

PROMEHS NEWSLETTER #2

Dear PROMEHS friends,

We are pleased to send you the second Newsletter containing updates on the latest news. The project is moving towards its end, so we would like to sum up what happened during this year.

First of all... follow us!

The latest updates about PROMEHS can be discovered on many social media. If you do not follow the PROMEHS pages yet, this is the perfect time to do it! Click on the links here below:

- [PROMEHS website](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [ResearchGate](#)

Don't forget to watch the [new video](#) developed by the Italian team from the University of Milano-Bicocca, describing the key aspects and main results of the PROMEHS project.



The conclusion of teachers' training

During the last academic year (2020-2021), teachers of schools involved in the experimental group were trained and supported in carrying out PROMEHS curriculum with their students. They faced many difficulties because of the COVID-19 pandemic, between quarantines and lockdowns, however, they did their best to promote students' mental health and prevent problematic behaviors at school. They kept on believing in PROMEHS and used the Handbooks we prepared for them.

After the experimentation, even teachers belonging to schools of the control group took part – and still have been taking part - in the training course. The PROMEHS trainers guided them in the promotion of their own and students' social and emotional learning and resilience and the prevention of problematic behaviors at school. They are all ready to implement the activities of the Handbooks in their classroom even in the future!

Here below you can find some reflections by teachers who attended the PROMEHS training:

“The themes developed (during the training) were relevant, and the proposed activities were very interesting. With it, I could think about myself, allowing me to stop and think about me, my emotions, and my attitudes towards others. It’s been a long time since I have done this analysis, and it was so important. I stopped to think about myself, as a person but also as a teacher. These moments are rare and yet so important. We enter into our routine that we end up not having time to think about ourselves and the way we relate to others, and in this training, that was possible. In the practical part of this training (PROMEHS implementation), I and my students lived very interesting moments, of sharing and complicity that allow us to get to know each other better since the developed activities are based on stories that are part of our reality. The students could see themselves in the stories that were read, which was the starting point for a long conversation, full of surprises, experiences, and emotions. I identified very well with the sessions that I proposed to develop, which was also important for their success.”. (Portuguese teacher)

“I thought it would be much work, and by looking at the teachers’ manual, it seemed hard to implement. With the implementation of the sessions and a closer look, everything became clearer and simpler. I selected the activities I thought were best for my class, and the “path” started with this organization. The fact that I am a primary school teacher was an advantage because I could manage time. I was able to deepen the themes while working on the different curricular subjects with no time pressure since I was with the students for five hours a day. I could develop and implement the activities at the necessary time. The training was an important help [...]. The training and the supervision allowed me to increase knowledge and share ideas and experiences with colleagues from different schools across the country. There were moments of reflection on the reality of each group that was very enriching.”. (Portuguese teacher)

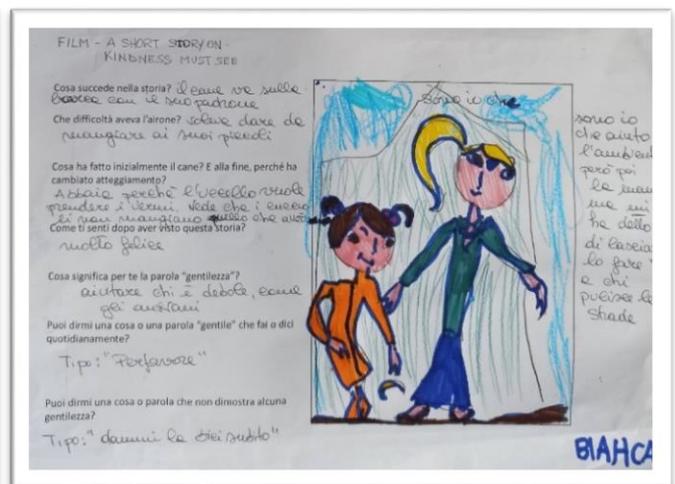
“This training gave me many tools and information to enrich myself, leading me to linger and reflect on my general way to face the routine. It helped me to reflect on both my emotional wellbeing and the importance of social-emotional learning at school, to let children develop important competences that will help them grow up healthy and consciously. [...] Now I pay more attention to students’ feelings, I try to understand what is the reason why they feel them.”. (Italian teacher)

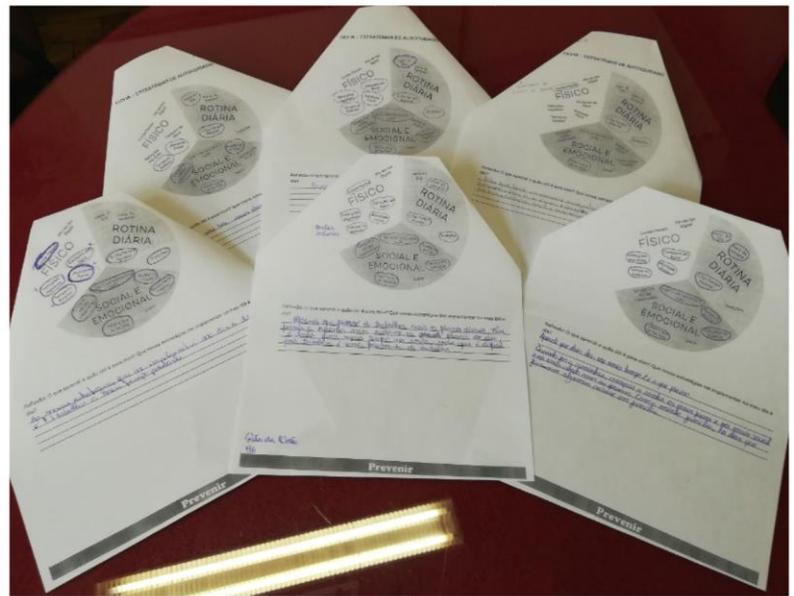


Two groups of Italian teachers who attended the PROMEHS training, together with their head teacher.

PROMEHS handbooks in the European schools

The teachers involved in the experimentation implemented the PROMEHS curriculum in their classrooms. The PROMEHS handbooks were valuable resources to talk about topics perceived as relevant for students (e.g., identifying and managing emotions, solving conflicts with peers, understanding and respecting rules, etc.). To achieve the greatest benefit, teachers embedded the activities of the handbooks into the school curriculum within their subject areas. Here below you can see some examples of activities realized in the European schools (find more [here](#)).





Examples of activities that European students from kindergarten to secondary school implemented.

Here below you can also read some positive experiences reported by teachers:

“It is (was) a 10th grade, half of the students did not know each other because they came from different schools. During the first period, two big groups were created (the ones that belong already in school and the others), and problems started to exist between them, like making fun of, jokes, mockery, and online threats. Some parents and students reported me these situations. During the PROMEHS sessions, this situation ended, the students got to know each other better, and the unpleasant situations ended. Today, not all are friends, but they tolerate each other.”
(Portuguese teacher).

“I embraced this project with confidence and the activities in the classroom confirmed my expectations: a classroom climate of wellbeing guarantees more effective and meaningful learning. The students (high secondary school) need to talk about themselves and these activities allow to create the opportunity to bring out problems of the class group, discuss and reflect on them. Someone might argue that it is a waste of time at the expense of teaching, but it is exactly the opposite! Dedicating a weekly space, an hour, to important topics such as recognizing and managing emotions, resilience, positive thinking, etc., leads to a greater awareness of ones’ abilities and limits and better deal with situations, including those related to the learning. To conclude, I strongly believe in promoting mental health at school and I will keep on doing it.”
(Italian teacher)

The involvement of head teachers

Even head teachers had an active role in the PROMEHS project and were enthusiastic about its implementation in their schools. Trainers involved them in some meetings aimed at strengthening their efforts to promote mental health in their school community.

Meetings for parents

To be more effective, PROMEHS adopted a systemic approach and supported even parents in their role as mental health promoters. Parents and caregivers attended online meetings where PROMEHS handbooks and topics were illustrated and discussed. This way, they could work in synergy with the school and promote children’s and adolescents’ mental health also at home. Read what parents said about the PROMEHS meetings:

“Your words were of great help for me, not only as a parent but firstly as a person. I was recently struck by an important mourning and the dynamics discussed this evening are and will be a huge resource.”

“An absolutely precious meeting in an emotionally complex historical period. THANKS!”

“Please come back even next year 😊 Parents and children thank you.”

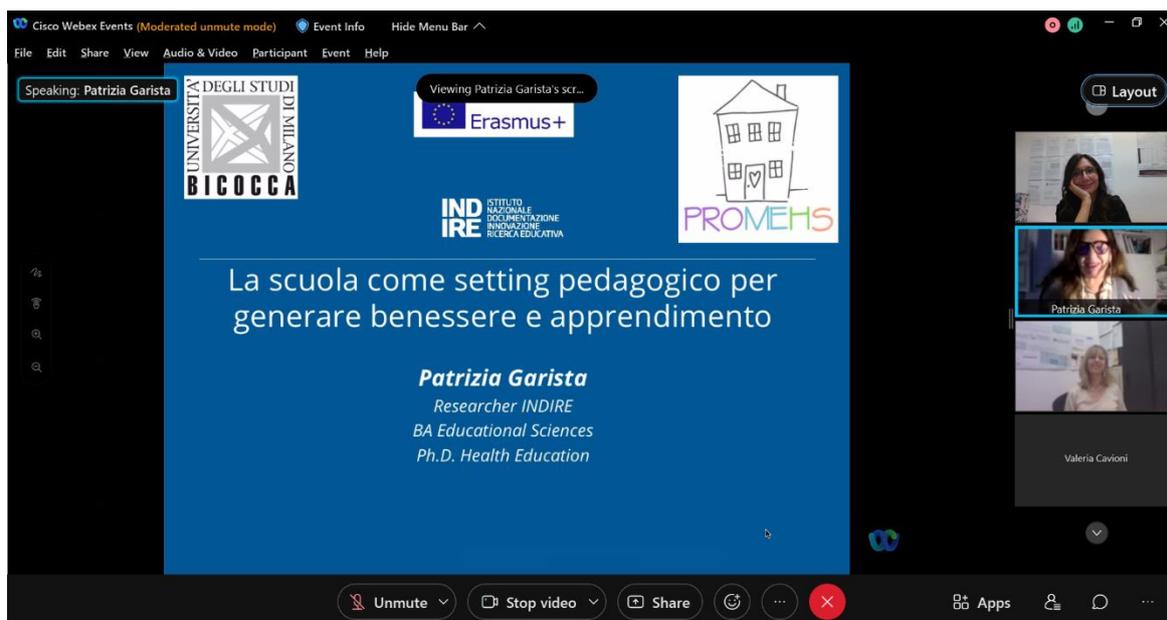
National Closing Conferences

We are approaching the end of the project so we need to report the projects' results and spread the importance of PROMEHS for improving mental health at school also by attracting the interest of policy-makers and school communities. Thus, last months some Countries of the partnership held the National Closing Conferences, which were important occasions to inform the general public about the benefits of PROMEHS.

The University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy) organized an online event on November 24, 2021. More than 100 people (teachers, head teachers, students, parents, policy-makers, researchers, etc.) attended the National Closing Conference. Prof. Maria Grazia Riva, Pro-rector at the University of Milano-Bicocca, held the opening speech, and Dr. Patrizia Garista, a researcher from INDIRE (National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research), held an interesting speech about the school as a promotor of wellbeing. During a round table, representatives of head teachers, teachers, and students reflected on their participation in the project and described their experiences and feelings.

The University of Latvia (Latvia) organized a [live streaming conference](#) on October 19, 2021, attended by more than 700 participants. The event was endorsed by the Minister of Education and Science of Latvia, who held the opening speech, and by the ex-president of Latvia, who wrote a letter supporting the PROMEHS project that was read during the conference. Some representatives of schools involved in the project were also invited to discuss their positive experiences with PROMEHS.

The other partners of the project are still organizing their National Closing Conferences. The University of Patras (Greece) will held an online Conference on January 17, 2022, open to all Greek schools. The University of Rijeka (Croatia) is planning a two-days event, on January 28 (online) and 31 (face-to-face with teachers involved in the project). The University of Lisbon (Portugal), the Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava (Romania), and the University of Malta will hold their Closing Conferences at the beginning of the next year as well. Follow the PROMEHS social media pages for updates!



Dr. Patrizia Garista, an INDIRE researcher, speaks at the Italian Closing Conference (November 24, 2021).



Rūdolfs Kalvāns (Director of the Sigulda State Gymnasium, President of the Latvian Association of Educational Leaders), Anda Ķīvīte-Urtāne (parent, Director of Institute of Public Health, Associate Professor at Department of Public Health and Epidemiology, Riga Stradiņš University), and Elīna Apsīte (teacher and deputy director of Sigulda City Secondary School) during the Latvian Closing Conference (October 19, 2021).

Dissemination actions

Since the beginning of the project, we have been working collaboratively with policy-makers and stakeholders at local, regional, and national levels in all the PROMEHS Countries to ensure the success and sustainability of PROMEHS. These are some examples of actions (see more [here](#)):

- February 2021, Prof. Adina Colomeischi (Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania) was interviewed by the Romanian local TV *Bucovina TV* about mental health at school.
- May 2021, Prof. Sanja Tatalović Vorkapić (University of Rijeka, Croatia) was invited to take part in a round table organized by the *Croatian Education and Teachers Training Agency* within the *National Assembly of Social Pedagogists*, to present the PROMEHS project and its contribution to the promotion of children, youth, and educators' mental health.
- May 2021, Prof. Sanja Tatalović Vorkapić (University of Rijeka, Croatia) participated in the TV show *Classroom*, broadcast by the local Croatian television *KanalRi*, to describe the PROMEHS project and its implementation in European schools.
- September 2021, Prof. Ilaria Grazzani (University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy) presented the PROMEHS project to more than 500 professional people during an Advanced Training Course organized by *Formazione Continua in Psicologia*, concerning interventions to promote children's and adolescents' social-emotional development.

The PROMEHS team also actively presented and described the project in [national and international conferences](#), such as:

- The XXXIII National Conference of the Italian Association of Psychology (AIP, Italy)
- A webinar organized by the Order of Psychologists of Lombardia (OPL, Italy)
- The Conference "Children of the Pandemic: Mental Health, Wellbeing and Resilience", organized by the University of Malta in collaboration with ENSEC
- The II Online Congress of New Approaches on Infant and Juvenile Mental Health (Brazil)
- The XI International Congress of Child and Adolescent Psychology (Portugal)
- 3rd Cycle of Conferences at the D'Anter Highschool (Portugal)
- The Sintra ES+ Conference (Portugal)
- The 9th International Congress of Educational Sciences and Development (Spain)
- The XXI National Congress of Pediatrics (Portugal)
- 19th Week of Integration (Brazil)
- XVI Galician-Portuguese International Congress of Psychopedagogy (Portugal)
- Moving Research into ACTION (Portugal)

Moreover, the team contributed to spreading PROMEHS internationally through some analytical reports about whole-school approaches to the assessment and promotion of mental health. Find out more [here](#).

PROMEHS meeting in Lisbon

After a long pause, eventually, the PROMEHS team met face-to-face for the VI partners' meeting, held at the University of Lisbon on October 29 and 30. During the meeting, the University of Malta presented preliminary results about the effectiveness of the PROMEHS curriculum and the next steps of the project were discussed. Find more information [here](#).



The PROMEHS team at the VI partners' meeting (Lisbon, October 29-30, 2021)

What next?

Moving towards the end of the project, the PROMEHS team is now working on several fronts to complete the expected tasks, such as:

- Development of the Research Report, a document containing detailed findings on the effectiveness of the PROMEHS curriculum.
- To make the training course and handbooks available for all schools, through close collaboration with policy-makers and stakeholders.

More information will be given in the next newsletter, so stay tuned and follow the PROMEHS social pages to be updated!



Last but not least, we would like to thank every head teacher, teacher, student, and parent who took part in the PROMEHS project. Despite the difficult times, the school communities dedicated time, effort, and energy to guarantee the success of PROMEHS, demonstrating great confidence towards the PROMEHS project. Nothing was possible without you, **THANK YOU!**

We will continue to share with you any news on the PROMEHS progress and achievements, at both national and international levels.

In the meantime, the PROMEHS team wishes you a great festive period!

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