

START THE CHANGE

Embracing differences through intercultural education and volunteering

Erasmus+, Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reform.



FINAL REPORT: FOCUS GROUP ACTIVITY (WP1)

National report - Italy

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1. About the project “Start the change!”

The project **START THE CHANGE - Embracing differences through intercultural education and volunteering** aims to fight the radicalization among young people, a process that has to start as soon as in the primary and secondary schools. In order to deal with this issue, START THE CHANGE will organize a large-scale coordinated action that foresees the participation of 40 schools, 110 teachers, and 2000 youngsters across 4 European countries.

The project’s lighting principle for action is to make marginalized youngsters feel heard and cultivate diversity and democratic values in the social threads, bearing in mind the fact that radicalization often results from deprivation and identity crisis fuelled by negative personal experiences and wishes for revenge.

The project seeks to solve the problem by creating international cooperation among diversified social groups. The final objectives are to bring about changes in the way society handles diversity as a result of combined efforts in diverse fronts. Actions will consist of enhancing teachers’ intercultural capacities and civic competences in order to teach controversial topics, to equip CSO staff with peace-building ideas in their youth work, and to change the perception at grassroots level with local diversity projects realized by youngsters.

Foreseen activities

- Research on the most difficult and important intercultural topics with 40 focus groups and interviews.
- Development of training manual in 4 languages.
- Exchange of best practices in educational and integration methods.
- 36 Peace-building projects in local communities conducted by 2000 young volunteers.
- Capacity-building training session for 110 school teachers and volunteers in Diversity work.
- Organization of the creative contest “Paint the World with Diversity”.



Results

- “Start the change Toolkit” made up with a Handbook on Youth Work and an Workbook with suggested activities.
- “Book of Good ideas for Peace” with good examples from the local projects.
- Creation of the Online Resource Centre in 4 languages.
- Policy Recommendations for future educational and social policies on diversity issues.

Partners

- Coordinator: [FFE – Forum for Freedom in Education](#), Croatia
- [Development Education Association](#), United Kingdom
- [Centro Per Lo Sviluppo Creativo Danilo Dolci](#), Italy
- [Youth Centre Dravinje](#), Slovenia

Funding institution

DG EAC, Erasmus+ Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reform.

Project duration

30/12/2016 – 29/12/2018

2. Dates and times of focus groups (name and type of school)

Length of interview

The Focus Group activity usually took place in the morning at the selected school for about 1,5 – 2 hours, both starting from 9:30 or 10:30 and lasting until noon. Upon request a short break of about 10 minutes would be given, yet in general students were enthusiastic and active throughout the session even without break. In many cases they were even more engaged and opened up towards the end of the discussion.

Where

Most Focus Groups (FG) were held in the school's auditorium or library, and several took place directly in their classrooms. Circular seating was the kind of arrangement applied in order to maximize eye contact and stimulate equal participation among the group.

When

Three Focus Groups were carried out in March, another three until April, one in May and the last two in early June. Exceptionally, in one school (Valdese Institute) we conducted two Focus Groups, each with half the class upon request of the school's Educational Director to apply an inclusive approach to every activity taken place there.

The list of participating schools is as follows:

	Name of School	Type of School	Date of FG
1	Centro Diaconale "La Noce" - Istituto Valdese	Private Primary School	6 Apr
2	Istituto Comprensivo Amari Roncalli Ferrara	Public Lower Secondary School	4 Apr
3	Scuola Media P. Mattarella di Bonagia di Palermo	Public Lower Secondary School	5 Jun
4	I.I.S. Damiani Almeyda – Crispi	Public High school	22 Mar
5	Liceo Scientifico Benedetto Croce	Public High school	27 Apr
6	IIS Orso Mario Corbino	Public Vocational school	9 Mar



7	Liceo Classico Vittorio Emanuele II	Public High school	14 Mar
8	Liceo Scientifico Ernesto Basile	Public High school	24 May
9	Liceo Scientifico Statale S. Cannizzaro	Public High school	7 Jun

Table 1: Focus Group Timetable

3. Research sample - short description: *total number of young people, age, balance of gender, type of school (vocational, general, primary/secondary), urban/rural (size of the community)*

Until early June 2017 we have interviewed 10 groups of students from 9 schools in Palermo province. They quite vary in size, location, and specialization. In total we have involved 115 students for the research, more than the set number thanks to the high interest from the students.

Geographically, most schools are scattered around different zones in the city of Palermo, from the very historical center to the rather peripheral ones, which gives the sampling the desired diversity of viewpoints on the same city environment. In addition, there is also one school from Partinico, a small town about 35 km from Palermo that lives a totally different rhythm from the boisterous Sicily's capital city.

Regarding their characteristics, the schools also quite differ in their specialization and type. There are not only vocational high schools but also artistic, technical, economic, scientific and general ones. All levels of the educational system have also been covered, including high school, lower secondary schools, and in particular one primary school that is quite famous for their inclusive approach. This diversity has allowed us to collect quite different perspectives from students on various issues.

With regards to gender share, boys make up a slight majority of the research sample; constituting 62 participants (equal to 54%) while girls 53 participants (46%). This could to a large extent be attributed to the more frequent presence of schools with technical specialization, and thus, objectively more male-dominant. Nevertheless, the high participation of males in the research is a positive result because by and large, young men seem to be more prone to "violentization"¹ and radicalization. Therefore it is important that the male adolescents take part and be articulate in this prototype of social dialogue instead of leaving the "talking job" to their female counterparts. Altogether, the relatively fair share among the two genders shows the common interest and concerns in the topic of research.

Another note is that most of the participating students are of Italian nationality, and a small number are immigrant youngsters of second generation.

Table 2 below summarizes the characteristics of the research samples:

¹ a term coined by criminology researcher Dr. Lonnie Athens of Seton Hall University.

	Name of School	Type of School	Specialization	Date of FG	Gender share
1	Centro Diaconale “La Noce” Istituto Valdese	Private Primary School	-	6 Apr	10 F/12M
2	Istituto Comprensivo Amari Roncalli Ferrara	Public Comprehensive School* – 8 th grade	-	4 Apr	8F/4M
3	Scuola Media P. Mattarella di Bonagia di Palermo	Public Lower Secondary School	-	5 Jun	6F/3M
4	I.I.S. Damiani Almeyda – Crispi	Public High school	Artistic - Economic	22 Mar	4F/7M
5	Liceo Scientifico Benedetto Croce	Public High school	Scientific	27 Apr	10F/10M
6	IIS Orso Mario Corbino	Public Vocational school	Technical	9 Mar	0F/10M
7	Liceo Classico Vittorio Emanuele II	Public High school	Classic	14 Mar	8F/2M
8	Liceo Scientifico Ernesto Basile	Public High school	Scientific	24 May	4F/7M
9	Liceo Scientifico Statale S. Cannizzaro	Public High school	Scientific	7 Jun	3F/7M
53F / 62M - 46% F - 54% M					

Table 2: Summary on Research Samples

***Note: a kind of school that hosts three levels: kindergarten, primary and lower secondary.**

4. Short description of impressions about the process

(how it went, how young people reacted on the questions, lively discussions or not, etc.)

We have very positive impression of the whole process. All young participants made a deliberate choice to participate in the interview; therefore they were very engaged and reflective on all questions to the best of their knowledge. The discussions were usually very lively and lasted longer than intended (in most cases up to 2 hours instead of 1, 5 hours as requested) and we had to give turns so that everyone had the chance to speak. Students were generally also not afraid to confront ideas with their peers and actively took the opportunity to express themselves and their seemingly well-reflected thoughts that had been with them for a good while.

We also observed that students were even more participative towards the end of the interview, probably because then the rapport between us was more consolidated.

When it came to some sensitive issues, such as anecdotes of bullying or exclusion, many were very open to narrate real stories and experiences, either their personal ones or told of their friends, which we see as a great leap of faith and also their personal growth. Yet in some schools a few students were still a bit reserved to tell their true deep thoughts, probably for fear of disclosing their secrets to their peers, especially if there was someone that expressed their views in a rather too strong manner. This trend of reservation increased when their teacher was present out of their wish to observe the activity, which is quite predictable.

5. Research questions

5.1. *What are the main interests of children/young people of your age?*

- *What are you interested in the most in your life? (What do you love to do?) How about your peers? In which way do you choose activities that interest you? – conditions (material, technical, human resources...?) Do you have all you need for that?*

Generally speaking, the interviewed young people live typical adolescent lives according to their age, following the calls of healthy interests and passions and their internal quest of world exploration and self-discovery. No one reported to have to be subject to earning their living or sharing the economic burden with their family.

At the same time, as many well uttered, they were aware of their transition into taking first responsibility and decision, and almost all of them adopted a serious attitude towards preparation for their future, getting their diploma and finding a job.

Nevertheless, many learnt to draw the line between career and enjoyment, and that schoolwork, much important as it is, should not encompass everything in your life. Obviously, considering their current social relations, family and friends were claimed to play an extremely important part of their life and thus have a direct effect, either positive or negative, on their well-being.

Another notable element is that all youngsters seemed to prefer actual, personal interactions and outdoor activities than the virtual world via social media channels, though aware of that trend. Neither were videogames said to be a big priority among boys, with few students reported and even if yes, "just a little bit".

Last but not least, social vices looked quite distant to their daily life. Some boys hinted to have tried some light drug (such as smoking cannabis), yet stressed that it was okay only if "for fun". For the rest, they only got to know people who pursue harmful habits and behaviour through the media, not in their personal circle of acquaintances. Table 3 summarizes the reported interests among young people and their peers.

Question 1a: <i>What are you interested in the most in your life? How about your peers?</i>					
Most Frequent/ Typical answers		Less Frequent answers		Rare answers	
Answers	Quotations	Answers	Quotations	Answers	Quotations
- Do their hobbies	<i>sports, singing, dancing, drawing, reading books/comic books, languages, theatre, outdoors hiking, listening to music, playing videogames, traveling,</i>	-Taking light drugs (other people)	<i>"some people take light drugs or follow violent trends as they see in films and on the TV"</i>	- Working or work-oriented activities. <i>(from the whole group at a vocational</i>	<i>"I care a lot about finishing my studies here and find a job relevant to our study course"</i> <i>"I want to have some working experience in</i>

	<i>etc.</i>			<i>school)</i>	<i>some company”</i>
- Going out and spending time with friends	<p><i>“if a friend asks me to go out I will right away”</i></p> <p><i>“for our age it is important for us spending with our friends, not necessarily doing something special but just passing time and having fun together”</i></p>	-Following fashion trends, grooming in the school	<i>more frequent among high schoolgirls.</i>	-Doing volunteering services	<i>“I often go to one center that takes care of disadvantaged children. It is a nice experience because you expected to give away but in the end you are the one who receives a lot”</i>
- Family and loved ones	<p><i>“I care a lot about my family, going out and”</i></p> <p><i>“What concerns me the most in life is my family”</i></p> <p><i>“In life I care that my family and loved ones stay well”</i></p>	-Adopting violent practices from film, games.		- Not clear what their interests are	<i>“ I don’t know”</i>
-Traveling around and	<i>“I like to do a job that will allow me to travel a</i>			- Fishing and	

getting to know new people and things	<i>lot” “I like to discover places, new languages and keep friendship with everyone, to explore”</i>			growing insects	
- Learning new languages	<i>“I like to learn English (and French), with English you can read everything” “I want to learn English and become an English teacher”</i>			- Playing a bit of video games, play station	
- Becoming the kind of professional they want	<i>Become pilot, chef, teacher, etc.</i>			-Romantic relationships	<i>“some people when engaged in a relationship exclude themselves from other friends as for them it is the most important thing at the moment”</i>

Table 3: Interests of young people

- *Name the interesting activities and projects you know that exist in your school as well as outside the school? How does the school encourage you to take part in activities?*

All schools were said to organize extracurricular activities and projects for their students, yet they varied in volume and diversity depending on the type of school.

Apparently an academic high school would try to engage their students more in different social projects and activities – whether organized by their own or in collaboration with local cultural and educational entities, than vocational high schools that tended to stick to their technical camp, job-orientation purpose, or usual male-oriented activities such as football tournaments.

Some examples of activities and projects are:

- Theme-based school trips.
- Study project on religions and monuments.
- Sport tournaments (football, volleyball, etc.).
- Extra language course.
- Conferences on current issues (bullying, domestic and gender violence, etc.).
- Mobility projects and Erasmus+ projects for schools.
- Professional internships at schools' business partners.

5. 2.a Which are the key problems of children/young people of your age?

- *What worries your peers? Which problems are most common in school, and which ones outside of it?*

Question 2a. What worries your peers? Which problems are most common in school, and which ones outside of it?

Most Frequent/ Typical answers

Answers	Quotations
<p>- <u>Bullying and violence</u>: whether physically or psychologically constitute the most commons problems that tend to take place in all schools. This seemed to carry more weight than other more serious social vices such as alcohol or drug. Victims were usually individuals that had something "different" from the mainstream group, such as their external appearance or dressing, belonged to an ethnic minority or not speaking very well the language , or having something that provoked envy, or sometimes for some unknown reason. At least 7 students reported to have been victims of bullying in the past.</p> <p>In addition the phenomenon of “small grouping” was reported in almost all groups, whether as a thing of the past or at present. As for resolution, teachers were not generally considered a good source of help, in some cases parents or older siblings could be counted on, yet in their opinion reactions had to come unitedly from their mates who lived</p>	<p><i>"It started with a small group then became diffused among the whole class. Like this you became isolated and could not justify yourself. How could you fight against the whole class? And so I took one year off the school just to spend time with myself and make peace with myself. Now I am happy that I have overcome it and have to courage to come here and talk about it".</i></p> <p><i>"It happened to my classmate. He is Romanian and doesn't speak very well Italian, and my classmates excluded him".</i></p> <p><i>"I was victim of bullying during lower secondary school, it was very bad. One time they pushed me down the stairs. I was able to get over it with the help of my parents. The reasons? I don't know. They just did so."</i></p> <p><i>"I don't remain friends with any from my secondary school, it was such a bad experience that I want to forget. My mother was a teacher there"</i></p> <p><i>"in some way yes, a friend of mine was bullied because he was the best one in the class and so he was distanced"</i></p> <p><i>"they form groups and feel that as they belong to a group, they are strong and</i></p>

<p>everyday in such environment.</p>	<p><i>have the right to judge others outside"</i></p>
<p>- <u>Peer pressure and social image</u>: the perceived need to follow certain standards and be accepted by their friends in order not to end up being alone. Some reported to have to hide their real personality and thoughts and behave in the way others expected them to.</p>	<p><i>"I think that the problem that combines together all of these is the problem to go after the standards, to be forced to appear in a certain way because this is the standard of the society."</i></p> <p><i>"In my opinion also the anorexia and bulimia are most common among girls for the standards transmitted via the media"</i></p>
<p>- <u>Family problems</u>: for many, parents' divorce or the loss of a grandparent was a common cause of sadness and worries. In some cases the former even caused a source of discrimination or bullying towards the young person at school. Relationship with their parents during their adolescent years also posed a challenge for many as a significant number admitted that often times their parents did not understand their thoughts and their needs.</p>	<p><i>"they [the parents] don't understand that there are moments in which we want to be alone and they instead would like to help us but from time to time they just complicate the situation. When I have problems in general I try to keep myself closed from my parents and to solve them alone"</i></p> <p><i>"I have had many friends that had family problems, and frequently it happened that I had to host friends that escaped from their home, because they just couldn't put up with staying at home anymore"</i></p> <p><i>"in my opinion the lack of communication with the parents because today we tend to isolate ourselves with phones, in front of the TV and not talking to our parents"</i></p>
<p>- <u>Lack of self-esteem and motivation</u>: some youngsters might be confused about their upcoming course of life and</p>	<p><i>"in my opinion one of the main problems of youth today is the low self-esteem, they tend to lose a lot of opportunities in life and have the tendency to live just</i></p>

<p>apparently got lost in the search for meaning, which led to their characterized empty and demotivating speeches.</p>	<p><i>for the day without building projects for the future"</i></p>
<p>- <u>Worries about the future prospects</u>: job prospects constantly constituted a source of anxiety for teenagers who are aware of the gloomy labour market and high youth unemployment in Italy. They feared that when the time came for them to look for a job, they would have to leave their family and loved ones behind to go abroad.</p>	<p><i>"in fact frequently one has to abandon what one really wants to do in order to unblock an access to a job, for example one wants to become a lawyer, but now there are so many lawyers, and these people can't find a job, and also my mother tells me "you know that only 20% of the lawyers find a job", and I tell her that I still don't care, that she brings me only anxiety like this"</i></p>
<p>-<u>Self-acceptance</u>: whether regarding their external appearance or their internal self.</p>	<p><i>"For me a boy of about 12-13 years old could have problems because he feels fat and doesn't accept it."</i></p> <p><i>"A common problem of a 13-14 years old is to accept him/herself, the adolescent tries to know him/herself, and there is who he knows before, who after, and begins the period of preferences, and at times these preferences can be manifested in a different way"</i></p>
<p>- <u>Relations with friends and fear of being alone</u>: friendship during adolescence is very important.</p>	<p><i>"One source of worries for us is the thinking of other, what others think of us"</i></p> <p><i>"What worries us is remain alone, in this period the friendship is very dynamic, for one very small thing you can fight and then the friendship may end, and the person doesn't know who to talk to and remains alone, and in this period the friends are like the family, because in the family we are not able to understand each other, and therefore we prefer to stay with people of our age"</i></p>

Less Frequent Answer	
- World poverty, child malnutrition and exploitation	<p><i>"there are children that don't have food, don't have a home and have to work to take care of the family, or to migrate with their parents"</i></p> <p><i>"a boy that did not receive adequate education at home, his parents took him out of school and made him work in the shop"</i></p>
- Obsession with virtual world in social media	<p><i>"a problem for many adolescents is not being famous, not being followed by many people, for example on Instagram. Me I don't care. I only care about being with my family, my friends, but to many people it is being present in social media"</i></p>
- Immature behaviors and irresponsibility, some of which could lead to a kind of vandalism	<p><i>"one problem is that at this age one is not able to distinguish what is bad and what is good, for example sometimes they suggest to me "let's do this", and I say, "no, absolutely no, it is not good", and they "come on, we have fun, it is fun", and I respond that it is not a right thing to do, but they don't get it and for such times you lose also friendship, and one begins to enter into groups in which everyone has the same mentality and become influenced"</i></p> <p><i>"there are small problems but we tend to blow them up, make them look important and make a whole fuss over it"</i></p>
-Risk to commit suicide, do drugs and alcohol	<p><i>Mostly second-hand information, heard from the media</i></p> <p><i>""I see within my circle of friends horrible situations, people that from the</i></p>

	<i>outside seem nice but have problems related to alcohol and drugs, smoking, and I prefer to stay away"</i>
- Diversity, difficulty in socializing with others: youngsters choose to stay with people more similar to them instead of being with people who are different.	<p><i>"one chooses to stay close to the ones similar rather than the ones different, and so the difference creates difficulty to socialize"</i></p> <p><i>" discrimination and bullying could happen because of the cultural or physical differences" (agreed by one whole group)</i></p> <p><i>"some of our peers feel different from physical or family point of view, someone has family problem, and so they find themselves different"</i></p>

Table 4: Sources of worries for teenagers

- *Do you feel safe in your school and in your community? (Have you experienced or witnessed violence?)*

Most of young people feel safe in school. Outside school it depends on where they go, but in general many feel safe. Others, on the other hand, fear the city traffic and are a bit concerned with today's insecurities brought about by extreme groups. However, in Palermo's context, they generally think of Palermo as a typical big cities where bad things happen from time to time, but they don't seem to feel the terrorism panic imminent – taking into consideration the fact that until now Palermo fortunately has not experienced any attacks. For them, life simply has to go on and they will not accept restraining themselves from moving out of fear.

One female high-schooler expressed such youthful spirit very well citing the conversation with her mother when she communicated her intention to go to England this summer, despite recent terrorists attacks there:

"Mum honestly I don't intend to have myself blocked in only one place because of the fears, and not live my life because they do these things. And she told me "ah, you are brave", and I responded, "no, I am not brave, brave is who goes there to fight, in places where there are really [members of] ISIS. I go there [England] in order to choose to live my life without limitations."

Rare answer:

Only one student stated to feel safe both in the school and outside the school. It was more the case with students living in small town that is more homogeneous in its demographic composition and more tranquil than in a big and rather chaotic city such as Palermo.

5. 2.b Questions related to the prevention of radicalisation:

- *Do you observe and feel some kind of injustice that is happening to you, your community and/or around you? What is it? Tell us more about it and how it feels like.*

For young students, injustice usually revolves around the academic grades or preferential treatment that teachers give to certain individuals. However they also understand that teachers are human so this is normal.

Other rare and isolated answers report injustices linked to the religious differences, to the tone of mocking among peers, even within a group of friends, injustices in the working field, where there is not meritocracy and in the sanitary field, where the public sector appears superficial and inefficient.

Question 2b: Do you observe and feel some kind of injustice that is happening to you, your community and/or around you?	
Most Frequent/ Typical answers	
Answers	Quotations
- <u>School issues</u> : grades, exam failure, preferential treatment of teachers towards certain students, improper behaviour of teachers towards students	<p><i>"there are the exam re-takes and failures at school that we can't explain"</i></p> <p><i>"teachers give many unjust marks"</i></p> <p><i>"some teachers adopt certain attitudes towards some students, often say things"</i></p>

	<p><i>not right, they should not bring themselves to saying certain judgment, jokes that may offend"</i></p> <p><i>"many injustices between classmates are always about school matters. All teachers tell you that they are fair, but it is never like this, even if I am in good faith, all teachers have their own likes and dislikes".</i></p>
<p>- <u>Violent treatment or bullying</u> towards someone, especially those of a different and allegedly lower social status but neglected by teachers.</p>	<p><i>"my classmates were bullied and got black eyes, and we informed our teacher but he/she was on the telephone"</i></p> <p><i>"one injustice that I saw in my class has been a violence: some of my male classmates slapped the Romanian guy, and I tried to defend him together with some girls but some of my male classmates hit him and he couldn't react"</i></p>
<p>- <u>Violent treatment or bullying</u> towards someone, especially those of a different and allegedly lower social status but neglected by teachers.</p>	<p><i>"one time one my male classmate pushed another one, and I didn't see it personally. Then the teacher entered and asked what happened, and other classmates said that they did not have any idea but in fact they were there like spectators"</i></p> <p><i>"it happened to me to have to witness a scene in which two girls beat another younger one"</i></p>
<p>- <u>Social injustices</u> from different aspects: work, public services, etc.</p>	<p><i>"another injustice is in the field of work, there are so many [people who obtained their job thanks to friendships/favours or] recommendations and few people who don't, this is stressful"</i></p> <p><i>"injustice in the healthcare field, people tend not to trust anymore the public"</i></p>

	<p><i>health services but the private ones because the public system is not efficient"</i></p> <p><i>"injustice regarding work for my parents, they worked as freelance and only after 20 years they got their contract"</i></p>
Less frequent answers	
- Execution of laws, flaws of democracy in Italy	<i>"the release of Totò Rina [a mafia boss]. I heard a lot of justification such as "the law is equal for all" and for me thinking about such thing it doesn't seem right"</i>
- Small interpersonal conflicts that were not perceived to be properly resolved by adults	<i>Misunderstanding and refusal during a random minor conflicts to listen to explanation, such as during a game, when someone breaks something but someone else was to be blamed for, or when justice was not done.</i>
- Fraud practices for economic benefits	<i>"society-wise, for me it is unjust that organizations such as UNICEF ask you for money as part of their fundraising but in fact it is just robbery"</i>

Table 5: Perceived injustices by young people

- *Do you sometimes feel excluded from peers in school or even teachers or even society at large? Do you observe some peers around you who might feel excluded? (if necessary the researcher adds explanation of majority and minority, exclusion or discrimination). What happens when someone is "different"? How do grown-ups deal with it?*

5.2c: Do you sometimes feel excluded from peers in school or even teachers or even society at large?	
Most Frequent/ Typical answers	
Answers	Quotations
Many young people get along well with their peers and friends	<i>"Personally no"</i> <i>"Things go very well with my classmates. I make friends very easily"</i>
<u>Feeling different:</u> Some of them feel excluded also today for having hobbies and passions different from their peers	<i>"I feel excluded ideologically in the first place, because it turns out that my thoughts are too articulate and there is somebody that doesn't share them, I don't feel understood"</i> <i>"the exclusion is due to the relation among classmates, when it comes to doing things they find to be wrong and become excluded"</i> <i>"I sometimes feel excluded from my friends because from time to time I feel a bit different from them"</i>
<u>Self-exclusion:</u> at times some youngsters prefer to not belong to any group and stay alone	<i>"rather than being excluded I prefer to exclude myself because I don't find myself at ease with my peers, I feel better with older people"</i>

<p><u>Problematic secondary school</u>: the majority of the students witness a sense of exclusion in different fields and moments of their lives, especially during the secondary school</p>	<p><i>"depending on the degree of maturity of people you are with... I was not happy during secondary school because I don't feel well with my classmates. I preferred to estrange myself"</i></p> <p><i>"even me at secondary school I did not get attached to anyone else other than 2 classmates"</i></p> <p><i>"I was happy to get out of secondary school, at high school I feel very fine, as if I had always been their mate"</i></p>
<p><u>Lack of parental attention</u>: especially when a younger sibling is born and the older ones feel neglected</p>	<p><i>"exclusion in extended family when the parents prefer a person, for example my parents favor my little sister and me alone at a corner to listen to her that is asking questions"</i></p> <p><i>"a close friend of mine one day told me that a little brother was born and he was a bit excluded from the family exactly for that reason, but nothing important, I think it is quite normal"</i></p>
<p>Less frequent answers</p>	
<p>- <u>One's timidity</u> is the cause</p>	<p><i>"not everyone knows how to open oneself in public, and often the timidity and the feeling of being different lead to all of that stuff"</i></p>
<p>- <u>Disapproval of peers' behavior</u>: that are of bad character</p>	<p><i>"I see within my circle of friends horrible situations, people that from the outside seem nice but have problems related to alcohol and drugs, smoking, and I prefer to stay away"</i></p>

<p>- <u>Preference to be excluded by teachers</u></p>	<p><i>Being excluded from teachers is actually a nice thing because it means that they don't interrogate you, they leave you in peace, and I love minding my own business"</i></p>
<p>-<u>Reverse exclusion</u>: excluded by playground friends for having better economic conditions</p>	<p><i>"this year I played in a [football] team with older boys and many of them come from low social context and at the beginning we were excluded (contrary to what usually happens). From one part they made fun of us because we were younger and for our economic conditions, but from other side it looked like they were a bit intimidated, and with the envy, after one year's staying together such things passed away"</i></p>
<p>-<u>Neglect exclusion</u>:</p>	<p><i>"human being is able to adapt to different environments and normally exclusion never happens among true friends."</i></p>

Table 6: Exclusion situation among young people



Correlations between school violence and terrorism

Seeing that bullying is an alarmingly common phenomenon among schools, the researchers took the opportunity to take an extra step into analyzing the correlation between their perception of school bullies and terrorists in reality, infamously represented by ISIS group. Due to time limit, researchers were able to ask such questions only in a few schools.

The correspondences are stunning. Many students view both bullies and terrorists having the following common characteristics:

- (1) being against the world for some of their personal bad experiences and therefore develop hatred against the others and the whole world.
- (2) having the need to feel "strong" and at the center of attention, thus adopting physical strength, violence or diminishing someone else in order to feel stronger.
- (3) having a closed mentality, conservative, hating diversity and what different from them
- (4) both usually justify their acts on certain motives, ("terrorists in the name of religion and Allah, and bullies in some other ways")

While a few participants think that the bullies start acting violent at school and end up being terrorists, some see terrorists as mere economic pursuers in a destructive way. Many of them actually concern that the victims of bullying are more prone to becoming radical or terrorists, due to their past sufferings and early exposure to violence, which forms a source of frustration that gets bigger over time and get stuck inside them, waiting for the moment to be released. Following are some quotations:

"excluded people are easier to be influenced by the people who come close to them and accept them"

"their rage that grows day after day and creates frustrations to unleash one day"

"I think that [members of] ISIS were normal people that have a bad past and violent life episodes and seeing that kind of behavior they wanted to strike"

"In my opinion, when they were young they already got ISIS people in front of them reminding them of the bad experiences that they had and they take revenge but with people that are totally uninvolved"

- *Do you participate in solving those issues and in what way? What can you do or change by yourself? What do you need for that? Whom can you turn to for an advice, help, or an action...?*

Most frequent answers:

To fight exclusion most of the students agree that the best solution is to integrate the person and try to talk with him/her even s/he reacts with a refusal, even it is too difficult especially when s/he is a person different from us and far from our customs; nevertheless some of them state that this is not always easy to integrate marginalized people, since most of them prefer to stay lonely.

For many young people, teachers are usually not the best source of help. Many prefer an older sibling, friends, or parents to intervene and help them overcome their difficulties.

Less frequent answer

For some, the solution against bullying lay within themselves, seeing it simply as a fight with oneself so that they could learn to accept themselves as they were and rediscovered peace, regardless of what other people said.

Some others answered that a solution could be to strengthen security measures in the host country, but also the education system, in order to spread a welcoming attitude among people and to reduce racism.

Distinctive quotations:

"Would you come to your teachers for help? " " No"

"Parents don't seem to be the best source of help because they don't live in our world"

"A brother, an older sibling, cousin are more suitable to help in this case than parents"

"A: I think it is wrong to involve the parents because parents see everything as a source of danger and the person in question feel betrayed"

B: yes but the person in time would thank you for that [informing his parents]"



- *Are you optimistic about your future here where you live, and how do you see it?*

Due to the limit of time towards the end, this question was not always asked. The findings, therefore, are based on their general responses regarding the job, unemployment prospects, and security assessment.

The current gloomy job prospects seem to have created frustrations among young people who remain perplexed about their future and if all the efforts they are making will be worth it.. However, the majority keep the upbeat spirit and a can-attitude, not letting themselves living in the limits caused by the ongoing terrorist acts over Europe.

5.3. Are you familiar with volunteering?

- *What does it mean? How do you see it's purpose?*
- *What possibilities does the school offer you for volunteering?*

Again, due to the limit of time towards the end of the Focus Group, this question was usually only swiftly asked to check their understanding of "volunteering" and whether they would be willing to participate and spread the word about the peace-building projects next year.

The majority of the students know what volunteering means and agree in its positive effect on the society and on the volunteer himself, but only few of them state to have had first-hand experiences: someone is volunteering in boy scout, three girls have been involved in a reception center for migrants in Palermo through their school, others have never done any volunteer job but seem interested in starting this experience in their local community.

They all seemed to be very excited and gave a strong "yes" to next year's projects, guaranteeing their continued presence, aspiring to turn what had been said during the discussion into actions.

6. Conclusions of key findings and Recommendations

In conclusion, the young people are highly aware of the complicated and unpredictable world we are living in today, both from social, political or economic terms. Though it is undeniable that the such precariousness casts some shadow on their behavior and thinking patterns, they are seen to bravely confront any events that come along, with energy, determination and optimism of a solidarity action that can make change happen.

A key finding is that bullying and exclusion is a common phenomenon in many schools, particularly prevalent in lower secondary schools and only less severe in upper secondary schools. The environment, therefore, is found to take a crucial effect on one's personality formation, well-being and chosen path of actions. In addition, bullying happens not only to students that belong to certain ethnic minority but extends to also Italian students who has some "difference" regarding their peers.

Another striking finding is that most students agree with the constructed nature of radicalization process. That is to say, to many students, radicalized people used to be good but also weak, and their negative life experiences have pushed them away from humanity and caused them to do horrible things as a way to unleash their suppressed hatred.

With regards to diversity, most students agree that it is a positive thing to encourage, on the condition that newcomers have to comply with the rules and customs of their new homes, and staying away from making troubles. Nevertheless, as reported by students, it is not easy being „different“. As a matter of fact, except in few cases in which the person has more international exposure, young people tend to feel more comfortable being with the ones similar who they have things in common, an important ground for relationships, and friendship to spring from. Their answers suggest that from international exchange of cultures, for instance to a dear friendship it takes quite a course.

Finally, students were all very eager to start the peace-building project next year in order to put their ideas and aspirations into actions, which was exactly the catalyst we aimed to achieve through this research-intervention activity. This enthusiasm could be looked upon as a precious seed of hope to be nurtured among young people, who aspire to do good and to change the world for the better.

Palermo, 12 July 2017

CSC Danilo Dolci Team