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ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS
FOR SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION
IN THE CAMPANIA REGION – ITALY

"EU countries have committed to reducing the average share of early school leavers to less than 10% by 2020" (Europe 2020) and this means Governments around Europe, mainly in less developed areas, are working and investing to improve the education offer and keep the kids in school to give them better opportunities for their futures.

Nonetheless, the south of Italy is still losing students. In the Campania region, even though in the last 10 years many efforts have been made to reduce early school leaving, at the end of the last school year, the level of drop-outs was still between 15% and 20%.

" We at the primary school have 5 classes from 1st to 5th grade. All kids are from the Spanish Quarters which is the name of the neighbourhood, a deprived area known to be not the safest neither the richest one in the city of Naples. With their small streets and hidden corners, the Spanish Quarters have been for long time the headquarter of some of the mob families of the city centre and therefore home to gangs of young kids committed to the small crimes and shady businesses run by the first.

As a consequence, among the pupils we have kids from richer families and kids from less well-off, poor families. In both cases, families tend to show a hostile attitude towards the school system, not taking into the right consideration the importance of having an education and therefore making illiteracy and early school-leaving urgent issues.

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This place was run by the church before, there were nuns in the school and the cloister was open to the neighbourhood but without any kind of organization of the space. We introduced a different pedagogical approach in the schools (nursery, preschool, primary - ed.) and the Foundation that took over the entire building renovated everything and launched several activities with different associations or higher education school, such as Argo – a programme for special need and disabled people and the Accademia di Belle Arti. There's a lot of potential but the attitude towards the primary school didn't improve. If something, they felt less protected and taken care of than they did with the nuns who for instance would supply food and clothes. So, we do need a change to somehow give back this space to the community and at the same time build trust in the school and show them what it can do for the youngest, but not only.

Involving the families and the community does sound like what we need to bring some peace in the school and help kids and adults having a better life." G. Di Martino - DPDB-FOQUS Primary School Coordinator.

"I read with great interest the presentation of this Learning Community project. It looks accurate in its structure and the actions it promotes are important and needed. I think we should introduce that to the Mayor" S. Pace, deputy-mayor of the Metropolitan City of Naples and Head Teacher of a High School on Classic Subjects. "I see the great potential of these actions in our region, we should support and spread these ideas and scientific knowledge as much as possible. My concern regards the actual and full-scale implementation of the actions in the Italian school system where bureaucracy too often works against the introduction of new methods and people" Mr Pace said regarding the implementation of the volunteers' network.

Following the Convergence Objective of the European plan for growth 2007-2013, the Ministry has kept supporting actions to fight low competences, early school-leaving and foster inclusion with national or European funds in the same regions listed as Convergence Objective, being the Campania Region one of these.

Many of the projects supported by the Ministry and the Regional government focus on making the schools open all day, for the kids to learn extra subjects, reinforce school subjects or practise sports instead of wandering on the streets. Some of these projects last

also during summer or school-breaks actually helping the community seeing an ally in the school system. But obviously the path to drop-outs free communities is still long.

If this direction, with the school showing it can help and give beyond its established objectives, works, and schools and governmental entities have acknowledged it, we believe any actions in the same direction will be welcomed.

"Our school is located in the most spoken about area of the city, Secondigliano. A deprived, violent neighbourhood, home to the biggest mob families. When the Government issues calls for drop-outs prevention or competences improvement projects, we always try to submit ideas and obtain the funds every single time, in addition to be in the list of the school in risk areas. It's hard to deny the need we have for new activities and better involvement of the kids beyond the school hours or for reinforcement of basic competences and knowledge. We are a big school with about 1000 kids enrolled and it's never too easy to globally introduce changes or new ideas. Nonetheless we like to do everything in our power to help our kids and this project seems to be something we could slowly introduce, maybe starting with a few actions in the groups of the most motivated teachers." G. De Rosa – Head Teacher of the I.C. Enrico Berlinguer of Secondigliano. The Berlinguer school has classes from pre-school to middle school (8th grade) and is located in the very heart of an area where poverty and deprivation live together with the easy money and the unlawful system of the mobs. The school implements all of the projects the Ministry promotes to fight early-leaving and literacy improvement. It's an always-open institute – thanks to the *Scuole al Centro* programme that funds the school to be open during summer and breaks - and for the last two years it's been carrying on the *Scuola Viva* project, that with the same aim of the first, offers extra subjects and activities in the after school. In the last 10 years it has won several projects of this kind, helping the local community seeing the school as the safe welcoming place it is, where life can be bettered and future shaped.

In addition to the records above mentioned, many primary schools showed great interest in the community learning approach and requested to be involved in future activities.

Among these, Mrs Carla Taddeo – Headteacher of the IC Spirito Santo dd1 of Casal di Principe (Caserta), a town in the wide surroundings of the city of Caserta where the local mob have their fortresses from where they control the garbage business. The poverty level among the common people and the lack of job opportunities for who graduated high schools,

generate an increasing mistrust towards the school system starting already in the compulsory years.

The headteacher has clearly expressed the need for transforming actions that bring the kids back to school and avoid others to leave.

A positive instance of the effectiveness of the approach in the area, it's given by the experience of the I.C. Virgilio 4, a school of the same level as the IC Berlinguer, located in the Scampia neighbourhood, very close to the Secondigliano area and sharing with it the low occupancy rates and therefore the low incomes, the high levels of drop-outs and the prevailing organized crime as a result.

The Virgilio 4 was involved in the implementation of the Learning Community and the SEAs approach within the SEAs4ALL project, led by the Universitat de Barcelona and preceding the present STEP4SEAs.

The Headteacher, Mrs Lucia Vollaro, expressed in several occasions the importance and relevance of the project that reached remarkable results with the involvement of the community, the Interactive Groups and the tutored library.

The community involvement and the introduction of new form of class management and activity organization is seen by the headteachers as a new stimulus also for the teachers who too often show signs of mistrust towards the system themselves. When presented, the ideas proven by the INCLUDED research and spread through the SEAs projects are always received by teachers, headteachers and schools as a whole with great hope and motivation, showing that the changes we all hope for in terms of inclusion and learning results can definitely come from within the community instead of waiting for a top-down system revolution.