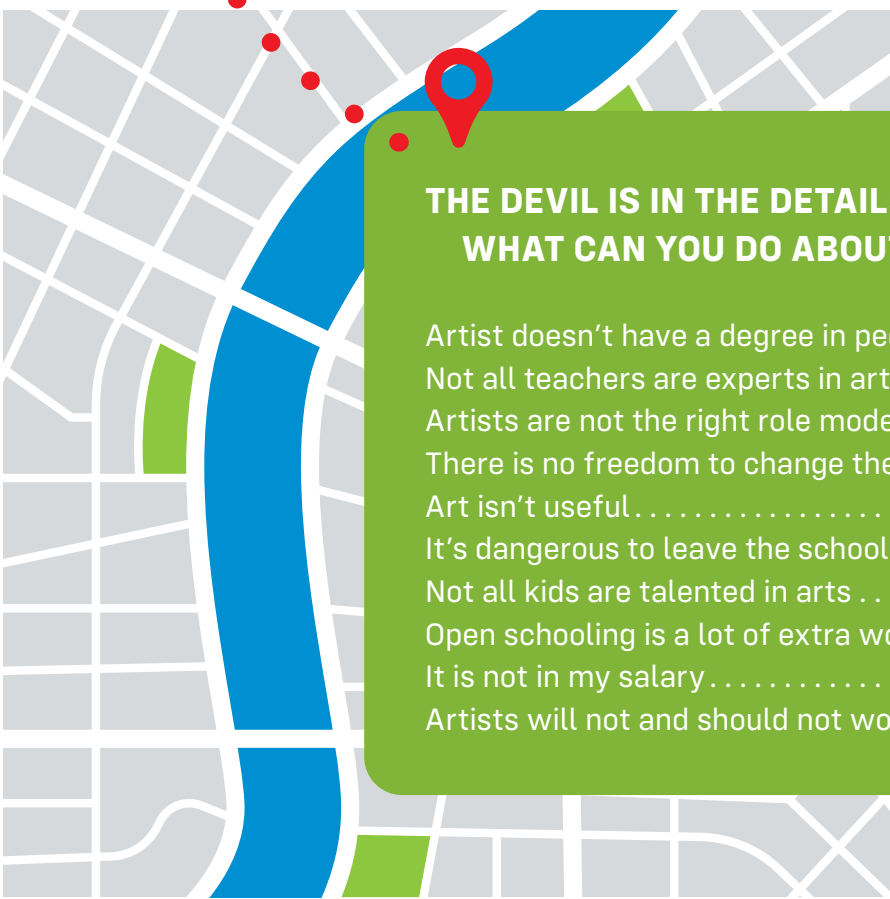
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# INTRODUCTION

Children and young people today live in a world full of uncertainties, things that can be frightening, and cause anxiety, panic and trauma. Statistical data show that all over Europe more children are in need of professional mental health support than ever<sup>1</sup>.

The therapeutic power of arts activities has long been used by adults and children to relieve stress, treat traumas and also communicate thoughts that are difficult to express otherwise<sup>2</sup>.

Arts has also been consciously used to enrich school activities, especially to make STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects attractive for more students.

In most countries, arts as such have not been given much emphasis in education policy and practice. European and national education policy have long neglected arts education other than a kind of 'annex' to STEM for promoting the later. Arts are often just subjects, and not even the most prestigious ones. School is usually a place for learning the right answers to questions, and thus there is often little room for free-roaming creativity and artistic expression.

In the past few years it has also become obvious that while schools play (or should play) an important role in the education of children, traditional schools are often unable to cater for the individual learning needs of children. Thus, open schooling has become the main way to deliver on the promise of education – schools, and the professional educators employed by them actively reaching out to and collaborating with other educators, be they museums, libraries, science centres, sports, youth and environmental organisations, individual experts, parents.... and artists.

Within this, arts play an especially important role. Schools are becoming more and more multicultural and diverse with community members bringing in their own artistic traditions that teaching and learning can draw on. Thus, art has become an important tool for inclusion and for fostering the sense of belonging crucial for educational success.

After the school closure periods of 2020-2022, more and more schools and school leaders realise that they need to renew and widen their educational offer. They understand that

1 Iacobucci G. Covid-19: Pandemic has disproportionately harmed children's mental health, report finds BMJ 2022; 376 :o430 doi:10.1136/bmj.o430

2 Art as therapy has its own vast literature.

their students are under a lot of stress and pressure, many of the causes are beyond the power of the school. Committed education professionals are looking for solutions, including offering release also for these external factors in the form of practices and spaces that are alternative to those traditionally offered in formal school settings.

The CoMap consortium researched towards, developed, piloted, and recommends one approach that can help this cause. It is a programme that engages not only students, but also the teachers, parents and community members around the school in co-creation activities using various art forms and in collaboration with local artists.

However, there might be internal and external obstacles to overcome. This Toolkit is to help those who wish to implement such an arts-based methodology or a similar methodology they develop themselves in overcoming such difficulties for the best interest of their students as well as their colleagues who may also need this kind of relief.



## WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

The Toolkit is targeting school leaders, parent leaders, community educators that can use the tools for their own advocacy work towards the implementation of the Co-MAP approach, using creative activities for education inclusion especially of migrants and other marginalised groups. It draws upon trauma-informed methods among other things.

The secondary target group of the Toolkit is decision makers at all levels of policy and practise with special focus on national and local level policy makers, school leaders and other leading practitioners in the formal and non-formal education areas. The Toolkit is aiming at policy change at primarily the level of the school, but also at higher levels, especially by the recognition and remuneration of teachers' work with artists and other non-formal and informal providers.

## WHAT CAN YOU USE IT FOR?

This toolkit is designed to help your efforts, whatever your role might be in the school, in convincing others that art projects are excellent for inclusion and tackling trauma. In this toolkit, you can find the legal background, evidence-based claims to support your arguments, as well as some possible answers to the most common doubts that you might hear from school stakeholders.

## WHAT IS ADVOCACY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

**(Policy) advocacy is the process of negotiating and mediating a dialogue through which influential networks, opinion leaders, and, ultimately, decision makers take ownership of your ideas, evidence, and proposals, and subsequently act upon them (Eóin Young & Lisa Quinn, 2012<sup>3</sup>).**

Anyone can be an advocate, all it takes is to be wanting to achieve change in society in general, but more typically in a specific field or area. Rigid education systems have often been difficult to steer to meet the needs of students in aall countries of the world, but it doesn't mean that you need to accept it. Advocacy is a way to fight for change by offering better alternatives to decision makers.

It is not enough to have strong arguments, and well working evidence based methods, you will also need to find a way to reach the decision makers, and convince them to act.

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3 Young, E., Quinn, L. (2012) MAKING RESEARCH EVIDENCE MATTER A Guide to Policy Advocacy in Transition Countries. Open Society Foundations. Budapest



# HOW TO PLAN YOUR ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES?



Advocacy is an activity that you will need to plan yourself by customising it to your own political, social and financial reality (see SWOT analysis below). You will need to define who you will need to address, position your message in the current reality, and define what the “selling point” can be (see Stakeholder mapping below).

Advocacy needs to be planned in a SMART way. SMART is an acronym that stands for

**Specific** – you need to define what exactly you want to achieve

**Measurable** – you should be able to judge if you have achieved your goals fully or partially

**Achievable** – you must set realistic goals to avoid major disappointment

**Relevant** – invest money, effort and time in what really matters and what can result in better opportunities for children

**Timed** – you need to set a time-frame for your activities so that you can focus properly

## STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

One of the greatest challenges to advocacy activities is identifying and understanding the target audiences and their needs/motives. At the planning stage you need to consider that policy and decisions in general are made by people, not institutions. Therefore, advocacy activities must be targeted at individuals. Successful advocates carefully analyse their target audience to ensure their efforts and resources are directed in the most efficient manner.

When making the first steps in identifying and understanding the target audience, it might be useful to create a distinction between primary and secondary audiences. In other words, advocates need to answer the questions:

- *Who has the authority to make the changes that need to be made? and*
- *Who influences them?*

The primary audience includes decision makers at any level with the authority to directly affect the outcome of the advocacy goal – be it policy change or other crucially important factors like funding. These are individuals, for example, who must approve a change of legislation. The secondary audiences are individuals and groups that can influence these decision makers. The opinion and actions of the latter group of individuals are important in

achieving the advocacy objectives, since they have the potential to affect the opinions and actions of the decision makers – both as supporters or as adversaries.

For example, if you would like to achieve the systemic introduction of art projects in school with the involvement of external artists to discuss experiences and trauma the students face in their life, your stakeholders can be:

- *Your own colleagues or leaders*
- *Your students*
- *The families of the students*
- *Local artists or organisations of artists*
- *The professionals (psychologists, therapists, doctors, teachers) can be your allies or maybe they need convincing, as well*
- *NGOs working in the field of art education in an informal way beyond the traditional art curriculum*
- *The political decision makers who are influencing or deciding on the implementation of such policy (might be education or health ministers, state secretaries, local council members) that need convincing*
- *Financial decision makers that have an impact on the available funding*
- *Training providers and other institutions that would have a role in training people for participating*

### Stakeholder Map: Who Needs What?



For each target group (and in the case of very influential people e.g., a school leader, a minister or mayor, each individual target) you can make decisions on which quadrant they belong to and what tools can be used for engaging them answering a few simple questions:

 **What do they know about the value of art projects in general and as an inclusion tool, or open schooling?**

If you provide too basic information, that may be redundant and you lose their interest. If you do not ensure a common ground, it can cause problems later on.

 **What beliefs may influence them in supporting your goal?**

What do they think about inclusive education? What is their relation to and opinion about artists? How do they view the role of external actors? Who do they think is responsible for different roles concerning children with diverse education needs?

 **What personal interests can have an impact on their support?**

Do they have children in school? Are they artists or art lovers? Do they have recent traumas themselves? Are they up for re-election? Could it offer media coverage for them? – and other similar factors can have major influence.

 **What can be the impact of their support on your goals?**

It is important to understand how their direct support can help you in implementing inclusive education through art, but it is equally important to see what might be the impact of their not doing anything or directly acting against your goals.



## SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis is a simple and well-known tool. If done properly, it can be the basis of your advocacy work (and the method can be used for other goals, too.) SWOT is another acronym that stands for

**Strength** – what you or the idea/method/product you are trying to convince people about is really good at

**Weaknesses** – what can be the challenges, what may be too difficult to embrace or implement, what may need to much effort

**Opportunities** – what element of the environment (media coverage, legislation in the pipeline, wish to change) can help the realisation of what you want to achieve

**Threats** – what are the main obstacles that can be in your way

It is important to remember that Strengths and Weaknesses are internal, you may even be able to improve and eliminate some weaknesses, while Opportunities and Threats are external, they do not depend on you, and it may take a lot of advocacy effort to minimise threats.

We invite you to perform a SWOT analysis of the policy environment, the institutional environment, financial provisions and the public opinion in your own context to assess what are the main barriers to achieve your goal, and what are the supporting factors.

### Swot Analysis



## POLICY ENVIRONMENT

When we talk about the policy environment we mean all the laws and regulations that are applicable and are influencing your situation – from school internal rules and pedagogical programmes to the national Education Act.

Later in this document we have summarised the most important international policy documents impacting the possibility of introducing art as an inclusion tool, or open schooling, but additionally to this there will be national regulations that can differ a lot or even contradict international policy. Some international policy documents, namely international treaties are binding, while others (like all EU school policy) are recommendations that you can use in your advocacy work. Is your national/local policy environment supportive (at least on paper) of the role of arts in school, or open schooling? Are there any laws or regulations currently in place that explicitly prevent your country from adopting open schooling? What room and practices do the schools have in creating their own policy environment?

## INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

While institutions are supposed to follow the laws and regulations, in reality they might be stricter and controlling, or the opposite, they are willing to go against some rules to provide extra support. Analyse and list the practices that are in your favour, or that are preventing a system to realise that is truly taking into account the needs of children in general and their families.

## FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Often the first question from decision makers when hearing a new idea is “how much will it cost?”. While many changes can be made without any extra financial burden, you need to assess the financial resource needs of what you want to achieve, the current financial provisions in place, what they are supporting, how flexible they are. International treaties on child rights and rights of people with disabilities, or those belonging to a minority group all require states to provide support, you might need to argue that the current support does not meet the needs of the target groups. One of the main challenges when working with external educators like experts is the remuneration for their work as well as teacher time if the activity is not strictly curricular.

## PUBLIC OPINION

Your advocacy efforts can be tremendously easier or more difficult depending on how widely supported your messages are. Prejudices and misconceptions are sadly not uncommon in the topic of art or inclusion. By being aware of the general trends of public opinion you may customise your messages and activities specifically targeting negative beliefs, or building on positive ones. Public opinion about doing arts in schools is another important aspect to consider as you will probably need to change how people perceive the importance of arts in schools as compared to the importance of subjects traditionally considered “more serious”.

# ADVOCACY TOOLS



## WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE

Once you have reviewed your target groups, the enabling factors and the barriers in your environment, it is time to assess what tools you currently use to promote your views on inclusive education and on using art projects as a way to deal with trauma. Do you already have some established channels to decision-makers? You might just need to specify your messages or be more mindful to use them as an advocacy tool.

Examples of advocacy tools you already have:

- *International treaties and policy documents – use relevant quotes*
- *Research articles*
- *Outcomes that you can share – better learning outcomes, higher level of well-being, etc. proven by piloting activities*
- *Photos – but please be aware of children’s privacy rights and never share photos with recognisable people in them*
- *Media articles*
- *Methodology already developed*
- *Examples of artwork*

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DEVELOP

If you realise that there are some groups of people who are essential to be convinced are still not yet targeted, it is time to develop some new tools to reach them.

Examples of advocacy tools that you can provide:

- *Testimonials*
- *Own research outcomes*
- *Infographics of what you are promoting*
- *Videos, audios, photos – again being mindful of privacy rights*
- *Newsletters*
- *Website*
- *Social media posts*

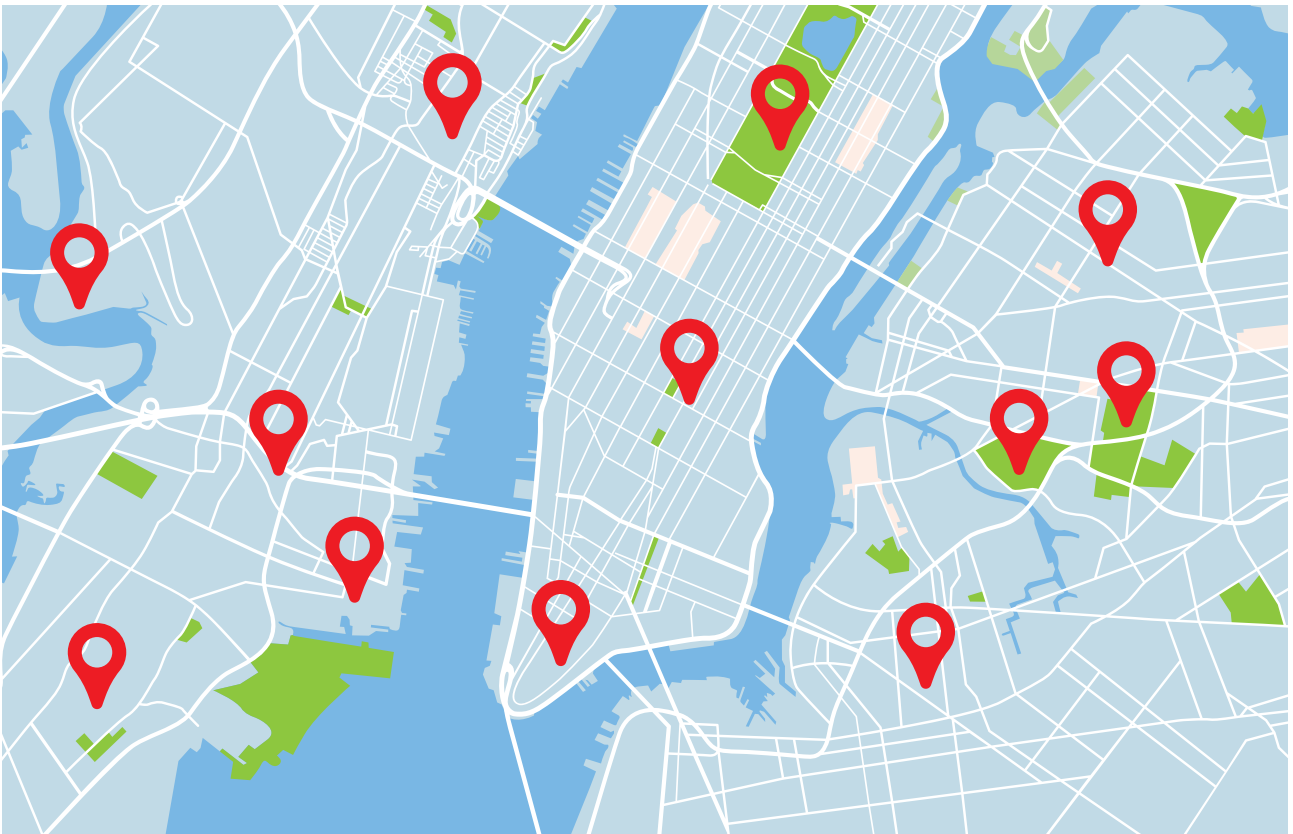
## COMAP TOOLS AS ADVOCACY TOOLS

Personal experiences are the strongest factors influencing any decision-maker. Even the most objective people claiming to work on the basis of evidence adjust how they evaluate evidence to their personal experiences. Thus, the best is to use the CoMap methodology as your strongest advocacy tool.

- Show artwork children and/or teachers and parents have created during CoMap workshops, and ask policy makers to evaluate them for themselves
- Have some strong images of participants faces showing their joy, concentration, excitement<sup>4</sup>
- Invite them to participate at a mapping workshop

The CoMap tools are available for download here:

[comaproject.eu/intellectual-outputs](http://comaproject.eu/intellectual-outputs)



4 The permission of participants is necessary for this. If the participant is a minor, you also need to ask for permission from their parent or guardian, however that consent is not valid without the explicit consent of the child if you are compliant with child rights regulations. Even if you have permission, use these images in a format that ensures they cannot be replicated – show them, but don't share them in digital or printed format.

# STARTING POINTS FOR YOUR ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES



## MAIN DEFINITIONS

*It is essential when starting advocacy work, to make sure that everyone understands the same thing under key phrases and terms.*

## OPEN SCHOOLING

Operating a school in a way that reflects on external ideas, topics and challenges and incorporates them in their teaching approaches and everyday school life, and in return, provide the creativity and potential as the assets of their pupils and teachers to the community around them.

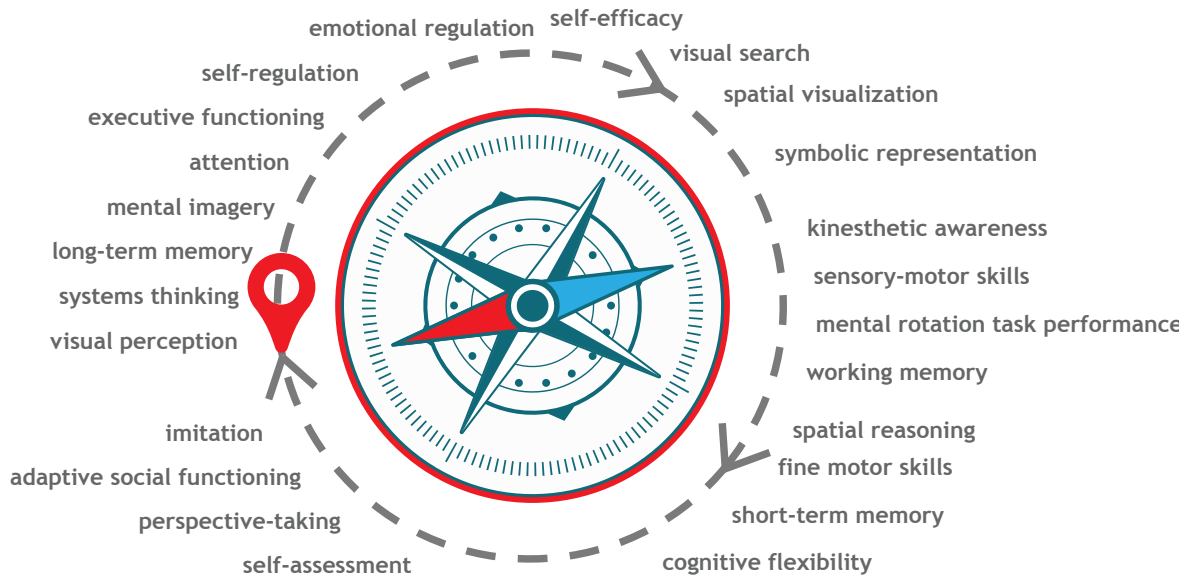
## ARTS AND CRAFTS EDUCATION

Traditionally, through arts and craft subjects children learn to value and appreciate artefacts and images across cultures and times. Experience in design, art, and crafts enable them to reflect critically on their own work and those by others. Doing arts in a freer educational approach fosters creativity and design thinking, but also improves eye-hand coordination, manual dexterity, visualisation skills and memory. It is also joyful and often playful – elements that enhance learning of children and adults alike.

The LEGO Foundation has visualised the different types of learning happening when somebody is asked to build a duck of 6 LEGO bricks within a short timeframe – an activity often carried out in training for teachers, but also managers in companies. There are over a hundred million ways of combining 6 LEGO bricks and many of them can be depictions of ducks. This activity uses and enhances 24 different skills:



## WHAT HAPPENED?

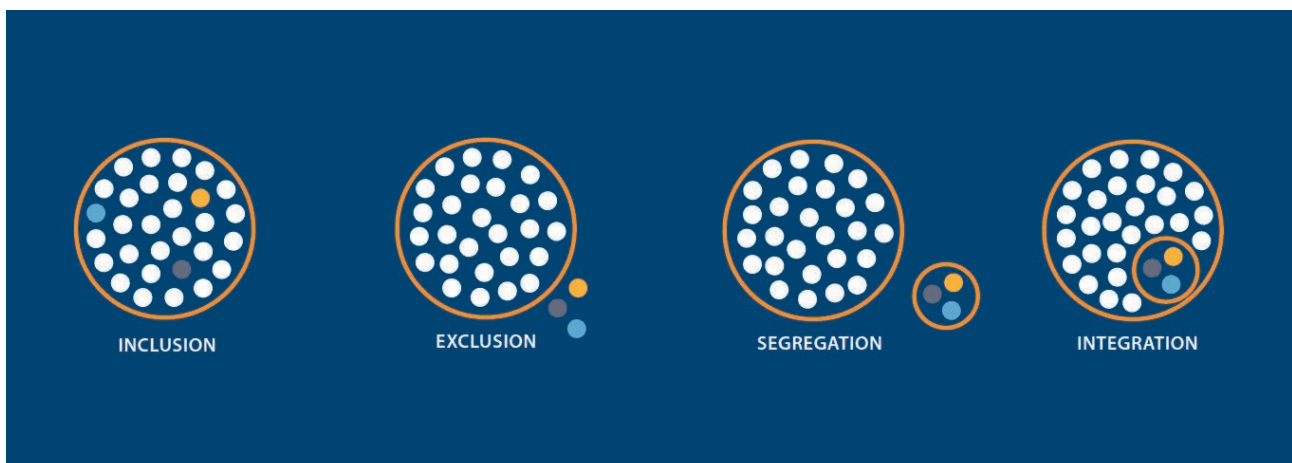


## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education allows students of all backgrounds to learn and grow side by side, to the benefit of all (UNICEF).

Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. It defines inclusive education, including formal early childhood and primary education, as an education that is available for all boys and girls and leads to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Inclusion is a difficult concept to define and there is no one agreed definition between practitioners or those who study inclusion academically. An easier starting point might be what inclusion is not, rather than what it is:



**Exclusion:** some children and young people are prevented from accessing quality education. Many children with intellectual disabilities, or learning disabilities have no access to quality education that fits their needs, often because the only options are financially not affordable for them, or there simply is not any opportunity locally.

**Segregation:** some children and young people are educated separately from others, for example in different classrooms but in the same school or through constant 'setting' or 'streaming' of groups throughout the curriculum.

**Integration:** children and young people are seemingly involved in learning together, but in reality are still educated separately. An example of this would be when a child is present in the same classroom as other children for classes but receives one-to-one support from an adult and does not interact with the other children. Inclusion, in contrast, could be described as 'with', not just 'in'.

## PARENT/GUARDIAN

Parental responsibility is exercised by the child's parents – biological or adoptive. Guardianship is exercised by someone who is not one of the child's parents. It is up to the person or persons with parental responsibility, or the guardian, to make decisions about the child's care and upbringing and to administer the child's property. While this legally defined responsibility is crucial, parents are also people to offer love and support. This kind of parental role is often shared with other family members such as older siblings or grandparents. In culturally diverse schools it is important to be aware that regardless of the legally defined decision-making role, the actual parental role might be played by other people or groups of people.

## STAKEHOLDER

In education, the term stakeholder typically refers to anyone – people or organisations – who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councillors, and state representatives. In short, stakeholders have a "stake" in the school and its students, meaning that they have personal, professional, civic, or financial interest or concern.

## FORMAL EDUCATION

Formal learning or formal education is education normally delivered by trained teachers in a systematic, intentional way within a daycare centre, kindergarten, school, university, another higher education institution or a vocational training provider. It is one of three forms of learning as defined by the OECD, the others being informal learning and non-formal learning.

## INFORMAL EDUCATION

Informal education is the wise, respectful and spontaneous process of cultivating learning. It works through conversation, and the exploration and enlargement of experience.

## NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or a complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters for people of all ages but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure; it may be short in duration and/or low intensity, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars. Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognized as formal qualifications by the relevant national educational authorities or to no qualifications at all. Non-formal education can cover programmes contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programmes on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development.

## TRAUMA

Trauma is the lasting emotional response that often results from living through a distressing event. Experiencing a traumatic event can harm a person's sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. Long after the traumatic event occurs, people with trauma can often feel shame, helplessness, powerlessness and intense fear.

We propose to use the definition of trauma by Bruce D. Perry for advocacy purposes as being very relevant for the school context. He differentiates between two types of trauma<sup>5</sup>: "Capital "T" trauma, or the experiences that likely come to mind for most people when thinking about trauma: abuse, neglect, natural disaster and death.

Small "t" trauma, "You can have a loving family... but if you're continually in a school where you're feeling like you don't belong, you're not the right colour, you're not the right gender, you're not the right religious beliefs, whatever it is, if you are continually in the outgroup, it leads to the same emotional, physical, and social consequences as capital "T" trauma". If prolonged enough, small "t" trauma activates stress response systems and leads to the very same changes in the brain."

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5 See <https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-with-oprah-winfrey-and-dr-bruce-d-perry-on-trauma-resilience-and-healing/>

## CHILD AGENCY

Agency is the ability to make wise decisions and put those decisions into actions that are consistent with the life we want to live. It is also a sense of self-efficacy, the belief that you can affect an outcome, that you have some power over what happens. In the context of CoMap it is also considered as making one's identity and perceptions visible and actively acknowledged by others to enhance and empower the personal, cultural, and social aspects of one's life. Listening deeply, being present and being willing to see the world through the eyes of the child are just some ways of respecting a child's sense of agency. Allowing children to express themselves freely through art and appreciating the products is a great manifestation of this.



# ADVOCACY THROUGH EXISTING POLICY



*Overview of relevant international and European legislation and policies*

## UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

While the EU has not concluded the UNCRC, all the EU Member States have ratified the Convention. The UNCRC explicitly recognises the rights of children with disabilities under its Article 23. In addition, Article 2 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability and Article 3 calls for the best interests of the child to be at the heart of any decision affecting children, including those with disabilities. Articles 5 and 18 recognises the sole right, duties and obligations of parents for the upbringing of their children and obliges member states to provide support for parents to fulfil this role in forms they require. At EU level, Article 3 TEU defines the protection of the rights of the child as a European Union objective which requires it to actively develop appropriate legislative or policy initiatives according to its competences.

## RETHINKING EDUCATION

The UNESCO report “Rethinking education: towards a global common good?” is an update by UNESCO of the approaches of one of the reports that has most influenced the world of education: the 1996 Delors Report “Learning: The Treasure Within”. The document is based on the enormous changes that the world has experienced in the previous 25 years. These changes are characterised by new degrees of complexity and contradiction, which imply an even greater need to transform education than indicated in the Delors Report. Among other things, it examines issues related to the governance of education, and in particular the principle of education as a public good. The report presents a humanist vision of education as an essential common good. This distinction is important in many European countries. Public good has a bad connotation in former socialist countries meaning not only that it is the state that is obliged to provide for them, but also that it does not really belong to anybody while not being transparent and accountable enough. As compared to this, the notion of common good emphasises the angle of all people being responsible for education – both as learners and as educators.

## GLOBAL LEARNING CRISIS

The World Bank has reported about the global learning crisis: a growing number of students attending school, but not acquiring basic skills. (World Bank 2018.) It is not only about children with no access to school anymore, but about those who do attend formal education, even receive some kind of school leaving certification, but do not acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, not to mention other skills necessary for the 21st century. School has little to do with real life which is a multifaceted phenomenon. First of all, school curricula are often overcrowded with skills and academic content that is outdated and without consensus on why they are necessary to teach and learn. School is also often sheltered from the outside world meaning that it provides little support and skills development in the field of everyday life situations – present and future – especially for those whose parents are less able to provide such necessary education at home struggling with aspects of everyday life themselves.

At the same time, there is a consensus that there is a need to change as quality, inclusive education is one of the keys to sustainable development all over the world. This is defined in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and education has a highlighted position being given number 4 as an SDG. (United Nations 2015.) There is also a growing consensus on the changing role of school and education that necessitates a change of approach from educating obedient workers for the assembly line to educating creative, critical thinkers for a robotised world.

In Europe PISA results have been declining and it is a warning sign regardless of the questions raised around PISA. According to the World Bank report, there is an alarmingly high percentage of students that do not even acquire basic reading, writing and numeracy skills while officially they are not early school leavers, but finish their formal education.

The EU has set overall goals in education that were to be met by 2010 and then by 2020 without full success;

There is a growing disappointment in school as an institution all over the world that has only increased during the school closures of 2020–22.

## EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

The EPCR principles include that:

- *Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successful transitions in the labour market.*
- *Regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding employment, social protection, education, and access to goods and services available to the public. Equal opportunities of under-represented groups shall be fostered.*
- *Children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality.*

# INSPIRATION FROM NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EXAMPLES OF THE COUNTRIES IN THE COMAP PROJECT



## GERMANY

There is a policy push for giving school leaders opportunities for performing leadership duties in supporting teachers and improving school. As part of this, more and more teachers participate in peer learning initiatives such as Erasmus+ mobility. However, this progress was somewhat slowed down with the strictest and longest restrictive measures in Europe since 2020.

## GREECE

Both music and art are compulsory subjects in both primary and lower secondary education and it is entitled as “Aesthetic Education”, and the school curriculum is largely based on teaching children the appreciation of ancient and more recent arts. Through the lessons of Aesthetic Education (visual arts and music), the connection of subjective perspective with emotional involvement and critical thinking is achieved. Consequently, they participate and enjoy a creative exploration in the arts field.

## HUNGARY

The country has a centralised school system and uniform national curriculum, but complete pedagogical freedom is provided to schools and teachers without the need to consult any other education stakeholders.

In case a school decides to include open schooling programmes in their local education programme and the school authority approves it, 100% funding is to be provided by the school authority. In reality, the funding is often missing, thus the execution of open schooling programmes depends on parents or external funding.

There is no legal restriction on who can enter school and students are also free to leave the building at any time although some schools invent such rules that are explicitly illegal. If it is an organised programme, parents need to be informed in advance. If an open schooling programme requires transportation, that is in nearly all cases a financial burden for the family.

## NETHERLANDS

Open schooling is encouraged by national policy in the Netherlands to an extent that does not interfere with the wide autonomy of schools. School leaders are autonomous and independent in entering into partnerships, and schools are autonomous to define their own curricula and teachers to choose their teaching methods as long as they meet output requirements at the end of school cycles. This creates a positive environment for open schooling initiatives.

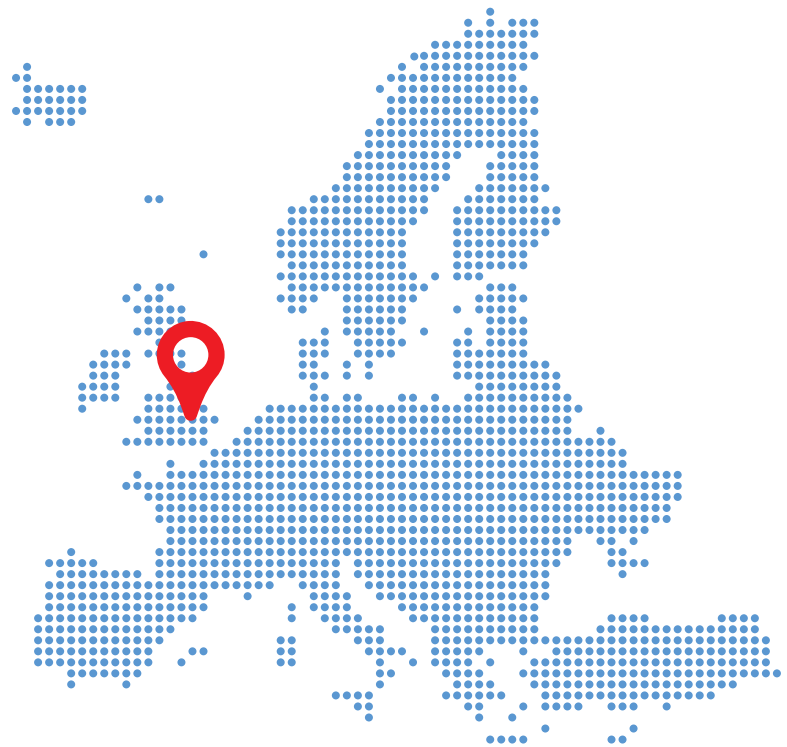
Students are regularly and meaningfully involved in decisions concerning school and their own learning, although they are not formally involved in school boards that have a proportionate representation of parents and teachers. Boards have a decisive role on overall school programmes, but play only a consultative role on curricula or specific activities such as open schooling partnerships as it falls under the teacher autonomy category. At the same time, parents have a decisive role in questions that require the allocation of school funds or direct payment by parents.

There are no restrictions on people entering school buildings, so there is a positive climate for open schooling activities that are within the school building. There are also no restrictions on free movement, so there are no obstacles in this field to open schooling activities outside of school.

## UNITED KINGDOM – ENGLAND

British schools have a tradition of working on projects and artistic expression has long been important at schools across the UK, thus arts education programmes are popular and in place regardless of the examination pressure.

School leaders have a high level of autonomy when deciding on their open schooling partnerships. Education in the UK has long been built on the professional collaboration of teachers, thus teachers are generally involved in decision-making. There is also an important role of non-teaching staff who are also regularly involved.





# WHY AND HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR OPEN SCHOOLING ART PROJECTS?



## WHY IS AN ART PROJECT A GOOD TOOL?

Every child has the right to quality education and learning. This means that when you start thinking about creating an art project you have to consider how to provide the opportunity of participation for all the students in your school, regardless of their various physical and mental abilities.

At the same time, an art project is an excellent tool to prove to the students, your colleagues and the wider school community that with careful planning it is indeed possible for everybody to participate. It makes it possible for students whose talents are not in fields traditionally celebrated by the school to have a highly satisfying learning experience that may also boost their classroom performance. Since an artistic project needs people to perform a diverse set of roles you can find a suitable job for nearly every student. There will be creative people who are good at writing or making props and costumes, others will have the opportunity to show off their technical skills with music or lights, yet others will enjoy being on stage, etc. Very often an opportunity to show such non-school-like talents raises the social status of a student, and subsequently even their classroom results may increase.

Also, arts provide a vehicle to express feelings and thoughts that are difficult to express in traditional school activities. This provides a good ground for uncovering and relieving trauma. Art therapy has long been established as a successful tool to heal – and it does not require any artistic talent. A recent study<sup>6</sup> suggests that art therapy is especially beneficial for survivors of prolonged or recurrent trauma. Also, a 2021 study<sup>7</sup> reports that art therapy may benefit children who have experienced trauma. Art therapy may also be beneficial for treating anxiety and depression, common symptoms of traumatic experiences, according to a review of studies<sup>8</sup>.

6 Schouten, K., Van Hooren, S., Knipscheer, J., Kleber, R., & Hutschemaekers, G. (2019). Trauma-focused art therapy in the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder: A pilot study. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 20(1), 114–130.

7 Braito, I., Rudd, T., Buyuktasgin, D. et al. (2022) Review: systematic review of effectiveness of art psychotherapy in children with mental health disorders. *Ir J Med Sci* 191, 1369–1383

8 Uttley L, Scope A, Stevenson M, et al. (2015) Systematic review and economic modelling of the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of art therapy among people with non-psychotic mental health disorders. Southampton (UK): NIHR Journals Library; Health Technology Assessment, No. 19.18.)

## CREATING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

An inclusive environment is safe in every sense of the word.

When planning the venue of your project (it can be inside the school building or outside of it) it is necessary to be informed about the various needs of the participants. Beside the more obvious issues like basic safety (e.g. no loose floorboards or free-range wires) or wheelchair access, you have to consider if the venue is easily accessible for everybody at all times (e.g. commuters might find it difficult to go home if rehearsals last till late afternoon or are organised at weekends). The best way to make sure that the venue is acceptable for every participant is to include them in the planning from the very beginning. A safe space needs certain boundaries. If you expect your participants to express themselves artistically you need to make sure that they feel safe when doing so, especially while they are still developing their skills and products.

You should also create a space that is not only physically safe, but where participants can express their opinion, concerns, fears, but also happiness and content. For this, it is of utmost importance to build trust within the group and also set rules together to make proper feedback possible, but only in a constructive, non-obtrusive way.

Creating a mentally and spiritually safe environment for everybody is difficult, but maintaining it throughout the whole duration of the project is almost impossible. If your students and other participants feel passionate about their art, it is very likely that they will have some clashes from time to time. You need to make sure that they learn to communicate their frustration in a respectful way. Students who are very talented may be especially difficult to handle in this regard and may require a gentle but firm hand in curbing their attitudes. The job of the teacher/facilitator is to support a learning process in which the development of the students is the most important goal.

## PARTICIPATORY DESIGN AND DELIVERY

In an ideal case, the role of the facilitator is a background role leaving most of the activities to the participating students and artists. It is a difficult position, quite unusual for most teachers. You have to be present, monitor the process, enable progress, but interfere as little as possible.

Remember that every moment of the artistic product creation is a learning opportunity for the students and other participants, but it is learning by doing. You should also remember that students are capable of doing far more than most adults think if they are given the opportunity and feel they are trusted.

A nearly fully student-led project will offer the widest possibilities for learning. However, your presence as the facilitator is essential in avoiding total failure. (Trial and error, however, is very beneficial for learning.)

After choosing the topic, students should be guided by you and the artist in the various phases of the project. It can also be students who organise the showing of the products to an internal or wider public.

## ENGAGING YOUR COLLEAGUES – PROS AND CONS

As these art projects are designed to be school projects, it is important to consider which of your colleagues are to be engaged.

First and foremost, you need to have school leadership on board. This is necessary for a number of reasons: school leadership should understand the pedagogical value of your project, school agenda may need some adjustments, you will probably use school premises and equipment, you may need support from other teachers or non-teaching staff, but they may even get involved in case of a complaint. Make sure that school leadership is kept informed, and make sure students are part of this information process so that this element of the project is also participatory.

You may want to engage other teachers, for example arts teachers in the process. In such a case, make sure that your role as facilitator and especially the role of the artist is not taken over, students agree with engaging a certain teacher, the teacher's role is clear for all, and the teacher plays according to the agreed rules. In case of potential problems or doubts you can consider engaging an external player such as a local artist instead. The same is true for any non-teaching staff you may engage in the process, such as the janitor who may play a crucial role.

At the same time, your colleagues need to be informed and have ownership of your project as much as possible. Especially when you need a substitute or take students out of class, a positive mindset about the project is important. It is crucial to make the pedagogical value of your project clear to colleagues.



# USING DIGITAL AND ONLINE TOOLS IN ARTS PROJECTS



The CoMap approach promotes the use of its digital platform for sharing art projects with others and being inspired by their work. It adds to the openness of the approach but also adds some elements that need to be considered. It is a topical issue as after the school closures it is a clear wish of students, parents and also teachers to keep using digital tools to accompany (and not replace) in-person activities in schooling and in the broader context of education.

## CHOOSING AND USING DIGITAL TOOLS

For educational purposes, schools can require children to bring their own device(s) (usually referred to as *bring your own device systems*, “BYOD”) to class. In such cases, it is important not only to ensure that children have a tool with which they can work, but that said tool is fit for purpose. While it is natural that children bring their own pens and exercise books, there is a lot of debate around the BYOD policy, especially inclusion concerns as compared to the personal nature of digital devices. We wouldn’t use shared smartphones as adults, and most people have similar feelings about tablet or laptop computers. **BYOD policies have a lot of merit**, a clear positive effect on learning, and these outweigh the concern arising (e.g. playing games or going on social media instead of working), especially if it is accompanied by interesting tasks. It also makes it possible for students to continue whatever they have been working on outside of the classroom. For an **inclusive BYOD policy, schools must understand who needs support by providing a device**, and if digital devices are used, there must be a lending library or similar solutions for those unable to buy a device.

Since it is relatively complicated to create an environment that is based on full consent, teachers are advised to use online services that do not need registration or where registration is optional, but it is possible to use the services in full without.

It is also a good idea to allow students the freedom to choose between similar services if collaborative use is not absolutely necessary. For example, if students are asked to have a learning journal, you should offer them to use a blogging or micro-blogging site, social media or an offline document.

## MITIGATING RISKS IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

Being and doing things online is part of the life of all our students. As a teacher, parent or other educator, you have a duty to support minors to navigate online in a way that both considers their rights and well-being. Thus, it is important to abandon risk prevention approaches and start actively mitigating risks.

There is no question about a certain hierarchy of child rights: **we need to do everything we can to prevent any risk to life**. Still, accidents and incidents happen, and children – sadly – die. However, you teach children certain skills, for example to prevent them from being hit by a car and allow them to leave the house every day. The media is full of stories about children being harmed, mostly mentally by online activities. The answer for many is to prevent children from going online (in their presence) or using certain online tools, such as social media, but this approach only leads to children facing these situations in secret, without support from adults they could trust. Similarly to navigating the roads, **we need to teach our children how to recognise and deal with online risk and harm** – and thus starting to provide for another basic right, the right to education. We also need to ensure a family and school environment where children feel safe to seek adult (primarily parental) advice if they feel uncomfortable, sad or at risk – thus providing for the basic right to be brought up in a loving and caring environment.

Research has confirmed that for the children of today online and offline presence means a continuum, not two separate fields of life. Online tools, and especially social media provide the platform for getting together, for organising social life, for expressing views and debating them, for widening their horizon and learning about the world around them. Therefore, child rights organisations have highlighted the importance of online access – thus providing for a number of basic child rights, such as the right to the freedom of speech, the right to peaceful assembly, and again the right to education. When legislation, family, or school attempts to prevent access, they violate all these rights while their actions are definitely not justifiable by the prevention from harm as a proportionate element. It is important to mention that adult access to mailboxes, social media handles and other personal online spaces as well as most so-called parental control tools are also violating the basic right to privacy.

## GENERAL APPROACHES TO SOCIAL SHARING

Social media platforms are online platforms that provide a space to **share and view content**. The form, manner, and the publicity of shared content is widely different between platforms. However, their core unifying feature is that all users are able to share the same type of content with each other that other users can see. **The age at which children start engaging with such platforms is rapidly decreasing.**

The CoMap platform is a safe, limited-use social media platform that also provides the possibility to learn and practise the related netiquette.

## DATA PROTECTION AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

One of the most wide-spread practices violating child rights and data protection is the common practice of obtaining a blanket consent from parents for photos and videos, often for a whole school year. While children's right to give consent is limited, they have the right to express their opinion and it is to be listened to. This means that

- *children of all ages need to give consent to photo and video making and use, parental consent only authorises this already given consent under the GDPR defined age (it is between 13 and 16, depending on the country,*
- *over the age of consent, asking for parental consent is illegal.*

It is also necessary for the child to fully understand what they consent for. Thus, blanket consent is not suitable, but it is necessary to ask for consent for each use of each picture. The common practice of schools and also some teachers to share pictures on websites and social media is usually unauthorised and thus illegal.

The right to be forgotten is to be guaranteed by the person or institution handling the pictures or video, but in reality it is very difficult to ensure it as pictures and videos are regularly copied to other websites. Thus, in general, it is advisable to not share videos of children publicly, and limit photos to ones that have no recognisable child in them.

Another major child rights concern is about **intellectual property rights**. Although, in case of minors, parents act as guardians, children are still the rights holders. Thus, a drawing, painting, poem, text, etc. created by a child cannot be freely used, **the consent of the child (that may be withdrawn) and the consent of the parent must be obtained**, for example for sharing it in a public picture gallery on the school's website or the CoMap platform.

For more detailed guidance for teachers on using digital tools in teaching and learning, check out this guide for teachers developed by CoMap consortium partner IPA together with the European School Heads Association: <https://library.parenthelp.eu/seafarers-guide/>

# THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS – WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?



When you are trying to convince other stakeholders, such as the school leader or the teachers to adopt this methodology, you might have to address some common doubts or perceived problems. This section is designed to help you come up with an answer to these doubts.

## **ARTIST DOESN'T HAVE A DEGREE IN PEDAGOGY**

The CoMap methodology offers training materials for the artists who will work with the pupils, and the teacher is present at all times during the sessions: However, they are encouraged not to interrupt the artist who leads the sessions, but support them with their professional pedagogy knowledge if necessary.

## **NOT ALL TEACHERS ARE EXPERTS IN ART**

The whole idea of open schooling builds on the fact that teachers cannot be the experts in everything, thus it is to everyone's benefit to bring in or to go out and visit external experts. The teacher still remains in a learning leader position, and helps with the preparation, the facilitation, and leads the discussions after the open schooling activity, but during the session the expert on art itself and art education is somebody else.

## **ARTISTS ARE NOT THE RIGHT ROLE MODELS FOR STUDENTS**

It's a common misconception that artists are living an unconventional lifestyle, that they are not the right role models for children, or that their values don't align with the schools. When you engage an artist, you are not inviting a role model, but a person with specific skills and attitudes toward art. By including the artist in the (formal or informal) classroom you are adding to the diversity of the group that supports students' social-emotional learning. Artists experience different ways to express themselves, and have different career paths, and it helps them to understand how the world can be viewed in many ways.

## **THERE IS NO FREEDOM TO CHANGE THE CURRICULUM**

Many countries in Europe have a rigid curriculum, however, the CoMap methodology allows you to start small, and to stay within the bounds of the freedom allowed however narrow it might be. Introducing the methodology suggested in CoMap is also something that you can implement within the boundaries of a centralised curriculum. European countries all offer some level of pedagogical freedom and teachers can choose the classroom methods that fits their students' learning needs best.

## **ART ISN'T USEFUL**

While there is a lot of focus on other, seemingly more "useful" subjects, and there might be pressure both from the teaching body and the parents to focus on those, art is a way to focus on the well being and general mental health of the students (and teachers) as well as provide them with a tool of self-expression. It is especially a great tool for those who do not enjoy or are not successful in oral or written assignments. At the same time, you will also find evidence in this toolkit on the benefits of arts for developing skills for more traditional school learning.

## **IT'S DANGEROUS TO LEAVE THE SCHOOL BUILDING**

Many schools don't support any activities outside of the school building due to the concerns of teachers or some parents about the safety of children. It is impossible and very damaging to pretend that children can be protected from all harm by simply not allowing them to leave the building during the day. Instead, we recommend spending time on teaching them basic safety measures (e.g. how to cross the street), the logistics and possibly ask for an extra teacher or a volunteer from among the parents to tag along and help ensuring the safety of the students. At the same time, regardless of national legislation on this topic, it is a violation of children's rights to restrict their freedom, thus the logistics and preparatory approach is well-founded.

## **NOT ALL KIDS ARE TALENTED IN ARTS**

When art is used as a communication method, or as a tool to work with trauma, it is not about talent or the quality of the art. Art is a tool of self-expression, a way to communicate with the students in a new way, thus the focus needs to be on the emotional aspect and not on the particular level of art outcome. However, there will be art forms that some children are not comfortable about (they think they cannot draw or paint), so the most inclusive approach is to provide for various art forms by e.g. providing play-doh or computers.



## **OPEN SCHOOLING IS A LOT OF EXTRA WORK**

Open schooling has been promoted as an approach that creates an engaging environment for children's learning while strengthening links to local communities. Local expertise and experience incorporated into learning at school and making links to the real world offers ways to learn more meaningfully and leads to better motivation of learners, but also of teachers.

You are encouraged to start small, use your positive outcomes as a means to grow the scale of activities, and the failures to improve.

At the same time, all schools aim for catering to the various learning needs of children. Starting open schooling needs investment, especially because schools and teachers need to create the necessary frameworks and processes. But as it happens with most new things, once in place, it actually makes the teaching work easier.

## **IT IS NOT IN MY SALARY**

This is why you need school leadership and other teachers on board. You may want to include the art project in your regular work as a class head or coordinator since the responsibility in such a role is always beyond subjects and focuses on students' social-emotional development. If you want to include it in your subject's curricular activities, exercise your pedagogical freedom. Also, in some schools teachers are paid for extracurricular activities.

## **ARTISTS WILL NOT AND SHOULD NOT WORK FOR FREE**

The CoMap methodology is promoted as an open schooling activity for a number of reasons. One of them being the focus on the school. In non-formal or informal education, educators often or mostly work as unpaid volunteers. However, in open schooling, the activities are within the boundaries of formal compulsory education provisions. Since the government has the responsibility for providing the financial means for compulsory education, once your art project is accepted as an open schooling activity, the payment for artists is also cared for under normal circumstances. Similarly, the necessary material and props should be financed from the school budget or other provisions for schooling in an open schooling context.





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**IPA** [Netherlands]

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**TU Dresden CODIP** [Germany]



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

This project has received funding from the European Commission under grant agreement 2020-1-UK01-KA227-SCH-094553.

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.