



# RESCUR

## Program Overview

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## Author of this description

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## Program name

RESCUR

## Country of Origin

Malta

## Other Countries

Italy, Croatia, Greece, Sweden, Portugal

## Implementation level of the program

International/Regional

## Type of Program

Non-evidenced based

## Description

RESCUR is the result of a three-year LLP Comenius Project (2012 – 2015) with research partners from six countries (Malta, Greece, Italy Croatia, Sweden and Portugal).

The output of the project is a European resilience curriculum for early and primary education through intercultural and transnational collaboration between partner institutions. (Cefai et al., 2018)

The curriculum has the following objectives:

To develop and enhance children's social and emotional learning and resilience skills

To promote children's positive and prosocial behaviour and healthy relationships

To promote children's mental health and wellbeing, particularly those at risk of mental health difficulties

To improve children's academic engagement, motivation and learning

Instead of having an outside expert coming to the school to implement a specific program, RESCUR takes an integrated approach by proposing a resilience curriculum as a whole school initiative, including the school's staff, parents and children. (Cefai et al., 2014) For example, the curriculum also includes parents and provides for a parents' guide encouraging them "to reinforce the competences learnt at school and to adopt the resilience philosophy in parenting their children." (Cefai et al., 2018).

## Age Range

0-3 years, 3-7 years

## Age Range Information

- Early Years (4-5 years)
- Early Primary School Years (6-8 years)
- Late Primary School Years (9-11 years)

## Group Size

Entire school/class groups

## SEL Skills Targeted

Responsible decision-making, Relationship skills, Social awareness, Self-awareness, Self-management

## Sequenced Activities

It is a multi-grade program (preschool, 1st – 4th grade, and 5th – 6th grade) that aims to promote children's resilience and develop socio-emotional skills and it is led by teachers in the classroom over the school

year.

Six themes of resilience are addressed in the program (Cefai et al, 2014):

- 1) Developing communication skills
- 2) Establishing healthy relationships
- 3) Developing a growth mindset
- 4) Developing self-determination
- 5) Building on strengths (self-concept, self-esteem)
- 6) Turning challenges into opportunities

These themes occur in the three manuals, from basic activities in the early years to more complex activities in the early primary and late primary years. Each of the two subthemes in each respective theme consists of three topics and each topic includes three activities at basic, intermediate and advanced level respectively.

## Active Learning

The learning activities involve forms of active learning:

storytelling to introduce the topic: in the early years and early primary school, the stories are based on two specially designed mascots, namely the unusually coloured, bespectacled Sherlock the Squirrel, and the broken spikes Zelda the Hedgehog. In the late primary school years, the stories make use of human figures and real life resilience stories and fables;

mindfulness: each activity starts with a short mindfulness activity chosen from the mindfulness activities, included on the soft version of the curriculum, or designed by the classroom teacher herself;

practical, multisensory activities such as drawing, drama and play to complement the story telling; a learner portfolio where learners collect their drawings, worksheets and other written tasks into a developing resilience portfolio;

take home activities, including worksheets, where parents and learners are encouraged to continue discussing and practicing the skills learnt in the classroom; teacher and self-assessment checklists for every theme.

## Outcomes / Results

The program relies on existing research (evidence-informed). Nevertheless, it is being evaluated in different countries (Cefai, 2021).

## Quality / Effectiveness

A study by Cefai, published in 2018, investigated the impact of the RESCUR programme in a selection of schools in Malta on the social, emotional and cognitive competences of children in their early years. More specifically, the study aimed to identify (i) whether skills, behaviour, and learning engagement had improved and (ii) whether the children's social, emotional and mental health difficulties had been reduced. (Cefai et al., 2018) The study concludes that the RESCUR does indeed contribute to the development of resilience skills, and increases "prosocial behaviour and learning engagement for young children coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds." (Cefai et al., 2018, p. 201).

Post-intervention evaluations of schools (adopting at least one activity of the curriculum) in Croatia, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Sweden, show "that in most cases, the teachers observed a moderate positive change in the pupils' behaviour related to the theme implemented, particularly amongst the older primary school pupils. Some of the teachers also observed a change in the classroom climate, with closer relationships and more collaborative and prosocial behaviours. Interviews and focus groups with teachers and pupils indicated that the programme was popular with both teachers and pupils, particularly the experiential activities, the stories, the puppets, and the mindfulness activities." (Cefai et al., 2018, 193).

A small study over a period of three months in Croatia evaluated two themes with 173 children (3 to 7 years). The results of the study indicated "an improvement in children's resilience skills and behaviours for children both with and without risk factors." (Cefai et al., 2021, p. 227).

Finally, an increase of "social and emotional competence and decrease in social, emotional and behaviour difficulties" particularly in young children, was reported in a series of evaluations of Portuguese schools using the programme. Also, a positive impact on the emotional competence and resilience of the teachers involved was identified. (Cefai et al., 2021, p. 227).

## Additional Information

[www.rescur.eu](http://www.rescur.eu)

## References

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