Let's care

BUILDING SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS
TO FOSTER EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION
AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

WP3. Data collection and analysis

T3.2. Qualitative and collaborative data collection with teachers

Systematization work with teachers: Focus Groups and peer observation

Promaestro

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1. Executive Summary

This document reports on Task 3.2: Qualitative and collaborative data collection with teachers within WP3 of the Let's Care project. Two processes of collaborative work and co-creation were carried out with teachers from the six countries involved in the project.

The aim of this task was to develop the concept of Safe Teaching and generate tools for its observation and implementation, drawing on teachers' own thoughts and experiences in diverse contexts. In doing so, we triangulate the theoretical model of Safe Teaching developed through the literature review (WP2) and generate materials to be used in building the Safe Teaching toolkit (WP4) and Safe Teaching training program (WP5). The teachers' analysis of Safe Teaching is key to understanding the relationship between attachment, educational success and dropout prevention, describing the barriers and facilitators in the educational system, and making Safe Teaching a reality in European classrooms and schools.

Firstly, 90 teachers participated in the implementation of **Focus Groups**, whose main objective was for teachers to define Safe Teaching and identify the main barriers and facilitators to implementing Safe Teaching in the classroom. The factors identified by the teachers in these Focus Groups were the basis for the development of two observation tools: the Safe Teaching Observation tool (for direct classroom observation) and the Pedagogical Reflection tool (for indirect observation of school-level factors). The Focus Group results also served to contrast the theoretical model that emerged from the literature review in WP2.

Secondly, 62 of the teachers who participated in the Focus Groups were involved in an **observation process**, using the tools developed from the Focus Groups results. The teachers carried out self-observation and peer observation of their classroom practices. They also participated in a joint reflection session on school culture and stakeholder actions. The aim of this observation process was for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices with a focus on Safe Teaching and thereby identify their strengths and areas for improvement. In addition, the observation results substantiated and expanded on the Safe Teaching factors identified in the Focus Groups. Finally, the teachers' and National Coordinators' Board assessed the tools and provided feedback, which was then employed to improve them. The final versions of the observation tools, as well as the teachers' systematised teaching practices will contribute to the Safe Teaching toolkit (WP4) and the Safe Teaching program (WP5).

In this report, we first detail the methodology employed, starting with a brief description of the research techniques, the characteristics of the participants, and the steps followed in preparation and implementation of the fieldwork. Subsequently, we elaborate on the results obtained in the

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Focus Groups and teaching observations, which pertain to the factors of Safe Teaching inside and outside the classroom, as well as teachers' thoughts on Safe Teaching and experiences of observation. We also explain the results of the two-tier validation process that the observation tools went through. Finally, we discuss the results of both processes jointly, drawing conclusions on the implications for the Let's Care project as a whole.

2. Methodology

The type of research carried out is action research, with teachers being one of the main agents of the project. A collaborative working method has been followed, which has allowed the participating teachers to take on a researching role, as they gathered the data by reflecting on their lived experiences in the classroom. In this way, the relationship between the teachers and other research agents has been one of co-creation, which means that it has been horizontal, collaborative and mutually enriching. This has allowed the design of the phases of this part of the research to take into account both the evidence collected in WP2 of the project and the experiences and actions of the teachers. Thus, the design has been flexible and emergent**.** The participating teachers are valued in this project as the experts in the teaching-learning relationship and those who can offer the most knowledge about educational and school practice. It should be noted that keeping the same people involved in both research processes further contributes to knowledge and capacity building, both in participants and researchers.

2.1. Participants

2.1.1. General characteristics

Teachers from schools in six different countries took part in this research: Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Spain. Two schools from each country participated, with between 5 and 7 teachers each, with the exception of Bulgaria, where three schools participated. A summary is presented in table 1 below.

Table 1. Data by country

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING TEACHERS FG1	NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING TEACHERS FG2	NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING TEACHERS FG3
Bulgaria	5	8	5
Italy	10	5	X
Lithuania	4	6	X

Poland	7	8	X
Portugal	7	6	X
Spain	10	9	X
Total per Focus Group	43	42	5
Total of all Focus Groups	90		

The schools that participated in the Focus Groups were schools that belonged to the Community of Schools in each participating country. Likewise, it was recommended that the schools be diverse, representing the different levels of the education system, public and private institutions and rural and urban contexts. In order to recruit schools, a letter of dissemination was sent to them, which can be seen in the Appendix 1. A total of 13 schools and 90 teachers participated (for detailed data and information by country see Appendix 2). The teachers had different characteristics in terms of grades they taught, gender, age and years of teaching experience, which was enriching as it resulted in a variety of opinions and perceptions.

The following tables present the teachers' characteristics:

Total data of registered teachers

Table 2. Age data

AGE	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Between 20 and 30	7
Between 30 and 40	12
Between 40 and 50	37
Between 50 and 60	26
Between 60 and 70	8

Table 3. Gender data

GENDER	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Female	73
Male	16
Does not indicate	1

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Table 4. Data on the stage of education at which they are teaching

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF TEACHING	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Pre-school	6
Primary	54
Secondary	35
Special education	1

Note: 4 teachers have selected more than one stage (3 teachers ticked 2 stages and 1 ticked 3).

Table 5. Data on years in the teaching profession

YEARS AS TEACHER	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
From 0 to 10 years	21
From 10 to 20 years	16
From 20 to 30 years	34
From 30 to 40 years	15
From 40 to 50 years	4

2.1.2. Participants in the observation process

After the application and analysis of the Focus Groups, the observation process was carried out. Of the 90 teachers who participated in the Focus Groups, 62 also participated in the teaching observations . Table 6 below shows a breakdown of the participants by country.

Table 6. Participants in the observation process

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF TEACHERS SCHOOL ONE	NUMBER OF TEACHERS SCHOOL TWO	NUMBER OF TEACHERS SCHOOL THREE	TOTAL PER COUNTRY
Bulgaria	4	3	4	11
Italy	6	6	X	12
Lithuania	N/A	N/A	X	10
Poland	7	7	X	14
Portugal	2	1	X	3
Spain	6	6	X	12
Total for all countries				62

2.2. Research phases and techniques

2.1.1. Focus Groups

Preparing the fieldwork

- **Materials development:** in order to carry out the Focus Groups, a dossier was prepared for the facilitators indicating the steps to follow with the teachers, as well as providing all the relevant information they needed to know prior to their application.

  One of the main elements of this dossier was the script for the Focus Groups. This script was elaborated in a deductive way, using the dimensions of analysis that were previously established in the Let's Care project and that described the elements of study: (I) relationship between attachment and learning, (ii) definition of Safe Teaching, (iii) barriers and facilitators of Safe Teaching.

  The dossier included templates to be completed by the facilitators. The aim of these templates was to collect the information obtained through the Focus Groups and for the facilitator to reflect on and synthesise the teachers' responses. It should be added that in order to complete these templates in the dossier, the facilitators were instructed to audio-record the focus group conversations, so that they could then be transcribed, the information analysed and the template completed.

- **Training and delivery of materials**: after sending the dossier to the facilitators, an online session was arranged to explain the purpose of the Focus Groups, how to run them and what the systematisation and analysis materials were. The steps for accessing the participating schools and scheduling the focus group sessions together with the participating teachers were also explained to them.

- **Creation of teacher groups in each school:** a team of teachers interested in participating in the research was formed in each school. The teachers had to complete an authorisation form and read the legal notices of the research in order to obtain informed consent and ensure the free and voluntary participation of each teacher.

- **Contact and follow-up with partners:** Promaestro was available throughout the focus group implementation process to resolve any queries. This service was provided via email to the facilitators.

Arrival at the field and implementation

- **Implementation of the Focus Groups:** the Focus Groups were carried out during the months of May and June 2023 and took place in the participating schools. The following table shows the specific dates of each Focus Group.

Data collection and analysis

- **Collection and systematisation of Focus Group data in each country:** the facilitators were primarily responsible for implementing the Focus Groups and for carrying out the first collection and analysis of information from the Focus Group transcripts. For this analysis, they were provided with a template aimed at summarising the information extracted. This template (see Focus Group dossier in Appendix 1) was made up of the same categories used in the Focus Group script.

  Subsequently, in June 2023, Promaestro received these templates from the facilitators and proceeded to carry out a secondary analysis of the information. Promaestro did not receive either the recordings nor the transcripts of the Focus Groups. This analysis was divided into several stages, which are described below.

- **Elaboration of categories of analysis and codification of the information**: all the information collected was categorised based on content analysis. Firstly, a deductive categorisation of the information was carried out based on the dimensions of the Focus Group script (definition of attachment and bonding dimension; definition of Safe Teaching; Safe Teaching enablers; Safe Teaching barriers).

  After this first categorisation, a new inductive categorisation was carried out, from which new subcategories emerged that were considered relevant to the research. In this way, the categories went through different revision processes until a final category tree was established, which can be seen in Appendix 3.

  The systematisation of the information was carried out in two phases:

  1. Categorisation of the information by country: the result of this work was 6 documents, one for each country, with the categories of analysis.
  2. Consolidation of all country information by category: this process resulted in 4 final documents, one for each of the main categories.

- **Analysis of the information:** once all the information was coded for each category and subcategory, an analysis of all the information obtained was carried out. To this end, the

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most relevant ideas in each category were compiled, selecting those quotations from the teachers that reflected in a concrete way what was being described. In addition, this selection of textual quotations allowed the essence of the teachers' voices to be captured and made explicit as the main source of information in the analysis. This analysis was presented in the form of a report, in which each of the categories was described (Appendix 4).

2.2.2. Observation process

Preparing the fieldwork

- **Preparation of the Facilitator and Teacher Observation Dossiers:** First of all, it is essential to mention that the observation process is directly related to the Focus Group process described above. Both go hand in hand and involve the teacher as the main agent of participatory action research in this project. Therefore, the observation process is part of the collaborative methodology, with the purpose of positioning the teacher as an active participant who offers relevant and valuable knowledge coming from classroom experience.

  The observation dossier was divided into two parts according to the target audience: one dossier for the facilitator (Appendix 5) and one dossier for the teachers (Appendix 6). Unlike the Focus Groups, the observation process required much more involvement from the teachers, as they performed the observations, and therefore needed an overarching understanding of the process. On the other hand, the facilitator had to master the whole of the observation process in order to accompany the teachers through it.

  The dossier consisted of several parts: first, a theoretical framework on the key concepts and processes of teaching observations in order to inform the facilitators and provide them with instructions on how to implement them successfully in schools; second, the four phases of implementation of the observation process, which were described in detail in both the facilitator's and the teacher's dossier.

- **Development of the self and peer-observation tool:** the results of the Focus Groups were the starting point for the development of the observation tool. The instrument was made up of observation criteria that emerged from the analysis of the Focus Groups and, therefore, from the participating teachers. This observation instrument, named Safe Teaching Observation tool, is divided into three dimensions. Each dimension is itself composed of factors and indicators, in order to focus on specific aspects of classroom practice and to be able to monitor and measure them.

In parallel to this process and after the analysis of the information, a series of elements were identified that have an impact on the effectiveness of Safe Teaching but cannot be observed directly in the classroom. For this reason, a second instrument was developed, aimed at reflecting on the structural and social practices of the school community, i.e. reflection on the functions of the tutor, the school culture, the participation of families and the role of the management team and the administration. This instrument was called the Pedagogical Reflection tool on Safe Schools and Safe Education. It was applied in a reflective session among participating teachers from the same school and facilitated by the facilitator. The first versions of the tools went through a validation process by the teachers and NCB, which is explained below.

- **Training and delivery of materials:** the materials were sent to the facilitators during November 2023 and stored in the cloud of all Let's Care project partners. It should be noted that both dossiers were translated into the language of each of the participating countries. The training of facilitators was carried out in five sessions. The first was held in November 2023, to present the dossier and the preparation work with schools, and four were held fortnightly from January to March 2024, to explain each of the phases of the observation process and to resolve possible doubts and conflicts.

  The facilitators themselves held tutoring sessions with the teachers to guide them in the unfolding of the different phases. In addition, during the training sessions, the facilitators informed Promaestro of the developments in the observation process and the experiences and needs of the teachers, and the implementation was adapted in consequence. Information sharing was thus bidirectional, reinforcing the co-creative nature of the research.

- **Contact and follow-up with partners:** the contact and follow-up with the facilitators was carried out by email throughout the fieldwork period with the teachers to resolve any doubts.

Arrival at the field and implementation

- **Implementation of classroom observations:** The observations were carried out by the participating teachers from each of the CoS schools. Facilitators in each country were responsible for overseeing the process through online meetings and email communication. Within the facilitator's dossier, the timetable for these sessions was established, as well as the planning of each session with the contents to be covered. Along with the above, a

proposal of dates was made so that teachers could execute each of the phases and tasks of the observation process, which ran from January to March 2024.

The teachers had to carry out two teaching observations, one in which they observed another colleague and another in which they self-observed. For this, they employed the Safe Teaching Observation tool described above. In addition, they had to complete two templates to systematise the process, and take part in a reflection session guided by the Pedagogical Reflection tool. Finally, they completed an evaluation questionnaire on the instruments used.

The facilitators were required to complete two reports to send to Promaestro and also to compile the templates completed by the teachers into a single document for each teacher called Teacher's Workbook. These materials were sent to the Promaestro team in April 2024.

- **Validation of the observation tool:** the observation tool went through different validation phases before reaching its final version. This validation was meant to strengthen the tool by introducing modifications and improvements. In this validation process, the voice of the teachers and the National Coordinating Board (NCB) of the project has been taken into account. The validation process consisted of the following stages:

  Stage I → Implementation of the **first version** of the tools (Observation tool and Pedagogical Reflection tool) through the peer observation process developed by the participating teachers (this version of the tools can be found in the facilitator and teacher dossiers in Appendices 4 and 5). Teachers responded to a questionnaire to evaluate the relevance of the tools and to suggest improvements.

  Stage II → Following the comments received in the evaluation questionnaire answered by teachers, a **second version** of the tools was developed. Once the changes had been made, a briefing session with the NCB was held to explain the entire research process carried out with the teaching staff. The second version of the tools was also presented to them, explaining the changes made. After this session, the NCB group was given time to evaluate the observation tools by answering a new evaluation questionnaire.

  Step III → Once the evaluation data from the NCB group arrived, the comments received were reviewed to assess the possibility of further changes and improvements to the observation tools. Following this review, the **third and final version of both tools** was produced.

Table 7. Validation of the observation tool

FIRST VERSION	SECOND VERSION	THIRD VERSION
Prepared from the information gathered in the Focus Groups with teachers.	Developed following implementation and evaluation by the teachers.	Prepared following the evaluation by the NCB.

Data collection and analysis

- **Collection and systematisation of observation materials:** the collection of information began in April once all the facilitators' reports had been received. The documents received were organised and reviewed.

  Information was received from all countries, resulting in: 13 Facilitator Report 1 (one per participating school), 6 Facilitator Report 2 (one per participating country) and 62 Teacher's Workbooks (one per participating teacher).

  Report 1 contained a section to describe how the observation process and the work with teachers developed, and two sections in which to compile the teachers' reflections on each of the factors of the Observation tool and the Pedagogical Reflection tool, respectively. The facilitators organised the information on each of the factors by strengths, areas for improvement, needs and pedagogical actions suggested.

  Report 2 contained a summary of the teachers' answers to the evaluation questionnaire, organised by tool.

  The Teacher's Workbook consisted of the compilation of the templates submitted by each teacher, that is, a description of the lesson observed, a reflection on the observation process and notes on the factors resulting from the use of the Observation tool to analyse their teaching practice.

- **Analysis of the information:** the analysis was carried out separately for each type of material received, with its own systematisation processes:

  - **Facilitator Report 1:** An Excel book was used to systematise the information received from the different countries. The content of all the reports received was brought together in several spreadsheets, maintaining the separation by section and country. Subsequently, the information from different countries was unified. The analysis of the information aimed to find common ideas and synthesise,

resulting in a unified and reduced document. The most repeated ideas across countries were highlighted in the spreadsheet and those that were not repeated were kept so as not to lose the information. In a final round of synthesis, a report was drawn up containing only the most important ideas in each section.

- **Facilitator Report 2:** A similar process as the one described above was followed for the analysis of the information in Report 2. All the information provided by the different partners was collected and systematised in a single Excel book. The spreadsheet was organised analogously to the sections in Report 2, that is, following the structure of the evaluation questionnaire.

  For the analysis stage, qualitative responses were kept separate by country at all times, and synthesised by selecting the most representative comments. Quantitative responses, referring to the YES/NO or 1-to-6-format questions, were initially kept separate by country and subsequently averaged. The number and percentage of teacher respondents in each category was calculated as %YES/ %NO and % supporters (5 and 6 ratings)/ % neutral (3 and 4 ratings)/ % detractors (1 and 2 ratings), respectively. Bar graphs were generated to illustrate the distribution of responses pertaining to the specific factors and indicators, in order to draw conclusions about general trends.

  Finally, a summary report was produced with the collated quantitative data and selected comments, highlighting the testimonies on the strengths and areas for improvement of the tools.

  In parallel to the systematisation of information in Excel, the main improvement recommendations from the teachers were collected in a separate Word document to facilitate the preparation of the second version of the tools.

- **Teacher 's Workbook:** all Teacher's Workbooks were collected and reviewed to check that they were complete, and the information was relevant to that requested in the template. The format of the documents was reviewed so that all the Teacher's Workbooks followed the same standards. This was done as a preparation for subsequent publication in the database of practices that went through the observation process.

The present report was elaborated using the analysis from each of the documents mentioned. The discussion of the results can be found in Section 3.2.

2.2.3. Legal and ethical requirements

In the development of this part of the project, ethical and legal procedures have been followed to comply with confidentiality and voluntary participation, in accordance with EU data protection legislation. The information and permissions provided were elaborated by Promaestro and Timelex.

In order to carry out the Focus Groups with the teachers, a section of legal notices was added to the dossier (Appendix 1, page 12) with the indications for the teachers to give their authorisation as participants. By means of this authorisation, the teachers gave their permission for the information they provided to be part of the research carried out in the Let's Care project. IThe teachers were provided with a series of Q&As explaining all the details of the Let's Care Project and the implications of their participation in the research.

Secondly, for the process of teaching observation, an explanation linking this process to the previous Focus Group process was added to the facilitator's dossier. Subsequently, and following the legal requirements of each participating country, a new authorisation for participating teachers was developed specifically covering the process of teaching observation.

3. Results

3.1. Focus Group results

The comprehensive results of the Focus Groups can be found in the report in Appendix 4. There, each of the categories was considered separately, reflecting on the keywords that emerged from the teachers' speech.

We obtained relevant information pertaining to the categories presented for discussion in the Focus Groups script: implications of attachment and bonding dimension at school, definition of Safe Teaching, Safe Teaching enablers, and Safe Teaching barriers. Upon analysis and integration of the summaries of the teachers' contributions provided by the facilitators from each participating country, these categories were maintained. To account for emerging themes within the categories, for instance school culture, teaching practices, classroom situations or stakeholder actions and needs, the categories were further subdivided.

Finally, we used the categorised content of the Focus Groups to develop criteria for the observation of Safe Teaching. These translated into two observation instruments for qualitative evidence-gathering. In essence, the observation instruments incorporate the teachers'

recommendations for what should be fostered and what should be avoided inside and outside the classroom in order to build Safe Teaching.

The analysis of the categories allowed us to arrive at the following general conclusions. Please take note that here the results have been reorganised to highlight themes, which are different to the initial categories that emerged from the Focus Group analysis.

Definition of Safe Teaching: the participating teachers describe Safe Teaching as practices that foster collaboration, open communication and personalisation of the teaching and learning processes. Safe Teaching practices show students to respect and appreciate each other's opinions, so they can share their thoughts and feelings without fear of being judged. One teacher states: *"Safe learning is about the classroom environment, calm communication, mutual respect".* Safe Teaching is also related to knowledge of each student individually and awareness of group dynamics, which can be used to adapt classroom processes and support students in their personal development.

Benefits of Safe Teaching: the participants agree that establishing a bond of security between students and teachers, often expressed as a positive affective relationship, is critical to the students' emotional well-being and educational success. One teacher notes that *"Secure Attachment is the basis for any learning".* Nevertheless, the relationship between secure attachment and early school leaving is not evident to the teachers at first.

Safe Teaching promotes students' emotional well-being by creating spaces that provide physical and psychological safety, characterised by trust, acceptance, collaboration and protection. It also develops students' social and emotional skills, for instance embracing mistakes as learning opportunities, resolving conflicts, empathy and effective communication. As a result, Safe Teaching reduces bullying and other antisocial behaviours. Students feel that their needs are acknowledged and that they can freely share their successes and failures. Such spaces nurture students' personalities and drive their personal development.

Moreover, Safe Teaching creates educational success by boosting students' motivation and commitment to learning, and fostering meaningful learning environments that support creativity, critical thinking and teamwork. In turn, the improvements in learning outcomes lead to higher teacher satisfaction.

School culture and stakeholders: school culture emerged as a crucial factor in creating a welcoming and safe environment for students. A safe school culture must promote a sense of belonging to the school community, foster empathy and understanding and embrace diversity. In order to create a school culture that facilitates Safe Teaching, the participating teachers point to

several good practices: the availability of extracurricular activities involving different stakeholders, the commitment of school management, positive relationships among teaching faculty, the participation of families, and the integration of school counsellors and other professionals who meet special education needs. On the other hand, several factors were found to prevent Safe Teaching at the institutional level, among them a culture where teachers work in isolation, a large student body, and a school infrastructure without spaces for joint work, coordination and socialisation among teachers.

Teaching practices and classroom climate: teaching practices that facilitate Safe Teaching encourage group work, include a variety of dynamics and promote student participation. Students are empowered to make decisions, generating a sense of responsibility for their own learning, and are encouraged to intervene in classroom discussions. The activities are adapted to the characteristics of each group, and teachers feel that they have time to attend to individual student's needs. Supportive structures are put in place to help students succeed, and their successes are celebrated.

Classroom climates that facilitate Safe Teaching are defined by trust and respect between teachers and students. The students are able to express their emotions and needs in the classroom, and their opinions and rhythms are acknowledged by the teacher. The participating teachers stress the need to provide spaces for listening to and getting to know the students personally, such as the classroom/morning assembly.

Classroom situations that prevent Safe Teaching relate to the students' low motivation for learning, display of disruptive behaviours, breaches of classroom regulations for peaceful coexistence, and negative perception of the teacher. These can be the result of challenging family situations, or cultural and language differences that make student engagement difficult. Teachers also cite strained relationships between teacher and students as harmful to Safe Teaching. These can result from an excessive focus on academic performance, unresolved conflict, low expectations towards certain students, and arbitrary or unequal treatment of students.

Teachers' perceptions and needs in relation to Safe Teaching: the participating teachers express that when implementing Safe Teaching they experience positive emotions related to the feeling of connection to other members of the educational community, including motivation, gratitude, satisfaction with their work, and confidence in their abilities. When they encounter difficulties related to the bonding dimension, they feel insecure and anxious. Being unable to meet the needs and expectations of the students, or feeling misunderstood or underappreciated by other members of the educational community leads to frustration and discouragement. Despite this, teachers persevere and draw resilience from their colleagues' support.

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Indeed, in order to develop Safe Teaching, teachers should work with their colleagues to share perspectives, exchange good practices, give feedback, comment on students' progress and support each other. In the words of a participating teacher: *"We are not independent islands. We have to find ways to work collaboratively and learn from each other".* Consequently, some factors holding back Safe Teaching regarding teachers themselves are a lack of time and frameworks for working together. In addition, they note the absence of support from other professionals to meet students' needs (psychologists, pedagogues, speech therapists, social workers...), fatigue and demotivation.

Teachers pinpoint a need for professional development in promoting Safe Teaching. The areas of competence they deem more important are communication and conflict resolution, implementation of collaborative learning dynamics, leadership and classroom management, carrying out fair, objective assessment, and caring for students' emotional needs.

Teachers' relationships with families: families contribute to Safe Teaching when they build understanding with teachers and pursue common goals in the interest of their children's education. Families engage by attending meetings with teachers and school events. The participants mention the importance of teachers taking the lead in establishing and nurturing transparent communication with the families. One of the participating teachers comments: "*When we manage to build positive relationships with parents and they understand that we want the best for their child, this is the key to creating Safe Teaching*". They can do this by being available to discuss their concerns and sharing their plans for activities in the classroom. Among family-related constraints, teachers highlight the neglect of students' basic needs, dysfunctional family dynamics, negative attitudes towards school, lack of trust in teachers, and limited involvement in school activities due to working schedules or language barriers.

The influence of school management and public administration: school management has a key role in influencing the school's culture, especially through setting and socialising a clear vision of what Safe Teaching means to the school. They can support teachers by providing spaces for collaboration, training and resources, trusting their judgement and valuing their interventions. They also provide security to students and families by attending to their demands.

Public administration may work to break down perceived barriers to Safe Teaching by ensuring the stability of educational laws and supporting public policies. Public policies that promote Safe Teaching would increase the presence of specialists within schools, reduce teacher workload and bureaucratic commitments, limit class sizes and ensure that teacher subject area assignments match their training. They can also endorse protocols, programmes and teacher training for a safe and effective educational environment.

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3.2. Observation results

The following is a general analysis of teachers' experiences and reflections resulting from the classroom observations in their respective educational contexts, as compiled in each school's Facilitator Report 1. Individual teachers' thoughts upon observing their teaching practice were gathered into their teacher workbook, which also constitutes a final result of the research process. For this analysis, we have taken into account the ideas that are most frequently repeated and therefore that teachers from the six participating countries have in common.

We start with a contextualisation of how the observation process developed and a summary of the experiences that the teachers had in their active participation in the Let's Care project. The teachers were able to carry out the observation without major difficulties, although in some cases dates and timetables had to be adapted. Regarding the resources provided to implement the observation process (facilitator dossier, teacher dossier and accompaniment sessions), teachers responded that the information was clear and allowed them to understand and prepare the observation process in an effective way. Only one school mentioned that the methodology was not straightforward. In addition, the facilitator-teacher communication was fluid, each facilitator used their own resources to accompany the teachers, and they held meetings to resolve their doubts about the observation process. Moreover, most of the teachers highlight the importance of the support they received from their management teams in implementing classroom observation.

Over 80% of teachers rated the observation experience positively, underlining that the observation promoted joint reflection, facilitated the learning of new strategies and strengthened trust between teachers. For a small number of teachers, classroom observation made them apprehensive or uncomfortable due to not being used to the presence of another teacher in the room, and they were concerned about the reaction of students.

The templates given to teachers and facilitators encouraged them to reflect on the evidence from classroom observations in terms of strengths, areas for improvement, needs and suggestions for action for each of the factors included in the Safe Teaching Observation tool and Pedagogical Reflection tool. As a result, during the analysis process it became clear that, as teachers belong to different educational contexts, certain indicators were strengths for some, while for others they were a need or an area for improvement. For this reason, this section comments on elements that teachers have discussed on many occasions while inquiring into their classroom or school realities. These have thus been identified as fundamental to Safe Teaching. If they are present in a teaching practice or school culture, they are elements that enhance Safe Teaching, and if they are not, they are fundamental needs to be addressed in order to strengthen the practice.

Firstly, for Safe Teaching to occur, students need to have a positive attitude towards learning and promote a good classroom climate. This can be reflected when students feel valued and listened to by teachers, when they demonstrate a willingness to help each other with tasks, when they participate in activities, collaborate in the development of the session and remain interested and engaged in learning.

Secondly, in order to achieve a positive student attitude, there are a series of actions and attitudes that teachers can adopt. A teacher facilitates Safe Teaching by acting as a figure of reference for learners, showing that they are available when needed and instilling confidence. When interacting with students, they pay attention to their tone of voice and the language they employ, and treat all students equally, without any preferences. In maintaining classroom discipline, they try to strike a balance between closeness and seriousness, and respond consistently and coherently to established school protocols when students break the rules. The teacher seeks to hold students accountable for their learning and behaviour, and reinforce the students' positive behaviour and attitudes. They create an atmosphere of trust, promote integration and collaboration. They do this by helping students to identify their emotions, encouraging empathy, respect and helping dispositions, and providing opportunities for resolving conflicts when they arise. They themselves work collaboratively with their colleagues. They foster a culture of error, where mistakes are accepted and understood as part of the learning process. They display motivation and a positive attitude towards teaching despite the difficulties encountered and, during the lesson, they seek to foster student motivation as well.

In addition, to practise Safe Teaching, teachers should consider several factors in the structure and delivery of their lessons. At the outset of the lesson, they can provide an explanation of the sequence and objectives of the class, and create opening dynamics that awaken the interest and attention of the students. In the lesson there are times for collaborative work and autonomous work, with breaks between activities. The lesson activities and dynamics are adapted to students' abilities and needs. There are activities designed to promote student participation, increase students' self-esteem and let students express themselves. Different resources and methodologies are employed, taking into account students' interests.

With respect to the role of the tutor, Safe Teaching translates into aiming to attend to individual students' needs, creating spaces for communication with students outside as well as inside the classroom and having enough time to do so. In terms of communication with families, it means holding individualised meetings with them to discuss the students' progress and difficulties, and inviting them to participate in a variety of school activities. In terms of professional community, it means sharing information with other teachers and/or specialists at the school to ensure the best care.

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Moving to the school level, there are a number of requirements for teachers to be able to practise Safe Teaching. Among these, there should be protocols and procedures in place to prevent and address disruptive behaviour and conflicts, and the facilities must offer spaces where students feel calm, comfortable and safe and where extracurricular activities can take place. With respect to human resources, the school needs specialists who support classroom teachers (psychologists, special education teachers, etc.) and a student to teacher ratio that allows teachers to attend to students' needs.

Families also have a role in facilitating Safe Teaching, first and foremost by creating a home environment where the basic needs of students are covered. Families need to have a positive attitude towards school life, and listen to, support and trust both teachers and other school specialists. In their views of their child's learning, they should accept mistakes as part of the process, avoid exerting excessive pressure for academic results, and encourage autonomy. In respect to their involvement in school, they should attend regularly when required, and collaborate in activities to which they are invited.

Equally important for teachers to develop Safe Teaching are the decisions and actions of the management team and the administration. The management team needs to position itself as an authority figure who shares, communicates and maintains close relationships with students and other members of the educational community. They need to be active in making proposals for the prevention and resolution of problems within this community. In relation to teaching staff, management teams need to support, listen to and take into account teachers' opinions, provide them with spaces for collaborative work and reflection, and attend to their requests. Additionally, the administration and management team should promote teachers' professional development in areas such as conflict management, social skills, emotional education, positive discipline, relationship with families, drop-out prevention, classroom management and leadership. At the same time, teachers highlighted that the bureaucratic workload cannot take precedence over other needs such as lesson planning, producing materials, attending to students individually, meeting with families, or working collaboratively with other teachers. In relation to families, the management team needs to offer them programmes or recommendation guides to support learning at home, invite them to participate in the teaching and learning processes as well as in extracurricular activities in which the whole educational community comes together.

3.3. Validation of the observation tools

The application of the observation instruments by the participating teachers in their contexts during the observation process served to test their usefulness and relevance. The feedback they provided enabled the observation criteria to be revised and refined. The final objective was to

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generate a model tool for the observation of Safe Teaching, which emerged from the reflections delivered by the teachers in the Focus Groups applied at the beginning of this project.

To provide a more detailed account of this validation process, the main recommendations and changes that were made to the tools are described below. You can see the final version of the Observation tool and the Pedagogical Reflection tool in Appendix 7 and 8.

3.3.1 First stage of validation: teacher feedback

A total of 63 teachers responded to the evaluation questionnaire: 12 teachers from Italy, 4 from Portugal, 11 from Bulgaria, 10 from Lithuania, 14 from Poland and 12 from Spain.

Regarding the general questions of the **Safe Teaching Observation tool,** 84% of the teachers considered the proposed dimensions to be relevant for the observation of Safe Teaching and 83% rated positively the information that was collected through the proposed criteria. Furthermore, 81% of the teachers understood the difference between the factors and indicators. 90% of them found the tool useful for the observation of Safe Teaching. Among its strengths, they highlighted that the tool was easy to use, detailed and specific, with a very clear structure and adaptable to different educational contexts. In addition, they highlighted that it allowed them to stop and reflect, identify strengths and opportunities for improvement in teaching.

Regarding areas for improvement, teachers mentioned that the length of the tool could be reduced. In the same line, they indicated that some indicators were very similar and could be merged. Although most of the teachers mentioned understanding the difference between factors and indicators, others found this difficult. On the other hand, teachers made suggestions for some indicators that were not in the tool and could be included.

With regard to the **Pedagogical Reflection tool**, teachers emphasised that the tool invites an important reflection on issues that are often overlooked or taken for granted. This reflection is useful for teachers, principals and people working on educational policies. They mentioned that the factors in this tool provoked an enriching discussion addressing issues related to working with families, student attendance at school, learning outcomes, relationships within the school and conflict resolution. In addition, the tool invited the sharing of different views and experiences with other teachers. It brought to the forefront the high value the teachers place on the role they play in the lives of their students and collaboration with other teachers and education professionals. With regard to areas for improvement, teachers made several proposals for new indicators to be incorporated into the tool.

Following the feedback received from the teachers, a second version of the Safe Teaching Observation tool was developed. Among the changes that were made, some indicators were unified in order to simplify and reduce the length of the tool, while indicators proposed by the teachers were added or merged with others. Factors were reworded to account for novel compilations of indicators and the tool was restructured to depict the importance the teachers placed on each dimension. The result was a second, more concise version of the tool reduced to two dimensions of analysis. As for the Pedagogical Reflection tool, the four dimensions proposed in the first version were maintained, while some indicators were included and others merged for simplification.

It should be added that in both tools a revision of the introduction was made, adding more thorough instructions for their application , specifying the difference between factors and indicators and emphasising the freedom of teachers to adapt the tools to increase their relevance to their classroom and school realities.

3.3.2 Second validation stage: feedback from the NCB

In this second phase, 8 NCB members representing all countries of the consortium were presented with the second version of the observation tools. They subsequently answered an adapted evaluation questionnaire. The responses were generally very positive, with 100% of the participants confirming that the proposed dimensions are relevant for the observation of Safe Teaching. Regarding the difference between factors and indicators, some doubts were again raised about the context and instructions for use provided within the tool. On the other hand, 88% of the participants mentioned that the Safe Teaching Observation tool was easy to understand, that the indicators gave a global picture of the educational process and that it covered the main pillars of Safe Teaching. At the same time, it allowed teachers to observe and identify specific aspects to take into account in their lessons. As for the format and method of application, 88% of the participants considered it to be adequate.

Regarding the Pedagogical Reflection tool, they highlighted that the factors provide steps to create a safer school environment. Furthermore, they highlighted that they were well formulated and prompted relevant reflections on teaching methodologies, the classroom, the school environment, attitudes of different members of the community, the role of management and the relationships with families. Regarding the format of application of this tool (joint reflection among teachers), participants mentioned that it invites a lively debate, exposing both common ground and points of disagreement. Participants also considered that the factors and indicators represent concrete actions that can be observed indirectly in the school and can be taken as suggestions for improvement.

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Following the feedback received from NCB members, the factors and indicators were maintained in both tools, again adding clarifications to introductory text so that teachers gain a better understanding of the tool.

4. Discussion and conclusions

We set out to determine if the concept of Safe Teaching in the context of Let's Care seemed relevant to teachers in their pedagogical practice. In addition, we wanted to identify how Safe Teaching manifests in classrooms and schools, in order to develop tools to observe it, and give teachers a space to reflect on how aspects of their day-to-day lives in schools relate to Safe Teaching.

The teachers went through two major participatory stages in this project. Firstly, they discussed their ideas around Safe Teaching through Focus Groups. Secondly, they tested the validity of the ideas that arose through self-observation and peer observation of their practice, as well as guided discussions on school culture and stakeholders. As described at the beginning of the report, this methodology was crucial to honour the participatory nature of this research stage with teachers and empower them as co-researchers.

In the Focus Groups, teachers from six different European countries and from different educational stages became familiar with the concepts of Safe Teaching, Safe Schools and Safe Learning, their facilitators and barriers to their implementation. The reflections provided in these discussions brought to light a variety of classroom and school-wide determinants that are relevant for Safe Teaching and were translated into two observation instruments for qualitative evidence-gathering: the Safe Teaching Observation tool and the Pedagogical Reflection tool. These tools capture the teachers' recommendations for what should be fostered and what should be avoided to build Safe Teaching.

Subsequently, in the observation process, a subset of the participating teachers analysed their classroom and school practices employing the tools. The teachers reflected on their actions in the classroom, their relationship with their students, the way they plan their classes, the way they relate to other teachers, to families and to their management teams. The reflections provided by the teachers following the direct observation allowed us to contrast the knowledge obtained from literature review and that obtained from indirect inquiry through the Focus Groups. The teachers confirmed several elements that strengthen Safe Teaching; thus, when they are not present, they become a need that should be addressed. While we recognise that each context is unique, the similarities encountered in the teachers' discourses and experiences paint a clear and robust picture of Safe Teaching.

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Most teachers evaluated the observation process as very positive for their professional development. They highlighted that it allowed them to identify strengths, areas for improvement, needs and pedagogical actions to address in relation to Safe Teaching. Although it was a complex process to implement, especially if they had never carried out classroom observations, the support provided by the facilitators and in the form of materials was sufficient.

One of the central findings has been the characteristics of the teaching practices that promote or hinder Safe Teaching in the classroom. Briefly, lessons that promote Safe Teaching encourage students to participate, share their questions, and seek help. In addition, they include collaborative work among students and provide differentiated activities. The teacher and students create a classroom climate that rewards empathy and respect and provides spaces for peaceful conflict resolution. Through their classroom management approach, the teacher showcases interest in students' well-being, monitors their learning individually, provides positive reinforcement, and establishes behavioural limits.

Similarly, a series of school-culture determinants to develop Safe Teaching and teacher needs involving other educational actors were outlined. Teachers ask for time and space outside lessons to get to know their students. They need to work and reflect with their colleagues and to have spaces for the whole educational community to gather, facilitated by a school vision that values emotional safety and belonging. From school management, they need a listening ear, the establishment of protocols for conflict resolution and the promotion of professional development for Safe Teaching. The families, in turn, make Safe Teaching possible by providing for the basic needs of their children, trusting teachers, participating in school activities and supporting their child's learning process. The results confirm the great importance of accounting for the different agents that make up a school, and the need for these actors to communicate and work together.

The main limitations of this research are those related to its qualitative nature. The value in employing focus groups and observations is that of capturing the individual voices of participating teachers. However, this methodology impedes generalisation of the results to other contexts. This aspect is strengthened in that these techniques are complemented by the literature review as well as the implementation stages of the project. There might also have been a bias in the formation of the teacher groups for the pedagogical reflection session, as their composition was not monitored.

The two tools and materials resulting from this research, including the teachers' workbooks, constitute a tested model for Safe Teaching that is intended to be disseminated to the wider education community. This dissemination aims to raise awareness of Safe Teaching and focus efforts on its development. The alignment found between the results of the Focus Groups and the observation process provides further grounding to the tools developed in collaboration with

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teachers. It also allows triangulation of the theoretical framework and shows the validity of the Safe Teaching model in real European contexts of application. We want to reiterate that the teachers' voice has been immensely valuable and hope that their experience in this observation process will enrich their teaching practice and motivate other teachers to observe their practice with a focus on Safe Teaching.

Appendix

Appendix 1 → Focus Group Dossier

Appendix 2 → Country data Focus Group

Appendix 3 → Category tree Focus Group analysis

Appendix 4 → Focus Group Report

Appendix 5 → Peer Observation - Facilitator Dossier

Appendix 6 → Peer Observation - Teacher Dossier

Appendix 7 → Safe Teaching Observation tool

Appendix 8 → Pedagogical Reflection tool on Safe Schools and Safe Education

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