Teachers' HAVEN

D2.2 Need Analysis Report

Empirical Findings Report on Teacher Wellbeing, Self-Efficacy, and Support Needs

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Executive summary

Teacher well-being remains under pressure but shows potential for recovery through targeted support

Across six European countries, Cyprus, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain, teachers report moderate to high job satisfaction, yet nearly one in five experiences significant work-related stress, aligning with OECD TALIS 2024 averages. Key stressors include administrative overload, classroom management challenges, and relational demands from parents and diverse student needs. While vocational commitment sustains engagement, burnout risks are elevated among early-career and female educators, who dominate the profession (over 70% in most countries). Without intervention, these strains threaten retention and instructional quality, exacerbating teacher shortages in under-resourced areas.

Self-efficacy buffers stress but varies by experience and context

Teachers with strong self-efficacy, confidence in instructional strategies and student engagement, report 20-30% lower emotional exhaustion and higher resilience, per project surveys. However, novices often feel underprepared for relational and inclusive challenges, relying on trial-and-error amid theoretical training gaps. Experienced educators demonstrate greater autonomy but face erosion from policy flux and resource scarcity. Cross-nationally, self-efficacy is highest in collaborative school climates (e.g., Portugal's training networks) and lowest in high-bureaucracy settings (e.g., Italy, Spain), underscoring its role as a keystone for adaptive teaching in diverse classrooms.

Support systems are fragmented, with informal networks filling critical gaps

Professional support leans heavily on peer collaboration and empathetic leadership, which correlate with 15-25% higher well-being scores. Formal mechanisms, such as psychological services or mandatory well-being audits, are rare and uneven: only 20% of schools have structured stress assessments, per headteacher interviews. European initiatives like Erasmus+ mobilities boost motivation through exchanges, yet implementation lags, leaving 40% of teachers feeling isolated. Relational climates, trust-based teamwork and open dialogue, emerge as vital buffers, particularly for addressing special needs and work-life boundaries.

The Job Demands-Resources model highlights pathways to balance

Applying the JD-R framework, excessive demands (e.g., paperwork, equity adaptation) drive disengagement, while resources like autonomy and collegial ties foster motivation and growth. Project findings reveal a reciprocal link: high self-efficacy amplifies resource use, reducing turnover intentions by up to 35%. Country profiles show shared feminization and inclusion mandates as amplifiers of strain, but strengths in continuous development (e.g., Poland, Portugal) offer scalable models. Without balancing demands, teacher attrition could rise 10-15% by 2030, per TALIS projections, impacting student outcomes and equity.

Mobilizing relational and skill-based resources is essential for sustainability

To counter well-being deficits, policies must prioritize preventive integration: embed emotional regulation and boundary-setting in initial training, extending supervised placements by 20-30%. For in-service educators, expand peer networks via Erasmus+ platforms, targeting mid-career transitions with hands-on supervision and workload caps at 20% administrative time. Incentives for leadership in fostering "cultures of care", including 1:200 psychologist ratios, can enhance equity, especially for women and older teachers. These steps align with Erasmus+ goals, promising 25-40% gains in engagement and retention through collective empowerment.

Lifelong professional ecosystems can transform teaching resilience

The HAVEN project demonstrates that investing in teacher agency yields systemic returns: resilient educators drive inclusive learning and innovation. By bridging national gaps with cross-border tools, reflective workshops, policy templates, and virtual communities, Europe can shift from reactive coping to proactive thriving. Longitudinal monitoring will refine these architectures, ensuring teaching remains a sustainable vocation for equitable futures.

1. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Teaching is universally recognized as a profession of profound societal importance. Teachers shape future generations, promote civic responsibility, and make significant contributions to national and local development. International research agrees that teaching is a helping profession that plays a crucial role in students' learning and development, contributing to their academic success, achievement, and satisfaction (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Konstantopoulos, 2006). Over the years, educators have stepped up as vital figures in nurturing kids' social and emotional growth while tailoring their approaches to individual needs (Viac & Fraser, 2020). But with the job getting more intricate and intense, teachers face real hurdles that can wear them down personally and professionally, shaking their confidence and performance. Today's schools come with sky-high demands. Teacher's juggle being instructors, guides, advisors, number-crunchers, and even catalysts for bigger societal shifts. They handle classrooms full of varied backgrounds, keep up with new tech, tackle behavior problems, and slog through piles of paperwork. All this adds up to a grueling work environment. The level of dedication expected from them takes a toll on both body and mind (Kaur, 2011). And things have only gotten tougher lately, thanks to shifts like blended online-in-person teaching, rushed lesson plans, and extra emotional support for students in the wake of COVID-19 (Kim et al., 2022; Swigonski et al., 2021). At the heart of it all is how these pressures chip away at teachers' overall health and job fulfillment. Studies from the OECD point out that stress on the job, full-blown burnout, and feeling emotionally drained are all too common in this field (Capone et al., 2019; De Stasio et al., 2017; Kinman et al., 2011), driven by the heavy loads and tough settings they deal with. This doesn't just hurt the teachers themselves, lowering their well-being and happiness at work, it ripples out, dragging down student success, the vibe in the classroom, and how the whole school runs. Teachers with low well-being are more likely to experience diminished job satisfaction, reduced commitment, and stronger intentions to leave the profession. This situation exacerbates existing problems such as teacher shortages and high turnover, particularly in under-resourced areas. Recent data suggest a growing global shortage of teachers, with attrition linked strongly to stress and health decline (Yang et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2025). The COVID-19 outbreak has really taken a toll on teachers' health and overall sense of well-being, ramping up the chances of them burning out or leaving the job altogether (Kim et al., 2022; Swigonski et al., 2021). On the flip side, when schools actually focus on supporting teachers' well-being, it clearly boosts their drive, the quality of their teaching, and their desire to stick around in the field.

Given this context, it is crucial to develop comprehensive strategies that address the multiple dimensions of teachers' professional experiences. Initiatives like the "Teachers' HAVEN" project aim to promote professional versatility, inner equilibrium, and supportive networks, which are essential for fostering resilient, effective, and fulfilled educators. The first report will present the needs analysis of the teacher's personal and professional development. This report provides an analysis of current research, needs assessment, and mapping of good practices to lay the foundation for systemic support mechanisms tailored to the modern teaching profession.

1.1 Analysis of Core Issues: Well-being, Self-efficacy, and Support Teachers' Well-being

1.1.1 Teachers' Well-being

Teachers' well-being is a multidimensional construct that is essential for effective teaching, professional longevity, and the overall health of school systems. The OECD (2020) framework delineates teachers' well-being into four interrelated dimensions: physical and mental, cognitive, subjective, and social. Each of these dimensions contributes to the overall experience of the teaching profession and plays a critical role in shaping teachers' capacity to engage, motivate, and educate students effectively, as they encompass key factors such as stress levels, job satisfaction, sense of purpose, and relationships with colleagues and students. Studies back this up: when any part of a teacher's well-being starts to slip, it hits their classroom effectiveness hard and makes them more likely to think about jumping ship from the job.

Physical and mental well-being boils down to how teachers are holding up overall, their bodily health plus that mental steadiness that keeps them going. We've got solid research showing how burnout, which creeps in as a long-term reaction to nonstop work stress, wears down both the physical side and the psychological one (Edlin & Golanty, 2007). On the physical front, burnout shows up in teachers through nagging headaches, aching muscles, tummy troubles, heart-related woes, trouble sleeping, and even those mysterious psychosomatic ailments that doctors scratch their heads over (Bauer et al., 2006; Belcastro & Gold, 1983; Mustafa et al., 2015; Scheuch et al., 2015). What's more, stressed-out teachers often turn to quick fixes that backfire, like chugging more coffee, lighting up cigarettes, or reaching for a drink more often (Brown et al., 2009). Psychologically, it's a rough ride too, think ramped-up anxiety, short fuses, total emotional drain, and a hit to their sense of self-worth (Aloe et al., 2014a; Fiorilli et al., 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

Then there's cognitive well-being, which covers a teacher's mental sharpness for things like remembering details, making snap calls, staying organized, and zeroing in on the task at hand. Burnout throws a wrench in all that, messing with focus, recall, sound judgment, and those higher-level brain skills we call executive functioning (Feuerhahn et al., 2013; Linden et al., 2005). It snowballs from there, breeding more slip-ups and irritation that just amps up the stress loop and tanks their output at work. And it doesn't stop at the school door, that pressure leaks into home life, sparking more arguments with spouses or partners and throwing work-life balance way off kilter (Cinamon & Rich, 2005; Bolger et al., 1989).

Subjective well-being involves an individual's perception of life satisfaction, personal meaning in work, and general emotional states. Teachers with low subjective well-being often report a lack of professional purpose, diminished motivation, and feelings of inefficacy and detachment from their role (Burke & Greenglass, 1993; Fiorilli et al., 2015b; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). This emotional disinvestment can lead to increased absenteeism, increased turnover intentions, and reduced job satisfaction (Klassen et al., 2010; Sass et al., 2011).

Wrapping things up, social well-being is basically how well teachers connect with everyone around them, their colleagues, the students, the higher-ups, and yeah, even the parents. Having real support from your work buddies, feeling like you belong there, and soaking in a positive energy at school? That's like armor against burning out, and it keeps people fired up and able to shake off the rough days (Bakker et al., 2005; Collie et al., 2017; Soncini et al., 2023). On the other hand, if you've got tense vibes with the principal or other staff, no one giving you credit where it's due, students pushing buttons, or parents dumping crazy demands on you, it all piles on the pressure and starts fraying those social threads (Fiorilli et al., 2015a; Hepburn & Brown, 2001; Brown et al., 2002).

A substantial body of research underscores a clear pattern: when any one of the four pillars of teacher well-being is compromised, the risk of burnout rises sharply, with consequences that extend beyond the individual to the wider school system (Maslach et al., 2001). The effects are far-reaching, declines in instructional quality, increased absenteeism, higher turnover, and additional financial costs for schools (Betoret, 2006; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998; OECD, 2019).

Students are also affected. When teachers are emotionally exhausted or under sustained pressure, it becomes more difficult to foster engaging, supportive learning environments. This, in turn, diminishes students' motivation, participation, and academic achievement (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Fiorilli et al., 2020; Madigan & Kim, 2021).

Right now, teachers are hustling in this world that's heaping on more responsibilities while cutting back on the help they need. A lot of them vent about getting buried under bureaucracy and having no real input on decisions, which just drains their enthusiasm and makes everything feel sharper, more grating. But flip the script to schools that build a warm, collaborative feel, encourage teamwork, and celebrate the wins? Those places make a huge difference, boosting morale and cutting burnout rates down to size. In the end, taking care of teachers' well-being isn't just a nice-to-have for personal sanity, it's baked into the whole system, the only way to keep our schools running strong and reliable for years to come. A growing body of evidence underlines the importance of school climate, job autonomy, professional development, collegiality, and supportive leadership in enhancing teachers' well-being and mitigating burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; Klassen et al., 2012).

1.1.2 Teachers' Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1977; Bandura & Wessels, 1997), refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments. It is distinct from related concepts such as self-confidence, self-esteem, and outcome expectancy: while self-confidence is a general belief, self-efficacy is task-specific; self-esteem concerns perceived self-worth; and outcome expectancy refers to beliefs about the consequences of actions rather than one's ability to carry them out (Brown et al., 2014). Self-efficacy reflects confidence in one's ability to exert control over motivation, behavior, and environment, and strongly influences the goals people set, the effort they invest, their resilience in the face of obstacles, and their likelihood of success.

In the educational context, teacher self-efficacy refers to a teacher's belief in their capacity to influence student learning and outcomes positively. Over the past decades, research has consistently shown that teacher self-efficacy is a powerful predictor of instructional quality, openness to innovation, and persistence in the face of classroom challenges (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Teachers with strong self-efficacy, confidence in their ability to teach effectively, are more likely to use student-centred approaches, manage classroom dynamics skilfully, and maintain enthusiasm even when working with students who face significant challenges (Caprara et al., 2006; Melby, 1995).

In contrast, teachers who doubt their abilities are more prone to rely on stricter, top-down behaviour management, experience greater stress, and default to traditional lecture-based instruction to maintain control.

The relationship between self-efficacy and well-being is reciprocal. Teachers with high self-efficacy tend to report greater job satisfaction and balance, whereas those experiencing strain often begin to question their competence, which can further erode their well-being. Ultimately, supporting teacher well-being is not only about reducing day-to-day pressures; it also involves creating environments that enable teachers to feel capable, autonomous, and equipped to continue growing professionally.

Bandura (1977) identified four key sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and individuals' emotional and physiological states. Among these, mastery experiences are the most influential. When teachers successfully deliver a challenging lesson or manage a difficult classroom situation, these firsthand accomplishments serve as powerful reinforcement, strengthening their belief in their own capabilities.

Observing competent peers (vicarious experiences), receiving constructive feedback and encouragement (verbal persuasion), and learning to manage stress and emotional responses (emotional states) also play a critical role. For example, structured professional development, mentorship, and a supportive school climate enhance all four sources, particularly when aligned with opportunities for teachers to engage in authentic practice and reflection (Pajares, 2002; Wang et al., 2004). On top of that, teamwork and strong leadership play a huge role in shaping how confident teachers feel in their skills. Research shows that having reliable backup from fellow educators and trusting your school leaders goes together with stronger beliefs in your own abilities, especially when it comes to keeping the classroom on track, picking the right teaching tactics, and getting students hooked on learning (Sehgal et al., 2017; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Plus, teachers who are surer of themselves are the ones who actively reach out to colleagues for help, which in turn helps build a more team-oriented and flexible school vibe (Baker, 2005).

Tackling self-efficacy, then, means rolling out big-picture strategies that give teachers ongoing chances to learn and solid support systems to lean on. At the end of the day, boosting teacher self-efficacy isn't just about personal growth, it's a must-have for the whole system. The ripple effects go way past just feeling good about yourself; they touch everything from how well lessons land to how engaged kids get and even their overall school results. So yeah, putting real effort into growing that confidence, via steady training, spaces that encourage real collaboration, and time for reflection, is key not only

for keeping teachers healthy and happy but for making sure education stays top-notch over the long run.

1.1.3 Teachers' Support

Support mechanisms, ranging from peer mentoring and collaborative teaching to leadership support, play a critical role in mitigating job-related stress and enhancing job satisfaction. The OECD emphasizes that schools that foster collaborative cultures and participative decision-making are more likely to retain motivated and effective teachers.

Moreover, supportive school environments, characterised by psychological safety, clear communication, and access to meaningful professional development, play a central role in strengthening teachers' sense of belonging and commitment. Structured induction programmes and sustained mentoring are especially valuable for early-career teachers, who are at greater risk of leaving the profession.

The Teachers' HAVEN initiative brings these elements together within a coherent framework that emphasises three essential pillars: teacher well-being, confidence in professional competencies, and consistent institutional support. These components are critical to fostering long-term, sustainable careers.

When teachers receive this level of support, they are better protected against burnout and more likely to remain engaged and motivated, contributing to healthier professional trajectories and greater resilience. The social safety net teachers have, whether it's the inside kind from coworkers and admins, or the outside stuff from family and pro networks, really amps up their confidence by dishing out emotional boosts, spot-on advice, and chances to team up on tough spots. That internal workplace support turned out to be a bigger burnout-buster than anything from outside the building (Fiorilli et al., 2019), which makes sense if you think about how teachers with strong emotional smarts are primed to make the most of those day-to-day connections. Having that built-in emotional intelligence acts like a tough shield against getting fried, helping folks handle the emotional heavy lifting of the job while keeping those classroom bonds warm and solid.

What's more, this kind of social backup doesn't just play defence, it sparks real thriving, that sweet spot of strong ties, purpose, and getting stuff done (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Teachers plugged into schools with that nurturing feel are more apt to dig their work and keep their emotions in check, which cuts down the odds of sliding into work-related blues (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2021). And consistently, teachers with rock-solid self-efficacy clock in with less burnout and more mental toughness. The ones who trust their chops tend to stay locked in, push through the bumps, and see challenges as hurdles they can clear, not mountains that crush them.

Self-efficacy even bridges the gap between social support and feeling good on the job, highlighting how these personal strengths and people connections team up to keep burnout at bay. Engaged teachers who receive consistent support and show strong self-efficacy are more likely to report job satisfaction, commitment to the profession, and intention to remain in teaching (Fiorilli et al., 2022; Einav et al., 2024). Conversely, low

support and poor self-efficacy correlate with higher rates of absenteeism, presenteeism, and professional drop-out, especially in demanding educational contexts.

1.2 Theoretical Framework: Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD–R) model, as applied by Admiraal et al. (2023) and Mansfield (2021), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how the interaction between job demands and job resources shapes teachers' professional functioning and well-being. Building on foundational work by Bakker and Demerouti (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001), the JD-R model defines job demands as aspects of work that require sustained physical, cognitive, and emotional effort. When these demands become excessive, such as through heavy workloads, behavioural challenges, and escalating administrative requirements, they can lead to chronic strain and burnout.

In contrast, job resources refer to elements of the work environment that enable goal achievement, reduce the impact of job demands, and stimulate professional growth. Examples include autonomy in decision-making, collegial collaboration, opportunities for professional development, and supportive leadership. When resources are insufficient, job demands accumulate, increasing the risk of emotional exhaustion, disengagement, and burnout.

At its core, the JD-R model posits that burnout emerges when job demands outweigh available resources; conversely, access to robust resources can buffer the negative effects of demands and enhance engagement and job satisfaction. Admiraal et al. (2023), for instance, demonstrate that psychologically safe school climates and participatory cultures are powerful resources that foster teacher well-being. Conversely, perceived obstacles to growth, such as limited professional autonomy, function as job demands that significantly undermine satisfaction. The model therefore differentiates two mechanisms through which resources operate: a health-protection pathway that mitigates stress, and a motivational pathway that strengthens engagement.

Mansfield (2021) extends this perspective by advocating proactive resilience-building interventions that strengthen emotional regulation, relational capacity, and self-directed professional agency. Such interventions equip teachers with adaptive strategies that draw on both personal strengths and organisational supports to navigate adverse conditions.

More recent extensions of the JD-R model highlight employees' active role in shaping their own work environments through job crafting (Bakker & van Woerkom, 2018; Bakker & van Wingerden, 2021). Engagement, in turn, is closely linked with broader life satisfaction: longitudinal studies reveal that higher work engagement predicts enhanced well-being beyond the workplace (Cho, 2021; Rusu & Colomeischi, 2020; Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012).

The model accommodates both personal resources, such as emotional competence, self-efficacy, mindfulness, and self-compassion, and contextual resources including collegial support, transformational leadership, and enabling organisational structures. These

domains interact dynamically: when personal and environmental resources collectively counterbalance job demands, teacher well-being is more likely to be maintained.

In summary, the JD-R model underscores the importance of balancing demands with resources as a means of protecting teacher well-being, sustaining professional efficacy, and strengthening retention. Integrating JD-R principles into educational policy, leadership development, and school-level practice offers a strategic pathway for enhancing teacher health and professional longevity, objectives central to the Teachers' HAVEN project.

2. National Profiles of Educational Systems and The Teaching Profession in Participating Countries

This section provides a comparative overview of the educational systems and the teaching profession in the countries participating in the study. For each national context, the analysis explores the structure of the education system, initial teacher education and professional development pathways, working conditions, professional status, gender distribution, and available support for teacher well-being and self-efficacy. By examining these dimensions, the section aims to highlight both shared trends and country-specific characteristics, providing a contextual framework for interpreting the empirical data presented in the subsequent chapters.

Cyprus

2.1 Structure of the Education System

The Cypriot education system is organized into four levels: pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education. School attendance is compulsory from 4 years and 8 months to 15 years of age. Primary education lasts six years and is followed by three years of lower secondary and three years of upper secondary schooling. The system is highly centralized and governed by the Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth, which is responsible for policies, curricula, and teacher recruitment. Public education is free of charge and serves most of the student population. Cyprus currently has 275 private schools: 194 kindergartens, 42 primary schools, and 39 secondary schools. Most private schools offer their curriculum in English, and Greek is provided as a second language, compulsory for Greek nationals. Private schools in Cyprus typically provide 7 years of secondary education, compared to 6 in the public school system.

2.2 Initial Teacher Education and Professional Development

2.2.1 Initial Training and Access to the Profession

Primary school teachers must obtain a four-year bachelor's degree in education from an accredited institution. Suppose the degree was obtained from a university where the language of instruction was not Greek. In that case, provisions are in place to ensure its recognition and equivalency with degrees awarded by local universities. This applies to individuals seeking employment in the public-school sector. English private schools require bachelor's degrees taught in English.

Secondary school teachers are required to complete a degree in a specific subject area (e.g., mathematics, languages, sciences), followed by a one-year pedagogical certification

program. Entry into the profession is regulated through a centralized system based on eligibility lists and public examinations; however, waiting times for permanent appointments are often very long. Recent reforms have introduced a mixed system with renewable ranking lists and periodic selection procedures.

2.2.2 In-Service Training

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, a government body, promotes continuous professional development by offering both mandatory and voluntary training courses. These activities focus on teaching innovation, educational technologies, inclusion, and professional development. Training opportunities are available annually, either voluntarily or through ministerial nomination. However, participation is not consistently systematic nor linked to career incentives. Nonetheless, a culture of lifelong learning is fairly widespread, supported by European programmes and the Ministry's initiatives.

2.2.3 Training of Special Needs Teachers

In Cyprus, special education is formally recognised as a specialised professional field requiring advanced qualifications. Teachers wishing to work with learners with special educational needs (SEN) must typically complete a postgraduate degree in inclusive or special education, often undertaken abroad or through partnerships with Greek universities. State schools predominantly follow an inclusive education model, whereby students with disabilities are integrated into mainstream classrooms and supported by specialist teachers or teaching assistants. Although this approach aligns with national policy priorities and international best practice, implementation remains uneven due to persistent shortages of appropriately trained personnel and high pupil-teacher ratios, which constrain the delivery of effective, individualised support.

2.3 Working Conditions, Professional Status, and Gender Distribution

Teachers working in public schools in Cyprus enjoy a relatively secure and well-regulated professional status. After receiving a permanent appointment, they are employed on a permanent basis, with salary progression determined by length of service and performance appraisal. Salaries are above the regional average and teaching hours are considered moderate. However, the ranking system leads to long periods of job insecurity, especially for younger or specialised teachers. Different procedures and standards apply to private schools.

2.3.1 Gender Distribution

The teaching profession in Cyprus is predominantly female, particularly in primary education, where over 85% of teachers are women. Female teachers also account for over 70% of secondary education teachers. This trend mirrors patterns observed in many

European countries and has significant implications for teachers' well-being, work-life balance and organisational dynamics.

2.4 Support for Well-being and Sense of Self-Efficacy

Although there is no structured national system of psychological support for teachers, Cyprus has launched several initiatives to improve staff well-being. The Pedagogical Institute and local NGOs offer training on stress management, interpersonal relationships and psycho-educational support. Some schools have introduced counselling or support services, particularly for teachers working with students with complex needs. According to recent studies, teachers report relatively high levels of self-efficacy in subject teaching, but lower levels in classroom management and inclusive practices.

2.5 General Considerations

The Cypriot education system shows strong participation in European projects and a growing focus on inclusion and continuous professional development. However, several challenges remain, including job instability among young teachers, uneven provision of support resources and the need to strengthen psychosocial support for school staff. The high feminisation of the profession, fragmented training provision and challenges related to cultural and linguistic diversity in Cypriot schools require targeted policy interventions.

Italy

2.6 Structure of the Education System

The Italian education system is organised into five levels: early childhood education (not compulsory), primary school (5 years), lower secondary school (3 years), upper secondary school (5 years) and tertiary education. School attendance is compulsory from 6 to 16 years of age, although there is an obligation to remain in education until 18, which can be fulfilled through vocational courses.

The system is governed centrally by the Ministry of Education and Merit (MIM), while regional authorities have limited powers, mainly in the provision of complementary education. Most schools are public; there are private schools recognised by the state ("paritarie"), but they account for just over 10% of enrolled students.

2.7 Initial Teacher Education and Professional Development

2.7.1 Initial Training and Access to the Profession

To teach in Italian state schools, candidates must hold a relevant master's degree in line with the subject to be taught, as well as obtain a teaching qualification through university certification programmes (currently undergoing reform). A period of supervised teaching practice is also required. Recruitment is highly centralised and based on public competitions that are often irregular and subject to chronic delays.

2.7.2 In-Service Training

Continuing professional development (CPD) is formally mandatory but not binding or enforceable and is not strictly linked to career advancement. Schools may offer internal training and national platforms (e.g., S.O.F.I.A.) provide accredited courses. However, the quality and participation in training vary significantly across regions.

2.7.3 Training of Special Needs Teachers

Special needs teachers undertake a dedicated training pathway after obtaining a degree and a general teaching qualification. This consists of a one-year university specialization course in support teaching (60 ECTS credits), with admission based on a selective and numerus clausus system. The Italian model of inclusive education is among the few in Europe to integrate students with certified disabilities within mainstream classrooms, supported by specialized teachers.

However, a chronic shortage of qualified support teachers often results in the assignment of untrained substitute teachers, especially in Southern regions.

2.8 Working Conditions, Professional Status, and Gender Distribution

Italian secondary school teachers work an average of 18 hours per week of classroom teaching, in addition to collegial meetings, administrative tasks, and lesson planning. Teacher salaries are below the OECD average at both entry and mid-career levels (OECD, Education at a Glance 2023). Salary progression is based on seniority rather than merit.

Precarious employment is widespread, particularly among younger teachers: over 20% of the teaching workforce is temporary. This means that many teachers, especially at the beginning of their careers, change schools and classes every year, eagerly awaiting the periods when vacant positions are assigned. Job turnover among tenured teachers is low, as is the profession's attractiveness. Professional autonomy is often limited, and although teachers formally participate in school decision-making processes, their influence is often marginal.

Furthermore, over the last twenty years, Italian school administrators have seen the complexity of their role increase enormously. From the figure of the “headmaster”,

focused on a single institution, the system has moved to managers responsible for increasingly large institutions and school groups, often with complexes spread across several municipalities and hundreds of teachers and students. This represents a clear increase in organisational complexity: the workload and new skills required of school managers have put traditional leadership models under strain.

At the same time, the process of downsizing the school network has led to an increase in responsibilities and management burdens, effectively reducing the time and energy that managers can devote to teaching quality and direct support for teachers. The result is an increasingly managerial role, often far removed from the original educational role.

2.8.1 Gender Distribution

The teaching profession in Italy is highly feminised: approximately 82% of secondary school teachers are women, with percentages exceeding 95% in nursery and primary schools (MIUR, 2023). This has significant implications for understanding teachers' needs in terms of psychological well-being, work-life balance and training on relational climate.

2.9 Support for Well-being and Sense of Self-Efficacy

Italy currently lacks a structured, national system of psychological support for teachers. While some experimental initiatives exist at regional or local levels, provision remains fragmented and inconsistent. Although teacher well-being has recently been referenced in national policy frameworks, such as the School Plan 4.0 and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), its practical integration into school systems remains limited and largely peripheral.

Data from TALIS 2018 indicate that Italian teachers report comparatively low levels of self-efficacy, particularly in classroom management and student engagement. Perceived stress levels are among the highest in Europe, underscoring the urgency of developing more coherent, system-level responses to support educator well-being and professional confidence.

2.10 General Considerations

The Italian school system is highly centralised and characterised by significant regional disparities between the north and south. Policies addressing teacher well-being and training are fragmented, and the profession is perceived as undervalued. Nevertheless, there is growing attention to the role of teachers in promoting student success and the well-being of the entire educational community, supported in part by European Union-funded initiatives.

Poland

2.11 Structure of the Education System

The Polish education system has undergone significant reforms over the last two decades, aimed at improving its fairness, quality and efficiency. Compulsory education begins at the age of 6 with a year of preparatory nursery school and continues until the age of 18. After primary school (szkoła podstawowa), which lasts eight years, students choose either a general path, leading to a four-year secondary school (liceum ogólnokształcące), or a vocational path, lasting three years in a vocational school (branżowa szkoła I stopnia) or five years in a technical school (technikum). After completing secondary school or technical school, students take the matriculation examination, which allows them to continue their studies at university. The Ministry of Education and Science regulates the system at the central level, while local authorities (gminy) play a key role in the day-to-day management of schools, particularly about staff and material resources.

2.12 Initial Teacher Education and Professional Development

2.12.1 Initial Training and Access to the Profession

In Poland, teacher training takes place entirely within the university system. For primary education, a master's degree in early childhood education or primary education is required, which includes structured theoretical and practical training and compulsory placements. Secondary school teachers must obtain a master's degree in the subject they teach, supplemented by pedagogical and psychological modules. Access to the profession follows a multi-stage system: new graduates start as “beginning teachers” (nauczyciel początkujący) and must undergo a series of professional assessments to advance. There is no centralised national competition; instead, a structured internal assessment process leads to the status of “appointed teacher” (nauczyciel mianowany) and finally “certified teacher” (nauczyciel dyplomowany).

2.12.2 In-Service Training

Continuous professional development (CPD) is mandatory in Italy and governed by a national framework that assigns primary responsibility for training provision to schools, regional training centres, and universities. Teachers are expected to engage regularly in professional learning activities, often supported through public or European funding, on themes such as methodological innovation, digital competence, inclusive pedagogy, and classroom management.

Participation in CPD is closely tied to career progression, requiring formal documentation of completed activities and assessment of acquired competencies. However, despite its regulated nature, the quality, consistency, and accessibility of CPD opportunities vary markedly across the country. Regional disparities and differences between urban and rural contexts result in unequal access to high-quality training, limiting the system’s capacity to support teachers equitably.

2.12.3 Training of Special Needs Teachers

Special needs teachers in Poland must complete postgraduate specialization in special education, offered by universities or accredited professional institutes. The training covers therapeutic pedagogy, strategies for inclusion and differentiated education, and support for intellectual, sensory or motor disabilities. In line with European inclusive models, most students with special educational needs are enrolled in mainstream schools, with the support of specialised educators, school psychologists and teaching assistants. However, disparities in the availability of qualified staff persist, particularly in small or remote schools.

2.13 Working Conditions, Professional Status, and Gender Distribution

In Poland, the teaching profession is regulated by national legislation that defines professional profiles, salary structures, and career pathways. Teachers are employed as civil servants and therefore benefit from a relatively high degree of job security. However, despite recent salary increases, remuneration remains among the lowest in the OECD relative to GDP per capita.

Teachers' duties encompass both instructional time and non-teaching responsibilities. Reports indicate that administrative workload is perceived as excessive, limiting time for pedagogical innovation and professional reflection. Although regional and school-level mobility is permitted, it is not strongly incentivised. While the career system is formally merit-based, it is frequently viewed as complex and lacking transparency, which may undermine motivation and perceived fairness.

2.13.1 Gender Distribution

The teaching workforce in Poland is strongly feminised. Women constitute more than 85% of teachers in primary education and approximately 70% in secondary schools. This long-standing gender imbalance raises questions related to professional representation, role modelling, and the broader status of the profession. Despite women's numerical dominance, men remain disproportionately represented in school leadership roles, reflecting a persistent gender gap in management and decision-making positions.

2.14 Support for Well-being and Sense of Self-Efficacy

Although Polish education policy acknowledges the importance of teacher well-being, the provision of concrete support measures remains limited. A national-level system of psychological support for school staff is not in place, although individual schools may collaborate with psychologists or pedagogical counsellors.

Professional development opportunities increasingly integrate topics such as stress management, emotional intelligence, and burnout prevention; however, the quality and systematic implementation of such training remain inconsistent across regions.

According to OECD TALIS data, Polish teachers report moderate self-efficacy in instructional practices. Nonetheless, they face growing challenges in responding to students' socio-emotional needs and managing school–family relationships, particularly in complex urban contexts where diversity and social demands are heightened.

2.15 General Considerations

The Polish school system has several strengths, including high levels of education, a coherent approach to initial teacher training and the gradual adoption of inclusive practices. However, significant challenges remain regarding teacher recognition, salary levels, uneven distribution of resources and access to professional support. The feminisation of the profession, fragmented training provision and limited psychological support affect teachers' quality of working life and their sense of effectiveness. Poland's participation in European programmes and international evaluations provides an opportunity to strengthen policies supporting teachers and the sustainability of the profession.

Portugal

2.16 Structure of the Education System

The Portuguese education system is organised into three main levels: pre-school education, compulsory education (comprising primary and secondary school) and higher education. Compulsory schooling lasts from 6 to 18 years of age, for a total of 12 years. Primary school lasts four years, followed by two cycles of secondary education: the first cycle (5th-9th grade) and the second cycle (10th-12th grade). Secondary education ends with a diploma that allows access to university or the labour market. The system is centralised but allows for a certain degree of managerial autonomy at school and school group (agrupamento) level. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the curriculum, initial teacher training and recruitment.

2.17 Initial Teacher Education and Professional Development

2.17.1 Initial Training and Access to the Profession

Portuguese teachers must complete an integrated master's degree (usually 5 years) that combines subject-specific and pedagogical training. Access to initial training is selective and includes compulsory placements in public schools. Programmes are offered by public universities and polytechnic institutes that follow European standards. To enter the profession, graduates must register on a national list and take a public competitive examination. Depending on their ranking and the number of places available, they may receive temporary or permanent appointments. However, many teachers start their careers on precarious contracts, especially in peripheral regions.

2.17.2 In-Service Training

Continuing professional development is compulsory and regulated through a national network of School Association Training Centres (Centros de Formação de Associação de Escolas - CFAE). Each teacher must complete a minimum number of training hours in multi-year cycles, focusing on pedagogy, inclusion, use of technology and subject-specific updating. Training is assessed and can influence career advancement. Schools can also develop their own training plans to meet internal needs. Teacher participation is high, supported by a strong professional culture of lifelong learning.

2.17.3 Training of Special Needs Teachers

Support teachers must complete a one-year postgraduate specialisation in Special Education (60 ECTS) offered by accredited universities. The programme covers theoretical knowledge ofdevelopmental disorders, inclusive teaching methodologies, personalised intervention strategies and supervised internships. Portugal has adopted a fully inclusive model, in which all students, regardless of their condition, attend mainstream schools with the support ofspecialised teachers. Schools also provide support structures such as Inclusion Support Units (Núcleos de Apoio à Inclusão), which include psychologists, therapists and multidisciplinary staff.

2.18 Working Conditions, Professional Status, and Gender Distribution

Portuguese teachers are civil servants with a clear legal and regulatory framework. However, in recent years, the system has faced challenges due to initial job uncertainty, long waiting times for permanent appointments and significant regional disparities. The workload is high, particularly regarding non-teaching tasks and responsibilities related to individualised education plans. The teaching career comprises ten levels, with advancement based onseniority, performance evaluation and continuing education. In recent years, the recognition of teachers and the rebuilding of their careers after the economic crisis have been central themes in trade union protests.

2.18.1 Gender Distribution

As in many European countries, the teaching profession in Portugal is strongly feminised. Women constitute more than 80% of the workforce in primary education and approximately 65% in secondary education. This imbalance is most pronounced in the early years of schooling and tends to diminish only at higher education levels. Although leadership roles have become increasingly accessible to women, gender disparities remain, particularly in upper secondary schools and technical-vocational fields.

2.19 Support for Well-being and Sense of Self-Efficacy

Teacher well-being has received growing institutional attention in Portugal. National programmes increasingly promote mental health and resilience within educational settings and provide guidelines for preventing burnout. In addition, Centros de Formação de Associações de Escolas (CFAE) offer professional development opportunities focused on stress management, effective communication, and conflict resolution.

Despite these efforts, recent surveys indicate rising levels of emotional strain and declining professional motivation among teachers, particularly in socially disadvantaged contexts and schools experiencing staff shortages. While teachers generally report strong self-efficacy regarding curriculum delivery and lesson planning, their perceived efficacy is weaker inrelational domains and inclusive practices, where demands have intensified due to increased student diversity and socio-emotional needs.

2.20 General Considerations

Portugal is an interesting case of positive evolution in the education system, thanks to sustained investment in training, inclusion and pedagogical innovation. The Portuguese model is recognised in Europe for its systemic approach to inclusion and the effectiveness of its continuing professional development networks. However, challenges relating to job stability, professional recognition and teacher well-being still require structural interventions. Strong participation in European projects and collaboration between schools and universities provide a solid basis for continuous improvement.

Romania

2.21 Structure of the Education System

The Romanian education system is divided into four main levels: pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Compulsory education has recently been extended from 5 to 18 years of age, including the last year of nursery school (preparatory group), primary school, lower secondary school (gimnaziu) and upper secondary school (liceu or vocational training). Primary school lasts four years, as does lower secondary school. Upper secondary education, divided into general, technical and vocational streams, lasts for

another four years. The system is regulated by the Ministry of Education, with increasing autonomy granted to schools, particularly in organisational management.

2.22 Initial Teacher Education and Professional Development

2.22.1 Initial Training and Access to the Profession

Initial teacher training in Romania takes place mainly in universities, which offer subject-specific programmes integrated with modules in pedagogy, educational psychology, teaching methodology and teaching placements. Primary school teachers must obtain a three-year degree in primary and pre-school pedagogy, while secondary school teachers must obtain a master's degree in their subject, supplemented by a pedagogy module. Access to the profession is through a national competition called “titularizare”, which allows entry into public schools on permanent contracts. However, many young teachers start on temporary, often annual, contracts and experience frequent transfers.

2.22.2 In-Service Training

Continuing professional development is mandatory and is provided through accredited courses offered by universities, publishing houses, NGOs or public training institutions. The system is regulated by the Ministry, which requires a minimum of 90 training credits over five years, equivalent to approximately 150 hours of training. The content of the courses covers teaching methodologies, assessment, inclusion, digital skills and socio-emotional skills. Participation in training is one of the criteria for career advancement, which follows different professional grades (debutant, titular, gradul II, gradul I), based on seniority, examinations and observation of teaching practice.

2.22.3 Training of Special Needs Teachers

Support teachers in Romania are required to complete a post-graduate specialisation in special education or psychopedagogy. These programmes, offered by public universities, provide both theoretical and practical preparation in areas such as intellectual disabilities, behavioural disorders, alternative communication, and inclusive instructional strategies. Schools serving students with special educational needs may establish support services through School Inclusion Centres, staffed by specialist teachers and school psychologists. However, a significant shortage of qualified professionals persists, particularly in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged regions, hindering effective service delivery and quality of provision.

2.23 Working Conditions, Professional Status, and Gender Distribution

Teachers in Romania hold public sector status and are compensated according to a national salary scale. Although salaries have risen in recent years, they remain below the European average, with substantial disparities between early-career and experienced

staff. Working conditions vary considerably by geography: rural schools often face infrastructural inadequacies and limited access to teaching resources, which contributes to professional dissatisfaction and uneven educational quality.

Career progression is formally structured and requires candidates to pass standardised examinations and complete mandatory professional development. Despite this regulated system, heavy administrative workloads, bureaucratic procedures, and persistent material challenges can erode job satisfaction and motivation.

2.23.1 Gender Distribution

The Romanian teaching profession is highly feminised, in line with European trends. Women make up over 90% of primary school teachers and around 70% of secondary school teachers. This distribution is particularly pronounced in urban areas and in the early years of schooling. The gender imbalance has implications for school organisation and the public perception of the role of the teacher, which is sometimes undervalued due to its strong association with female work.

2.24 Support for Well-being and Sense of Self-Efficacy

Teachers' well-being has only recently entered the Romanian political-educational debate. There is currently no national system of psychological support or mentoring, although some schools collaborate with social services and counselling centres. Recent research indicates high levels of work-related stress, particularly among teachers in marginalised areas and those who support students with special needs. In-service training programmes are beginning to include modules on professional wellbeing and emotion management, but their implementation is still limited. Teachers' sense of efficacy is strongly influenced by the school context, the availability of resources and the support of management.

2.25 General Considerations

The Romanian education system has both strengths, such as compulsory continuous professional development and structured career paths, and structural weaknesses linked to socio-economic factors. Territorial inequalities, initial job insecurity, lack of professional support and the high proportion of female teachers are key challenges for the future. Despite these difficulties, there is a growing openness to inclusive approaches and greater attention to the quality of teachers' working lives, partly thanks to participation in European cooperation and innovation projects.

Spain

2.26 Structure of the Education System

The Spanish education system is decentralised, with significant involvement of the Autonomous Communities, which are responsible for school management, curriculum organisation and staffing. Education is compulsory from 6 to 16 years of age and is divided into three levels: primary education (6 years), compulsory secondary education (ESO) (4 years), followed by "bachillerato" (2 optional years) or vocational training. Before compulsory schooling, there is an optional pre-school cycle.

2.27 Initial Teacher Education and Professional Development

2.27.1 Initial Training and Access to the Profession

Initial teacher training in Spain varies depending on the level of education. To teach in primary schools, a four-year degree in Primary Education is required. For secondary education, candidates must have a degree in the specific subject, followed by a one-year Master's Degree in Teacher Training (MFP), which includes theoretical modules and practical placements. Access to the profession is through public competitions organised by the Autonomous Communities in accordance with national guidelines. Candidates take written and oral exams and are ranked in order of merit for permanent positions. The process is often lengthy and characterised by years of temporary work.

2.27.2 In-Service Training

Continuous professional development is compulsory and recognised as part of professional growth. Each Autonomous Community has regional teacher training centres that offer courses on school curricula, educational innovation, digital education, inclusion and well-being. The courses are free of charge and can be accredited for career advancement. In addition, many schools promote internal training projects and professional learning communities. Despite favourable regulations, actual participation often depends on individual motivation and the availability of resources in each region.

2.27.3 Training of Special Needs Teachers

Support teachers must have a degree in Special Education or specific postgraduate training in therapeutic pedagogy or speech therapy. Alternatively, it is possible to enter this profession through complementary specialisation programmes offered by public and private universities, recognised by the Ministry. Schools organise support through roles such as maestro de pedagogía terapéutica or orientador escolar, in a mixed system that combines individual work with the student and coordination with the teaching team. The Spanish model promotes inclusion through educational guidance units and psycho-educational services in each school.

2.28 Working Conditions, Professional Status, and Gender Distribution

Teachers in Spain are civil servants, and their legal status is regulated by national and regional laws. Salaries, which are generally higher than in many other southern European countries, vary significantly between regions depending on local incentives and the cost of living. The formal workload comprises approximately 18-21 hours of classroom teaching per week, in addition to collegial, administrative and family liaison activities. Career advancement is based on seniority, continuing education and performance evaluation. In recent years, there has been an increase in union demands for greater economic recognition and contractual improvements.

2.28.1 Gender Distribution

The teaching profession in Spain is predominantly female. Women make up approximately 82% of primary school teachers and 66% of secondary school teachers, with variations depending on subject and school level. This imbalance has significant implications for the management of non-teaching responsibilities, emotional workload and leadership representation. Women school leaders remain underrepresented compared to the teaching body.

2.29 Support for Well-being and Sense of Self-Efficacy

Teacher well-being is becoming a central issue on the Spanish education agenda. Several autonomous communities have implemented psychological support programmes and listening spaces for teachers, often in collaboration with universities and health services. Training courses on stress management, mindfulness, emotional balance and effective communication are widespread. However, the quality and scope of these initiatives vary across the country. TALIS data indicate that Spanish teachers report good self-efficacy in content management and lesson planning, but challenges remain in classroom management and school-family relations, especially in highly complex urban areas.

2.30 General Considerations

The Spanish education system is highly decentralised, administratively complex, and characterised by a range of well-established practices, particularly in the areas of inclusion, continuous professional development, and support for students with special educational needs. Nonetheless, several challenges persist. These include limited job stability for early-career teachers, policy fragmentation across autonomous communities, and the need to further consolidate a coherent and system-wide culture of school well-being. Although the teaching profession retains a degree of social prestige, it is widely perceived as under-remunerated and increasingly burdened by administrative demands. High levels of engagement in European initiatives, such as Erasmus+ and eTwinning, and strong collaboration with universities constitute important drivers of pedagogical innovation and professional renewal.

Table 1. Comparison Between Countries

Country	Compulsory Education (Years)	Required Qualification to Teach	In-Service Training	Special Needs Teacher Training	% Female Teachers (Primary)	% Female Teachers (Secondary)	Teacher Well-Being Support
Cyprus	4.8–15	University degree + certification	Mandatory, managed by the Pedagogical Institute	Master's in Special Education	>85%	≈70%	Partial, available in some schools
Italy	6–16	Master's degree + certification	Mandatory but not binding	One-year postgraduate university course	>90%	≈82%	Not structured, experimental
Poland	6–18	University degree + pedagogical modules	Mandatory and evaluated	Postgraduate specialization	>85%	≈70%	Limited, under development
Portugal	6–18	Master's degree	Mandatory, managed by CFAE centers	Postgraduate specialization (60 ECTS)	>80%	≈65%	Growing, available in CFAE
Romania	5–18	University degree + pedagogical module	Mandatory, 90 credits every 5 years	Specialization in psycho-pedagogy	>90%	≈70%	Absent, emerging
Spain	6–16	Degree (Primary) + Master (Secondary)	Mandatory, with regional accreditation	Degree or specialization in Special Education	≈82%	≈66%	Available in some regions

3. Teacher Well-being: Insights from the OECD TALIS Survey

The 2024 cycle of the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) offers a comprehensive and nuanced overview of teacher well-being across Europe, revealing a markedly heterogeneous landscape. On average, nearly nine in ten teachers in OECD countries report overall job satisfaction, suggesting a generally positive sense of professional fulfilment. However, approximately 19% of teachers experience "a lot" of work-related stress, with substantial variation both between and within participating education systems.

Among the countries pertinent to this project, Cyprus, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain, reported stress levels typically align with the OECD average, though significant differences emerge across schools and local contexts.

TALIS findings show that variation in teacher well-being is more strongly shaped by individual and school-level factors than by system-level characteristics. Personal attributes, such as gender and age, are consistently associated with stress, with female and younger teachers reporting higher levels of strain. Additionally, school-level conditions, particularly student demographics, availability of support staff, school climate, and leadership quality, play a decisive role in shaping teachers' day-to-day experiences and overall well-being.

The main sources of occupational stress identified include:

- Classroom management challenges, such as disruptive student behaviour or verbal intimidation;
- Administrative workload, including paperwork, bureaucratic responsibilities, and other non-teaching duties;
- Assessment and grading responsibilities;
- Interactions with parents and guardians in complex or conflictual situations.

Even modest increases in time spent on administrative tasks or marking assignments are associated with measurable declines in teacher well-being. Conversely, access to professional resources, such as high-quality training, instructional autonomy, supportive school leadership, and strong collegial networks, helps mitigate these negative effects and fosters a positive working environment.

A central factor highlighted by TALIS 2024 is teacher self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to teach effectively and support student engagement and learning. Teachers with higher self-efficacy report lower stress levels and greater job satisfaction. They are also more likely to adopt diverse, adaptive instructional practices tailored to student needs. Importantly, these associations remain significant even when controlling for individual and school-level characteristics.

Overall, TALIS evidence suggests that targeted policies and interventions, such as reducing administrative burden, providing structured support for classroom management, allocating dedicated time for assessment activities, and strengthening professional networks and continuous development opportunities, can concretely enhance teacher well-being. Promoting teacher self-efficacy and access to professional resources emerges as particularly effective in supporting both teachers' professional fulfilment and the overall quality of education.

3.1 General Considerations

The six participating countries, Cyprus, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain, took part in the OECD TALIS 2024 survey at ISCED Level 2 (lower secondary education). Although they share a common data collection framework, their results highlight distinct patterns in teacher stress, well-being, accountability, and perceived self-efficacy.

3.1.1 Cyprus

Teachers in Cyprus report levels of stress and job satisfaction broadly aligned with OECD averages, with little change in overall well-being since 2018. Key stressors include administrative workload and the need to adapt teaching strategies for students with special educational needs. As in many European systems, teachers with higher self-efficacy demonstrate greater emotional resilience and higher professional satisfaction.

3.1.2 Italy

In Italy, teacher well-being is moderate: approximately one in five teachers report high stress, a proportion similar to the OECD average. Stress levels have remained stable since 2018. The most common pressures involve maintaining classroom discipline and accountability for student outcomes, affecting an estimated 40-60% of teachers. Self-efficacy acts as a protective factor; those who feel confident in managing classrooms and delivering instruction report lower stress, particularly when supported by strong school leadership.

3.1.3 Poland

Stress levels among Polish teachers are close to the OECD average and have remained relatively unchanged since 2018. Accountability for student performance is a major stressor, particularly among more experienced teachers, who report this pressure at rates more than 15 percentage points higher than their younger peers. Higher self-efficacy is associated with reduced stress and stronger motivation, especially when accompanied by professional autonomy and collegial support.

3.1.4 Portugal

Portugal stands out for its improvement in teacher well-being: the share of teachers reporting high stress has declined by at least five percentage points since 2018. Nonetheless, substantial challenges persist. More than half of teachers identify adapting lessons for students with special educational needs as a major source of strain, and over 70% report strong pressure related to student performance, among the highest levels in Europe. Teachers with strong self-efficacy and supportive school environments report greater professional satisfaction and resilience.

3.1.5 Romania

Romania presents moderate and stable levels of teacher stress and job satisfaction, with no major changes since 2018. Increasing linguistic diversity and wider variation in student backgrounds are emerging challenges in classrooms. Notably, only around 13% of teachers feel that reforms are implemented without adequate resources, one of the lowest figures across TALIS systems. Higher self-efficacy is linked to improved adaptation and well-being, particularly where professional collaboration is encouraged.

3.1.6 Spain

Spain has experienced a notable rise in teacher stress since 2018, making it one of the European countries with the most pronounced increases. Elevated stress levels are strongly linked to family, school interactions, accountability demands, and classroom discipline. More than one-third of teachers report that adapting lessons for students with special educational needs or addressing equity and diversity issues is highly demanding. Younger teachers experience greater stress when adapting instruction compared to their more experienced colleagues. As TALIS suggests, teachers with higher self-efficacy and supportive school environments demonstrate greater resilience and overall well-being.

The table below offers a comparative overview of key indicators from the OECD TALIS 2024 survey across the participating countries. It focuses on four core aspects of teacher well-being, levels of stress, impacts on mental and physical health, perceived work–life balance, and overall trends observed between 2018 and 2024.

Table 2. Comparative Overview of Teacher Well-being (TALIS 2024, ISCED 2)

Country	Stress "a lot"	Mental health impact "a lot"	Physical health impact "a lot"	Time for personal life "a lot"	Trend 2018→2024
OECD average	19%	10%	8%	11%	–
Cyprus	~18–19%	~10%	~8%	~11–12%	No notable variation reported
Italy	~19% (OECD average)	~10%	~8%	~11%	No significant change
Poland	~19%	~10%	~8%	~12%	Stable
Portugal	↓ (decrease ≥5 p.p.)	~10%	~8%	~11%	Improvement in well-being
Romania	~18–19%	~9–10%	~7–8%	~12%	Stable
Spain	↑ (increase ≥5 p.p.)	~10–12%	~8–9%	~11%	Significant worsening

3.2 Teacher Well-being: Trends, Challenges, and Policy Implications

The TALIS 2024 results provide an in-depth overview of teacher well-being across the participating European countries, revealing both shared tendencies and notable national differences. Overall, teachers in Cyprus, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain report relatively high job satisfaction and generally view their work as professionally rewarding. Nonetheless, approximately one in five teachers experiences high stress, reflecting persistent challenges related to workload, classroom discipline, accountability for student performance, and adapting instruction to diverse learning needs.

Country-level data highlight a varied landscape. Cyprus, Italy, Poland, and Romania report stress levels close to the OECD average, with little change since 2018. By contrast, Spain shows a marked increase in stress, whereas Portugal demonstrates a clear improvement, with fewer teachers reporting high stress than in previous cycles. Across all countries, classroom management demands, administrative and assessment duties, and interactions with families, often in challenging or conflict-prone circumstances, are the most frequently cited stressors. Differences also emerge between novice and experienced teachers, particularly regarding pressures linked to student outcomes and behavioural management.

Across systems, teacher self-efficacy consistently appears as a key predictor of well-being. Teachers who feel confident in their professional skills report lower stress, higher job satisfaction, and more effective classroom practices. This association holds even when controlling for individual and school-level characteristics. These findings highlight the importance of professional development, instructional autonomy, supportive leadership structures, and collaborative cultures in mitigating workload-related strain.

As summarised in Table 2, Portugal offers a positive example of improving teacher well-being, whereas Spain faces a concerning rise in stress. The other participating countries, Cyprus, Italy, Poland, and Romania, remain relatively stable but continue to struggle with student diversity, classroom management, and general workload. Although most teachers report moderate mental and physical health impacts, these are not negligible. Work-life balance remains a challenge, with only a minority of teachers indicating adequate time for their personal lives.

Overall, the TALIS evidence underscores the need for targeted policy measures that respond to both systemic and individual needs. Reducing administrative burdens, providing structured classroom-management support, allocating dedicated time for assessment, and strengthening professional learning networks could help enhance teacher well-being. Promoting self-efficacy emerges as a particularly powerful lever, supporting resilience and job satisfaction, bolstering instructional quality, and equipping schools to better respond to the complex demands of contemporary classrooms.

4. A Cross-national Analysis of Teachers' Needs Concerning Well-being and Professional Development in Cyprus, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain

The theoretical framework of this report highlights how teachers' well-being, self-efficacy, and institutional support are deeply interconnected, influencing not only educators' personal and professional fulfilment but also the quality and sustainability of education systems. Grounded in models such as the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R), it emphasizes the urgent need for systemic strategies that balance professional pressures with meaningful resources and opportunities for growth.

Building on these insights, the following section presents the study's methodological approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gather empirical data on teachers' experiences, needs, and perceptions across participating countries. This mixed-method design enables a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena and validates the theoretical assumptions outlined above.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate teachers' well-being and professional needs within the framework of the Teachers' HAVEN Erasmus+ project. This integrated design enabled a comprehensive exploration of both measurable trends and nuanced stakeholder perspectives, aligning with the project's emphasis on evidence-informed interventions for educator empowerment. All procedures received ethical approval from the relevant local authorities in each participating country, ensuring compliance with national standards for research involving human participants.

4.1 Quantitative data procedure

Quantitative data were collected using an online self-report questionnaire developed and hosted on Google Forms. The instrument consisted of 104 items, 94 of which measured burnout, emotional distress, work engagement, teachers' self-efficacy, perceived social support, and overall well-being. These dimensions were assessed using validated scientific scales available in the respective national languages of the partner countries, ensuring linguistic and cultural appropriateness. The remaining items collected socio-demographic information (gender, age, years of service, educational level, school level taught, type of contract, number of students, number of students with SLD, and teaching

profile, General or Special Education). On average, teachers required approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Participants were recruited through school contacts and professional networks. Before accessing the survey, they were informed about the research aims and provided informed consent. They were assured that participation was voluntary, responses would remain anonymous and that data would be processed in accordance with privacy and data protection regulations. Data collection adhered to the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

The questionnaire was administered in six languages (Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, and Spanish). Each partner institution was responsible for translation and adaptation, using existing validated versions where available. Following data collection, all responses were translated into English to allow for comparative analysis across countries. Statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (IBM, New York, NY, U.S.A.).

4.2 Quantitative measures

Teachers completed a battery of validated self-report instruments in their national languages, assessing burnout, psychological distress, engagement, self-efficacy, social support, and well-being. The instruments included:

4.2.1 Burnout Assessment Tool

The Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT; Schaufeli et al., 2020) is a self-report questionnaire designed to evaluate burnout. The BAT comprises 33 items evaluated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Never") to 5 ("Always"). The first section, the BAT-C, includes 23 items assessing four core dimensions: Exhaustion (e.g., "At work, I feel mentally exhausted"), Mental Distance (e.g., "I struggle to find any enthusiasm for my work"), Cognitive Impairment (e.g., "At work, I have trouble staying focused"), and Emotional Impairment (e.g., "At work, I feel unable to control my emotions"). The second section, the BAT-S, contains 10 items addressing secondary symptoms, specifically Psychological Distress (e.g., "I feel tense and stressed") and Psychosomatic Complaints (e.g., "I often get sick"). Subscale scores are calculated as the mean of the corresponding items, with higher scores indicating greater symptom severity. In the original validation, internal consistency was acceptable, with Cronbach's α values above 0.70.

4.2.2 Depression Anxiety Stress Scale

The Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) is a self-report instrument assessing psychological distress. It includes 21 items rated on a four-point Likert scale from 0 ("Did not apply to me at all") to 3 ("Applied to me very much or most of the time"). The scale evaluates three subdimensions: Depression (e.g., "I felt down-

hearted and blue"), Anxiety (e.g., "I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool"), and Stress (e.g., "I found it difficult to relax"). Reliability in the original validation was high, with Cronbach's α values ranging from 0.89 to 0.96.

4.2.3 Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-3; Schaufeli et al., 2017) is an ultra-short version of the original instrument for measuring work engagement. It comprises 3 items rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("Never") to 6 ("Always"). The scale assesses three dimensions: Vigor (e.g., "At my work, I feel bursting with energy"), Dedication (e.g., "I am enthusiastic about my job"), and Absorption (e.g., "I am immersed in my work"). In its original validation, internal reliability was acceptable, with Cronbach's α values above 0.70.

4.2.4 Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale

The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) is a self-report questionnaire evaluating teachers' perceived capability in classroom-related tasks. It includes 12 items rated on a nine-point Likert scale from 1 ("Nothing") to 9 ("A great deal"). The scale is structured into three subscales: Instructional Strategies (e.g., "How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?"), Classroom Management (e.g., "How much can you do to control disruptive behaviour in the classroom?"), and Student Engagement (e.g., "How much can you do to help your students value learning?"). Original studies reported strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's α values above 0.90.

4.2.5 Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988) is a self-report instrument assessing perceived social support. It includes 12 items answered on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 ("Very strongly disagree") to 7 ("Very strongly agree"). The scale evaluates three sources of support: (e.g., "I get the emotional help and support I need from my family"), Friends (e.g., "I can count on my friends when things go wrong"), and Significant Others (e.g., "There is a special person who is around when I am in need"). The original validation showed good internal reliability, with Cronbach's α values ranging from 0.85 to 0.91 for subscales and 0.88 for the total scale.

4.2.6 Mental Health Continuum-Short Form

The Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF; Keyes, 2002) is a self-report questionnaire measuring well-being. It consists of 14 items rated on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("None of the time") to 5 ("All of the time"). The instrument assesses three dimensions: Emotional Well-being (e.g., "During the past month, how often did you feel

satisfied with life?"), Social Well-being (e.g., "During the past month, how often did you feel that the way our society works makes sense to you?"), and Psychological Well-being (e.g., "During the past month, how often did you feel that your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it?"). In the original validation, reliability was satisfactory, with Cronbach's α = 0.86 for the total scale and values ranging from 0.70 to 0.81 for the subscales.

4.2.7 Socio-demographic information

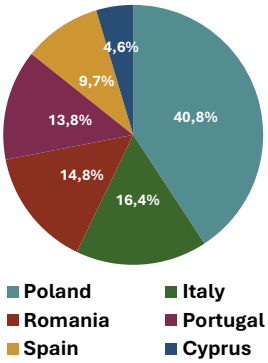
The socio-demographic data collected provide a broad picture of teachers' personal and professional backgrounds. Personal details included gender, age, years of teaching experience, and educational qualifications, helping to capture the diversity of the sample. Professional information covered the educational level in which teachers work, type of employment contract, class size, number of students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), and whether respondents teach in general education or special education settings. Together, these data help contextualize the study's findings and ensure that the results reflect the perspectives of a varied group of educators.

These measures were selected for their cross-cultural relevance in assessing teachers' personal and professional resources related to well-being, self-efficacy, and support.

4.3 Quantitative results

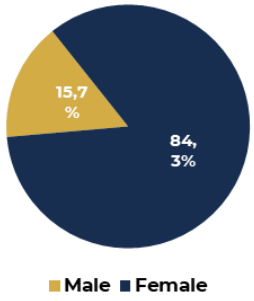
4.3.1 Participants

A total of 1,088 teachers from six European countries took part in the Teachers' HAVEN Erasmus+ project by completing the questionnaire. The largest group of respondents came from Poland (N = 444; 40.8%), followed by Italy (N = 178; 16.4%), Romania (N = 161; 14.8%), Portugal (N = 150; 13.8%), Spain (N = 106; 9.7%), and Cyprus (N = 50; 4.6%). This diverse international sample provides a wide-ranging picture of teachers' experiences across different educational systems in Europe. It is important to note that due to differences in sample sizes across countries, the results should not be directly compared between countries, and analyses are more reliable when interpreted within each country.



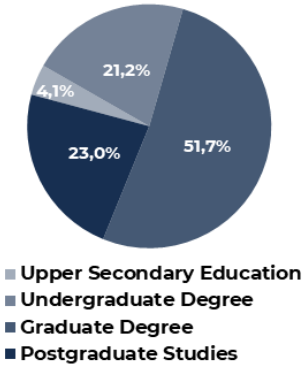
Participants ranged in age from 26 to 70 years, with an average of 48.42 years (SD = 9.55).

The sample was predominantly female: 917 participants (84.3%) identified as women and 171 (15.7%) as men. This gender distribution reflects a well-established trend in many European countries, where the teaching profession is largely female (OECD, 2018).



On average, teachers reported 21.40 years of professional experience (SD = 11.40), indicating that most respondents were seasoned educators with extensive classroom practice. Their long teaching careers strengthen the reliability of the findings, as responses are grounded in substantial professional experience.

Most participants reported a high level of academic qualification. Over half (51.7%) held a graduate degree, and an additional 23.0% had completed postgraduate studies (e.g., master's programmes or specialisations). A smaller proportion (21.2%) held an undergraduate degree, while only 4.1% reported upper-secondary education as their highest level of attainment. This high level of formal training illustrates the increasingly professionalised nature of the teaching workforce in Europe and suggests that teachers are well prepared theoretically and pedagogically, which further supports the depth and validity of their responses.

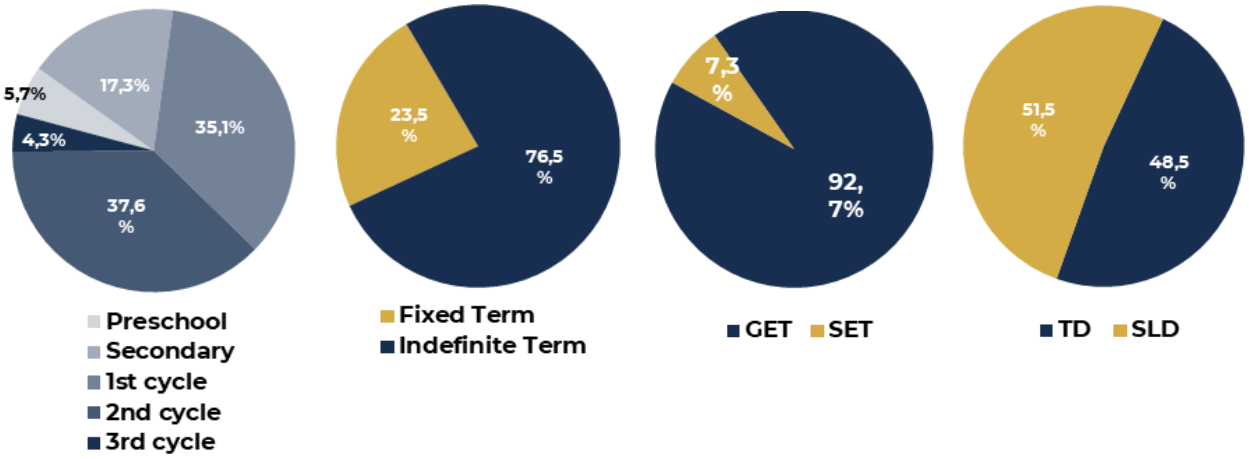


Teachers worked across multiple educational stages, demonstrating the project's broad scope. Of the sample, 5.7% taught in preschool, 35.1% in the 1st cycle, 37.6% in the 2nd cycle, 4.3% in the 3rd cycle, and 17.3% in upper secondary education. This indicates stronger participation from teachers in primary and lower-secondary education.

Regarding employment status, most teachers held permanent contracts (76.5%), while 23.5% worked on fixed-term arrangements. This suggests that a large share of

respondents enjoyed stable employment, an important condition for job satisfaction and continued professional development.

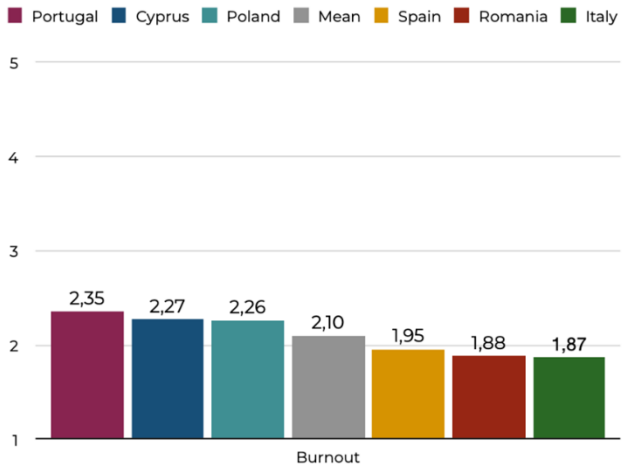
The average class size reported was 21.07 students (SD = 17.33), though the high variability reflects significant differences between countries and school levels. Just over half of the teachers (51.5%) reported teaching students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD), while 48.5% primarily taught typically developing (TD) students. In terms of professional roles, the vast majority were General Education Teachers (92.7%), with Special Education Teachers representing 7.3% of the sample. This distinction helps contextualise the range of learner needs schools manage daily.



The following section presents the results related to the principal psychological and professional variables assessed in the study. It compares, across participating countries, average levels of burnout, exhaustion, mental distance, emotional and cognitive impairment, secondary symptoms, depression, anxiety, and stress. The analysis then shifts to indicators of occupational well-being, including work engagement and self-efficacy, as well as perceived social support and measures of subjective well-being (emotional, psychological, and social). The aim is to identify notable cross-national differences and to outline broader patterns of teacher well-being and psychological distress.

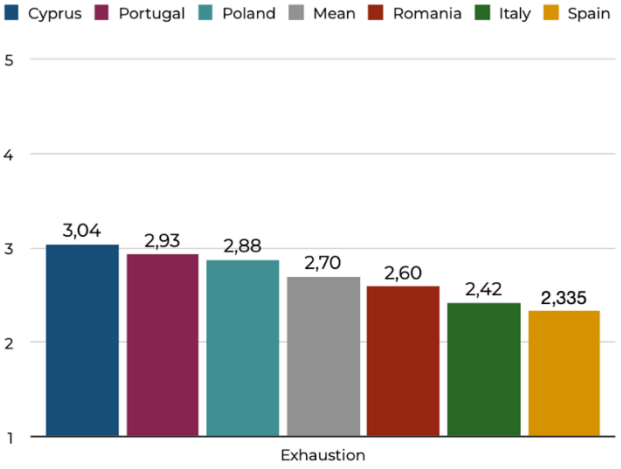
4.3.2 Burnout

Portugal shows the highest mean level of core burnout (M = 2.35), followed closely by Cyprus (M = 2.27) and Poland (M = 2.26). These countries report higher burnout levels compared with Spain (M = 1.95), Romania (M = 1.88), and Italy (M = 1.87). The ANOVA indicated a significant effect of country on core burnout (F = 21.32, p < 0.001), and post-hoc comparisons confirmed that most differences between higher- and lower-scoring countries are statistically significant.



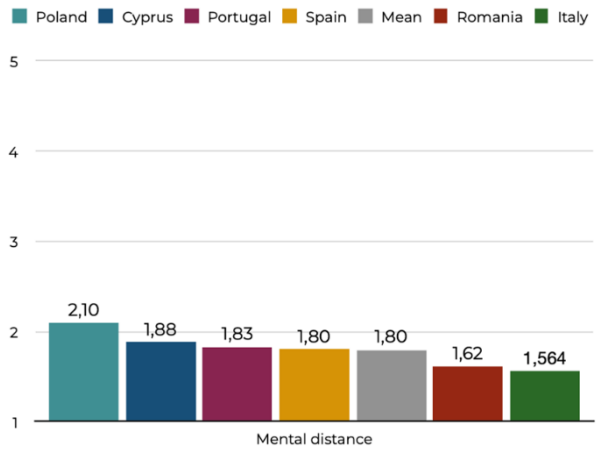
4.3.3 Exhaustion

Cyprus reports the highest mean level of exhaustion (M = 3.04), followed by Portugal (M = 2.93) and Poland (M = 2.88). Romania (M = 2.60) and Italy (M = 2.42) show moderate values, while Spain reports the lowest mean (M = 2.33). The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of country on exhaustion (F = 18.999, p < 0.001), with post hoc analyses indicating that most differences between countries with higher exhaustion (Cyprus, Portugal, Poland) and those with lower exhaustion (Spain, Italy) are statistically significant.



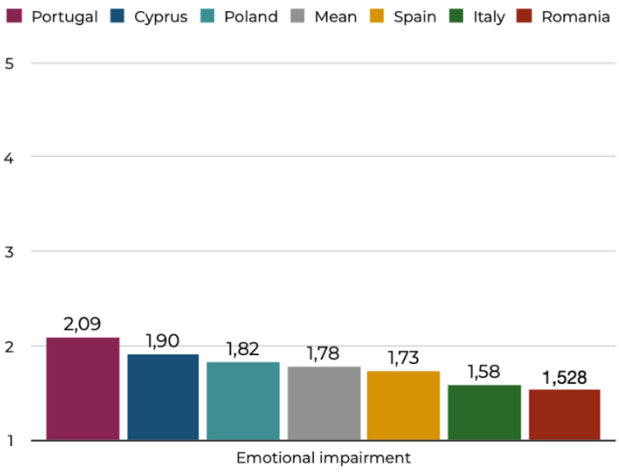
4.3.4 Mental distance

Poland shows the highest mean level of mental distance (M = 2.10), followed by Cyprus (M = 1.88) and Portugal (M = 1.83). Spain (M = 1.80) and Romania (M = 1.62) report lower means, and Italy shows the lowest level (M = 1.56). The ANOVA confirmed a significant effect of country (F = 19.98, p < 0.001), and post-hoc comparisons showed that most differences between higher-scoring countries (Poland, Cyprus, Portugal) and lower-scoring countries (Italy, Romania) are statistically significant.



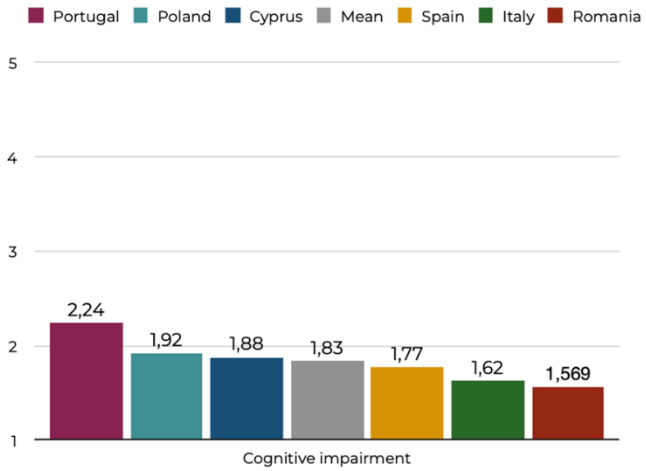
4.3.5 Emotional impairment

Portugal also shows the highest emotional impairment (M = 2.09), followed by Cyprus (M = 1.90) and Poland (M = 1.82). Spain (M = 1.73), Italy (M = 1.58), and Romania (M = 1.53) display comparatively lower values. The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of country on emotional impairment (F = 16.04, p < 0.001), and post-hoc tests confirmed that most of the differences observed between higher- and lower-scoring countries reached statistical significance.



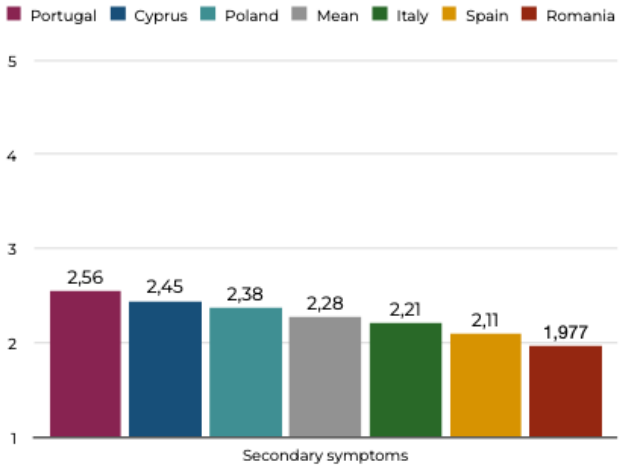
4.3.6 Cognitive impairment

Portugal reports the highest level of cognitive impairment (M = 2.24), followed by Poland (M = 1.92) and Cyprus (M = 1.88). Spain (M = 1.77), Italy (M = 1.62), and Romania (M = 1.57) show comparatively lower levels. The effect of country on cognitive impairment was statistically significant (F = 20.63, p < 0.001), and post-hoc analyses confirmed that most of the differences observed between countries with higher and lower mean scores were statistically significant.



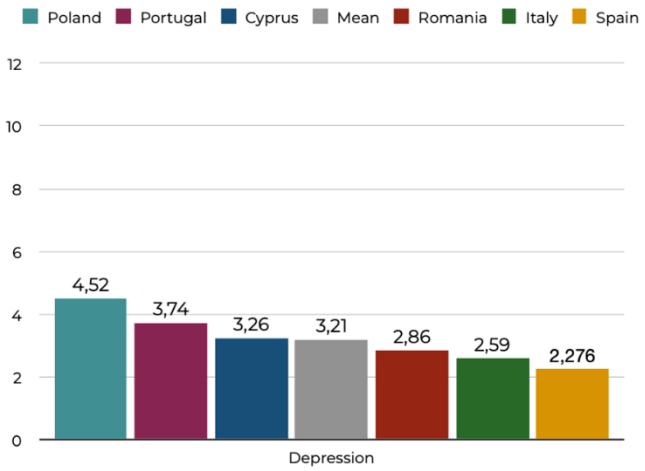
4.3.7 Secondary symptoms

Portugal reports the highest mean level of secondary symptoms (M = 2.56), followed by Cyprus (M = 2.45) and Poland (M = 2.38). Italy (M = 2.21), Spain (M = 2.11), and Romania (M = 1.98) show comparatively lower levels. The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of country (F = 12.42, p < 0.001), and post-hoc analyses confirmed that most of the observed differences between countries with higher and lower mean scores for secondary symptoms were statistically significant.



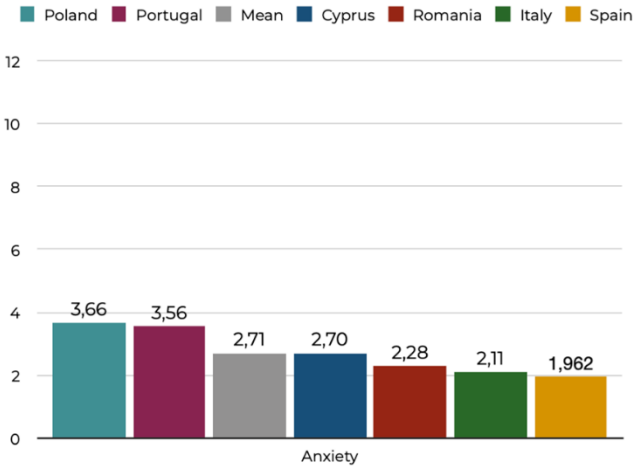
4.3.8 Depression

Poland reports the highest mean level of depressive symptoms (M = 4.52), followed by Portugal (M = 3.74) and Cyprus (M = 3.26). Romania shows a moderate mean (M = 2.86), while Italy (M = 2.59) and Spain (M = 2.28) report comparatively lower levels. The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of country on depression scores ($F = 10.23$, $p < 0.001$), and post-hoc comparisons indicated that most differences between higher-scoring countries (Poland, Portugal) and lower-scoring countries (Italy, Spain) are statistically significant.



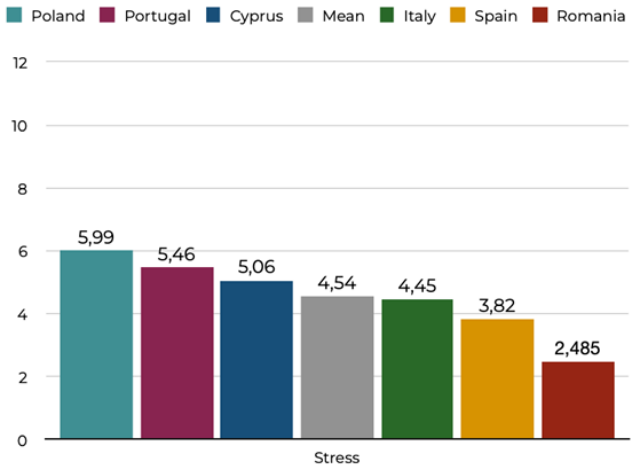
4.3.9 Anxiety

Poland has the highest mean anxiety level (M = 3.66), followed by Portugal (M = 3.56) and Cyprus (M = 2.70). Romania (M = 2.28) and Italy (M = 2.11) report moderate levels, while Spain presents the lowest mean (M = 1.96). The ANOVA confirmed a significant country effect ($F = 9.17$, $p < 0.001$), with post hoc analyses showing that most differences between the highest-scoring countries (Poland, Portugal) and the lower-scoring countries (Spain, Italy) are statistically significant.



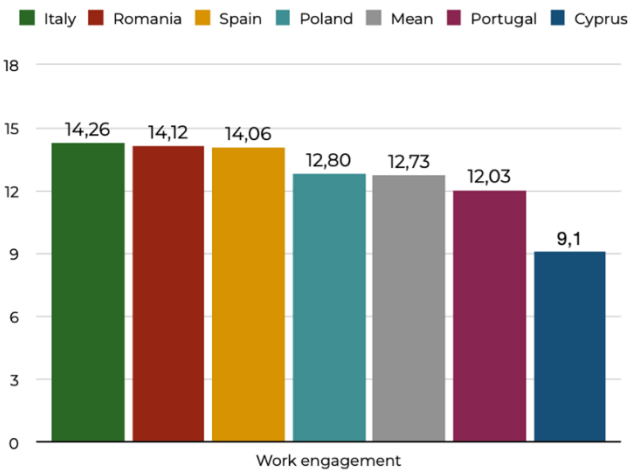
4.3.10 Stress

Poland has the highest mean stress level (M = 5.99), followed by Portugal (M = 5.46) and Cyprus (M = 5.06). Italy (M = 4.45) and Spain (M = 3.82) show moderate levels of stress, whereas Romania reports the lowest stress levels (M = 2.48). The ANOVA indicated a significant effect of country on stress (F = 20.30, p < 0.001), and post-hoc results confirmed that most differences between countries with higher (Poland, Portugal, Cyprus) and lower stress scores (Romania, Spain) are statistically significant.



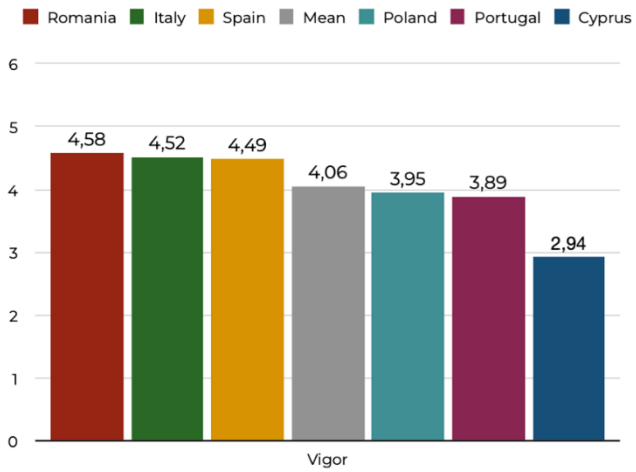
4.3.11 Work engagement

Italy reports the highest mean level of work engagement (M = 14.26), followed by Romania (M = 14.12) and Spain (M = 14.06). Poland (M = 12.80) and Portugal (M = 12.03) show moderately lower scores, whereas Cyprus reports the lowest mean among all participating countries (M = 9.10). The ANOVA confirmed a significant effect of country on work engagement (F = 21.73, p < 0.001), and post-hoc comparisons indicated that most differences between higher-scoring countries (Italy, Romania, Spain) and lower-scoring ones (Cyprus, Portugal) are statistically significant.



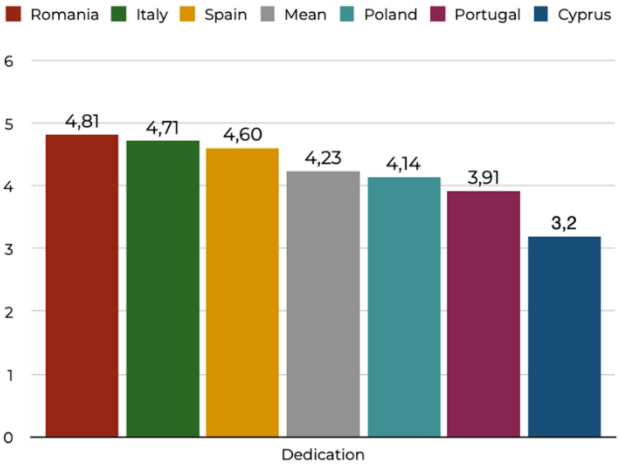
4.3.12 Vigor

Romania has the highest mean vigor level (M = 4.58), followed by Italy (M = 4.52) and Spain (M = 4.49). Poland (M = 3.95) and Portugal (M = 3.89) show moderately lower levels, while Cyprus reports the lowest mean (M = 2.94). The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of country on vigor ($F = 16.14$, $p < 0.001$), and post-hoc analyses confirmed that most differences between higher-scoring countries (Romania, Italy, Spain) and Cyprus are statistically significant.



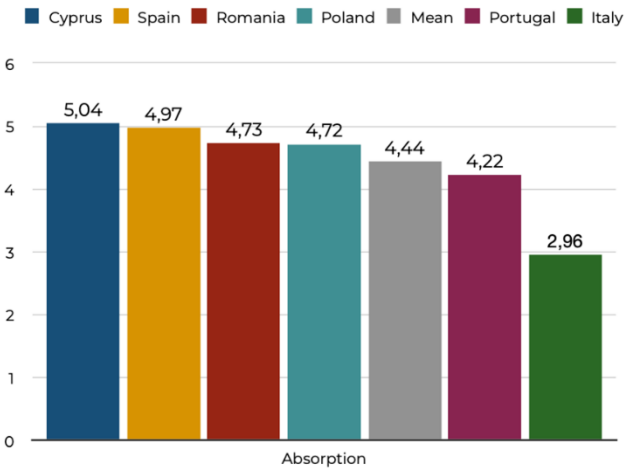
4.3.13 Dedication

Romania reports the highest dedication (M = 4.81), followed by Italy (M = 4.71) and Spain (M = 4.60). Poland (M = 4.14) and Portugal (M = 3.91) show lower levels of dedication, whereas Cyprus has the lowest mean dedication (M = 3.20). The effect of country on dedication was statistically significant ($F = 17.10$, $p < 0.001$), with post-hoc tests confirming that most differences between the highest-scoring countries (Romania, Italy, Spain) and lower-scoring ones (Cyprus, Portugal) are significant.



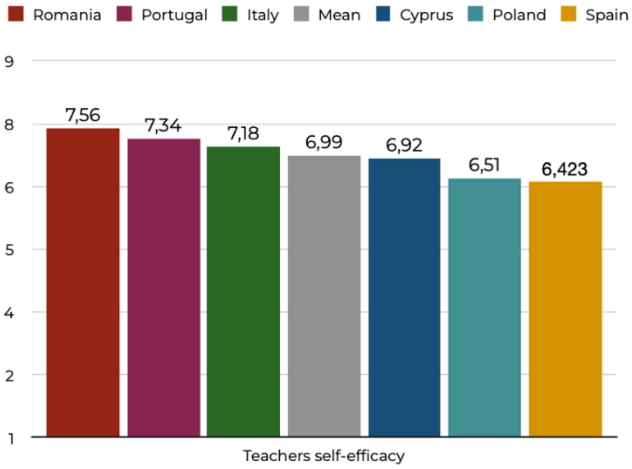
4.3.14 Absorption

Spain shows the highest absorption scores (M = 4.97), followed by Romania (M = 4.73), Poland (M = 4.72), and Portugal (M = 4.22). Italy reports the lowest level of absorption (M = 2.96). The ANOVA indicated a significant country effect ($F = 24.27$, $p < 0.001$), and post-hoc comparisons confirmed that most differences between higher-scoring countries (Spain, Romania, Poland) and Italy are statistically significant.



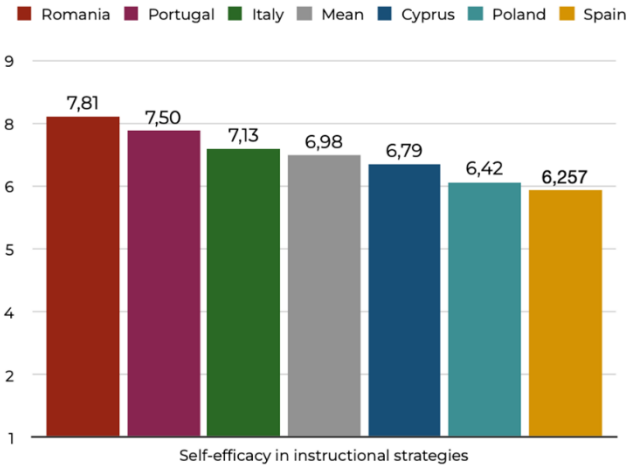
4.3.15 Teacher self-efficacy

Romania reports the highest overall level of teacher self-efficacy (M = 7.56), followed by Portugal (M = 7.34) and Italy (M = 7.18). Cyprus shows moderately high levels (M = 6.92), while Poland (M = 6.51) and Spain (M = 6.42) present the lowest means. The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of country on total self-efficacy (F = 32.86, p < 0.001), and post-hoc comparisons confirmed that differences between high-scoring countries (Romania, Portugal, Italy) and lower-scoring ones (Cyprus, Poland, Spain) are mostly statistically significant.



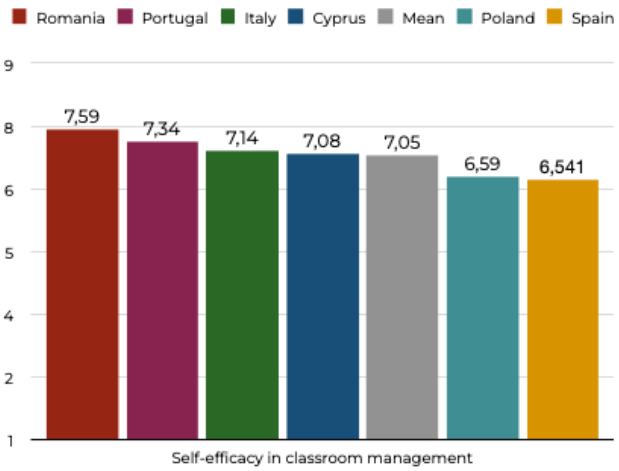
4.3.16 Teacher self-efficacy in instructional strategies

Romania shows the highest perceived self-efficacy in instructional strategies (M = 7.81), followed by Portugal (M = 7.50) and Italy (M = 7.13). Cyprus reports a moderate level of self-efficacy (M = 6.79), while Poland (M = 6.42) and Spain (M = 6.26) present the lowest values. The ANOVA indicates a significant effect of country (F = 45.85, p < 0.001), and post-hoc analyses show that teachers from Romania, Portugal, and Italy score significantly higher than those from Spain and Poland, with Cyprus positioned in an intermediate range.



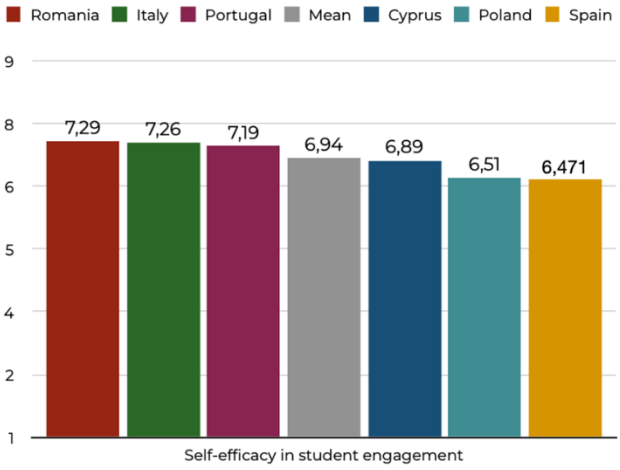
4.3.17 Teacher self-efficacy in classroom management

Romania reports the highest mean self-efficacy in classroom management (M = 7.59), followed by Portugal (M = 7.34) and Italy (M = 7.14). Cyprus shows intermediate levels (M = 7.08), while Poland (M = 6.59) and Spain (M = 6.54) present the lowest values. ANOVA confirms a significant effect of country ($F = 26.03$, $p < 0.001$), and post-hoc results indicate that teachers from Romania, Portugal, and Italy score significantly higher than those from Poland and Spain.



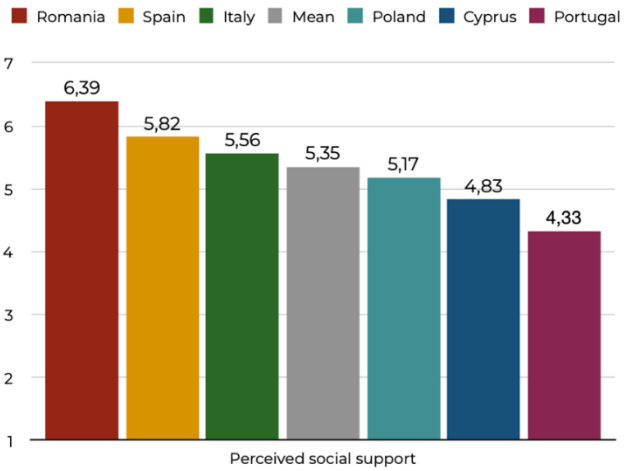
4.3.18 Teacher self-efficacy in student engagement

Romanian teachers report the highest self-efficacy in student engagement (M = 7.29), followed by Italy (M = 7.26) and Portugal (M = 7.19). Cyprus shows moderate levels (M = 6.89), while Poland (M = 6.51) and Spain (M = 6.47) report the lowest scores. The ANOVA confirms a significant effect of country on this domain ($F = 23.15$, $p < 0.001$). Post-hoc comparisons indicate that teachers from higher-scoring countries (Romania, Italy, Portugal) differ significantly from those in lower-scoring countries (Spain and Poland).



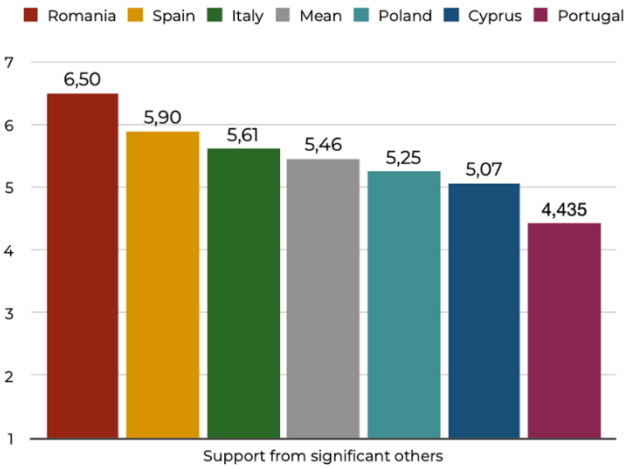
4.3.19 Perceived social support

Romania reports the highest perceived social support (M = 6.39), followed by Spain (M = 5.82) and Italy (M = 5.56). Poland (M = 5.17), Cyprus (M = 4.83), and Portugal (M = 4.33) show lower levels. The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of country on perceived social support ($F = 50.73$, $p < 0.001$), and post-hoc comparisons indicated that high-support countries (Romania, Spain, Italy) differ significantly from lower-support ones (Poland, Cyprus, Portugal).



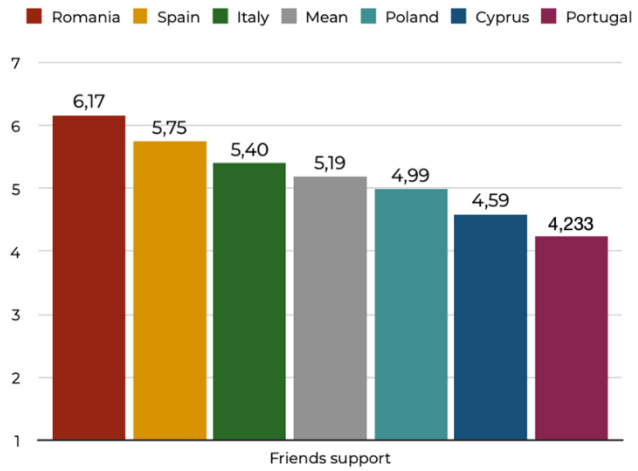
4.3.20 Family support

Romania again shows the highest perceived family support (M = 6.50), followed by Spain (M = 5.81) and Italy (M = 5.68). Poland (M = 5.28) exhibits moderate levels, while Cyprus (M = 4.83) and Portugal (M = 4.32) report the lowest means. ANOVA results indicate a significant effect of country on family support ($F = 47.04$, $p < 0.001$), and post-hoc analyses confirm that Romania differs significantly from all other countries, whereas Portugal and Cyprus score significantly lower than the higher-support countries.



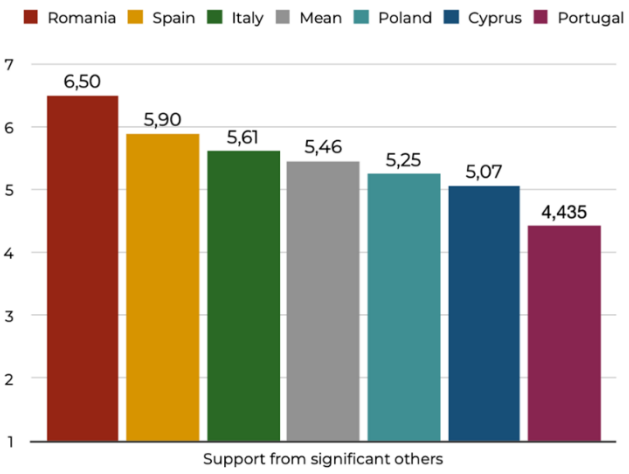
4.3.21 Friends support

Romanian teachers report the highest levels of support from friends (M = 6.17), followed by Spain (M = 5.75) and Italy (M = 5.40). Poland (M = 4.99) and Cyprus (M = 4.59) show lower levels, while Portugal again presents the lowest mean (M = 4.23). ANOVA results reveal a significant effect of country ($F = 39.72$, $p < 0.001$), and post-hoc comparisons indicate that Romania scores significantly higher than all other countries. In contrast, Portugal scores significantly lower than most of the higher-scoring countries (Romania, Spain, and Italy).



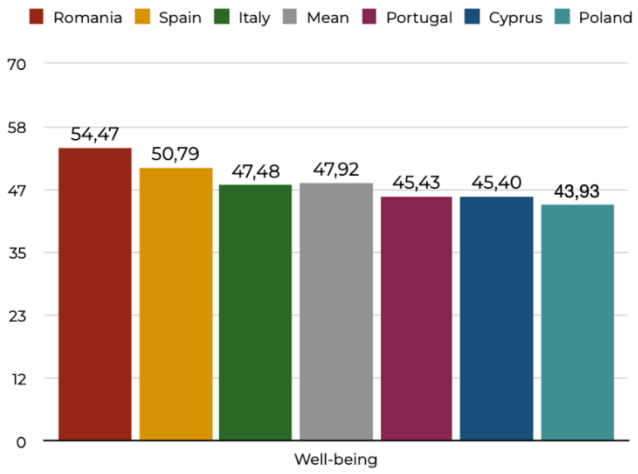
4.3.22 Support from significant others

Perceived support from significant others is highest in Romania (M = 6.50), followed by Spain (M = 5.90) and Italy (M = 5.61). Poland (M = 5.25) and Cyprus (M = 5.07) report moderate levels, whereas Portugal shows the lowest mean (M = 4.44). ANOVA results confirm a significant effect of country ($F = 39.31$, $p < 0.001$), and post-hoc comparisons indicate that Romanian teachers report significantly higher support from significant others than teachers in all other countries. Meanwhile, Portugal consistently scores significantly lower than the higher-scoring countries.



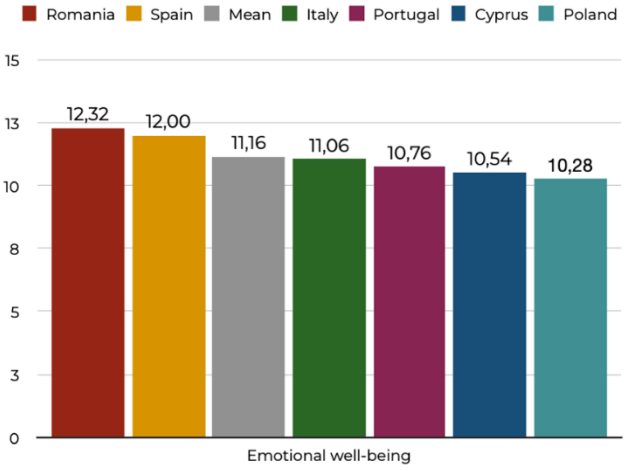
4.3.23 Well-being

Romania reports the highest overall well-being (M = 54.47), followed by Spain (M = 50.79) and Italy (M = 47.48). Portugal (M = 45.43), Cyprus (M = 45.40), and Poland (M = 43.93) show comparatively lower scores. ANOVA results reveal a significant effect of country on overall well-being ($F = 15.38$, $p < 0.001$), and post-hoc comparisons indicate that Romanian teachers' well-being is significantly higher than that of teachers in most other countries, whereas Poland and Portugal score significantly lower than the higher-scoring countries.



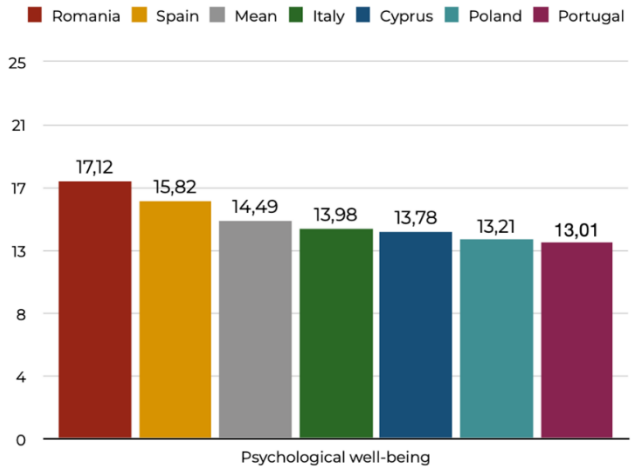
4.3.24 Emotional well-being

Romania shows the highest mean level of emotional well-being (M = 12.32), followed closely by Spain (M = 12.00) and Italy (M = 11.06). Portugal (M = 10.76), Cyprus (M = 10.54), and Poland (M = 10.27) report lower values. ANOVA results confirm a significant effect of country ($F = 12.26$, $p < 0.001$), and post-hoc tests indicate that Romanian and Spanish teachers report significantly higher emotional well-being than teachers from Cyprus, Poland, and Portugal.



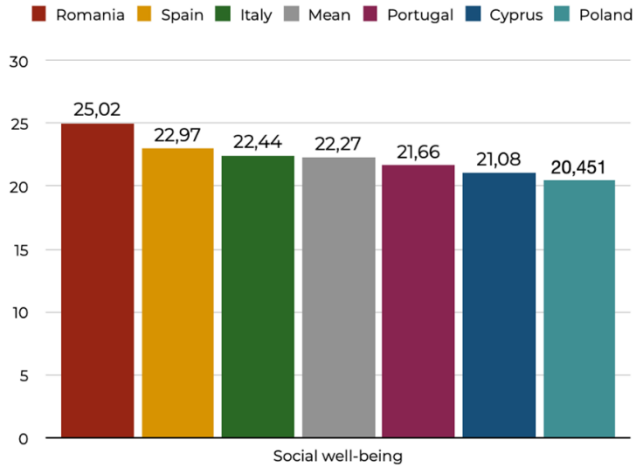
4.3.25 Psychological well-being

Romania presents the highest psychological well-being (M = 17.12), followed by Spain (M = 15.82) and Italy (M = 13.98). Cyprus (M = 13.78), Poland (M = 13.21), and Portugal (M = 13.01) show lower levels. ANOVA results indicate a significant effect of country ($F = 12.15$, $p < 0.001$), and post-hoc comparisons reveal that Romania differs significantly from all lower-scoring countries. Additionally, Spain scores significantly higher than Portugal, Poland, and Cyprus.



4.3.26 Social well-being

Romania again reports the highest social well-being (M = 25.02), followed by Spain (M = 22.97) and Italy (M = 22.44). Portugal (M = 21.66), Cyprus (M = 21.08), and Poland (M = 20.45) show lower means. The ANOVA shows a significant effect of country on social well-being ($F = 14.04$, $p < 0.001$), with post-hoc comparisons indicating that Romanian teachers differ significantly from the lower-scoring countries. At the same time, Spain and Italy also score significantly higher than Portugal, Cyprus, and Poland.



4.4 Overall Summary

Overall, the findings highlight substantial cross-national differences in teachers' psychosocial functioning, well-being, and professional resources. A general pattern emerges, distinguishing two broad clusters of countries. On one side, Portugal, Cyprus, and Poland consistently report the highest levels of burnout, exhaustion, emotional and cognitive impairment, depression, anxiety, and stress. These data suggest that teachers in these countries experience comparatively higher levels of psychological strain and job-related distress. On the other side, Italy, Spain, and Romania tend to display lower burnout and stress levels and higher well-being, work engagement, and self-efficacy, suggesting a more positive psychosocial profile.

When considering work engagement, the opposite trend to burnout is clear (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Teachers from Italy, Romania, and Spain show significantly higher engagement, particularly in the subdimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption, whereas teachers in Cyprus and Portugal report notably lower engagement levels. This pattern emphasizes the potential buffering role of engagement against the negative outcomes of occupational stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Regarding teacher self-efficacy, results again position Romania, Portugal, and Italy as the countries with the highest perceived competence, especially in instructional strategies and classroom management. Cyprus, Poland, and Spain, by contrast, exhibit lower levels of perceived efficacy. Higher self-efficacy may help explain the better emotional balance and engagement observed in the Romanian and Italian samples, supporting the idea that confidence in one's professional abilities can mitigate stress and burnout (Burić & Kim, 2020; see Aloe et al., 2014b for a meta-analysis).

Regarding perceived social support, Romania consistently reports the strongest support from family, friends, and significant others, followed by Spain and Italy. Conversely, Portugal and Cyprus display the lowest perceived social support. These differences may partially account for the observed disparities in well-being and mental health indicators, since social support is a well-established protective factor against occupational stress and emotional exhaustion (see Halbesleben, 2006 for a meta-analysis).

Finally, the indicators of subjective well-being, emotional, psychological, and social, mirror the overall trend: teachers in Romania report the highest levels of well-being, while those in Portugal and Poland report the lowest. These results support the view that positive psychosocial resources, including engagement, self-efficacy, and social support, are strongly associated with greater well-being and reduced burnout (Angelini et al., 2024; Collie et al., 2016).

In summary, countries where teachers benefit from stronger professional and social resources (such as Romania, Italy, and Spain) tend to show better psychological adjustment and higher well-being. Conversely, in settings where teachers perceive limited support and heavier work demands (including Portugal, Poland, and Cyprus), levels of distress are higher and engagement tends to be lower.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of creating school environments that promote teacher engagement, self-efficacy, and social connection (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Collie et al., 2016). Policies and interventions that strengthen these protective factors could play a key role in reducing burnout and enhancing teachers' well-being across diverse educational systems.

4.5 Qualitative data procedure

Qualitative data were collected through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and roundtable discussions with key stakeholders in the education sector. Participants were selected through invitations sent to schools and institutions involved in the project, and participation was entirely voluntary. Before taking part, all individuals provided informed consent in accordance with ethical standards and data protection regulations. Furthermore, all data were anonymised to ensure confidentiality and to allow the inclusion of excerpts and quotations in the analysis.

A thematic content analysis was then conducted using the T-LAB software, which facilitated the identification of recurrent themes, semantic patterns, and lexical co-occurrences related to teachers' well-being, self-efficacy, and support systems.

The following sections present the results on a country-by-country basis, including findings from focus groups with both in-training and in-service teachers, reports of interviews with headmasters, and reports of the round tables conducted in each country.

4.6 Focus groups

A total of 12 focus groups were carried out: six with in-service teachers (n = 48) and six with pre-service teachers (n = 49). Each session lasted roughly one hour and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. Trained project collaborators facilitated the discussions, following a common protocol to ensure consistency across countries. The guiding questions explored three main themes: teachers' well-being and emotional strain; perceptions of self-efficacy in classroom management and instructional practices; and the institutional and social support available within schools.

In-training teachers

4.7 Cyprus

The focus group consisted of five participants, all female, with a mean age of 24.4 years. Four participants were in training for kindergarten and early primary education, while one was preparing to teach English at the secondary level. This composition, which combined early-career trainees and a participant with a slightly different educational focus, provided a context for exploring a range of perspectives on teacher education, pedagogical development, and expectations for professional practice.

4.7.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Emotional and practical unpreparedness
- Stress related to classroom complexity and parental expectations
- Lack of structured psychological and collegial support
- Social undervaluation of the teaching profession

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Emotional and practical unpreparedness	Training is seen as too theoretical, overlooking emotional and relational skills.	"The degree course is very theoretical... it's not really about how you feel."
Stressful classroom and parental demands	Teachers feel unprepared for diverse student needs and parental pressure.	"It's hard when you have children with special needs or parents who are constantly questioning you."
Need for psychological and peer support	There is a strong call for psychological support and structured peer meetings.	"Every school should have a psychologist... or monthly meetings among teachers to help each other."
Social undervaluation	The perceived social devaluation of teaching lowers motivation and self-esteem.	"People say it's not real work that makes you feel less appreciated."

4.7.2 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers report that their training provides limited emotional and practical preparation for the realities of classroom life. Stress arises less from workload per se and more from managing complex social and behavioural situations and parental expectations. The lack of institutional psychological support, combined with low social recognition of the profession, undermines well-being and increases feelings of isolation. Structured peer networks and emotional support systems are perceived as essential for early-career resilience.

4.7.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Confidence grounded in practice, not theory
- Insecurity in classroom management
- Difficulties with inclusion and language diversity
- Need for guidance, feedback, and mentoring

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Learning through experience	Professional confidence grows through real classroom experience, not academic study.	"If I hadn't worked in a kindergarten before, I wouldn't be ready."
Classroom management and boundaries	Managing behaviour and asserting authority are the main challenges.	"I still find it hard to set limits and be firm."
Inclusion and language diversity	Teachers feel unprepared to assist students with disabilities or language barriers.	"We don't really know how to handle it."
Guidance and mentoring	Lack of structured feedback and career guidance.	"Someone from the university could guide us or recommend good placements."

4.7.4 Interpretive synthesis

Self-efficacy is closely tied to experiential learning and informal exposure rather than formal coursework. Teachers express low confidence in managing behavioural issues and adapting to diverse learners, revealing a critical training gap. The absence of systematic mentoring, feedback, and inclusive education strategies prevents the consolidation of professional competence and confidence.

4.7.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Theory–practice misalignment and task overload
- Insufficient coordination and feedback
- Lack of mentoring and emotional support
- Inadequate support for special needs education

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Excessive theoretical focus	The programme is seen as overloaded with theory and little practical value.	"So many assignments are unnecessary... we need more practice."
Poor coordination and feedback	Confusion about learning objectives and evaluation criteria.	"We weren't really taught what those goals were or how to design them."
Mentoring and emotional support	Desire of mentoring that combines technical guidance with emotional understanding.	"We need mentors who understand how we feel."
Special needs provision	The lack of qualified aides for children with disabilities is viewed as a major gap.	"Often, assistants for children with disabilities are not trained."

4.7.6 Interpretive synthesis

Training is perceived as fragmented and poorly aligned with classroom realities. Theoretical overload and lack of clear pedagogical guidance limit the perceived utility of academic courses. Teachers advocate for a more integrated model that includes structured mentoring, formative feedback, and emotional support during practicum periods. The absence of trained staff for special needs education further exacerbates teachers' sense of unpreparedness and stress.

4.7.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- Limited awareness of structured good practices
- Isolated positive experiences
- Reflection and self-assessment as emerging ideas

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Limited awareness	Limited awareness of existing well-being or support initiatives in schools.	"We haven't really seen such things during our training."
Isolated positive experiences	A few examples include collaborating with psychologists and using positive reinforcement.	"The psychologist worked with the teacher to help the child... it really helped."
Reflective practice	Keeping an educational diary is suggested to enhance reflection and teaching quality.	"Teachers could write a diary to realise what to change or what went well."

4.7.8 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers demonstrate limited awareness of structured good practices within educational settings. Nonetheless, they identify isolated examples of effective collaboration between teachers and psychologists and recognise the potential of positive reinforcement. The proposal of reflective tools such as educational diaries signals a nascent awareness of professional self-reflection as a pathway for growth. Systematic exposure to evidence-based practices could enhance pre-service teachers' capacity to integrate relational and pedagogical skills.

4.7.9 Overall Summary

In-training teachers portray a training system overly oriented toward theory and insufficiently responsive to the emotional and practical realities of teaching. Their sense of competence and well-being relies largely on informal experience and personal initiative. The findings highlight the need to integrate experiential learning, structured mentoring, and emotional support into teacher education, while also promoting exposure to concrete examples of effective and compassionate professional practice.

4.8 Italy

The focus group consisted of seven participants, all female, with a mean age of approximately 28.7 years. All participants were Master's students in Primary Education, representing an advanced stage of teacher training. The group's composition, combining younger and slightly older students, provided a coherent context for exploring shared and diverse perspectives on pedagogical development, professional identity formation, and expectations related to future teaching practice.

4.8.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Work-related stress and emotional preparation
- Relational climate and collaboration
- Parents as stressors
- Collective well-being and relationships

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Work-related stress and emotional preparation	The gap between theory and practice in managing stress	"The degree course does not really prepare us to deal with sources of stress."
Relational climate and collaboration	Conflicts and lack of teamwork: impact on well-being	"The main problem is the relationship between teachers... the greatest source of stress comes from the lack of relationships with colleagues."
Parents as stressors	Parental mistrust and pressure on young teachers	"It often happens that parents try to assert themselves, especially if you are a young teacher just starting with short-term substitutes."
Collective well-being and relationships	Well-being is linked to group belonging and positive relationships	"If I feel emotionally supported, I'm more open to accepting practical help."

4.8.2 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers perceived well-being as a collective and relational condition rather than an individual one. Stress is mainly associated with relationships with colleagues, parents, and school leadership, and with the gap between university preparation and real classroom situations. Collaborative climates and mutual support are viewed as key to sustaining motivation and emotional balance.

4.8.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Confidence in didactic and relational skills
- Classroom management and experience gap
- Dealing with diversity and inclusion
- Relations with parents

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Confidence in didactic and relational skills	Ability to use engaging methods and ICT; strong empathy	"I use ICT a lot to make activities more engaging and fun."
Class management and experience gap	Insecurity in handling behavior and complex situations	"The first days I entered, I was awkward... I need to work more on being authoritative."
Dealing with diversity and inclusion	Practical difficulties in special needs and inclusive education	"If you have a child with autism or other difficulties, you cannot just sit at your desk and give lessons on your own."
Relations with parents	Communication challenges and fear of judgment	"I still don't know how to calibrate my words... one word might seem too little, two might seem too much."

4.8.4 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers express confidence in their pedagogical knowledge but limited self-efficacy in classroom management. The transition from theory to practice is marked by uncertainty, particularly in inclusive contexts and interactions with parents. Effective classroom practice is associated with experience, collaboration, and relational sensitivity, more than technical mastery.

4.8.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Mentoring and supervision
- Psychological and emotional support

- Integration of emotional and practical support
- Leadership and organisational culture
- University training gaps
- Coordination between the university and the schools

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Mentoring and supervision	Need for experienced tutors in the classroom and lesson planning	"There should be an experienced teacher as a reference point."
Psychological and emotional support	Request for psychologists and professionals offering guidance	"We need real reference figures: a psychologist, a pedagogist, people with direct experience."
Integration of emotional and practical support	Emotional safety as a prerequisite for learning	"If I feel emotionally supported, I'm more open to accepting practical help."
Leadership and organisational culture	Role of principals in promoting preventive actions	"They have funds and tools to prevent problems... but they often act too late."
University training gaps	Labs are perceived as theoretical; lack of practical experience	"In the labs we ended up doing more theory than practice."
Coordination between university and schools	Internships are often misused or poorly supervised	"The trainee should observe and not replace the teacher."

4.8.6 Interpretive synthesis

Training is described as fragmented and overly theoretical, with limited connection to real practice. In-training teachers highlight the need for structured mentoring, psychological support, and leadership support in creating supportive environments. The data confirm the importance of integrating emotional, practical, and organisational dimensions to ensure smoother professional transitions.

4.8.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- University-based support
- Absence of structured practices in schools

- Informal and self-initiated networks

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
University-based support	Well-being came mainly from psychological support and supportive tutors.	"I personally used the psychological support service offered by my university... it was very helpful."
Absence of support in schools	There were no structured programs for well-being or collaboration.	"At school, unfortunately, no. There's a lot of talk about the school psychologist, but I've never seen one."
Informal and self-initiated networks	Teachers used online groups or informal training to connect and share experiences.	"I met a group who created a blog to share experiences and problems."

4.8.8 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers reported very few concrete good practices within schools. Most positive experiences stemmed from university-based support or self-organised peer networks rather than institutional initiatives. This highlights a systemic gap between training and professional practice, where support remains individual and informal. The absence of structured school-based practices underscores the need for stronger continuity and shared responsibility across educational contexts.

4.8.9 Overall Summary

In-training teachers experience a transition marked by enthusiasm but also insecurity and stress. University training offers solid theory but little preparation for the emotional, relational, and organisational realities of schools. Relationships with colleagues, parents, and leaders are key sources of both challenge and growth. The lack of mentoring, psychological support, and coordinated leadership fosters isolation and uncertainty. Teachers call for experiential, practice-based learning, guidance in classroom management, inclusion, and parent communication. The scarcity of structured well-being initiatives contrasts with the support found in universities and informal peer networks. Overall, their needs focus on connection, practical competence, and emotional resilience, supported by mentoring and engaged leadership.

4.9 Poland

The focus group consisted of seven participants, all female, with a mean age of approximately 38.7 years. All participants were HEI pedagogy students, engaged in advanced teacher training. The group's age diversity, ranging from early-career to more experienced adults, provided a rich context for exploring perspectives on pedagogical development, professional growth, and reflections on teaching practices.

4.9.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Emotional involvement and responsibility toward students
- Relationship with parents as a source of stress
- Tension and competition between novice and senior teachers

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Emotional involvement and responsibility	Teachers feel emotionally involved with students and responsible for their well-being.	"This job involves constantly making decisions that affect other people, our students, the children."
Parents as a source of stress	Dealing with parents is one of the hardest and most stressful tasks.	"Parents are very demanding and each expects an individual approach."
Collegial tension	Rivalry and poor collaboration between senior and junior teachers hinder teamwork.	"Older teachers sometimes don't accept new methods, it creates unnecessary rivalry."

4.9.2 Interpretive synthesis

Well-being is influenced by emotional strain, high responsibility, and complex relationships with parents and colleagues. Trainees feel emotionally exposed and seek supportive professional environments that value cooperation and empathy.

4.9.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Feeling prepared but facing unpredictable challenges
- Need for stronger communication skills with parents

- Stress linked to inclusion and diverse students

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Prepared but unready	Teachers feel prepared in theory but find real classrooms unpredictable.	"We can't really prepare for everything; situations appear that we never dreamed of."
Communication with parents	Handling difficult talks and setting limits are key but often undeveloped skills.	"It would be good to have workshops on how to handle difficult conversations with parents."
Inclusion and diversity	Managing special needs and class dynamics remains a major gap.	"We must care for each child, but also for the whole group."

4.9.4 Interpretive synthesis

Self-efficacy emerges as conditional: trainees trust their pedagogical background but doubt their readiness for complex, emotionally charged realities. Communication, inclusion, and adaptability are identified as areas needing more experiential training.

4.9.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Gap between theory and practice
- Importance of mentoring and supervision
- Need for psychological and emotional support

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Theory–practice gap	University training is too theoretical and detached from real classrooms.	"The work experience showed us how these situations really look on a daily basis."
Mentoring and guidance	Guidance from experienced teachers is essential in the first years.	"Someone with more experience could definitely help."
Psychological and emotional support	Teachers need professional and emotional support to avoid burnout.	"We also need to protect our private space and find time outside of work."

4.9.6 Interpretive synthesis

Teacher education is valued for its academic foundation but criticised for lacking structured mentoring and emotional support. Trainees call for closer integration between theory, practice, and personal well-being.

4.9.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- Peer collaboration and informal support networks
- Absence of institutionalised well-being practices

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Peer collaboration	Informal exchanges among peers and teacher clubs are perceived as motivating and protective.	"There's a club for passionate teachers, a forum to exchange inspiration."
Lack of structured practices	Schools rarely provide consistent well-being or reflective initiatives for teachers.	"Sometimes it's enough for someone to say, 'I have the same problem,' so you know you're not alone."

4.9.8 Interpretive synthesis

Good practices rely mainly on peer relationships rather than institutional systems. Trainees value shared reflection and collaboration but highlight the need for structured spaces for support and professional dialogue.

4.9.9 Overall Summary

In-training teachers express a strong commitment to their future profession and a genuine sense of responsibility toward students. However, they often feel emotionally overwhelmed and insufficiently prepared for the complexity of classroom life. Real teaching situations reveal gaps between theoretical preparation and the unpredictable realities of everyday school work. Peer collaboration emerges as a valuable but informal source of emotional and professional support, highlighting the lack of institutional mechanisms for sustained teacher well-being. Overall, these findings suggest that initial teacher education should adopt a more integrated, experiential model that combines emotional awareness, relational competence, and practical classroom skills to promote professional growth.

4.10 Portugal

The focus group consisted of 10 participants (9 women and 1 man), with a mean age of 24 years. The group included six pre-service teachers specializing in preschool education and four in primary and lower secondary education with a focus on mathematics and science. This diverse yet balanced composition offered a valuable range of perspectives across different educational levels, enabling an in-depth exploration of attitudes, experiences, and perceptions related to teacher training, pedagogical approaches, and disciplinary teaching practices.

4.10.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Early exposure to professional stress
- Lack of preparation for stress and emotional management
- Stronger pressure in real work contexts
- Need for emotional and practical support

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Early exposure to professional stress	In-training teachers already face stress from workload, conflicts, and teamwork, reflecting real job pressures.	"We are already experiencing what our future will be like."
Lack of preparation for stress and emotional management	Training offers limited preparation for stress management or parent communication.	"We don't really have support to learn how to deal with this aspect, especially with parents."
Stronger pressure in real work contexts	Expected stress is linked to responsibility and accountability.	"At work there's an even greater responsibility... because we're being paid, and it's entirely our responsibility."
Need for mentoring and extended practical support	Need for mentoring, emotional support, and extended internships with real family and staff interaction.	"Once we finish the course, we could be placed in a classroom with a more experienced teacher."

4.10.2 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers perceive that stress begins early in their professional journey and that current training programs inadequately address it. While internships provide some exposure to real-life challenges, students feel emotionally unprepared and uncertain

about handling relationships with parents, colleagues, and school leadership. The main expectation for future well-being support lies in structured mentorship, emotional guidance, and extended practical experience to experience the realities of the teaching profession.

4.10.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Uncertainty in classroom management and authority
- Insecurity in dealing with parents
- Learning self-efficacy through practice
- Gaps in handling behavior and inclusive challenges

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Uncertainty in classroom management and authority	Teachers feel unprepared to manage classroom behaviour and assert authority constructively.	"I don't want to be that authoritarian figure... but at the same time, we need to find a balance."
Insecurity in dealing with parents	Relationships with parents are perceived as major sources of stress.	"What scares me the most is facing parents."
Learning self-efficacy through practice	Real classroom experience is viewed as key to building confidence and competence.	"I know I'm going to make mistakes, but I think it's through mistakes that I'll understand and improve."
Gaps in handling behaviouraland inclusive challenges	Managing behavior and supporting students with special needs are common areas of insecurity that require further training.	"I feel that I'm not leaving the Master's program well enough prepared to help students with specific needs."

4.10.4 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers show partial self-efficacy, grounded more in motivation and self-awareness than in concrete skills. They feel confident in theory but insecure in practice, particularly in behavior management, inclusion, and communication with parents. Experience and reflection in real settings are considered crucial for building authentic professional competence and confidence.

4.10.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Gaps in practical and health-related training
- Poor preparation for job entry
- Need for integrated practical and emotional support

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Gaps in practical and health-related training	Preparation for physical education and health management is inadequate, with limited access to relevant courses.	"We didn't even get the basic knowledge."
Poor preparation for job entry	Administrative and employment procedures remain unclear for future teachers.	"We don't know how to enter the job market in our field."
Need for integrated practical and emotional support	Early career guidance, mentoring, and school-based support are essential for building confidence and managing stress.	"If we have strong practical support, the emotional part becomes easier to manage."

4.10.6 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers highlight gaps in practical and health-related preparation and feel uncertain about entering the profession. They call for integrated practical and emotional support, ideally through structured mentoring and guidance within schools, to strengthen confidence and well-being during the transition to work.

4.10.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- Lack of structured good practices
- Collaborative lesson planning as a positive example

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Lack of structured good practices	Initiatives supporting teacher well-being or collaboration are rare and mostly informal.	"I don't know if it directly relates to well-being... but I think it's much better than a teacher planning alone."
Collaborative lesson planning as a positive example	Weekly group meetings among teachers foster cooperation, idea sharing, and collective responsibility.	"The second-year teachers would all meet one day a week to plan together... it's much better than a teacher planning alone."

4.10.8 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers note a lack of structured practices promoting teacher well-being or professional support. The only clear example is collaborative planning among teachers, seen as an effective way to enhance teamwork, reduce isolation, and strengthen professional confidence.

4.10.9 Overall Summary

In-training teachers feel only partially prepared for professional challenges. While they develop early awareness of stress and emotional demands, training is overly theoretical. It offers little guidance on real workplace situations, especially in dealing with parents, behavior management, and inclusion. Students identify major gaps in practical, health-related, and career-entry preparation, calling for longer internships and structured mentoring. School support systems are crucial for building confidence and emotional stability. Finally, there is little evidence of structured good practices that promote well-being and collaboration, with team-based lesson planning as one of the few positive examples.

4.11 Romania

The focus group consisted of six participants, all female, with a mean age of approximately 25 years. Participants were in training for both primary and secondary education, covering STEM, social sciences, and primary/preschool pedagogy. The group's diversity in teaching levels and focus areas provided a rich context for exploring participants' perspectives on teacher training, pedagogical development, and professional competencies.

4.11.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Communication and conflict with students
- Relationships and communication challenges
- Balancing students' needs and institutional demands
- Support from peers and a school counselor

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Communication and conflict with students	Teaching is described as emotionally demanding, particularly with challenging or unpredictable student behaviour.	"You never know how students will react." "Sometimes I'm not sure I'll manage to keep control."
Relationships and communication	Relations with parents are stressful, as trainees often feel inexperienced or not fully respected.	"Parents don't always see you as an authority."
Balancing needs and curriculum	Balancing individual student needs with curriculum demands is difficult and limits flexibility.	"You'd like to help each student, but you must finish the programme."
Support from peers and the school counselor	Emotional balance and peer support are seen as crucial for managing stress and maintaining well-being.	"It helps when you can share experiences with someone who understands."

4.11.2 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers' well-being is shaped by emotional regulation, social support, and the perceived balance between expectations and personal capacities. Stress arises from classroom management and complex relationships with parents. Building a sense of belonging and having opportunities for open discussion are seen as protective for emotional health.

4.11.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Partial readiness for teaching
- Classroom management and authority
- Learning by observation

- Gradual development through experience

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Partial readiness	Training provides theoretical knowledge but lacks practical application.	"Maybe 70 or 80 percent ready... the rest comes with experience."
Classroom management	Managing attention and behaviour, particularly with older students, is the main challenge.	"Keeping them focused is harder than teaching itself."
Learning by observation	Observing experienced teachers offers valuable informal learning.	"Watching how others handle things teaches you a lot."
Gradual development	Confidence develops gradually through experience, feedback, and self-reflection.	"You start feeling capable when your students respond positively."

4.11.4 Interpretive synthesis

Self-efficacy is viewed as a process of continuous construction. Teachers stress that theoretical preparation alone cannot replace practice. They express a strong desire for longer and more structured practicum experiences to develop classroom confidence and real teaching skills.

4.11.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Mentorship and tutoring
- Emotional and psychological support
- Coordination between universities and schools
- Continuous learning and collaboration

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Mentorship and tutoring	The need for consistent tutoring during the practicum and mentoring after graduation	"We need a mentor who observes us, gives feedback, and helps us learn from mistakes." "Sometimes you're just left alone to replace the teacher."
Emotional and psychological support	Psychological supervision is considered essential for managing emotions and understanding student behaviour.	"It would help to have someone specialised to talk to when you feel overwhelmed."
University–school coordination	Academic training is criticised for being disconnected from real school practice; internships lack depth.	"During my practicum, I was mostly left in the classroom without guidance."
Continuous training and collaboration	Workshops and peer communities for sharing experiences and teaching resources are valued.	"We'd like national platforms to connect teachers and exchange resources."

4.11.6 Interpretive synthesis

Support is perceived as crucial yet insufficient. In-training teachers call for more hands-on practicums guided by dedicated tutors and long-term mentors who can follow their progress. Emotional and psychological support should be integrated into training. In-training teachers underline that bridging the gap between universities and schools would transform training from a bureaucratic requirement into a genuine learning process.

4.11.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- Scarcity of structured good practices
- Informal peer collaboration
- Pilot initiatives and potential improvements
- Reflection and personal learning

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Scarcity of structured good practices	Good practices are limited, informal, and depend on individual initiative rather than institutional support.	"I've seen a few examples, but most of the time you're on your own." "Good practices exist outside regular teaching, like during workshops."
Informal peer collaboration	Small peer networks occasionally share materials or meet outside school, but these are uncommon.	"My teacher said they had a small group who met for coffee and exchanged ideas, which helped them a lot."
Pilot initiatives	Planned initiatives such as mentoring and counselling are viewed positively but remain unimplemented.	"We'll have a pilot practicum with a mentor and counselling; I hope it becomes the norm."
Reflection and personal growth	Teachers depend on self-reflection to guide professional growth.	"After each lesson, I note what went well and what I'd change next time."

4.11.8 Interpretive synthesis

Good practices are not systematically integrated into teacher training. Most students have observed only isolated or informal initiatives. The lack of structured models leaves novice teachers feeling unsupported and uncertain. However, the presence of pilot mentoring programmes and peer collaborations is perceived as a sign of hope for future improvement. Teachers clearly express the wish for consistent mentoring, practical guidance, and institutionalised support systems that foster well-being and professional identity.

4.11.9 Overall Summary

In-training teachers show strong motivation but significant uncertainty about their readiness to teach. They experience stress related to classroom management, limited feedback, and the disconnection between academic preparation and real school life. Teachers call for more practical internships, structured tutoring, and a mentor who can guide both professional and emotional development. The lack of structured good practices is one of the most critical issues: most experiences of collaboration or support are spontaneous and personal. Despite this, teachers value these rare examples as essential sources of encouragement and hope for the future systemic integration of such models.

4.12 Spain

The focus group consisted of six participants (four women and two men), with a mean age of approximately 30 years. Participants were in-training teachers representing both primary and secondary education levels, with specializations ranging from generalist primary teaching to subject-specific areas such as mathematics, economics, and humanities. The group's heterogeneous composition, in terms of age, teaching level, and disciplinary background, provided a rich context for exploring diverse perspectives on teacher education, pedagogical practice, and the development of professional competencies.

4.12.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Gap between teacher training and real classroom demands
- Disconnection between theory and school practice
- Staffroom as a key source of stress
- Collective and structural dimension of well-being
- Need for mentoring and psychological support
- Importance of peer support

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Training–reality gap	Academic preparation and short practicums are inadequate for managing real classroom stress, particularly in challenging schools.	"Internships are too short… they don't prepare you for what reality is."
Theory–practice disconnection	University teaching remains idealized and disconnected from school realities, with a limited focus on psychological readiness.	"Everything in the master's sounds idyllic, but in practice it's different."
Staffroom stress	Conservative or unsupportive staff cultures often generate more stress than students.	"The greatest stress… was facing the staffroom."
Collective and structural well-being	Well-being requires systemic attention through better conditions, teamwork, and reduced bureaucracy.	"Teacher well-being is not an individual issue but a structural one."

Need for mentoring and psychological support.	Guidance from experienced colleagues and professional psychological support is highly valued.	"I hope to count on experienced teachers... and psychological support."
Peer support	Collegial solidarity and peer support are essential for coping and sustaining motivation.	"You cannot face aggressive adolescents alone... You have to rely on your team."

4.12.2 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers highlight a clear gap between academic preparation and the realities of teaching, especially in complex or vulnerable schools. Training is seen as too theoretical, offering little support for managing emotions, behavior, or bureaucratic stress. Many find that staffroom tensions can cause more strain than students themselves. Well-being is viewed as a collective responsibility that depends on mentoring, psychological support, and a positive, collaborative school climate.

4.12.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Academic readiness vs. emotional preparedness
- Classroom management and behavioral challenges
- Motivation and engagement difficulties
- Workload and time pressure
- Continuous learning and professional growth

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Academic readiness vs. emotional preparedness	Training was perceived as too theoretical and detached from classroom realities.	"The syllabus doesn't scare me. What scares me is to face situations where I risk losing emotional control, my own or my students'."
Classroom management and behavioral challenges	Managing disruptive behavior, conflicts, and special needs (e.g., ADHD, autism) remains difficult due to limited practical tools.	"How do you handle someone with severe ADHD? These cases are becoming more and more frequent."

Motivation and engagement difficulties	Maintaining student motivation is challenging under rigid curricula and long school hours.	"Motivation is really hard... For me, finishing the syllabus while ensuring real understanding is impossible."
Workload and time pressure	Heavy workload and multitasking reduce time for individualized teaching and lower perceived efficacy.	"Being a primary teacher requires multitasking all the time, and that scares me."
Continuous learning and professional growth	Self-efficacy develops through experience, collaboration, and continuous learning rather than formal education alone.	"Preparation means being able to adapt... continuous training is a big part of our job."

4.12.4 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers feel confident in their academic preparation but unready for the emotional and behavioral realities of the classroom. They experience stress linked to student motivation, special needs, and heavy workload. Self-efficacy emerges as a dynamic process that grows through practice, mentoring, and peer collaboration rather than solely through academic instruction.

4.12.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Lack of emotional and psychological preparation
- Need for mentoring and structured induction
- Bureaucratic overload and unclear communication

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Lack of emotional and psychological preparation	Lack of preparation for managing emotional and psychological aspects of teaching, including both student support and self-regulation.	"Training doesn't prepare us for the emotional needs of students."
Need for mentoring and structured induction.	Formal mentoring and gradual induction are considered vital for reducing stress and building confidence.	"Having an experienced teacher guiding you, someone you can talk to, who can help you when you feel overwhelmed."

Bureaucratic overload and unclear communication	Bureaucratic demands and constant policy changes generate frustration, confusion, and anxiety.	"When laws change, teachers are left confused, with endless meetings and no clear explanations."

4.12.6 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers perceive teacher education as insufficient for preparing them for the emotional and practical realities of teaching. They stress the need for mentorship and clearer institutional communication to ease the transition from training to professional practice and to support teacher well-being.

4.12.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- Collaborative problem-solving structures
- Initiatives to strengthen teacher connection
- Coaching and peer feedback practices

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Collaborative problem-solving structures	Pedagogical committees (C.C.P.) provide valuable spaces for collective problem-solving and coordination.	"Real cases are presented, like punctuality or absenteeism; it's an ideal setting for solving problems together."
Initiatives to strengthen teacher connection	Shared breaks and informal gatherings strengthen mutual support and reduce isolation.	"They organize shared meals or coffee breaks that foster communication and team spirit."
Coaching and peer feedback practices	Peer observation and coaching serve as effective methods for professional growth and emotional support.	"In the Finnish model, teachers and coaches support each other through structured teamwork."

4.12.8 Interpretive synthesis

In-training teachers emphasize the importance of collaboration, shared reflection, and supportive networks. Structured teamwork, peer feedback, and coaching systems are promising practices for enhancing well-being and professional growth.

4.12.9 Overall Summary

In-training teachers identify a clear gap between teacher education and real classroom work. Training is seen as too theoretical and inadequate for handling emotional, behavioral, and bureaucratic challenges. Many feel insecure managing diverse classrooms, conflicts, and special needs, stressing the need for stronger psychological and practical preparation. Continuous development, mentoring, and peer collaboration are viewed as essential for easing the transition into teaching. Initiatives such as pedagogical committees, shared team spaces, and peer observation are valued for building connections and fostering learning. Coaching models inspired by Finnish practices are highlighted as effective for promoting reflection and well-being. Overall, teachers call for more realistic, emotionally grounded, and collaborative training.

4.13 In-training teachers: cross-country synthesis

Across the six participating countries, in-training teachers present a consistent pattern of motivation, emotional strain, and perceived unpreparedness for the teaching profession. While participants report strong engagement and commitment to their future role, the transition from academic training to school practice is described as demanding at both the emotional and organisational level, with limited institutional support.

4.13.1 Well-being

Teachers' well-being is generally conceived as a collective and relational condition, shaped by the quality of interactions with colleagues, parents, and students, the main sources of stress concern relational dynamics and the **gap between theoretical preparation and practical demands.** Additional stressors include the absence of structured psychological support, unclear organisational communication, and, in some contexts (e.g., Cyprus and Spain), the low perceived social recognition of the teaching profession. Across all countries, collaboration, collegiality, and open dialogue appear as key protective factors for sustaining emotional balance. However, well-structured school-based well-being initiatives are rarely institutionalised and, when present, rely mainly on individual or local initiatives rather than on systemic frameworks.

4.13.2 Self-efficacy

Perceived self-efficacy develops primarily through practical experience, observation, and feedback, rather than through formal academic instruction. In-training teachers report confidence in their pedagogical knowledge but limited confidence in classroom management, parent communication, and inclusive practices. Theoretical training is often seen as misaligned with the realities of teaching, leaving trainees unsure how to manage **authority, diversity, and emotionally complex situations**. Self-efficacy is

therefore understood as a gradual, experience-based process that benefits from structured mentoring and reflective practice.

4.13.3 Professional Support

All reports underline a shortage of **structured mentoring, emotional supervision, and coordination** between universities and schools. Internship experiences are often described as brief, inconsistently guided, or insufficiently linked to practical learning objectives. Participants highlight the need for mentoring models that integrate pedagogical and emotional guidance, longer, better-supervised placements, and access to psychological support during training. Informal peer networks, such as online groups or local teacher circles, provide partial compensation but do not substitute for institutionalised systems of professional support.

4.13.4 Overall Summary

In-training teachers demonstrate strong professional motivation but face substantial emotional and practical challenges during the transition from education to professional practice. **Their main needs concern emotional preparation, experiential learning opportunities, and sustained guidance in early career stages**. The findings suggest that training models combining **practical experience, structured mentoring, and psychological support** may strengthen both individual well-being and professional competence, contributing to a more cohesive and supportive organisational climate within educational institutions.

In-service teachers

4.14 Cyprus

The focus group consisted of eight in-service teachers (six women and two men), with a mean age of 42 years. Participants were teaching at both secondary (n = 5) and primary (n = 3) school levels. This composition, combining different teaching stages and professional experiences, provided a rich context for exploring participants' perspectives on pedagogical practices, professional development, and insights derived from classroom experience.

4.14.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Time pressure and workload
- Lack of experiential training and motivation

- Impact of students' social problems
- Multicultural and diversity challenges
- Internal relationships and organisational support
- Stress management strategies

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Time pressure and workload	The curriculum is heavy, leaving little time for planning or collaboration.	"We don't have time to plan or even breathe."
Lack of experiential training and motivation	Training is seen as too theoretical and disconnected from real teaching. Motivation declines due to a lack of incentives and institutional support.	"Seminars are too theoretical and not really useful."
Impact of students' social problems	Students' family and emotional issues weigh on teachers' well-being.	"Some students bring their home problems to school, and it stays with you."
Multicultural and diversity challenges	Migrant and non-Greek-speaking students add stress; teachers feel unprepared.	"When you have children who don't speak Greek, you are on your own."
Internal relationships and organisational support	Collaboration varies; some experience teamwork, others competition, and weak leadership.	"In some schools we share everything, in others everyone works alone."
Stress management strategies	Stress is managed through peer support, hobbies, and maintaining work–life balance.	"We talk to each other, it's like therapy."

4.14.2 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers describe a demanding job with little time for preparation or cooperation. They are emotionally affected by students' difficulties and by the growing diversity in classrooms. Peer relationships are essential but depend on the individual school climate. Stress management primarily relies on informal support from colleagues and personal strategies. Over time, motivation tends to decline, and institutional recognition is perceived as scarce.

4.14.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Pedagogical adaptation and flexibility
- Planning and self-assessment
- Classroom management
- Student motivation
- Emotion and frustration management

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Pedagogical adaptation and flexibility	Teachers tailor methods to students' age, abilities, and class context.	"You teach the students, not just the subject."
Planning and self-assessment	Lesson diaries and annual plans support reflection and adjustment.	"I look at my lesson plans and see what I should change next time."
Classroom management	Setting boundaries and building trust are key to discipline and respect.	"Respect must be mutual, but we're not their friends."
Student motivation	Creative tools (games, competitions, cooperative learning, technology, AI) enhance students' engagement.	"If they have fun, they learn better."
Emotion and frustration management	Experience fosters calmness, frustration management, and self-awareness.	"With time, you learn to stop worrying about what you can't change."

4.14.4 Interpretive synthesis

Self-efficacy is grounded in direct classroom experience and adaptability. Teachers rely on reflection and experimentation more than on formal training. Emotional regulation improves with experience, allowing them to manage challenges with composure. Creativity and relational skills are essential for maintaining motivation and engagement in the classroom.

4.14.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Role of school coordinators
- Collaboration and sharing of materials

- Accessibility of training
- Differences between public and private schools

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Role of school coordinators	Coordinators play a central role but vary greatly in effectiveness and attitude. Some are helpful, others are seen as bureaucratic.	"Sometimes they help, other times they just add paperwork."
Collaboration and sharing of materials	Resource sharing exists in some schools and among teachers of similar subjects.	"We share worksheets and ideas: it helps everyone."
Accessibility of training	Training seminars are frequent but often repetitive and attended by few.	"Always the same people, always the same topics."
Differences between public and private schools	Private schools are seen as more flexible and better equipped, offering more training opportunities.	"Private schools have more freedom and resources."

4.14.6 Interpretive synthesis

Professional support depends strongly on the school environment. Coordination and leadership vary significantly. Collaboration with colleagues is the most reliable source of help, while institutional training is often repetitive or difficult to access. Differences between public and private schools affect the quality and diversity of professional opportunities available to teachers.

4.14.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- Few structured examples of good practices
- Positive experiences with online or international training
- Need for systematisation

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Few structured examples	Teachers depend mainly on personal experience rather than institutional models.	"We just do what works for us, there's no official model."
Positive experiences	Online platforms (e.g., National College) and international webinars offer valuable opportunities for exchange.	"The webinar with foreign teachers was really inspiring."
Need for systematisation	There is a strong demand for structured, shareable models of good practice.	"It would be good to have a place to see what others do and share ideas."

4.14.8 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers report limited awareness of structured good practices but value opportunities for digital and international exchange. They express interest in learning from others and in developing systems for sharing effective teaching methods and ideas across schools.

4.14.9 Overall Summary

In-service teachers describe a profession marked by time pressure, emotional demands, and limited institutional support. Peer collaboration and personal strategies are key to maintaining balance and motivation. Professional growth depends largely on experience, reflection, and informal networks. Although good practices are not systematically shared, teachers show strong openness to learning and collaboration through online and international initiatives.

4.15 Italy

The focus group consisted of eight in-service teachers (seven women and one man), with a mean age of 45 years. Participants were teaching at both primary (n = 3) and secondary (n = 5) school levels. The group's composition, combining different teaching stages and professional experiences, provided a rich context for exploring reflections on pedagogical practices, professional development, and insights gained through practical classroom experience.

4.15.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Communication and relational challenges
- Recognition and professional value
- Emotional and relational strain
- Peer support as a strategy

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Communication difficulties	Communication with families and students has become increasingly demanding.	"The most important challenge is to find the right way to communicate, especially with families and, consequently, with children, who are very different from those of 20 years ago."
Need for recognition	Feeling valued by peers and families boosts motivation and satisfaction.	"A teacher who feels recognised and has a sense of empowerment can only teach well... often you get overwhelmed, you don't recognise the children, they don't recognise you, and you don't even recognise yourself as a teacher."
Emotional complexity	Teaching is emotionally rewarding but also draining, requiring balance.	"Always trying to empathise with others could be a challenge."
Peer support	Support from colleagues helps manage stress and sustain well-being.	"I manage stress thanks to the support I find in my relationships with some of my colleagues."

4.15.2 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers' well-being is deeply rooted in relationships with students, families, and colleagues, sources of both fulfilment and strain. Effective communication and mutual recognition sustain motivation, while emotional overload and changing relational dynamics challenge balance and identity. Despite limited institutional support, collegial trust and shared understanding remain key protective factors that help teachers preserve meaning and engagement in their professional role.

4.15.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Self-efficacy as a collective and relational construct
- Awareness of situational and fluctuating efficacy
- Adaptability in managing relational and contextual challenges
- Emotional connection with students
- Meaningful and community-oriented learning

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Collective sense of efficacy	Self-efficacy grows through collaboration and shared support.	"When we make an effort together, because alone we get nowhere... the sense of self-efficacy increases in everyone involved."
Situational awareness	Efficacy varies with emotional and relational demands.	"It is impossible to always feel effective... the important thing is to know this and to say when I do not feel effective, but it is not that I have failed."
Adaptability in facing challenges	Confidence comes from adaptability and the ability to manage challenges.	"When I get the children to work in small groups... I feel more confident. Having a plan B helps me."
Emotional resonance with students	Trust and empathy sustain engagement and mastery.	"When I manage to create a good atmosphere, one of trust and collaboration, then yes, everything works better."
Meaningful and community-based learning	Linking lessons to students' experiences enhances efficacy.	"Whenever I manage to anchor Greek, Latin or Italian to something experiential, either mine or theirs, then a mechanism of effectiveness is created."

4.15.4 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers conceptualise self-efficacy as a collective, relational process that develops through collaboration and adaptability in complex contexts. Confidence arises

from shared efforts, emotional connection, and meaningful, community-oriented teaching practices, reinforcing the idea that efficacy is situational rather than individual.

4.15.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Fragmented and inconsistent well-being initiatives
- Importance of psychological and counselling support
- Collegial collaboration as the main support system
- Need for experiential and practice-oriented training
- Leadership and organisational guidance

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Lack of continuity	Well-being projects and training are often sporadic and short-lived.	"Maybe a project one year, then it disappears the next year. There's no clear line."
Psychological and counselling support	External counselling is appreciated but needs greater continuity.	"Having an external figure to turn to... is essential. It's a pity it's not permanent."
Collegiality as informal support	In the absence of structured initiatives, teachers rely on peer collaboration.	"We get by a bit among colleagues, we support each other, but in terms of organised support from the school, I'd say little or nothing."
Experiential training	Teachers call for hands-on, context-specific approaches.	"They are often theoretical things, when what we need is something more practical, more immediate."
Lack of leadership guidance	Limited organisational support in managing stress or conflicts.	"We don't always receive clear guidance or support when there are bigger conflicts... I felt very alone."

4.15.6 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers view school-based support and training as fragmented and sporadic, valued but rarely sustained. Peer collaboration remains the most dependable form of help, compensating for limited institutional structures. They call for experiential, practice-

oriented training that addresses real classroom challenges, and for leadership that fosters continuity and shared learning.

4.15.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- Community-building and shared initiatives
- Collaborative and experiential training
- Supportive and visionary leadership
- Grounding practices in everyday challenges
- Collegial and external relationships as protective factors

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Shared social activities	Informal and community-based activities strengthen relationships.	"Good practices are above all those that have created the conditions for being together, spending quality time together... doing things that bring people closer."
Collaborative training	Training that promotes group work and peer creativity is most valued.	"We did several training courses, with workshops where teachers worked in groups to create... and I thought that was really great."
Leadership fostering identity	Participative leaders help build a sense of belonging and shared values.	"We had enlightened leaders who guided us... creating community events allowed us to create our own identity as a school."
Context-based practices	Good practices arise from solving concrete daily problems.	"We try to find small solutions in everyday life; that's where good practice comes from."
Peer and external support	Relationships with colleagues and family sustain motivation and balance.	"Good relations with colleagues are definitely a good practice... but also finding support outside of work helps a lot."

4.15.8 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers associate good practices with community, participation, and shared meaning, often emerging from everyday challenges rather than formal interventions. Activities that foster collaboration and togetherness sustain motivation and well-being. Supportive leadership enhances collective identity, though initiatives often remain isolated and individually driven. Overall, good practices are relational, context-based processes that promote connection and belonging.

4.15.9 Overall Summary

For in-service teachers, school is a relational ecosystem where stress, support, and well-being revolve around colleagues, families, students, and the community. Professional well-being depends less on individual traits than on stable, collaborative relationships supported by practical training and a caring culture. Teachers call for experiential, peer-based learning focused on communication, relationship management, and stress handling in complex contexts. They also emphasise the need for continuous, structured support rather than fragmented initiatives, seeing training as a shared process that nurtures both competence and well-being.

4.16 Poland

The focus group consisted of seven in-service teachers (five women and two men), with a mean age of 42 years. Participants taught across both primary and secondary school levels. The group's composition, encompassing diverse teaching stages and professional experiences, provided a rich context for exploring pedagogical practices, professional development, and reflections on classroom experience.

4.16.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Emotional involvement and boundaries
- Parental pressure and expectations
- Strategies to manage stress and recover energy
- Importance of self-awareness and balance

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Emotional involvement and boundaries	Teachers struggle to separate work from their personal lives and to absorb students' emotions.	"Sometimes I take everything home with me, and I keep thinking about it."
Parental pressure and expectations	Parents often pressure them to fix problems right away.	"Parents think that if there is any problem, we must fix it at once."
Managing stress	Coping strategies include time alone, family time, and time with pets.	"I walk with my dog and everything feels lighter."
Balance and awareness	Awareness of limits and the need to protect personal space are seen as essential.	"If I don't take care of myself, I can't be good for my students."

4.16.2 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers describe their work as emotionally demanding and closely tied to relationships with students and parents. The boundary between professional and personal life often becomes blurred, leading to feelings of overload. In-service teachers use personal coping strategies to regain balance, such as spending time in nature or with family. Parental pressure and high expectations add to stress, making self-care and clear boundaries necessary for maintaining well-being.

4.16.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Satisfaction from students' progress
- Atmosphere and emotional connection in the classroom
- Supportive colleagues and cooperation
- Flexibility and creativity in teaching

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Students' progress	Teachers feel effective when students are engaged and improving.	"When a child who didn't like school starts to enjoy lessons, I feel it's a success."
Classroom atmosphere	A good emotional climate and mutual respect support learning.	"When there is a good atmosphere, students work better."
Collegial support	Cooperation and exchange between teachers increases confidence and motivation.	"We can always count on each other; we help and talk a lot."
Flexibility and creativity	Using games, experiments, and different activities keeps students interested and helps teachers feel more effective.	"I often use role play and games; then students are active and I feel the lessons go well."

4.16.4 Interpretive synthesis

Self-efficacy is linked to visible student engagement, classroom atmosphere, and cooperation with colleagues. In-service teachers describe confidence as emerging from daily experiences rather than formal evaluation. Flexibility, creativity, and mutual support help sustain motivation and a sense of competence in teaching diverse student groups.

4.16.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Peer collaboration as everyday support
- Availability of psychological and pedagogical help
- Protecting private time
- Preference for practical and experience-based training

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Peer collaboration	Teachers share ideas and experiences to handle challenges.	"We talk a lot with colleagues, share what works and what doesn't."
Psychological and pedagogical support	Support from school psychologists and pedagogical staff is valued.	"It's good to know that the psychologist is there if we need to talk."
Private time	Protecting free time for rest and family is essential.	"Training on weekends shouldn't happen; we also need time for ourselves."
Practical training	Practical workshops and supervision on real cases are preferred.	"I like when training is about real cases, not just theory."

4.16.6 Interpretive synthesis

Professional support is described as uneven but important. In-service teachers rely strongly on colleagues for advice and emotional support. Access to psychological staff is appreciated, although not always regular. Teachers express a need for training that connects directly with real classroom experience and everyday problems. Maintaining private time is also viewed as part of professional balance and sustainability.

4.16.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- Cooperation and mutual help among teachers
- Sharing experiences and ideas
- Openness to creative methods
- Positive relationships and teamwork

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Cooperation and mutual help	Teachers highlight teamwork and mutual help in daily school life.	"When we work together, everything goes smoothly."
Sharing experiences	Sharing materials and teaching methods is common and motivating.	"We often share ideas and examples of lessons."
Creative approaches	They enjoy experimenting with new and creative approaches.	"We try different things, games, experiments, projects."
Positive relations	Friendly, respectful staff relationships foster a positive atmosphere.	"It's a pleasure to come to work when people are kind."

4.16.8 Interpretive synthesis

Good practices are grounded in collaboration, creativity, and everyday cooperation among teachers. Sharing experiences and methods builds motivation and strengthens professional relationships. Openness to new ideas and mutual support create a sense of community, helping teachers manage challenges and maintain satisfaction in their work.

4.16.9 Overall Summary

In-service teachers describe their schools as relational environments where well-being, teaching quality, and cooperation are closely linked. Emotional involvement, parental expectations, and workload represent common challenges, while collegial support, creativity, and balance between work and private life are key resources. Teachers prefer training that is practical, experience-based, and grounded in real school situations. Informal collaboration and trust among colleagues emerge as the strongest sources of well-being and professional growth.

4.17 Portugal

The focus group consisted of six in-service teachers (four women and two men), with a mean age of 52 years. Participants were teaching across different educational stages, including basic education (n = 2), second-cycle basic education (n = 1), secondary education (n = 1), and third-cycle secondary education (n = 3). The group's diversity in teaching levels and extensive professional experience provided a rich context for exploring pedagogical practices, reflections on teaching strategies, and professional development.

4.17.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Work overload and bureaucracy
- Class diversity and inclusion challenges
- Decline in discipline and authority
- Physical and mental fatigue
- Personal coping strategies
- Planning and organization as protective factors
- Collegial and social support

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Work overload and bureaucracy	Excessive administrative tasks reduce teaching time and generate frustration and fatigue.	"The bureaucracy is overwhelming... it steals time from what I really love to do."
Class diversity and inclusion challenges	Managing students with special needs or behavioral issues causes emotional strain and self-doubt.	"I have three students with very significant special needs... I try not to harm the others or her."
Decline in discipline and loss of authority	Declining student behavior and limited parental support undermine classroom control.	"Parents are more likely to discredit the teacher's word."
Physical and mental fatigue	Heavy workload, large classes, and teaching across multiple schools lead to exhaustion and health issues.	"I came home with a headache... I really need to find a balance."
Personal coping strategies	Physical activity, relaxation, and hobbies help restore balance and reduce stress.	"I go for a run... Pilates helps me relax."
Planning and organization as protective factors	Structured planning and classroom organization enhance calm and self-efficacy.	"Good planning and organization help relieve tension during class."
Collegial and social support	Supportive relationships and open dialogue with colleagues sustain emotional well-being.	"It's good to talk to colleagues... to get those healthy rants off our chests."

4.17.2 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers experience multiple sources of stress, including bureaucracy, workload, and increasingly diverse classrooms with behavior and inclusion challenges. Physical and emotional fatigue are common, yet many rely on planning, organization, collegial support, and personal coping strategies (e.g., exercise, relaxation) to maintain well-being. Despite these pressures, a strong sense of purpose and commitment to teaching remain key protective factors.

4.17.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Curriculum changes and uncertainty
- Inclusion and classroom diversity as instructional challenges
- Student engagement through participatory and adaptive teaching
- Pedagogical relationship and enthusiasm as key to self-efficacy
- Reflective practice and ongoing adaptation

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Curriculum changes and uncertainty	Frequent modifications in curricula generate confusion and instability in teaching practice.	"These cuts the Ministry makes... leave me worried if I'm teaching the right way."
Inclusion and diversity challenges	The growing number of foreign and special needs students requires continuous adaptation of teaching strategies.	"I had to use another student as a translator... I'll have to readjust my strategies."
Engagement through active and creative methods	Interactive, musical, and project-based methods help maintain student motivation and focus.	"I use songs, videos, games... they really get more engaged."
Pedagogical relationship and enthusiasm	Connection, openness, and passion are seen as key to effective classroom management and self-efficacy.	"If I don't enthuse myself, how can I enthuse others?"
Reflective and adaptive mindset	Effectiveness depends on ongoing adjustment to class dynamics and individual needs.	"Each class is a unique moment... I adjust my approach accordingly."

4.17.4 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers demonstrate a strong sense of self-efficacy grounded in relational, adaptive, and creative teaching. Curriculum instability and growing classroom diversity are major challenges, yet many rely on enthusiasm, pedagogical connection, and reflective adaptation to maintain effectiveness. Motivation and engagement are sustained through participatory, context-sensitive methods, while passion for teaching emerges as the core driver of self-efficacy and resilience.

4.17.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Absence of structured well-being programs
- Importance of supportive and accessible leadership
- Belonging and collegial climate as sources of well-being
- Misaligned or insufficient professional training
- Value of external professional communities

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Lack of formal well-being programs	Well-being relies mainly on collegial relationships and informal staffroom culture rather than formal initiatives.	"Nothing concrete… the atmosphere among teachers was the source of well-being."
Supportive leadership	Supportive, approachable principals foster trust and a sense of being valued.	"Her door is always open… perfect freedom to work."
Belonging and collegial climate	Belonging and camaraderie sustain morale, though these are harder to maintain in large schools.	"I no longer felt that notion of belonging… in the big school."
Professional training gaps	Institutional training is considered repetitive and irrelevant, and the institution prefers self-directed learning.	"Always the same digital training… at the end of year, massacre."
External professional networks	Communities of practice provide both pedagogical exchange and emotional support.	"It's fundamental to seek support… to see our questions in others' questions."

4.17.6 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers report no structured well-being programs, but highlight the value of collegial ties, supportive leadership, and belonging. Training is often inadequate and misaligned, prompting self-directed learning and engagement in external professional communities. Smaller, cohesive schools nurture well-being more effectively than large, impersonal ones.

4.17.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- Need to restore humanity and relational culture in schools
- Bureaucratic overload as a barrier to collegiality and well-being
- Importance of informal and community-building initiatives
- International and creative projects as sources of renewal and belonging

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Humanism and relational care	Greater emphasis on empathy, kindness, and human relationships within the school community is needed.	"It's fundamental to work on humanism within the school... sometimes it's just one word too many."
Bureaucratic overload	Administrative demands reduce time for connection and weaken collegial bonds.	"We are increasingly overloaded... it steals the time we used to have to joke with each other."
Community and belonging	Shared moments such as meals and celebrations are valued but increasingly rare.	"That social side has disappeared... now hardly anyone is in the teachers' lounge."
Innovative and creative initiatives	Erasmus projects, seminars, and creative workshops enhance well-being and professional inspiration.	"Poetic play... poetry was the medicine."
Hope for systemic renewal	Growing policy attention to teacher well-being inspires cautious optimism.	"I'm convinced this Minister might be different... more focused on making that happen again."

4.17.8 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers emphasize human connection and empathy as the foundation of well-being and professional vitality. Yet, bureaucratic overload and lack of time undermine

these bonds. Creative and collective projects, from Erasmus to poetry workshops, serve as rare yet powerful sources of renewal, fostering belonging, joy, and shared purpose. There is a shared hope for institutional change toward a more humane and community-oriented school culture.

4.17.9 Overall Summary

In-service teachers highlight the importance of human connection, collegial trust, and belonging as key to their well-being and professional motivation. Yet these are increasingly undermined by bureaucratic overload, limited time, and fragmented school relationships. Formal well-being initiatives are mostly absent, with support emerging instead from peer solidarity and accessible leadership. Training opportunities are seen as misaligned, often limited to technical skills. Still, creative and collective projects, such as Erasmus exchanges, poetry workshops, and collaborative planning, offer spaces for renewal and inspiration. Overall, teachers call for a more humane and relational school culture that restores meaning and community to their work.

4.18 Romania

The focus group consisted of ten in-service teachers, all women, with a mean age of 35 years. Participants were teaching at primary (n = 5), secondary (n = 3), and combined primary and secondary (n = 2) levels. The group's composition, reflecting a range of teaching stages and experiences, provided a rich context for exploring pedagogical practices, professional development, and reflections on classroom experience.

4.18.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Class size and overload
- Emotional exhaustion and lack of breaks
- Special educational needs and group heterogeneity
- Bureaucracy and systemic pressure
- Relationship with parents and family environment
- Emotional self-regulation and boundary setting

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Class size and overload	Overcrowded classes hinder individual attention and increase stress.	"When you have 20 or 30 little ones, giving each child the same level of attention becomes almost impossible."
Emotional exhaustion and lack of breaks	Continuous contact with students can lead to emotional fatigue; teachers may request co-teachers or assistants for support.	"Primary school teachers stay with the children from morning until noon every day, we even spend the breaks together with them."
Special educational needs and heterogeneity	Managing special needs while keeping others engaged is challenging and time-consuming	"Out of 16 students, 7 had special needs... teaching became very difficult."
Bureaucracy and systemic pressure	Bureaucratic and administrative duties reduce time for meaningful teaching.	"There is simply too much, and the number of documents could definitely be reduced."
Relationship with parents and family environment	Parent relationships are stressful, often marked by denial and boundary violations.	"Most parents do not accept that their children have emotional or behavioural problems." "Parents call and text even at 11 p.m.; there should be boundaries."
Emotional self-regulation and boundary setting	Teachers cope through personal strategies, exercise, music, therapy, and by setting clear communication limits.	"I listen to music for an hour after work to regulate emotionally." "I made clear from the beginning that parents can contact me only until a certain hour."

4.18.2 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers describe well-being as fragile and constantly challenged by multiple external pressures. Overcrowded classes, bureaucratic demands, and the complex relationship with parents create emotional strain and fatigue. Teachers express a strong need for structural and emotional support, such as co-teachers, counsellors, and clearer communication policies. Despite difficulties, teachers demonstrate resilience through personal coping strategies and boundary management, showing awareness of the need to protect their emotional health.

4.18.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Instructional autonomy and flexibility
- Emotional state and contextual dependence
- Strategies for classroom management
- Motivation and student engagement

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Instructional autonomy and flexibility	Teachers feel more effective when they can design their own activities, adapt lessons to student needs, and receive trust and support from school leadership.	"In primary school I can structure the activities... This helps and motivates me."
Emotional state and contextual dependence	A sense of efficacy varies according to the teacher's emotional state, classroom atmosphere, and students' receptivity. Calmness and mutual respect are key to lesson success.	"If I am calm and motivated, the children receive it with the same joy."
Strategies for classroom management	Teachers use clear signals, routines, and positive reinforcement to maintain order. With older students, firmness, consistency, and communication about consequences are most effective.	"I raise my hand and the children follow... it works." "I start speaking quietly, and they immediately pay attention."
Motivation and student engagement	Engagement is fostered through play, variety, choice, and real-world relevance. Teachers encourage self-confidence and small challenges while balancing technology and rewards.	"I give them several options so they can choose what they enjoy." "I explain why what we learn will be useful in their future."

4.18.4 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers describe self-efficacy as grounded in both personal and contextual factors. Autonomy, emotional balance, and responsive classroom climates sustain their confidence in teaching. Effective classroom management is seen as relational and adaptive rather than disciplinary. Motivation arises from creativity, student choice, and meaningful learning experiences, supported by a sense of trust and professional freedom.

4.18.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Lack of institutional well-being resources
- Collegial solidarity vs. institutional absence
- Bureaucratic overload and expanded responsibilities
- Positive but isolated examples of supportive leadership

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Lack of institutional well-being resources	No formal initiatives exist to support teacher well-being; informal events are rare and self-organized.	"We would like it to exist, but unfortunately it does not."
Collegial solidarity vs. institutional absence	Emotional support relies on colleagues, while institutional backing is largely absent.	"From colleagues I can say that there is support... but from the institution itself, no."
Bureaucratic overload and expanded responsibilities	Bureaucracy and administrative tasks have intensified, especially for homeroom and primary teachers.	"Now all these issues and conflicts have to be resolved by homeroom teachers... very few want to take it on anymore."
Positive but isolated examples of supportive leadership	Isolated examples of supportive leadership highlight how appreciation and collaboration can boost motivation.	"The principal made a real effort to make us feel validated and appreciated."

4.18.6 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers perceive an almost complete absence of structured institutional support for their well-being. Professional and emotional resilience relies largely on peer relationships and personal coping strategies, while organizational systems fail to provide consistent resources. Bureaucratic overload and emotional demands further strain teachers' capacity to manage their workload. Supportive leadership emerges as a rare yet powerful example, suggesting that fostering recognition and community may significantly improve teachers' sense of support and involvement.

4.18.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- Lack of structured initiatives

- Informal social gatherings as relational glue
- Team building and professional integration
- Collaboration with external specialists

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Lack of structured initiatives	Formal programs for well-being or professional networking are largely absent or sporadic.	"At our school there are not really such initiatives."
Informal social gatherings as relational glue	Informal social events help relieve stress and strengthen relationships, but are harder to sustain in larger schools.	"In a larger school... I do not see real unity."
Team building and professional integration	Small-group or committee meetings serve as informal peer support, fostering inclusion and trust among colleagues.	"We try to have regular meetings... it has helped me a lot to integrate into this school."
Collaboration with external specialists	Some schools host external experts for student sessions, indirectly improving the school climate and teacher well-being.	"Specialists who come and talk to the students... that is a really good thing."

4.18.8 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers identify few structured or long-term initiatives supporting well-being or professional development. Instead, social and relational activities, such as informal gatherings, team outings, or committee meetings, act as primary mechanisms for connection and emotional balance. These practices foster a sense of community, particularly in smaller schools, yet remain spontaneous rather than strategic. Occasional collaborations with external specialists also contribute to a positive environment, but are not systematically integrated into school well-being policies. Overall, professional support and inspiration emerge from grassroots social interaction rather than institutional design.

4.18.9 Overall Summary

In-service teachers depict a profession driven by personal commitment and peer relationships rather than institutional support. Well-being is sustained through informal bonds and individual resilience, while organizational initiatives remain scarce. Self-efficacy stems from autonomy, emotional balance, and students' engagement, but is undermined by stress and bureaucratic demands. Formal training and support systems are largely absent, replaced by collegial empathy and shared frustration. Good practices mainly take the form of informal gatherings or small-scale team-building activities, with limited

strategic continuity. Overall, teachers show strong intrinsic motivation but operate within a weakly supportive institutional environment.

4.19 Spain

The focus group consisted of eight in-service teachers (six women and two men), with a mean age of 46 years. Participants were teaching at both primary (n = 2) and secondary (n = 6) school levels. The group's composition, combining different teaching stages and professional experiences, provided a rich context for exploring pedagogical practices, professional development, and reflections on classroom experience.

4.19.1 Topic 1 – General well-being at Work

Main themes

- Support from management and colleagues
- families and behaviouralissues
- Existence of behavior management protocols
- Peer relationships and staffroom climate
- Personal and collective coping strategies
- Lack of institutional follow-up after emotional crises

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Support from management and colleagues	Well-being depends strongly on support from management and colleagues; absence of backing during conflicts causes major stress.	"What overwhelms me and stresses me a lot is when I have a problem with a student, and the management team is not with me."
Conflicts with families and behaviouralissues	Difficult families and disruptive behaviour are described as the most stressful aspects of teaching.	"The most complicated part of my job is the families."
Existence of behavior management protocols	Structured conflict-management protocols foster a sense of safety and coherence.	"When there's a conflict with a student... the teacher has to fill out a conduct report... If the behavior is very serious, the student is suspended immediately."
Peer relationships and staffroom climate	The emotional climate among staff greatly influences well-being; negative relationships heighten distress.	"Behavior problems and conflict in the classroom generate quite a lot of discomfort among teachers... and what can also cause stress is a bad atmosphere in the staffroom."
Personal and collective coping strategies	Personal coping strategies (e.g., yoga, informal peer "therapy") compensate for the lack of institutional support.	"The most important thing we have to work on is ourselves. For example, I actually do yoga... we support each other, we share our difficulties."
Lack of institutional follow-up after emotional crises	After critical incidents, emotional needs are often neglected by school administrations.	"We had a very serious emotional case at school... and the next day there was a substitute. No 'how are we,' not for us, not for the students."

4.19.2 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers emphasize that their well-being depends less on students and more on the quality of interpersonal and institutional support. The absence of management support or families' hostility creates intense distress, while structured behavioural protocols and collegial solidarity foster security. When official responses are limited to administrative procedures, teachers turn to self-care and peer support, which some describe as informal "group therapy" moments. The narratives convey a sense of emotional isolation and self-reliance: "we have to work on ourselves," as one teacher put

it. Overall, well-being emerges as a relational and systemic issue rather than an individual one.

4.19.3 Topic 2 – Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

Main themes

- Small class sizes and stable environments
- Relational and emotional connection with students
- Collaborative structures and mediation systems
- Adaptive and emotion-focused classroom management
- Balancing motivation and realism
- Digital fatigue and humor as management tools
- Family involvement and student motivation

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Small class sizes and stable environments	Smaller class sizes and familiar environments enhance perceived teaching effectiveness.	"Low ratios are essential to keep some order in class. With 15 students it works wonderfully."
Relational and emotional connection with students	Personal connection and regular check-ins with students improve engagement.	"When I start class, I begin from a more personal point of view, asking them how they are."
Collaborative structures and mediation systems	Mediation departments and coexistence coordinators support emotional and behavioural management.	"They created a mediation department with teachers and students elected by their peers."
Adaptive and emotion-focused classroom management	Flexible planning, emotional education, and peer dialogue foster a positive climate.	"My strategy is to adapt to them... when there's a conflict, I tell them: don't come to me, talk to each other."
Balancing motivation and realism	Intrinsic motivation and responsibility are encouraged through realism and reflection.	"Motivation has to come from within... holding up the mirror of reality."

Digital fatigue and humor as management tools	Excessive screen use reduces attention; humor helps sustain focus.	"Screens have numbed us... I use humor a lot, otherwise I'd burn out."
Family involvement and student motivation	Limited parental cooperation weakens student motivation	"You can do everything right in the classroom, but if the families don't cooperate, the motivation goes down."

4.19.4 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers perceive self-efficacy as strongly tied to relationships and classroom context. Smaller groups, emotional connection, and peer or institutional support increase confidence and control. Humor and adaptability emerge as coping mechanisms in a demanding environment marked by digital fatigue and emotional strain. Motivation is seen as a shared responsibility among teachers, students, and families. Family disengagement and lack of systemic support remain key barriers to sustaining efficacy.

4.19.5 Topic 3 – Training and Professional Support

Main themes

- Need for structured emotional well-being training
- Lack of time and institutional resources for well-being activities
- Post-Covid superficial approach to teacher well-being
- Importance of clear behavioural support protocols
- Importance of management support

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Need for structured emotional well-being training	Formal, expert-led programs on emotional well-being are requested, comparable to other professional trainings.	"There should be training on emotional well-being for teachers... let experts give that training."
Lack of time and institutional resources for well-being activities	Well-being initiatives often depend on teachers' personal effort, lacking time or institutional backing.	"The teachers involved need hours allocated to be there... emotional work requires teacher effort and involvement."
Post-Covid superficial approach to teacher well-being	Post-Covid, well-being gained visibility but without concrete implementation or resources.	"After Covid, the whole emotional well-being trend got big... But what did we get? A beautiful dossier."
Importance of clear behaviouralsupport protocols	Clear conflict-management procedures create a sense of safety and structure.	"When there's a conflict, we have a protocol... Once a week we review them in a coexistence meeting."
Management support and leadership responsiveness	Managerial support is essential for effectively addressing classroom difficulties.	"When you have problems... and you don't have support from management, of course you feel alone and abandoned."

4.19.6 Interpretive synthesis

In-service teachers emphasize the need for institutionalized, expert-led training in emotional well-being, contrasting it with the limited, superficial initiatives currently offered. While formal behavior management protocols provide structure, management support remains inconsistent and often situational. A lack of dedicated time and resources burdens teachers, who are responsible for their own well-being. Post-pandemic, awareness has grown, but concrete implementation is missing. Consistent leadership and systemic backing are viewed as key to fostering genuine professional support.

4.19.7 Topic 4 – Good Practices and Inspiration

Main themes

- Collaborative networks with administration
- Emotional and motivational support
- Improved working conditions

- Listening and professional autonomy

Theme	Description	Representative Quotes
Collaborative networks with administration	Inclusive professional communities involving both teachers and administrators are proposed to share experiences and solutions.	"Professional support networks, yes, but with the administration paying attention, taking note of changes that can be implemented."
Emotional and motivational support	Psychological support, yoga, and peer reflection groups help sustain motivation and emotional balance.	"Maybe it's a psychologist, maybe yoga, call it what you want, but there needs to be something to motivate us to say, 'This is worth it.'"
Improved working conditions	Smaller classes, lighter workloads, and less bureaucracy are viewed as key to improving well-being.	"I think the best is improving working conditions. That means lowering class sizes and fewer teaching hours."
Listening and professional autonomy	Greater recognition from leaders and policymakers is needed, along with fewer restrictive rules.	"The administration, the education ministers, all those at the top, none of them have ever set foot in a classroom."

4.19.8 Interpretive synthesis

Good practices are envisioned as systemic conditions that enable motivation, collaboration, and professional dignity. Teachers stress the value of shared networks including administration, emotional support mechanisms, and manageable workloads. Autonomy and trust are considered essential for sustainable engagement. Ultimately, effective well-being practices must begin with listening to teachers' voices and acting upon them.

4.19.9 Overall Summary

In-service teachers describe well-being as a collective and structural issue rather than an individual one. The most critical stressors stem from conflict with families, lack of management support, and excessive bureaucracy. Emotional exhaustion and demotivation are widespread, highlighting the need for institutional attention and recognition. Teachers emphasize peer solidarity, emotional self-regulation, and informal "support circles" as coping strategies. Effective teaching is linked to strong collegial relationships, manageable workloads, and supportive leadership. Good practices include professional networks that involve administration, mentoring, and emotional

training. Overall, teachers call for real listening, reduced administrative pressure, and renewed motivation within a more humanized educational system.

4.20 In-service teachers: cross-country synthesis

In-service Across all six countries, in-service teachers describe their work experience as characterised by high relational demands, variable institutional support, and significant administrative burdens. Overall, the teaching profession appears marked by strong commitment operating within fragmented organisational conditions.

4.20.1 Well-being

Well-being is largely described in relational and organisational terms. Main sources of strain include: (a) communication difficulties with families and students; (b) the emotional toll of student behaviour and social problems; (c) time pressure, curriculum overload, and bureaucracy; and (d) limited or inconsistent leadership support. Teachers often report blurred boundaries between work and personal life, which contributes to fatigue and highlights the need for clearer communication rules (e.g., limits on parental contact).

Protective factors include strong interpersonal trust among colleagues, recognition, and a collaborative school climate. However, structured school-based well-being initiatives are rare. When such initiatives do exist, they tend to rely on the motivation of individual staff rather than systematic implementation.

4.20.2 Self-efficacy

Perceptions of self-efficacy are described as highly context-dependent, shaped by class composition, class size, and relational dynamics. Teachers feel more effective when they have instructional autonomy, can adapt strategies to diverse learners, and maintain positive relationships with students.

Effective teaching is associated with proactive planning, reflective practice, collaborative learning, creative and active methodologies, and emotion-sensitive approaches to classroom management.

Major challenges include managing heterogeneous groups and students with special educational needs, maintaining consistent discipline, and building cooperative relations with families. Smaller class sizes and stable school environments consistently support higher perceived efficacy.

4.20.3 Professional Support

Professional support systems vary widely across countries and are often described as fragmented. Everyday support mainly comes from peers through informal exchanges and shared resources, whereas structured mentoring, counselling, and long-term well-being programmes are limited.

Teachers express a strong need for regular access to school psychologists and clear behaviour management procedures but note that implementation is inconsistent and that organisational feedback and emotional support are often lacking.

Professional development is frequently viewed as too theoretical, repetitive, or poorly aligned with classroom realities. Participants favour practical, case-based formats that include supervision and opportunities for reflective practice.

Leadership is seen as a crucial factor: accessible leaders who provide recognition and guidance contribute significantly to the perception of organisational support.

4.20.4 Overall Summary

In-service teachers portray teaching as a highly relational profession carried out under significant administrative pressure and uneven organisational support. Their well-being depends heavily on workplace relationships, recognition, and a manageable workload.

Self-efficacy is strengthened by autonomy, reflective planning, and adaptive instruction but is hindered by heterogeneous classrooms, discipline challenges, and limited family engagement.

Key priorities include: (1) establishing structured well-being resources at school level (e.g., psychological services, systematic feedback, clear boundary policies); (2) ensuring consistent and supportive leadership alongside clear behaviour protocols; (3) reducing unnecessary workload and bureaucracy where possible; (4) providing experiential, supervision-based professional development with strong opportunities for peer learning.

Implementing these measures would support teacher well-being and strengthen instructional quality in a sustainable, system-wide way.

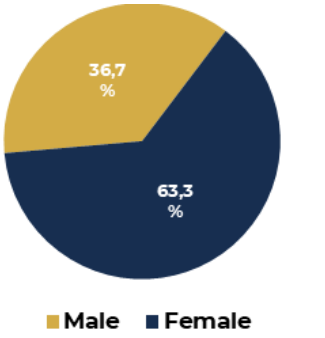
4.21 Interviews

A total of 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with school headteachers by the six partner institutions involved in the Teachers' HAVEN Erasmus+ project. Each interview lasted roughly 30 minutes and was carried out either in person or online. All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and fully transcribed. Trained project collaborators facilitated the sessions, following a shared protocol to ensure comparability across countries. The interview questions focused on three core themes: teacher well-being and emotional strain; perceptions of self-efficacy in classroom management and

instructional practices; and the institutional and social support teachers receive within their school contexts, viewed from a leadership perspective.

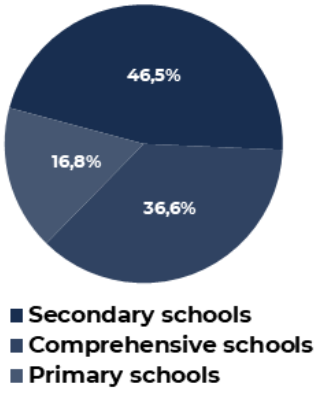
The sample consisted of 30 headteachers from six European countries, with each country contributing five participants (16.7% each): Cyprus, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain. This balanced design provides a broad and representative overview of leadership perspectives across diverse educational systems in Europe.

Participants ranged in age from 44 to 65, with an average age of 54.67 years (SD = 5.87), reflecting a cohort of experienced educational leaders capable of offering insights informed by extensive professional trajectories.



In terms of gender, the sample was predominantly female: 19 participants (63.3%) identified as women and 11 (36.7%) as men. This distribution reflects recent European trends, with women increasingly represented in headship roles, although male leadership remains common in some national contexts (European Commission, 2022).

The average length of leadership experience was 15.08 years (SD = 10.23), with a range of 1 to 37 years. The mix of mid-career and highly experienced headteachers adds depth to the data, offering diverse perspectives on teacher well-being and support.



Headteachers represented different school levels, illustrating the project's reach across the educational continuum. Nearly half (47%) led secondary schools, 37% worked in combined primary-secondary institutions, and 17% headed primary schools (some including preschool). This distribution captures viewpoints from varied organisational settings, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of teacher well-being and self-efficacy needs across stages of schooling.

4.21.1 Teacher Well-Being

Across all participating countries, headteachers described teacher well-being as fragile, shaped by multiple stressors and buffered mainly by informal, relationship-based supports rather than by consistent organisational policies. A recurring theme was the emotional strain generated by external pressures, with schools often relying on empathetic leadership and ad-hoc initiatives to help teachers cope. This gap between recognised needs and structured provision points to the importance of proactive, context-sensitive measures to support well-being at school level.

4.21.2 Main Sources of Stress for Teaching Staff

Headmasters consistently identified relational and systemic pressures as primary stressors, with interactions involving parents/families emerging as a near-universal challenge, often amplified by workload, bureaucratic demands, and evolving student needs (e.g., psychological fragility or indiscipline).

> **Cyprus:** *"Communicating with demanding or critical parents can cause tension and frustration."*
>
> **Italy:** *"The main source of stress for my teachers is their relationship with parents: it often becomes contentious, 'union-like', suspicious... We struggle to maintain an adult-to-adult relationship."*
>
> **Romania:** *"The most significant source of stress comes from interactions with parents, who often believe they can dictate how things should be done."*
>
> **Portugal:** *"The main source of stress is student indiscipline, combined with parental oversight. Many parents tend to overly defend their children, and teachers often feel their authority and work are challenged."*

These factors lead to emotional exhaustion, particularly for novice teachers who lack preparation for complex dynamics.

In private or exam-oriented contexts (e.g., Cyprus, Poland), performance pressures exacerbate this, while public systems (e.g., Spain, Romania) highlight policy instability and low salaries as demotivators.

> **Cyprus:** *"A significant source of stress is the pressure exerted by the results of external examinations, such as IGCSE and A levels."*
>
> **Poland:** *"Teacher stress in this school is primarily driven by high-stakes exam requirements, rigid curricula, and limited opportunities for individualized instruction."*
>
> **Spain:** *"The greatest cause of teacher stress is the change of the educational laws. It takes away our time and vitality for what we should do, which is the transmission of knowledge."*
>
> **Romania:** *"A second major source is related to salaries, which are widely perceived as inadequate."*

Overall, stress is relational at its core, balancing authority, empathy, and administrative overload, undermining motivation and long-term retention.

4.21.3 Strategies or Practices Currently in Place to Promote Teacher Well-Being

Strategies were predominantly informal and leadership-driven, focusing on building trust, community, and access to resources rather than structured programs. Common practices

included open-door policies, team-building events (e.g., retreats, lunches), and access to psychologists or workshops, often voluntary but encouraged.

> **Cyprus:** *"The school administration has ensured that a climate of trust and transparency is maintained, where teachers can freely express their opinions... We also organize group activities... And the school also has a professional psychologist."*

> **Italy:** *"The school organizes annual meetings with specialists and psychologists to help teachers reflect on and address these relational challenges. Participation is voluntary but strongly encouraged."*

> **Poland:** *"Strategies to support teacher well-being are largely headmaster-driven, including offsite retreats, coaching groups, and structured opportunities for peer collaboration."*

Reception was positive, enhancing cohesion, though participation varied by workload. Private schools (e.g., Cyprus, Italy) showed more proactive initiatives like funded excursions, while public ones emphasized dialogue.

> **Portugal:** *"We have several measures: schedule adjustments, days off, flexible start and end times, whenever necessary. We also promote training in socio-emotional skills, such as the Ubuntu project."*

> **Romania:** *"One of our key strategies is to provide teachers with the necessary material resources. Another important strategy focuses on well-being, which we try to foster through informal gatherings."*

> **Spain:** *"What helps is the climate of the school itself: very good atmosphere among teachers. We try to set an example, support teachers as much as possible. And there are voluntary courses for emotional management."*

This reactive, people-centred approach mitigates isolation but reveals a reliance on individual headmaster initiative over scalable systems.

4.21.4 Specific Regulations or Policies for Assessing Work-Related Stress

A striking consensus emerged: no formal regulations or systematic assessments exist in most schools, with monitoring relying on informal observation, dialogue, and intuition, which headmasters viewed as a systemic oversight, fearing added bureaucracy but acknowledging its limitations in early detection. Where present (rarely, e.g., risk assessments in Poland), implementation was ad-hoc via leadership or HR.

> **Cyprus:** *"Our school does not currently have any official policy or regulation that specifically and systematically addresses the assessment of teachers' work-related stress."*

> **Italy:** *"No specific regulation for monitoring stress exists. Indicating that teacher well-being largely depends on leadership sensitivity rather than formal policies."*
>
> **Poland:** *"Formal institutional policies on stress assessment are absent."*
>
> **Portugal:** *"No, there is no formal process currently in place. Assessment is mostly informal, based on daily contact, direct observation, and spontaneous complaints."*
>
> **Romania:** *"No. The absence of any regulation highlights a significant gap in the school's organizational well-being framework."*
>
> **Spain:** *"All headmasters agree that there are no formal regulations or systematic protocols for assessing work-related stress. Stress is identified through informal communication."*

This absence underscores a cultural gap in prioritizing mental health proactively, leaving well-being to reactive, personal interventions and highlighting the need for EU-level guidelines adaptable to national contexts.

4.21.5 Teachers' Self-Efficacy

Headmasters described self-efficacy as dynamic and relational, rooted in a blend of technical mastery and soft skills, with confidence built through collaboration and experience. Novices often start fragile but grow via mentorship, while veterans adapt resiliently. Schools promote this informally via peer exchange and projects, yet call for sustained, practice-based training. Cross-nationally, self-efficacy is seen as protective against stress, but eroded by isolation or rapid changes, pointing to the value of integrated support in fostering agency.

4.21.6 Essential Skills for an Effective Teacher and How the School Promotes Them

Essential skills converged on a holistic profile: pedagogical expertise (e.g., differentiated instruction) paired with socio-emotional competencies (empathy, communication, resilience), where classroom management and adaptability to diverse needs (e.g., special education) were prioritized, reflecting modern challenges like digital integration or inclusiveness. Promotion occurs via mentoring, workshops, and collaborative planning, often external or voluntary, with schools emphasizing reflection and innovation, though financial barriers limit formal development.

> **Cyprus:** *"The ability to design and implement lessons with a clear goal... The ability to understand and manage one's emotions... As a school, we organize training seminars... and offer guidance to new teachers through collaboration."*

> **Italy:** *"Strong disciplinary knowledge, skill in 'relational dynamics', and early detection of pupil distress; above all, 'empathy'. In primary/middle schools, systematic observation supports early identification."*
>
> **Poland:** *"Essential skills for effective teaching include strong interpersonal and soft skills, resilience, adaptability. The school promotes these through coaching, mentoring, and targeted workshops."*
>
> **Portugal:** *"The most important skill is emotional intelligence. Our school supports this development through ongoing training; teachers are encouraged to seek further education at training centres."*
>
> **Romania:** *"Psycho-pedagogical skills, followed closely by subject-specific expertise. Equally critical are strong communication skills. Our school encourages participation in external training programs."*
>
> **Spain:** *"The most frequently mentioned qualities are empathy, adaptability, classroom management, teamwork. Development is mostly informal, taking place through collaboration, shared projects."*

This synthesis reveals teaching as an empathetic craft in which soft skills bridge knowledge gaps.

4.21.7 General Level of Self-Efficacy Among Teachers

Self-efficacy was generally rated high, characterized by confidence in classroom challenges and adaptive strategies, though varying by experience: novices show enthusiasm but need guidance, while experienced teachers exhibit autonomy and initiative.

> **Italy:** *"Experienced staff generally show confidence and autonomy, while newly hired teachers often appear fragile, needing closer guidance."*
>
> **Poland:** *"Self-efficacy is higher among experienced teachers while younger teachers are still developing confidence and coping strategies."*
>
> **Romania:** *"In general, teachers demonstrate a good level of self-efficacy. Most feel confident. Of course, there are differences between beginner and experienced teachers."*
>
> **Spain:** *"Overall, teachers are seen as having a high level of self-efficacy. New teachers often show enthusiasm, while veteran teachers feel more secure due to experience."*

Collaboration and reflection amplify this, with project involvement boosting motivation. In high-pressure contexts, it fluctuates with support.

Cyprus: *"The overall level of self-efficacy among our school's teachers is high. They often show initiative and a willingness to experiment with new approaches."*

Portugal: *"I believe that the teachers have a very good level of self-efficacy. This new generation tends to stick to their schedule, but we develop this sense, because it's necessary to find solutions."*

Collectively, headmasters view self-efficacy as cultivated communally, essential for retention, yet vulnerable to burnout without targeted nurturing.

4.21.8 Social and Relational Variables

Relational climates were depicted as strengths, collaborative and trust-based, serving as buffers against stress, with teamwork integral to efficacy. Conflicts were minor and resolved dialogically, often tied to organizational issues rather than interpersonal rifts. This positive framing emphasizes schools as communities, where peer networks and leadership modelling sustain morale, though generational or workload strains occasionally surface. Enhancing these variables could amplify the project's impact on holistic teacher support.

4.21.9 Relational Climate Among the Teaching Staff

The climate was overwhelmingly positive: collaborative, with regular meetings, shared planning, and informal exchanges that fostered unity and reduced isolation.

Poland: *"The relational climate is positive and collaborative, with teachers exchanging knowledge, participating in integration initiatives."*

Portugal: *"The relational climate is quite positive. It is a team that can come together to support each other. Regular team meetings are held."*

Spain: *"The relational climate is described as generally positive and collaborative. Teachers work together in both formal meetings and informal exchanges."*

Headmasters linked this to student outcomes, emphasizing trust and mutual aid.

Italy: *"Collegiality is described as robust. 'It is better to make mistakes together than to divide between who was right and who was wrong.'"*

Romania: *"Relationships among teachers are characterized by open communication and mutual support, which contribute to a constructive and motivating work environment."*

While new staff integration may temper initial dynamics, co-teaching and events build cohesion.

> **Cyprus:** *"Our school has a positive and supportive atmosphere of cooperation. There is a willingness to exchange good practices."*

Nationally, private schools (e.g., Cyprus) tie it to performance, while public schools (e.g., Spain) tie it to cultural norms, revealing relational bonds as a universal resilience factor.

4.21.10 Recurring Conflicts or Specific Dynamics Within the Team

Conflicts were rare, minor, and transient, often organizational (e.g., schedules, bureaucracy) or generational, resolved via open dialogue, mediation, or informal talks, preventing escalation.

> **Cyprus:** *"Conflicts are rare and usually minor. There is a positive working climate, with staff unity seen as crucial."*

> **Poland:** *"Conflicts are infrequent and mostly personal, managed informally."*

> **Spain:** *"Conflicts are acknowledged as minor, cyclical, and mostly organizational. Handled constructively through dialogue, mediation, and open discussion."*

Headmasters viewed them as growth opportunities, with leadership facilitating empathy.

> **Portugal:** *"I believe that when minor disagreements arise, they are resolved quickly. We may not always agree, but as soon as a conflict appears, it is addressed."*

> **Romania:** *"In general, the climate is stable, and there are no recurring conflicts. Occasionally, disagreements arise, but they do not affect the good collaboration."*

In exam-focused settings (e.g., Cyprus), they link to performance, while elsewhere (e.g., Italy), to envy.

> **Italy:** *"Occasional conflicts rooted in envy or interpersonal difficulties. I actively seek to reduce [gossip] through stricter communication rules and individual dialogue."*

This low-intensity pattern reflects mature cultures but signals the protective role of proactive communication in averting relational erosion.

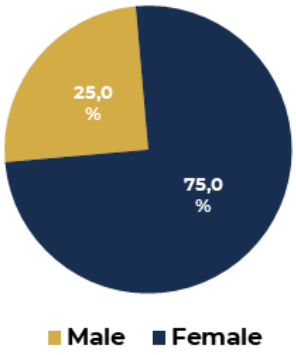
4.21.11 Overall Summary

These interviews reveal a shared European narrative: teachers flourish when supported by strong relationships but struggle when stressors, such as parental pressure and administrative burden, go unaddressed. Well-being and self-efficacy are closely tied to positive school climates, yet formal support structures often lag, leaving many schools to rely on informal, ad-hoc practices. The Teachers' HAVEN project is well positioned to

respond by developing cross-cultural tools, such as reflective workshops, policy templates, and peer-support networks, that can help headteachers amplify and systematize these promising practices. Moving forward, particular attention should be given to supporting early-career teachers and advocating for structural changes that ensure long-term, sustainable impact.

4.22 Round table

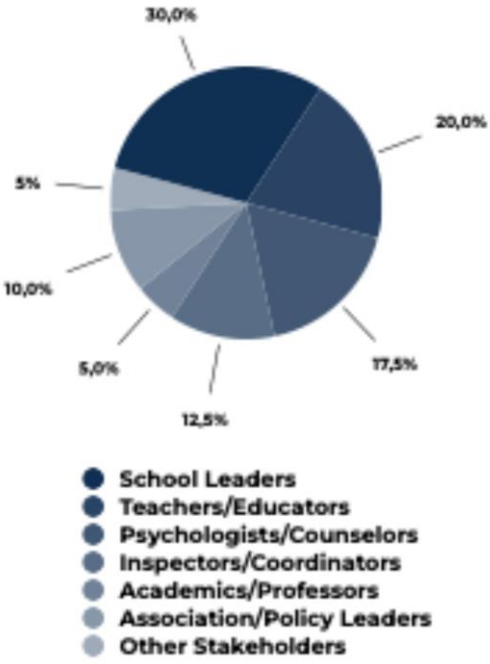
The six partner institutions carried out a total of 6 round tables as part of the Teachers' HAVEN Erasmus+ project. Each round table lasted approximately 1 hour, was conducted either face-to-face or online, was audio-recorded with informed consent, and was fully transcribed. They were conducted by trained project collaborators who followed a shared protocol to ensure consistency across countries. The guiding questions focused on three main thematic areas: teachers' well-being and emotional strain, perceptions of self-efficacy in classroom management and teaching practices, and perceived institutional and social support within the school environment, from the perspectives of diverse educational stakeholders.



A total of 40 stakeholders from six European countries took part in the round tables. Cyprus contributed the largest group with 9 participants (22.5%), followed by Poland and Spain with 7 each (17.5%), Romania and Italy with 6 each (15%), and Portugal with 5 (12.5%). This varied yet balanced international representation ensures a comprehensive view of stakeholder perspectives across diverse educational contexts in Europe.

In terms of stakeholder roles, the sample consisted of 30% School Leaders, 20% Teachers/Educators, 17.5% Psychologists/Counselors, 12.5% Inspectors/ Coordinators, 10% Association/Policy Leaders, and 5% Academics/Professors as well as 5% Other Stakeholders.

Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 65 years, with a mean of 48.91 years (SD = 11.67). This indicates a diverse cohort of educational professionals and representatives, well-positioned to provide insights informed by a broad range of professional experience.



In terms of gender distribution, the sample was predominantly female, with 30 women (75%) and 10 participants (25%) identifying as male.

Insights are synthesized below by the three core themes of the Teachers' HAVEN project: teacher wellbeing, self-efficacy, and professional support. Each theme includes a narrative summary of key findings, followed by supporting quotes from participants.

4.23 Cyprus

The roundtable in Cyprus involved a diverse group of nine stakeholders, including teachers, school psychologists, headmasters, policymakers, and educational advisors from both public and private sectors. Discussions highlighted systemic challenges in the teaching profession, with a notable dichotomy between frontline educators' experiences of stress and policymakers' emphasis on available resources.

4.23.1 Teacher Wellbeing

Stakeholders unanimously described teaching as inherently stressful and chaotic, exacerbated by societal expectations, parental pressures, and the multifaceted roles teachers assume (e.g., counselor, nurse).

> *"Teachers feel like a hamster that are on a spinning wheel that are running and running but never get anywhere."*

> *"Teachers face stress from all directions: from within and outside and also from above. The problem is systemic."*

While policymakers pointed to existing seminars and EU reports on burnout, educators emphasized a lack of practical relief, leading to a pervasive sense of undervaluation and exhaustion. The profession's demands, including managing student mental health in large classes (around 25 students), were seen as systemic sources of burnout, with limited mechanisms for emotional self-care. Good practices like the "open school" initiative during breaks were praised for allowing teachers to showcase talents and foster personal fulfillment, but calls were made for more institutionalized support, such as in-school psychologists, to address delinquency and daily stressors.

> *"Delinquency raises the rates of burn-out in teachers."*

> *"When the whole society does not support the teachers, then it is hard for the teachers to feel valued and support their well-being."*

4.23.2 Self-Efficacy

Participants agreed that current preparation for classroom management and professional effectiveness is inadequate, particularly for secondary school teachers who often enter the field without pedagogical training, relying instead on post-degree seminars that feel theoretical rather than skill-building.

> *"In the secondary education there is not enough preparation, it is up to the teacher to look into how they can prepare effectively."*

> *"All of our lessons were very theoretical in the classroom management and they did not prepare thoroughly the novice teacher to effectively manage a classroom."*

> *"For sure the programmes are helpful, but the teachers need practical help after the programmes end."*

EU-funded programs like Erasmus mobilities were viewed positively for rejuvenating teachers through exchanges and good practices. Yet, implementation gaps, such as a lack of follow-up mentoring or localized support, hinder sustained confidence.

> *"Even if I travelled abroad for a mobility and learned a lot while being abroad, it is true that even if I shared my knowledge and good practises with my colleagues, after the school year ended, the good practises ended as well."*

Communities of practice, whether through national mobilities or peer groups, emerged as vital for building self-efficacy, alongside improved infrastructure (e.g., air conditioning amid rising temperatures) and monitoring to translate training into daily efficacy. The sentiment was mixed: optimistic about potential benefits but critical of superficial application.

4.23.3 Professional Support

A clear divide existed between policymakers' awareness of abundant training options (e.g., Cyprus Pedagogical Institute seminars, EU projects like ProWell) and teachers' frustration that these remain theoretical, rarely reach classrooms, or address real-time needs such as daily emotional support.

> *"The amazing tools that are produced by EU funded programmes never reach the schools. They remain in the depository of the Erasmus+."*

> *"There's a need for teachers to support one another and create a strong professional community."*

> *"Teachers need help everyday."*

Principals were identified as key enablers for disseminating tools and fostering informal networks, with suggestions for compulsory EU project implementation, localized peer groups, and mentor-led monitoring to bridge this gap. Networking through

"communities of practice" and "supportive groups" was endorsed for reducing isolation, but emphasis was placed on systemic changes, such as appreciation-driven motivators in training and principal-led initiatives from within schools.

> *"The only thing left for educators nowadays is for them to feel like their work is appreciated."*

4.24 Italy

The roundtable in Italy featured six stakeholders, predominantly female and aged 40–65, including representatives from the National Association of School Leaders, a retired teacher, a coordinating tutor in teacher training, a school psychologist, a school tutor, and a primary school teacher. Discussions revealed a unified concern over the emotional and relational burdens of teaching, with critiques of fragmented support systems contrasted against calls for preventive, systemic reforms.

4.24.1 Teacher Wellbeing

Stakeholders described a profound emotional toll on teachers, characterized by chronic stress, burnout, and emotional detachment as a survival mechanism, stemming from heavy workloads, bureaucratic overload, and a lack of societal recognition.

> *"They perform their work in a detached, almost aseptic way."*

> *"I go on doing what I'm always done, sailing by sight."*

While individual resilience and preventive training in initial education were noted as partial mitigations, the consensus highlighted systemic failures: fragmented initiatives, insufficient psychological resources (e.g., only 15 psychologists for over 1,000 schools), and neglect of emotional self-care in favor of disciplinary training.

> *"There are no systematic national programs... much is left to individual initiative."*

Good practices, such as localized "cultures of care" in small schools, were praised for fostering serenity and linking teacher well-being to student outcomes, but participants urged national programs for supervision, intervision, and reflective spaces to counteract isolation and promote preventive strategies over reactive coping.

4.24.2 Self-Efficacy

A shared fragility in teachers' professional identity emerged, undermined by theoretical overload in training, lack of hands-on mentoring, and a shift from authority-based to relationship-driven classroom management requiring untaught emotional intelligence.

"Have we been adequately prepared? Absolutely not."

“There’s too much theory and not enough hands-on experience.”

“A brilliant scholar can still be useless as a teacher if they can't connect with students.”

Participants noted that while dedication persists, demotivation arises from unvalued efforts, excessive bureaucracy, and inadequate preparation for modern challenges like student disengagement and AI integration, leading to improvisation and burnout. Effective self-efficacy was tied to experiential learning, such as co-teaching and peer observation, with calls for mandatory, rewarded development that balances "hardware" (cognitive skills) with "software" (relational competence) to rebuild confidence and motivation.

4.24.3 Professional Support

Critiques centered on episodic, underfunded initiatives that fail to sustain teacher development, with European programs like eTwinning and Erasmus+ lauded for networking and growth. Still, they contrasted against Italy's fragmented domestic efforts, which prioritize students over teachers.

“[Initiatives] exist, but they are fragmented and episodic, not enough to solve the problems in a lasting way.”

“Only structured and continuous programs generate real learning and trust.”

Small-scale successes in primary schools, through communities of practice, coaching, and dialogue, highlighted the value of peer collaboration and local exchanges, yet secondary schools were seen as more isolated. Stakeholders advocated for structured national networks, accessible long-term training focused on methodologies and resilience, and institutional reforms to integrate supervision, reduce bureaucracy, and foster a "culture of listening" for collective professional fulfillment.

“We are flooded with proposals to fill our heads, but emotional nourishment and the joy of doing things together are completely neglected.”

“Networking helps teachers grow together, something still rare in Italian schools.”

4.25 Poland

The roundtable in Poland engaged 7 stakeholders, including policymakers (e.g., the deputy mayor for education and the deputy superintendent), educators (teachers, principals, and vice principals), and specialists (psychologists and consultants from teacher training centers). Discussions revealed a moderately critical yet constructive tone, pointing out systemic gaps in soft skills training and the pivotal role of school leadership in translating opportunities into real impact. A generational shift toward greater self-care awareness among younger teachers was noted, alongside calls for practical, relational-focused reforms.

4.25.1 Teacher Wellbeing

Stakeholders highlighted a cultural undervaluation of self-care in Polish society, extending to teachers who often view expressing needs as selfish, leading to blurred work-life boundaries, exemplified by constant parental messaging outside hours, and chronic stress from administrative scrutiny and overload.

> *"Parents send text messages after 5 p.m., then again at 7 in the morning, and complain if the teacher hasn't responded."*

> *"Many teachers lack this skill [boundary-setting], resulting in stress and burnout."*

While younger teachers show more openness to boundary-setting and coping strategies, novices particularly struggle without guidance, relying on trial-and-error amid "performance-like" teaching demands and undetected student crises.

> *"Teaching is a performance art, teachers are constantly scrutinized by students, parents, principals, and inspectors."*

Systemic pressures, including paperwork and delayed work outcomes, exacerbate burnout, but supportive leadership and early identification systems are essential for fostering recovery and retention.

> *"In our society, we generally pay little attention to our own well-being."*

4.25.2 Self-Efficacy

Participants critiqued the inconsistency of training in building professional competence, noting that formal qualifications often fail to equip teachers with practical tools for classroom management, such as group facilitation or individualized education plans, leading to improvisation and frustration.

> *"The results of teaching often manifest years later, and coupled with a lack of institutional recognition, this can foster frustration and lack of sense of self-efficacy."*

Self-perception as effective hinges on post-training reflection and leadership follow-up, with passive online formats yielding minimal retention and a disconnect between certification and real skills.

> *"If you don't test or implement something after training, only about 2% of it remains."*

Supervision and peer learning were praised for enabling self-evaluation and growth, particularly for novices, while challenges like special needs support and long-term outcome delays undermine sustained confidence, underscoring the need for experiential pedagogy over theoretical exams.

> *"Some pedagogics majors pass their exams but are unable to lead a class effectively."*

> *"Teachers listen, hold the certification on paper, but in reality, they don't implement what they've learned."*

4.25.3 Professional Support

While several training opportunities exist, their superficiality, lack of interaction, focus on soft skills (e.g., mediation, emotional regulation), and lack of follow-up limit their impact, with principals' engagement critical for application and up to 50% efficacy gains.

> *"There is a notable shortage of training in soft skills, which are vital for interacting with students, parents, and colleagues."*

> *"An interpersonal training course for teachers would be very useful."*

Good practices like the "Mirror" project (practical lesson scenarios), "School for Parents and Educators" (mandatory training for shared communication), and supervision/tutoring in underperforming schools were lauded for promoting peer exchange, safe reflection spaces, and improved school climate (e.g., 70–80% parental completion, reducing conflicts).

> *"Teachers said they could just come and talk in a safe space about what works and what doesn't."*

> *"After this training, conversations and relationships with [parents] were entirely different."*

Networking through professional learning communities and evidence-based platforms was advocated to combat isolation, alongside long-term programs emphasizing implementation, collaboration, and trust-based leadership.

4.26 Portugal

The roundtable in Portugal involved five stakeholders, primarily female and aged 34–57, including representatives from disability associations, nursery coordination, teacher training centers, the higher education vice presidency, and an NGO foundation. Discussions conveyed a predominantly negative to mixed sentiment, underscoring systemic inadequacies in preparation and support, with heavy workloads, inconsistent training, and generational gaps amplifying feelings of underpreparedness and burnout. Participants called for practical, tailored reforms to bridge ideals of self-care with daily realities.

4.26.1 Teacher Wellbeing

Stakeholders expressed deep frustration over the gap between promoted self-care ideals and the profession's realities, where overwhelming responsibilities, long hours, and conflicting expectations foster guilt and exhaustion, particularly for new teachers lacking resources and seasoned ones feeling worn down.

> *"We're constantly told to take care of ourselves, but then we're given more and more responsibilities. It's impossible!"*

Training neglects actionable stress management and burnout prevention, exacerbating challenges like student mental health pressures and the digital divide, where teachers lag behind students' tech skills.

> *"I didn't feel prepared at the end of my initial training. I was full of fear."*
>
> *"Our biggest difficulty is to keep up to date. For me, this is a challenge."*
>
> *"Teachers should also have this support at the beginning of their careers, especially in the early years, so as not to feel completely thrown into the wild."*

While generational differences were noted, younger educators showed enthusiasm but quick burnout, systemic barriers like funding shortages and rushed transitions hinder recovery, with calls for dedicated self-care time and holistic programs to normalize wellbeing without added burden.

4.26.2 Self-Efficacy

A mixed-to-negative view prevailed regarding training's role in fostering professional confidence, with theoretical focus failing to translate into practical classroom management skills, leaving teachers improvising amid behavioral challenges, special needs support, large classes (e.g., 25 students), and diverse backgrounds.

> *"And all of a sudden, we are launched, caught alone with a group of children of 25 boys, all looking at us, and we have to win."*

> *"It's just chaos sometimes. I feel like I'm constantly putting out fires instead of actually teaching."*

New teachers reported acute fear and underconfidence upon entering "alone" into chaotic environments. In contrast, experienced ones questioned long-term impact due to limited feedback and one-size-fits-all approaches, making skill transfer hard to measure beyond perceptual surveys.

> *"The training is okay, but it doesn't really prepare you for the real challenges you face in the classroom."*

> *"I've been teaching for 20 years, and I haven't found a training program that actually made me a better teacher."*

Emphasis was placed on adaptation to constant changes and initial induction overhauls to build efficacy, highlighting the need for hands-on observation and district-level evaluation teams.

4.26.3 Professional Support

Administrators appeared increasingly aware of pilot projects such as mentorships and other forms of professional support. These initiatives were generally recognized as positive steps toward teacher development.

> *"Our mentorship program has been really helpful in supporting new teachers."*

However, training opportunities were often described as inconsistent and short-term, driven more by funding priorities than by long-term goals. Teachers also highlighted their limited relevance to everyday classroom needs and the absence of sustained follow-up.

> *"There are a few workshops here and there, but nothing consistent or comprehensive."*

> *"They are not exactly training programs, they are promotion initiatives."*

> *"Training needs to be practical and relevant. I don't want to sit through another lecture on theory."*

Good practices such as professional learning communities, mindfulness sessions, and NGO partnerships were acknowledged for building networks and retention, yet implementation gaps persist, especially in the private sector, facing pushback. Effective programs should prioritize practical strategies, collaborative frameworks, and ongoing mentorship tailored to contexts, with teacher input essential to ensure relevance and ethical prioritization of wellbeing for sustained growth.

4.27 Romania

The roundtable in Romania featured six female stakeholders, aged 18–57, including principals, teachers, a school counselor, a union leader/English teacher, and a student representative. Discussions conveyed a predominantly negative sentiment, marked by frustration with systemic neglect, underfunding, and politicization of education, contrasted against resilient individual efforts and bottom-up initiatives. Participants expressed skepticism toward policy-level change, emphasized overload, lack of resources, and the need for authentic motivation.

4.27.1 Teacher Wellbeing

Stakeholders unanimously agreed that teachers are ill-prepared for self-care, driven by chronic overload, performance pressures, and insufficient emotional awareness, leading to disconnection from personal needs and relational burnout.

> *"[Teachers] are very performance-oriented, but lack connection with their own needs and with others."*

> *"We are never fully prepared to care for our well-being. It requires constant awareness and practice."*

While passion for teaching provides some fulfillment, daily stressors like excessive workload, parental interference (disinterest or over-involvement), and societal devaluation exacerbate frustration, with no systemic training for stress management or crisis response.

> *"Parents are either disinterested or overly involved, thinking they know everything."*

> *"We are perhaps the most humiliated category of intellectuals, discredited by the media and neglected by the government."*

Continuous awareness was framed as essential but unattainable without supportive environments, highlighting a cycle where well-being is sacrificed for output.

4.27.2 Self-Efficacy

Trainings were critiqued as superficial formalities that add frustration without building confidence, focusing on irrelevant topics like digitalization while ignoring emotional health and practical efficacy, leaving teachers to rely on personal resourcefulness for classroom management.

> *"I feel prepared thanks to my own additional training and personal development, not because the school provided it."*

> *"Courses are done just for the sake of being done, but not really taken seriously."*

Preparedness varied by experience; novices struggle with disengaged students and special needs, while seasoned educators manage through persistence, but systemic gaps in feedback, differentiated instruction, and resource support undermine professional identity.

> *"It is possible if you fight for it as a headmaster. You have to insist, search, and push hard, because support does not come easily."*

Effectiveness was seen as possible via individual effort and reciprocity-building approaches, yet the overloaded, underpaid context fosters doubt in sustained competence.

> *"They often bring additional frustration through imposed tasks in an already overloaded and poorly paid system."*

4.27.3 Professional Support

Existing programs were largely absent or misaligned, with sporadic workshops on strategies or AI that failed to address well-being, prompting calls for listening, experiential learning, and de-bureaucratization.

> *"The only trainings are educational, for example courses on digitalization."*

> *"Some workshops exist on new teaching strategies or AI, but none focus on well-being, which would be very useful."*

Good practices emerged organically: methodological circles for idea-sharing, volunteer projects like "Rural Education" for a purpose, informal "coffee days" for bonding, and peer advice. Yet these are rare, non-systemic, and overshadowed by governmental disinterest.

> *"In methodological circles, we share problems but also exchange new ideas, encourage creativity, and support one another."*

> *"The key element is for teachers to be listened to, advised, and supported with their real problems."*

Effective training should prioritize real problem-solving, safe environments, time management, and intrinsic motivation to foster networking and growth, though skepticism persisted that formal efforts cannot instill true passion.

4.28 Spain

The roundtable in Spain involved seven stakeholders, aged 43–60 and mixed gender (four males, three females), primarily headmasters/principals of public primary and secondary schools, education inspectors, and a coordinator for educational management systems. Discussions adopted a critical yet nuanced tone, acknowledging teachers' resilience and vocational commitment while highlighting systemic gaps in emotional preparation and support amid rising overload and instability. Participants emphasized institutional climate as a buffer, with calls for strategic, transferable training across European contexts.

4.28.1 Teacher Wellbeing

Stakeholders critiqued the lack of intentional training in emotional stability, with teachers developing coping strategies informally through experience rather than through structured programs, leading to overload in diverse classrooms (e.g., unresourced special needs support), excessive bureaucracy, and constant regulatory flux that erodes motivation.

> *"The qualifying master doesn't address well-being at all. It's only digital and new methodologies."*

> *"I have experienced teachers with lots of [educational] tools, but they break down because the overload exceeds what they can handle."*

Family disengagement adds relational strain, while surveys revealed unexpectedly positive self-perceptions among over 100 teachers, attributing resilience to supportive leadership fostering a "protective umbrella" of cooperation.

> *"If you create a good community work climate, that really helps people when they face problems."*

Well-being was framed as a "forgotten skill," exacerbated by societal discouragement, yet mitigated by community climates that enhance motivation.

4.28.2 Self-Efficacy

While academic and technical preparation is robust, enabling subject mastery, participants highlighted a critical shortfall in initial training in classroom management, where skills such as discipline, motivation, and conflict resolution are acquired through trial and error over the years, amid the "living ecosystem" of unpredictable group dynamics.

> *"No one prepared me for classroom management. I've learned it over 37 years of experience."*

> *"The classroom is a living ecosystem. Every day is different."*

"We're not prepared for so much diversity in such large groups."

New teachers often succeed through clear guidance but face early difficulties without peer support, with efficacy tied to capturing student attention and building personal confidence.

"Students really appreciate clear guidance. They need to know where to focus their attention."

Inspection data showed most managed positively, yet the dynamic, resource-scarce environment underscores the need for experiential learning to sustain professional identity.

4.28.3 Professional Support

Training has evolved positively with on-demand, school-led programs in Castilla y León, yet remains fragmented, lacking continuity, competence recognition beyond digital skills, and time for the assimilation of innovations such as cooperative learning.

"If you take a course but don't apply it in the classroom, it's like it never happened."

Good practices include observation exchanges (national/international, e.g., with Malta for ASD quiet spaces), eTwinning/Erasmus for networking and mobilities, and congresses for reflection, though emotional well-being initiatives are occasional.

"The Observation Program allows us to learn from other teachers, both in Spain and abroad."

"Erasmus and E-Twinning create support networks that help us not feel alone."

Effective programs should integrate emotional regulation (mindfulness, yoga), conflict/diversity management, leadership tools, interdisciplinary guides, and network-building via learning communities and European campuses to provide practical, transferable support.

"We need tools to provide emotional support to students... and to ourselves as well."

4.29 Overall Summary

Within the framework of the Teachers' HAVEN Erasmus+ project, six roundtable discussions were facilitated across Cyprus, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain, engaging a total of 44 educational stakeholders, including teachers, school principals, psychologists, policymakers, and NGO representatives. These sessions aimed to elicit qualitative insights into teachers' needs, structured around three core dimensions: personal well-being, professional self-efficacy, and support networks.

This synthesis integrates emerging patterns, foregrounding the interplay between systemic constraints and individual agency in shaping teaching experiences.

The dialogues converge on a portrait of the teaching profession as profoundly strained by multifaceted pressures, including administrative overload, resource scarcity, and evolving classroom dynamics.

Well-being emerges as systematically undermined, with participants articulating a pervasive cycle of emotional exhaustion and adaptive detachment, often exacerbated by cultural norms that stigmatize self-care and by inadequate institutional safeguards against boundary violations.

Self-efficacy, while rooted in vocational commitment, is frequently eroded by a disconnect between theoretical training and the exigencies of heterogeneous learning environments, where improvisation supplants structured skill-building.

Professional support reveals a fragmented landscape, with European initiatives lauded for their networking potential yet critiqued for superficial implementation; leadership emerges as a pivotal mediator, fostering resilience through collaborative climates but hindered by bureaucratic inertia.

Cross-nationally, generational variances are evident: novice educators exhibit heightened vulnerability to early burnout, while veterans leverage experiential wisdom, underscoring the need for tailored interventions that bridge policy aspirations with praxis.

This qualitative inquiry illuminates a shared European imperative: the sustainability of teaching hinges on prioritizing educators' holistic development as a precondition for equitable learning outcomes. The findings affirm that unaddressed well-being deficits not only imperil teacher retention but also perpetuate inequities in student support, aligning with broader Erasmus+ objectives of inclusive, resilient educational ecosystems. By foregrounding stakeholders' voices, the analysis advocates a paradigm shift from reactive palliatives to proactive, evidence-informed architectures that valorize teaching as a vocation of mutual empowerment.

4.30 Recommendations

In line with the needs expressed by participants, the following evidence-based strategies are proposed to help translate the Teachers' HAVEN outputs into practice:

- **Preventive curriculum integration:** Incorporate required modules on emotional regulation and boundary setting within initial teacher education, supported by long-term mentoring to reduce early-career attrition.
- **Facilitated peer networks:** Expand transnational communities of practice through Erasmus+ platforms, including reciprocal classroom observations and digital forums that build self-efficacy through shared experience.
- **System-level reform:** Promote policy changes aimed at reducing administrative workload and improving resource allocation, with incentives for empathetic school leadership and dedicated support for diverse learners.
- **Impact-focused evaluation:** Adopt participatory monitoring frameworks that use stakeholder feedback to refine interventions and measure gains in well-being and self-efficacy.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Integrated synthesis of findings: A pan-European perspective

The findings of this study, carried out through its rigorous mixed-methods inquiry, have illuminated the multifaceted landscape of teacher well-being, self-efficacy, and professional support across six partner countries. By converging quantitative metrics, derived from validated scales assessing burnout, engagement, self-efficacy, social support, and subjective well-being, with rich qualitative narratives from in-training teachers, in-service educators, headmasters, and multi-stakeholder roundtables, this study transcends national boundaries to reveal a cohesive European narrative.

The findings portray a profession at a pivotal moment: teachers demonstrate strong vocational commitment but contend with systemic pressures that threaten long-term sustainability. This synthesis highlights recurring themes, outlining both protective factors and vulnerabilities, and aligns with Erasmus+ priorities to build inclusive, equitable education systems that recognise teachers as key agents of transformative learning.

Quantitative evidence points to two broad clusters across participating countries, marked by distinct psychosocial profiles. One cluster reports higher levels of burnout, emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and stress, accompanied by reduced work engagement and self-efficacy,particularly in instructional strategies and classroom management. The other shows lower distress, greater energy, dedication, and absorption in teaching, together with stronger perceived competence. These differences are reflected in the availability of social support: stronger family and collegial networks are associated with lower occupational strain and higher subjective well-being, emotional, psychological, and social. Meta-analytic findings (e.g., Aloe et al., 2014; Halbesleben, 2006) reinforce these patterns: self-efficacy helps protect against burnout; engagement is inversely related to exhaustion; and social support can soften the effects of heavy job demands.

Importantly, these psychosocial resources, relational support and professional confidence, emerge not only as individual characteristics but as products of broader contextual conditions, including school climate and policy frameworks. Three vulnerabilities appear across countries: (1) the emotional load linked to parental expectations and porous boundaries between work and personal life, (2) administrative demands that limit time for pedagogical innovation, and (3) resource gaps in responding to diverse student needs, such as special educational needs or digital disadvantage. These pressures often fuel emotional fatigue and early-career attrition. At the same time, shared strengths—peer collaboration, informal professional networks, strong intrinsic motivation, and opportunities for cross-cultural exchange through initiatives like Erasmus+, provide fertile ground for promising interventions that can strengthen relational support and hands-on learning across contexts.

Qualitative findings reinforce this picture. The perspectives of in-training and in-service teachers, alongside insights from school leaders and roundtable discussions, depict teaching as a highly relational profession facing organisational tensions. Pre-service

teachers, motivated and enthusiastic, describe a disconnect between university coursework and the emotional realities of the classroom, particularly in managing behaviour, responding to parental expectations, and creating inclusive environments. This lack of preparedness leads to insecurity and early discouragement, prompting calls for longer supervised internships and integrated emotional-literacy training to bridge theory and practice.

In-service teachers portray well-being as collective and relational, grounded in trust among colleagues but strained by blurred work-life boundaries, bureaucratic load, and the demands of increasingly diverse classrooms. Headteachers echo these concerns: they identify stress as largely relational, rooted in family conflict, student vulnerability, and gaps in leadership support. Many rely on informal strategies such as open-door policies and team-building to compensate for limited institutional mechanisms.

Roundtable contributions further highlight that self-efficacy develops mainly through reflective, experience-based learning rather than formal accreditation. Professional support is described as uneven, often emerging through EU-inspired networks (e.g., Erasmus+), but limited by weak implementation and competing priorities.

Taken together, these insights suggest a holistic model: (a) Well-being grows in environments characterised by trust, recognition, and flexible autonomy; (b) Self-efficacy develops through supported practice, feedback, and shared reflection; (c) Professional support is strengthened through both horizontal collaboration (peer-to-peer) and vertical alignment (school leadership).

Challenges remain concentrated around emotional labour, the “performance” of teaching, in which educators act simultaneously as counsellors, disciplinarians, and instructional innovators amid resource limitations and shifting policy expectations. Persistent boundary erosion, such as after-hours parent communication, further strains emotional capacity.

Protective factors cluster around communal practices: peer learning circles, classroom observation programmes, and school cultures that prioritise care and belonging. These approaches reduce isolation and counterbalance the emotional demands of teaching.

This pattern is consistent with Job Demands–Resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007): while high demands drain energy and elevate risk, strategic investments in engagement, confidence, and meaningful support can create positive motivational cycles that enhance both teacher well-being and wider system resilience.

5.2 Implications for teacher well-being: From strain to sustainability

At the heart of the findings lies a clarion call to reconceptualize teacher well-being beyond individual coping mechanisms toward a structural imperative. Across cohorts, well-being is not a peripheral "soft" concern but the foundational substrate for pedagogical excellence: exhausted educators, detached from their relational core, perpetuate cycles of disengagement that ripple into student outcomes. The elevated burnout observed

in several country clusters, together with qualitative accounts of “adaptive detachment” and diminished effort, signals a critical inflection point: vocational commitment is increasingly giving way to coping strategies aimed simply at survival. This shift threatens both teacher retention and pedagogical innovation.

Yet, the data also point to actionable solutions. Supportive relational climates, marked by collegial trust, collaborative practices, and empathetic leadership, consistently buffer against stressors such as conflict with families and administrative overload. Headmasters describe how empathetic organisational cultures, expressed through open-dialogue spaces, informal wellness rituals, and accessible leadership, help sustain emotional balance. These accounts align with roundtable recommendations for cultivating reflective and mindfulness-oriented professional communities.

Taken together, the findings challenge deficit-focused interpretations and instead argue for an asset-based approach. Pre-service teachers’ calls for proactive emotional preparation, paired with in-service teachers’ appeals for clearer boundaries, highlight the preventive value of early, structured support. Embedding emotional regulation, relationship-building skills, and boundary management into initial teacher education could ease the transition into practice, enabling new teachers to enter schools not as vulnerable beginners but as confident contributors.

For established teachers, the results point to a need for continuous, contextualised support: accessible psychological services, workload adjustments, and dedicated reflective spaces that honour the emotional dimension of teaching. Central across groups is the protective power of social support. Quantitative findings show that strong social networks correlate with greater engagement and reduced distress, while qualitative data reveal how peer communities help distribute emotional load, encourage knowledge-sharing, and promote mutual accountability. These insights confirm that well-being is not an individual pursuit but a collective process.

Viewed through an Erasmus+ lens, these outcomes reinforce the project’s core rationale: supporting teacher resilience strengthens the educational workforce and, by extension, the inclusive, lifelong learning ecosystems that Europe aims to cultivate.

5.3 Self-efficacy as a keystone of professional agency

Self-efficacy, as conceptualized herein, transcends mere confidence to encompass the dynamic interplay of competence, autonomy, and relational attunement, a keystone for navigating the "living ecosystems" of modern classrooms. Quantitative disparities, higher efficacy in clusters with lower distress, align seamlessly with qualitative testimonies: in-training educators decry theoretical approaches disconnected from practice that leave them adrift in behavioural maelstroms, while in-service voices extol experiential arcs, co-teaching, and adaptive strategizing as amplifiers of efficacy.

Headmasters’ accounts show how the “fragile enthusiasm” of novice teachers can, when supported through sustained mentoring, develop into the confidence and resilience

characteristic of experienced practitioners. This highlights self-efficacy as a developmental process, shaped over time through structured guidance rather than a fixed personal attribute.

Across sources, several key levers emerge. Autonomy in lesson design and relational skill, particularly the capacity to differentiate instruction and foster inclusive classroom dynamics, strengthen teachers' sense of control and help counteract the improvisation often required in under-resourced schools. Roundtable discussions reinforce this view, noting that certification alone provides an insufficient foundation when not followed by hands-on support. Participants emphasised the value of EU mobility programmes, which broaden pedagogical horizons and revitalise practice by combining local expertise with international perspectives.

Persistent challenges, including managing learner diversity, supporting students with special educational needs, addressing digital inequities, and responding to behavioural issues, continue to undermine teacher confidence, particularly where material and institutional supports are limited. However, opportunities for growth are evident. Peer-mediated learning spaces, such as reciprocal classroom observations and methodological discussion groups, allow educators to share strategies, build collective knowledge, and translate communal insight into personal agency.

Taken together, these findings underline the central role of self-efficacy in promoting educational equity. Teachers who feel equipped and supported are better positioned to implement inclusive practices, address disparities in student backgrounds, and cultivate participatory, democratic learning environments.

5.4 Professional support: Architectures for collective empowerment

Professional support emerges as a critical link between teacher well-being and self-efficacy, yet the findings reveal a fragmented landscape characterised by short-term, funding-dependent initiatives that prioritise technical upskilling over holistic development. In-training teachers' calls for structured, supervised internships, and in-service teachers' appeals for ongoing, practice-based supervision, highlight a persistent transition gap in which universities and schools operate largely in parallel, leaving early-career teachers without adequate guidance.

Although many headmasters cultivate informal "open-door" cultures, an approach often appreciated by teachers, this reliance underscores the scarcity of systematic, institutional support mechanisms. Roundtable discussions highlighted that, without structured implementation strategies, EU-developed tools risk becoming passive repositories rather than active components of daily school practice.

Encouragingly, findings converge on the value of relational infrastructures. Peer learning communities, cross-border exchanges, and leadership that models collaborative and reflective practices foster a sense of belonging and stimulate pedagogical innovation. Quantitative associations between social support and lower exhaustion reinforce these

qualitative insights: informal collegial ties, shared planning, and wellness circles often serve as functional safety nets, offsetting gaps in formal provision.

The synthesis points toward hybrid support models. Vertically, school leaders should be trained and incentivised to provide empathetic, instructional leadership. Horizontally, scalable professional networks, leveraging Erasmus+ platforms, could facilitate ongoing transnational exchange and shared problem-solving. Addressing barriers such as bureaucratic inertia will require streamlined administrative processes and broadened recognition of teacher expertise beyond digital compliance. Such reforms would help shift support from episodic goodwill to embedded practice, ensuring that protective factors are translated consistently from policy into classroom pedagogy.

5.5 Broader implications and alignment with Erasmus+ objectives

The Teachers' HAVEN findings align closely with the core pillars of Erasmus+: strengthening quality and innovation in education, promoting equity and inclusion, and deepening transnational cooperation. By illustrating how psychosocial pressures contribute to teacher shortages and widen learning disparities, the study underscores the need for preventive, capacity-building strategies. Interventions that enhance well-being and self-efficacy promise significant returns, not only improving teacher retention but also enriching instructional quality and curricular engagement. The identified clustering patterns support a dual approach: targeted resourcing in high-strain contexts, complemented by the Europe-wide diffusion of effective practices such as collaborative, relational school climates, embodying Erasmus+'s commitment to mutual learning and cross-border exchange.

The study also foregrounds ethical responsiveness. Participant perspectives are treated as catalysts for action: in-training teachers call for experiential bridges between theory and practice; in-service teachers emphasize the need for relational scaffolds and boundary clarity; headmasters highlight informal adaptive strategies; and roundtable participants advocate scalable, context-sensitive models of professional learning. While limitations, including reliance on self-report and contextual variation across systems, are acknowledged, the systematic triangulation of survey data, focus groups, interviews, and roundtables enhances the validity of the conclusions and informs a clear agenda for longitudinal follow-up.

5.6 Recommendations: Operationalizing insights for transformative impact

To move from insight to action, the following evidence-based recommendations are proposed to guide the development of the Teachers' HAVEN toolkit:

- **Curriculum and Transition Reform:** Embed practical modules on emotional regulation, boundary setting, and inclusive teaching strategies into initial teacher

education. Extend supervised school placements by 20–30%, pairing trainees with both pedagogical and pastoral mentors. Pilot these changes in high-stress contexts and monitor progress via pre- and post-measures of self-efficacy to support early-career resilience.

- **Strengthening Relational Infrastructure:** Use Erasmus+ platforms to create virtual peer networks that support reciprocal classroom observations and reflective dialogue. For in-service teachers, formalise weekly "support circles" that combine well-being check-ins with collaborative problem-solving—particularly around relational stressors such as challenging family dynamics.
- **Leadership and System Enablers:** Develop recognition pathways for school leaders who demonstrate empathetic, capacity-building leadership, including training in stress assessment and team development. Link incentives—such as additional funding—to completing well-being audits. Advocate for EU-level guidelines reducing administrative workload to a maximum of 20% of working time and ensuring access to school psychologists at a ratio of 1:200 students.
- **Monitoring and Scaling:** Create participatory evaluation frameworks that gather real-time feedback on engagement and burnout through digital tools, supported by annual cross-national benchmarking. Provide seed funding for bottom-up innovation—such as mindfulness-based or peer-mentoring initiatives—to identify and scale successful practices across settings and career stages.
- **Policy Engagement and Dissemination:** Partner with Eurydice networks to ensure project findings influence national strategies. Produce open-access toolkits (e.g., relational stress-management protocols) adaptable to different educational systems. Track implementation longitudinally to measure impact and inform future Erasmus+ priorities for teacher empowerment.

In summary, Teachers' HAVEN moves beyond diagnosis to propose a systemic shift: embedding well-being within the core of teaching, strengthening self-efficacy to advance inclusive practice, and building cross-border support networks that acknowledge the central role of educators in shaping equitable learning environments. The project is well positioned to contribute lasting, positive change grounded in shared professional purpose.

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7. Annexes

7.1 ANNEX 1 – In-service Teachers Focus Group - Guidelines and Template

Purpose of the Focus Group

The aim of this focus group is to explore in-service teachers' needs in order to reduce stress, improve classroom performance, and enhance overall well-being.

7.1 Participant Selection Criteria

- **Working Status**: All participants must be in-service teachers.
- **Teaching School Level:** Include both:
  - **Purpose: Primary School Teachers** (grades 1-5/6)
  - **Secondary School Teachers** (middle and/or high school)
    - Ensure representation from various subject specializations (e.g., STEM, humanities, languages, arts).
- **Gender Balance**: Ensure a roughly equal number of male and female participants.
- **Experience Balance:** Participants should be selected to represent different years of teaching experience.
  - **Novice Teachers** (0–3 years of experience)
  - **Mid-Experience Teachers** (4–10 years of experience)
  - **Experienced Teachers** (11+ years of experience)

7.2 Preparation and Setup

- **Moderator**: Select a neutral, trained moderator with experience in educational research or group facilitation.
- **Location**: Choose a quiet, comfortable, and neutral space free from distractions.
- **Group Size**: Aim for 8-10 participants per session to encourage discussion while maintaining manageability.
- **Duration**: Plan for a 60-minute session.
- **Recording**: Audio recording will be used.
- **Confidentiality**: Clearly explain confidentiality measures and ensure informed consent is obtained.
- **Translate**: Translate in English language and insert in the following template.

7.3 Template

Participant 1

Gender _____ Age _____ Experience level _____

Teaching School Level _____

primary or secondary school, and specializations [e.g., STEM, humanities, languages, arts]

Participant 2

Gender _____ Age _____ Experience level _____

Teaching School Level _____

primary or secondary school, and specializations [e.g., STEM, humanities, languages, arts]

Participant 3

Gender _____ Age _____ Experience level _____

Teaching School Level _____

primary or secondary school, and specializations [e.g., STEM, humanities, languages, arts]

Repeat for each participant.

Welcome and thank you for joining this focus group session.

Today's discussion is part of the fieldwork for the Teachers' HAVEN project, an EU-funded initiative aiming to enhance teachers' inner wellbeing, self-efficacy, and professional support networks.

The goal of this focus group is to explore the perspectives of in-service teachers on their current professional needs and challenges. Your input is crucial to help us better understand how teachers experience their needs in order to reduce stress, improve classroom performance, and enhance overall well-being.

The data we gather today will inform the creation of flexible training programs, tools for emotional and professional self-care, and opportunities for mentorship and peer collaboration. Your insights will directly shape training pathways and support systems that are genuinely aligned with the realities and needs of early-career teachers.

Thank you once again for being here and for contributing your valuable experience to this important conversation.

Topic 1. General Well-Being at Work

1. What are the biggest challenges in maintaining well-being in your daily teaching experience?

Support prompts for the moderator

Can you think of a recent situation where you felt particularly stressed or overwhelmed?

Are these challenges more emotional, physical, or organizational?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

2. How do you manage the stress associated with your profession?

Support prompts for the moderator

What do you do to unwind after a stressful day?

Have you ever received training on stress management?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

Topic 2. Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

3. How effective do you feel in your daily instructional practice?

Support prompts for the moderator

Are there situations where you feel less effective? Why do you think that happens?

What factors help you feel more confident when teaching?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

4. What classroom management strategies do you find most effective in your experience?

Support prompts for the moderator

Can you describe a situation where a strategy worked particularly well (or failed)?

Are there any techniques you've learned from colleagues or training that you regularly use?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

5. How confident do you feel in your ability to motivate students and keep them engaged in learning?

Support prompts for the moderator

What helps you capture and maintain students 'attention?

Do you use any specific tools, methods, or resources to enhance engagement?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

Topic 3. Training and Professional Support

6. Do you have access to well-being resources or support at your school?

Support prompts for the moderator

Have you ever used these resources? Why or why not?

What kind of resources would you find most helpful?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

7. How would you assess the support you receive from your school or colleagues?

Support prompts for the moderator

Can you describe an experience when you felt particularly supported (or unsupported)?

How important is peer support in managing everyday teaching challenges?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

Topic 4. Good Practices and Inspiration

8. Are you aware of any good practices, either in your own school or elsewhere, that effectively support teacher well-being, self-efficacy, or professional networking?

Support prompts for the moderator

Have you seen or experienced initiatives that had a positive impact on staff morale or collaboration?

Are there any approaches you would recommend to other schools?

Do you think these practices could be adapted for early-career or in-training teachers?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

7.2 ANNEX 2 – In-Training Teachers Focus Group - Guidelines and Template

Purpose of the Focus Group

The aim of this focus group is to explore in-training teachers' perceptions of their professional needs in order to reduce stress, improve classroom performance, and enhance overall well-being.

7.1 Participant Selection Criteria

- **Working Status**: All participants must be currently enrolled in a teacher education program.
- **Teaching School Level:** Include both:
  - **Purpose: Primary School Teachers** (grades 1-5/6)
  - **Secondary School Teachers** (middle and/or high school)
    - Ensure representation from various subject specializations (e.g., STEM, humanities, languages, arts).
- **Gender Balance**: Ensure a roughly equal number of male and female participants.

7.2 Preparation and Setup

- **Moderator**: Select a neutral, trained moderator with experience in educational research or group facilitation.
- **Location**: Choose a quiet, comfortable, and neutral space free from distractions.
- **Group Size**: Aim for 8-10 participants per session to encourage discussion while maintaining manageability.
- **Duration**: Plan for a 60-minute session.
- **Recording**: Audio recording will be used.
- **Confidentiality**: Clearly explain confidentiality measures and ensure informed consent is obtained.
- **Translate**: Translate in English language and insert in the following template.

7.3 Template

Participant 1

Gender _____ Age _____

Teaching School Level _____

primary or secondary school, and specializations [e.g., STEM, humanities, languages, arts]

Participant 2

Gender _____ Age _____

Teaching School Level _____

primary or secondary school, and specializations [e.g., STEM, humanities, languages, arts]

Participant 3

Gender _____ Age _____

Teaching School Level _____

primary or secondary school, and specializations [e.g., STEM, humanities, languages, arts]

Repeat for each participant.

Welcome and thank you for joining this focus group session.

Today's discussion is part of the fieldwork for the Teachers' HAVEN project, an EU-funded initiative aiming to enhance teachers' inner wellbeing, self-efficacy, and professional support networks.

The goal of this focus group is to explore the perspectives of in-service teachers on their current professional needs and challenges. Your input is crucial to help us better understand how teachers experience their needs in order to reduce stress, improve classroom performance, and enhance overall well-being.

The data we gather today will inform the creation of flexible training programs, tools for emotional and professional self-care, and opportunities for mentorship and peer collaboration. Your insights will directly shape training pathways and support systems that are genuinely aligned with the realities and needs of early-career teachers.

Thank you once again for being here and for contributing your valuable experience to this important conversation.

Topic 1. General Well-Being at Work

1. Do you think your current training is adequately preparing you to manage work-related stress? Why?

Support prompts for the moderator

Can you imagine what might be the main sources of stress in a teacher's daily work?

Has your training provided you with any tools or strategies to deal with potentially stressful situations?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

2. What kind of well-being support do you expect from the school?

Support prompts for the moderator

Thinking about teaching experience, what kind of support would help you feel more confident and secure?

Do you think you would need more emotional support, practical guidance, or both?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

Topic 2. Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practice

3. Based on what you've learned so far, how prepared do you feel to manage a classroom?

Support prompts for the moderator

Which aspects of classroom management do you currently feel most prepared for, even if only through theory or simulations?

Are there specific situations you imagine (e.g., noisy students, loss of attention, conflict) that seem particularly challenging?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

4. Are there any teaching-related skills or areas where you currently feel less confident?

Support prompts for the moderator

Are there specific tasks you find difficult (e.g., explaining concepts, giving feedback, using technology)?

Do you feel more confident about the theoretical or the practical side of teaching?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

5. What types of situations in the classroom do you currently find most challenging?

Support prompts for the moderator

Do you expect classroom behavior, time management, or student engagement to be more difficult?

Have you received any specific preparation for dealing with these kinds of challenges?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

Topic 3. Training and Professional Support

6. What gaps do you see in current professional training programs?

Support prompts for the moderator

Are there any topics or areas you feel haven't been addressed enough in your training?

What would you add to your training to feel more prepared for the classroom?

Answer 1.

Answer 2.

Answer 3.

...

7. When you imagine starting to work in a school, what type of guidance or support would you find most helpful as a new teacher?

Support prompts for the moderator

Would you prefer ongoing mentoring, peer support, or structured induction programs?

How important do you think emotional support is compared to practical or instructional guidance?

Answer 1. Answer 2. Answer 3. …
Topic 4. Good Practices and Inspiration **8. During your training or observations, have you come across any examples of good practices that support teacher well-being, build self-efficacy, or encourage professional networking?** **Support prompts for the moderator** Can you describe any programs, activities, or strategies you have learned about that seemed effective? Have you seen or heard about how schools or teachers support each other emotionally and professionally? Do you think these kinds of practices are important for new teachers starting their careers?
Answer 1. Answer 2. Answer 3. …

7.3 ANNEX 3 – Headmaster Interview - Guidelines and Template

Purpose of the Interviews

The aim of this interview is to explore the headmasters' perspectives on teachers' training and professional needs, focusing on teaching competencies and well-being.

7.1 Participant Selection Criteria

- **Working Status**: All participants must be school principals.
- **Teaching School Level:** Include both:
  - **Purpose: Primary School Teachers** (grades 1-5/6)
  - **Secondary School Teachers** (middle and/or high school)
- **Gender Balance**: Ensure a roughly equal number of male and female participants.

7.2 Preparation and Setup

- **Recording**: Audio recording will be used.
- **Confidentiality**: Clearly explain confidentiality measures and ensure informed consent is obtained.
- **Report**: Prepare a comprehensive report in English language including a qualitative commentary summarizing the roundtable outcomes and insights.

7.3 Template

Headmaster 1

Gender _____ Age _____ Years of experience _____

Teaching School Level _____

primary or secondary school

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today.

This interview is part of the fieldwork for the Teachers' HAVEN project, an EU-funded initiative that aims to support teachers' well-being, strengthen their professional competencies, and foster effective support networks within schools.

The purpose of this interview is to gain insights into headmasters' perspectives on teachers' training and professional development needs, with particular attention to both teaching competencies and well-being.

As a school leader, your viewpoint is especially valuable. You are in a unique position to observe how current training initiatives align with the real demands of the classroom, as well as how they impact teachers' motivation, performance, and emotional health.

The information gathered through this interview will help shape targeted training pathways, self-care strategies, and peer support structures that are tailored to the everyday realities of teaching staff. Your contribution will play a key role in ensuring that the project responds meaningfully to the actual needs of schools and educators.

Thank you again for your time and for sharing your insights with us.

Topic 1. Teacher Well-being

1. In your opinion, what are the main sources of stress for the teaching staff?

Support prompts for the moderator

Are these sources of stress more related to workload, student behavior, or external pressures (e.g., families, administration)?

Are certain groups (e.g., early-career teachers) more affected than others?

Answer

2. What strategies or practices are currently in place at the school to promote teacher well-being? If any.

Support prompts for the moderator

How are these initiatives received by the staff?

Is participation voluntary or encouraged by school leadership?

Answer

3. Is there any specific regulation or policy in place at your school regarding the assessment of work-related stress among teachers? If yes, how is this regulation implemented or monitored in practice?

Support prompts for the moderator

Who is responsible for its implementation (e.g., HR, school leadership, external consultants)?

Has the school taken any action based on the results of stress assessments?

Answer

Topic 2. Teachers Self-Efficacy

4. What skills do you consider essential for an effective teacher, and how does the school work to promote them?

Support prompts for the moderator

How does the school support teachers in developing soft skills as well as instructional skills?

Answer
5. How would you describe the general level of self-efficacy among the teachers in your school? **Support prompts for the moderator** Do teachers seem confident in handling challenges in the classroom? Are there noticeable differences between new and more experienced teachers?
Answer
Topic 3. Social and Relational Variables **6. How would you describe the relational climate among the teaching staff?** **Support prompts for the moderator** Do teachers collaborate or tend to work in isolation? Are there regular opportunities for team meetings, shared planning, or informal exchanges?
Answer
7. Are there recurring conflicts or specific dynamics within the team? **Support prompts for the moderator** Are these conflicts typically related to roles and responsibilities, generational differences, or organizational issues? How are conflicts usually addressed or resolved within the school? Answer

Repeat for each participant.

7.4 ANNEX 4 – Round table - Guidelines and Template

Purpose of the Round table

The aim of this round table is to explore the training and professional needs of teachers, focusing on teaching competencies and well-being, from the perspective of principals stakeholder (inspectors, supervisors, etc.).

7.1 Participant Selection Criteria

- **Participants**: Could be Teachers, School principals, Training supervisors, Ministry of Education representatives, Local educational authorities, Regional education bodies, School psychologists, etc..
- **Gender Balance**: Ensure a roughly equal number of male and female participants.

7.2 Preparation and Setup

- **Recording**: Audio recording will be used.
- **Confidentiality**: Clearly explain confidentiality measures and ensure informed consent is obtained.
- **Report**: Prepare a comprehensive report in English language including a qualitative commentary summarizing the roundtable outcomes and insights.

7.3 Instructions for the roundtable and to write the report

7.3.1 Instruction to synthesize the whole discussion

Use phrases like:

- "Several participants highlighted..."
- "A recurring theme was..."
- "There was general agreement that..."
- "Some participants, particularly those from [role/region], noted that..."

7.3.2 Group Feedback by Question or Topic

Structure your synthesis around each of the core questions asked.

For each:

- Summarize the overall sentiment (positive/negative/mixed)

- Note any differences in viewpoint by role (e.g., teachers vs policymakers)
- Include 1–2 short, powerful quotes that illustrate a key point (anonymously)

7.3.3 Keep a Running List of Quotes

As the moderator, jot down powerful quotes verbatim when possible, and tag them by role and country. This will help the report include authentic voices.

7.3.4 Highlight Contrasts and Patterns

Indicate when:

- Certain roles consistently shared a view (e.g., "Teachers expressed concern…")
- There was a clear divide in opinion
- Surprising insights or contradictions emerged

7.3.5 Note Any Actionable Suggestions

If participants proposed practical ideas or requests, include them briefly at the end of each section or in a final list.

7.4 Template

Participant 1

Professional profile _____ Gender _____ Age _____

Participant 2

Professional profile _____ Gender _____ Age _____

Participant 3

Professional profile _____ Gender _____ Age _____

Welcome and thank you for being part of this roundtable discussion. Today's conversation is framed within the scope of the Teachers 'HAVEN project, an EU-funded initiative aiming to enhance teachers 'inner wellbeing, self-efficacy, and professional support networks.

As highlighted in multiple EU-level reports, the teaching profession is facing increasing challenges: teacher shortages, burnout, rising expectations, and complex classroom dynamics. Teachers are now required to meet diverse student needs, integrate digital tools, and manage multicultural environments, all while maintaining their own mental and emotional health.

The Teachers 'HAVEN project responds to this reality by offering flexible training programs, tools for emotional and professional self-care, and opportunities for mentorship and peer networking. Today, we want to hear your perspectives, across different roles and responsibilities, on teacher wellbeing and professional empowerment.

1. In your opinion, are today's teachers adequately prepared to take care of and maintain their own wellbeing?

2. Do you believe current training programs help teachers perceive themselves as effective professionals?

3. Based on what you've learned so far, how prepared do you feel to manage a classroom?

4. Are you aware of any good practices, either within your experience or knowledge, that effectively support teacher wellbeing, build self-efficacy, or foster professional networking?

7.5 ANNEX 5 – Tool

A Few Details About You

Gender

☐ Male
☐ Female

Age (in completed years)

_____

Years of service completed (if less than a year, write 0)

_____

Your highest level of education attained

☐ Upper Secondary Education
☐ Undergraduate Degree
☐ Graduate Degree
☐ Postgraduate Studies

Current Marital Status

☐ Single
☐ Cohabiting (married or partnered)
☐ In a relationship (not cohabiting)
☐ Divorced (not in a relationship)

☐ Widowed (not in a relationship)
☐ Other

Educational level where you teach

☐ nursery or preschool
☐ primary school (elementary school)
☐ lower secondary school (middle school)
☐ upper secondary school (high school, vocational school, etc.)
☐ university or postgraduate

Type of employment contract

☐ permanent
☐ fixed-term

Average number of students per class

_____

Do you have students with specific learning disorders (SLD) or special educational needs (SEN) in your class?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Subject(s) taught

_____

BAT

The following statements are related to your work situation and how you experience this situation. Please state how often each statement applies to you.

☐ Never
☐ Rarely
☐ Sometimes
☐ Often
☐ Always

1. At work, I feel mentally exhausted
2. Everything I do at work requires a great deal of effort
3. After a day at work, I find it hard to recover my energy
4. At work, I feel physically exhausted
5. When I get up in the morning, I lack the energy to start a new day at work
6. I want to be active at work, but somehow I am unable to manage
7. When I exert myself at work, I quickly get tired
8. At the end of my working day, I feel mentally exhausted and drained
9. I struggle to find any enthusiasm for my work
10. At work, I do not think much about what I am doing and I function on autopilot
11. I feel a strong aversion towards my job
12. I feel indifferent about my job
13. I'm cynical about what my work means to others
14. At work, I have trouble staying focused

15. At work I struggle to think clearly
16. I'm forgetful and distracted at work
17. When I'm working, I have trouble concentrating
18. I make mistakes in my work because I have my mind on other things
19. I At work, I feel unable to control my emotions
20. I do not recognize myself in the way I react emotionally at work
21. During my work I become irritable when things don't go my way
22. I get upset or sad at work without knowing why
23. At work I may overreact unintentionally
24. I have trouble falling or staying asleep
25. I tend to worry
26. I feel tense and stressed
27. I feel anxious and/or suffer from panic attacks
28. Noise and crowds disturb me
29. I suffer from palpitations or chest pain
30. I suffer from stomach and/or intestinal complaints
31. I suffer from headaches
32. I suffer from muscle pain, for example in the neck, shoulder or back
33. I often get sick

DASS-21

Please read each statement and circle a number 0, 1, 2 or 3 which indicates how much the statement applied to you over the past week. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement.

☐ Did not apply to me at all
☐ Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time
☐ Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time
☐ Applied to me very much or most of the time

1. I found it hard to wind down
2. I was aware of dryness of my mouth
3. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all
4. I experienced breathing difficulty (eg, excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)
5. I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things
6. I tended to over-react to situations
7. I experienced trembling (eg, in the hands)
8. I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy
9. I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself
10. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to
11. I found myself getting agitated
12. I found it difficult to relax
13. I felt down-hearted and blue
14. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what
15. I was doing I felt I was close to panic

16. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything
17. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person
18. I felt that I was rather touchy
19. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physicalexertion (eg, sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)
20. I felt scared without any good reason
21. I felt that life was meaningless

UWES-3

The following 3 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross the '0' (zero) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

☐ Never
☐ Almost never/A few times a year or less
☐ Rarely/Once a month or less
☐ Sometimes/A few times a month
☐ Often/Once a week
☐ Very often/A few times a week
☐ Always/Every day

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy
2. I am enthusiastic about my job
3. I am immersed in my work

TSES

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.

☐ Nothing
☐ Almost nothing
☐ Very little
☐ Little
☐ Something
☐ A bit more than something
☐ Fairly much/Quite a bit
☐ Almost everything
☐ A great deal

1. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?
2. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?
3. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?
4. How much can you do to help your students value learning?
5. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?
6. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?
7. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?
8. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?
9. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?
10. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?
11. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?
12. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?

MSPSS

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.

☐ Very Strongly Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree
☐ Mildly Disagree
☐ Neutral
☐ Mildly Agree
☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Very Strongly Agree

1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.
2. There is a special person with whom I can share joys and sorrows.
3. My family really tries to help me.
4. I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.
5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.
6. My friends really try to help me.
7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.
8. I can talk about my problems with my family.
9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.
10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.
11. My family is willing to help me make decisions.
12. I can talk about my problems with my friends.

MHC-SF

Please answer the following questions are about how you have been feeling during the past month. Place a check mark in the box that best represents how often you have experienced or felt the following.

☐ Never
☐ Once or twice
☐ About once a week
☐ About 2 or 3 times a week
☐ Almost every day
☐ Every day

During the past month, how often did you feel...

1. happy
2. interested in life
3. satisfied with life
4. that you had something important to contribute to society
5. that you belonged to a community (like a social group or your neighborhood)
6. that our society is a good place, or is becoming a better place, for all people
7. that people are basically good
8. that the way our society works makes sense to you
9. that you liked most parts of your personality
10. good at managing the responsibilities of your daily life
11. that you had warm and trusting relationships with others
12. that you had experiences that challenged you to grow and become a better person
13. confident to think or express your own ideas and opinions

14. that your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it

Teachers' HAVEN

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