

# D3.5 Report On the Analysis Of the Impact Of Community Building Actions

## T.3.1.4. Analyzing the impact of community building actions



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## Inclusion4Schools Project Summary

The emerging European context is to a large extent characterized by widening and deepening inequalities, the crisis of democracy, and the disintegration of communities. It is especially the case in the Central-Eastern European semi-peripheral, post-socialist context, where there is a growing tendency of rearticulating authoritarian, nationalist, neoconservative discourses, which are increasingly infiltrating the political landscape within and beyond Europe. This „*retrotopia*“ is conducive to the hegemonic production of an imaginary social homogeneity, which consequently stirs up reactionary xenophobia, fear, and hatred through the construction of external intruders (e.g. the migrant) and enemies within (e.g. the Roma). Such a milieu steeped in fear tears up old wounds and produces new divisions as well, hence the construction of new walls – symbolically, as well as physically.

Since the leitmotif of this program is primarily educational, the proposed action targets such (imaginary, symbolic, and real) walls of exclusion which are intended to segregate children (based on class, ethnicity, gender, etc.), which are meant to divide and alienate the local communities to which those children nonetheless belong, thus actively (re)producing inequalities. In contrast to the power-relations of exclusion, the culture of silence, and the reproduction of unjust structures, the project aims to foster and promote pedagogical relations of inclusion, a culture of dialogue, and the transformation of unjust structures through education.

Running in parallel to the research and innovation actions the central objectives of the proposed action are:

- (1) to support and coordinate community schools (as being central to the constitution and maintenance of cohesive local communities) and their respective communities of practice, and
- (2) to create a place and culture of sharing (knowledge, praxis, solidarity) between such communities by initiating and coordinating the convergence and synergies of local, regional and transnational communities.

The expected impact of the proposed project is to contribute to the European initiatives and interventions that aim at reversing inequalities. Adopting a mission-oriented, impact-focused approach to address the specific challenges of the call, synergies will be enhanced between the relevant stakeholders through coordinating and supporting the cooperation between teachers, researchers, local communities and other relevant stakeholders (such as policy-makers), in order to generate networks of policy development and to promote the policy uptake of the project.



## Partners

Participant No	Participant organization name	Country
1 (Coordinator)	Regional Centre for Information and Scientific Development (RCISD)	Hungary
2	John Wesley Theological College	Hungary
3	C.E.G.A. – Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives Foundation (CEGA)	Bulgaria
4	J. Selye University	Slovakia
5	Oltalom Charity Society	Hungary
6	Albanian National Orphans Association (ANOA)	Albania



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Scope and objectives of the report

### Purpose of the report

The report presents the key findings of the analysis of the community building process conducted within the I4S project in the four partner countries – Hungary, Albania, Bulgaria and Slovakia. In line with the project tasks, specific attention is paid to exploring the dynamics of the action in diverse local contexts, marked by different power relations, existing habits and ways of association between the local residents, different views on the significance of sharing and leadership, as well as by the local interpretation of the meaning of community.

The **purpose of this report** is to help fostering the process of scaling up of the community centered approaches for expanding the local networking aimed at tackling the educational inequalities and promoting the inclusive education of children. It is intended to inform the local authorities and key stakeholders, the schools and communities about:

- Achieved direct results, effects and benefits for the participants involved – schools and communities;
- Identified effective methods and good practices for building school-community partnerships, including the ways of adapting to the specifics in different national and local contexts;
- Effective approaches for motivation of different stakeholders to participate in the process, considering their different roles and potential contribution to the mission of the partnership between the school and communities;
- Challenges of the community building process and optional solutions;
- Exploring the potential long-term impact of the community building interventions in the pilot localities.

This way the report is contributing to outlining **recommendations to local authorities and relevant local stakeholders** for how to facilitate such processes by adapting the working models and good practices to the local contexts (D3.6 of the Inclusion4Schools project). Based on the findings and conclusions of this report, we will recommend to local authorities to act as facilitators and providers of resources of the initiatives of the residents so that they could exercise control over their lives, i.e. they are capable to plan and organize actions to achieve locally relevant desired goals.

The **targeted audiences of this report and of the recommendations are**: the local authorities, national and local NGOs, working in the domains of education and Roma community development,



schools, teachers and educators, educational institutions at central and local levels, researchers, community activists, other local stakeholders and professionals. The intentions of the authors are to provide them with a kind of a knowledge resource – not strictly academic, but more practice-oriented analysis that can be used for better understanding of the school-community building process and for convincing the targeted audiences to multiply the good practices of I4S project.

In parallel, the Inclusion4Schools project has produced also a Report on the results of a Social Impact Analysis (D1.4). It was performed by Oltalom, Hungary, applying sociology methods (attitude tests and focus groups) specifically exploring the attitudes of the local project participants and offering a nuanced understanding of both quantitative shifts in perceptions and qualitative reflections on their experiences. Unlike the social impact assessment (D1.4), the current report (D3.5) is focused on analyzing the achievements of the community building interventions applying the standard criteria and methods for projects' evaluation. Both reports are complementing each other in providing a comprehensive picture of the long-term impact of the community building interventions influencing the people and communities involved in the I4S project.

The **process of work on this impact analysis** (D3.5) has involved all project partners. It is developed by C.E.G.A. Foundation as a WP3 leader; experts from partner organizations are acknowledged as co-authors as parts of the country reports are directly used in this analysis. The contribution of the project coordinator and the project scientific coordinator is important. The project partners, responsible for piloting of community building in their countries – ANOA in Albania, Wesley in Hungary and Selye in Slovakia – have substantial inputs through provision of information about their experience gained during the piloting.

## 1.2 In brief on the methodology of the impact analysis

The **object of the impact analysis** are the schools and communities involved in the piloting of the community-centered approaches, performed in the period of March 2022 – October 2024 in 22 pilot localities in the four partner countries – by ANOA in Albania, C.E.G.A. Foundation in Bulgaria, John Wesley Theological College in Hungary and by Selye University in Slovakia.

The analysis uses the five **standard criteria for evaluation** of projects and programs, given also in the EC guidelines to evaluation procedures: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The assessment of the piloted community building interventions is focused on:

- Relevance of the intervention in terms of relevance to the local needs and the appropriateness of the methodology designed and applied;
- The analysis of efficiency is confined to a general assessment of the implemented activities and direct results achieved by the project; local management capacity; difficulties and risks



that affected the implementation process. (The cost-efficiency of invested resources isn't a task of this assessment.)

- Effectiveness, i.e. the actual benefits achieved for the participants in the process – schools, parents and communities, other local stakeholders. The effectiveness and impact are judged more from the beneficiaries' perception of benefits received. The main analytical points of effectiveness are the benefits received and the target group reached by the project, as well as the improvement of the skills and knowledge of the teachers, Roma communities and local partners.
- Impact: Considering that the impact analysis is carried out very soon after the completion of direct interventions, the impact and sustainability are analyzed as conditions created for long-term effects on the participants.
- Under the sustainability criterion, the extent to which the benefits, services and partnerships are likely to continue is considered. Sustainability is projected as potentials for continuation of the community building processes and of the local partnerships created in support of schools after the completion of the project.

It is important to point out some **considerations and restrictions regarding the conclusions of the report**. The short time span of the impact analysis, made too soon after the completion of the activities, allows for the identification mainly of the short-term effects and benefits of the community building actions. Usually, the sustainable effects and long-term impact on the communities and schools involved can be assessed at least one or two years after the completion of the interventions.

The main **sources of data and qualitative information** are the project documentation, including partners' reports, various documents and photos of the community building events in the pilot schools, as well as the consortium project meetings for planning and sharing experiences. Qualitative information about the point of view of beneficiaries is ensured through focus groups, country reports and observations of the project experts.





## 2 Concept And Methodology Of the Community Building

A Guide for community building has been designed by an international team of project experts as a joint product and agreed by the partners. It provided a coherent concept, methodology and guidance on the technology, approaches and tools for the piloting of the community building actions. The Guide helped for the synchronization of the activities in the pilot localities within the four partner countries, creating a common language and common understanding of the community building process among the participating organizations and professionals in the project.

### 2.1 Context

The problems and gaps in the education in Roma and other disadvantaged ethnic communities are explored and analyzed in surveys and research (incl. those under WP1 of the I4S project). Public authorities, professional societies of teachers and educators are quite familiar with the gaps; while the media is disseminating information to the public at large, although often marked by disinformation, prejudices and negative stereotypes.

Research has proved that the segregation is one of the crucial factors generating educational inequalities in the socially isolated ethnic communities and marginalized groups. The educational segregation has not yet been overcome in the four project countries, despite the desegregation measures performed in the last decades.

**In Albania**, educational segregation often manifests in the form of disparities between urban and rural areas, with rural schools typically having fewer resources, less qualified teachers, and poorer infrastructure. Disadvantaged schools are usually located in remote, rural, or impoverished urban areas, and they struggle with lower attendance rates and higher drop-out rates. The quality of education in these schools is significantly lower compared to more affluent urban areas. Children from disadvantaged families, particularly those living in poverty, face significant barriers to accessing quality education. These barriers include lack of access to educational materials, poor school infrastructure, and a limited number of qualified teachers. In addition, children from these backgrounds may need to work to support their families, leading to higher dropout rates.

Similar problems are registered **in Bulgaria**, but here the school segregation is aggravated by the legacy of the educational policy implemented by the communist regime. The segregated schools in Bulgaria were set up after the Second World War, when the communist authorities established schools in the segregated Roma neighborhoods. They cover education up to the eight grade only. The declared goal has been to eradicate illiteracy among Roma, which at that time reached over



90% in some neighborhoods. In these schools, a curriculum has been introduced with reduced number of general subjects at the expense of vocational training, sports, music, etc. Thus, they have become second-rate schools that "produce" poorly educated youngsters, without a real chance to further their education in secondary and higher stages. This practice was abolished only in 1991, when the general education curriculum, valid for the whole country, was introduced in segregated schools as well. Despite the restrictions against the segregation adopted in the new Law for Preschool and School Education (in force since 2016), cases and practices of educational segregation are still in place. Also, the level of education in these schools still remains significantly lower than in mainstream ones.

**In Hungary**, educational segregation is a significant challenge, particularly affecting disadvantaged schools, suffering from lack of resources, lower quality infrastructure, and less experienced teachers. Historical practices have wrongly classified Roma children as disabled, leading to their placement in special education classes despite their normal abilities. By the mid 1980s, a significant percentage of Roma pupils attended special schools, thus contributing to segregation. Even after policy changes in 2003, other forms of special educational needs' categories increased, perpetuating exclusion. After the nationalization (extreme centralization) of schools in the 2010s, a new problem arose in Hungary. Local elites often handed over schools to churches to benefit from better funding and resources, which inadvertently promoted segregation. Church-run schools, which are receiving significant financial support from the government, could selectively admit students due to more lax regulations, often excluding disadvantaged and Roma children. A further possibility for free choice of school, which is particularly exploited by parents with an intellectual background and higher socio-economic status, is that some types of schools are above the district enrolment rule. These include church-run schools, foundation-run schools, schools for ethnic minorities, schools with alternative educational programs, schools with a specialized curriculum (e.g. specializing in sports or music) or bilingual schools. The establishment of such schools can facilitate the 'transfer' of children from better social backgrounds from traditional state institutions, which inevitably leads to a homogenization of the social composition of state schools, with an increase in the proportion of lower-status parents. A high proportion of Roma students still attend schools or classes where 50% or more of their classmates are Roma. They are particularly at risk of dropping out of school without a secondary degree.

In the past, educational segregation **in Slovakia** regrettably has affected the Roma minority in a profound manner, particularly through the separate placement of many Roma children in classes or even schools, frequently owing to their socioeconomic backgrounds and limited proficiency with the Slovak language. This segregation has often been rationalized through claims of "adaptation difficulties", leading to a disproportionate number of Roma learners attending specialized schools intended for learners with intellectual disabilities. Such practices have curtailed Roma learners'



access to quality education, have hindered the development of their social abilities among peers, and have prevented the attainment of academic standards on par with non-Roma learners.

Today, schools have the option to solicit extra support for learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, representing a shift toward increased inclusion. Several initiatives are now focused on aiding segregated communities, offering monetary and professional resources to better educational circumstances for these learners. In spite of these efforts, confronting segregation remains challenging. Schools naturally have no desire to become “segregated schools”, yet inadvertently drift toward that, in some cases, by parents able to do so, transfer their children elsewhere, exacerbating the issue by amplifying the concentration of socially disadvantaged students in certain schools and perpetuating the cycle of social exclusion while unintended segregation gets reinforced.

The **surveys under WP1** of I4S project have confirmed the initial project assumptions that there are systemic gaps and problems in the interaction between schools and communities, in particular in the localities with pupils from Roma, Egyptian and other disadvantaged ethnic minorities. The isolation of excluded minority communities, incl. Roma from the macro-society is one of the key barriers to their inclusion in education. At the same time, the barriers in interaction between the schools and parents/communities are higher for schools attended mostly by disadvantaged children from segregated ethnic communities living in poverty and isolation.

Despite the country specifics and the historical roots of educational segregation in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia, there are identified **common problems and needs for support of the interaction and partnerships between disadvantaged schools and excluded ethnic communities** (Roma and other vulnerable minorities):

**Mutual distrust between educational institutions and Roma communities:** There is often a lack of trust between Roma families and educational institutions, stemming from a history of discrimination and exclusion. This mistrust of Roma communities can lead to low parental involvement in their children's education and reluctance among parents to engage with schools. Many of the teachers are from the majority population, have limited awareness of Roma ethno-cultural codes and are easily influenced by the negative stereotypes towards Roma, which are spreading in the macro-society.

**Communication and language barriers:** Effective communication between schools and Roma families is often hindered by language differences and a lack of culturally competent staff within schools who can engage with these communities in a meaningful way. Schools often lack effective communication strategies to engage with Roma families. This includes a failure to provide information in accessible formats or languages and insufficient efforts to understand and address the specific needs and concerns of Roma parents.



**Cultural differences:** Schools may not be equipped to understand and accommodate the cultural practices and needs of Roma families, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts.

**Parental involvement:** Roma parents may face challenges in supporting their children's learning and engaging with schools, partly due to systemic barriers and historical inequities in access to education. Furthermore, schools may not actively seek to involve Roma parents in decision-making processes or school activities, leading to further alienation.

**Inadequate support structures:** There is often a lack of programs and initiatives in Albania aimed at bridging the gap between schools and marginalized communities. Without adequate support, schools struggle to create an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all students.

**Weak partnerships:** Partnerships between schools and Roma communities, including the Tanoda program in Hungary, are typically limited and project-based rather than strategic and long-term. There are instances of cooperation with local governments, minority governments, and various associations, but these collaborations often lack sustainability. This sporadic and project-focused approach limits the effectiveness of efforts to support Roma inclusion in education.

In response to these and other challenges, the Inclusion4Schools has launched and piloted community-centered practices for building mutual trust and convincing both communities and schools that their ultimate goals are common – better education for children and improved welfare of the communities.

## 2.2 Goals and objectives of the community building

The goals and specific objectives are set in line with the scope and objectives of the I4S project. The community building interventions are aimed at “improving the network activity among the stakeholders of inequality discourses (municipal authorities, Roma organizations, civil right movements, centralized state actors and local authorities, welfare institutions, public health and social care systems, churches, academic associations, research institutes, community media etc.)”

**The long-term goal is to tackle the educational inequalities by building a community around the school, which will attract all interested parties and in particular the most isolated ethnic communities, mobilizing them in common actions for the improvement of education.**

The piloting and demonstrating models for transformative practices of schools for fostering the inclusive education are intended to involve communities in school-community collaboration. The local community planning and actions are specifically focused on proposing solutions and improvements in education, in particular targeting the disadvantaged Roma children and families. The main areas of common interests might be the welfare of children and young people, inclusive



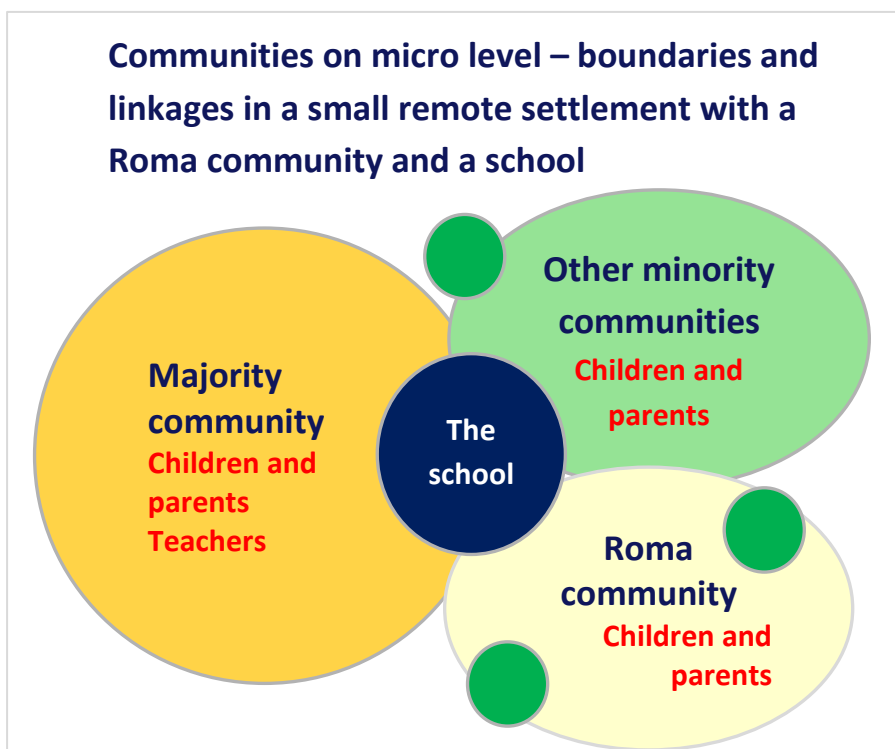
education for better opportunities for personal development of all children and young people, the improvement of the quality of life in the settlement and local communities.

**The specific objectives of the community building interventions** are identified in response to local contexts and identified problems in different pilot schools and are related to:

- Overcoming the still existing distances and mutual distrust between the disadvantaged schools and isolated ethnic communities;
- Breaking the barriers in communication between teachers, school managers, educators and parents from isolated ethnic communities, informal community leadership, local community self-organizations, reducing prejudices towards each other;
- Introducing operational practices and informal communication channels for bias-free dialogue and mutual exchange between the teachers and the parents;
- Mobilizing schools and communities for common actions and initiatives supporting the improvement of the education of disadvantaged children – reducing dropouts, motivating children for higher educational achievements;
- Expanding partnerships by attracting the relevant stakeholders that can support the process with knowledge, resources, administrative solutions, etc.

**Building a community around the school requires involving people from diverse, often divided and confronting communities.**

Normally, the communities in cities, towns and villages are not homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, social status, etc. They consist of different groups, sub-communities and interest groups. On the other hand, the individuals in the communities often belong to more than one community, each consolidated /attracted by different unitive features, for instance – origin, profession, others.

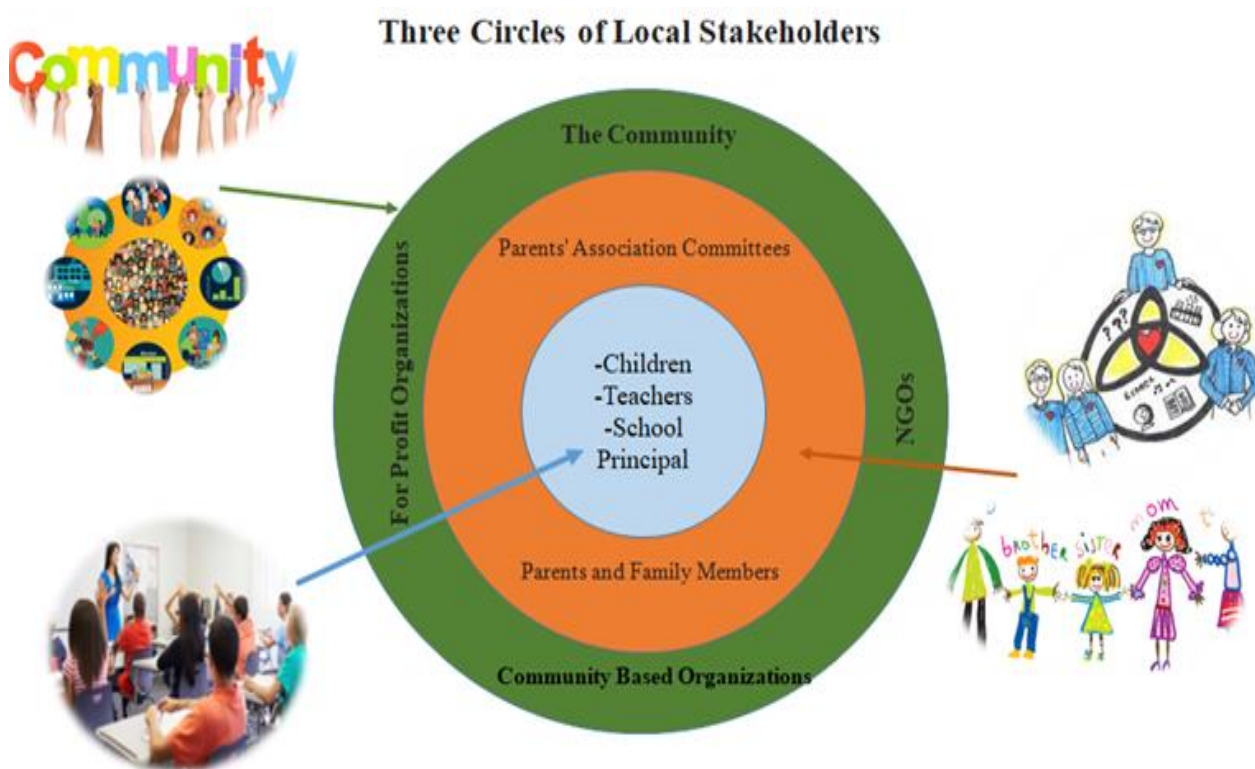




**Target groups and local specifics in the project countries.** The I4S project is focused on building a community around the school, involving most of the relevant stakeholders in the locality. The target communities in the pilot localities in the four countries have their specifics / diversity but still they have a lot in common in their general characteristics:

- According to the criteria for involvement of the pilot schools, most of the pre-selected localities are isolated from the national/local macro/mainstream society as a whole;
- Most localities include both majority and minority ethnic communities (like Roma and other minorities), with social distances and possible conflicts between them, existing open or hidden confrontation and mutual prejudices towards each other;
- These are small settlements with missing or minimized number of public institutions and public services located on the spot, meaning that some of the stakeholders are located outside the locality. Some of the teachers in the pilot school often live in other neighboring settlements and aren't part of the local community.

There are three main circles of local stakeholders, as illustrated in the Guide:



The net for attracting the target participants in community building must be cast as wide as possible, at the same time considering the distinction of the roles and expected contributions of different categories of participants. Ensuring the active participation of the mandatory **key actors** without whom results cannot be achieved, is of critical importance: (1) the school – managers, teachers and

educators, school boards, educational mediators, if any; (2) the disadvantaged communities – parents, informal community leaders, community based organizations and initiative groups; (3) the local authorities - municipal experts and ideally decision-making representatives (mayors, municipal councils) and other local NGOs (if any), which are expected to take over the facilitation of the process after the project completion.

The target list of **participants supporting the community building process** might involve various other stakeholders like locally based state institutions – representatives of education offices in the towns and other institutions (responsible for the policies in healthcare, social assistance and benefits, housing, employment), social service providers, Child Protection Units, cultural institutions, NGOs, local businesses.

## 2.3 Approaches and methods

The concept, the methods and tools are specifically designed to be applied in a social environment determined by deep inequalities, barriers and social distances between the co-existing diverse communities – a majority community and segregated minority communities. Designed as a practical guide for action, the methodology document is not a recipe, but provided guidance for how to adapt the approaches to the local situation of pilot schools and communities.

### 2.3.1 Principles and values of the community building

Despite the specifics of different communities and contexts, there are more or less **‘universal’ values and principles followed in the community building processes**, valid also for school-community partnerships targeted by I4S project interventions, such as:

- **Community leadership of the process:** The community building is a natural process within the community itself, which can be stimulated and reinforced by external actors, but it should be community led, involving the participation of the community members. The crucial task of the external facilitators (i.e. the role performed by I4S experts) is to empower the natural community leadership with knowledge, motivation and self-esteem for enabling it to lead the process.
- **Participation of the community:** The active participation of the diverse groups in the community and the individual members is a crucial indicator for the consolidation of the community. There is a variety of forms and methods for ensuring the participation of different community sub-groups and individuals.
- **Ownership of the community:** It is crucial to ensure the growing sense of ownership of the community on the process, on the decisions and results – achievements and/or failures – of the joint actions. The community participants might feel like ‘hosts’ rather than ‘invitees’ in



conducted various meetings and events. Frequent messages are very important in this direction, articulated by the external facilitators.

- **Voluntary participation of the community members – teachers, parents, local stakeholders:** The efforts and contributions of the local people to the process are offered voluntarily, driven by their personal motivation and shared aspirations for positive change and collective benefits in community life. All local participants in I4S project activities should be motivated to get involved on voluntary basis.
- **Consensus-based decision-making:** The common decisions and priority setting of the communities are reached through a process of discussions and exchange of opinions with respect to different opinions. The external facilitators can contribute by providing expertise and knowledge on the subject and performing the process of discussions and participatory priority setting.
- **Respect to human rights, tolerance, non-discrimination and respect to diversities** are obligatory principles for the I4S project. Unfortunately, the practical experience provides also negative examples of sub-communities consolidated around predominating discrimination attitudes and lack of tolerance to others – ethnic minorities, LGBTIQ, people with disabilities, etc.; in other cases, there are detected negative prejudices between parents and teachers. Hence, from the very start of the process, the external facilitators should encourage participants to overcome prejudices and building mutual trust.

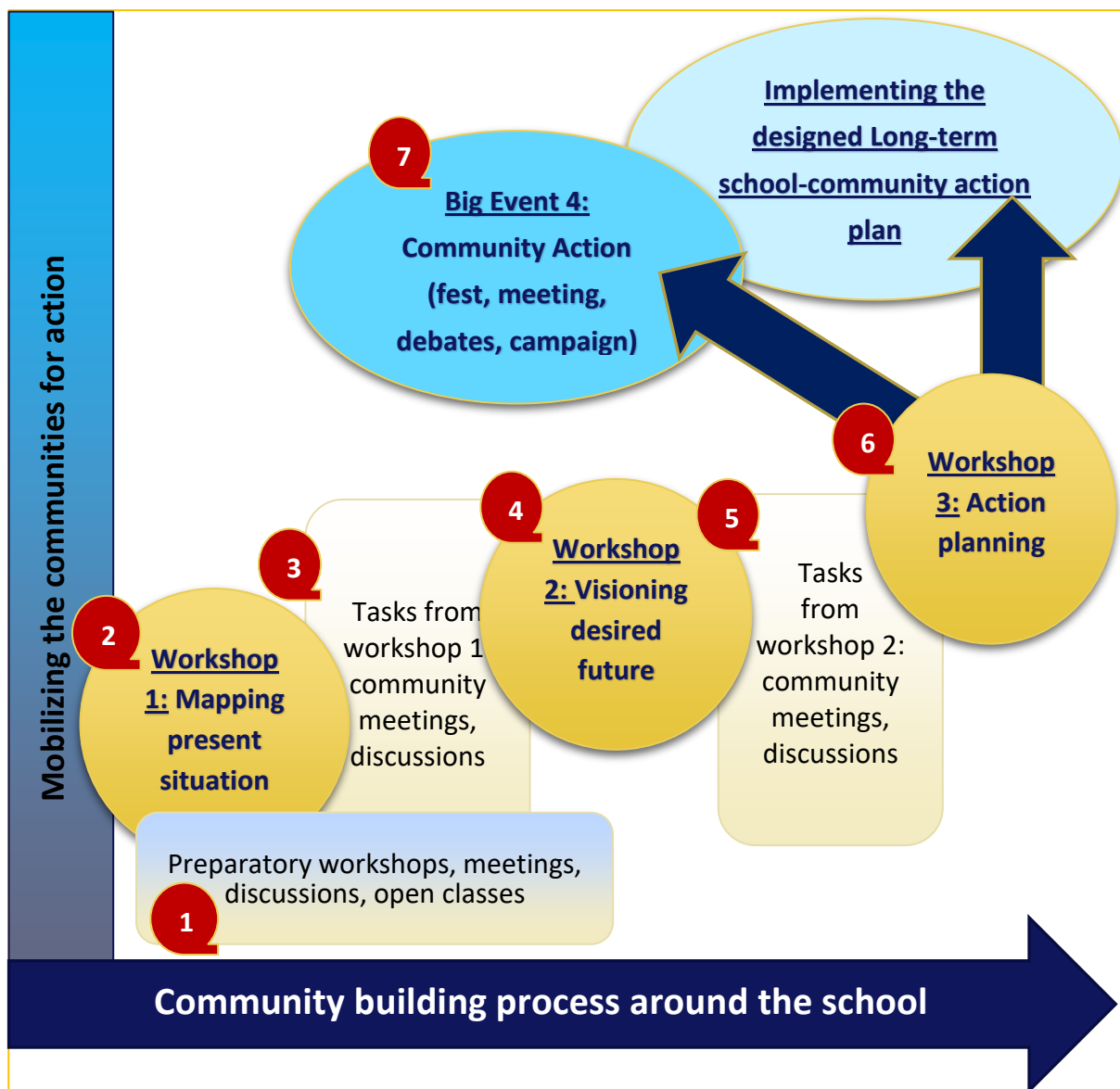
**The community building is a long-term process following its' own internal dynamics**, depending on the type of communities and issues addressed. The external community facilitators can push/influence for accelerating the process but to a limited extent with balanced and careful steps. The community activists and local stakeholders need to walk their own way, meanwhile gathering experience, understanding and perception of the action, in order to ensure the sustainability of the process. This is of critical importance in working with segregated vulnerable communities and groups where the risk of losing the motivation and support of the community is really high. The speaking and thinking of the local participants can easily turn back from *'our/my event'* to *'yours/your project event'*, meaning that the perception of the community ownership on the process is seriously endangered.

### **2.3.2 Key methods and tools**

The community building within the I4S project applied **three main methods for mobilization of the local potential and enhanced interaction**: (1) participatory community planning, (2) local community/social action and (3) community learning.



## Main steps in the I4S community building actions



**(1) Participatory community planning process** was designed in three stages, organized as separate events, involving 20-30 participants on average – teachers, parents, representatives of the community, local authorities, NGOs and other stakeholders. The workshops are targeted at:

- Participatory assessment of the current situation in the school and the education in the locality, the problems and needs, including SWOT analysis of the situation and interaction between the school and community (Workshop/Event 1);

- Outlining the desired future and the vision for the development of the communities in the locality, reflecting the diverse interests of the residents; reaching consensus about the common long-term goals and objectives of the school – community partnership (Workshop/Event 2);
- Priority setting and action planning of activities in support to the school, advocacy campaigns, etc., responding to opportunities and available resources in the locality (Workshop/Event 3).

The Guide for community building suggests a number of specific methods and techniques for facilitating a participatory community planning process.

**SWOT analysis** is a well-known method, outlining strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats in a situation/problem. I4S project has suggested only some extra tools, to be able to ensure that the opinions of all participants will be respected and registered in the diagnose of the education and interaction between the school and community in their locality. Working in small groups on SWOT cards, and then discussing in the big group to compare and summarize the opinions of all small groups in a product agreed by everyone. Another optional tool is the ‘carousel’ technique of supplementing the opinions of 4 small groups – each small group is starting the work on one of the elements of the SWOT analysis; then it passes the flipchart to the next small group for comments, corrections and additions, until all 4 flipcharts have passed through every group. The big group discussion on the presented opinions is effective for clarifying questions, adjusting the statements and producing a common outline of the SWOT.

**Back-casting methodology** is adapted by the Hungarian partners to the tasks of I4S project. Back-casting is an innovative design method of planning steps for reaching a desired future. It starts with sketching and modelling a future scenario in which a certain product or service functions in a desired way and only after a common understanding of the vision is reached, allows it to plan steps for the present and the near future towards achieving this positive future. Back-casting is fundamentally distinct from forecasting. Although both start with a foresight action, i.e. collecting signals in the present, extrapolating current trends and, based on them, imagining a future scenario, forecasting tries to answer the question, ‘*What will probably happen in the future?*’ Back-casting has another, rather normative goal, its concern is not the probability of scenarios but the answer to such a question as ‘*How we can reach a positive future?*’ It tries to answer a ‘how?’ not a ‘what’ question. The future is, without any doubt, uncertain; it is beyond the scope of this exercise to test if any scenario is more likely than another. Back-casting helps communities to take a step towards such a scenario that they regard desirable.

**Other participatory planning methods** are proposed as well, combining emotional and analytical approaches for ‘shaping’ the desired future. The small group exercise ‘Let’s dream together’ is





encouraging participants to share their dreams about the future of their community/settlement, to imagine what education of the young generation is needed to reach such a desired future. Discussing all the dreams, the big group is reaching a common vision of the desired future and the dreams about the desired inclusive school. Gently led by the facilitators, the participants are setting the priorities, goals and objectives of the action plan.

**(2) School – community actions/common social actions** are outlined during the participatory planning with a short-term and long-term perspective. Actions like fest, big meeting, debates, campaign or other actions are identified by the local participants – such events are intended to be the first visible and tangible result of the participatory community planning process performed during the three workshops. These might involve about 60-80 participants – parents, teachers, children and youth, key stakeholders. The participants need to experience in practice the created partnership between the school and community. The shared feeling of satisfaction of a successful action is proved to be the best motivating factor to continue working together. It is of crucial importance for ensuring the sustainability of the community building process and strengthening the support for the implementation of the overall action plan in the future.

**(3) Community learning methods** are proposed to invest knowledge in the communities and to help bringing the diverse sub-communities together. Interactive workshops and open school classes are planned on educational and other issues, identified by the participants. Learning events and discussions on the topics of social exclusion/ inclusion, intercultural and interethnic tolerance and protection against discrimination are considered helpful for overcoming prejudices, negative stereotypes and mutual distrust of the participants.

Technically, the so-called open school classes initially were planned as a separate project activity, but essentially these trainings and seminars are promoted as an essential part of the overall process of community building, considering that in a certain locality around a school, both action planning and community learning are addressing the same target groups – the parents and people living in the same neighborhood, the teachers at the school, the available local stakeholders – institutions, local authorities, civil organizations, local businesses.



## 3 Brief Overview Of the Piloting In the Four Partner Countries

The piloting of the community building interventions under I4S project are planned in 19 schools/localities and performed in 22 localities: 3 in Albania, 7 in Bulgaria, 7 in Hungary and 5 in Slovakia. The community building processes in Albania are facilitated by ANOA, in Bulgaria by C.E.G.A. Foundation, in Hungary by John Wesley Theological College and in Slovakia by J. Selye University.

### 3.1 Community building in Albania

The community building interventions in Albania started with preparatory activities in the summer of 2022, and were implemented till October 2024 in 3 pilot schools.

#### Mobilizing schools and communities for action

I4S team of ANOA has undertaken a comprehensive approach to stakeholder engagement, recognizing the importance of involving a wide range of participants to ensure the success of the community-building interventions. The process has begun with a series of separate meetings involving key stakeholders, including the school principal, local government representatives, members of the local education office, and representatives from relevant NGOs. These initial discussions are crucial for establishing the foundation of support and understanding the diverse perspectives and interests that would influence the intervention's success.

However, the engagement process has encountered significant challenges, particularly in identifying and involving parents from the school community. A critical aspect of the events is the involvement of parents, specifically those from the Roma and Egyptian communities. The school administrations have displayed a notable hesitation in sharing information about parents, which has posed a barrier to fully engaging this critical target group. Despite these difficulties, the few parents involved in Elbasan have demonstrated a high level of engagement and were particularly vocal in expressing their views. Their active participation is indicative of a broader sentiment within the community, suggesting that they represented a larger constituency of parents who were either unable, or unwilling to participate directly at that stage. A few outspoken Roma parents have actively participated in the discussions in Cerrik. These parents are seen as representative of the broader Roma community, voicing concerns and perspectives that have highlighted the specific challenges faced by Roma students in the school system.

#### Performed activities in Albania



**Participatory school-community planning** is completed in 2 pilots – in Elbasan and Cerrik. The two pilots are public schools for mandatory education (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade), attended mostly by children from poor families (parents living under economic aid scheme) and from disadvantaged ethnic minorities. Half of the students in the school in the city of Elbasan are from the Egyptian community, there are also some Roma students. Over 60% of the students in the pilot school in the small town of Cerrik are from the Egyptian community.

The third pilot in Korça involved 2 schools (Naim Frashëri and Asdreni, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade) in open school classes for community learning, a workshop outlining desegregation measures and a big event for raising awareness about the benefits of inclusive education. The Naim Frashëri school serves approximately 283 students, almost all of whom belonging to the Roma and Egyptian communities. This demographic concentration has resulted in the school being classified as a segregated educational institution. Efforts to address this segregation have been ongoing, including a 2022 European Court of Human Rights ruling that called for desegregation measures to be implemented.

The interventions in Albania started with large-scale community learning activities, known as Open School Classes successfully implemented across 6 schools in 5 pilot localities, resulting in a total of 15 events (3 per location). Notably, in Korça, two schools – Naim Frashëri and Asdreni – have actively participated in these sessions, as they share similar challenges despite being situated in different parts of the city. At a later stage, in two of them (Korça and Elbasan), the community building actions were also piloted.

#### **In Pegin:**

- Three open school classes were conducted in the period February 2022 – March 2023 involving 25 to 30 persons in discussions on the following topics: The Health System as a Children's Right, School Bullying and Community Roles in Conflict Resolution, Role of the Children Protection Unit in Solving Violence Issues.

#### **In Pogradec:**

- Amaro Tan School in Pogradec benefitted from three open school classes, performed in the period July 2022 – April 2023, on the following topics: Community Building Processes, Inclusive Education: An Approach Beyond School Walls, Addressing Discrimination, involving 24 participants – teachers, parents and representatives of local authorities.

#### **In Elbasan:**

- Three community planning workshops were carried out in the period November 2022 – March 2024 involving 41 persons – teachers, parents, local stakeholders.



- Community learning activities were held in May-June 2024 – three open school classes on the following topics: School Management for Improved Education, Local Government and Its Role in School Performance, Discrimination and Addressing Discrimination Issues by the School.

#### **In Korça:**

- The intervention has started with 3 open school classes held in the period August 2022 – April 2023, with 24 to 27 participants on the topics of: Building and Strengthening Community Roles to Support Inclusive Education; Inclusive Education: An Approach Beyond School Walls; Discrimination and Segregation in Albanian Legislation and Procedures to Address the Issues.
- As a follow-up of community learning a big event was carried out in the school (February 2024) within the framework of an impactful Anti-Discrimination Week in Korça. An awareness raising event in front of the school involved 200 participants – teachers, school children, parents and community representatives, local authorities, NGOs.
- Then, an action planning discussion involved 40 participants discussing the major issues contributing to ongoing segregation of the school and outlined potential solutions to facilitate desegregation of the school in Korça.

#### **In Cerrik:**

- Three community planning workshops took place in January – February 2024 involving 32 participants – school principal, teachers, social workers, members of the parents' council, local government representatives and civil society members, including those from religious groups.

#### **In Shkodra:**

- Three open school classes were held in May 2024 on the topics: Project Introduction and National Human Rights Defending Mechanisms, International State of Art and Initiatives, case Study-Hungary, School and Parents Dialogue, with the participation of 24 to 35 people – teachers and parents.

The **SWOT analysis** has outlined a lot of common issues – strengths, weaknesses, problems and threats faced by the two schools involved in community planning, as well as specifics, related to local contexts and resources of each school.

**Strengths:** The existing commitment of teachers and school staff to support all students, including those from marginalized communities, the strong collaboration and team spirit among the staff are identified as significant strengths in both schools. Several specific strengths within the local educational environment are revealed in Elbasan: the new school building, offering an improved



and modern learning environment; highly qualified and experienced school staff, strong communication and collaboration between teachers and parents. Additionally, the small student-to-teacher ratio allows for more personalized attention, enabling teachers to better address individual student needs and improving overall educational outcomes. In addition, the school's initiative to provide necessary supplies free of charge to students in need ensures that all students have access to essential educational materials, regardless of their socio-economic background. The school in Cerrik is benefitting by the presence of active local NGOs providing a supportive network for Roma students.

The major weaknesses that need to be addressed in both schools are the communication barriers between the school and Roma/Egyptian families, the low level of parental involvement, especially among marginalized communities. Furthermore, the low socio-economic status of many families and the limited capacity of the school to address the diverse needs of Roma students are noted. The low educational levels of parents may limit their capacity to support their children's academic progress, creating an additional barrier to student success. In Cerrik the school's reliance on internal channels of communication, which sometimes leads to the exclusion of critical voices, is highlighted as a concern. The participants in Elbasan have mentioned that the absence of fully equipped laboratories limits the school's ability to offer a comprehensive educational experience.

Several opportunities are highlighted in both pilot localities for strengthening the school-community relationship: the potential for enhanced collaboration with NGOs and local government institutions. In Elbasan, the community engagement through initiatives aimed at boosting parental involvement can strengthen the existing overall support system for students from disadvantaged families, creating a more cohesive and supportive educational community. The participants in Cerrik have highlighted opportunities for increased collaboration between schools and local NGOs, which could lead to more targeted support for Roma students. Additionally, the possibility of engaging local government authorities more actively in addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by Roma families is seen as a promising avenue for future interventions.

Threats: Discrimination is a threat that could undermine the success of the community-building efforts. Persistent discrimination and cultural misunderstandings between the school community and Roma families are identified in Cerrik as ongoing threats to the success of inclusive educational initiatives. In Elbasan, the socio-economic challenges faced by the community, such as poverty and social exclusion, continue to pose significant threats to student engagement and success. These challenges are exacerbated by the discrimination and stigmatization faced by some marginalized groups, particularly by Roma families. Such negative attitudes can hinder the full inclusion of these groups and limit their participation in the education process. The teachers in Elbasan have identified also the ongoing emigration of families, particularly those with children as a serious threat, which poses a risk to maintaining stable student enrollment and could disrupt the continuity of the school





community. Lastly, the declining birth rate presents a long-term threat to the school's viability – the challenges in maintaining enrollment levels in Elbasan could impact its funding and ability to provide quality education.

**The action plans** are targeted at leveraging strengths, addressing weaknesses, capitalizing on opportunities and mitigating threats. The planned activities have included community meetings to build trust, and outreach programs to engage Roma families more directly in school activities. Regular workshops for teachers are planned, as well as introducing professional development programs for teachers and school leaders, focused on inclusive education practices, cultural competence and leadership.

Improving the parental involvement is addressed in both schools. In Elbasan are planned outreach programs to engage parents from marginalized communities, particularly the Roma, through home visits, culturally sensitive communication materials, community meetings held at convenient times for parents. The participants in Cerrik proposed several solutions, including establishing clearer communication channels between schools and Roma communities, possibly through the involvement of community liaisons. Increasing collaboration with local NGOs to provide after-school programs and additional support for Roma students. Protocols can be developed for more effective communication and collaboration between schools and local government child protection units. The participants in Elbasan proposed also measures for optimizing the school infrastructure by developing and equipping laboratories and other necessary facilities, and for strengthening the teachers' collaboration and teamwork.

The **performed community action** in Korça is focused on understanding the challenges of segregation, identifying systemic issues, and brainstorming actionable solutions. The Anti-Discrimination Week has brought together key stakeholders, including representatives from the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, the Council of Europe, local community leaders, teachers, parents, and students. The I4S Albanian project team has reaffirmed their commitment to support the desegregation of "Naim Frashëri" school and similar institutions, aligning with the principles set forth by the European Court and local advocacy groups. Moving forward, a concerted effort involving policy reform, community engagement, and resource allocation will be essential in achieving meaningful progress toward an inclusive educational environment in Korça and beyond. Specific desegregation measures are outlined in three directions: (1) Enrollment based on residential zones: A proposed reform to mandate enrollment based on students' residential zones aims to naturally diversify the student body, encouraging children from all local communities to attend this school. (2) Awareness campaigns and community dialogues aimed to dispel stereotypes and promote inclusivity. (3) Enhancing the school resources by providing additional support for schools serving high numbers of disadvantaged students, including resources for teacher training, extracurricular programs, and academic assistance.



The **community learning activities in Albania** – the Open School Classes have demonstrated the potential of community-centered approaches to address local educational and social challenges. Despite logistical and resource-related hurdles, the Open School Classes succeeded in fostering collaboration, identifying actionable solutions, and building sustainable networks. With strategic improvements, the methodology can become a powerful tool for addressing systemic issues in education and community development. The implementation of Open School Classes in Albania has offered significant insights into the strengths and challenges of using community-centered educational approaches to address local issues.

## 3.2 Community building in Bulgaria

The community building interventions in Bulgaria have started in February 2022 with preparatory activities, were implemented until July 2024 in 7 pilot schools/localities and continued in the Autumn 2024 with methodological advice via phone calls and field visits.

### **Mobilizing schools and communities for action**

The process is initiated by the project experts of C.E.G.A. through a number of field visits, phone calls and email exchanges. Along with checking the level of motivation of the school managers and teachers to participate, the team has aimed to identify local community leaders, parents and activists, Roma health and education mediators, able to ensure the actual involvement of isolated Roma communities in the process together with the school. The methodology relies mostly on school managers and teachers to lead the process of building a supportive community around the school, yet the leadership is not assigned as a monopoly to schools. All parties and stakeholders should be involved on relatively equal basis. In line with the principle of a community led process, it is assessed that identifying and mobilizing local community representatives with respect and motivation to be accepted as equal partners is of critical importance. Considering the limited period for the piloting, the experts have preferred to work in localities with available “entry-points” to the segregated communities, which are relatively independent from the school contacts with the community, in order to test the methodology and to achieve visible results. Otherwise, the community building is feasible, but requires much longer intensive efforts for building relations of trust within the Roma community and parents. The involvement of other stakeholders – municipal authorities, state institutions, NGOs, centers for social services, cultural institutions, etc. – is provoked by the joint efforts of the school and the project experts.

In short, at the start, the I4S project experts identified potential entry-points to Roma communities in 3 of the 7 pilot schools/localities. In the other 4 pilots, the team has initiated the process relying on the capacity of the school management and the teachers to attract the Roma parents – in 2 of these pilots the process is successfully completed, but in other 2 the community building process



has stalled and has been interrupted due to the hidden resistance of the school authorities to involve Roma parents in a more active participation, which has been assessed as a danger for achieving results within the period of the project interventions.

### **Performed activities in Bulgaria**

**Participatory school-community building** is initiated in 7 pilot localities and completed in 5. All the schools are municipal schools, funded by the state budget. Three of them are the only secondary schools (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade) in the town of Rakitovo and the villages of Medkovets and Drenovets, which are attended mostly by Roma children and students from poor families, due to the socio-economic and ethnic profile of the settlements. There are 3 primary schools, providing education from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade. In Lom there is a segregated school attended entirely by Roma children (100%). The other two schools, located in relatively larger cities (Haskovo and Harmanly), are mixed with about one-third pupils coming from ethnic minority communities. However, in all these schools many Roma children face difficulties in continuing their education at 8<sup>th</sup> grade level in the mainstream schools of the cities. The last pilot locality – the town of Novi Pazar – represents a specific case: following the recommendations of a strong local Roma NGO and municipal authorities the process has involved all 4 secondary schools on the municipal territory and the segregated primary school (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade) in building wide-scale support for eradicating the segregation and reforming the school system in the municipality.

#### **In Medkovets:**

- A school-community meeting in March 2022 opened the process presenting the I4S concept, targets, steps of the forthcoming community building to 37 participants (teachers, parents, community members, the Mayor and other institutions).
- The three community planning workshops have taken place in February – April 2023 involving 22 participants – the school principal, teachers, parents and community members.
- Community learning was conducted in parallel – between June 2022–July 2024 in Medkovets, where 5 open school classes were held: 2 of them with teachers and parents on the topics Fake News and Anti-Roma Media Disinformation, Innovative Methods of Teaching and Improvement of Learning Environment in the school. Other 3 open school classes involved also school students, and presented the Magic of Creative writing, Professional Secondary Education and Opportunities for Roma Youngsters and the Language Literacy As a Door To the World.
- Four big events (school fests and family days) were organized and held together with the teachers in the period of May 2023 – December 2024, involving between 107 and 193 participants - teachers, parents and students.

#### **In Haskovo and Harmanli:**



- Preparatory meetings were held in February – March 2022 in both schools, presenting I4S project, the objectives and steps of community building.
- Community planning has started in June 2022 with SWOT analysis workshops in Harmanly (16 participants) and Haskovo (31 participants, out of them 18 teachers and 13 parents, only Bulgarians).
- Despite the efforts and contacts made during the following school year (2022 – 2023), the schools did not get involved in organizing the next steps of the community planning and the interventions stopped.

#### **In Lom:**

- Along with the SWOT analysis, the first workshop (November 2022, 28 participants) outlined ideas for solutions of the problems and specific proposals for the next steps of community building.
- Two big events promoting the benefits of the inclusive education vs. segregation were held – an event on the occasion of the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school (June 2023, 164 participants, incl. the Mayor, municipal and regional educational institutions, teachers, parents, children, Roma community members, NGOs) and an Educational forum (September 2023), involving 63 participants - the Mayor, NGO activists, representatives of schools and kindergartens in Lom, Roma community, local institutions.
- 3 Open school classes for community learning were carried out in May 2023 – June 2024 with the participation of 25 to 52 Roma parents and teachers on the topics of the value of education, available social services and community support for improvement of education.

#### **In Rakitovo:**

- The three sessions of community planning (November 2022) involved 26 participants from the school, the deputy Mayor of the municipality, parents and Roma community members, Roma NGO activists, local authorities and child protection department.
- School-community meeting was held (June 2023, 51 participants) to discuss the developed Long-term plan for interaction between the school and the communities in Rakitovo and the next steps of I4S project.
- Big event at the school (June 2024) involved about 80 participants – teachers, students and parents.
- Open school classes were held (June 2024) with 30 participants (teachers, parents, Roma NGO activists and Roma community members) on the topics of: Child Marriages as Barrier to Education of Roma Girls; Approaches for Motivation of Students to Complete Their Secondary Education in Rakitovo and How to Develop Partnerships Between the School, Roma Community and Local Stakeholders to Keep Roma Girls within the Educational System.



### **In Drenovets:**

- Meetings in February – April 2024 prepared the community building initiatives.
- The community planning workshop (May 2024, 41 participants) revised and agreed the recent SWOT analysis in the Strategy for development of the school (2023-2028), and elaborated vision and action planning.
- Big school-community event (May 2024, 246 participants) has attracted teachers, parents and students from one more school in a neighboring village.

### **In Novi Pazar:**

- The preparatory discussions with local stakeholders in Novi Pazar (August 2023 – February 2024) highlighted the priorities, already identified by them for overcoming the educational inequalities and the I4S team agreed to involve in the process not only one school in the process, but most of the schools in the municipality.
- Community planning was conducted in 2 workshops (March 2024) with 28 participants – managers and teachers from 4 schools, Roma NGO activists, social workers, parents, kindergartens.
- Three Open school classes for community learning were held in March – July 2024 with 30 to 37 participants on the topics: Education in Intercultural Environment - Stereotypes and Prejudices, Parents' Involvement and Opportunities for Optimization of the School Network in the Municipality of Novi Pazar Aimed at Eradicating the Segregation of Roma and Millet<sup>1</sup> Children in Primary Education.
- A conference presenting the contribution of local Roma NGO to social inclusion, community development and education of Roma/millet community was held as a big event (July 2024) with 66 representatives of schools, regional administration, deputy Mayor and municipal administration, NGOs, Roma and millet activists, regional state institutions responsible for education, social assistance, employment.

The **SWOT analysis** outlines the common features and the differences between the pilot schools/localities involved in Bulgaria – as expected, most of the weaknesses and threats are common or similar, but differences have appeared mainly in the identified local strengths and opportunities for problems solving.

**Strengths:** The educational environment and school facilities, availability of free of charge textbooks for all students, the free transport for students, opportunities for creation of STEM centers,

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<sup>1</sup> Millet is a specific ethnic sub-group historically linked to Roma communities in Bulgaria – Muslims, speaking Turkish language. Most Millet communities declare their preferred Turkish self-identification, instead of Roma, although the majority and the ethnic Turks in Bulgaria perceive them as Roma.



resources for extra curriculum activities of students are ensured through participation in projects and national programs of the Ministry of Education in all pilot schools. All schools assess highly their staff of qualified and experienced teachers and the availability of the so-called resource teachers, assigned to support students with disabilities. The schools have established good communication between teachers, students and parents. There are motivated parents that actively support the school and are really motivated for better education of their children, although the participants agreed that it isn't valid for all parents. The participating teachers have outlined the strength of existing tolerance in the schools between children from different ethnic origin and tolerance towards Roma communities, however, in some cases this opinion is opposed by parents during or after the workshops (Rakitovo, Harmanli, Novi Pazar). The students are benefitting from the work of Roma educational mediators in the school staff (in Novi Pazar, Rakitovo, Harmanli) or ensured by NGOs (Lom).

Weaknesses: The low parental involvement is identified in all pilots as a common weakness. Despite the available good practices, there are difficulties in the communication between the participants in the educational process – students, teachers and parents and the lack of parents' commitment to the problems of the school that needs to be addressed. According to shared opinions, in most localities the lack of interest of parents about the education of their children is determined by the families' status and attitudes, specifying that the main problem are the marginalized, poor and low educated families. Only in Haskovo, the assessment of the level of parents' involvement is differentiated by ethnicity, 'blaming' in particular the Roma parents for the "bad or missing communication with the teachers". The general assessment of the teachers' qualification as a strength isn't valid for all teachers – there are teachers with insufficient qualification (Rakitovo, Novi Pazar); the skills for development of digital educational content is a problem for some teachers (Drenovets); better skills are needed for introducing innovations in the education.

Opportunities: Important opportunities for improvements are identified in development / extension of partnerships with local institutions, NGOs, businesses and in attracting the support of local communities throughout the mediation of active parents and graduates of the schools, parents' councils, NGOs and others. Exchange of experience and trainings of teachers may help improve teachers' qualification, including the skills for better communication with parents. Secondary schools have highlighted the need to revise and optimize the vocational training of the students towards provision of qualification for professions, adequate to the labor market.

Threats: Poverty, social isolation, risks of marginalization, low educational level of many families in particular in Roma communities have been mentioned everywhere. The limited employment opportunities for young people in the locality are a strong demotivating factor for higher education in smaller settlements. The strong trend of depopulation due to migration abroad or to bigger cities in the country is identified as a serious threat in smaller settlements (Medkovets, Drenovets, Novi





Pazar, Rakitovo, Lom). The migration is leading to diverse problems, like reduced enrollment of students in schools, children/youngsters raised by grandparents, knowledge gaps of children migrating with their parents abroad and coming back to Bulgaria. Specific threats, generated by the long-term social isolation of segregated communities, are the pre-modern traditional social norms, child marriages and early births, mentioned as factors for school drop-out in all localities (except in Haskovo).

Additionally, the participants from all pilot schools have pointed out weaknesses and threats, which are due to the national policies in education, in terms of too heavy educational program and curriculum, increasing administrative burden of teachers, the funding system of schools, based on the number of students that stimulates the schools to hide the actual school attendance in order to keep their budget rate, and other issues, which cannot be solved at the local level.

**The vision statements and planning of actions** has included a variety of interventions for bridging gaps in parental involvement, increasing motivation of students for better educational achievements, encouraging the mutual understanding and trust between the school and communities, initiating projects targeting various specific needs of schools, qualification trainings of teachers, etc. Long-term plans for interaction between the schools and the communities, intended to complement and upgrade the approved strategies for development of the schools have been elaborated in Medkovets and Rakitovo. Following the elaborated vision statements, the participants have designed specific objectives, long-term interventions and short-term activities, structured in several priority components, related to the community building and collaboration between the school, communities and parents, as well as to improving the quality of education and educational achievements of the students.

In Novi Pazar, a plan has been developed for advocacy and information campaigns at municipal and regional levels, tackling the educational segregation of Roma children, which will be led by respected local Roma NGO – Hayaci Association. A feasible solution is to transform the segregated primary school (1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade) in the Roma neighborhood into a mainstream elementary school (1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade) enrolling all students at this age in the town, who will continue their education in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade in the other mainstream schools in Novi Pazar. Such a concept for optimization of the school system has already gained support from the management of several schools and some understanding from the municipal authorities. Consistent advocacy and information campaigns are needed to address the expected serious challenges and resistance at all levels – teachers, children and parents, majority and minority communities, local and regional educational administration.

**The performed school-community actions** in Bulgaria have followed different dynamics in line with the ambitions of participants in different pilots. The project experts flexibly have adapted the methodological support, facilitation and activities to the expectations in each locality. Most actions



are aimed to convince parents, children and disadvantaged communities of the values of education and benefits of education for the welfare of young people and communities in the municipalities. As a first step of the planned campaign in Novi Pazar, the open school class in fact has opened wide-scale debate between institutions, relevant stakeholders, schools and communities on the harmful effects of the educational segregation, the possible solutions and benefits for the overall society from ensured inclusive education for every child in the municipality.

### 3.3 Community building in Hungary

The community building interventions in Hungary started in February 2022 and were completed in June 2024 in 7 pilot schools/localities.

#### **Mobilizing schools and communities for action**

In Hungary the main line of contacts with local communities are the schools. Schools are invited to participate in the community building events, whose specifics are discussed with them at the beginning, at preparatory meetings. They could decide whether they wanted to participate in the open class or the community building workshops program. If they have chosen the open school classes, the team asked them to choose its topic: an issue that is a deeper problem for the school and the community. If they have chosen the workshops, the process was started and the project experts have only asked them to help identify and invite participants. In most cases, the schools invited the teachers and the parents and the I4S team has invited the other stakeholders and local key actors.

This way, the participation of the school is dependent to a great extent on the attitude of school principals and teachers. With a few exceptions, most principals have been supportive but the project team had to earn their trust and to turn them in drivers of the activities. The involvement of Roma parents presented a real challenge, as it was dependent on the initiative of the school and its ability to overcome the communication barriers with Roma communities.

#### **Performed activities in Hungary**

Community centered approaches were applied in 8 pilot schools/localities in Hungary. Community building events were implemented in 7 localities, involving 5 primary schools (1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade) – 2 of them - state schools (in Tereske and Taktakenéz), while the others are managed by churches – in Tiszabő by the Maltese Charity Service, in Pécs by the Catholic Church and in Nagyharsány by the Lutheran Church. The 2 secondary schools (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade) are managed by the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (in Abaújkér and the MÁV Telep in Budapest). One more school in Kőtelek was involved quite late only in the project's community learning activities, instead of Kecskemét - an institution that dropped out because the school district changed their minds. All pilot localities



are isolated from mainstream society, even if they have been a part of a bigger settlement, as in the case of Pécs. Ethnic diversity is typical for them - communities comprised of both majority and minority ethnic groups, with existing social distances and potential conflicts. In some cases, there were conflicts even between different Roma minority groups, e.g. in the case of Tereske. Smaller settlements are lacking sufficient public institutions and services, meaning a need of external support for effective intervention. In addition, in the case of some small isolated villages, some teachers and students are not part of the local community as they live in neighboring settlements.

#### **In MÁV Telep, Budapest:**

- The preparatory meeting (February 2022) indicated the serious concerns of the teachers, their skepticism about NGO programs and reluctance to convince parents to participate.
- Hence, the 3 workshops for community planning (March – May 2022) were attended by 9 to 5 participants only.
- Family day event (May 2023) was attended by 42 students, parents and teachers. (The school in MÁV Telep was forced to close down for political reasons, in September 2024.)

#### **In Taktakenéz:**

- After the preparatory meeting (February 2022), the activities focused on community learning through 3 open school classes (April – December 2022) with 22-28 participants on the following topics: Coping Strategies for Everyday Life for Further Education, Parent-child Communication and Drug Prevention.
- The community planning sessions were skipped here but a family day event was held (June 2023) with 157 participants.

#### **In Pécs:**

- Following the preparatory meetings in the Spring of 2022, the 3 community planning workshops started in June 2022 and finished in February 2023 with 15 participants.
- Family day as a big school community event was held in May 2023, involving 71 participants – teachers, parents, children, Roma community representatives, NGOs, local stakeholders.
- Extra learning activities were carried out for the teachers in February – May 2024: 11 teachers participated in 4 sessions of WANDA case study circles aimed to help them in finding solutions to the major problem of the school with the involvement of parents, especially poor Roma parents.

#### **In Tereske:**

- The interventions in Tereske started in May 2022 with community learning: 3 open school classes were held until February 2023 with 18-19 participants each on the topics of Roma identity and the relations between Bayash and Romungro sub-groups, prevention of



addictions, healthcare and children welfare, including nutrition, mental health, and physical activity of the students.

- The 3 workshops for community planning were held in March – May 2023 with 13 participants.
- Two big events were carried out to foster community engagement and interaction. The Family day event (May 2023) attracted 85 people – parents, students, teachers – mostly from the Roma community, actively participating in the organized juggling workshop, a non-violent communication workshop for children, a Fair play football championship, a music performance, arts and crafts workshop. The field trip to the Veresegyház Bear Park, an idea that originated from the action plans, involved 45 people - teachers, Roma children and parents in joint activities (June 2024).

#### **In Abaújkér:**

- The preparatory meetings indicated that the school in Abaújkér will become a very active and enthusiastic partner.
- Three workshops for community planning were carried out in the period October 2022 – January 2023 with 20 participants.
- The community learning included 2 open school classes (March – April 2023) with 18 participants. The events addressed the topics of online bullying and classroom abuse, and presenting inspirational stories and successful Roma role models aimed to discuss practical ways in which families, schools, and communities can support children's aspirations.
- The Family day event (May 2023) involved 343 participants – almost the whole school staff and students, 90 people - parents, representatives of local authority, NGOs and other stakeholders. The I4S team couldn't perform the planned second wide-scale school-community event, because unfortunately the school was closed down in the fall of 2023.

#### **In Nagyharsány:**

- Community planning was performed in three workshops held in the period March – May 2023, with 21 going down to 15 participants – teachers, a few parents (one of them Roma), representatives of local government, family support center, local NGO.
- The two school-community big events involved Roma parents and children together with the teachers: 87 people participated in the Family day event (June 2023); the second event linked to Nagyharsány Generational Project (June 2024) involved almost the whole school – 140 teachers and students, and some Roma parents.

#### **In Tiszabó:**

- Field visits in Summer 2023 served for preparation of the community building events.



- Community planning was performed in three workshops held in the period September 2023 – January 2024, with 20 going down to 14 participants.
- The decreasing participation reflected the loss of the initial enthusiasm of the principal and deputies, who were very supportive in the beginning, however, after the first session they became reluctant to help and seemed considering the program as a nuisance to them. For that reason, the next step of large-scale community events was skipped in Tiszabő.

### **In Kőtelek:**

- Community learning activities were carried out in November 2023 – March 2024 in 4 sessions, attended by 9 to 20 participants – parents, school representatives and civil professionals. The open school classes were dedicated to the topics of prevention of addictions, bullying and non-violent communication, supporting students' further education in a new context and strengthening the parent-teacher communication.
- An extra learning event was held in May 2024 as a field trip to the Gödöllő royal castle. 22 teachers and parents enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about Hungarian history, meanwhile having the time to talk, sit together, connect informally in a relaxed and positive way, getting to better know each other.

Regardless of the differences between the schools in terms of attitudes of teachers, type of settlements, maintenance of schools (by the state or by different churches), the **SWOT analysis** has outlined dominating similarities in identified problems, challenges and issues in education and a diversity of strengths and options for solutions.

**Strengths:** The cohesive teaching community and motivated committed teachers, the professional diversity – (psychologist, social worker, teaching assistant), after school programs and talent development are pointed out (Pécs, Nagyharsány, MÁV Telep). Inclusive nature of the school (Abaújkér), cohesion, empathy and involvement of local residents (Tiszabő), and the ethnic profile of the school is mentioned as a strength by one school (Pécs). Several schools have appreciated the support and well-established cooperation with other organizations and stakeholders like family support services (Abaújkér), local professional organizations (Pécs), Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta (Tiszabő), NGOs (Nagyharsány).

**Weaknesses:** As in other partner countries, in Hungary, common weaknesses are identified in teachers-parents interaction: parents' lack of motivation towards education, inadequate communication between parents and teachers, challenges in communication and contacts with parents, lack of knowledge sharing and communication between parent-teacher and school-community. Most schools are suffering from lack of professionals and services; in one of them, the need for recruitment and employment of Roma teachers has been identified (MÁV Telep).



**Opportunities:** The participants are looking for opportunities mainly for better communication among teachers and parents and more active involvement of parents in school life, development of projects and community programs, Tanoda-type after school activities, partnerships and building supportive community (Tereske, Abaújkér, Nagyharsány, Pécs, Tiszabő). Making school buildings more welcoming is also important (Pécs), as well as finding external supporters and knowledge sharing, enhancing professional autonomy and maintaining contact with supporters (MÁV Telep).

**Threats:** The main threats are related to the problems of disadvantaged communities and families of the students: poverty, healthcare issues, diversity of lifestyle and different value systems, lack of prospects in minority communities, etc. The existing prejudices and segregation, Roma and non-Roma conflicts, negative parental attitudes towards school are undermining the poor parent-school connections. In some pilots, the threats of burnout among teachers have been identified (Tiszabő), and work overload (Nagyharsány), as well as systemic issues in education policy, such as teacher shortages, low salaries, and inadequate training (MÁV Telep). Specific statements are referred to individual schools like deviant behavior, drug and alcohol consumption, violence, which are assessed as alarming in one school (Abaújkér), inter-family conflicts (Pécs), student transportation issues (Tereske), fluctuation in the number of children, due to mobility of families, including many Romanian families (MÁV Telep).

**Setting of objectives and action planning** in Hungary was performed in the format of projects, addressing the challenges outlined by the SWOT analysis. Improvement of parental engagement and communication between teachers and parents can be achieved through: Hiring mediators, revitalizing parent-teacher associations, organizing joint programs, using social media groups and building trust through appropriate communication (Tiszabő); organizing parent clubs for both Roma and non-Roma parents (MÁV Telep). Family visits have been planned in all localities for better understanding and building trust between teachers and parents.

Follow up activities have been planned within projects for Family Days - events involving Roma families and teachers in sports, cultural activities, and cooking (Pécs); Recharging by organizing sports days, field trips, team-building activities and increasing vacation days (Tiszabő); camps, learning sessions with experts, presentations by notable speakers (Abaújkér, MÁV Telep), etc. Cultural events and initiatives for promoting and understanding Roma Culture have been planned (MÁV Telep, Nagyharsány). Networking with local institutions and involvement of civil society organizations and volunteers in school life, especially focusing on the Roma community has been planned (MÁV Telep, Nagyharsány). Projects for increasing the motivation of children and parents for education have been outlined like “Be Someone” - showing successful Roma examples (Abaújkér); after school program “Be Smarter with Us!” (Tereske); “Life Paths” and “Career Guidance” helping students to envisage their future (Pécs); talent development; activities for





creating supportive learning environment at school - establishing digital libraries, internet access, creating study rooms (Tiszabő).

Within the follow-up **school-community actions** in Hungary, some of these elaborated projects were realized during the family days, organized in the pilot localities under I4S project. The Family days have involved teachers, parents, children, community activists in various activities – interactive arts and crafts workshops, music performances, puppet theatre, common cooking, health day services, sports, fair play football championship, other games (Tereske, Pécs, Taktakenéz, Nagyharsány, Abaújkér). Parent-children-teacher field trips came up as solution, suggested by the participants in action planning workshops and open school classes for fostering community engagement and interaction and improving the parent–teacher relations, able to communicate with each other in a relaxed and positive way. Field trips were held to famous historical places or other interesting places, like bear park (Tereske).

### 3.4 Community building in Slovakia

In Slovakia, the community centered approaches have started with community learning sessions held in January - October 2023 in 4 pilot localities with relatively high share of Roma population. The scope and number of schools involved was different, according to local specifics in the localities. In Fiľakovo the first open school class initially involved principals, teachers, parents from several schools and other key stakeholders in the settlement. The next sessions were focused on the segregated schools with high share of Roma students attending the school. In other localities (Gemér, Turňa and Bodvou) the learning sessions involved participants from several schools, attended by pupils from the town and surrounding settlements. In another locality (Rimavská Seč) the activities involved only one primary school.

The essential community building in Slovakia has required a longer period for preparation of the facilitation team and has started later than in the other partner countries. The activities were performed in the period February – July 2024 in 5 pilot schools/localities, different from the localities involved in open school classes. In all pilots, community planning workshops and large-scale events were held. There are 4 primary schools with students from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade (Kolárovo, Okoč, Dvory and Žitavou and Tomášikovo) and 1 elementary school from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade (Veľké Blahovo) involved, attended by high percentage of Roma children.

#### **Mobilizing schools and communities for action**

Coordination meetings were held online or in person for promoting the goals, the process and methods of community building, aimed at convincing schools and local authorities to participate. Then, the Slovakian team used two main channels for outreach to parents and communities – the



schools (managers and teachers) and the influence of the churches to invite parents from their congregation in the localities. In very small schools (like Veľké Blahovo, 19 students) the project team worked to mobilize the participation of local authorities and teachers from the neighboring municipality who will teach these students after their completion of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **Performed activities in Slovakia:**

#### **In Filákovo:**

- The first open school class (January 2023) involved 40 people principals, teachers and parents from several schools in Filakovo, as well as representatives of the local government. In presenting and discussing the topics of inclusion and creativity in schools, the session was focused on the problems of the segregated primary school in the town.
- Three open school classes were held in the segregated Mocsáry Lajos primary school (March – May 2023) on the following topics: Education as a Value, The Importance of Talent Management in Education and Crafts and Traditional Games with the participation of 39 to 88 people from the school staff and parents.

#### **In Rimavská Seč:**

- Three open school classes were carried out (March – June 2023) on the topics of Equality of Opportunity, Importance of Sport, and Parents and School Communication, involving 19 to 26 participants.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> open school class named “Better Together” (September 2023), involved 90 adults and students in various activities.

#### **In Gemer:**

- Three Open school class sessions were held (April – June 2023) on the topics of School Truancy and Catching up, Successful Cooperation and Communication between the School and the Parents and Education through Sports. The sessions involved between 24 to 33 people - schoolteachers, parents, representatives of the local government and the civil society, social workers, and entrepreneurs from Gemer and nearby settlements.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> open school (September 2023) was organized in more informal style like a family day with 70 participants.

#### **In Turňa nad Bodvou:**

- 3 open school classes were organized (May – July 2023), involving between 33 to 36 participants from two schools in discussions on the following topics: Inclusive Schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Community Building and How to Help Children with Special Educational Needs to Successfully Manage School.
- A Family day was organized (October 2023) as a more informal event with 169 participants.



### **In Tomášikovo:**

- The three community planning workshops were held in March – May 2024 with 24 to 26 participants.
- The Family day (June 2024), involved 49 adults – teachers, parents, representatives of local government, other stakeholders and institutions and 149 children.

### **In Dvory nad Žitavou:**

- Three community planning workshops took place in April – May 2024 with 24 participants from the school, local authorities and parents.
- The Family day (June 2024), involved 53 adults – teachers, a few parents, representatives of local government, other stakeholders and institutions and 98 children.

### **In Veľké Blahovo:**

- In April – May 2024 three workshops on community planning were conducted with 25 to 28 participants.
- The Family day (June 2024), involved 52 adults – teachers from the school and kindergarten, parents, representatives of local government, NGO and institutions and also about 300 children.

### **In Okoč:**

- The three community planning workshops (May – June 2024) were attended by 24 participants – teachers from the school and from other institutions, representatives of the municipality, health and social workers, and the pastor from the village.
- The Family day (June 2024), involved 64 adults – teachers from the school and kindergarten, parents, representatives of the local government, the church, NGO and 86 children from the school.

### **In Kolárovo:**

- Three community planning workshops were carried out in June 2024 with 27 participants – teachers, parents, local authorities and NGO activists.
- The Family day in June 2024 involved 60 adults – teachers, parents, representatives of local government, NGOs, institutions and 59 children.

The **community planning** in Slovakia is structured in three workshops named: “Together for the Future”, “Our Future” and “Action Plans to Achieve Common Goals”, following the designed project methodology.

The **SWOT analysis**, conducted within the “Together for the Future” workshops, was focused on how participants perceive the situation regarding cooperation between the school and the



community, at the same time outlining the specific problems/issues of each school. The participants have discussed a variety of issues, but it is possible to outline here only the key points.

Strengths: Qualified and attentive teachers, their “good teamwork and creativity”, the “openness” and “family environment/atmosphere” in the schools were assessed as strengths of the schools. In some pilots, it was added that “class teachers work with children in their spare time and keep in touch with parents” (Dvory nad Žitavou), and “the presence of a special teacher and assistants” (Kolárovo). Good relations with parents and “trust between parents and school” were assessed in one locality (Okoč). Established partnerships were mentioned in some localities: the good cooperation between the school - nursery school - municipality - church-organizations (Velké Blahovo); the “cooperation with the municipality/municipal police (Kolárovo); the “community centered approach to local problems” (Tomášikovo).

Weaknesses: Problems in communication and relationships between the school and parents are assessed in all pilot localities. The structural problems of disadvantaged Roma communities are listed in all pilot localities: the poverty, “social background of families”, the segregation and social isolation of communities, contrasts between Roma and non-Roma community, the low educational level of parents, bad infrastructure, lack of public transport, etc. The participants outlined also the challenges faced by Roma children for their performance at school like “lack of language skills - they can't get a job in Slovak” (Tomášikovo), the lack of parental support to children in the preparation of their homework, etc., leading to educational inequalities. Discrimination, prejudices and “segregation between Roma and white children” were registered in the list of weaknesses and threats (Dvory nad Žitavou) or as a challenge (Kolárovo, Velké Blahovo, Okoč).

Opportunities: In all pilot localities the participants have identified opportunities for initiation and implementation of programs and projects at schools, focused on improvement of the school facilities and educational infrastructure, school bus, etc. Ensuring the availability of professionals at school has been pointed out: psychologist, social worker, mental health professional (in Tomášikovo) and a Romanian speaking teacher (in Dvory nad Žitavou). Activities to boost cultural life are mentioned (Velké Blahovo), talent management (Okoč), provision of “study opportunities for any age” (Tomášikovo) and parents’ education (Dvory nad Žitavou). The need to build partnerships and cooperation with stakeholders, both inside the locality and beyond its’ boundaries, was highlighted in response to the isolation of schools and communities. In some pilot localities, the participants are speaking more in general: cooperation with other villages, international relations with organizations providing job opportunities (Velké Blahovo); in other localities, the participants specify their suggestions for partnerships with NGOs, church organizations, press and media (Dvory nad Žitavou) or with a Roma Civic Association (Kolárovo). The “involvement of representatives of the Roma community in local government decisions” (Dvory nad Žitavou) is pointed out as an opportunity for improvement of education and for community building around the school.



Threats: Similar to the SWOT analysis in other countries, the profile of challenges/threats in Slovakia is very close to the list of weaknesses. It is not surprising, as participants often face difficulties in distinguishing between internal and external factors. But it is more important that main challenges for the school and education in the locality are mentioned – prejudices and segregation, poverty and high share of children in disadvantaged situation, the difficulties in teachers – parents communication, existing discrimination and insufficient knowledge of human rights, etc. Despite the opposition of teachers, parents have formulated their desire: “to have Roma and white children in the same class” (Dvory nad Žitavou). Specific threats are outlined, as well: truancy, drugs (Veľké Blahovo, Tomášikovo), the language barriers for bilingual Roma children and early marriages (Dvory nad Žitavou); the “negative effects of social media, internet addiction and computer games” (Okoč).

The **setting of objectives and action planning** in Slovakia is addressing the challenges outlined by the SWOT analysis, following the back-casting methods as designed and applied in Hungary. The visioning of a “miracle” or “wonder school” has outlined objectives and measures for improvement, structured in the format of desired projects. With regard to increasing the school attendance, projects are aimed to “encourage Roma families to encourage their children to attend school regularly”, including also measures against child marriages and early pregnancies (Dvory nad Žitavou), activities for “motivating children, helping them catch up and promoting social integration” (Kolárovo), school bus. Fostering the tolerance at school is addressed by establishing a community center in the village (Veľké Blahovo, Tomášikovo) and learning about each other's cultures, mutual acceptance; events like “Week Easier Together” (Okoč). Better communication between parents and teachers can be achieved through “communication without conflict” and “cooperation between schools and Roma families, requiring an open school” (Dvory nad Žitavou).

The activities for community learning are missing in these pilot schools in Slovakia, but **community action** is carried out in all pilot localities, as Family days events, too.



## 4 Analysis Of Achievements In Building a Community Around the School

### 4.1 Relevance of the intervention

The analysis of the relevance of the intervention considers the initial design of the community building intervention, reflected in the Guide, as well as the relevance of the action as implemented, taking into account the changes that have occurred throughout the execution of the action. Important factors for the appropriateness and feasibility of the community building interventions are: coherence of the interventions with the local needs of schools and communities, the teachers' commitment, the Roma parents' involvement.

#### 4.1.1 Profile of the pilot schools/localities

The methodology for building a community around the school has been specifically tailored to work in disadvantaged schools, with pupils and communities with high percentage of Roma, Egyptian, millet and other segregated minority groups. Considering the available project resources for testing in a limited number of pilots, a selection was made among the schools in each country. Actually, when the community-centered approaches are scaled up in the partner countries, the local stakeholders in a certain municipality would skip the selection process, because they are supposed to support the process in the available disadvantaged schools in their locality. Of course, they will have to adapt the approaches to the specifics of the local schools and communities.

The adequate selection of pilot schools/localities is of key importance for the success of the piloting of the community building approaches in line with the task **to test and demonstrate how the model works** in schools, challenged by educational inequalities and facing strong barriers in the interaction with parents and communities. Accordingly, the partners have agreed on the following **selection criteria**:

- (1) Type of settlement and community size, seeking for diversity of settlements in terms of number of population, urban/rural, administrative centers, etc., yet ensuring the involvement of isolated, detached small towns and villages, as well;
- (2) Poverty/Degree of social exclusion, vulnerability of the area / community;
- (3) Type and level of segregation of the school;
- (4) Number of students attending the school;
- (5) Approximate share of the disadvantaged students from vulnerable ethnic minorities in the school;





- (6) Participation of the school in projects/programs and readiness to share the good practices;
- (7) Availability of working partnerships of the school with NGOs, parents, other stakeholders.

The selection process was performed in two stages: Firstly, by selecting 20 schools on average per country, fitting the key criteria. The selection was performed through a survey among 1358 schools at risk of segregation in the four countries, which were identified through desk research; 387 out of them completed the survey questionnaire. Secondly, by reducing the lists taking into consideration: (a) the willingness of schools to participate in the project, as announced through direct contacts and meetings with the school staff and key stakeholders in the locality; (b) the available experience of schools and communities in innovations and projects, and (c) the indications for feasibility of community building interventions, provided by the community field surveys for mapping of stakeholders and community assets. The initial selection has been partially revised during the piloting in response to feedback and changes in the schools and local environment.

Finally, 22 schools/localities were involved in the testing of the community building actions: 3 in Albania; 7 in Bulgaria (2 of the schools were involved at the start, but lately replaced for different reasons; the case of piloting in Novi Pazar is specific due to the involvement of 5 schools in the municipality, but in the table below Novi Pazar is referred to as one pilot locality); 7 in Hungary and 5 in Slovakia. (For more details, see below the list of the pilot schools/localities in Annex 1). Finally, 19 succeeded to pass through the main types of community building interventions.

**Table # 1: Profile of schools involved in the piloting of community building actions**

No	Criteria and details	Number of pilot schools / localities fitting the criterion in:				Total
		Albania	Bulgaria	Hungary	Slovakia	
	Number of pilot schools/localities involved	3	7	7	5	<b>22</b>
	<b>Type of the school</b>					
	Elementary school – primary/basic education <sup>2</sup>				1	<b>1</b>
	Primary school – main or first degree of the secondary education <sup>3</sup>	3	3	7	3	<b>16</b>
	Secondary school – upper secondary education <sup>4</sup>		4		1	<b>5</b>
<b>(1)</b>	<b>Settlement and community size</b>					
	School in a big/medium city	2	2	2	1	<b>7</b>
	School in a small town	1	3		1	<b>5</b>

<sup>2</sup> In Albania 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, in Bulgaria 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

<sup>3</sup> In Albania up to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, in Bulgaria up to 7<sup>th</sup> grade (10<sup>th</sup> grade for the first level of the secondary education), in Hungary up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, in Slovakia up to 9<sup>th</sup> grade

<sup>4</sup> In Albania up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, in Bulgaria up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, in Hungary up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, in Slovakia up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.



No	Criteria and details	Number of pilot schools / localities fitting the criterion in:				Total
		Albania	Bulgaria	Hungary	Slovakia	
	School in a village (rural area)		2	5	3	10
	The settlement is a municipal center	3	6			9
	High share of ethnic minorities in the population	1	5	7	3	16
	Compact minority community in a settlement with approximately low or medium share of minorities in the total population		2		4	6
<b>(2)</b>	<b>Poverty/Degree of social exclusion, vulnerability of the area / community</b>					
	High levels of poverty, discrimination and social exclusion of the minority communities – big differences in the quality of life between the minorities and macro-society	3	2		1	6
	Decent levels of poverty but high level of social exclusion and isolation of vulnerable ethnic communities		3	2	1	6
	Poverty and vulnerability of the overall population, living in detached and isolated area with low economic development and limited opportunities for employment		2	2	3	7
	Groups in deep marginalization are available in the ethnic community	3	7	3	1	14
<b>(3)</b>	<b>Type and level of segregation of the school</b>					
	The pilot school is the only school in a detached, isolated and poor settlement/area		2	5		7
	Segregated school attended mostly by Roma in a town with other schools – mixed or attended mostly by the majority	2	1	2	2	7
	Mixed school attended also by pupils from disadvantaged ethnic communities – Roma, Egyptian, other	1	4		3	8
<b>(4)</b>	<b>Number of students attending the school</b>					
	Relatively small school (up to 100 students)		1		2	4
	Relatively medium size of school (up to 400 students)	3	3	7	3	16
	Relatively big school (more than 401 students)		3			3
<b>(5)</b>	<b>Approximate share of the disadvantaged students from vulnerable ethnic minorities in the school</b>					
	High share of pupils from Roma and other minority communities – more than 70%	2	3	6	2	13
	Roma students are between 40-69%	1	1	1	3	6



No	Criteria and details	Number of pilot schools / localities fitting the criterion in:				Total
		Albania	Bulgaria	Hungary	Slovakia	
	Mixed school attended by the majority and students from Roma and other ethnic minority communities		3			3
<b>(6)</b>	<b>Participation of the school in projects and readiness to share the good practices</b>					
	The school is active in implementing projects and introducing innovations	1	5	6	4	16
	The school has limited experience in projects implementation	2	2	1	1	6
<b>(7)</b>	<b>Working partnerships of the school with NGOs, parents, other stakeholders</b>					
	The school has good practices in involving parents and cooperation with various stakeholders	2	5	6	1	14
	Established partnerships of the school with local of national NGOs	2	3			5
	Limited experience in creating partnerships	1	2	1	2	6

Table #1 outlines a profile of the pilot schools, responding to the main criteria and at the same time providing a variety of diverse specific conditions and social environment. This way **the profile of pilots ensures the reliability of the results from the testing of the designed community building models**. All the schools involve vulnerable students from poor, socially excluded Roma, Egyptian and other ethnic communities. Although in different measure, most schools have good practices or at least some experience in project implementation and partnerships with NGOs, parents, etc., which is important for the testing with the limited resources of I4S project.

In addition, the I4S project involved 8 more pilot localities (3 In Albania, 1 in Hungary and 4 in Slovakia), which participated only in community learning activities through organizing open school classes. In Bulgaria, all open school classes were held as part of the community building process in the same pilot schools/localities.

#### **4.1.2 Relevance of interventions to the local needs and problems addressed**

The key relevance question is **to what extent the proposed and implemented interventions respond to the needs of the target groups and participants**. The main problems, identified in the project design and then confirmed and analyzed through the research on State-of-the-Art (WP1), are discovered in the pilot localities through the mapping of community assets and needs. Along with the project experts, the target participants from the schools and communities have highlighted the everyday challenges, faced by them due to the low parental involvement, the difficult



communication, mistrust, cultural and language barriers between educational institutions and Roma communities.

The first check of the relevance was provided through the **motivation of selected schools to participate in the piloting** of designed initiatives. The experience in community development and social/education innovations proves that convincing people to act doesn't happen automatically and require targeted efforts, despite the declared common understanding of the problems to be solved. The project experts have performed series of field visits, online exchange of information, calls and meetings with school managers, community leaders, local authorities and stakeholders to promote the community building approaches and the I4S project support to local actors throughout the whole process. In fact, the potential local partners do not oppose the objectives, the problems addressed and desired benefits of the community building actions. As expected, project experts have reported the uncertainty of teachers on "feasibility of Roma parents' involvement" in the process. They have also faced cases of articulated or hidden discriminatory attitudes. Still, some schools have withdrawn their participation for such reasons only as an exception, but have not openly declared their resignation, before the start, or during the initial stages of the interventions.

**Challenges in convincing the schools to participate** in the piloting have appeared rather in operational than in substantial issues. They agree that the project might help increase their interactions with the communities, bringing new allies and supporters for reducing the school drop-outs and overall improving the educational practices and achievements of the children. Still, the schools and local stakeholders require to see some practical results. The opportunity to organize large-scale events, promoting the inclusive education in the community, is perceived as a benefit for the school, children and parents. In Hungary, the motivation of the schools is achieved step-by-step during the implementation of the community building program. In Bulgaria, the perspective to develop a long-term plan for cooperation between the school and the community, complementing the strategy for the development of the school, has become a strong motivating factor. A common problem in all partner countries is the overloaded school staff and heavy educational programs.

The action in Albania and Hungary has proved to be challenging also due to **administrative obstacles**. In Albania, the bureaucracy of receiving permission from authorities for a school to participate in project activities is taking time and extra efforts. The Ministry of Education in Albania required that the premises of the schools and students not be used for the I4S project. Consequently, the decision was made to carry out community development activities outside the school premises. In Hungary, public schools also had to request permission from the school district leaders, if they wish to participate in any project (and the participation in projects must be indicated in advance in the so-called annual work plan of the school). Principals essentially lost all decision-making authority. Regional leaders, on the other hand, can decide whether to grant an approval, or not at their own discretion. That is why cooperation with church schools is often easier in Hungary.



After that, as a result of the first workshops, the local participants admitted also the needs of external support and the benefits for the facilitation of the process by the project experts.

**Strong justifications for local awareness of the problematic relationships between schools and communities are provided by the SWOT analysis,** elaborated by the participants during the first workshops of the action planning process. Though expressed in different ways, the low or missing parental involvement is present in all analysis of Weaknesses and/or Threats, particularly referring to parents from disadvantaged ethnic communities and marginalized families. The reasoning varies between blame placed on the parents (by the teachers) and blame placed on the teachers (by community representatives) to diverse understanding of mutual responsibilities of teachers and communities for the poor communication between teachers and parents. The lack of active engagement on behalf of parents diminishes their influence on the school environment and hinders the development of a more inclusive educational culture (Elbasan, AL). The level of parental involvement is often included both in Strengths and Weaknesses in Bulgaria, thus making a distinction between ‘normal’ and ‘marginalized’ families (Harmanli, BG), in other cases regardless of their ethnic origin (Rakitovo, Medkovets, BG), or in rare cases blame is being placed only on the Roma for ‘the total lack of parental interest in the education of their children’ (Haskovo).

Negative prejudices and segregation are identified as threats (Tereske, HU; Novi Pazar, BG; Dvory nad Žitavou, SK) and in other localities in the four partner countries. The discrimination in the mainstream social environment and macro-society is highlighted as a crucial factor for segregation and educational inequalities mainly in localities with high participation of Roma and other vulnerable ethnic groups in the community building process (like Novi Pazar, BG). Persistent discrimination and cultural misunderstandings between the school community and Roma families are identified as ongoing threats to the success of inclusive education initiatives (Cerrik, AL). In some of the localities, the teachers neglected or were hesitant to admit the existence of educational segregation. Nevertheless, almost all participants agreed that these are the first barriers to overcome for building a community around school.

“Weak partnerships” and “lack of support” from local stakeholders and communities to schools are other problems, outlined almost everywhere. Even in cases of shared experience of effective partnerships between schools and NGOs, the participants mentioned the need to build or improve the cooperation with other stakeholders, like social assistance and employment services, local businesses, municipal administrations, etc.

The participatory SWOT analysis also identifies a variety of specific problems related to school environment - weak infrastructure and educational facilities, limited resources and equipment, curriculum issues, insufficient number of qualified teachers in the locality, etc. Problems in social-economic environment in the locality, influencing the educational achievements of student, are not



neglected, either. In Albania, the low socio-economic status of many families in the community also presents a challenge, as financial difficulties can impact students' ability to fully engage in their education. Furthermore, the low educational levels of parents may limit their capacity to support their children's academic progress, creating an additional barrier to student success. Similar statements referring to poverty, social exclusion, migration abroad, poor living conditions of Roma have also been made in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia, which when addressed may improve education. Systemic challenges generated by the national educational policies and regulations are specifically outlined in Hungary, such as teacher shortages, low salaries, and inadequate training (MÁV Telep, HU); in Bulgaria, as well – too heavy educational programs and curriculum, overloading the school managers and teachers with administrative work, inadequate vocational training of pupils on professions with low demand on the labour market, etc. (Medkovets, Rakitovo, Novi Pazar, BG). The participants are fully aware that such problems cannot be solved at the local level, but need to be assessed by national advocacy campaigns.

Working on **Strengths and Opportunities** components, the participants agreed that **building school-community partnerships might strongly contribute to finding solutions to identified problems and improve educational outcomes of children**. For example, a pilot in Albania relies on the potential for enhanced collaboration of the school with NGOs and local government institutions - by working together, these organizations can address socio-economic challenges, faced by students and their families, by providing additional support and resources to the school (Elbasan, AL). In Hungary some schools stated an objective to create a network of local institutions (schools, community centers, local government) aimed to work together on community initiatives (Nagyharsány, HU). In one of the localities in Bulgaria (Novi Pazar), the participants have set more ambitious goals for the school-community partnership – to advocate and support the ending of the educational segregation in the Municipality through transformation of the existing one segregated school and restructuring of the school system in such a way, as to ensure that all the children will study in mixed schools and classes. Accordingly, the process was led by a strong local Roma organization (Hayaci Association) and the partnership building in Novi Pazar involved all the schools on the municipal territory, the local authorities, parents, community representatives and other relevant institutions.

Thus, the performed SWOT exercises confirmed the relevance of designed school-community building interventions to local problems and needs of the pilot schools/localities.

#### ***4.1.3 Relevance of the designed methodology***

The review of implemented actions (outlined below in paragraph 4.1) shows that the piloting has followed the logic of the process, starting with participatory community planning (in three stages), and then initiating common social action – larger scale school-community events. In most pilot localities. the process is supported through community learning by organizing open school classes.





The local participants have stepped in the process bringing their different personal experiences and concerns. The school staff is more or less familiar with SWOT analysis and planning in their work, but mostly following top-down methods. The participatory approaches are new to them. Most of the parents from disadvantaged communities have never participated in action planning, related to education and community actions. Only a few had some previous experience in participatory action planning, in particular identified in pilot localities with a history of successful partnerships between schools, communities and NGOs. Nevertheless, the participants in most of the pilots, supported by the project experts, have followed the logic of the community building process relatively easily.

**All three components of the process – community planning, social action and community learning through open school classes** are carried out in 8 pilot schools out of the total 22 pilots. **Community planning and wide-scale events** without open school classes are performed in 9 pilots. The process has covered **only community planning workshops** in 3 pilots and **only big school-community events** are held as a follow up of the open school classes in 2 localities. There are a few exceptions of cancelled processes during the community planning (like Haskovo and Harmanli in Bulgaria), due to the low interest of the school management overloaded with tasks and other projects, due to lack of confidence in the successful inclusion of Roma parents and/or other reasons. Such cases do not refute the logic of the methodology, but rather confirm that community building usually requires longer and intensive preparatory efforts to overcome initial distrust, existing prejudices, and to motivate the locals to participate.

The key principles and **approaches of the community building** are followed as much as possible. Positive feedback for the participatory tools is received everywhere – shared in comments of participants' and moderators' observations after the workshops/events. The participants – teachers, parents, local stakeholders - confirm their commitment to the community building on voluntary basis and their appreciation of the facilitation style in compliance with the obligatory principles of respect to human rights, consensus-based decision-making, tolerance, non-discrimination and respect to diversities.

The comparative analysis of the methodology, followed during the testing outlines a **variety of tools applied in different pilot localities**.

The **back-casting methodology** was widely applied in Hungary, considering the needs of the participants to deeply empathize with the situation through creative and role-playing exercises to contextualize the stories of fictive characters, typical for the local community (like a young mother, a child in a large marginalized family, youngster in foster care, grandmother taking care of grandchildren, unemployed father, etc.). The group exercises are aimed to identify those present processes, trends, factors, drivers, services, and assets that push forward, accelerate, and support the desired future and also those that hinder, slow down, or impede them. These factors provide



the basis for the development of actions in the third phase of the community building process. In this design tool, participants can reach a common understanding of a desired future scenario. Through the application of role-playing, they could indirectly bring their problems and challenges into the stories of the fictive characters, but without personally being involved in any potential conflict, or bringing inequalities, or power relations into the groupwork.

The initial plans for community building activities in Hungary have been to make them longer, lasting for 4 hours each. However, they had to be shortened to three-hour training agendas, as the schools could not allocate longer periods of time to this purpose. The original objectives and content of the community building events are preserved with changes allowing for the faster implementation of tasks. For example, the initially selected world café method for the SWOT analysis is replaced and the team has created imaginary persons profiles for the second session, instead of having the participants create those themselves. The goal setting exercise is cut from the initial plan, but later put back in again at the end of the second session in order to restore the missing link of logic in the community planning process.

The specific tools and formats for conducting meetings and events are designed to be interactive and inclusive, ensuring the active participation of all community members. These tools include games, interactive small group work, like world café, brainstorming, project planning etc. in mixed participant small groups as well as groupwide discussions.

For instance, in Bulgaria the participants have clearly indicated their preferences for more analytical methods, instead of role playing, in order to reach common understanding of problems and opportunities for solutions. Empathy is encouraged in the groups, as the exercise 'Let's Dream Together' aimed to outline a common vision about the desired future of their community/settlement and to set the priorities for improvement of education and opening of new development opportunities for the young generations. The participants were asked to imagine the desired future from the point of view of the different segments in the community, in particular considering the most marginalized groups and most vulnerable families. A crucial element in this exercise is the internalizing of the commitment of participants to their roles in building a strong community around the school, which is capable of supporting the school on the way to innovations, increasing the inclusiveness of education and ensuring that no one will be left behind.

In line with the agreed tools, the participants have provided **feedback on the events** through visual opinion boards and written notes. However, in Bulgaria the participants have preferred to skip the written notes as no paper evaluation form is provided, and have preferred to share their opinions directly with the moderators of the events. In Albania, some participants have been hesitant to engage fully in certain activities, such as the visual opinion board, with a few leaving the event early. This reluctance is attributed to the discomfort with the public nature of the feedback process and



possibly a lack of familiarity with such interactive methods. Despite these minor issues, the overall feedback is that the events have successfully created a space for open dialogue and mutual learning.

The outcomes of the community learning activities confirmed the **relevance of the methodology for the open school classes**, which proved its' strengths for:

- Community Engagement and Inclusion: The open school classes successfully brought together diverse stakeholders, including school representatives, parents, local government officials, civil society organizations, and health professionals. This multi-stakeholder approach fostered dialogue, collaboration, and a deeper understanding of shared challenges.
- Focus on Relevant Local Issues: The events addressed locally significant issues such as children's health, school infrastructure, and access to resources for disadvantaged students. For example, a session in Albania (Peqin) focused on healthcare as a children's right, generating actionable ideas to enhance local service delivery.
- Participatory Approach: The methodology encouraged active participation through small group discussions, brainstorming sessions, and collaborative problem-solving. This enabled participants to feel heard and contributed to the identification of practical solutions, such as improving health services in schools and creating multifunctional groups to address child protection (in Albania); initiating school-based programs for prevention of child marriages and a local advocacy campaign against school segregation (in Bulgaria).
- Building Sustainable Networks: The open school classes have been instrumental in building school-community networks that facilitate continued discussions, collaboration, and advocacy for addressing key educational and social issues. For instance, follow-up activities, such as WhatsApp group discussions and collaborative planning have helped sustain momentum beyond the events.

In conclusion, distinguishing between the main approaches and methods, on the one hand, and the techniques and tools, on the other hand, we can confirm that the designed methodology is applied to a great extent. Differences are registered in the applied tools, flexibly adapted to the profiles and dynamics of the groups, in line with national and local contexts.

## 4.2 Efficiency – activities and direct results

The assessment of achieved direct results is the necessary basis for an analysis of effects – the real benefits provided and what results have actually reached the beneficiaries. The summarized comparative review of the community building interventions in the project countries clarifies to what extent the interventions are performed as planned, in terms of scope, profile and number of participants involved. Efficiency analysis here does not cover aspects like quality of the day-to-day



project management, monitoring systems, cost analyses. It is confined to an assessment of direct results, success factors and risks, main challenges met, difficulties and solutions found at the local level, how the difficulties were addressed, explanation and reasons for deviations (if any) from the original planning/expected direct results.

#### 4.2.1 Summary of the direct results reached

The narrative about the community building actions in the partner countries is summarized above in the section: Brief overview of the piloting in the four partner countries. It has outlined the facts and sources of the findings and conclusions in the next chapters, which are based on comparative analysis of the piloting in diverse conditions, national and local contexts.

**All three components – community planning, social action and community learning** through open school classes were carried out in 8 pilot schools out of the total of 22 pilots: 1 in Albania (Elbasan), 4 in Bulgaria (Medkovets, Novi Pazar, Rakitovo, Lom) and 3 in Hungary (Tereske, Pécs and Abaújkér). **Community planning and wide-scale events** without open school classes were performed in 9 pilots – 1 in Albania (Cerrik), 1 in Bulgaria (Drenovets), 2 in Hungary (MÁV Telep-Budapest and Nagyharsány) and 5 in Slovakia (Dvory nad Žitavou, Kolárovo, Okoč, Tomášikovo and Veľké Blahovo). The process has covered **only community planning workshops** in 3 pilots - 1 in Hungary (Tiszabő) and 2 in Bulgaria (Harmanli and Haskovo). **Only big school-community events** were held as a follow up of the open school classes in 2 localities - in Hungary (Taktakenéz) and in Albania (Korça). **Only community learning activities** – open school classes were performed in 8 other localities – 3 in Albania (Peqin, Pogradec and Shkodra), 1 in Hungary (Kőtelek) and 4 in Slovakia (Fiľakovo, Gemer, Rimavská Seč and Turňa nad Bodvou).

**Table #2: Quantitative indicators reached**

Quantitative Indicators for direct results	Total planned	Data - results achieved				Total achieved
		Albania	Bulgaria	Hungary	Slovakia	
<b>Pilot schools / localities</b>						
Number of pilot schools / localities involved in community building	19	3	7	7	5	<b>22</b>
Number of pilots involved in three types of intervention: community planning, community action and community learning (open school classes)		1	4	3	-	<b>8</b>
Number of pilots involved in community planning and community action		1	1	2	5	<b>9</b>



Quantitative Indicators for direct results	Total planned	Data - results achieved				Total achieved
		Albania	Bulgaria	Hungary	Slovakia	
Number of pilots involved only in community planning		-	2	1	-	3
Number of pilots involved in community learning and community action		1	-	1	-	2
Number of pilots involved only in open school classes		3	-	1	4	8
<b>Community planning interventions: meetings and workshops for SWOT analysis, vision identification and action planning</b>						
Number of meetings and workshops	57	7	17	18	15	57
Number of local participants attending workshops and meetings	1425	238	463	254	376	1331
Total number of participants attending workshops: locals and project experts		278	527	387	468	1660
<b>Community action interventions: large-scale school – community events</b>						
Number of large-scale events and family days	19	1	9	8	5	23
Total number of participants attending large-scale events	1520	200	1225	970	971	3366
<b>Target groups reached - Summary of individual people involved in the community building process</b>						
Approximate number of individuals involved in the community building process	1520	371	1025	918	899	3213
<b>Community learning activities – open school classes</b>						
Number of pilots involved both in community building and community learning	25	2	4	4	-	16
Number of pilots involved only in open school classes		3	-	1	4	
Number of open school classes held in pilots involved both in community building and community learning	75	6	14	12	-	62
Number of open school classes held in pilots involved only in community learning		9	-	5	16	
<b>Total number of participants in open school classes</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>2023</b>



The quantitative results of the community building actions show that the I4S project has achieved more than the initially set target indicators in terms of number of pilot localities/schools, events and people involved. Open school classes were held in less than the expected number of pilot localities, but the learning activities outreached three times more people than initially planned. In summary, the quantitative data for key performance indicators and activities confirms that the community building interventions in the four partner countries are completed at a highly satisfactory level as compared to the initial planning.

#### **4.2.2 Challenges and solutions found**

The partners have reported common challenges in facilitating the community building process, in particular regarding the involvement of Roma parents, mostly due to missing direct ‘entry points’ of partners to isolated local communities. The motivation of schools to participate in the community building process has required a lot of efforts and preparatory meetings to find the common interest of the schools in order to initiate the community building.

**In Albania** the collaborative efforts to organize community-building actions have faced a series of challenges, particularly in the coordination between the school and the broader community. One of the most significant challenges has been the reliance on the school as the primary channel of communication with parents and communities. While the project experts had to accept this approach, considering the situation at pilot schools, it has introduced a level of subjectivity and potential bias into the selection of participants and the organization of activities.

The reliance on the school as an intermediary means that the process of identifying supporters and opponents of the community-building interventions is influenced by the school’s own perspectives and priorities. As a result, those identified as key supporters are often individuals or groups aligned with the school’s interests, while potential opponents or critics may have been underrepresented or overlooked. This dynamic has created a barrier to truly inclusive participation, as the criteria for involvement are shaped by the school’s subjective viewpoints rather than by an objective assessment of community needs and interests. In response, the experts have recommended developing more transparent criteria for participant selection and involving a broader range of community members in the planning stages of future events.

The main supporters of the community-building interventions are typically those stakeholders who have a vested interest in the success of the school and the broader educational outcomes. This includes the school administration, local education authorities, and certain NGO representatives who have previously collaborated with the school. These stakeholders have recognized the value of strengthening school-community relationships and have been motivated by the potential positive impact on student outcomes. On the other hand, potential opponents include community members





or groups who felt excluded from the process or who harbored skepticism about the school's ability to effectively engage with the community. The subjectivity in the selection process, influenced by the school's control over communication channels, may have exacerbated these feelings of exclusion and opposition.

**In Bulgaria** the main challenge is the ensuring the wide involvement of different sub-communities in the pilot localities – in some the Roma parents have been missing from the events (Haskovo in particular), in others – the involvement of Bulgarian parents has been low. The attracted Roma participation in the actions for building a community around the school in Bulgaria is due to a great extent to the previous experience of C.E.G.A. with Roma community development, also to the Roma experts in the I4S team, as well as to the commitment of local Roma NGOs to the concept/targets of inclusive education. The support of Hayaci Association in Novi Pazar, Budeste Foundation in Rakitovo and Roma-Lom Foundation in Lom and Medkovets is of crucial importance for the project achievements. The participation of representatives of the municipal authorities in 4 of the pilot localities – two mayors and two deputy mayors – also shows the commitment of the authorities to the creation of a school community.

**In Hungary**, the I4S team faced difficulties regarding the Roma parents' participation in several pilot localities due to the reliance on school administration to invite them. The I4S team purposefully sought support also from NGOs and local Roma activists, as well. Some schools succeeded to engage Roma parents (like Tereske, Taktakenéz, Abaújkér). Other schools have been reluctant in contacting with Roma parents. In some cases, the limited number of Roma participants have even been working as janitors in the school; Roma parents appreciated their participation in discussions but "kept coming and going" throughout the session to go do their jobs (like in Tiszabó). In another locality a Roma expert has activated the local population with the help of local Roma elite figures, while the school Principal recruited teachers and parents, but encountered difficulties in engaging local Roma parents, in spite of all the efforts, including the support of a local Roma organization called Kethanipe (Pécs).

**In Slovakia**, the partners also have faced challenges in involving parents and have activated two main outreach channels to the parents and communities – the schools and the influence of the churches in the localities. In order to ensure the active participation of Roma in the events, they have followed the good practice of the Hungarian team for involving Roma (educators, Roma study teachers, local activists) as facilitators in some workshops.

An important change in conducting local activities is the **involvement of school students, children in the big school-community actions**, which is missing in the original project plan. Nevertheless, the partners have accepted the suggestions of schools and parents to perform also child-focused activities within the family days and the big events, attended by children, together with their parents



and teachers. As expected, the results for increasing the parents' motivation to participate were impressive – it is well known through experience, that the support to children opens the door to parents, in particular in isolated communities.

Along with ensuring the participation of schools and communities, the partners have faced also other difficulties, requiring flexible solutions and adjustments of initial plans and schedule of activities. The joint planning of events, together with the schools has been a challenging job. The setting and following the schedule of events has met many difficulties, leading to delays in the activity's implementation. A problem in all partner countries was the overloaded school staff and heavy educational programs, often leading to postponing the I4S project events. During the events, the facilitators have followed the dynamics of the groups by adjusting the duration of individual sessions, the emphasis in the content and the formats of interactive exercises in order to ensure opportunities for everyone to be heard and respected.

### **4.3 Effectiveness and Impact of the Community Building Actions**

The evaluation focuses on assessing the qualitative changes in the interaction between the schools and communities which could support the inclusiveness of education and increase the future development opportunities for the children, including those from disadvantaged minority communities – Roma and other.

The logic of the community building determines inherent process objectives/outcomes, which can enable its vitality and continuity in the future. With clear understanding that building a community around the school is embedded in the perception of common interests and common goals, it starts with participatory community planning in three stages, outlining a common vision and priorities about the improvement of education and future of the community. Then, the initiated social action brings teachers, parents and local stakeholders together, in common action, thus granting the participants with a powerful experience of doing something together and overcoming mutual distrust and prejudices step-by-step. The performed larger school-community events scale up the messages for the societal benefits of the inclusiveness of education, and consolidate a larger community around the school. The joint community learning through organization of open school classes is targeted to reinforce the exchange of experiences and reduce the gaps in knowledge, practices and skills of participants from the diverse groups, gathered in the community around the school.

#### ***4.3.1 Achieved effects and benefits from the community building***

The achievements in building a community around the school are analyzed in two-fold perspective: in terms of progress of the process itself and in terms of the specific effects and benefits for different



schools/localities, involved in the piloting. The qualitative results, effects and benefits for the participants in the community building are based on the self-evaluation of participants, observations of project experts (trainers and facilitators of the process) and the feedback of the follow-up focus group discussions in the localities.

**The community building interventions in the four partner countries brought about substantial benefits for all the participants in the process.** Let us remind the audience, that not only the official structures like schools, institutions, NGOs, but also the parents and communities themselves are stakeholders in the community building process. Of course, the benefits from the involvement in the process for different individuals and categories of stakeholders depended on the intensity of their engagement in discussions and events. However, even those who did not feel confident enough to argue in the discussions and preferred rather the position of observers, than that of activists, were influenced to a certain extent by the spirit of interaction with the others.

**The most important effects and benefits for the local participants in the community building activities can be grouped in several directions:**

- **Initiated open dialogue and interaction between diverse key stakeholders in education. The participants have gained positive experience in working and acting together.**

The events have gathered together diverse groups with limited or missing record of communication at equal level, as equally important participants; groups that have rarely passed beyond the visible or hidden communication barriers, dependencies, fears and mutual distrust – teachers and parents, non-Roma and Roma, schools and NGOs, teachers and school managers, schools and local institutions.

In Albania, the participants have noted the value of having a diverse group of stakeholders involved. The presence of teachers, school administrators, parents, local government representatives, and NGO members created a rich environment for sharing different perspectives and experiences (Elbasan, Albania). This diversity has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges, faced by the school and the broader community. According to the experts, the events have successfully brought together a wide range of stakeholders, fostering an environment of collaboration and mutual support. Planned and organized together, the big events in Bulgaria have provided both satisfaction and practical experience to locals in performing community actions. Similar feedback was also received in the other partner countries – Hungary and Slovakia.

- **The created common products – SWOT analysis and action plans – are a tangible benefit for all participants in the process.**

Developed with joint efforts and agreed with consensus by diverse participants, the SWOT analysis and action plans in the 18 pilot localities are a common benefit for all categories of stakeholders



involved in the four countries. There is still a need to further enhance the feeling of ownership of the community on these products, but they ensure the available basis for the next steps in the community building processes.

In Albania, Hungary and Slovakia the use of SWOT analysis, in particular, is highlighted by the participants as a beneficial tool for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school-community relationship and for developing actionable strategies to improve inclusivity in education. In Bulgaria, 2 of the pilots (Medkovets and Rakitovo) have elaborated long-term plans for the development of a strong community around the school, another one (Novi Pazar) has outlined and started an advocacy campaign for transformation of the municipal school network aimed to eradicate the segregation of Roma and millet children in primary education.

- **Diverse communities and stakeholders in pilot localities are getting to know each other at personal and community levels.**

The joint activities and the community learning events contributed to better understanding of attitudes, behavioral models and cultural codes of different ethnic communities, professional societies, people.

Teachers have appreciated the possibility to get together with parents and other stakeholders and connect in an informal way, talking about useful topics, or just about their lives. Accordingly, the parents could get to know teachers better and participate in sessions, where they were treated as equals, where they could feel respected and their opinions mattered. For instance, the deeper understanding of the teachers in Hungary of their own problems, as well as of the problems of families, they work with, leads to a change of perspective: a possibility to switch from complaining mode into a problem-solving mode. Changes in the attitudes of teachers and parents are inspired also in the other countries through the back-casting methods (Hungary, Slovakia, Albania), the exercises of 'stepping into someone else's shoes' (Bulgaria) and the intensive exchange of ideas everywhere. The respondents in the focus groups in Hungary have highlighted the value of joint efforts and learning from different perspectives. They have appreciated the exchange of information about grants and approaches to common problems, which have broadened their understanding and reduced the "blinder effect" meaning that everyone only sees things from the point of view of their own profession (Pécs, Hungary).

- **Strengthening community networks.**

The open school classes provided a platform for participants to connect with others in their community, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and shared purpose. Learning outcomes included: (a) Building relationships – the participants expanded their professional and personal networks, enhancing opportunities for future collaboration. (b) Better understanding of their roles



in the community – the participants gained a clearer understanding of their role and responsibilities within the broader school-community network.

- **Important outcome for the local participants is the increased knowledge, skills and practical experience as a result of their involvement in various workshops, discussions, and large-scale events.**

All groups of participants – teachers, parents, community members, NGO activists, representatives of institutions – have benefited from the new knowledge, provided during the community building interventions. According to the feedback results, the open school classes were highly appreciated by the participants for the provided information and better understanding on topics of interest for local communities. The improved skills and practical experience gained in participating in discussions and small group work, formulating and exchanging opinions with others, are less visible in the documented feedback, but are identified by the project experts and facilitators of events. Their observations of the group dynamic and the behavior of individuals, participating in consecutive events, have registered signs of improved self-esteem, self-confidence and freedom of expressing opinions, of acting in role games and small group work.

- **Raised awareness, knowledge and skills of the communities as a result of the open school classes.**

The open school classes provided significant learning benefits for participants by raising awareness, fostering collaboration, and building practical problem-solving skills. The learning benefits for participants extended far beyond the acquisition of knowledge on specific topics. Participants developed critical skills and capacities, essential for both personal growth and community development through participatory discussions, collaborative problem-solving, and exposure to diverse perspectives. These benefits have equipped participants with the tools and confidence to take an active role in creating positive change within their schools and communities. Despite content wise information, what the partners perceived as more important were the skills acquired through the process as follows:

- Development of collaborative skills. The open school classes emphasized multi-stakeholder collaboration, bringing together school staff, parents, local authorities, and community representatives. Participants gained: (a) Teamwork and Communication Skills: Through group discussions and brainstorming activities, participants learned to engage with diverse perspectives and work collectively toward solutions. (b) Conflict Resolution: Addressing different viewpoints helped participants practice constructive dialogue and compromise.
- Enhanced critical thinking and problem-Solving: The methodology encouraged participants to analyze local challenges, such as education quality and access to



resources, and proposed practical solutions. This approach fostered: (a) Analytical thinking – participants critically examined the root causes of issues in their schools and communities. (b) Creative solutions - brainstorming sessions allowed for the generation of innovative and actionable ideas.

- Knowledge Acquisition: While specific topics were discussed, participants also gained broader knowledge, related to community development and educational practices, including awareness of local services and available resources and services, as well as the processes, required to access them. The discussions contributed to better understanding of human rights by reinforcing the importance of equality, inclusion, and rights-based approaches in education and community work.

- **Enlarged partnerships of schools.**

The schools have established new partnerships with NGOs, local authorities and institutions and have consolidated the existing partnerships. Despite some logistical and structural challenges, the initiative empowered stakeholders to take an active role in addressing local issues, laying the groundwork for sustainable change in educational and community practices. With targeted improvements, the open school classes have the potential to further enhance learning outcomes and create lasting impact across diverse communities.

- **Schools have benefited from the enhanced collaboration and internal communication within the school staff.**

In Albania and Hungary in particular, the events have significantly improved the level of collaboration and communication within the schools' staff. Teachers, administrators, and support staff have reported a stronger sense of unity and shared purpose, which translated into more cohesive planning and implementation of school activities. The events have facilitated open dialogue among school staff, helping to encourage a more collaborative working environment. This enhanced communication is expected to have a lasting impact on how the school operates, particularly in terms of inclusivity and responsiveness to student needs.

- **The excluded ethnic minorities (Roma, Egyptian, millet and others) have, to a certain extent, become active participants in the community building process. Initial steps have been taken towards acceptance of Roma as partners by the macro-society.**

The comparison of the dynamics of the process in different pilot localities and countries indicates different challenges met and different levels achieved in the Roma involvement in the process. For instance, a stronger commitment of community leadership in isolated Roma neighborhoods to education and cooperation with the schools is reached in Bulgaria in localities with influential Roma NGOs (Lom, Novi Pazar, Rakitovo). In the other pilots, the input of I4S project is visible, but more or less limited to fostering collaboration between Roma parents and teachers – the involvement of





wider community leadership is still in the future. In Albania, ensuring the participation of Roma and Egyptian parents has been a challenge, as noted above. But an important step forward was taken through the acknowledgment of other participants from the majority that marginalized communities should be involved. A few participants in Elbasan have expressed concerns about the limited involvement of parents, particularly those from marginalized communities, such as the Roma, sharing that more effort could have been made to engage these parents and ensure their voices to be heard.

- **Some progress is registered in passing on the leadership of the process to local participants and building the sense of ownership on the products and achievements of the community building.**

The feedback of participants, collected on visual boards and shared to the facilitators in most pilot localities, is dominated by highly positive and positive assessments. Various opinions can be cited, expressing the satisfaction with events, with favorable attitude and well-disposed environment for discussions, being happy with achieved results. However, there are indications that the participants have appreciated their engagement in activities, led by someone else (by external supporters), rather than by themselves; and the step ahead to internalizing the community building process as their own is still to be made.

Nevertheless, the overall assessment of the performed community building interventions indicates satisfactory level of achievement of goals in this project component.

#### ***4.3.2 Assessment of the impact of the community building process***

Usually, the sustainable effects and long-term impact on the communities and schools involved can be assessed at least one or two years after the end of interventions. Considering that the impact analysis is carried out very soon after the completion of direct interventions, the impact and sustainability are analyzed as created conditions for long-term effects on the participants in the community building process.

**Substantial changes have commenced in attitudes and practices at the local level** as a result of the introduced participatory approaches in the interaction between schools, parents, community members and local institutions. In particular:

- **Signs of a breakthrough in building trust between the school and isolated ethnic communities have been registered in most pilot localities.**

The improved communication between schools and parents, the experienced practices of common actions are the first important steps along the long way of overcoming mutual distrust between teachers from the majority and parents from disadvantaged communities. The community building actions succeeded in building stronger ties between the school and the broader community.



Community members, local government representatives, and NGO participants have reported a greater sense of connection with the school. This strengthened relationship is expected to facilitate more effective collaboration in future initiatives, aimed at improving educational outcomes and addressing the socio-economic challenges, faced by students and their families.

- **Motivated schools and local stakeholders to continue the efforts to increase their interactions with the communities, bringing new allies and supporters to reduce the number of school drop-outs and overall improve educational practices and children’s achievements.**

It is difficult “to count and calculate the levels of motivation” without additional in-depth surveys. However, the analysis of received feedback from the field indicates that about half of the pilot schools involved are convinced to foster the community building process on their own. Other 30% are ready to continue but need ongoing external methodology advice and support for facilitation of activities.

- **Commitment to the mission of building a community around the school, promoting inclusiveness of education, in particular, tackling educational inequalities and segregation of marginalized ethnic minorities – Roma and others.**

Positive shift is registered towards deeper understanding of the benefits of the community support for better education of children and well-being of the community. The perception of existing common interests of the key participants in the community building process is the corner stone and the engine for transforming a group of people into a community. Committed promoters of community centered approaches have appeared among school staff, parents, civil activists, etc., in most of the pilot localities. Despite the differences between localities – in some, the number of promoters is bigger, in others, there are only a few – they have the potential to attract a critical mass of supporters able to move forward the process of building a community around the school.

The community building activities have fostered the increased awareness among all stakeholders about the importance of collaboration in achieving educational and community goals. Participants from NGOs, local government, and civil society organizations have noted that these initiatives have provided valuable networking opportunities, which will help in coordinating efforts to support the school and its students. The shared experiences and discussions have laid the groundwork for ongoing collaboration, which is expected to lead to more comprehensive and effective interventions in the future.

- **Empowerment of socially isolated ethnic communities (Roma, Egyptian, millet and other).**

For the community members, particularly those from marginalized groups and excluded ethnic communities, like the Roma, the events have provided a rare opportunity to engage directly with



schools, local authorities and other stakeholders. Participants have reported that they feel empowered by the opportunity to share their experiences, ideas and challenges in a supportive environment. This sense of empowerment is critical for fostering ongoing engagement with the school and ensuring that their voices continue to be heard in future discussions. The increased self-reliance of the community members and the change of attitudes may give new horizons and ambitions for development of the community.

The participatory nature of open school classes empowered participants by valuing their input and actively involving them in decision-making. The key benefits included increased confidence of teachers, parents, and local actors that felt more confident in voicing their concerns and proposing solutions. The community learning activities contributed to the leadership development – roles, such as group facilitators, or discussion leaders, enabled participants to practice and enhance their leadership abilities.

- **Lifelong learning mindset.**

By creating a safe and supportive environment, open school classes encouraged participants to see learning as an ongoing process. This was reflected in openness to new ideas as the exposure to diverse perspectives fostered curiosity and a willingness to explore new approaches. The involvement in the community learning activities fostered commitment to continuous improvement – the participants recognized the importance of sustained efforts to address challenges in education and community development.

- **Increased awareness and sensitivity to inclusivity of education.**

One of the key benefits, observed by the experts, is the increased awareness among school staff regarding the importance of inclusivity of education. The discussions and actions during the community building process have highlighted the challenges, faced by marginalized students, particularly those from the Roma community. This is leading to a deeper understanding of the need for inclusive practices within the school. Teachers and administrators expressed a commitment to apply these insights in their daily interactions with students, which is likely to result in a more welcoming and supportive school environment for all. Observations of project experts indicate also a positive shift in attitudes towards inclusivity among community members and stakeholders. The events have challenged preconceived notions and stereotypes, particularly regarding marginalized groups like the Roma. Participants expressed a commitment to fostering a more inclusive community, both within the school and in the broader social context. This shift in mindset is a crucial step towards creating a more equitable and supportive environment for all members of the community.

- **Promising opportunities to increase the parental involvement in their children's education are expected to enhance students' outcomes at school.**



The interventions are helping to strengthen the relationship between the school and the parents. While parental involvement initially has been a challenge, the events have created a platform for parents to voice their concerns and contribute to the discussion. As a result, school staff has gained valuable insights into parents' perspectives, which will help tailor communication and engagement strategies in the future. The school is now better positioned to build trust and foster a stronger partnership with parents, which is essential for student success. In addition, the participation in direct dialogue with the teachers helped the parents to feel welcomed in the school environment and to start overcoming fears and distrust in the communication with the teachers.

## 4.4 Expectations for sustainability of the school - community interaction

Under the sustainability criterion the extent to which the benefits, services and partnerships are likely to continue, is considered. Sustainability is projected as potentials for continuation of the community building processes and of the created local partnerships in support of schools after the project ends. The sustainability of the benefits depends on motivation, as well as on available material, financial and human resources – active people and knowledge, as a result of increased local capacity and skills and the lessons learnt by the schools, Roma communities and the local partners involved. The key evaluation questions are:

- To what extent the initiated interaction between schools and communities are expected to continue after the project completion?
- What are the factors influencing the sustainability of the process in a positive or a negative way?
- To what extent local participants have gained sufficient knowledge and experience to enable them to facilitate the process on their own? What kind of follow-up support is needed for continuation of the process?

**The assessment of I4S partners with regard to sustainability of the piloted initiatives** is optimistic, but also takes into consideration the strong negative factors that need to be overcome at the local level.

**Albania:** The initiated interaction between schools and communities in Elbasan and Cerrik is expected to continue to some extent after the completion of the project, but its sustainability will largely depend on several critical factors. The foundations laid during the project, particularly the improved communication channels, the collaborative mindset fostered among stakeholders, and the engagement of marginalized communities, provide a strong basis for ongoing interaction. However, the extent, to which these interactions will persist, hinges on the continued commitment



of both the schools and the community members. In Elbasan, the presence of a well-organized school administration, combined with a proactive approach to inclusivity, suggests that the school-community interaction is likely to continue, particularly if the relationships forged during the project are nurtured. In Cerrik, where socio-economic challenges are more pronounced, the sustainability of these interactions may be more fragile, requiring ongoing effort and support to maintain the momentum gained during the project.

The sustainability will be supported by several positive factors, such as: strong leadership and commitment of school leaders, such as principals and key staff members, to maintain and enhance the interaction with the community is a significant factor in ensuring sustainability. Strong leadership can drive the continuation of initiatives and keep the community engaged. The established communication channels during the project, such as regular meetings, newsletters, and online platforms, provide a framework that can easily be maintained and utilized for ongoing interaction. The empowerment of marginalized groups, particularly the Roma community, during the project has increased their willingness to engage with the school. This empowerment can serve as a catalyst for sustained interaction if these groups continue to feel heard and valued. The collaboration with local NGOs in the project has created a network of support that can help sustain the interaction. These organizations can continue to facilitate dialogue and provide resources that keep the school-community partnership active.

Socio-economic challenges are expected to have a negative influence in areas like Cerrik, where socio-economic difficulties are more acute, these challenges could undermine the sustainability of the interaction. Economic hardships may divert community members' attention away from school engagement towards immediate survival needs. The ongoing emigration of families, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas, poses a significant threat to the sustainability of the interaction. As families leave, the school-community dynamic may weaken, due to a diminishing number of engaged parents and community members. The lack of institutional support – if local government and educational authorities do not continue to support the initiatives, started by the project, the school-community interaction may lose momentum. Institutional backing is crucial for the provision of resources and legitimacy needed to sustain these efforts.

**Bulgaria:** The I4S project experts are optimistic that the actions for building a community around the school will continue after the project ends, at least in the 5 pilot localities, where all the steps of the process have been implemented. The key factor for sustainability is the attracted local leadership of the process. The commitment of local Roma NGOs – like Roma-Lom Foundation, Hayaci Association and Budeste Foundation – experienced in education projects, community development and advocacy, is important for continuation of school-community interaction in Novi Pazar, Lom and Rakitovo. In Medkovets and Drenovets the leadership of the community building process is being transferred to the schools step-by-step, supported by several active parents. In the



pilot localities in Bulgaria the I4S project interventions have contributed to the promotion of inclusive education beyond the segregated schools, as a value for the whole town, not only for the isolated community, thus stimulating extra motivation for the local authorities to keep their participation and support as part of the process.

**Hungary:** The experts, facilitating the community building process in Hungary, assess that the activities will continue in the pilot localities, where the local stakeholders have stated to implement one or two of their action plans, (such as Pécs, Nagyharsány, Tereske), as well as in localities, where school staff, communities and NGOs got to know each other better, or succeeded to build relationships with each other (especially in Kőtelek or Pécs). Since the process is led by the schools, the continuation depends on the commitment of the principals and their skills to attract extra funds or supporters, who can provide them with cheaper opportunities (like in Tereske); on availability of external support they can rely on – for example, the church maintainers can provide some extra funds (in case of Nagyharsány), or on the good relationship with the school maintainer and/or the local government. The opportunities for sustainability will be influenced in a negative way by the lack of capacity on behalf of schools, including work overload, burnout, as well as lack of funds; systemic problems, such as the huge gap between the middle-class ‘white’ teachers and the Roma families; local political struggles between opposing sides, or different interest groups.

**Slovakia:** J. Selye University’s assessment of the sustainability of community-building interventions in segregated Slovak schools suggests a cautiously optimistic outlook, grounded in the active engagement of various stakeholders—teachers, parents, local government, and the civil sector—throughout the project. This inclusive approach has created a foundational network of invested participants, which is essential for lasting impact. The structured interactions during the three training sessions, which brought together these diverse groups, likely fostered strong communication channels and shared understanding that can support future collaborations even beyond the funded project.

However, sustaining these community-building efforts may present challenges. The project's structured framework, facilitated by funding, played a significant role in organizing the events and uniting different sectors in the intervention. With the project concluding, it is crucial for local entities, such as schools, parent associations, and municipal authorities, to take on leadership roles to maintain momentum. Initiatives like the family day, which brought the community together in a shared, informal environment, could serve as a model for ongoing, locally driven events. By securing smaller, local sources of funding, or in-kind support, and encouraging volunteer participation from the civil sector, these interventions have a viable chance of evolving into self-sustaining practices that continue to address the needs of segregated communities in Slovakia.

**What kind of follow-up support is needed for the continuation of the process?**





To ensure the sustainability of the school-community interaction in the pilot schools/localities, several types of follow-up support are necessary:

- Continuing **investments in local capacity building to provide them with leadership skills for the community building process** through trainings and methodological advice. The external experts will be really helpful with continuing facilitation and mentoring, by being present in the schools/ communities for a longer period of time. This way they can support the learning-by-doing of local activists, focused on development of their knowledge and practical facilitation skills, which will enable them to lead the process on their own.
- Ongoing **professional development and continuous training for teachers and school managers on inclusive education and community engagement** is essential. This training should focus on practical strategies for maintaining and deepening the relationships established during the project.
- **Knowledge sharing about relevant best practices, tools, programs** can help the local activists, school managers and teachers, parents and community activists with specific issues.
- **Resource allocation** will ensure that schools and communities have the necessary resources to maintain communication channels and community engagement activities, which are crucial. This may require securing ongoing funding from local government, NGOs, or community fundraising efforts. Training and support to schools to teach them how to raise funds, will improve their access to funds for extra activities and continuation of the large-scale events.
- Encouraging the **continued involvement of NGOs** in support of school-community interactions will be key. These organizations can provide expertise, resources, and facilitation to help maintain momentum and adapt to changing circumstances.
- It is important to **institutionalize the practices developed during the project**, such as regular community meetings, parental engagement strategies, and collaborative decision-making processes. This could involve embedding these practices into the school's annual plans and ensuring that they are supported by local educational authorities.
- Establishing formal **community liaison roles within the school** could help sustain the interaction. These individuals could act as bridges between the school and the community, ensuring that communication remains open and that community members continue to feel involved.

Implementing a **system for regular monitoring and evaluation of the school-community interaction** can help identify any emerging challenges and address them proactively. This process should involve feedback from both the school and the community to ensure that the interaction remains relevant and effective.



## 5 Conclusions

In conclusion, our overall assessment of achievements is as follows: the piloting of community-centered approaches has accomplished the stated objectives and reached the key expected results. Here, some of the key findings and conclusions about the long-term impact and challenges faced within the process of building a community around the schools, will be highlighted.

**Relevance of the methodology design:** The piloting has proved the relevance of the concept, initially set priorities/objectives and the elaborated methodology – the key approaches, methods and tools. The three components of the process – community planning, social action and community learning through open school classes – have been applied and complemented the impact on stakeholders involved.

**Achieved direct results and effects of the model:** The findings about the efficiency of the piloting interventions in the four partner countries show that the process was successfully performed in 22 pilot schools/localities. A total of 80 events - various workshops, community meetings and large-scale school-community events were conducted, engaging a total of 5026 participants. Approximately 3213 individuals were involved in the community building process, considering that some of the participants have attended more than one event. Furthermore, 62 open school classes were carried out in the four countries, involving a total of 2023 people in community learning. The effectiveness analysis outlines substantial benefits for the local participants (teachers, parents, community members, other stakeholders) and indicates a promising long-term impact – changes in attitudes and practices at the local level.

**Increased awareness and collaboration:** The community-building process has successfully increased awareness among stakeholders about the importance of inclusive education and the critical role that community involvement plays in supporting schools. The active participation of teachers, parents, local government representatives, and NGOs led to a richer understanding of the challenges, faced by excluded communities and marginalized groups, and highlighted the collective responsibility of the macro-society to tackle social isolation and exclusion.

**Community leadership of the process:** Much more can be desired regarding the community leadership of the process. The ambition to enforce the community leadership of the process was accomplished to some extent during the piloting. Accordingly, stronger indications in some schools of their feelings of ownership on the community building process are detected – mostly in the feedback from managers and teachers, and less so in the feedback from parents, activists and other members of vulnerable communities. It is well-known from practical experience, that strengthening the community leadership of the process requires more time and human efforts on behalf of the



external facilitators on the spot, invested in motivation, transfer of knowledge/skills, self-esteem of the local actors – resources not sufficiently provided by I4S project.

**Empowerment of isolated ethnic communities and marginalized groups:** The process is particularly effective in empowering marginalized groups, such as the Roma community, by providing them with a platform to voice their concerns and engage in the decision-making process. This empowerment is crucial for ensuring that these groups are not only included but also play an active role in shaping the educational environment.

**Strengthened school-community relationships:** The initiatives are fostering stronger relationships between schools and their surrounding communities. By involving a diverse array of stakeholders in the discussions and activities, the process helped build trust and collaboration, which are essential for sustaining long-term partnerships. This strengthened relationship is expected to contribute positively to the educational outcomes of students.

**Identification of key challenges:** The process has revealed several key challenges, including socio-economic barriers, low levels of parental involvement, existing prejudices and discrimination attitudes in the social environment, not excluding the direct participants in the process. The need for more inclusive teaching practices is identified at many schools. These challenges underscore the complexity of building an inclusive educational environment and highlight the need for ongoing effort and support.

**Sustainability achievements and concerns:** The achievements during the I4S project lifetime have created promising conditions for ensuring the sustainability of the process in most of the pilot localities. Furthermore, while the community-building process has been successful in the short term, concerns about sustainability are evident in some of the pilot localities. The continued engagement of stakeholders, especially in economically disadvantaged areas, remains uncertain without further support and resources. This points to the need for strategies that ensure the longevity of the initiatives started during the process.

**Proved opportunities for scaling up of the school-community interaction model:** The gained experience and knowledge, the good practices and lessons learned during the piloting confirm the significant potential of the model to be replicated and scaled up in other isolated areas and schools. The testing in diverse environments of schools and communities has demonstrated its adaptivity to different national and local contexts.



## 6 Annexes

### 6.1 Annex 1: List of the pilot schools/localities involved in the testing

No	Locality	Name of the school	Type of the school	Number of students
<b>Albania</b>				
1	<b>Elbasan</b> Municipality of ELBASAN, Central Albania	Proleme Xhuvani school	1-9 years mandatory, public school	242
2	<b>Cerrik</b> Municipality of CËRRIK, Central Albania	"Drita Como" school	1-9 years mandatory public school	154
3	<b>Korça</b> Municipality of Korça, South Eastern Albania	Naim Frashëri School	1-9 years mandatory public school	283
		Asdreni School	1-9 years mandatory public school	280
<b>Bulgaria</b>				
1	<b>Medkovets</b> Medkovez village Municipality of Medkovez, Montana district North-Western Bulgaria	SU "Otetz Paisii"	Secondary school, 1 <sup>st</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	250
2	<b>Lom</b> Lom town, Municipality of Lom, Montana district North-Western Bulgaria	IV OU "Hristo Botev"	Primary school 1 <sup>st</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> grade	77
3	<b>Rakitovo</b> Rakitovo town, Municipality of Rakitovo, Pazardjik district South-Central Bulgaria	SU "Saint Kliment Ohridski"	Secondary school, 1 <sup>st</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	515
4	<b>Drenovets</b> Dernovets village, Municipality of Ruzhintsi, North-West Bulgaria	SU "N.Y. Vaptsarov"	Secondary school, 1 <sup>st</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	184
5	<b>Novi Pazar</b> Novi Pazar town, Municipality of Novi Pazar, Shumen district, North-East Bulgaria	Professional High School in Agriculture;	8 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	115
		SU "Khan Isperih";	1 <sup>st</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	428
		SU "Vassil Levski";	1 <sup>st</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	497
		OU "N.Y.Vaptsarov";	1 <sup>st</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> grade	102
		Professional High School "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov"	8 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	150



No	Locality	Name of the school	Type of the school	Number of students
6	<b>Harmanli</b> Harmanly town, Municipality of Harmanly, Haskovo district South-Central Bulgaria	OU "Ivan Vasov"	Primary school 1 <sup>st</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> grade	477
7	<b>Haskovo</b> Haskovo city, Municipality of Haskovo, Haskovo district South-Central Bulgaria	OU "Shandor Petiofi"	Primary school 1 <sup>st</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> grade	340
<b>Hungary</b>				
1	<b>Tiszabő</b> settlement: Tiszabő county: Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok North Great Plain region	Magyar Máltai Szeretetszolgálat Tiszabői Általános Iskola	Primary School of the Maltese Charity Service 1 <sup>st</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	337
2	<b>Pécs</b> settlement: Pécs county: Baranya South Transdanubia region	Néri Szent Fülöp Katolikus Általános Iskola és Óvoda	Primary School of the Catholic Church 1 <sup>st</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	113
3	<b>Tereske</b> settlement: Tereske county: Nógrád, Northern Hungary region	Tereskei Általános Iskola	State Primary School 1 <sup>st</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	151
4	<b>Taktakenéz</b> settlement: Taktakenéz county: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Northern Hungary region	Taktakenézi Petőfi Sándor Általános Iskola	State Primary School 1 <sup>st</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	122
5	<b>MÁV Telep</b> settlement: Budapest county: Budapest	MÁV-Telepi Általános Iskola és Gimnázium	Primary School and High School of the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship 1 <sup>st</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	168
6	<b>Abaújkér</b> settlement: Abaújkér county: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén Northern Hungary	Wesley János Családi Bölcsőde, Óvoda, Általános Iskola, Szakképző Iskola, Technikum és Kollégium	Nursery School, Primary School and Vocational School of the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship 1 <sup>st</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	238
7	<b>Nagyharsány</b> settlement: Nagyharsány county: Baranya South Transdanubia region	Pécsi Református Kollégium Nagyharsányi Általános Iskolája	Primary School of the Lutheran Church 1 <sup>st</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	153
8	<b>Kőtelek</b> settlement: Kőtelek county: Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok East-Central Hungary	Szent Gellért Catholic School	Nursery and Primary School of the Catholic Church 1 <sup>st</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	124



No	Locality	Name of the school	Type of the school	Number of students
<b>Slovakia</b>				
1	<b>Dvory and Žitavou</b> settlement: Dvory nad Žitavou county: Nové Zámky South Slovakia	Základná škola Adolfa Majthényiho s VJM - Dvory nad Žitavou	Primary School 1 <sup>st</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	223
2	<b>Kolárovo</b> settlement: Kolárovo county: Komárno South Slovakia	Základná škola F. Rákócziho II. - Kolárovo	Primary School 1 <sup>st</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	168
3	<b>Okoč</b> settlement: Okoč county: Dunajská Streda South-West Slovakia	Spojená škola, Špeciálna základná škola internátna, Odborné učilište internátne - Okoč	Special Primary School and dormitory 1 <sup>st</sup> - 9 <sup>th</sup> grade; Vocational Secondary Dormitory School 1 <sup>st</sup> – 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	86
4	<b>Tomášikovo</b> settlement: Tomášikovo county: Galanta South-West Slovakia	Základná škola s materskou školou - Tomášikovo	Primary School 1 <sup>st</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	114
5	<b>Veľké Blahovo</b> settlement: Veľké Blahovo county: Dunajská Streda South-West Slovakia	Základná škola Veľké Blahovo	Elementary School 1 <sup>st</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> grade	19

## 6.2 Annex 2: Open school classes – List of conducted community learning sessions

Country	Pilot school/Locality	Date	Topics discussed	Number of participants
<b>ALBANIA</b>				
Albania	Peqin, School Hasmashaj	23.02.2022	The health system as a children's right and the role of local actors in increasing access to health services for children living in disadvantaged situations	25





Country	Pilot school/Locality	Date	Topics discussed	Number of participants
Albania	Peqin, School Hasmashaj	24.03.2022	School bullying and community roles in conflict resolution	25
Albania	Pogradec, Amaro Tan school	21.07.2022	Inclusive Education: An approach beyond school Walls	23
Albania	Korça, Naim Frashëri and Asdreni schools	2.08.2022	Discrimination and Segregation in Albanian legislation and procedures to address the issues	25
Albania	Pogradec, Amaro Tan school	23.08.2022	Community Building Processes	22
Albania	Korça, Naim Frashëri and Asdreni schools	30.08.2022	Inclusive Education: An approach beyond school Walls	24
Albania	Peqin, School Hasmashaj	6.03.2023	The role of the Children Protection Unit in solving violence issues	30
Albania	Pogradec, Amaro Tan school	27.04.2023	Addressing Discrimination	24
Albania	Korça, Naim Frashëri and Asdreni schools	28.04.2023	Building and Strengthening Community Roles to Support Inclusive Education	27
Albania	Shkodra, Liria School	2.05.2024	Project Introduction and National Human Rights Defending Mechanisms	35
Albania	Shkodra, Liria School	24.05.2024	Building School and Parents Dialogues	32
Albania	Shkodra, Liria School	29.05.2024	International situation with a view to discrimintaion/ Case Study Hungary	24
Albania	Elbasan, Ptoleme Xhuvani School	30.05.2024	School Management for Improved Education	35
Albania	Elbasan, Ptoleme Xhuvani School	7.06.2024	Local government and its role in school performance	30
Albania	Elbasan, Ptoleme Xhuvani School	12.06.2024	Discrimination and addressing discrimination issues by the school	33
<b>Albania</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL Number of events - Open school class sessions</b>			<b>15</b>
	<b>SUBTOTAL Number of participants</b>			<b>414</b>
<b>BULGARIA</b>				
Bulgaria	Medkovets, Secondary School "Otetz Paisii"	23.06.2022	Fake news and anti-Roma media disinformation	31
Bulgaria	Medkovets, Secondary School "Otetz Paisii"	29.04.2023	Innovative methods of teaching and improvement of learning environment in the school	22
Bulgaria	Lom, Primary school "Hristo Botev"	4.05.2023	Presentation and discussion on integrated community-focused social services for Roma communities recently	52



Country	Pilot school/Locality	Date	Topics discussed	Number of participants
			established in the municipality of Lom, i.e. (1) Complex for integrated services for social inclusion of Roma; (2) Early Childhood Development services with a focus on education and health.	
Bulgaria	Medkovets, Secondary School "Otetz Paisii"	30.05.2023	The magic of creative writing – meeting with the Bulgarian writer for children Dobrinka Simova with the participation of students, teachers and parents	75
Bulgaria	Novi Pazar, 4 schools and 2 kindergartens in the Municipality	21.04.2024	Education in intercultural environment - stereotypes and prejudices	27
Bulgaria	Novi Pazar, 4 schools and 2 kindergartens in the Municipality	21.04.2024	Involvement of parents in the education	28
Bulgaria	Lom, Primary school "Hristo Botev"	30.05.2024	Education as a value for Roma parents and children	26
Bulgaria	Lom, Primary school "Hristo Botev"	18.6.2024	Community support for improvement of education in the Municipality of Lom	25
Bulgaria	Rakitovo, Saint Kliment Ohridski Secondary School	21.6.2024	Child marriages – barrier to education of Roma girls	30
Bulgaria	Rakitovo, Saint Kliment Ohridski Secondary School	22.6.2024	Partnerships between the school, Roma community and local stakeholders to keep Roma girls within the educational System	30
Bulgaria	Rakitovo, Saint Kliment Ohridski Secondary School	22.6.2024	Approaches for motivation of students to complete their secondary education in Rakitovo, in the Saint Kliment Ohridski Secondary School	30
Bulgaria	Novi Pazar, All schools and kindergartens in the Municipality	1.07.2024	Opportunities for optimization of the school network in the Municipality of Novi Pazar aimed at eradicating the segregation in primary education in the municipality	37
Bulgaria	Medkovets, Secondary School "Otetz Paisii"	4.07.2024	Professional secondary education - opportunities for Roma youngsters	27
Bulgaria	Medkovets, Secondary School "Otetz Paisii"	26.07.2024	Language literacy – a door to the world	36
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL Number of events - Open school class sessions</b>			<b>14</b>
	<b>SUBTOTAL Number of participants</b>			<b>511</b>



Country	Pilot school/Locality	Date	Topics discussed	Number of participants
<b>HUNGARY</b>				
Hungary	Taktakenéz, Taktakenézi Petőfi Sándor Általános Iskola	28.04.2022	Coping strategies for everyday life for further education	19
Hungary	Tereske, Tereskei Általános Iskola	19.05.2022	Boyash and Romungro groups in the school	18
Hungary	Tereske, Tereskei Általános Iskola	10.11.2022	Addictions: health and well-being, including nutrition, mental health, and physical activity by healthcare professionals and local experts 19	18
Hungary	Taktakenéz, Taktakenézi Petőfi Sándor Általános Iskola	14.11.2022	Parent-child communication 22	28
Hungary	Taktakenéz, Taktakenézi Petőfi Sándor Általános Iskola	12.12.2022	Drug prevention - Good practices sharing, addiction prevention, community values	22
Hungary	Tereske, Tereskei Általános Iskola	7.02.2023	Addictions – alcohol, drugs, cigarette, internet	19
Hungary	Abaújkér, Wesley János Családi Bölcsőde, Óvoda, Általános Iskola, Szakképző Iskola, Technikum és Kollégium	28.3.2024	Addressing online bullying and classroom abuse	18
Hungary	Abaújkér, Wesley János Családi Bölcsőde, Óvoda, Általános Iskola, Szakképző Iskola, Technikum és Kollégium	24.3.2023	Inspiring students and adults by presenting Roma role models	15
Hungary	Kőtelek, Szent Gellért Catholic School	7.11.2023	Supporting students' further education and integration into a new environment	19
Hungary	Kőtelek, Szent Gellért Catholic School	4.12.2023	Prevention of addictions (smoking and drug use)	20
Hungary	Kőtelek, Szent Gellért Catholic School	22.01.2024	Restorative approach to prevent bullying, non-violent communication	18
Hungary	Pécs, Nursery School and Primary School of the Catholic Church	21.02.2024	4 WANDA sessions: Session 1	11
Hungary	Kőtelek, Szent Gellért Catholic School	6.03.2024	Strengthening parent-teacher communication	9
Hungary	Pécs, Nursery School and Primary School of the Catholic Church	21.03.2024	4 WANDA sessions: Session 2	10



Country	Pilot school/Locality	Date	Topics discussed	Number of participants
Hungary	Pécs, Nursery School and Primary School of the Catholic Church	24.04.2024	4 WANDA sessions: Session 3	11
Hungary	Pécs, Nursery School and Primary School of the Catholic Church	23.05.2024	4 WANDA sessions: Session 4	10
Hungary	Kőtelek, Szent Gellért Catholic School	30.05.2024	Parents' and teachers' field trip to the Gödöllő royal castle	22
<b>Hungary</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL Number of events - Open school class sessions</b>			<b>17</b>
	<b>SUBTOTAL Number of participants</b>			<b>287</b>
<b>SLOVAKIA</b>				
Slovakia	Fišákovo, Gymnázium Nám, several schools involved	30.01.2023	Theoretical and practical issues of inclusion and creativity	40
Slovakia	Fišákovo, Mocsáry Lajos Primary School	09.03.2023	Education as a value	60
Slovakia	Rimavská Seč, Primary school	24.03.2023	Equality of opportunity	25
Slovakia	Fišákovo, Mocsáry Lajos Primary School	18.04.2023	Find out who is talented. The importance of talent management in education	39
Slovakia	Gemer, several schools involved	25.04.2023	School truancy and catching up	33
Slovakia	Fišákovo, Mocsáry Lajos Primary School	10.05.2023	Crafts and traditional games	88
Slovakia	Rimavská Seč, Primary school	16.05.2023	Importance of sport	19
Slovakia	Turňa nad Bodvou, 2 schools involved	30.05.2023	Inclusive schools in the 21st century	33
Slovakia	Gemer, two schools involved	31.05.2023	Successful cooperation and communication between the school and the parents	29
Slovakia	Turňa nad Bodvou, 2 schools involved	20.06.2023	Community building	30
Slovakia	Rimavská Seč, Primary school	21.06.2023	Parents and school communication	26
Slovakia	Gemer, several schools involved	23.06.2023	Education through sports	24
Slovakia	Turňa nad Bodvou, 2 schools involved	09.07.2023	How to help children with special educational needs successfully manage school	36



Country	Pilot school/Locality	Date	Topics discussed	Number of participants
Slovakia	Gemer, several schools involved	21.09.2023	Family day	70
Slovakia	Rimavská Seč, Primary school	22.09.2023	Better Together (Family day)	90
Slovakia	Turňa nad Bodvou, 2 schools involved	10.10.2023	Family day	169
Slovakia	<b>SUBTOTAL Number of events - Open school class sessions</b>			<b>16</b>
	<b>SUBTOTAL Number of participants</b>			<b>811</b>
<b>All countries - TOTAL</b>				
All countries	<b>TOTAL Completed Open School Classes during the project (November 2021 – July 2024)</b>			<b>62</b>
All countries	<b>Total number of participants</b>			<b>2023</b>

