



A guide to define the scientific basis of a sports mentoring programme for disadvantaged youth



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Partners

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Aproximar - *Portugal*

Asociatia Vis Juventum - *Romania*

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Authors

This guide has been written by a consortium of associations within the framework of the European project SportyMentor :



AFEJI is a key social, socio-medical and educational actor in the North department of France. It intervenes in the social, sanitary and medico-social sector that covers physical handicaps, intellectual disabilities, behavioural disorders, social and familial handicaps as well as psychological difficulties. It is a non-for-profit.



APROXIMAR is NGO aiming to enhance people, communities and organisations' human and social capital as a strategy to strengthen their capacity to take advantage of the existing and emergent challenges and opportunities.



Vis Juventum is a private, not for Profit, organization working with various vulnerable groups. A main interest for this organization is working with offenders, ex-offenders and their families in an effort to invest in the community safety from a trauma informed perspective.



I & F Education is an Irish based organisation working in and from Dublin for the educational development of people of all ages, especially in the areas of entrepreneurship, sport and personal development, youth, language acquisition, inclusion and diversity and rural development.



POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ (PLS) is an independent European think & do tank founded in 2002 and committed to a mutually-supportive and sustainable Europe which mobilises to defend and consolidate the European social model, a subtle balance between economic development and social justice.



The University of Beira Interior (UBI) is one of the most recent public universities in Portugal but it is also a landmark institution in the educational, research, innovation, business, entrepreneurship and informatics fields.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The project

Too many young people do not have solid, lasting relationships with caring adults, which puts them at risk and makes them more vulnerable to a whole range of difficulties, from failing at school to adopting risky behaviour[1]. Research finds that resilient youth—those who successfully transition from risk-filled backgrounds to the adult world of work and good citizenship—are consistently distinguished by the presence of a caring adult in their lives[2], as a mentoring relationship can offer.

Moreover, despite the benefits of physical activity, according to the World Health Organization, more than 81%[3] of the world's adolescent population is insufficiently physically active and the COVID-19 pandemic exposed inequities in access and opportunities for some communities to be physically active. Thus, with this project we hope to increase the percentage of youngsters, especially the more vulnerable ones, who are interested in being involved in sports and more concerned in adopting healthy lifestyles.

The SportyMentor project aims to use mentoring and sport as tools to boost cognitive-behavioural and affective changes in young people. This project intends to involve adolescents and young people with challenging behaviours in a sport mentoring programme to strengthen their motivation to pursue a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

SportyMentor will offer a youth-centered methodology where young people will have time to interact with their mentor, play sports and be in contact with the environment. This programme will complement other projects already being run by some of the partners, but is innovative in that it offers a combination of sport and mentoring specifically designed to meet the needs of young people in challenging situations.

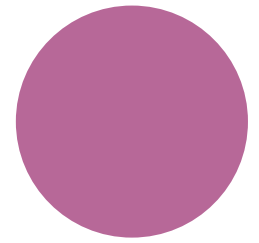
Despite the fact that mentoring relationships in sport are undeniable, there is a lack of research on the subject, combined with a lack of structured and formal mentoring programmes in sport.

This guide will therefore provide a theoretical basis for understanding and contextualising the situation of young people in Europe, particularly those in difficult situations. On the other hand, it will provide an understanding of the social and emotional needs of these young people and how sport and mentoring can address these needs.

[1] Cavell, T., DuBois, D., Karcher, M., Keller, T., & Rhodes, J. (2009). Strengthening mentoring opportunities for at-risk youth. Retrieved from [Votre texte de paragraphe](#)

[2] Ibid

[3] World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour. Retrieved from [Votre texte de paragraphe](#)



2. The project results (PR) and objectives

SportyMentor will offer a youth-centered methodology where young people will have time to interact with their mentor, play sports and be in contact with the environment.

To reach this goal, the consortium will produce 4 different deliverables:

- 1.PR1: A guide to define the scientific basis for a sports mentoring programme for young people (13-19 years old) with challenging behaviours,
- 2.PR2: A sports mentoring programme that will support 120 mentors and mentees in the partner countries,
- 3.PR3: An eco-citizenship toolkit to support the sport mentoring programme,
- 4.PR4: A SportyMentor mobile app to promote sports activities and create a link between mentor and mentee, as well as to raise awareness of environmental and sustainability issues.

The various project results contribute to achieve the following objectives:

- support adolescents who lack self-efficacy through exercise, social support, guidance, and role modelling

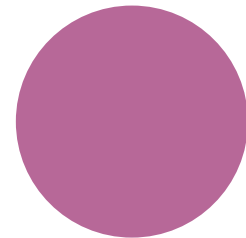
- develop an innovative approach that combines the use of mentoring, sports & mobile app to support the promotion of a healthy lifestyle of adolescents and young people

- use young people's active citizenship and volunteering as a strategic community resource to strengthen adolescents' personal beliefs and motivation about their capacity to begin and sustain regular physical activity, and over a long period increase their lifespan prospects;

- encourage a positive youth development (PYD) approach in schools, local NGOs, sports clubs & local communities promoting a new perspective on how youth is perceived and promoting the role of youth at the social level;

- introduce the digital means in a sport mentoring programme targeting social inclusion and active citizenship and in doing so increase the use of digital competencies for promoting the young people's social inclusion.

- use the potential of the sport mentoring programme to simultaneously promote contact with the environment and local territories.

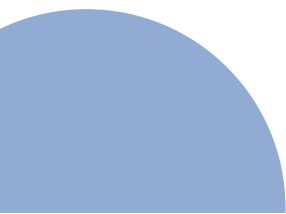


3.Methodology

The aim of this guide (PR1) is to provide the contextual elements and scientific basis for a sports mentoring programme for disadvantaged young people in the countries of the consortium. To carry this out, we began by defining the research guidelines to provide a more precise definition of the audience and its needs, as well as the benefits of sport and mentoring for this audience. Then we organised a validation workshop with civil society organisations (CSOs)/grassroots organisations working with disadvantaged young people and, finally, we analysed the results of the workshops and cross-checked them with the main findings of the literature review.

The different intellectual products of the project are being produced simultaneously, and the other three are currently in progress. In order to develop a Sports Mentoring Programme for SportyMentor (PR2), we will select and recruit mentors and mentees, train the mentors (minimum 12 hours training course), match mentors and mentees, launch the pilot and analyse the findings along with fine tuning.

For the development of an eco-citizenship toolkit to support the sports mentoring programme (PR3), we will conduct a literature search on sport and the eco-citizenship toolkit, then design a roadmap of group activities with young people and finally pilot the toolkit with young people. Lastly, to develop the SportyMentor Mobile App (PR4), University of Beira Interior (UBI) will draft the initial scenario and user journey mapping, then design a guide in app' features, mock-ups and graphic design, develop the app, pilot the app and report on the app in order to fine-tune it. Furthermore, we will also organise two short-term joint staff training events and multiplier events to disseminate the project's results and explore transferability opportunities.



4.The partners

SportyMentor brings together 6 partner organisations with complementary expertise from 5 Member States.

In **France** : AFEJI Hauts-de-France (Coordination of the project)



Afeji Hauts-de-France is a non-for-profit (NGO) founded in 1962 and aiming at fighting against all forms of exclusion. It is a key social, socio-medical and educational actor in the Hauts-de-France with a recognised expertise and positioned as a true social partner of public services.

Afeji Hauts-de-France supports all vulnerable people, from early childhood to old age: complex family environment, disability, loss of autonomy, support for family carers, social distress, access to employment, exile...The association runs 110 establishments and services throughout the Nord department, employs 3000 professionals in bringing benefit to 16,000 beneficiaries.

Afeji's specialised establishments and services are living labs to elaborate, develop, test and evaluate innovative methods to bring relevant answers to contemporary challenges. Afeji wants to adapt, anticipate and innovate. It is by adapting to the specific needs of the territories that it has developed its expertise and know-how: a global approach and individual support provided by professionals.

In **Belgium** : POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ-PLS (Leader of Project Result 1)



Founded in 2002, **POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ-PLS** is an independent European think & do tank committed to a Europe of solidarity and sustainability. POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ-PLS works to defend and consolidate the European social model, a subtle balance between economic development and social justice.

The multicultural and multidisciplinary POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ-PLS team, with strong skills in research, consultancy, coordination of European projects and event organisation, works in the public space alongside companies, public authorities and civil society organisations with the motto: Understand, Connect and Support to Act;

In Ireland, **I and F Education** (Leader of Project Result 3)



I & F Education is an Irish based organisation working in and from Dublin for the educational development of people of all ages, especially in the areas of entrepreneurship, sport and personal development, youth and schools, language acquisition, inclusion and diversity and rural development. They stress and put the emphasis on lifelong learning as well as adult learning.

They are involved in a number of Transnational European Projects and are part of several European Networks, including The New Ideas for New Opportunities European Network and the EDIN Network, which is focused on diversity and inclusion.

In Portugal, **Aproximar** (leader of Project Result 2)
and **Universidade da Beira Interior (UBI)**, leader of Project Result 4)



Created in 2006, **Aproximar** is an NGO that aims to enhance the social and human capital of families, their surrounding community and young offenders. Aproximar has delivered projects that develop personal and social skills of young people in conflict with the law and/or young adults deprived of liberty in a Prison, and therefore, has a strong connection with the Portuguese prison system.

The organisation provides services in four main sectors: Criminal Justice System; Education, Training and Social Capital; Active Ageing and Dependent Care; and Social Economy, Entrepreneurship and Employability. These services include mentoring, non-formal education activities, entrepreneurship training and the development of new initiatives within the justice system.



The **University of Beira Interior (UBI)** is one of the most recent public universities in Portugal, but it is also a landmark institution in the educational, research, innovation, business, entrepreneurship and informatics fields. Over the years, the evolution of the number of educational programs and the number of students has been increasing, having surpassed the 7500 students from across the country and 300 from all over the world. Aiming to provide a solid educational and scientific background to his students in different fields of knowledge, UBI presents 27 first cycle programs, 47 second cycle programs and 26 third cycle programs.

The university presents various learning and research facilities, structured in 5 Faculties - Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Letters and Faculty of Health Sciences - and 14 research units that had been carefully implemented and range from aeronautics to computing, electro mechanics, health, mathematics, optics, education, psychology, telecommunications, textile and paper materials and management and entrepreneurship.

In **Romania**, Asociatia Vis Juventum



Vis Juventum is a private, Not for Profit, organisation working with various vulnerable groups. A main interest for this organisation is working with offenders, ex-offenders and their families in an effort to invest in the community safety from a trauma informed perspective. As an organisation, we believe and understand that trauma has a significant impact on the lives of individuals, their families and the community as a whole. As a result, in our opinion, it is imperative that prevention, intervention and aftercare opportunities should be provided in order to promote and assist the wellbeing of both the individual and the community. Consequently, our mission is to improve community safety and wellbeing by providing a root based, holistic approach to trauma prevention, intervention and treatment. We accomplish this goal by supporting those individuals (teenagers, young adults, adults and seniors) that can affect, affect or are affected by public safety. This is achieved by providing counselling services (group or individuals), education and training, mentoring, awareness campaigns, and referrals to specialised community resources.



YOUTH IN EUROPE

The SportyMentor project aims to use mentoring and sport as tools to stimulate cognitive, behavioural, and emotional changes in 13- to 19-year-old young people in difficulty, in order to strengthen their motivation to pursue a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

In this first part of the guide, the aim is to:

- get a better idea of who this "young" public is at European level
- identify the European and international policies that take their needs into account
- identify and understand the main sources of current disadvantage for these young people.

Understanding who these target groups are and familiarising ourselves with their reality and the different challenges they face in each country will enable us to develop a flexible, transferable programme that is above all based on the real needs of the target groups and local organisations.

1. Youth situation in Europe

1.1 Definition

Youth can be defined as “the passage from a dependant childhood to independent adulthood” or “the transition between a world of rather secure development to a world of choice and risk”[4]. Young people are in a unique social situation in that, on the one hand, they are no longer entitled to benefits and child protection and, on the other, they still need extra care because they do not benefit from all the possibilities and opportunities offered to adults.

[4] Perovic B. (April 2016), *Defining youth in contemporary national legal and policy frameworks across Europe*, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/mvewzcxx>

Furthermore, there is no clear-cut definition of what exactly a young person is, as youth is a very heterogeneous category with different social, economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, interests, challenges and needs. Finding a commonly accepted definition is a real challenge. So far, the age distinction has been considered the dominant - albeit insufficient - approach to defining youth.

Thus, for statistical purposes, the most useful definition of the terms "young people" and "youth" is to cover people aged between 15 and 29, and any age below is referred to as "children"[5]. However, as will be outlined later, in European and international policies, "children" are defined as individuals under the age of 18.

1.2 Demography

The percentage of young people in the population is decreasing in most European countries. According to Eurostat, the combined share of children and young people in the total population of the EU-27 fell from 38.1 % in 1999 (excluding Croatia), to 34.2 % in 2009, to 31.8 % by 2019[6].

In 2021, of the 197 million households in the EU, approximately one quarter had children and young people under 18 living with them (24%). Among these households, those with one child were the most common (49% of households with children). Meanwhile, 39% had two children and 12% had three or more children.[7]

Children and young people in the population, EU-27, 1999, 2009 and 2019

	1999 (*)		2009		2019 (*)	
	Population (thousands)	Share of total population (%)	Population (thousands)	Share of total population (%)	Population (thousands)	Share of total population (%)
Children and young people (0-29 years)	161 526	38.1	150 373	34.2	141 980	31.8
Children (0-14 years)	72 738	17.2	67 906	15.4	67 808	15.2
Young people (15-29 years)	88 788	21.0	82 467	18.7	74 172	16.6

Note: all data as of 1 January.

(*) Excluding Croatia.

(*) Break in series.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_pjangroup)

eurostat 

Figure 1 - Percentage of children and young people in the population, EU-27, 1999, 2009 and 2019 (Eurostat)

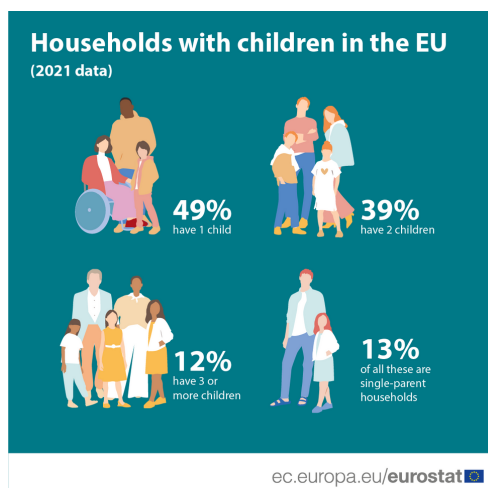


Figure 2 - Households with children in the EU (Eurostat, 2022)

[5] Eurostat, *Children and young people in the population*, consulted on <https://ii1.su/BnEXD>.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Eurostat (June 2022), *Almost a quarter of EU households have children*, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/suhp3rr3>

1.3 International & EU policies

The EU action in terms of child rights is mostly guided by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UNCRC) [8]. This international document provides that every child – persons under the age of 18 – across the world should enjoy the same rights and be able to live free of discrimination, recrimination, or intimidation of any kind. The convention highlights four fundamental principles concerning children:

1. non-discrimination
2. the best interests of the child
3. the right to life, survival, and development
4. respect for the views of the child

More than 30 years after the start of its enforcement, significant progress has been made and children are increasingly recognized as having their own set of rights. The new comprehensive **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**[9] and the **European Child Guarantee** – both established in 2021 – are major policy initiatives put forward by the European Commission and Council to better protect all children (persons under the age of 18), to help them fulfil their rights and to place them right at the center of EU policy making. As the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges and inequalities (domestic violence, online abuse...) and created new ones (distance learning), the goal for the EU is to adopt a comprehensive approach to reflect new realities and enduring challenges. This strategy aims to bring together all new and existing EU legislative, policy and funding instruments within one comprehensive framework.

The European Strategy focuses on six thematic areas:

1. Child participation in political and democratic life
2. Socio-economic inclusion, health, and education
3. Combating violence against children and ensuring child protection
4. Child-friendly justice
5. Digital and Information society
6. Helping children across the world

The **European Child Guarantee** [10] aims to prevent and combat social exclusion of children in need by guaranteeing access to a set of key services. Indeed, disadvantage and exclusion at an early age have an impact on children's ability to succeed later. This often creates a cycle of disadvantage across generations. Thus, the goal of this European document is to break this cycle. It provides guidance and means for Member States to support children in need.

[8] European Commission (24-03-2021), *EU Strategy on the rights of the child*, consulted on <https://ii1.su/mXcp9>

[9] Ibid.

[10] European Commission(24-03-2021), *Factsheet : European Child Guarentee*, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/3twkbuus>

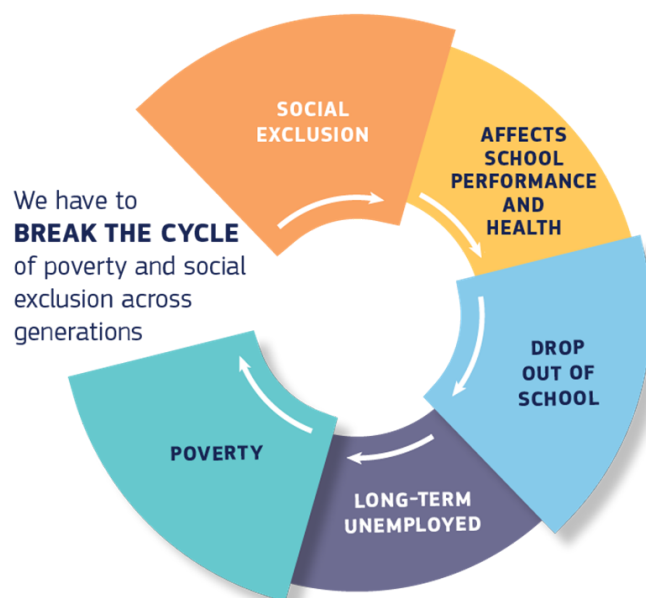


Figure 3 - European Child Guarantee : Cycle of disadvantage (European Commission, 2021)

Both initiatives have been informed by extensive consultations with citizens, stakeholders and, most importantly, more than 10,000 children.

2. Disadvantaged youth

More than the children or youth category, SportyMentor aims to reach the European disadvantaged youth. Teenage years can be very difficult as children try to navigate their way from childhood to becoming independent adults. Moreover, inequalities have increased over the last twenty years for young people and several causes can explain the disadvantaged situation of children and young people and lead them to have challenging behaviours.

There is no universal consensus for what factors make a youth “at-risk” or “disadvantaged”. When asked about the meaning of the term 'disadvantaged young people' during the workshops, the various experts we met gave us different definitions, but with a lot of similarities. The Irish experts highlighted four ways in which a young person can be considered disadvantaged: 1) Social disadvantage: referring mainly to a person's financial situation 2) Situational or geographical disadvantage: rural areas offer fewer opportunities and facilities than urban areas 3) Lack of institutional support 4) Young people with special needs: according to the experts, they are disadvantaged because they often cannot do the same things as other children or may need help to participate in certain activities.

The social component of disadvantage was emphasised by all the professionals that met in the different countries. Linked to this, family structure or ethnic origin were also mentioned as possible sources of disadvantage, particularly in France and Romania. Situational disadvantage and special needs were only highlighted in Portugal.

The Portuguese experts stressed in particular the lack of adaptation of teaching and learning methods. But despite the specificities of the countries in the consortium, most of the problems are common. In the following section, we will focus on the disadvantages linked to the economic situation, education, migration, digital technology, and health. We will conclude with an explanation of what we mean by challenging behaviours in the context of this project.

2.1 Socio-economic situation

The socio-economic situation is addressed in this section through the prism of economic status, and more specifically what it means to be poor or at risk of poverty, but also through the prism of the relationship with education, migration, and digital divide.

2.1.1 Poverty

Whereas the EU is considered as one of the wealthiest and most equal regions in the world, it does not mean that every European country is free from child poverty[11]. Of the countries in the consortium, Romania is the country with the highest level of child poverty (41,5%, data from 2021)[12]. The other countries' means are below the EU mean (24,4%) but all above 20%.

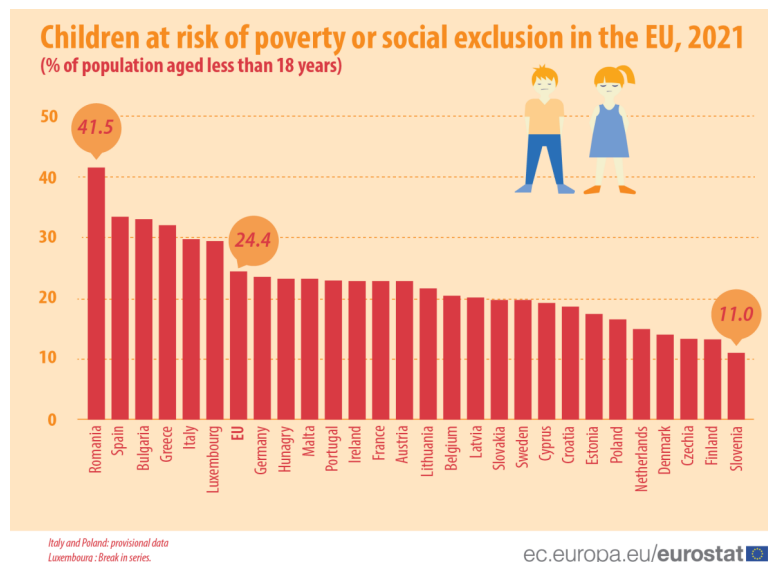


Figure 4 - Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU, (Eurostat, 2022) [13]

According to a report from the non-profit “Save the children”, the six main categories of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) are :

[11] Save the children (November 2021), Guaranteeing children’s future : How to end child poverty and social exclusion in Europe, consulted on <http://bitly.ws/DkFd>

[12] Ibid.

[13] Eurostat (October 2022), EU-Children Poverty 2021, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/mwd9p9ae>

1. Children with migrant background (refugees, asylum-seekers, undocumented, and unaccompanied children)
2. Children from single parent families: they have a higher risk of living with a low economic standard
3. Children from low-income families
4. Children with disabilities
5. Children from ethnic minorities
6. Children from large socio-economic disadvantaged families: this audience is particularly at risk because it combines a few factors like having one or both parents out of employment (usually mothers of large families are out of the labour market), being from a minority ethnic group, and on top of that, having several children.

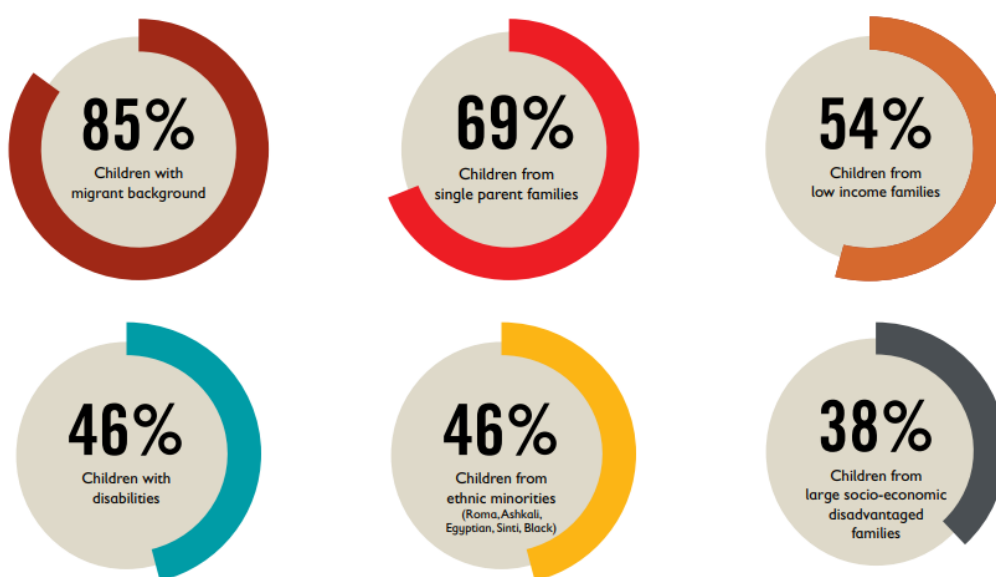


Figure 5 - Main groups of children at risk across Europe, (Save the Children, 2021) [13]

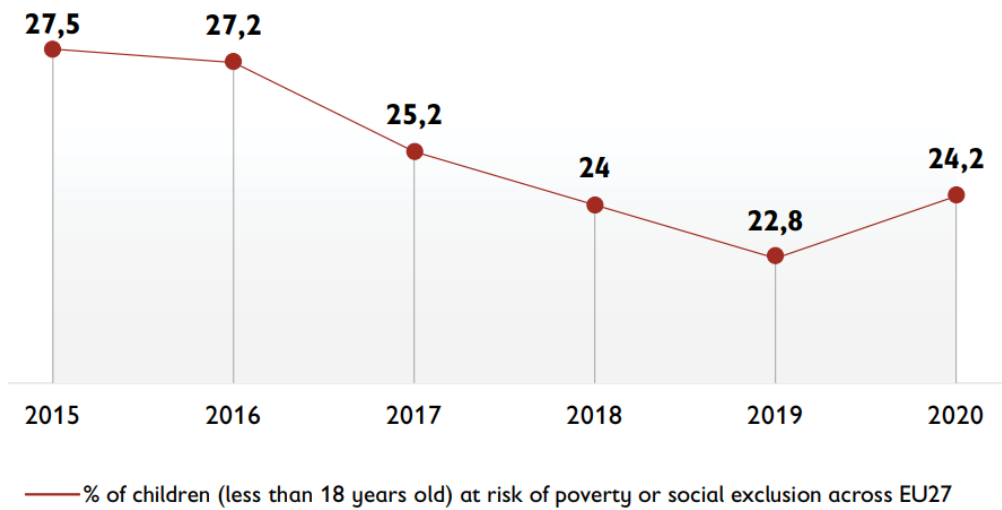
Poverty is affecting children's rights in the sense that it does not permit young people to access the same services, like healthcare, education, decent housing...thus, it's breaking equal opportunity. For example, children living in poverty are more likely to underperform at school and will have difficulty finding a decent job. What's more, even temporary exposure to poverty and deprivation in childhood can have devastating consequences that last a lifetime.

Finally, child poverty is also detrimental to society and its economy more broadly because these people will need to be supported all their lives. [14]

The EU has recently agreed on a number of initiatives to tackle child poverty. These include the European Child Guarantee mentioned above, the European Social Funds Plus (ESF+), which calls on EU Member States to allocate appropriate financial resources to address child poverty and implement the Child Guarantee, and finally, the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Action Plan aiming to lift at least 5 million children out of poverty by 2030. [15]

[14] Ibid., Save the children

[15] Ibid., Save the children



Source: Eurostat

* break in time series, estimated, as of 19 November 2021 for 25 out of 27 EU Member States

Figure 6 - Percentage of children AROPE across EU27 (Save the children, 2021)

Among the EU countries, in 2021, Romania reported the highest proportion of young people who were severely materially and socially deprived with 23.1 per cent, followed by Bulgaria and Greece [16].

In France, nearly 3 million children are considered poor. This number has been constantly increasing since 2008, with 440,000 more children. The poverty rate for children under 18 is 21%: in other words, one child in five is poor in the country[17]. This has consequences on their chances of social and professional integration because precariousness and poverty are accompanied by an isolation that is detrimental to the development of children. There are also 1.5 million young people who are neither in employment, nor in training, nor in school, and who are now called NEETS (Not in Education Employment or Training). Thus, they have to face different difficulties: material, financial but also relational because these young people suffer from isolation or are failing at school.

In Ireland, a study of the ESRI showed that the probability of deprivation in adulthood is 35 percentage points higher among individuals who grew up in poverty when compared to individuals who grew up in “very good” financial circumstances.[18] Thus, the support of disadvantaged young people is essential in order to tackle the downward cycle.

In most countries of the consortium and in Europe in general, the consequences of the coronavirus crisis are even more acute for children, young people, and families in poverty. One of the reasons for this is the lack of financial and (im)material opportunities in terms of work, income, housing, social networks, and digital opportunities. Moreover, this increase was not only expected for 2020 but also in the years to come. [19] That’s why, the European Pillar of Social Rights proposes three EU-level targets that have to be achieved by 2030 in the areas of employment, skills and social protection. Poverty and social exclusion are one of the targets. The number of people AROPE should be reduced by at least 15 million by 2030, and out of them, at least 5 million should be children.[20]

[16] Social Justice Ireland (April 2023), Youth poverty across the EU, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/49tvudf6>

[17] Apprentis d’Auteuil (2016), « Qui sont les jeunes en difficulté aujourd’hui ? », consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/mpczm62f>

[18] The Economic and Social Research Institute (October 2022), Intergenerational poverty in Ireland, Number 150, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/4pfra5m7>

[19] Ibid., Save the children

[20] Eurostat, “Glossary:At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE)”, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/422jarzp>

2.1.2 Education

As Nelson Mandela said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”[21]. Indeed, school education plays a crucial role in promoting inclusive, fairer, and more prosperous societies and economies.

First of all, if education is free in most European countries, there are still hidden extra costs which create unequal opportunities to benefit from education[22]. For example, children from poorer areas and families perform worse on average in school compared to their more privileged schoolmates, because they aren’t able to provide the same amount of after-school activities, school supplies, homework support, and entry into private schools,...[23]. Thus, access to education and training, beyond basic schooling, is now determined in many countries by the financial resources of individuals and families.

What’s more, being at school can also exacerbate discrimination and inequalities: disadvantaged children continue to be among the most discriminated against at school. Indeed, many of them are still being enrolled in special schools or placed in segregated classes within mainstream schools. For example, in Belgium, statistics show that children from poor neighbourhoods are over-represented in special education. In the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, 6% of children are enrolled in special education, whereas in the most privileged neighbourhoods, only 1.5% of children are enrolled in special education[24]. However, the purpose of special education is clearly not to solve learning difficulties linked to the social environment of children. It is in fact because education is suffering from a lack of professionals who can accompany and guide young people. Asylum seekers, refugees, migrants, and children from ethnic minorities are also often excluded from (or have limited access to) education[25].

Another issue of education for disadvantaged young people is the relationship with their teachers. Disadvantaged young people are often the ones that did worse academically and that disliked school. But they are at the same time the ones that were given out to by their teachers. However, having someone to talk to, like a teacher, has proved that it can help young people to improve their behaviour.

[21] Oxford University Press (2017), Oxford Essential Quotations, Susan Ratcliffe, consulted on Oxford Essential Quotations - Oxford Reference

[22].Save the children (November 2021), Guaranteeing children’s future : How to end child poverty and social exclusion in Europe, consulted on <http://bitly.ws/DkFd>

[23].Ibid.

[24].Romainville, A. (2015), « Le spécialisé en Communauté française, un enseignement spécial... pour les pauvres », Observatoire belge des inégalités, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/38c5a3kz>

[25].Save the children (November 2021), Guaranteeing children’s future : How to end child poverty and social exclusion in Europe, consulted on : <http://bitly.ws/DkFd>

In **Europe**, a small minority of 15–19-year-olds are not in education, training, or employment. But they represent a larger proportion in Southern Europe and particularly in Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus countries. This issue is therefore a significant aspect to consider. In Romania, a number of recent trends relating to the Romanian educational system point to both positive and worrisome developments when it comes to education: in 2017, Romania's rate of early school-leavers was the third highest in the European Union (18.1%)[26]. But at the same time, most young people aim for higher education (BA degree or higher) in this country. It shows the gap between the will and the possibilities offered to the youth.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has made these challenges even more visible and urgent.[27] Indeed, the closure of schools has most likely reinforced existing inequalities. Children from families living in poverty are more likely to live in conditions that make homeschooling difficult. For example, parents tend to have fewer skills and knowledge to provide adequate guidance and support for their children, and the social network is often more limited to deal with such problems. Furthermore, e-learning environments usually require computers, a reliable internet connection and a suitable place to do homework and take online courses. Access to the internet is therefore an important condition for home schooling and not falling behind in school.

2.1.3. Migration

From a statistical and legal point of view, European countries share some of the same definitions relating to migrants. For statistical data collection purposes, Eurostat distinguishes first generation immigrants – those born outside the host country, whose parents were also born outside; and second generation – those born in the host country but at least one of whose parents was born outside.[28] In most European education systems, migrant students tend to underperform and express a lower sense of well-being compared to their native-born peers.[29]

Among all migrants, children are a particularly vulnerable group requiring special care and immediate legal protection: according to UNICEF, one third of the refugees and migrants who have arrived in Europe are children[30]. They can find themselves in various situations. By migrating, they want to escape from persecution, armed conflict, or disturbance in their country, to escape conditions of serious deprivation or human rights violations or to look for new opportunities or a better life. They can move with their families, but they can also migrate alone.

[26]Eurostat (2018), Europe 2020 education indicators in 2017- The EU has almost reached its target for share of persons aged 30 to 34 with tertiary education, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/2p8e89fx>

[27]European Commission, « Pathways to School Success », consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/s5y46up>

European Commission (January 2019), Integrating students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in [28]Europe, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/f6kw87nt>

[29]Ibid.

[30]Unicef, Refugee and migrant children in Europe, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/yz5mvvay>

Migrant children face particular challenges, like having to learn a new language, dealing with trauma they had to face, or the stress of going to a new country. All these lower outcomes do not permit them to reach their full potential.[31] Inclusion will be the guiding principle of the upcoming EU Comprehensive Strategy on the Rights of the Child, which will seek to ensure that all children, regardless of origin, ability, socio-economic background, legal and residence status have equal access to the same set of rights and protection. The youth sector, and youth work in particular, can help young migrants gain skills and competences through non-formal learning. The transition into adulthood and from school to work can be particularly challenging for recently arrived migrant children, in particular unaccompanied young people, partly because support measures often stop when a child reaches 18 years of age. Preparing for such a transition in advance – through supporting their educational achievement, including them in vocational education and training and in the Youth Guarantee, and providing coaching and mentoring – can be particularly effective.

Migration has been a contentious issue in **Romania** since the fall of communism, but the importance of the issue has greatly increased in recent years. According to a United Nations International Migration Report between 2007 and 2015, around 3.4 million Romanians have emigrated, placing the country in second place globally regarding the emigration growth rate between 2007 and 2015, after Syria[32]. Clearly, Romania's migration problems have greatly increased since the country was officially admitted to the European Union and its citizens were allowed to freely move and obtain employment across EU Member States.[33] Confronted with poverty and lack of opportunities in the country, migration was a path opted for by many young people. Most often, migration is studied as a mechanism in which potential Romanian labour moves abroad, thus reducing the size and capacity of Romania's national economy. Secondly, migration is studied as an anti-poverty instrument, both through its capacity to provide economic opportunities to people who are otherwise among the most marginalised groups in Romania, but also as a function of remittances that Romanian workers abroad generally send to the country.

In **Portugal**, migrations have two complementary movements. On one hand, when nearly 2 in 5 young people are unemployed, some of them are looking for opportunities abroad, leaving their country[34]. On the other hand, as the Portuguese labour market is hot, the country has been open to immigrants for decades[35]. Finally, because EU citizens have the right to live and work in all member states, Portugal loses many of its own nationals to higher wages in countries like France and Germany and relies on cheap labour from beyond the EU's borders to keep its economy running.

[31] European Commission (January 2019), Integrating students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/f6kw87nt>

[32] Business Review (February 2018), 3.4 million Romanians left the country in the last 10 years; second highest emigration growth rate after Syria, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/mr3czu4x>

[33] Sandu Dumitru, Georgiana Toth, and Elena Tudor. 2018. "The Nexus of Motivation–Experience in the Migration Process of Young Romanians." *Population, Space and Place* 24 (1): e2114.

[34] International Labour Organization (August 2013), Educated youth migrate for a brighter future, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/4hvrzhw2>

[35] Makan, A. (May 2022), How Portugal Quietly Became a Migration Hub, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/2swe78r9>

Once again, **COVID-19** had big consequences for migrant young people. Suspension of procedures such as registration, age assessment and asylum impacted access to services for children, including guardianship, and in some contexts access to appropriate shelter. Family reunion/reunification has been delayed with the suspension of asylum procedures, consular services in third countries and limited flight options to facilitate transfers. Physical distancing and confinement measures have exacerbated previous challenges of individual oversight and case management, effective information provision to children as well as support for caregivers and parents. Access to education has been a challenge particularly in reception facilities, as refugee and migrant children may not have the same levels of connectivity for online learning, and with crowded reception conditions being far less conducive to learning than school environments.[36]

2.1.4 Digital divide

With the democratisation of digital access in Europe and all around the world, the debate on the "digital divide" has shifted in recent years. It initially referred to inequalities related to access to digital technology. However, it appeared that this definition was too restrictive, which led to the introduction of the concepts of second and even third-degree fracture. Attention is increasingly focused on the social inequalities linked to their use once the access barrier is overcome.

The relationship with digital technology is one of the six important themes of the EU strategy on children's rights. Furthermore, one of the deliverables of SportyMentor will be the development of a mobile application, for these and other reasons it seems crucial to explore the digital and information society as a source of disadvantage.

Children and young people are considered digital natives. The online world offers many opportunities for learning, social interactions, developing skills, playing, arranging everyday life, connecting with their peers, and participating in lessons. But many actors in the digital inclusion sector have expressed the need to deconstruct the image of users who are not comfortable with digital technology. First of all, not all children have equal access to the internet, electronic tools and devices. If given the opportunity and access to resources, they navigate the internet and social media with ease, but it does not mean that they have the digital skills in order to work with this equipment. What's more, the digital world can bring some threats as well such as abuse, cyberbullying, hate speech, harmful content, and misinformation. Over-exposure to screen time may also lead to health problems.

[36] UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM (June 2020), Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/5atbp939>

Percentage of individuals using the Internet by age group, 2022

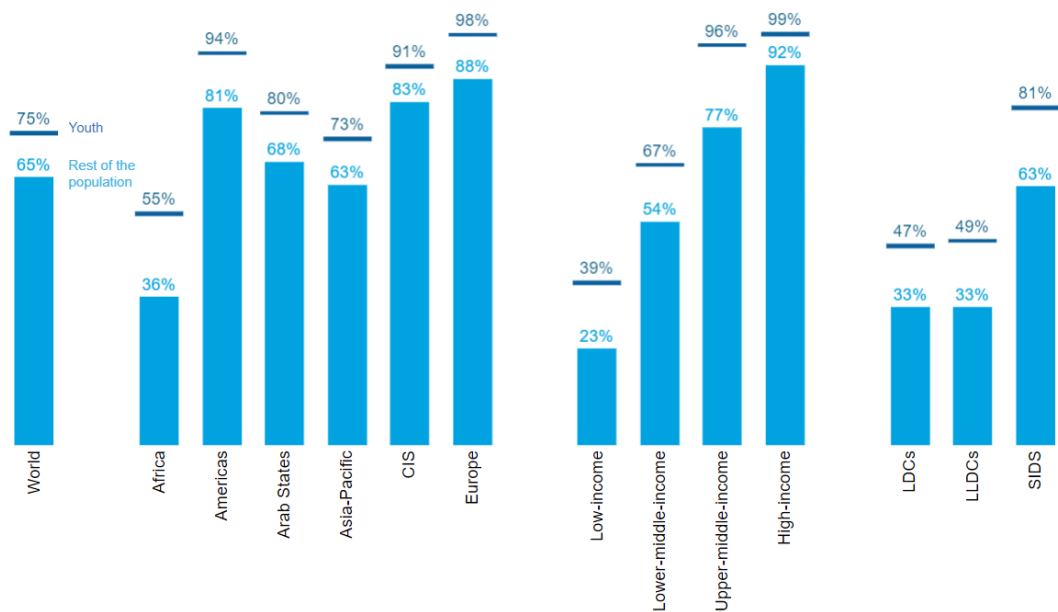


Figure 7 - Percentage of individuals using the Internet by age group (International Telecommunication Union, 2022)

The European Commission is very attentive to this issue and has launched a new action plan for digital education (2021-2027)[38] in which it aims to strengthen "digital skills and competences relevant to the digital transformation". The first part of the plan, dedicated to the acquisition of "basic digital skills and competencies from a very young age", includes the teaching of digital literacy - to fight against misinformation in particular - as well as the means to acquire a "good knowledge and understanding of data-intensive technologies, such as artificial intelligence". Within the European Union, two countries stand out for their very good figures of digital inclusion among young people: only 3% of Croatian youth express great difficulties with digital technology, and 4% of Icelandic youth[39]. This result can be explained by a change in their educational system, which began in 2014, making digital resources more accessible and fully integrated into national education. Most European school systems therefore have a lot of room for improvement in order to fight effectively against these digital inequalities from the earliest age. Laying the foundations of a digital culture is essential at any age in order to start a healthy digital life in complete security and opening the field of possibilities.

In **Romania**, as data shows, leisure time and internet use are interrelated in the sense that most Romanian young people use the internet for their preferred leisure-time activities. Most of them use the internet to communicate with friends (84.6 percent) or to use social networks (79.7 percent). In addition, another large portion of them use the internet to download/listen to music (59.3 percent) or download/watch movies and videos (52.4 percent). One positive aspect is that 55.1 percent of respondents use the internet for school, education, and work-related purposes.

[37] International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2022), *Global Connectivity Report*, consulted on <https://rb.gy/o2ww4>

[38] European Commission, *Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)*, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/yc7wmdsw>

[39] Bamas, A., Pasquier-Avis, L., Uhart, T. (January 2022), *Les jeunes Français, victimes insoupçonnées de la précarité numérique*, Le Monde, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/3x44r3na>

Use of the internet is also related to traits and the education of the family. In this respect, 49.7 percent of youngsters both of whose parents do not have a high-school education mentioned that they never use the internet for education, school, or work, while only 10.8 percent of those both of whose parents have graduated from high school or higher stated the same. At the same time, 27.5 percent of those respondents whose parents have not graduated from high school use the internet often for social networks, and only 8.5 percent of those with educated parents use it for the same reason.

France ranks 12th in the DESI 2022 index[40]. Thanks to a sustained effort in favour of digitization, France has achieved better results than expected in recent years: for example, 62% of French people have basic digital skills. However, while the majority of people under 18 are very comfortable with the so-called "fun" internet and are considered "digital natives", 17% of them have real difficulties with administrative procedures, according to the Defender of Rights in 2019[41]. To tackle digital illiteracy, 270 schools and higher education institutions are involved in a free online program, PIX, which has been created so that users can measure and develop their digital skills.

Moreover, during COVID-19, in **Portugal**, like in many other countries in Europe, organisations that worked directly with more vulnerable youths encountered big barriers in working remotely with them, since many did not have computers or any other electronic devices to carry out activities. However, organisations tried finding solutions to this problem, and avoid creating an even bigger gap between them and the beneficiaries. [42]

2.2 Health

In addition to socio-economic status, health is an important focus for an understanding of who the disadvantaged young people are and what can lead them to develop challenging behaviours. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”[43]. Health is a key measure of the quality of life. This aspect is also closely linked to socioeconomic differences because it appears poorer people tend to be in worse health and die younger than people who are better off[44]. Other factors such as living and working conditions, diet, physical activity, tobacco use, harmful alcohol consumption, provision and quality of health services, and related public policies, including social protection may also play an important role. In this section we will focus on physical health and mental health.

[40] Since 2015, the European Commission has been measuring the digital skills of its citizens between the ages of between 16 and 74 years old thanks to the DESI3 (the Digital Economy and Society Index). European Commission (July 2022), « Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2022», consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/mpef8rnr>

[41] Défenseur des droits (2019), Rapport - Dématérialisation et inégalités d'accès aux services publics, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/25nh4dt9>

[42] Benedito, C. (2022). AHEAD Bairros — AHEAD. AHEAD, consulted on <https://ahead.org.pt/>

[43] World Health organization – WHO, Health and Well-being, consulted on <http://bitly.ws/DkfV>

[44] Eurostat (July 2020), Being Young in Europe today – Health, consulted on <http://bitly.ws/Dkd2>

2.2.1 Physical health

Physical health can be defined as a state of well-being when all internal and external body parts, organs, tissues, and cells can function properly as they are supposed to function[45]. Two factors that impact this physical health are nutrition and physical activity. The WHO recommends that children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 years devote an average of 60 minutes per day to moderate to sustained physical activity and limit sedentary time, especially leisure time spent in front of a screen[46]. Regular physical activity is proven to help prevent several diseases, maintain healthy body weight, and can improve mental health, quality of life and well-being[47]. A healthy diet, together with regular physical activity, is vital to children’s full physical and mental development.

Even today, there are children in the EU who suffer from hunger, in particular Roma communities, homeless children and migrant children making them more susceptible to diseases and preventing their proper brain development. On the other hand, the increased affordability of unhealthy foods and the lack of physical activity can lead to children becoming overweight and obese.[48] For example, 2018, almost one in five 15-year-olds was either overweight or obese on average across EU countries.[49]

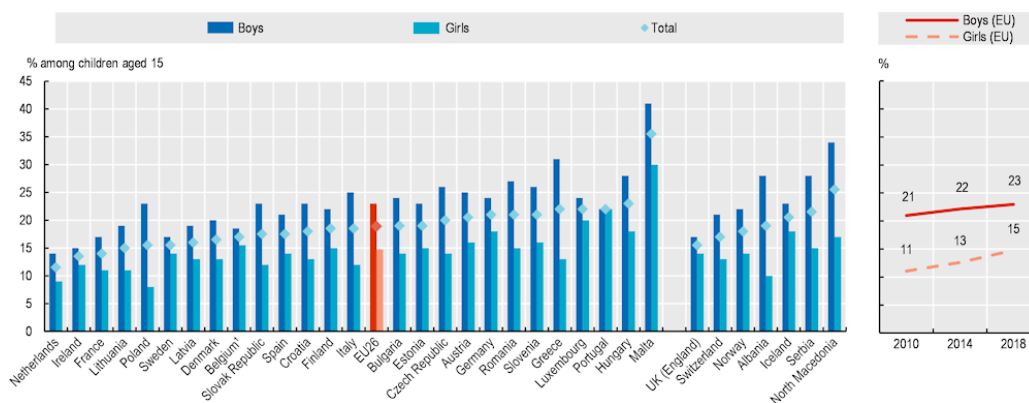


Figure 8 - Overweight and obesity rate among 15-year-olds, 2018 and trends since 2010 (OECD, 2020)

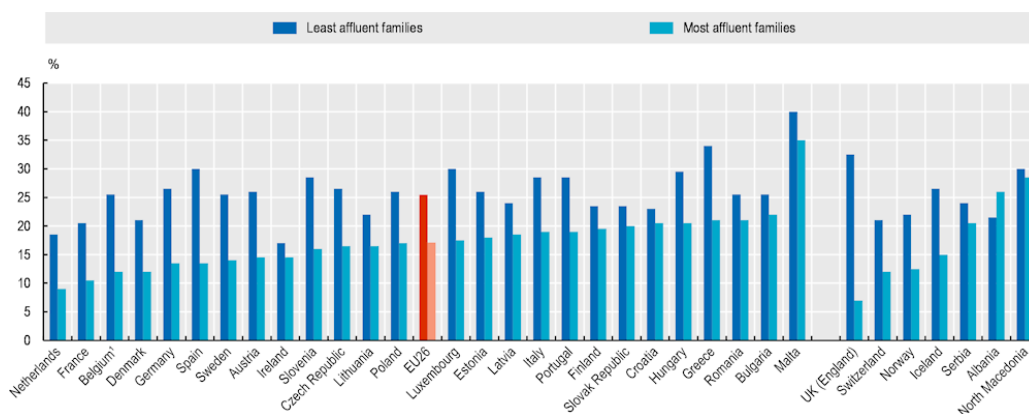


Figure 9 - Overweight and obesity rate among 11-, 13- and 15-year-olds by family affluence, 2018 (OECD, 2020)

[45] Virginia Wesleyan University, Health & Wellness: Physical Health, consulted on <http://bitly.ws/DkiV>

[46] WHO (October 2022), Physical activity, consulted on <http://bitly.ws/Dkxx>

[47] Ibid.

[48] European Commission, EU strategy on the rights of the child, consulted on <http://bitly.ws/Dknj>

[49] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2020), Health at a Glance : Europe 2020: State of Health in the EU Cycle, consulted on <http://bitly.ws/Dkix>

In **Belgium**, among 11- to 17-year-olds, only 20% of boys and 17% of girls comply with the WHO recommendations (which recommend at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day)[50]. According to the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children report, engaging in at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day is generally associated with higher family affluence[51].

The EU is focused on educating and promoting physical activity among children and youth. According to the WHO database, all 27 countries already have a national health-enhancing physical activity action plan for the sports sector and have physical education as part of their school programmes.

2.2.2 Mental Health

Adolescence is a crucial stage in life in determining future physical and mental health. This period of profound identity changes accentuates the vulnerability of young people, who become more prone to risky behaviour. Teenagers mental health issues are widespread and can sometimes be linked to isolation, education environment, social inclusion and poverty, and the prolonged use of digital tools.

Up to 20% of children worldwide experience mental health issues, which if untreated, severely influences their development, educational attainment and their potential to live fulfilling lives. School is recognised amongst the fundamental determinants of mental health of children.[52]In a report that should set off alarm bells across European capitals, UNICEF warned that suicide is the second leading cause of death in Europe among young people[53]. Once again, COVID has aggravated the mental health of young people: during this period, they suffered even more from anxiety, loneliness, breakdown...

In **Ireland**, mental health has been a stand-out topic these past few years, with nine in ten youth workers believing it to be the biggest challenge during the pandemic. 85% of youth workers say the last 12 months have been extremely difficult for the young people they support and 82% predict there will be serious long-term damage to the young people in their communities[54]. There has also been a steep rise in anti-social behaviour, along with early school leaving.

According to the National Institute for Health and Medical Research (INSERM), in **France**, 1 in 8 children suffer from a mental disorder, and this statistic rises to 1 in 5 among teenagers. These disorders are mainly emotional (anxiety or mood disorders) and behavioural (hyperactivity and oppositional disorders).[55]

[50] Belgique en bonne santé, Activité physique, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/y4k5m3fb>

[51]SIPES (2018), HBSC - Health Behaviour in School-aged Children, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/4ra376ca>

[52]European Commission (March 2021), EU Strategy on the rights of the child, consulted on <https://ii1.su/mXcp9>

[53]UNICEF (October 2021), A worsening mental health situation for Europe's children, consulted on <https://urlz.fr/j66D>

[54]Smyth, E., Darmody, M. (May 2021), Risk and Protective Factors in Adolescent Behaviour, Economical and Social Institute Research, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/msvr7hnh>

[55] INSERM (March 2015), Le nouveau visage de nos adolescents. Salle de presse, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/2naxv5us>

INSERM has also shown that these disorders stem from several factors: socio-demographic factors, lifestyle habits, events that occurred during childhood and the psychiatric morbidity of their parents.

In **Belgium**, more than one out of two young people (58%) report having experienced mental or psychological difficulties. The symptoms can be serious: 45% of young people say they have experienced feelings of panic, anxiety attacks, a feeling of loneliness, a loss of appetite or an excessive lack of sleep. Another observation: girls are the first to be affected. They feel more alone, more stressed, and more worried about the future than boys.[56] In Europe in general, many children have experienced anxiety attacks with the return to school, developing eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia, behavioural disorders such as anxiety or depression, and have sometimes experienced more intra-family violence.

In **Portugal**, numerous studies have shown that the COVID-19 measures had a strong impact on children and teenagers' well-being[57]. Indeed, respondents felt a declining of quality of life in the following aspects[58]: (1) physical health - specifically regarding reports on personal care (2) psychological well-being- in terms of emotional change (3) social relationships - resulting from distance from friends and social isolation, along with changes in family relationships (e.g., less contact), with likely influence on available social support and 4) relationships with their environment - regarding fear of infection and, above all, concern for the protection of others (attitudes towards the pandemic). The negative impacts of the COVID-19 measures on children and youth are not seen exclusively in Portugal but is present in numerous countries.

As stated by the WHO[59] : “Mental health is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life. On this basis, the promotion, protection, and restoration of mental health can be regarded as a vital concern of individuals, communities, and societies throughout the world.”

2.3 Challenging behaviours



In addition to addressing the various situations mentioned above that can be a source of disadvantage, the SportyMentor consortium wants to pay particular attention to young people with challenging behaviours. For the purposes of this project, we define 'difficult behaviour among young people' as attacks on people in positions of authority (parents, teachers, etc.), such as disrespect, mockery, or verbal aggression.

[56] Montay,J., F.C (December 2021), Santé mentale : plus d'un jeune sur deux a des difficultés mais n'ose pas voir un professionnel par "peur de stigmatisation", RTBF, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/4wfkjrsy>

[57] Neves, C. (July 2021), Impacto indireto da covid-19 é maior nos jovens: mais peso, pior sono, mais álcool e drogas, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/ycr8yhrd>

[58] Magalhães, C., Amante, M. J., Xavier, P., & Fonseca, S. (2021). Reflexões em torno da COVID-19: famílias, crianças e jovens em risco.

[59] Ibid



If taken to extremes, this behaviour can become violent, which may lead to consequences such as expulsion from school, broken families due to parents being unable to control the youth, getting in trouble with the law, or not having the required self-control to hold down a job. If this occurs, the youth may resort to finding kinship with gangs or people who are not good for them. This can lead into a downward spiral in which it is very hard to get out of.

During the workshops, we also questioned the various experts on this issue and completed our definition of “challenging behaviours”. In **France**, the emphasis was on the distinction between non-pathological behaviour (not linked to a medical diagnosis) and pathological behaviour (linked to a disorder or disability diagnosed by a doctor). In **Romania**, this is behaviour that interferes with the safety or learning of the pupil or other pupils. For the Irish experts, it is behaviour that can exclude a young person from normal life, often destructive for him or those around him. For the **Portuguese** experts, it is a constant challenge to authority, a difficulty in conforming to rules and standards, and a constant overstepping of limits. Finally, in **Belgium**, the experts stressed that a young person does not necessarily have to display difficult behaviour to be considered as being in difficulty.



HOW TO HELP AND SUPPORT DISADVANTAGED YOUTH ?

One of the key goals of this guide is to provide scientific evidence for the development of an evidence-based programme focused on the needs of children and young people.

The following section explores those needs through the social and emotional learning framework developed by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) and how those needs can be met by physical activity and mentoring relationships. This approach will provide the basis for creating a programme that contributes to safe, healthy, and inclusive communities.

1. Youth social and emotional needs

According to CASEL, social and emotional learning (SEL) can be defined as an integral part of education and human development. SEL should be the path which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.[60] Social and emotional competence can also be viewed as the ability to regulate emotions, manage social relationships and responsible decision-making.[61] Those competencies provide children and young people with the skills to form secure trusting relationships, to perform teamwork, to demonstrate perseverance, engage in problem solving, demonstrate emotional intelligence and self-awareness alongside the capacity to cope in adverse situations [62].

[60] Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL]. (2015). Social and emotional learning core competencies. Consulted on <http://casel.org>.

[61] Heckman, J. & Kautz, T. (2012) 'Hard Evidence on Soft Skills', *Labour Economics*. 19(4), pp. 451-464

[62] McLaughlin, T., Aspden, K & Clarke, L (2017) How do teachers support children's social-emotional competence? *Strategies for teachers*. Early Childhood Folio, 21(2) pp 21- 27

These skills are usually developed in very young children who have experienced sensitive care-giving and educational experiences that have provided opportunities for children to have the motivation and inclination to practise their developing skills.[63]

Other researchers argue that it is necessary to focus on skills development, because when emotional skills are emphasised and developed throughout childhood, the likelihood of young people being disadvantaged decreases . The literature suggests also that social and emotional skills should be emphasised in educational settings, such as emotional literacy (including self-awareness), social and problem-solving skills, empathy, and self-regulation. In addition, there is an interdependent link between social-emotional skills and emotional intelligence[65].

For disadvantaged youth, family, socioeconomic, education and other background issues are not always in perfect harmony to create the optimum conditions required for the development of the competencies discussed.

In the CASEL framework, SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities.[66]

Therefore, this framework provides a clear link between research, policy and practice underpinned by a collaborative approach with a range of expertise including practitioners, academics, and policy makers.



Figure 10 - CASEL'S SEL Framework (CASEL, 2020) [67]

[63] Ibid, McLaughlin et al.

[65] Vaida, S. (2016) *Social-Emotional Competence Development in Young Adults: A Theoretical Review*. Studia UBB Psychol-Paed, LXI, 1, pp 107-122

[66] Ibid CASEL (2015)

[67] CASEL (2020), CASEL'S SEL framework : What are the core competence areas and where they promoted ?, retrieved from <https://t.ly/UuaRU>

2. Physical activity to meet emotional needs

The use of physical activity and/or sport to support disadvantaged youth has become an important discourse and endeavour of the Europe 2020 agenda. This can be supported by a wide body of literature that supports a positive impact of engaging in sporting activities on psychological, cultural and behavioural development of individuals in addition to the physical progress usually expected. [68]

Several European institutions acknowledge the potential of physical education and sport as a means of developing social, ethical and moral competencies, such as: active citizenship [69]; cooperation attitudes[70]; personal qualities such as emotion regulation[71]; social skills such as teamwork, loyalty, self-sacrifice, ethical behaviour and perseverance to achieve goals.[72]

Research also shows the potential of sport and activity to educate young people promoting the respect for self and others alongside personal responsibility, self-regulation, communication skills, motivation, and self-awareness[73]. According to the authors, when comparing children who participate in sports to children who do not participate, those who engage in sporting activities have higher levels of self-regulation.

Juyal & Dandona (2012)[74] argue that the reason for this is due to the opportunity that physical activity and sport provide individual interactions in a collaborative manner whilst working towards a common goal, since participants learn to develop self-regulation skills and sport provides an arena to express and channel stronger emotions (such as aggression) in a more socially appropriate manner.

Hellison (2010) recognized the link between engaging in physical activity and developing core social and emotional competencies through the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility model (TPSR) (1985, 1995, & 2003). This model emphasises the need to teach, through sports and physical activity, values and behaviour that can contribute to the positive development of students' lives. Hellison's TPSR model identifies two values associated with well-being and personal development: self-management (level 1) and effort (level 2). Two other values are associated with social integration and development: respect for other people's feelings and rights (level 3), and caring (level 4).

[68] Hellison, D. (2010). Teaching personal and social responsibility through physical activity. Cahmpaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

[69] Banks, J. (2008). Diversity and citizenship education in global times. Education for citizenship and democracy, pp. 57-70

[70] Bailey, R. (2005). Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion. Educational review, 57(1), pp. 71-90

[71] Hellison, D. (2010). Teaching personal and social responsibility through physical activity. Cahmpaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

[72] Rudd & Stoll (2004) 'What type of character do athletes possess? An empirical examination of college athletes versus college non athletes with the RSBH value judgment inventory', The Sport Journal. 7(2),

[73] Ubago-Jiménez, J. , González-Valero, G. , Puertas-Molero, P., & García-Martínez, I. (2019). Development of Emotional Intelligence through Physical Activity and Sport Practice. A Systematic Review. Behavioral Science. (9:44). doi:10.3390/bs9040044

[74] Juyal, S.L & Dandona, A (2012) Emotional Competence of sports and non-sports personnel: A comparative study. IJBS, 27, p41-52

Hellison's Model of Social Responsibility

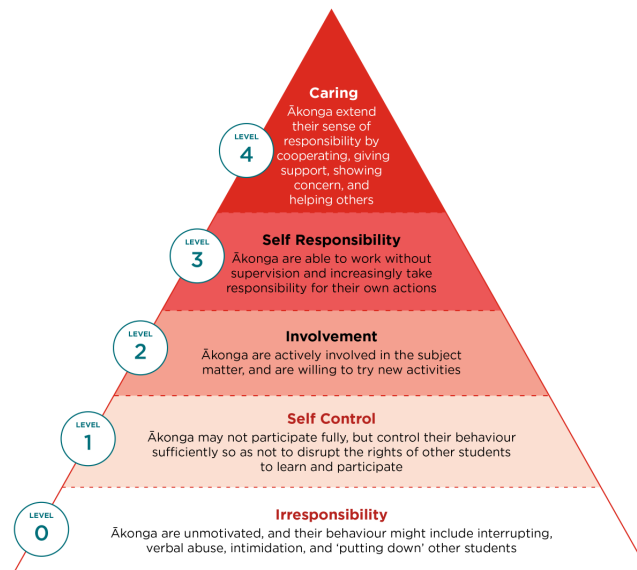


Figure 10 Adapted Hellison's Model of Social Responsibility (New-Zealand Ministry of Education)[76]

Given the affective (emotional) component of engagement has been shown to predict behavioural engagement (Li & Lerner, 2014)[77], it becomes important to acknowledge the emotional barriers that a young person might face when presented with learning opportunities. For team sports this could refer to supporting the emotional and self-regulation of the young people in terms of helping them to manage anxiety at their own performance compared to others. Helping manage their feelings when the young person falls short of their expected performance as well as how to empathise with others in that position is another aspect that would require support with young people in difficulty. It is therefore essential to meet the emotional needs of young people, even to engage them in sport, which underlines the importance of the skills of the educator.

To optimise the potential of sporting activity in developing these skills, Hellison (2010) suggested that there needed to be a holistic approach to engaging learners with physical activity. Within this approach, educators need to ensure that there is protected time for relationship building and reflection alongside ensuring that the voices of the participants are heard throughout which is achieved through group meetings; explicit explanation of the desired outcomes of the activity (including the social and emotional competency development) and individualised programmes which recognize individual needs.

3. Mentoring as a tool to engage disadvantaged young people

Young people need a range of caring adults in their lives to be successful. This is especially true for disadvantaged young people. With the right support, these young people could set themselves on the path to a bright future and make a vital contribution to themselves, their families, their communities and so much more.

[75] "Ākonga" is a maori word meaning "student, pupil, disciple"

[76] New-Zealand's Ministry of Education, Teaching personal and social responsibility, consulted on : <https://t.ly/l5tjw>

[77] Li, Y., & Lerner, R. M. (2013). Interrelations of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive school engagement in high school students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 42(1), 20-32.

Mentoring is therefore a particularly attractive intervention for this group because of its relatively low cost compared with more intensive programmes, the wide variety of areas it seems to promote and its flexibility in serving young people from a wide range of backgrounds[78]. Indeed, a growing number of studies have revealed significant associations between youth's involvement in mentoring relationships and positive developmental outcomes[79]. By developing trusting, caring relationships with adults, youth may begin to see themselves and others in a more positive light, develop cognitive and social skills that they can transfer to other important relationships and envision their futures with greater optimism and clarity[80]. But, success in creating strong, long-lasting and potentially life-changing mentoring relationships is certainly not a given in any mentoring program. Mentors and youth (mentees) characteristics and needs play an important role in relationship development.

In the following section, we review some of the elements identified as important in the mentor and mentee profiles for establishing a solid relationship between the two.

3.1 Mentors characteristics

For the purpose of this project, a mentor can be defined as a supportive (young) adult who works with a young person to build a relationship by offering guidance, support, and encouragement to help the young person's positive and healthy development over a period of time[81]. The mentor should have some knowledge about the possible struggles and hurdles that come from having a disadvantaged background. It could be beneficial for the mentoring relationship (by building empathy) for the mentor to have had a similar past and can be considered a successful case study. Nevertheless, a mentor, above all, should possess the following skills[82]:

- Be patient
- Be enthusiastic
- Show respect
- Genuinely interested in helping
- Be supportive
- Be a good active listener
- Be inspiring
- Be consistent
- Be adaptable
- Give honest feedback

[78] DuBois, D. L., N. Portillo, J. E. Rhodes, N. Silverthorn and J. C. Valentine (2011) "How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence." *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12 (2), 57–91.

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[81] Bruce M., Bridgeland J. (January 2014), *The mentoring effect: young people's perspectives on the outcomes and availability of Mentoring*, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/3b2fxhsp>

[82] Loretto, P. (2022), *Qualities of a Good Mentor*. *The Balance*, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/25kvjff6>

Additionally, the mentor can guide him or herself by following the 3 A's scheme of a valuable mentorship. The three A's of mentoring are:

- Availability - a mentor should offer and share with the mentee their time, experience, encouragement, feedback, and advice.
- Active listening - a mentor should listen and be attentive when the mentee is speaking.
- Analysis - good mentors should be able to analyse what is being said by the mentee. The mentor should listen to the mentee's context and provide appropriate feedback or solutions to promote the mentee's growth.

For the mentor, mentoring processes are an opportunity for personal development too, as he/she should put in practice, improve, or develop personal skills while promoting the development of the mentee.

3.2 Mentees characteristics

The mentee should be a young individual, who comes from a disadvantaged background, but is willing to receive guidance. A mentee should have the following skills:

- Be willing to receive guidance,
- Be consistent,
- Be open

Furthermore, according to an article posted by the University of Illinois [83], the main qualities of a good mentee are:

- Personal commitment – there should also be some commitment from the mentee's side, by preparing for meetings with the mentor and following the goals/objectives set, taking responsibility to learn
- Flexibility – a mentee should also be able to recognize the need to accommodate changes and keep the focus on the overall goal
- Openness – the mentee should be open to accept feedback, discuss areas for improvement, and ask for help, as well as share one's needs and views with the mentor. This openness should also cover the willingness to consider different ideas or opinions, to try new things, and to accept different points of view
- Initiative – which is the ability to act or take responsibility to do something without being prompted to do so

3.3 Mentoring relationship

When starting a mentoring program, it is crucial that both mentor and mentee are motivated in the development of this relationship. Since it constitutes a two-sided approach, where both parties can benefit from it, it is crucial that the mentor and mentee are engaged in the process.

Therefore, when talking about youth mentees, it is important, as a mentor, to incorporate some activities that he/she can benefit from, and still maintain a high motivation for the process.

[83]University of Illinois (2022), Mentoring undergraduates in Science & Engineering (MUSE) program. Mentoring Undergraduates in Science Engineering MUSE Program, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/2ukva6x4>

The very premise of mentoring is the idea that if caring, concerned adults are available to young people, youth will be more likely to become successful adults themselves.

Youth mentoring programs can have broad development goals. These range from improving academic performance, preparing youth for a specific line of work, to reducing substance abuse and other anti-social behaviours [84]. It is always important to consider the mentee's goal, and their particular needs.

According to Jekielek et al. (2022) there seems to be three very important characteristics of a good mentoring relationship:

- A “long-lasting mentoring relationship” seems to be more beneficial than a short-term mentoring process: Those involved in brief duration mentoring (less than 3-months) felt less confident about doing their schoolwork and had a substantially lower sense of self-worth.
- Youth mentees can benefit more from a mentor who keeps contact with them throughout the process, which means, young people whose mentors contacted them most often had significantly better outcomes on a range of indicators, such as academic performance, increased confidence about schoolwork, minimised their school absence, and even decreased their tendency of drug initiation. On the other hand, participants who rarely spoke with their mentors even experienced a decay on the above-mentioned indicators.
- Perceived higher-quality relationships with their mentors predicted the best results. Young people who perceived their relationship as good with their mentor showed better academic performance (i.e. less school absence; earned higher grades; were considered to be better students) and were even less likely to start using drugs and alcohol.

Mentoring relationships are most likely to promote positive outcomes and avoid harm when they are close, consistent, and enduring[85].

4. Good practices

Before developing an innovative approach that combines the use of mentoring, sport and a mobile application for teenagers and young people, as SportyMentor aims to do, it is important to identify and understand what has already been done in terms of sport and/or mentoring to support this audience.

[83]University of Illinois (2022), Mentoring undergraduates in Science & Engineering (MUSE) program. Mentoring Undergraduates in Science Engineering MUSE Program, consulted on <https://tinyurl.com/2ukva6x4>

[84]Jekielek, S. M., Moore, K. A., Hair, E. C., & Scarupa, H. J. (2002). Mentoring: A promising strategy for youth development. Child Trends Research Brief, 2, 1-8

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4.1. Mentoring related practices

Ireland

Le Cheile is a national, volunteer mentoring and family support service, which works with young people and their families, where the young person is involved in or at risk of offending. Established in 2005, they work in partnership with the Probation Service, An Garda Siochana, Oberstown Children Detention Campus and other agencies to reduce the level of crime in the community. They recruit, train and support over 200 volunteer mentors across 12 counties to provide a supportive relationship for young people and parents. Le Cheile also runs a dedicated Restorative Justice Project in Limerick and Clare and a number of family support programmes across the country.

Portugal

AHEAD Bairros is a volunteer project in Lisbon that seeks, through the promotion of school success of children and young people, to contribute to their social inclusion. The project began in 2008 and currently takes place in three different locations: in the Boavista neighbourhood, Ameixoeira neighbourhood, Padre Cruz neighbourhood and Marvila.

The program operates in an individualised mentoring format (1 to 1) in which each volunteer is responsible for accompanying a child or young person, with the objective of passing on school autonomy skills.

The mentors must:

- Conduct 2-hour long weekly mentoring throughout the school year.
- Conduct debriefing sessions with the coordinator after each mentoring.
- Participate in the various training actions (initial and continuous).
- Plan, organise and set goals with mentoring.
- Enhance individual and self-employed working skills.
- Provide tools for school, personal and future professional success.

4.2 Sport related practices

Belgium

Sport2Be (6-21 y/o): Sport2Be wants to re-establish equal opportunities and allow young people in difficulty to fulfil their potential. They want to offer them a springboard by accompanying them in their education, their orientation, and their entry into active life. Every week, Sport2Be offers children aged 6 to 21 free mixed sports activities in various disciplines, such as football, street soccer, basketball, boxing, hockey, rugby, tennis, and dance. Young people can develop under the guidance of a competent sports coach and with the support of an attentive development coach.

France

Sport dans la ville (*Sport in the city*) is the main association for integration through sport in France. It accompanies young people from priority neighbourhoods on the road to success through sport, which enables it to transmit important values for the personal development and professional integration of nearly 8,500 young people by actively participating in their progress and personal development.

The association's mission is to promote equal opportunities. It also offers several programmes, including “Sport et pédagogie” (*sport and pedagogy*), which provides free sports sessions (football, basketball, tennis, and dance) supervised by sports educators who pass on to young people values that are essential for their future social and professional integration, such as commitment, respect, goodwill, diligence, punctuality, and team spirit.



CONCLUSION

We wanted to use this guide to answer three main questions: who are young people in difficulty, what are their needs and how can they be met?

In the definition of this target group we were confronted, both in the literature review and in discussions with experts, with the complexity of proposing a definition that would meet with agreement, given the diversity of this group from a social, economic, or cultural point of view in the various EU countries. We were nonetheless able to identify a series of criteria on which there is consensus, and which fall within the scope of our project to define this group and the challenges they face. We then used the CASEL model to identify the social and emotional needs of these young people. This approach addresses different forms of inequality and empowers young people and adults alike to co-create thriving environments and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities. Finally, we wanted to highlight the added value of mentoring and physical activity in developing social and emotional skills, given the central role played by these two elements in this project.

This research and the workshops therefore enabled us to confirm our desire to make SportyMentor a programme that meets the needs of young people by promoting and defending the values of mutual respect, empathy, responsibility, and empowerment.



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