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Life competencies in action: Insights from Students and Teachers on the *Positive Discipline in European Schools* program's Impact

IMPACT STUDY

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the present Impact Study is to demonstrate the effects of the *KA220-SCH Positive Discipline in European Schools Project* in the six schools where it was implemented during the 2023/2025 project period across partner countries: Hungary, France, Portugal, Poland, Bulgaria, and North Macedonia.

The programme was introduced within schools as a dedicated extracurricular activity, embedded into the school day under the name *Life Competency Lessons* (called LifeComp, 45-minute sessions). T-Tudok Inc. as partner organisation and educational research expert was responsible for assessing the impact of the programme on both students and teachers from multiple perspectives.

Teachers participated in the project over a two-year period: the first year was dedicated to professional preparation and training, while the second year focused on classroom implementation. Students were introduced to the methodology in the second year of the project. Parents were also involved in the programme through the *Parents Helping Parents* component, which facilitated information sharing and community-based activities.

The Impact Study of the *Positive Discipline in European Schools* programme provides consistent evidence that the LifeComp lessons, grounded in Positive Discipline principles, made a measurable and meaningful contribution to improving classroom climate, student socio-emotional skills, and teacher practices across the six participating countries. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the research allowed for both the assessment of concrete outcomes and the exploration of underlying processes that explain the programme's effects.

Convergence of perspectives emerged as one of the strongest findings. Students reported that teachers increasingly listened to their concerns, encouraged effort as well as achievement, and recognised individual strengths. These perceptions were confirmed by teachers themselves, who described a shift in their own pedagogical posture: moving from punitive and confrontational approaches towards collaborative, solution-focused strategies. Classroom observations further reinforced this picture, pointing to a climate of greater mutual respect, shared responsibility, and constructive problem-solving.

Student development was evident across several domains. Survey results showed that participants in the LifeComp lessons improved their knowledge and internalisation of key competencies such as self-regulation, empathy, cooperation, and growth mindset. Gains were especially notable in areas supporting collaboration and resilience in learning. In parallel, soft-skill indicators reflected a decrease in negative self-perceptions, an increase in social confidence, and greater persistence when facing academic challenges. While improvements in assertive problem-solving and empathy were more modest, qualitative findings indicate that students had acquired practical tools and strategies they could apply both in and beyond school. Many students described transferring what they learned into family life, peer relationships, and leisure contexts—an important indicator of sustainability and real-world relevance.

Teacher interviews highlighted that the programme served not only as a new methodological toolkit but also as a catalyst for professional reflection and identity. Educators described a

renewed sense of purpose and a stronger professional community built around shared practices. At the same time, they also identified systemic constraints—chiefly limited time, parallel curricular demands, and uneven institutional commitment—that occasionally hindered deeper or more consistent integration of Positive Discipline methods.

Focus groups with students revealed an equally rich picture. Beyond the acquisition of psychosocial skills, students spoke of an increased sense of belonging, greater motivation to attend school, and stronger peer connections. They also recognised limits: some peers and teachers were reluctant to engage, and one session per week often felt insufficient to embed lasting change. Nonetheless, students consistently recommended the continuation and expansion of the programme, often calling for it to be made available to all classes, all teachers, and all schools.

Taken together, the different research strands demonstrate that Positive Discipline, when applied through structured and engaging LifeComp lessons, generates measurable benefits for students' socio-emotional development, strengthens teacher-student relationships, and contributes to a more supportive school climate. At the same time, the findings also underline that for these benefits to reach their full potential, structural integration and broader institutional commitment are required.

The evidence base provided by this study forms a strong foundation for drawing policy lessons. In addition to this report, the research team will publish a set of Policy Recommendations, which will translate these insights into actionable guidance for schools, educational authorities, and policymakers across Europe. These recommendations will focus on how to sustain and scale Positive Discipline practices in ways that ensure equity, inclusion, and long-term impact.

Research method

The research was structured into five distinct modules, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

On the quantitative side, two waves of online student surveys were conducted in Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025, involving approximately 500 students in total. In addition, an online teacher survey was carried out in Spring 2025, with the participation of around 30 teachers. While online surveys do not allow for in-depth understanding or exploration of the reasoning behind responses, they offer the significant advantage of collecting data anonymously, which increases the likelihood of honest answers. They also enable the structured handling of large datasets and support the identification of correlations — for example, linking variables such as country, family background, age, and the perceived impact of the programme.

The qualitative component included several complementary methods. A monitoring visit was organized in Makó in Winter 2025, during which two *LifeComp* lessons were observed, and four in-depth interviews were carried out. The research team drew on the insights gained during the monitoring visit to refine the design of the teacher interviews and to fine-tune the tools used in the student focus group discussions. In Spring 2025, structured interviews were conducted with 15 teachers, while four student focus group discussions took place during Spring and Summer 2025, engaging approximately 40 students.

Focus groups, or discussion groups, are a qualitative research method commonly used in the humanities and social sciences to collect data on individuals' perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes regarding a specific topic. This method involves forming a small group of people (usually between 6 and 12 participants) to discuss a topic under the direction of a facilitator—or two facilitators—who take on the dual role of leading the group, and moderating and regulating it as needed. The group facilitator is therefore the guarantor of both the content discussed during the group discussion and the form it may take. He or she is the one who allows everyone to express themselves and ensures that the discussion is circular and that the content discussed remains closely linked to the objectives of the study that motivated the establishment of this survey.

The 15 active teachers interviewed bring extensive professional experience, in many cases spanning several decades, across a wide range of fields and student age groups. Several hold postgraduate or specialized qualifications (e.g. IT, psychology); some contribute to teacher training as university lecturers, while others work as development teachers supporting students with special educational needs. The personal interviews provided valuable insights, allowing the project’s positive impacts and challenges to be understood in greater depth and complexity through the teachers’ perspectives.

Results from the online student survey

An online student survey was conducted with the participation of approximately 700 students across six countries, involving both Positive Discipline (PD) and control groups. Within this sample, 513 paired responses were collected, comprising 287 students in the PD group and 226 students in the control group.

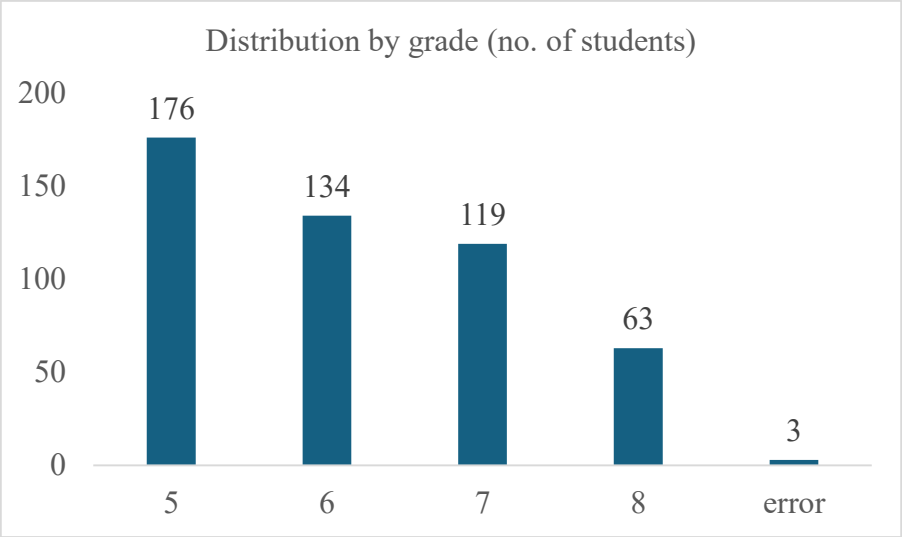
The survey was designed to explore changes occurring over the course of one school year. Key areas of focus included students' perceptions of their teachers during and outside of *LifeComp* lessons, the development of soft skills, competencies in assertive problem-solving, and their knowledge of the core concepts of Positive Discipline.

1. Table: Number of surveyed students from the partner countries

COUNTRY	POSITIVE DISCIPLINE	CONTROL	SUM
France	72	66	138
Hungary	62	43	105
North Macedonia	24	46	70
Poland	69	13	82
Portugal	33	35	68
Bulgaria	27	23	50
SUM	287	226	513

Sample Characteristics

The analysis was based on data from 176 fifth-grade, 134 sixth-grade, 119 seventh-grade, and 63 eighth-grade students. In terms of gender distribution, 48% of the participants were female and 52% were male.



1. Figure Distribution of surveyed students by grade:

Student's voice – How do they like LifeComp lessons?

When evaluating an educational programme, it is essential to examine multiple dimensions. Beyond assessing how students' skills or knowledge have developed, it is equally important to understand how participating learners experienced the programme. Did they find it engaging? Did they enjoy the lessons? How do they articulate what they internalised and whether the programme had an impact on them?

Equally relevant is what students themselves highlight when responding in an entirely open-ended format: did they perceive the programme as influencing them personally, the classroom community, their teachers, no one at all, or everyone involved? To capture these perspectives, we included a fully open-ended question in the student survey, seeking to uncover students' own reflections on the programme's effects.

The open-ended responses revealed three main thematic areas regarding the impact of the *LifeComp* lessons: (1) social relationships, (2) mental well-being and emotional skills, and (3) perceptions of teachers.

Social relationships

Students frequently highlighted the role of the lessons in strengthening class bonds, creating friendships, and fostering a sense of belonging within the school community. They emphasised the importance of communication and cooperation, including discussing issues, completing tasks together, and addressing interpersonal problems. The lessons were also seen as a means of developing empathy and social awareness, such as understanding peers' moods, recognising what helps or harms friends, and fostering civic consciousness.

As one student put it: *"I think it's an excellent way to strengthen class bonds."* Another explained: *"They're fun, they bring us closer together, and they help us understand others. Well, I think it's a useful session for living better in a community. I love it. It's a class that should exist in every school in the world."* Students also stressed the problem-solving dimension: *"I think they're very useful because if something bothers someone, we can talk about it there and*

maybe we can solve it." Others noted the wider life skills they developed: *"It's fun, and we learn to be with others and also become citizens for humanity."* and *"I think they're a good way to solve problems in class."*

Mental well-being and emotional skills

Another recurrent theme was the positive impact on emotional regulation and stress management. Students described the lessons as providing a safe and calm space for discussing problems, handling emotions, and practising self-control. They reported feeling more relaxed, listened to, and able to think more clearly. The sessions also offered practical tools such as forgiveness, effective communication, perspective-taking, and learning from mistakes. The playful and engaging methods (games, activities, role plays) enhanced motivation and made the lessons relevant to everyday life.

As one student reflected: *"It helps me calm down and rest at the end of the day."* Another emphasised the combination of emotional and practical benefits: *"I really like Positive Discipline because we can talk about our problems, how to react, how to forgive, how to say things, etc., and also because we play games. I really like it, it helps us with emotions or arguments, and a lot of things. It calms us down."* For some, the sessions provided a rare opportunity to open up: *"I really like them and it calms my stress a lot, and sometimes I can talk about my problems, but that's very rare."* Students also reported increased self-confidence: *"I think it's something that helps us solve our problems better and also learn to trust ourselves."*

Teacher perceptions

Finally, students expressed highly positive views of the teachers involved in the programme. They were often described as calm, kind, understanding, and supportive. Teachers were appreciated for explaining the material clearly, paying attention to students, and guiding problem-solving conversations. Individualised support and recognition, such as specific praise, were particularly valued. The activities led by teachers were described as "cool" and as helping students to open up.

As one student noted: *"The teacher always understands us in different situations."* Another highlighted the collaborative approach: *"The teacher and I often talk about problems and try to find a solution that works for everyone."* Several students expressed gratitude, as illustrated by this comment: *"Wonderful, a sacred moment. I learn a lot and have already learned a lot from the LifeComp classes, which makes me a better person. I'm immensely grateful to Professor [.....] for helping me when I needed it most."* Similarly, others pointed to the added value of clarification and support: *"They often explain topics I didn't understand before."*

What are the change students perceiving?

In addition to exploring students' own experiences, we were also interested in how they perceived potential changes in the behaviour of teachers participating in the programme. To this end, students were presented with nine statements, which had been developed in collaboration with Positive Discipline experts. They were asked to indicate, both at the beginning of the programme and at the end of the school year, which of these statements best

described their *LifeComp* lessons, and which characterised the behaviour of the participating teachers during their other subject classes (e.g. history or language lessons).

This approach was particularly important, as it allowed us to examine the extent to which the core principles of the programme were realised in actual classroom implementation. Moreover, it provided insight into whether teachers' behavioural changes extended beyond the dedicated *LifeComp* lessons and were also visible in their everyday teaching practice.

The statements were the following:

1. The teacher listens to me if I have a problem or if something is bothering me.
2. We, the students, also help solve problems, and we come up with ideas together. The teacher often says: "Let's solve it together!"
3. In the class, we doesn't look for who made a mistake, but how we can fix it.
4. Everyone has responsibilities and tasks in the class.
5. The teacher encourages us rather than punishes us.
6. The teacher doesn't only praise me when something turns out well, but also when I work hard and try my best.
7. If a test doesn't go well, instead of getting scolded, we talk about it in class to figure out together what we can do to improve.
8. Teachers make mistakes sometimes, but that's okay.
9. The teacher sees our strengths and good qualities.

Student Perceptions:

In Autumn 2024, students most commonly reported that everyone has responsibilities and tasks in the class, teachers make mistakes sometimes but that is acceptable, and that teachers recognize their strengths and positive qualities. By Spring 2025, students' perceptions had shifted: the most typical responses highlighted that teachers listen to them when they have a problem or are bothered by something, praise is given not only for successful outcomes but also for effort and hard work, and teachers continue to acknowledge their strengths and positive qualities. Notably, the perception that teachers occasionally make mistakes remained consistent.

The items showing the largest positive change reflected increased collaboration and problem-solving in the classroom. Students reported that they now help solve problems and generate ideas together, with teachers often encouraging the approach: "Let's solve it together!" Additionally, students observed that the focus shifted from finding who made a mistake to figuring out how to fix it, and that teachers praised effort as well as outcomes. Some aspects, however, showed little or no change: students continued to perceive that everyone has responsibilities and tasks in the class, and collaborative reflection after unsuccessful tests remained among the least typical experiences.

Teacher Reflections:

Teachers were surveyed after the conclusion of the program in May 2025 to share their perceptions of the most typical aspects of their classroom work and any changes they had noticed. The three statements they resonated with the most were: listening to students when they have problems or concerns, praising students not only for successful outcomes but also for effort and trying their best, and recognizing students' strengths and positive qualities. The statement they identified with the least was that "I make mistakes too as a teacher, and that's not a problem," indicating that while teachers acknowledge the importance of strengths and effort, they may be less comfortable openly recognizing their own mistakes.

Observed Alignment and Impact

Taken together, these findings show strong convergence between student and teacher perspectives. Both groups highlighted increased attention to students' concerns, effort-focused praise, and recognition of strengths, as well as enhanced collaboration in problem-solving. This suggests that LifeComp contributed to fostering a more supportive, participatory, and effort-oriented classroom climate, with impacts extending beyond the structured lessons themselves.

Familiarty with concepts used at LifeComp lessons

The LifeComp program focuses on nine core competencies: Self-regulation, Flexibility, Well-being, Empathy, Communication, Cooperation, Learning Management, Growth Mindset, and Critical Thinking. To evaluate its impact, students' knowledge of these concepts was measured at the beginning (Autumn 2024) and end (Spring 2025) of the program and compared to a control group who did not participate in LifeComp.

The results indicate that students in the LifeComp program (PD group) generally showed improvements across most competencies, with particularly notable gains in Self-regulation (from 50% to 64%), Empathy (from 67% to 82%), Cooperation (from 93% to 98%), and Growth Mindset (from 65% to 71%). For Communication, Well-being, Learning Management, and Critical Thinking, students maintained high levels of knowledge or demonstrated modest increases.

Compared to the control group, which also showed some natural growth over the same period, the LifeComp group had larger relative improvements in several key areas, especially those related to collaboration, social-emotional skills, and self-directed learning. For example, Self-regulation and Empathy increased more in the PD group than in the control group (Self-regulation: +14 pp vs. +13 pp; Empathy: +15 pp vs. +13 pp). Other competencies, such as Communication and Well-being, were already at high levels in both groups, leaving less room for measurable growth.

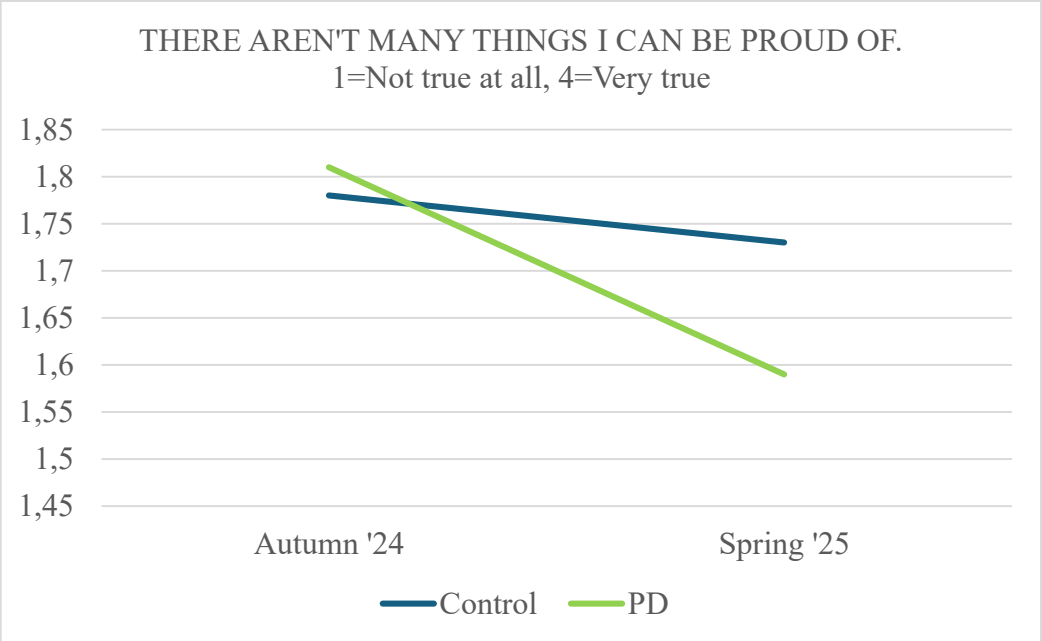
Overall, these findings suggest that the LifeComp program positively influenced students' understanding of its core competencies, particularly in areas that support collaborative problem-solving, social-emotional awareness, and effort-focused learning.

Impact of the Positive Discipline Program on Students' Soft Skills

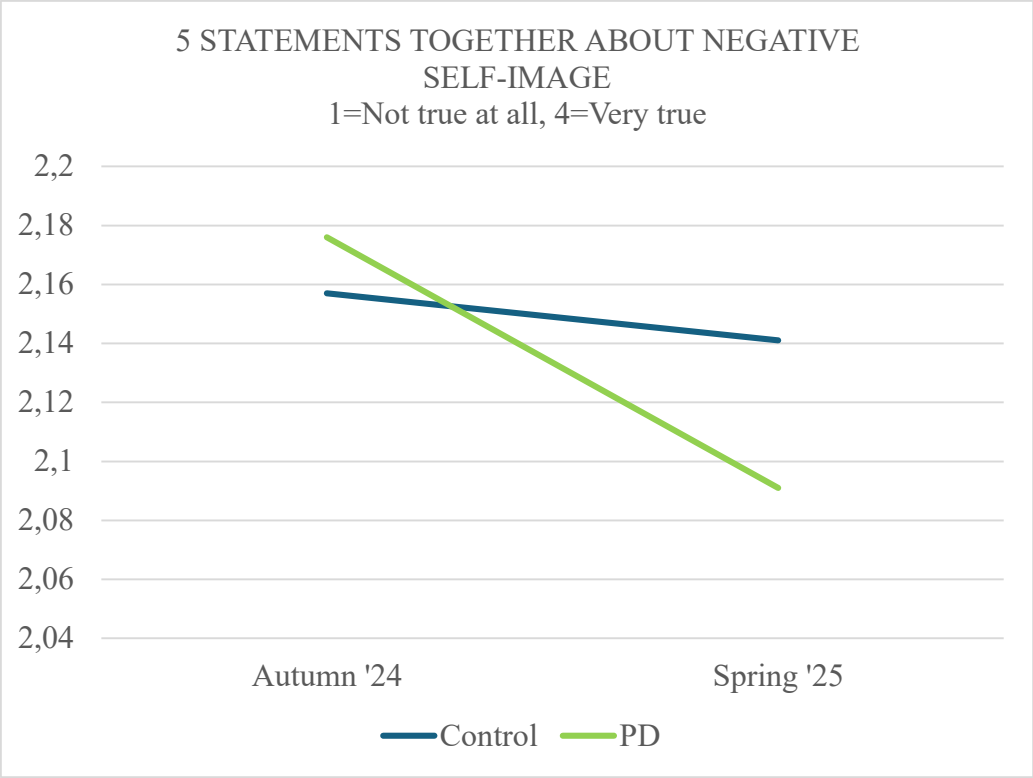
In addition to assessing core LifeComp competencies, we investigated how participation in the Positive Discipline (PD) program influenced students' soft skills, specifically their self-concept, social skills, empathy, and learning motivation.

Students' responses to 34 statements were analyzed to assess changes in self-image, social competences, empathy, and learning motivation. The results indicate that participation in the Positive Discipline (PD) program had a measurable impact on several aspects of students' soft skills.

Regarding self-image, PD students showed a significant decrease in negative self-perceptions compared to control students, suggesting an improvement in how they viewed themselves. This is particularly noteworthy because, as observed earlier, teachers' approaches to students had also shifted over the course of the program. Teachers focused more on encouragement rather than punishment, which likely contributed to students internalizing a more positive perception of themselves. This suggests that even a single school year can have a meaningful impact on students, as they incorporate the perceptions of significant adults, such as their teachers, into their own self-image.

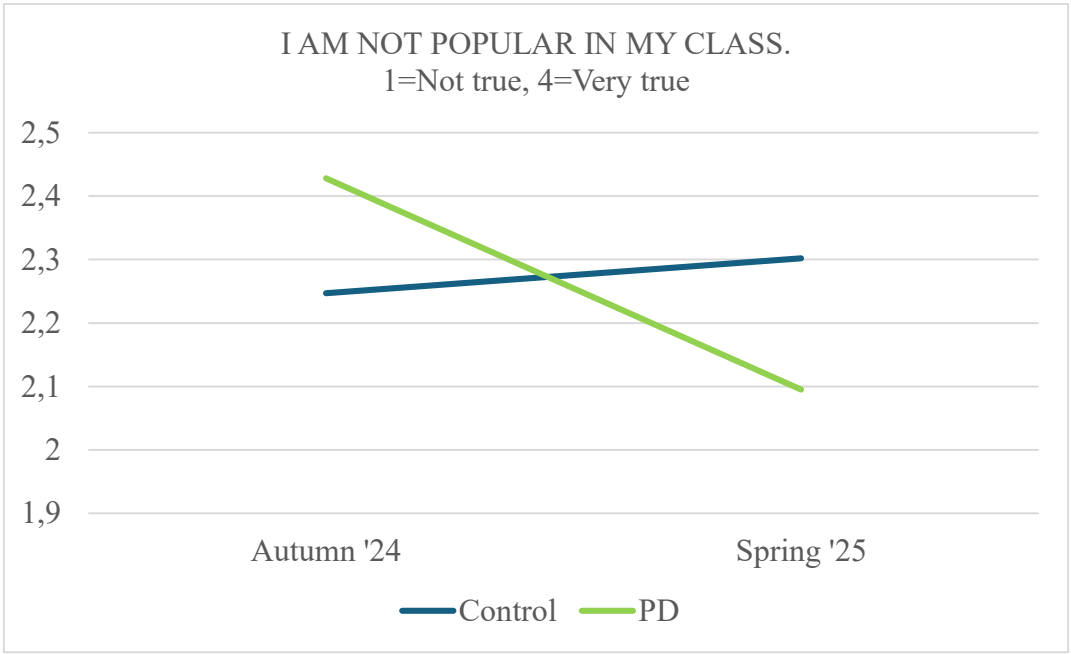


2. Figure: Change in students' self-perception I.



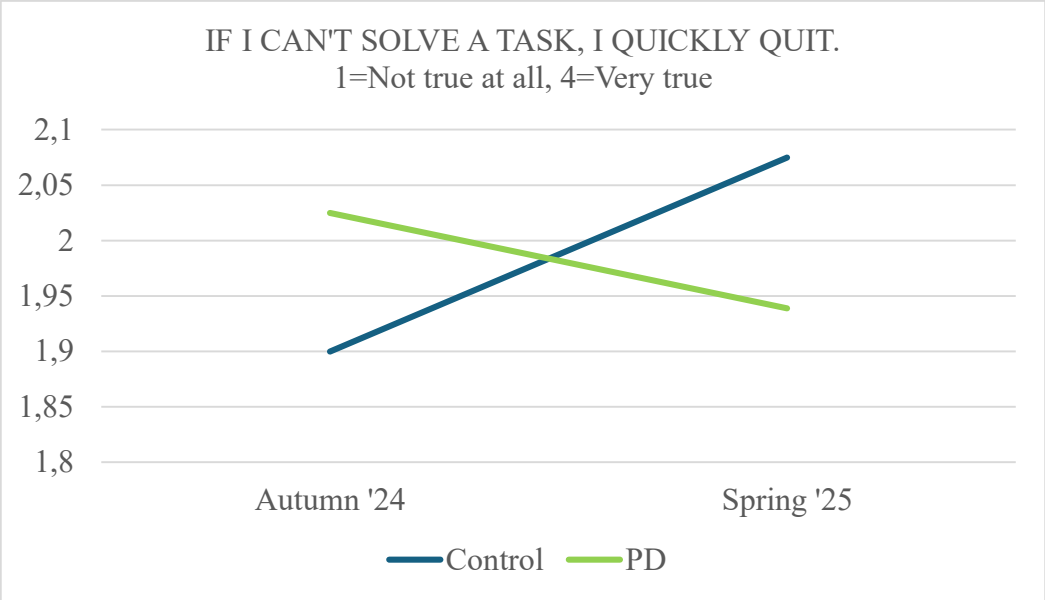
3. Figure: Change in students' self-perception II.

In terms of social competences, PD students reported a greater reduction in the perception of being unpopular in class than their peers in the control group, indicating enhanced social confidence and classroom integration.



4. Figure: Change in students' self-confidence

Learning motivation also improved: PD students demonstrated significantly higher persistence when working on tasks they did not immediately know how to solve, reflecting greater resilience and effort-focused engagement.



5. Figure: Change in students' learning motivation

No significant changes were observed in empathy between the PD and control groups. Overall, these findings suggest that the Positive Discipline program positively influenced students' self-image, social skills, and learning motivation, contributing to the development of essential socio-emotional and motivational competencies, while its effect on empathy may require further reinforcement.

Changes in Students' Assertive Problem-Solving Skills

The Positive Discipline program also aimed to influence students' assertive problem-solving abilities. Students were presented with eight realistic scenarios and asked to indicate how they would respond, choosing between avoidant, aggressive, or assertive strategies. The same scenarios were presented at the beginning (pre-test) and end (post-test) of the program, allowing for a direct comparison of changes in responses over time.

Analysis of the results showed that, out of the eight situations, only one demonstrated a statistically significant shift from non-assertive to assertive responses among students. This indicates that while there was a positive change in students' problem-solving approaches, the effect was limited and not consistently strong across different situations. Therefore, the program appears to have had a modest impact on enhancing students' assertive problem-solving skills.

Online student survey – Summary of the results

The Positive Discipline (PD) program had a measurable positive impact on students and teachers.

Students reported that teachers increasingly listened to their concerns, praised effort as well as outcomes, and recognized their strengths. Collaboration and problem-solving in class improved, with students actively participating in generating solutions. Teachers' self-reported observations largely aligned with student perceptions, highlighting increased attention to students' needs and effort-focused support.

Students in the PD group showed improvements in the nine LifeComp competencies, particularly in Self-regulation, Empathy, Cooperation, and Growth Mindset. Compared to the control group, the PD group demonstrated larger gains in collaboration, social-emotional skills, and self-directed learning, indicating that the program effectively enhanced key LifeComp concepts.

Participation in the PD program significantly improved students' self-image, social competences, and learning motivation. Notably, negative self-perceptions decreased more in PD students than in controls, reflecting the influence of teachers' encouragement-focused approach. Social confidence and classroom integration increased, and students showed greater persistence on challenging tasks. No significant changes were observed in empathy.

Students' assertive problem-solving skills showed limited improvement: only one out of eight scenarios demonstrated a statistically significant shift from non-assertive to assertive responses. This suggests a modest impact on this specific competence.

Focus group analysis

In order to evaluate the effects of the positive education program in the classroom, a particular focus was proposed on the primary stakeholders, and a collection of information from the students was considered. The methodological choice fell on a qualitative approach of the "focus groups" type.

Participants

The 36 participants (16 boys and 20 girls) are all students from classes that have benefited from LifeComp lessons in the six schools selected for the project. They are middle school students (students from 6th ^{to} 9th ^{grade}) from the six countries (Bulgaria, France, Hungary, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal). Their average age is 12 years. Some participants were mixed in the focus groups, according to their origin, others are homogeneous (Table 1).

2. Table: Description of participants in the different focus groups according to gender and country of origin

Focus Group	Place	Participants Gender	Nationality					
			Bulgaria	France	Hungary	Macedonia	Poland	Portugal
1	Portugal	10	4	4	/	/	/	2
2	Portugal	11	/	/	1	4	4	2
3	Hungary	9	/	/	9	/	/	/
4	France	6	/	6	/	/	/	/
		36	4	10	10	4	4	4

Method

Among the expected effects of the program, one hypothesis concerns the changes perceived by the students, both in their individual and collective school functioning. We therefore decided to question the students from the program on two distinct axes of reflection: first, by having them interact within a focus group on their knowledge and experiences of the Positive Discipline program. To do this, a semi-directive interview grid was developed to facilitate the discussion time (Table 3). This grid addresses three dimensions: i) the students' knowledge of the concept of Positive Discipline, in particular its defining criteria, the objectives they see in it, and the audience for which they believe it is intended; ii) their experiences of LifeComp lessons, more precisely what they consider to be an evolution of their class in terms of atmosphere, in particular and school climate, but also individual and collective functioning, focusing on different timeframes (before versus after the program); iii) Their assessment of Positive Discipline program, and more specifically their view of the program and what it has changed, both in the classroom and outside, the advantages of such a system and the possible limits and potential obstacles that they can already perceive.

3. Table: Focus group interview grid

Concept of Positive Discipline		
WHAT ?	FOR WHAT ?	FOR WHOM?

What is this ?	What is it for?	When can this be used?
Your experience with LifeComp lessons		
BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
How was your class? How did you feel? What was the atmosphere like?	What did you think of the LifeComp classes? How did it change things?	What is your class like? What is the atmosphere like? How do you feel?
Your PD program assessment		
IN CLASS	OUT OF CLASS	THE LIMITS
What is your assessment of PD program? Do you think it should be offered in all classes? Why?	Can the PD program be used outside of class? Example? Why?	What are the weaknesses of PD program? What improvements can you imagine?

In a second step, we proposed to the students classroom situations, developed by the research team. Thus, four situations were created in two formats: on the one hand, a brief semantic description, and on the other hand, an illustration generated by an artificial intelligence image generation software (Figures 1 to 4). The four situations all have in common that they are group situations, in the school environment, with protagonists presenting antagonistic postures, even in conflict. A teacher is systematically present, in order to report on the role that the students attribute to him. The aim of these four vignettes is to understand both the cognitive reading that the students have of a so-called potentially conflictual situation and the problem-solving avenues that they envisage from a behavioral point of view.

A systematic questioning grid was proposed to the students to guide their assessment of the situation (Table 4). This latter invites them to describe the scene, which is in fact a problematic and critical scene, to consider the different feelings and the various points of view, as well as a collective search for a solution.

4. Table: Question grid for situation analyses

What is happening in this scene?	
What is the problem situation? What do you think is at stake?	
How do the different characters in the scene feel? What are their emotions?	

How do you explain their behavior?	
How do you think they should have reacted?	
What other alternative behaviors do you suggest to ensure the story ends happily? What do you suggest?	

Picture 1. Noisy Victory

During a PE class, the team that wins the very close basketball game bursts with joy. The students on this team jump up and down, shouting “We’re the best.” In the losing team, some sulk, and one student apologizes, saying he is too bad and that it was his fault. Another student yells at a teammate, telling him he should have passed the ball. The teacher asks the teams to shake hands, but most of them refuse.

Picture 2.. Reminder to calm down

In class, a student refuses to do his work. Despite the teacher’s repeated requests, he does not work. He speaks loudly to his neighbor on the left, who laughs with him. His neighbor on the right shows signs of annoyance. Finally, he shouts “be quiet” very loudly. The teacher intervenes directly and asks the rude student to apologize to him as well as to the entire class.

Picture 3. The school trip

The teacher is preparing the end-of-year school trip with the class. The students cannot agree on the activities to do. As soon as a student suggests an activity or a place to visit, the others mock it and say it's nonsense. The teacher is unable to calm the class and threatens to cancel the trip.

Picture 4.. The memory hole

During an end-of-year theater performance, a student forgets their lines. Their main partners no longer know what to do. The audience realizes that something unusual is happening. The other students are backstage, and the teacher hesitates to intervene.

Procedure

The students were interviewed in groups, at the invitation of their Positive Discipline program reference teachers. The two focus groups conducted in Porto took place during one of the cross-country meetings, the last of the program. Between the group activities offered to students from the six countries, time is scheduled with the researchers to discuss feedback on the students' experiences, at the end of the program. These two groups are mixed and are therefore made up of students from different countries. English is the common and shared language for conducting the interviews. Conversely, the non-mixed groups take place via video , with researchers who are native speakers of the language of the selected country. Thus, the group of French students takes place with other French students who did not participate in Porto, and the Mako group also takes place via video, and only bring together Hungarian students. They were led by the French researcher and the Hungarian researcher respectively.

Each collection time takes place according to the same framework and the same sequence. First, the students are questioned about Positive Discipline and their theoretical knowledge, their

experiences, and their experience of the program. Second, they are asked to interact on fictitious situations, presented in images and words (Pictures 1 to 4). Then, a free time for more general sharing is opened, so that the students can address themes or questions they have, which would not have been anticipated by the researchers. This free time is also there to discuss their projects and their more specific paths. Generally speaking, the responses to the first two times are expected as a source of valuable information by the research team, but the group dynamics throughout the interview also provides an anchor point for reflecting in a more informal and implicit manner.

Focus group analysis is the methodical process that transforms rich, interactive discussions into usable insights. At the heart of this approach is thematic analysis, where researchers immerse themselves in the verbatim accounts of the discussions. The approach here is not comparative, in the sense that there are no research hypotheses regarding the students' origins. Thus, the students' comments will not be understood in light of their origins, and the content of the verbatim accounts will be pooled, in order to obtain more substantial and more usable content. However, marginally, certain specific field characteristics may be reported and highlighted here.

Data processing is structured in different stages, similar to the methodology chosen and described above. Thus, each of the questions is taken in accordance with the focus group interview grid as well as the situation analysis grid. Then, an analysis of the interaction styles within the groups will be carried out. Finally, a particular focus will be proposed on the French group, particularly in terms of selected activities.

Focus group analysis - Knowledge of Positive Discipline program

When asked what Positive Discipline is, students do not respond in a definitive manner. In fact, they tend to adopt a descriptive and process-based approach. They do not really define what it is. Thus, the question of a subject, or even a discipline in its own right, is avoided, to the detriment of understanding the effects it can have, or has had, on them, on their class, and on their relationships. For students, Positive Discipline is therefore defined by what it provides. Certainly, it is implicitly considered as a specific educational time, a subject learned at school, a series of tools to be used on a daily basis, or even a state of mind or a pedagogical posture, if not a posture in the relationship with others, or even in the relationship with oneself.

This difficulty in establishing a real conceptual definition can, in our opinion, be understood according to two hypotheses. The first being intrinsically the relative conceptual vagueness intrinsically linked to Positive Discipline itself. Indeed, for some, Positive Discipline is a posture, an attitude, a set of knowledge or know-how, a way of educating one's child, or managing a team, or behaving within one's class. Therefore, we are not surprised that students avoid this defining aspect, undoubtedly too reductive to the numerous possibilities of application and the various repercussions of this said discipline. The second hypothesis relates more to the artificial and experimental nature of the program itself. The difficulty of actually and precisely defining Positive Discipline does not appear to us in the analysis of the students' comments as an indicator of a lack of understanding, nor of any vagueness in the application. This can, however, make the answers a little tautological. Indeed, LifeComp lessons are for

some students a dedicated time, a new course that they had this year, a new subject, and the latter serves to... learn Positive Discipline or life competencies.

More generally, students consider LifeComp lessons as a time for discussion in class, a time for learning during which the class group will develop skills and resources. A taxonomy emerges from their remarks. Positive Discipline program serves to develop i) a new relationship with oneself, ii) a better understanding of others, and iii) a more serene relationship with others.

A new relationship with oneself

For students, Positive Discipline is first and foremost a way to better understand themselves. It allows them to understand their strengths, sometimes unsuspected, and their emotions by accessing more nuances in their recognition and naming. It also allows them to better regulate their stress, whether at school or in their daily lives. At the same time, they can more easily recognize their mistakes. LifeComp lession seems to some to be an opportunity to learn to be disappointed, if not frustrated. Frustration here is to be understood in terms of an opportunity to let go, and therefore as an experience of personal development, self-improvement, and the development of a more autonomous, but more altruistic, and less egocentric form of self. Better self-knowledge is then considered from the perspective of an opening to new tools of regulation or communication, even metacommunication. Students readily acknowledge having learned a lot about themselves during this program.

A better understanding of others

According to the students interviewed, Positive Discipline is also a preferred way to access others. Indeed, knowing ourselves better allows us to better communicate about our feelings. This therefore allows others to more easily identify our moods, our experiences, our emotions, or our needs. Since the other person provides more information, it appears easier to access them in their complexity and authenticity. This allows, for example, to adapt to others and also to adopt a heterocentric attitude. Thus, it is possible not to tease a classmate when they mentioned during the LifeComp lesson, during the mood forecast for example, that they were in a negative mood.

A more peaceful relationship with others

Getting to know yourself and others better seems conducive to developing a better quality relationship. But this is not always enough. Students are very concrete in their understanding of relationships, both at the level of inter-individual and group relationships. Thus, they describe times of conflict regulation. These can be done individually, that is to say between the people concerned, but it can also take place collectively, with the entire class group. Students seem more in a posture of openness, both cognitive and behavioral. Solution-finding activities allow them to move away from the problem, the dispute or the initial disagreement, in order to open up the field of possibilities, with a view to overcoming the point of tension and reestablishing a peaceful coexistence. During these times of expression, students are invited to express their feelings, without stigmatizing a person who poses a problem ; others, not directly concerned, are vectors for finding solutions. People must listen to each other speak, respect the words heard. To facilitate the flow of discussion and ensure everyone has a chance to express themselves, some use a talking stick. Others, by raising their hands, submit possible solutions

to the group. The group listens without judging. Those involved will choose the avenues they wish to explore. A time for feedback and debriefing will take place to determine the effectiveness of the solution tested. These solution-finding sessions can also be held between the participants, with the support of the teacher.

The relationship with others is not only modified during a conflict or possible tension. It is also modified in the absence of tension and is perceived by students as more collaborative. Here again, students learn to function more efficiently with others. Positive Discipline program allows them to prevent harmful relationships but also to strengthen positive relationships. These two axes are perceived as two sides of the same coin.

Another educational posture

For students, Positive Discipline is not only reflected in their behavior, but also in that of their teachers. Indeed, for some students, Positive Discipline is a type of teaching without punishment, a more pleasant and serene pedagogical and educational approach, aimed at accountability, understanding, and respect. It is an invitation to reflect on what the other person is experiencing, or even the reasons why they adopt a particular behavior. LifeComp teachers would therefore be teachers who do not shout, who communicate more horizontally with their students, and who ask more open questions in order to guide students towards greater autonomy.

A toolbox

Positive Discipline is also a kind of toolbox for students from which they can draw tools as needed. Thus, the experiential dimension of Positive Discipline is very present in the students' comments, and is often considered inseparable from learning. In other words, students understand Positive Discipline as a set of behavioral strategies to be mobilized as needed. These strategies can be to regulate themselves (breathing exercises, for example), to better understand their emotions (list of main emotions), to be more assertive in expressing discomfort without being accusatory or aggressive (search for solutions), to be able to apologize to others.

Experiences of Positive Discipline program

In general, the students' feedback on LifeComp lessons and activities is very cheerful, if not effusive. The students describe LifeComp lessons, in the sense that they identify a reference teacher for the subject, a dedicated time in the agenda (often a sequence of 45 minutes or one hour per week), specific activities, with a range of games, discoveries or learning, as a result of which they learn things about themselves, about others, or about ways of functioning together, of living well together. Some would say new psychosocial skills.

But the appreciation of the Positive Discipline program's effects goes beyond simple satisfaction with the dedicated activities. Indeed, students are questioned about less ephemeral and more diffuse aspects, such as the classroom atmosphere, the school climate, the quality of interpersonal relationships, or even their relationship with school. Overall, therefore, students generally consider that it has changed the classroom dynamic as a whole. They describe greater motivation or enjoyment in coming to school, a better atmosphere among themselves. They speak of a larger collective than before the program. The latter has reportedly had the effect of strengthening the sense of belonging to the class group as a whole, and of transcending the

small, restricted groups that existed previously. The new classroom dynamic is more serene, conducive to respect and listening, with more autonomy and solidarity. Interactions have developed, diversified, and intensified. Students feel they are more comfortable approaching each other, talking to each other, and even resolving any problems they may have on their own, without necessarily resorting to an adult. They also feel that teachers shout less than before and resort to sanctions or punishments much less.

A drawback is described by Polish students, in the sense that they consider the effects of the program to be very moderate, since according to them, Positive Discipline was already well institutionalized before the program.

A second drawback is also reported by some students who consider that the effects of the program are mixed, in the sense that certain harmful behaviors persist, whether it is the behavior of certain students, who continue to be unruly, defiant of adults, or in non-compliance with rules, or even in bullying behaviors, or whether it is the behavior of certain teachers who may still be in the form of shouting or punishment. The students consider the students reluctant to the program, and find, for some, that there are students and teachers who do not make a connection between the LifeComp lessons, that is to say that their behaviors are only stamped Positive Discipline during the dedicated times, but that they are completely different, outside of these allocated times. Some students, like the Hungarian students, weigh this assessment, saying that the program has sometimes been effective, sometimes much less so. Thus, for them, the limits of the program are as dependent on the contexts as on the individuals and their capacities to work with the established rules, and their desire to conform to them.

Evaluation of the Positive Discipline program

When they are asked to position themselves on the Positive Discipline program in a more meta-level way, a consensus emerges. All students consider the program useful and interesting, and recommend its continuation, renewal, and expansion. Their assessment is very positive, both in terms of what it has brought them in the classroom and outside of it. They also have positive expectations about what it could bring them in the longer term, particularly in terms of very ecological and very daily reading, both in their relationships and in their development of new resources.

Classroom review

As mentioned previously, students have a very positive opinion of the Positive Discipline program. They describe its many effects on classroom dynamics, both between students and between students and teachers. According to them, the effects are therefore numerous and significant, in terms of relationships, connection with others, autonomy, accountability, and social skills, more generally. But their assessment of the Positive Discipline program goes beyond the dedicated time slots, and even beyond school hours, and beyond the school walls.

Outstanding balance sheet

Students describe numerous learning transfers following the Positive Discipline program. They report reusing what they learned during activities, in their time with friends, in their family time, and even in their leisure time with themselves. In other words, students appropriate the

new skills and techniques learned in class, and reinvest them in their daily lives. Some describe the repercussions this can have on their relationships within their siblings, others on their friendships. Here again, both aspects are present, whether it is the aspect of dealing with the negative (conflict resolution, for example) or the aspect of taking care of the positive (valuing or encouraging loved ones). Finally, some students report using the techniques learned in their leisure time, particularly stress regulation techniques through breathing or break times.

Recommendations for the Positive Discipline program

For all the reasons mentioned above, students advocate continuing the Positive Discipline program. All recommend it, some rate it 4.5 stars out of 5. Regardless, they advise maintaining it, and even generalizing it. Generalization is considered at different levels: all classes, all teachers, all schools. Similarly, they believe it would be useful to have more dedicated time in the schedule. One session per week of only 45 minutes or one hour seems insufficient to them. Some project even further, believing that during adolescence the effects of such a program can be even more beneficial, in connection with the emotions inherent to this period, or even the stress of the brevet for middle school students in their final year of middle school. They believe the program must be open, not inward-looking. Openness to others is essential for them, at all levels, both inside and outside the classroom. For some students, the international meeting is a real opportunity to decentralize themselves, to see what other students from different cultures think and to adopt new strategies. In short, the Positive Discipline program was an opportunity for them to open up to others, in an intercultural stance. We bet that the international meeting times, and the various activities during these periods have greatly contributed to the development of this feeling of belonging to a large and broad community.

The limits of the program

Beyond all the positive aspects described above, students raise some limitations to the program, if not to the method itself. The first limitations refer to the artificiality of Positive Discipline program, and the limited time dedicated to it. For students, one session per week is not enough. The ideal would be to have more sessions, but also more connections between sessions. This would be possible if all teachers were involved in such a project.

Other limitations relate to the non-adherence of some students within a class benefiting from the program. While some students have been able to overcome their reluctance or open up to the program and what it offers, some resistant students remain frozen in behaviors of refusal or opposition. These students, admittedly a very small minority, seem to have harmful attitudes that minimize the positive effects already described. The question of the reasons for this stance is raised by the students themselves. Some see it as a lack of skills, while others see it as simple opposition, a refusal to adhere, or even a strategy to get noticed and exist. In any case, the question of the specific needs of these students is to be compared to what the teachers may describe on their side.

Postures and attitudes towards conflict situations

The situations chosen all have common characteristics: they refer to group situations, experienced in class or during school time, in which a teacher is present, and in which the students are in conflict, at the very least, in disagreement.

During these times of discussion on these so-called problematic scenes, the students in the group demonstrated a real ability to adopt different points of view, thus demonstrating their capacity for decentering. When questioned about their understanding of the event, they not only reported their own perception, but were able to put themselves in the shoes of the different protagonists, whether they were the students involved, the witnesses, or even the adults present, namely the teachers.

This approach allowed the students to express nuanced interpretations of the observed behaviors. They identified the triggers of the conflict and were able to distinguish between the apparent intentions and the deeper motivations of each person. Their discourse demonstrated a certain quality of analysis: they were able to identify relational issues, misunderstandings, and communication blunders at the root of the conflict situation.

Beyond the factual aspects, the students also placed great importance on the emotional dimension. They took care to imagine and express the emotions felt by each person: anger, sadness, frustration, but also fear or a sense of injustice. The clear empathy shown towards all the actors in the scene allowed for a comprehensive and caring view of the situation, without reducing the students to fixed roles of "guilty" or "victim."

Their ability to reflect on the emotional and relational consequences of conflict paves the way for constructive resolutions and an improvement in the group climate. This collective work thus highlights their maturity and openness, proof of effective learning around conflict management and understanding emotions at school.

It should be noted that in some groups they made connections with situations they themselves had experienced, either almost identically or with nuances. In these cases, they were able to demonstrate even more perspective, both on their own situation and on the analytical work situation. They were neither confused nor confused between the two scenes. The students systematically adopted a nuanced and circular stance. In accordance with their learning in LifeComp lessons, they succeeded in enriching their points of view together, whether these were congruent or not. A group stance tended to emerge, and to adopt a stance more focused on solutions than on the problem.

Their gaze seems benevolent and understanding, both towards the students present in the situation being worked on, but also towards the teacher. They grant him in these scenes a role of moderator, and buffer. They are able to envisage his role on the three temporalities: past, present, future. What he did or did not do, which was conducive to this overflow, and how he manages this, and what he should do to accompany the group towards a way out of the crisis. Their recommendations are, here again, directly linked to their achievements in LifeComp, and are inspired by situations they have experienced or exercises or activities they have already practiced. This analytical posture therefore seems to be directly rooted in their own experience, but to be expanded and generalized to other situations not directly experienced, but new situations. The students, certainly guided by the reading grid proposed by the researchers, show a systematic approach, applicable to each of the situations. It should also be noted that they can propose certain solutions from one situation to another. This demonstrates both an understanding of the activities carried out in class during LifeComp lessons and an ability to

transfer and generalize what they have learned. For example, the solution-finding activity or break time are activities that they consider to be universal, because they are mentioned and suggested in various situations.

Atmosphere and attitudes within groups

Beyond the content, that is, the comments made, the explanations provided, and the solutions proposed, other parameters were analyzed. Indeed, the researchers seized the opportunity of these group situations to access the dynamics and climate between the students. Note that there are two situations: mixed groups and non-mixed groups, bringing together students from several countries, and homogeneous groups, that is, bringing together students from the same country and the same class. The criteria analyzed are the following: listening, circularity of speech, respect for the comments of other students, sequence of ideas, manner of arguing, and involvement in the activity. Generally speaking, the groups are all benevolent, and in each of them, the students were keen to participate and exchange. The language used in the mixed groups was English. Despite this obvious difficulty, the students all wanted to share their experiences. They seemed proud to be able to describe what they had experienced and happy to be heard. In the mixed groups, it is interesting to note that the students were seated in subgroups, close to those who came from their country, but it is important to clarify that there was indeed a circular discussion. In other words, there was a real group and not subgroups, particularly in terms of dynamics and exchanges. The students had certainly had times of common activity, during the project regroupings, but they overcame both the language barrier and any social barriers. A feeling of belonging to the same group was palpable. Thus, there were subgroups identified, in terms of experience, for example, "In Poland we...", but a broader identity seemed to transcend this, particularly during the first part of the focus group, on Positive Discipline itself. It is satisfying to see students speak up, to give a definition, and to see the others support the comments of the first. The flip side of this feeling of belonging to the same group, namely the "students who have benefited from Positive Discipline program," or even the "students made aware of Positive Discipline," could be felt when talking about other students who were not trained, or even in some cases, students who were not interested in Positive Discipline, those they considered to be "not motivated for it," or who did not apply the principles. For the time spent defining and explaining Positive Discipline or how the activities worked, the students managed to develop a definition specific to the group, by pooling their contributions. Regarding less congruent responses, for example, when sharing different experiences, the students listened to each other speak, then later qualified their comments, specifying that it was not like that at home, or that it had happened differently. It was very explicit in their attitude that this was to share, and not to correct the comments of other students. In other words, the students all showed real open-mindedness.

The same was true in the second part of the focus group. Students sometimes focused more on certain protagonists in the situations described and presented as the subject of study. When students had contradictory opinions, or simply provided divergent perspectives, an open attitude was still present. Thus, it seemed more like an enrichment of the overall response, as if the best response was structured around the different points of view, the various perspectives, or the anticipated positions of all the characters in the situation, and therefore the opinions of all the

members of the group. This attitude and posture recall the open-mindedness of the search for solutions. The students succeeded in developing analytical thinking, by integrating the different points of view.

General Discussion

The four focus groups conducted with the students participating in the project allowed us to highlight very encouraging results (Table 4). First, the students have a very elaborate definition and understanding of Positive Discipline. They say they are very satisfied with the program, and describe with great enthusiasm the activities in which they participated, and the different times associated with the program, and particularly with LifeComp lessons. They report a large proportion of real changes within their classes, with a greater sense of belonging, and a better school climate. They declare having developed new resources to regulate potential conflicts or hypothetical tensions within the class. All this proves to be congruent with the main principles of Adlerian psychology. His approach emphasizes the unity of the person, the purpose of their actions and the importance of social connection. Unlike Freud's view of past causes, Adler adopts a teleological perspective: understanding behavior involves addressing the individual's goal, which we often refer to as the need, here the student's need. In education, Adlerian principles encourage children's active participation, the development of relationships based on mutual respect, and the use of encouragement as a driver of development, as opposed to punitive methods. By strengthening a sense of belonging, Positive Discipline develops empathy and cooperation. Educational tools focused on finding solutions contribute to cognitive and social skills, while encouragement supports self-esteem and emotional regulation.

However, students report very moderate effects, if not existing ones for some of their classmates, and this is true for each country (Table 5). This therefore leads us to question a possible sampling bias. Are the students selected to participate in the intercultural exchanges and who agreed to participate in the focus groups representative of the class group as a whole or do they represent a subgroup, a trend, or an epiphenomenon? It would be wise to question the teachers about how the groups were formed.

Other methodological biases can also be mentioned. Although this does not appear to have hindered the smooth running of the activity, possible language barriers should be noted for mixed groups. It is conceivable that the responses would have been more elaborate and detailed if the exchanges had taken place in their mother tongue.

On the other hand, the non-mixed groups were conducted via video. The use of this technology is questionable on two points. On the one hand, one of the two groups was conducted with significant technical difficulties, as internet connections did not allow for fluid communication. On the other hand, group dynamics are less fluid when the participants are all gathered in front of the same screen, and the facilitator intervenes through the screen.

Without this really being a limitation of the study or a negative point of the program, the students recommended broadening the areas of intervention, and this in two ways: on the one hand by increasing the number of LifeComp lessons, and on the other hand, by generalizing them to all classes in the school. Indeed, beyond the aspect that may seem artificial because it is experimental of such a program, its effectiveness becomes all the more convincing when it

is intended for all classes and all students, when all teachers are involved. In other words, to have a greater reach, it seems necessary to us that this be done at the level of the school. Thus, Positive Discipline is infused at all levels, in all relationships, and for everyone. Connections are thus encouraged. Connections between classes, between subjects, between lessons, but also connections with the outside of the school, families and extracurricular activities. Students learn and experience discipline within the school, but the fact that it is everywhere allows for the reinforcement of acquired knowledge, the development of automatisms, and allows for generalization and transfer. Behaviors, strategies, knowledge, know-how, and interpersonal skills are then automated. In cognitive science, we distinguish between controlled and automatic processes. The former require a lot of processing resources. From then on, they become second nature, and the students' kindness and assertiveness become spontaneous. When a student has become accustomed to knowing what they feel and communicating about it, this metacommunication no longer requires a lot of attentional resources. By having a better understanding of themselves, the student is therefore more available to listen to and observe others.

Psychosocial skills, defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the set of abilities that enable a person to effectively cope with the demands and challenges of daily life, include interpersonal, emotional, and cognitive abilities. They include skills such as assertive communication, emotional regulation, critical thinking, decision-making, and stress management. Their development is recognized as a major lever for academic success, psychological well-being, and social integration.

Positive Discipline, a concept developed by Jane Nelsen , is part of a non-punitive educational approach, centered on mutual respect and cooperation. It is based on the idea that children's inappropriate behavior often reflects an unmet need or a skill that is still being developed. This approach aims to develop self-discipline, responsibility, and a sense of belonging, using methods that are encouraging and caring, but also firm and structured.

The connection between these two theoretical frameworks appears particularly relevant. Indeed, Positive Discipline creates an educational environment conducive to the development of psychosocial skills. For example, encouraging collaborative problem-solving mobilizes critical thinking and communication skills; jointly establishing rules and solutions promotes autonomy, responsibility, and decision-making; valuing efforts strengthens self-esteem and the ability to persevere in the face of difficulties. Furthermore, the emphasis placed on active listening and the respectful expression of emotions contributes to strengthening emotional and relational skills.

Conversely, mastering psychosocial skills facilitates the implementation of Positive Discipline. A child who is able to identify their emotions, formulate a request assertively, or regulate their frustration will be more likely to respond positively to educational expectations. Thus, the development of these skills constitutes an essential foundation for the effectiveness of Positive Discipline, while it offers a structured and caring framework for their learning and consolidation.

Ultimately, the combination of psychosocial skills and Positive Discipline forms a virtuous circle: a respectful and cooperative educational climate stimulates the acquisition of social and emotional skills, which, in turn, promote greater engagement in educational interactions. This complementarity paves the way for an education that is not limited to the transmission of knowledge, but contributes to the formation of autonomous, empathetic, and responsible citizens. Only in this way can we speak of a culture of Positive Discipline.

5. Table: Main experiences of implementing the Positive Discipline project - according to students

Highlights	Challenges
Understanding Positive Discipline	**Difficulties in summarizing Positive Discipline**
“A time for discussion to find out what we think”	“A time to teach us positive discipline”
"It's to change the way students solve problems and are punished."	"It's a lack of punishment for students."
“We learn to solve problems without teachers, just students.”	“These are activities to learn how to behave better.”
Get to know each other better	**Artificial time**
“We learn to know each other better”	“It’s quite complicated to integrate our routines into our schedules.”
“It also helps you control yourself and learn from your mistakes.”	“It’s only one hour a week.”
“At puberty we get angry more easily, it can help us manage better.”	“Some teachers don’t really pay attention to what their students want.”
Knowing others better	**Insufficient intake**
"It's in everyone's interest, a bit like a collective interest."	"The teacher still punished the student."
“It helps to have empathy and responsibility.”	“It more or less changed the climate of the class.”
"You have to concentrate on what he says."	“Profits aren’t always all week long.”
Best relationship(s)	**Reluctance of some students**
“We learned to integrate people better”	“There are students who are not interested in Positive Discipline.”
"Because if you tease people and they're already upset, they'll take it badly."	"It depends on everyone's ability to respect the rules and some people don't like these rules."

"We said the noise was bothering us by raising our hands, and we calmed down."	“When there is a designated leader, the others do not always follow him.”
An experiential approach	**Relative ineffectiveness of Positive Discipline**
“You have to work as a team to successfully remove the knots.”	“Yes, it often works, but not always.”
“Not necessarily, but almost every time there is an associated activity.”	"There was harassment and it was not very effective."
“We look for solutions and the following week we see if it worked.”	“Everyone has to take the rules seriously, otherwise it doesn’t work.”
A reinvestment in everyday life	**A generalization objective**
“For third-year students, it can be cool not to have to stress about the brevet.”	“It would be nice if everyone knew how to control themselves.”
“I did a kind of Positive Discipline with my parents.”	“Everyone should be able to know each other.”
“We play a similar game and we learn that way.”	“Comparing foreigners, what they do best in other countries, or what should be changed”

Student focus groups – Summary of the results

Adlerian psychology provides a solid theoretical framework for understanding human behavior and implementing respectful educational practices. Positive Discipline represents a contemporary, operational translation that is adaptable to family and school contexts. Together, these approaches promote psychosocial skills, essential for personal, academic, and professional development.

These perspectives invite us to rethink the training of parents, teachers and educators, by equipping them to create educational environments where firmness and kindness coexist, and where each individual can find their place in the community.

This notion of community can be thought of on different scales. Indeed, the students mentioned the enriching side of the comparative approach between the countries involved. They particularly appreciated the intercultural encounters and recommended going to "see how others can do things" and how Positive Discipline is modeled abroad. The students who participated in this program seem to demonstrate great openness, both to things and to people, their habits and their cultures.

The Experiences of implementing the Positive Discipline project – reflected in teacher interviews

The 15 active teachers who spoke in the interviews typically have several years, even decades, of professional experience. They work in various fields and with students of different ages. Several of them have decades of experience, and some have postgraduate or special qualifications (e.g. IT, psychology). For example, several respondents also work as university lecturers in teacher training, while others also work as development teachers with students with special educational needs. According to them, several of them felt the need to get involved in the project while working as class teachers, as they trusted it and could thus have a greater impact on the dynamics of the class communities. There was also an interviewee who initially joined the program as a technical support worker, but, influenced by his colleagues, completed the training himself and became an active user.

The common characteristic of the speakers is that they are all committed to emotional education and community formation. The development of students' social competences, the formation of basic social attitudes and behavioral patterns are particularly important to them. The answers to the interview questions clearly show that they are all open to pedagogical renewal and are looking for pedagogical and methodological tools with which they can more effectively support the emotional and social development of their students. The interviewees therefore come [2]from different countries, professional positions and institutional contexts , but with common educational objectives and professional dedication.

Their motivations for joining the Positive Discipline program are also similar. Despite working in educational institutions in different countries, they report facing similar problems in their everyday pedagogical practice, especially in the areas of students' emotional needs, behavioral problems, and weak classroom cohesion. In response to these challenges, they interpret the Positive Discipline (PD) program as a structured toolkit that offers new pedagogical responses to these difficulties.

However, in the case of several interviewees, it can be observed that joining the program was not only the result of an individual decision, but also a need for a new disciplinary and educational approach appeared at the school or institutional level. For example, in Portugal, the introduction of the program was implemented at the initiative of the school psychologist, which fit well with the institution's existing emotional education practice. Similarly, in North Macedonia, they joined the project trusting that, in their opinion, international cooperation and

[2]From Portugal, primarily primary school teachers who work with children in grades 1–4 spoke. In North Macedonia, the interviewees included primary school teachers and school psychologists. From Poland, both developmental teachers and upper- grade teachers and class teachers shared their project experiences. From France, we analyzed the opinions of a secondary school English teacher, and from Bulgaria, a teacher who teaches religious studies and singing, and also works with teacher candidates as a university lecturer. The project-leading institution in Makó was represented by three lower- grade practicing teachers and two upper- grade teachers.

projects can be important catalysts for the introduction of educational innovations at the school level.

In parallel, several teachers also sought out the opportunity to connect with the program for personal reasons. In Poland, for example, interviewees first encountered the method on the Internet and their internal commitment, which was also supported by the institutional management, led them to join. This shows that teacher autonomy, professional curiosity and internal motivation play at least as important a role in participation as the institutional background.

In France, a teacher first joined the program as a translator, and then, influenced by his colleagues, became an active participant in the training and implementation. In his case, it is particularly clear how the distance stemming from initial skepticism can lead to openness and committed participation. In parallel, a teacher in Bulgaria also participated in the program who had previously applied similar approaches intuitively, but was able to systematize and deepen his knowledge through participation in the project.

Based on the interviews, it can be said that the motivations for joining the Positive Discipline program are diverse, but can be structured well: on the one hand, there are practical answers to pedagogical problems, while on the other hand, there is the need for personal professional development, openness, and community and institutional support of teachers. The introduction of the program can therefore be interpreted not only as an educational tool, but also as an opportunity to shape teacher identity, professional communities, and school culture.

The impact of the project on pedagogical work

Based on the responses of the participating teachers, it becomes clear that the program not only introduced new pedagogical and methodological tools for them, but also had a deeper impact on shaping their attitudes. The vast majority of teachers reported that the PD program opened up a new perspective for them in interpreting student behavior, in creating rules, and in rethinking teacher-student relationships.

Portuguese teachers highlighted the practical tools of the program as a major positive, which provided them with effective help in dealing with everyday pedagogical situations. The program also created an opportunity for relationships between teachers to become stronger and more collaborative. The PD program therefore transformed not only the relationship with students, but also the culture of the teaching staff – it provided a kind of common language for teachers.

North Macedonian teachers also gave a very positive assessment of the program. They emphasized that the PD program has a long-term impact on student behavior, the learning atmosphere, and the school community as a whole. They emphasized that the method works especially well with younger age groups, but they also saw changes in the upper grades, especially in class discussions, listening to each other's opinions, and conflict management.

In Poland, the most important impact of the program was the strengthening of empathy and community building, i.e. community cohesion. Teachers experienced that students participated more actively and responsibly in joint rule-making, and this community dynamic resulted in

positive changes in their behavior. The program provided them with methodological solutions for more conscious shaping of classroom communities.

In France, a shift in the teacher role was highlighted. One interviewee reported that the PD program helped to rethink classroom discipline practices, replacing previous confrontational situations with collaborative rule-making and student involvement. Of particular interest, the program also facilitated the participation of students with special educational needs, who previously had difficulty integrating into community processes.

In Bulgaria, the teacher highlighted that the application of the method in a playful way results in effective and experiential learning. The students actively participated in the exercises, and the use of the program was not limited to the school space: she was able to utilize what she learned in university education and at home. This also shows that the PD program is not just a school program, but an attitude-forming approach that leaves its mark on the deep layers of pedagogical thinking.

Based on the experiences of the Hungarian interviewees, the Positive Discipline program gave them confirmation that many of their previously instinctive pedagogical practices were scientifically and methodologically supported. They mentioned as an important realization that the ability to express emotions and self-regulation cannot be taken for granted, and teaching them is as essential as teaching any other skill. They also highlighted that emotional deficiencies or anxiety often lie behind student behavioral problems, therefore an empathetic and supportive approach is key in pedagogical work.

According to the collective experiences of the teachers who spoke – regardless of country – Positive Discipline is not just a behavior-shaping tool, but also initiates complex pedagogical change at the level of student relationships, teacher identity and school culture. In their opinion, the impact of the program goes beyond individual sessions: it is reflected in the classroom atmosphere, interactions between students and teachers' self-reflection.

The willingness to self-reflect is also evident in the teachers' narratives about their experiences during the program implementation. Based on these, it can be said that teachers generally approached the program in an experimental and reflective manner, but in several countries, integrating the program into existing curricular and organizational frameworks was a challenge.

Experiences of implementing the program

The Portuguese teachers' reports show that despite their initial enthusiasm, they faced several difficulties. They found it challenging to use the program guide, which many considered poorly structured, especially for the level of the lower grades. Other school programs running in parallel, as well as a lack of time, also made regular use difficult. However, there was a great deal of interest from the children, especially in the playful and conversational elements.

In North Macedonia, teachers positively assessed the practical implementation of PD methods, especially among younger children. Class discussions, practicing listening to each other and jointly developed rules effectively improved the functioning of class communities. Important lessons were mentioned that students became more independent and cooperative, and conflicts

were handled in a calmer and more structured way. Teachers placed special emphasis on integrating PD methods into the course of lessons, not just as separate sessions.

In Poland, a central element of the implementation was the involvement of students in the process of rule-making. According to teachers, this collaboration helped to develop empathy, attention and a sense of responsibility. In addition, the technique of "positive time-outs" proved to be particularly useful, especially in situations where children needed time to calm down and self-reflect. The methods were integrated into the classroom routine and students quickly got used to and accepted them.

In France, despite initial skepticism, the teacher reported positive experiences with the implementation. Students responded quickly to the new methods and the classroom atmosphere became more relaxed and productive. However, time constraints were also a challenge, especially in the tight schedule. The teacher facilitated the integration of the program by embedding the tools into the lessons, rather than as separate sessions.

In Bulgaria, the playful application of the program was dominant. The teacher highlighted the effectiveness of the "talking stick" and the "thank you cards" as techniques that simultaneously supported the creation of a positive atmosphere and the self-expression of the students. The children liked these elements so much that sometimes it was difficult to return to more traditional tasks between classes. However, this can be interpreted - according to them - as positive feedback. Teachers typically apply the elements of the program creatively, adapting them to local specificities. The key to success in many cases is flexibility, teacher commitment and the ability to develop reflective pedagogical practice that is tailored to the needs of the students.

Based on the implementation experiences of the Hungarian teacher interviewees, Positive Discipline tools – such as class-level discussions, the use of the talking stick, the conscious use of positive feedback or the introduction of thank-you cards – were well-suited to classroom practice and supported the strengthening of student communities. As a result of the introduced methods, students became more and more honest, previously passive children became more active, and in some cases they even independently initiated recognition or praise for each other. However, in each participating class, in addition to the supportive majority, there were also students who were reluctant to participate in such activities and rejected them. In addition to this type of student resistance, the respondents highlighted the general lack of time resulting from the high number of classes and the overcrowded curriculum as an implementation difficulty, which made it difficult to apply the learned methods regularly and consistently. In addition, faculty members had varying degrees of openness to the Positive Discipline approach, which somewhat limited the standardization of the program at the school level.

The best moments of the program

The most positive experiences recalled in connection with the program, the stories told as the so-called "best moments", mostly referred to the strengthening relationship between teachers and students, the development of student self-esteem, and the change in the dynamics of class communities as results.

Among the experiences of the Portuguese teachers, the feedback from a 13-year-old student was particularly memorable: the student told his teacher that he had learned to deal better with his frustration as a result of the LifeComp sessions. This experience illustrates that the program can have a profound emotional impact not only at the class level, but also at the individual student level. In addition, the teachers highlighted that, in their experience, the students' self-reflection was strengthened during the class discussions and that these discussions served a real community-building function.

In North Macedonia, the most positive experiences were the workshops held jointly with the student government. During these, students actively participated in the sessions and gave each other positive feedback. They found it particularly remarkable that even students who were previously considered "difficult cases" became more open, communicative and accepting. The program thus reached out to student groups that would otherwise be difficult to reach.

According to Polish teachers, students have become visibly more empathetic as a result of the PD program and have become more actively involved in community initiatives, such as charity events. According to teachers, students have appreciated being able to participate in setting rules, which has also increased their sense of responsibility. The atmosphere in the classroom has noticeably improved, the number of conflicts has decreased, and relationships between students have become more harmonious.

In France, the most positive experience was highlighted as students specifically requesting LifeComp sessions and enjoying icebreaker games, shared rule-making, and relaxation exercises. A particularly important feedback was that even non-participating teachers acknowledged the effectiveness of the method, proving to the participants that PD methods really has a positive impact on the learning environment.

For Bulgarian teachers, the "talking stick" and writing thank-you cards proved to be the most memorable. These tasks were not only playful and fun, but also provided an opportunity for students to experience the importance of listening to each other, giving positive feedback, and expressing emotions. According to teachers, these exercises significantly contributed to preventing conflicts and strengthening the class community.

For one Hungarian teacher, the most memorable experience of the Positive Discipline program was that it strengthened her determination to incorporate the method into her teaching practice in the long term. She believes that the LifeComp sessions are suitable for creating an emotionally safe, supportive classroom environment that can provide a foundation for students' balanced development and the acquisition of skills necessary for community life.

As can be seen from the above, the stories told as the best school moments of the project often indicate not spectacular but quiet but significant changes: increased self-reflection, better conflict management, greater empathy and more active community participation. However, the biggest challenges encountered during the application of the program mostly referred to the structural, institutional and methodological difficulties of practical implementation. These challenges show similar patterns across countries, but differences can also be observed due to the specificities of local education systems.

Implementation challenges

Portuguese teachers mostly mentioned the nature of the tasks developed for lower- grade students as a difficulty. Since some elements of the tasks to be introduced do not fit well with the level of children who cannot read yet, teachers had difficulty in properly applying some elements of the program. In addition, the overload of the school timetable also prevented the regular and in-depth application of the program, and due to the amount of teaching material, many teachers were unable to devote enough time to emotional education. These factors indicate that the introduction of the PD methodology would require adjustments not only at the pedagogical but also at the institutional level.

In North Macedonia, challenges were mainly related to involving parents and colleagues. Teachers reported that parents were often passive, uninterested in the programme or too busy to participate in the educational collaboration. In addition, there was a certain resistance within the school, especially from older colleagues or colleagues teaching science subjects, who considered emotional education less important. However, there were also positive examples: according to the experience of several teachers, sharing and testing methods among themselves worked well in more open pedagogical communities.

In Poland, the biggest challenge was that students were initially reluctant to adopt the new classroom structure. Teachers reported that it took time for them to get used to being able to participate in rule-making and community decisions. Teachers also found it difficult to consistently apply PD methods within a traditional school setting. In addition, teacher time constraints, coordination difficulties, and lack of joint planning were barriers to effective implementation.

The French experience partly echoes the above. Here, one of the most difficult tasks was to integrate PD methods into the lessons – in their experience, not all content or subjects lend themselves to their natural integration. Another challenge was that some colleagues were initially skeptical of the method, especially since LifeComp lessons require a lot of time and energy from the teacher. Despite this, teachers who were committed to the method found ways to adapt the program to their own style and student groups.

Bulgarian teacher participants highlighted age group differences as a difficulty. Some lessons involved students from different grades, which made it difficult to apply uniform methods and keep the attention of all students.

According to the feedback from Hungarian teachers, learning and incorporating the methodology of Positive Discipline into their daily practice initially posed a serious challenge for them. The natural use of the pre-formulated sentences received during the program was particularly difficult – these empathetic, supportive communication turns seemed foreign at first and required conscious attention. Several reported that at first they “had to force themselves” to utter these sentences, and only gradually, with practice, did they become a natural part of the teacher’s toolbox. The participants were greatly helped by the jointly kept spreadsheets and monthly objectives, in which they could share experiences and best practices with each other. These tools not only provided practical guidance, but also contributed to the sharing of knowledge within the teaching community and the gradual internalization of the method.

The challenges listed above do not question the value of the program, but rather indicate that successful implementation requires a complex, multi-level approach that takes into account the reality of teachers, students and institutions, as well as their established operating practices. The interviewees' responses clearly show that teachers' efforts alone are not enough: the effectiveness of the program is fundamentally influenced by the extent and manner in which other school actors – the teaching staff, school management, non-teaching staff and the student community – are involved. According to the participating teachers, the school structure, the quality of internal collaboration and the availability of resources are key factors. Based on the responses, it is clear that Positive Discipline program can only be truly effective if it becomes the practice of not only individual teachers, but also a collective, institutional-level attitude formation. For this, leadership support, the involvement of the teaching staff and making school structures more flexible are essential.

Opportunities to increase the efficiency of the program

In Portugal, teachers clearly indicated that they would have needed **much more professional support in the initial phase.** Several mentioned that the guide included with the program was not clear in all points and was difficult to follow, especially for teachers in the lower grades. Accordingly, a need emerged for a **more understandable, age-appropriate guide** or template that would help with practical examples for application. In addition, they mentioned as a positive experience that the support of the school psychologist was of great help to them in interpreting and applying the methods.

According to the feedback from North Macedonian teachers, the **external trainings and workshops were inspiring and useful, but more follow-up was needed** to implement them into everyday school practice. and internal consultation would have been needed. A typical problem was that methodological support waned over time, so teachers had to maintain motivation and the operation of the program themselves. Several indicated that they would need a **support network of teachers** or a mentoring system where they could share their experiences and dilemmas. The Polish trialists also missed regular reflective internal forums where they could discuss difficulties and find solutions together. At the same time, they valued the closer cooperation with colleagues that developed through the PD program, which often took place in an informal setting, as a positive.

Several interviewees believed that the program can function effectively if the institution's management contributes to the operation of the program by flexibly adjusting the schedule or organizing regular professional discussions related to PD. In the long term, a coordinating role or specialist to fill the role would also help to make the program run more smoothly. According to a senior teacher respondent, it is important that non-teaching staff – such as school administration or technical staff – also receive at least basic information about the program.

The program in participating institutions

At the end of each teacher interview, the question arose as to how the responding teachers see the future of the Positive Discipline (PD) program in their own school or in their wider environment. The answers show that the vast majority of the trial teachers still believe in the basic principles of the program and would like to see its application maintained in their school

in the long term. However, based on their pilot experiences, they see that the possibility of long-term embedding depends largely on the institutional environment and the attitude of the entire school community. In other words, the elements of the PD program are effective in themselves, but they can only have a lasting impact if they do not appear as isolated pedagogical practices, but are also integrated at the institutional level – for example, into school educational strategies or the curricula themselves.

Several teachers highlighted that their commitment to the program had remained and even strengthened due to positive student feedback. The students' interest, participation and the improved classroom atmosphere were all factors that confirmed their belief that it was worth continuing to use the method – whether in small steps or on their own initiative. At the same time, several emphasized that the program cannot work sustainably if it is based solely on individual efforts.

In terms of sustainability, teachers believe that regular training, supportive professional communities and opportunities for professional reflection are key. Where there is support from school management and collaboration between colleagues, there is a stronger belief that Positive Discipline program can be a valuable part of school life, not just as a temporary project, but also in the long term. Nevertheless, some indicated that the current conditions do not yet guarantee the survival of the program, especially if the necessary structural frameworks – such as teacher time frames, timetable options or uniform institutional application – are missing. As one interviewee put it, the long-term integration of LifeComp lessons into school life does not depend on the pedagogical power of the method, but mainly on the operational practice of the institutions wishing to use it and the conscious support of professional communities.

Teacher interviews – Summary of the results

The introduction of the Positive Discipline programme in European schools participating in the Erasmus+ project provided an opportunity to replace traditional disciplinary tools with a new, child-centred approach. The aim of the programme is to strengthen students' emotional safety, foster cooperation and self-discipline, while supporting teachers in managing everyday classroom situations. However, the implementation process was not without challenges: the schools' organisational frameworks, the composition of the teaching staff and time constraints often made it difficult to implement it uniformly. Despite all this, a number of positive effects were also evident in the participating institutions, which were also noticeable in the behaviour, attitudes and community relations of students and teachers.

Teachers who tried the program came to important insights into a deeper understanding of student behavior: they became aware that problematic behavior is often rooted in emotional deprivation, anxiety, or a feeling of not being understood. As a result, teachers' attitudes towards discipline changed: instead of reactions based on anger and punishment, joint rule-making, empathy, and conscious support for the expression of emotions came to the fore. It was an important experience that emotional self-regulation and social skills – such as empathy – should be taught just like any subject knowledge.

As a result of the program, according to the responding teachers, many positive changes were also observed among the students. The classroom atmosphere generally became calmer,

conflicts decreased, and the cohesion of the class communities strengthened. The jointly developed system of rules, regular class-level discussions, and the active participation of the students helped develop a sense of responsibility and student self-reflection. Particularly outstanding results were achieved in the case of students with special educational needs, who, due to the encouraging and accepting environment, became more actively involved in community activities. Several responding teachers felt that the students had become more open and honest, many of them were already independently formulating positive feedback to their peers, and several reported that their students were happy to take part in charity programs and student government workshops.

Based on the teachers' stories, it can be said that the project had a positive impact not only on the students, but also on the functioning of the teaching staff. Cooperation and relationship building between teachers strengthened, more and more people asked for help from each other and from colleagues from other schools, which triggered the networking of professional communities . Teachers received useful, easily applicable pedagogical methods and tools, which provide support both in their relationship with children and in their everyday pedagogical practice. Positive Discipline program therefore contributed in a complex way to the improvement of the school climate, the strengthening of emotional education and the development of community relations.

In addition to the positive effects listed above, respondents also highlighted the difficulties that accompanied the institutional implementation of the program. The existing school structures – for example, difficulties in coordination between classes, the high number of classes for teachers and the crowded timetable – were not conducive to the introduction of a new approach based on student participation and emotional safety. Several complained that there was little time for consultations and reflections within the institutions related to the project, so that the sharing of knowledge and exchange of experiences between teachers sometimes remained haphazard. Within the framework of the lessons, the scarcity of time frames was also often a problem, which hindered the full development of the method, especially when the students were not yet accustomed to the new classroom practice. In addition, the methodological materials required for the introduction did not always prove to be sufficient or clear enough – especially in relation to lower- grade classes.

Another challenge was that the openness of individual faculty members to trying out PD tools varied: initial skepticism or rejection was experienced primarily among older teachers and those teaching science subjects. In some participating schools, the lack of structural support – for example, the lack of involvement of school management or non-teaching staff – made it difficult for the method to be adapted throughout the school community. In addition, some teachers only occasionally used elements of the program, which weakened effectiveness and consistency.

Students also needed time to get used to the new type of classroom management, especially older students, who had a harder time accepting the more unusual methods based on emotions and cooperation. It was also difficult when there were several age groups present in a class, so it would have been necessary to adapt to the different needs and development levels of the

students at the same time. Involving parents was also difficult, and in many cases it was not possible to commit them to the program in the long term due to their busy schedules.

Despite all this, the responding teachers consider the trial of the program to be fundamentally successful, and several emphasize that the implementation of Positive Discipline program in schools depends not only on individual teacher motivation, but also on institutional-level organization and support.

6. Table: Main experiences of the implementation of the PD project - according to teachers

Strengths	Challenges
Teacher attitude change	**Lack of positive teacher attitude**
recognizing emotional deprivation and anxiety behind destructive student behavior	different attitudes of faculty members towards the educational principles of the program
changed teacher attitude towards discipline	initial skepticism from some colleagues
recognizing that emotional expression and self-regulation need to be taught	some teachers (especially older ones or those teaching science subjects) are less open to the program
encouraging active student participation	**Inflexible institutional operation**
Expansion of pedagogical and methodological tools	Established institutional operations resist change
learning and applying collaborative pedagogical methods and techniques	lack of clear commitment from school management
learning and applying methods for developing empathy	lack of involvement of non-teaching staff
learning and applying rule-making techniques	**Structural difficulties**
development of self-reflection (teacher, student)	high number of teaching hours
strengthening professional relationships between teachers	lack of time prevents regular teacher consultations
Strengthening student empathy	lack of time in classes
student involvement in charity events	coordination difficulties between lower and upper school teachers
student government workshops	busy schedule
student initiative in giving positive feedback	**Resistance from students**
Positive conflict management	slow adaptation to new classroom practices
joint rule-making instead of anger	It is a challenge to get older students to accept the method.
fewer school and classroom conflicts	it is difficult to keep the attention of all students, especially in a mixed age group
more favorable classroom atmosphere, development of a better school climate	The negative behavior of some students hinders community engagement
Transforming the dynamics of classroom communities	**Pedagogical-methodological difficulties**
joint rule-making with students	difficult to fit into lessons
constructive building of class community	story-based activities that are difficult to implement in lower grades
conducting class discussions	errors in the introduction guide

Involving SEN students	task discussion and methodological exchange of experience are rare
positive changes in students' behavior	**Lack of parental involvement**
Strengthening teacher-student relationships	parents' busy schedules
honest statements from students	low parental participation rate
making difficult students more open-minded	mainly proactive parental participation