

Lorin Salagean Technical College, Romania
“We Care About” by Nadina Carmen Nicolici, teacher

<p>Why did you/ your school choose to work on the issue of “Addressing well-being at school”?</p>	<p>We decided to embark on such an initiative as we discovered that too little is known about social exclusion, while it existed in our school, and many of our students were prone to it, which led to poor learning outcomes, absenteeism or early school leaving, low self-esteem and lack of motivation.</p>
<p>What did you do and what went well? Who took part? Please describe some important steps of the process.</p>	<p>We set up the project team (students and teachers), identified the students in the target group, and we set up a club for them. The activities took place every week, and they included workshops, debates, a mini-play on tolerance and exclusion, visits to different places in our area, and also helping the others, such as the old people in one local asylums or children in the local orphanage. Once a week, for 120 minutes, the students in the target group were helped by volunteers and teachers with the subjects where their performance tended to be poor.</p>
<p>What were main challenges you have experienced?</p>	<p>One of the biggest challenges we faced during the project, from the very beginning was to keep our students, teachers, and partners interested in the project and motivated. We managed to avoid it, as we involved our direct beneficiaries in the project – we discussed about the activities we want to do and we took our students’ opinions into account. We know that sometimes our ideas (as teachers) are not the same as our students’, so we let them take the floor from the beginning.</p>
<p>Did your project/ practice/ initiative bring some changes? What were the benefits?</p>	<p>Our students gained knowledge, but not in the formal way, they got involved, expressed their ideas, acted and saw the final results. They became more tolerant, and now they see things from a different perspective.</p>
<p>What would you say to a colleague who is about to start the same kind of project/ practice/ initiative to help them repeat your success?</p>	<p>Take into account the ideas that come from the direct and indirect beneficiaries. Collaborate and communicate with them regularly (have a communication plan for this), and you will be able to avoid the biggest challenge – see your project abandoned.</p>
<p>Anything else you would like to highlight?</p>	<p>Our project was based on cooperation because all the partners really worked together, we discussed, shared ideas, learned from each other, and we worked in the real world, not in the virtual one. Our direct beneficiaries had a mind-changing experience as they became more tolerant and understood that everyone may be prone to exclusion. They learned this concept – what it means, its causes and solutions to fight against it.</p>