RESCUR
PROMOTING RESILIENCE IN EARLY YEARS &PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN EUROPE

Conference
16-18 October 2014
ISTANBUL

RESCUR
Resilience Curriculum

Carmel Cefai et al.
University of Malta
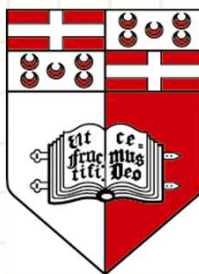
Education and Culture DG
Lifelong Learning Programme

RESCUR Project

- **3 year EU LLP Comenius Project (2012-2015)**
- **6 research partners:**
  - *University of Malta,* **Malta (Coordinator)**
  - *University of Crete*, **Greece**
  - *University of Pavia*, **Italy**
  - *University of Zagreb*, **Croatia**
  - *Orebro University*, **Sweden**
  - *University of Lisbon*, **Portugal**

Objectives

RESCUR is aimed at developing a resilience curriculum for early and primary education in Europe through the intercultural and transnational collaboration among the partner institutions.

What is resilience ?

- **Definition of resilience implies successful adaptation in the face of adversity and environmental stressors:**
  - *"Set of qualities that foster a process of successful adaptation and transformation despite risk and adversity"* **(Masten, 1994)**

What is resilience

- **RISK: socio-economic disadvantage, individual educational needs, cultural mismatch, family instability, negative early experiences, eg. children living in poverty, Roma children, children from minority and refugee status, children with disability and gifted children**

- **SUCCESS: academic success, social competence, emotional literacy**

Resilience

- **But children may be protected from the potential risks posed by such environments**

Defining resilience: Inclusive

- "Resiliency may be more about ordinary responses which focus on strengths rather than extraordinary processes" (Masten, 2001)

- 'Ordinary magic' rather than SuperKids ~ an inclusive perspective

Masten (2001) Ordinary Magic

The message from three decades of research on resilience underscores central themes of the positive psychology movement: Psychology has neglected important phenomena in human adaptation and development during periods of focus on risk, problems, pathology, and treatment. . . . Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from normative resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities. . . .

Defining resilience-contextual, developmental construct

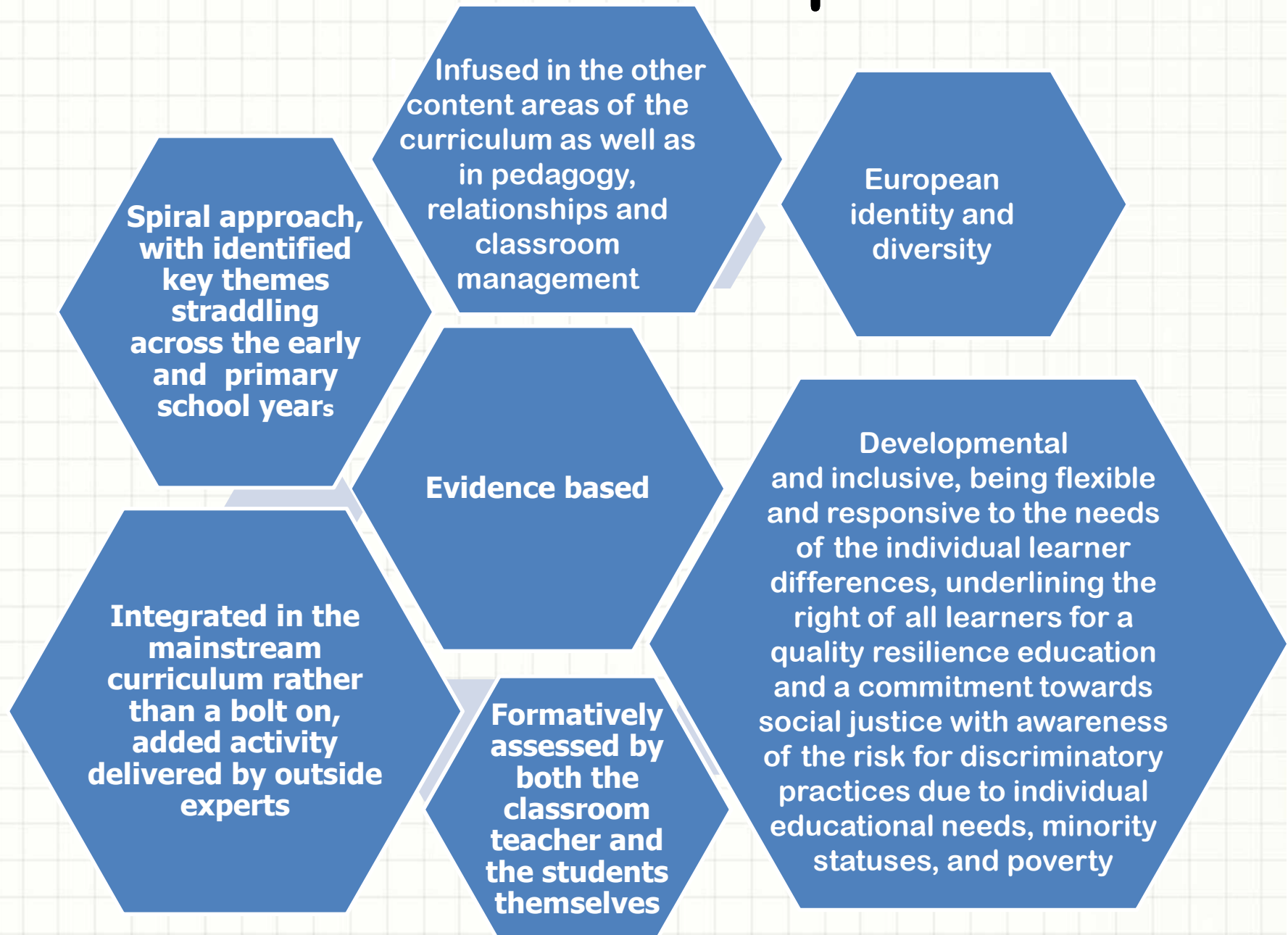*"Resilience is not a universal construct that applies to all life domains… or a trait a child is born with or automatically keeps once it is achieved…it's a multidimensional phenomenon that is context-specific and involves developmental change." (Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994)*

If circumstances change, resilience alters (Rutter, 1981)

RESCUR : 3 year programme

- In the 1st year, the consortium seeks to develop a universal resilience curriculum for the early years and primary school education.
- In the 2nd year, the curriculum will be piloted in a number of schools in each country
- In the 3rd year the curriculum will be revised and published in soft and hard copies in the 7 languages of the consortium.

Curriculum Principles

Infused in the other content areas of the curriculum as well as in pedagogy, relationships and classroom management

European identity and diversity

Spiral approach, with identified key themes straddling across the early and primary school years

Evidence based

Integrated in the mainstream curriculum rather than a bolt on, added activity delivered by outside experts

Developmental and inclusive, being flexible and responsive to the needs of the individual learner differences, underlining the right of all learners for a quality resilience education and a commitment towards social justice with awareness of the risk for discriminatory practices due to individual educational needs, minority statuses, and poverty

Formatively assessed by both the classroom teacher and the students themselves
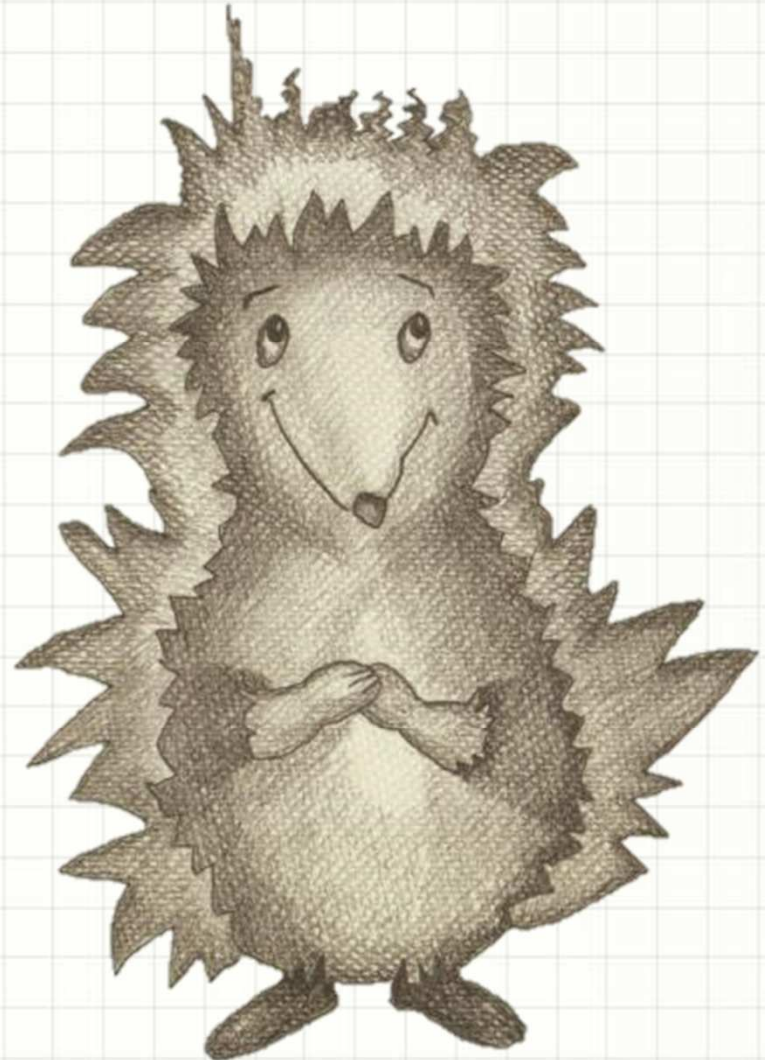
Manuals

- **The curriculum will consist of 3 manuals for teachers complete with resources and activities centred around 6 major themes (spiral)**

- **Manual 1: Early Years (3-5 years)**

- **Manual 2: Early Primary Years (6-8 yr)**

- **Manual 3: Late Primary Years (9-11 yr)**

- **There will also be a complementary manual for Parents**

CURRICULUM MASCOTS

RESCUR Framework
STORYLINE

BEING → **DOING** → **BECOMING**

(I AM) → Developmental & Situational Challenges → I Become = Resilience Outcomes

RESILIENCE CURRICULUM

DIRECT-Skills (Taught)   **INDIRECT-Processes (Caught)**

Child Wellbeing & Resilience

**DIRECT-Skills
(Taught)**

**Resilience as
Specific Curriculum
Area**

**Resilience as
Cross-Curricular
Area**

INDIRECT-Processes (Caught)

WHOLE SCHOOL **CLASSROOM (Climate & Relationships, Teacher Behaviour, Attitudes & Creativity)** **FAMILY** **COMMUNITY**

Whole School Policy

Engagement

Engagement & Education

INSET

Teacher Training

Teacher Resilience

Family Resilience

BEING   DOING   BECOMING (outcome)

(I AM) →   Developmental &   →   I Become =
                   Situational Challenges   Resilience
                                                              Outcomes

PRINCIPLES

- taught (teacher) & caught

- curricular & cross curricular

- universal & targeted groups

- classroom, whole/school, family/community

- SAFE approach

- formative assessment

- child-centered

- child, teacher & parent resilience

- inclusive & culturally responsive

- evidence based

- European identity & diversity

RESILIENCE CURRICULUM

(Increasing Protective & Enabling Factors/ Reducing Risk Factors)

DIRECT-Skills (Taught)

INDIRECT-Processes (Caught)

Resilience Curriculum (specific curriculum)

Cross-Curricular (Curriculum)

Classroom Climate & Relationships, Teacher Behaviour, Attitudes & Creativity

Teacher Training

Teacher Resilience

INSET

Whole School

Whole School Policy

Engagement

Community

Engagement & Education

Family

Family Resilience

Child Wellbeing & Resilience

Six Themes of Resilience Curriculum

1. Developing a growth mindset
2. Building on strengths
3. Developing self-determination
4. Enhancing communication skills
5. Building healthy relationships
6. Turning challenges into opportunities (tough mindedness)

Theme 1: Developing a Growth Mindset

- **Optimistic thinking and positive mindset when facing life's adversities**

  Using positive emotions to promote growth and wellbeing (hope, happiness, humour)

Theme 2: Building on & developing Strengths

Positive self-concept and self-esteem

- **Awareness and use of strengths in academic and social engagement**

Theme 3: Developing Self-determination

- **Creative problem-solving and decision making**

- **Empowerment: promoting autonomy, self-efficacy, internal locus of control**

determined
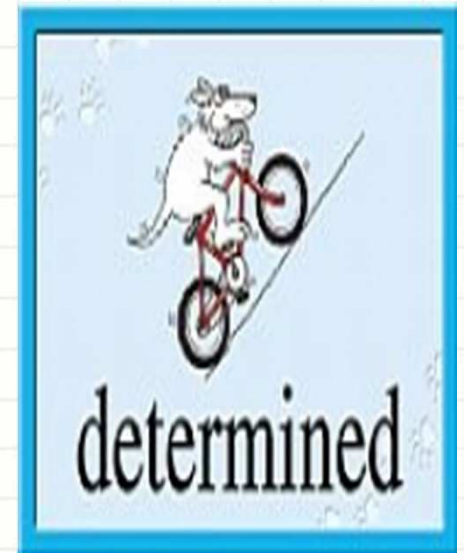
Theme 4: Enhancing communication skills

- **Interpersonal communication (effective listening skills, giving feedback, communicating ideas)**
- **Assertive behaviour**

Theme 5: Building healthy relationships

- **Establishing & maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships with adults (eg. teachers) and peers**

- **Engaging in ethical and responsible behavior (prosocial values and attitudes, responsible decision making)**

Theme 6: Turning challenges into opportunities (tough mindedness)

- Developing courage in adversity and persistence in the face of failure, injustice, overcoming difficulties and setbacks (e.g. disability, sickness, discrimination)
- Dealing with rejection by teachers, peers, family members
- Dealing with bullying behaviours at school
- Dealing with obstacles such as family conflict, divorce, poverty & parental unrealistic expectations
- Dealing with change, loss and transitions in life

ADVERSITY... SO EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED AND WHEN IT HITS, HOLD YOUR HEAD UP. DON'T LOOK BACK. FORWARD MARCH. YOU'LL BE SURPRISED AT HOW MUCH STRENGTH YOU HAVE.

Structure

- **Three manuals: early years, early primary and late primary**
- **Spiral curriculum, the same themes for all ages**
- **Developmental/inclusive rather than age determined: in each group 3 different levels:**
  - **Basic**
  - **Intermediate**
  - **Advanced**

Principles

- **Eg. SAFE Approach**
  - Sequenced step-by-step training approach
  - Active forms of learning
  - Focus sufficient time on skill development
  - Explicit learning goals

Example actvity: Building healthy relationships

SUBTHEME 1

ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Set 1 — Making and having friends

Set 2 — Seeking and providg support

Set 3 — Nurturing relationships and school climate

SUBTHEME 2

DEVELOPING COOPERATION SKILLS AND EMPATHY AND ENGAGING IN RESPONSIBLE AND ETHICAL BEHAVIORS

Set 1 — Sharing, cooperation and teamwork

Set 2 — Developg empathy

Set 3 — Ethical, responsible and moral behavior

Activity template

- Topic
- Learning goal
- Learning outcome
- Age level (early years, early primary, late primary)
- Activity level (basic, intermediate, advanced)
- Materials needed
- Activity in detail (eg. steps I, II, III)
- Home task

EXAMPLE ACTIVITY

ATTIVITÀ I. Zelda non sa a aspettare

Obiettivo di apprendimento

- **I bambini aspettano il proprio turno durante un'attività di gioco**

Traguardo di apprendimento

Alla fine di questa unità, sarò in grado di:

- **aspettare il mio turno durante le attività**

Età : **3-5 anni**

Livello: **Semplice**

Materiali: **Memory cards degli animali, fogli di carta, pastelli a cera/matite**

EXAMPLE ACTIVITY

Attività

1. Inizia l'attività leggendo la storia seguente dal titolo "Mirta e la pietra magica".

Mirta, la nonna di Zelda, stava per arrivare a casa di Zelda dopo un lungo viaggio. Mirta viveva molto lontano, sulla Montagna Fredda. Una volta all'anno aveva l'abitudine di scendere a valle per far visita alla famiglia di Zelda. Zelda era molto felice perché sapeva che sua nonna le avrebbe portato qualche regalo speciale dalla montagna.

Quando Mirta arrivò, tutta la famiglia aveva già preparato un fantastico pranzo per festeggiare il suo arrivo.

2. Utilizza le seguenti domande per aiutare i bambini a comprendere la storia:
- Ti è piaciuta la storia?
- Cosa porta Nonna Mirta a Zelda e Daria?
- Cosa succede dopo che Mirta mostra a Zelda e Daria il suo regalo?
3. Approfondisci con i bambini perché il regalo è stato rotto
4. Chiedi ai bambini di disegnare quello che è accaduto nella storia
5. Aiuta i bambini nel processo di comprensione dell'importanza del rispettare I turni, mostrando loro le Memory Cards degli Animali.

EXAMPLE ACTIVITY

A casa

A casa i bambini, con l'aiuto dei genitori, cercano un gioco da fare con i propri genitori che richiede di aspettare il proprio turno. I bambini fanno un disegno illustrando le regole del gioco.

MEMORY CARDS DEGLI ANIMALI

Parents' Manual

- **Complementary to teachers' manual**
- **A guide for parents in building resilience in their own children**

   A systemic perspective

Final products

- **3 manuals for classroom teachers (early years, early primary, late primary) including activities and resources for the teacher and the pupils**

- **A corresponding manual for parents**

- **Manuals will be in English and 6 other languages and will be published in hard copies and electronic version at the end of 2015**

- **For more information see**
  www.rescur.com

THANKS

carmel.cefai@um.edu.mt