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FRIENDS

Fostering Resilience-Inclusive Education and Non-Discrimination in Schools

FRIENDS Report of Implementation activities

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Table of Contents

Introduction 3

1. **Background to the implementation of the FRIENDS project** 3
2. **Activities of implementation up to date (Dec. 2018)** 4
   - 2.1 QT/TMP implementation in Portugal 6
   - 2.2 QT/TMP implementation in United Kingdom 8
   - 2.3 QT/TMP implementation in Italy 9
   - 2.4 QT/TMP implementation in Belgium 11
3. **Feedback from principals, teachers, staff, students and parents** 12
4. **Involvement of policy makers** 14
5. **Further expansion prospectives** 17

Introduction

The following report is compiled from deliverables in WP3- Implementation: D3.1 (Staff training and testing), D3.2 (Students training and testing), D3.3 (Consolidation of the programme at school) and it includes:

- The number of countries and the number of schools in each country where the Quiet Time with Transcendental Meditation (QT/TMP) programme has been implemented;
- The total number of administrators, teachers, staff, and students that have been trained;
- Principal and administrator feedback;
- Teacher feedback student feedback and parent feedback;
- Progress on the evaluation process;
- Interaction with ministries of education;

1. Background to the implementation of the FRIENDS project

The FRIENDS project aims to assess, disseminate and scale-up at European level an innovative whole school approach for inclusive learning, the Quiet Time based on Transcendental Meditation (QT/TM) Program for schools and specifically aims to adapt and transfer this practice in 4 European Countries (Portugal, Italy, Belgium, UK) to at least 1 school or non-formal education institution per implementing country, involving at least 150 students and learners and targeting schools and non-formal education institutions with disadvantaged students, migrants or students from a minority background. The project aims at evaluating the QT/TMP approach in his ability to a) foster an inclusive learning environment by promoting tolerance, respect for diversity and providing the basis for intercultural understanding and dialogue; b) providing the psychophysiological support teachers and staff need to deal with the increasing diversity of the learning environment.

The Quiet Time with Transcendental Meditation programme for schools consists in the introduction of 10/15 minutes of breaks at the beginning and at the end of the school day when students practice a very simple, natural, scientifically documented technique, Transcendental Meditation, that has been found to be effective for the development of brain functioning, cognitive performance, personality integration, and positive social behavior. Students who volunteer and whose parents approve, practice the Transcendental Meditation technique during the Quiet Time moments while others are engaged in other quite non-academic activities such as quiet reading or rest.

This programme addresses the root-cause of negative attitudes and violence by directly promoting the psycho-physiological well-being of all students and learners, including migrant, ethnic minorities, and those with disadvantaged backgrounds. Research reports that the Quiet Time programme fosters the personal development of the learners and increases positive pro-social outcomes, such as tolerance, moral reasoning, resilience, coping ability, and increased academic performance, while significantly reducing stress, anxiety, hostility, and violence in both the individual and society. All this taken together fosters inclusive education where diversity is seen as an opportunity and creates a more supportive, inclusive and harmonious social environment where students can function more effectively both in and out of school. An important feature of

this innovative and inclusive learning approach is that educators and teachers receive the psycho-physiological support they need for dealing with the increasing diversity of learners, being the role of the teacher key in helping learners fulfil their potential.

Being a whole-school approach promoting inclusive education, Teachers, administrators and staff are offered the practice of the Transcendental Meditation Technique from the beginning of the implementation process, and parents are strongly engaged in the programme, being accurately informed about the good practice adopted. Parents are also offered the possibility to learn the TM Technique if they wish. The creation and involvement of parent association is also fostered during the project.

2. Activities of implementation up to date (Dec. 2018)

In this section we will discuss the activities of implementation in the FRIENDS project that took place up to now in the four implementing countries, Portugal, UK, Italy and Belgium.

Schools have been chosen with a particular attention on targeting schools and non-formal educational setting with minority students or those with disadvantaged or migrant backgrounds, in line with the objective of the call. Contact have been made also at higher educational level at National / regional and municipality level in order to present the programme in all the implementing countries, and they have been very supportive in looking for schools in the territory (UK) or providing the authorization in order to implement the project in the schools (Belgium and Latvia as expansion).

Up to now about 20 schools and 2 organizations for migrants, for a total of 307 teachers and staff, 328 students and 18 parents, received training in QT/TM. Five Regional Teacher Training Centres in Portugal are offering courses in QT/TMP as accredited to the teachers' career, with other 90 Teacher Training Centers interested, showing a growing involvement of educational institutions in the project. Interest has been enlivened at local, regional, national and international level through: synergy with the new Governmental Flexibility Law favouring innovation in schools and presentation at 3 UNESCO national and regional meeting in Portugal; High Educational authorities interested in the project (UK-Italy-Belgium-Portugal); growing interest from the press; the first European face to face dissemination meeting involving stakeholders interested in the project.

At grass-root level, the implementation of Quiet Time / Transcendental Meditation programme in schools has been coordinated by Maharishi Foundation UK (P9) which has been providing assistance and guidance to the implementing partner countries, including with regular 2-weekly skype meetings and follow-up, while locally, the implementation has been brought ahead by the National partners responsible for the QT/TMP implementation: Cooperativa Cultural Ciencia e Tecnologia Vedica Maharishi (CCCTVM) (P11) for Portugal, Maharishi Foundation UK (MF-UK) (P9) for United Kingdom, Associazione Meditazione Trascendentale Maharishi (AMTM) (P12) for Italy, Maharishi Institute of Vedic Science (MIVS) (P14) for Belgium and with the support of the Maharishi school in UK (P8) bringing over 30 years of experience in implementing the QT/TMP in schools. Activities of dissemination and exploitation have taken place in all the partner countries, including Spain, with the support of the parent association APEJAA (P10) in Portugal, the Teacher training center Escola Secundária de Loulé/Centro de Formação de Professores "Do Litoral à Serra" (P6) in Portugal, the Municipality

of Sacile in Italy (P7), the Asociación Cívica de Comunicación y Educación Sophia (ACCESOPHIA) in Spain (P15) (a non-profit organisation established in Madrid and working internationally for social inclusion and empowerment) and the leading dissemination partner CESIE, for Italy and for all the partner countries involved, and expanding at European level.

The evaluation and data collection activities has been brought ahead by the leading evaluation partner Universidade do Algarve (P3) Portugal, University of Bologna (P4) Italy and MF-UK (P9)(in coopearion with professor Raymond Slot and Professor Alberto Bramanti). All the activities have been developed in coordination with the leading partner Fondazione Hallgarten Franchetti – Centro Studi Villa Montesca (P1), a study center for innovation based on the Montessori Method in the hearth of Italy.

The plan for the second year of the project is to increase the participation in the project of more teachers, students and schools, further disseminate the project results and findings, finalizing the Policy recommendations for guiding policy makers to successfully implement the programme on a large scale throughout Europe, fostering the local learning communities at local level and connecting them at international level, creating the basis of an alliance of schools for social inclusion.

2.1 QT/TMP implementation in Portugal

In Portugal most of the the schools part of the project or interested are in disadvantaged area. Some of the schools were part of the TEIP programme (***Priority Intervention Educational Territories Program***), a national programme of the Ministry of Education for disadvantaged schools and that include many students coming from disadvantaged background and trouble families, very aggressive students and with behavioural problems. As a scaling-up activity, the FRIENDS project implementation is expanding in all of Portugal but primarily in these TEIP territories.

In the first project period the programme has started in a total of 6 cluster of schools and other 7 cluster of schools are interested in implementing the project. 171 students have received training in QT/TM (125 pupils 5 to 10 years old and 46 students more than 10 years) and 134 teachers and school staff members have been trained in QT/TM. This has been done in cooperation with 5 teacher training centres in Loulè, Faro and Olhão, Lisbon, Aveiro and Vila Nova de Gaia that offer QT/TM as accredited course to the teacher career

The implementation in Portugal has expanded to the entire geographical area of Portugal: from the North of Portugal (Canelas / Vila Nova de Gaia, Penafiel and Aveiro); to the Centre (Lisbon) to the South (Olhão and Faro) with the implementation/training at Joao de Deus. There are also another seven clusters of schools who expressed their intention to implement in the FRIENDS project (D.1.7). Another schools who also expressed their intention was the Secondary School of Loulé, where it is located the Teacher Training Centre “Do Litoral à Serra

At the participating school in Olhao**,** (South of Portugal – Algarve), a special project was approved by the Ministry of Education, regarding the Autonomy and Curricular Flexibility Program for Schools on the basis of the new Flexibility Law issued by Portuguese Ministry of Education. This programme provides schools with the necessary conditions to manage their curriculum in a flexible and contextualized way, while also integrating practices that promote better learning inducing the development of higher level skills. Under supervision of the tutor of this class, a special schedule for this class was design and approved. In this schedule they have twice a day a new subject that includes additional instructions in the QT/TM programme. In this context, the 24 students start the day doing Yoga Asanas, special breathing exercises from Yoga (called Pranayama) and the practice of 15 minutes of Transcendental Meditation. This practice activities are complemented by an intellectual explanation of the benefits of TM practice and of basic principles of nature's functioning. The school day ends with the practice of another 15 minutes of TM practice. According to the first term evaluation of this 7ºD class, they achieved a success rate of 87,78%. This is remarkable, since the class has only three months of practice of this special program.

The Teacher Training Centre do Litoral à Serra of the Escola Secundaria de Loulè (P6) has approved a set of 3 Short-Term Courses (STC), lasting 6 hours each, so that the objectives of the FRIENDS Project, with respect to its Implementation and Exploitation dimension, can be achieved. This brought the prospect of moving forward with the project in 5 school clusters associated with this Training Centre in Loule, Quarteira and Almacil, with the possibility of offering the training courses in the QTTM programme to principals and administrators as professional training accredited to their careers, covering the costs of the training. An extraordinary work is

being developed in partnership with APEJAA(P10) and the Teacher Training Centre of Aveiro, where 45 teachers from 18 different schools began the course of Transcendental Meditation. The training has been very well received by teachers and management team, with report of experiencing the training as very positive and enriching.

Wider School community involvment: At this moment there are five Teacher Training Centres in Portugal, public structures in the region of Algarve (P6), Lisbon and Aveiro, that offer short courses in QT/TM as professional training accredited to the career to school teachers, showing the growing involvement and interest of the local and regional educational institution in the implementation of the project.

- Centro de Formação Do Litoral à Serra (Loulé and São Brás de Alportel Schools)
- Centro de Formação Ria Formosa (Faro and Olhão Schools)
- Centro de Formação Calvet de Magalhães (Lisbon Schools)
- Centro de Formação da Associação de Escolas (Aveiro and Albergaria-a-Velha Schools)
- Centro de Formação Aurélio da Paz dos Reis (Vila Nova de Gaia, Canelas School)

and other 90 Teacher Training Centres in the whole of Portugal are supporting the same action and are interested to include QT/TM in their offering.

APEJAA (P10), parent association and partner in the project, established contacts with the parent association of Barrocas school and Kindergarten and a teaching cooperative to show the benefits of Transcendental meditation and the work has being done in schools. The work with APEJAA has brought to the FRIENDS project the interest of 2 schools to implement the QT/TM programme: one school (where APEJAA established the contact with the parent association) and a second school, both from the Aveiro region. The Activities of APEJAA and of CCCTMV (P11) have also stimulated the creation and active participation of the parent association of the implementing school in Algarve, to the QT/TM dissemination and exploitation.

The FRIENDS project has been presented in Portugal during the:

- 3rd Regional Meeting of UNESCO Network Associated Schools in Faro (PT)
- 4th Intercalary Regional Meeting of UNESCO Network Associated Schools, at Secondary School, Loulé (PT)
- 17th National Meeting of UNESCO Network Schools in Porto (PT) by invitation of the Portuguese UNESCO coordinator

These conferences have seen the participation of Policy makers at local, regional and National level, education responsible, principals and teachers and the presentation of the project has been always well received.

2.2 QT/TMP implementation in United Kingdom

In the UK, the training of students has been slower than expected, especially in consideration of the fact that we are here implementing in very special schools with very difficult students, and in which work and attention are much more demanding for the school teachers (greater stress), and there is a much higher percentage of teachers compared to students (ratio teachers /students) then in the regular mainstreaming schools. The FRIENDS project has put an even more particular attention on teachers and staff training.

In the UK the programme has started in a total of 3 schools, where 59 headteachers and staff of three Alternative Provision Schools (APS) received the training in QT/TM, including 48 members of staff from 2 schools in the Colchester area and 11 staff from a school in Liverpool. These are schools highly in the target of the project as they are, according to the government's website, for pupils who are not able to attend mainstream school for a variety of reasons, such as school exclusion, behavioural issues, short- or long-term illness, school refusal or teenage pregnancy.

The project so far has shown a great impact and potential on these kinds of schools, as the level of stress within the teaching profession is very high and a number of teachers have been very appreciative of this programme to help them as well as their students.The results have been very encouraging with a number of staff expressing appreciation that they have learnt a life skill which is very useful and practical on a personal level, which impacts their professional life.

One interesting development has arisen from the type of school where the Quiet Time with TM programme has been introduced. Because the students have been transferred from the local mainstream schools, these **Alternative Provision Schools** have links with these local schools. In time, some of the students return to their original school. Hence, once students have been trained in QT/TM, these mainstream schools might need to make sure the students continue with their practice. This will favour the exploitation of the project in mainstreaming schools, including all students (not only the most excluded one) for the well-being of all.

This is again showing how the programme is positively perceived in relation to the general objective of the call and specifically in the effort of the FRIENDS project in supporting teachers who are challenged by the increasing diversity of the learning environment.

Interest has come also from **MERIT Pupil Referral Unit** (PRU) *(Staffordshire)* where, the project has been presented to a group of headteachers and to the senior staff in Stoke-on-Trent. The term PRU is another name for the same type of school as the APS. Merit school meets the requirements of pupils with complex medical and mental health needs. The school also provides home and personal tuition and education within the Royal Stoke University Hospital. The meeting was very positive and encouraged by the interest shown in Liverpool and Essex, the headteacher and her deputy decided to participate in the FRIENDS project. Their training began in September and the results were excellent.

Another presentation was given to the headteacher of a mainstream secondary school (about 600 pupils) in Stoke, and this proved very positive. The headteacher went ahead with training in November. This is a significant development as this is a mainstream school which although it has had difficulties in the recent past, is now according to the Government's school inspection organisation 'Ofsted', "rapidly improving".

2.3 QT/TMP implementation in Italy

In Italy the project has attracted the interest of many schools throughout the country. During the first year the project has been been presented in many schools, both from the very south to the extreme North, from Bolzano, involving a border be-lingual region of Italy, in which there are 2 official languages Italian and German, to Naples, historic capital of the South of Italy, and to Sicily

In Italy, a total of 87 principals, teachers and staff, have been trained in the Quiet Time with Transcendental Meditation programme in the first year of the project. At the moment, there are 5 schools where the project has started and where a total 118 students and 18 parents have been trained in the QT/TM programme. The project has been implemented until now in public schools, one in Milano, 3 schools in Brescia area, some with a high number of students (about 30%) from non-EU countries, with difficulty of integration, students with learning problems, with disabilities, ADHD, with problems of adaptability and with problems in interpersonal relationships. Another cluster of schools in the area of Bolzano with 2 schools both bi-lingual (Italian/German), participating into the project, one of which has regular time bilingual courses combined with courses with Montessori system. Being a be-lingual region, it has in it-self a challenge of integration and inclusion, for the integration of the two different communities, languages and cultures. Experiences so far show appreciation of the programme, supporting the general objective of the project. A presentation of the FRIENDS project has been done to about 40 teachers in a secondary school (technical/ professional) with more than 1500 students in Arzano (Napoli), that is situated in a very difficult area with student coming from disadvantaged families.

This is already in the direction of creating a basis for an alliance of schools for social inclusion between all the schools in Italy that are applying the project and all the other schools (and non -formal educational institutions) in Europe, joining the FRIENDS project in Portugal, UK and Belgium and in new countries exploitation.

Wider School community involvment: The mass media have been interested in the FRIENDS project and many articles have been published on the newspapers. Radio and television spoke about the FRIENDS project, reaching and awakening the interest in the project of the general public, teachers, principals and Educators at all levels

2.4 QT/TMP implementation in Belgium

In Belgium, several schools and non-formal educational institutions working with disadvantaged and migrants have expressed their interest in the QT/TM programme. The first step of introducing the programme to the principals and senior leadership teams began in 2 schools and 2 organization working with and supporting migrants and disadvantaged people. In the first year of the project, a total of 27 principals, teachers and staff, 34 students, 5 migrants and 18 parents have been trained in the 2 schools and 2 non-formal education institutions. The schools and non formal educational institutions participating are from different parts in Belgium (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels) and include schools from difficult areas such as Molenbeek and Anderlecht or from rural areas such as Oedeghien & Buissenal and Erembodegem.

In **Oedeghien & Buissenal**: the schools are situated in a rural area of the Wallonia region of Belgium. Both schools have a kindergarten and primary section. They are part of a municipality which has 13 villages and 7 communal schools.

One non-formal education institution has started the project: this is a large organization active in all provinces of Flanders and in Brussels that works with disadvantaged youngsters, guided by a team of educators. This organization is fully in the target of the project, dealing with many migrants, disadvantaged and difficult students that are taken away from the regular system of education, and that after a period of training together with this organization, are integrated again in regular education. The project was presented to the Leader of all the education teams, and also to the CEO of the organization. It was internally presented to all working teams and has steered the interest of the leader of a team working with youngster, and he decided to start the experimentation with the team working in the area of Molenbeek, 8 educators and team leader and one staff.

Another non-formal education institution to support the young migrant people to get back their lives decided to join the FRIENDS project. Until now 4 board members and 5 migrants have been trained in QT/TM. The director is enthusiast of the QT/TM programme and has already applied for an additional grant from the European solidarity corps, to create social moment in her house attracting migrants and young people where to present the FRIENDS project and this opportunity to be trained in QT/TM through the FRIENDS project

Other schools participating are one primary school in Erembodegem and one Primary School in Beerse, where teachers have now been trained in QT/TM and the students will be starting

in January and an Institut Médico-Pédagogique à Marchienne-au -pont where the coordinator of the home for students has been introduced to the project and trained in QT/TM together with the coordinator of primary and secondary school. Many members of this institute have expressed an interest in joining the project.

Wider school community: Three more schools, one also in the municipality of Molenbeek, are interested to implement the programme and a responsible of the educational department of the municipality of Anderlecht has expressed his interest in the project and the possibility to implement it in shools. Many interested principals and educators from Belgium, including the leading staff members of House of colours, met together at the first face-to-face dissemination meeting of local learning communities and stakeholders held in Brussels on the 29th of November for allowing the different local communities interested in the implementation of the Quiet Time with Transcendental Meditation programme in schools to connect at European level and exchange experiences on the implementation, dissemination and scaling up of the QT/TM approach in order to fostering social inclusion and exploring new possibilities of expansion, in new countries and new field, like health and sport. This reinforced their commitment and enthusiasm for the project, and the good practice.

3. Feedback from principals, teachers, staff, students and parents

The Quiet Time /Transcendental Meditation programme has been well received from Principals, administrators, teachers, staff, parents and students in the schools and non-formal educational institutions where it has been implemented until now with report of experiencing the training as very positive and enriching and with a number of staff expressing appreciation that they have learnt a life skill which is very useful and practical on a personal level and which impacts their professional life. Also from students and parents, the implementation so far has received very appreciative feedback.

For instance some of the quite positive **experiences from the Training of 45 school teachers** organized at the end of June in Aveiro by the Teacher Training Centre of Aveiro Centro de Formação da Associação de Escolas (Aveiro and Albergaria-a-Velha Schools), in cooperation with APEJAA(P10) parents' association, CCCTVM(P11), TTC Loulé (P6) Centro de Formação Do Litoral à Serra (Loulé) and São Brás de Alportel Schools, reported:

- *"I'm a teacher of special education. I think this training has all the necessary tools for a new approach (not only professionally but above all, personally) to everyday situations.*
- *This Training exceeded all the expectations, it brought quiet, peace, tranquillity, confidence… so necessary these days. I feel motivated to help implement this project with my students(...). All these initiatives are to be continued because they are important to the personal and social development and contribute to interpersonal knowledge useful in everyday life.*
- *Increasingly, this is where education should evolve to. This is the way. We speak very badly of our students, of the parents of our students, but we often forget about the principal, the teachers. And we? How are we doing? What we have to give? We often have very little – so we cannot expect to receive what we don't have to give. Transcendental Meditation makes us spontaneously position our minds on the right way ... and on the right path, a calm teacher has calm students.*
- *I believe that this training has proved to be very fruitful. I feel that transcendental meditation will contribute to my mental and physical wellbeing, which will reflect not only in my personal life as well*

as on my professional career. It will contribute to improve my teaching abilities and my interaction with students, making it a real pedagogical relationship, aiming at the promotion of school success.

- *This training, aimed towards education, is very useful for teachers… our professional life will be better and it will definitely improve the bond between teachers and students.*
- *I enrolled in this training, because I really wanted to find out and learn a new tool to help me in the promotion of educational success. Increasingly, we have students with highly disturbing behaviours. Sometimes our overwork leads to loss of patience. We need to stop, rethink and reflect on what we need to change. I think that Transcendental Meditation is a fundamental tool to acquire a serenity so important to a climate of peace.*

Experiences from the course offered by Teacher Training Centre of Aveiro Centro de Formação da Associação de Escolas (Aveiro and Albergaria-a-Velha Schools)

- *"The training proposal "transcendental meditation and teaching skills to promote educational success" was a very nice surprise since it had never appeared anything like this in the panorama of the themes suggested by the training centres. It was with great enthusiasm that I immediately took this opportunity to learn better potential we all have, but we don't use. The training experience was very positive and enriching, if not transcendent.*
- *Thanks for the experience! This is a tool for the future, which I will help spreading*
- *This training will extend itself throughout my life. THANK YOU"*

Students experiences:

- *"Transcendental Meditation made me more tranquil and flexible. TM helps you to face unexpected events in everyday life... I think I'm very lucky to have discovered it and to have started to meditate*

- *Transcendental Meditation has changed my life completely. This year I finally started to look people in the eyes while talking... after 2/3 week of regular practice I stopped suffering from headache too*
- *Since I started practicing, Transcendental Meditation, has helped me a lot, both at school and in personal relationships. At school I'm much more relaxed, especially during oral tests, if compared to last year, when I was much more nervous.*
- *Transcendental Meditation changed me not only as a student, but also in my private life, an as an athlete. I notice improvements in notes in subjects I used to struggle with. I'm also better at swimming when I meditate before competitions. Since I'm calmer my performances are better.*
- *When our teacher introduced us to Transcendental Meditation, I didn't want to do it because I thought it was something useless. The first day I started practicing it I immediately felt more relaxed and calmer. Now I feel it's a little bit easier to understand what I'm studying and I'm more focused. "*

Other reports of self-evaluation from students in Italy show experiences like:

- *"I behave better"*
- *"I feel calm, less anxious"*
- *"I used to feel alone, no one around me … I like Meditation very much and I feel much more calm and serene with myself"*
- *"I feel my head is clear before starting the lessons"*
- *"Studying is more easy"*
- *"Meditation is good for everyone, I like it very much, in fact I practice it twice per day"*
- *"Meditation helps me […], makes me relax and makes me face better the day"*

Experiences from parents:

- *"Transcendental Meditation is a tool for peace of mind. All practitioners will take advantage. If this practice can be applied from childhood, then very soon it starts a path of personal/emotional growth/strengthening."*
- *"This is a fantastic tool to calm stress, relax and gain physical well-being. It is essential for the children at the level of concentration and behaviour."*

This perception of the Quiet Time with Transcendental Meditation programme training from side of teachers and staff, students and parents, is showing the potential of the FRIENDS project in supporting the objective of the call and especially in "*Promoting inclusive education and training and fostering the education of disadvantaged learners, including through supporting teachers, and educators and leaders of educational institutions in dealing with diversity and reinforcing socio-economic mixity in the learning environment*".

4. Involvement of policy makers

Policy makers have been informed and involved in the process of implementation of the FRIENDS project from the beginning. The project is focusing on the policy making process during the different phases of the implementation, aiming at fulfilling the FRIENDS general objective in "…*contributing to improving the role of the Education Training and Youth system in promoting equality, social cohesion, nurturing mutual respect*

and intercultural dialogue, combating discrimination on all grounds and contributing to establishing a solid evidence leading to a mainstreaming roadmap for effective policy-making at European and National level, as a key factor for promoting continued improvement in education systems across Europe".

For this reason, attention is given to this aspect, and different cooperation has started so far at local, regional and National level, including:

- One Representative from the Ministry of Education Directorate General for Education (DGE) from Portugal, participating to the first face to face dissemination meeting in Brussels (PT-BE): In Portugal, the representative of the Ministry of Education - Directorate General for Education, has been very supportive and expressed the will of further cooperating with the project. She participated in the first face-to-face dissemination meeting in Brussels aimed at exchanging experiences with interested stakeholders and further discussing how to expand the programme in different countries and on a larger scale.
- Participation of the school Alberto Iria (associated partner implementing in the FRIENDS project) in coordination with CCCTMV (P11) on the 17th National Meeting of UNESCO Network Schools, by invitation of the Portuguese UNESCO coordinator of UNESCO network schools, where QT/TM was presented as good practice. This meeting took place on April 21st and 22nd in Porto city. The open session was attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, Dr. Augusto Santos Silva, under the theme "The Agenda 2030 and Associated Schools of UNESCO in Portugal". The Meeting, which was held at the Luso International College of Porto (CLIP) on April 21 and 22, was organized by the National Commission of UNESCO in collaboration with CLIP and was sponsored by the Porto City Council.

- Experimenting the FRIENDS project approach as part of the flexibility programme in Portugal, a new governmental legislative order that provides schools with the necessary conditions to manage more autonomously the curriculum while also integrating practices that promote better learning

- In *Oedeghien & Buissenal (BE),* local educational authorities have been involved and informed about the project since the beginning of the project. In order to implement the programme, the project has been approved by higher school authorities in the municipality, which gave authorization to start the programme in the schools. This gave already visibility of the project at a higher level of education, and local policy makers.

- The responsible of the educational department of the municipality of Anderlecht was present during the face to face dissemination meeting in Brussels in November and expressed his strong interest in the project and in the possibility of finding schools where to implement the programme.

- In May AMTM (P12), in partnership with one implementing school, with The Dominato Leonense Foundation (that in its mission promotes a cohesive sense of belonging and a marked identity of the actors of the territory, recovering traditions, history and values) and, the municipality of Leno, has created an event entitled: "Via stress, via bullismo (Bye stress, Bye bullying) where the FRIENDS project was presented in its entirety to the community of Leno, institutions, parents, teachers and neighbouring communities. During the conference where present also the president of the 4th Commission for Productive Activities, Education, Training and Employment, the mayor of Leno, the deputy mayor and the councillor for education. The event has reached the attention of the 'Rappresentanza of the European Commission in Italy' that has published on their website the announcement of the conference about the FRIENDS project organized by AMTM and the school in Leno (Brescia) in May 2018.

Essex County Council in UK, which is the second largest education authority in England and oversees all schools in the county of Essex including Colchester and Heybridge, have been very interested in seeing the developments in the two Essex schools where the programme has been implemented. The senior staff of the Education Department have asked for a detailed presentation. This is a seed for the expansion of the project to more schools in the area. Prior to the FRIENDS project, the Department for Education provided support with the then Under Secretary of State for Education, Lord Hill, stating "*I am sure that the Maharishi Free School will improve choice and raise standards, and will become recognised as a flagship of the Free School Programme".*

- Presentation of the project to the senior staff of the MERIT Pupil Referral Unit (UK) (the term PRU is another name for the same type of school as the APS

- As further exploitation, the project has been presented to a Latvian MEP which has expressed his willingness to help in finding schools interested to participate in the project (LV) and it has been presented by Maharishi School UK (P8) in a meeting organized by the National TM charity of Germany, with the involvement also of the German Education Ministry, to teachers and local authority in Northern Germany as part of a programme of continuing professional development

5. Further expansion prospectives

The project has steered the intrerest in the Quiet Time / Transcendental Meditation approach also in countries not involved in the project implementation. Interest has come from schools, policy makers and organizations working with disadvantaged from Spain, Germany, France, Latvia, Ireland, Island through dissemination channels and face to face dissemination activities

On 29th November 2018 in Brussels, many schools' representatives, educational leaders, educators, associations, institutions and Key stakeholders coming from different EU countries, also not directly involved in the FRIENDS project, such as Spain, France, Latvia and Germany, met in Brussels to participate to the 1° FRIENDS European face-to-face meeting, with the aim of connecting at European level the different local learning communities for exchanging experiences on the implementation, dissemination and scaling up of the QT/TM approach for fostering social inclusion and exploring new possibilities of expansion, in new countries and new field, like health and sport. The meeting was held between partners and participating schools and institutions of the FRIENDS project, interested schools of other European countries, together also with partners and schools of another EU funded Erasmus+ project implementing the same approach (The EUROPE project - Erasmus + *EU funded project n° 580416-EPP-1-2016-1-IT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN*) of which the final conference had been held in the morning. Main contacts were shared among schools and institutions already participating in the project in order to provide their direct experiences and make other stakeholders part of the different learning communities across partners countries.

Spain: On occasion of the final EUROPE conference and of the first FRIENDS face-to-face European meeting of the Learning Communities, a mass mailing to schools was organized, by initiative of the TM national charity of Spain, to inform about the FRIENDS and the EUROPE project, and the possibility to join these two important meetings. Representatives of Schools from Spain, mostly from Catalunya, but also from Valencia and Madrid, Murcia, joined the face-to-face meeting in Brussels. There was great interest in participating in the expansion of implementation of the FRIENDS project, exploring also new possibility of application for European grants, and new sectors, like sports. At this moment, there are various schools and principals interested in implementing in Spain.

The project from Belgium has expanded also in **Ireland**, where contacts have been established with the coordinators of centres around the world offering Yoga to exonerated people and with the director of Conflict Trauma Relief Centre of Belfast, both interested into the FRIENDS project.

News of the project has spread as far as **Iceland**. The head of the Arts Department in a school near Reykjavik, has followed the progress of the FRIENDS project and started implementing it into his own school by teaching 50 staff (half the total number at the school) including four board members.

Policy makers got involved in the FRIENDS project in **Germany** (MoE Norther Germany). The FRIENDS Project was presented by Maharishi School UK (P8) in a meeting organized by the National TM charity of Germany, with the involvement also of the German Education Ministry, to teachers and local authority in Northern Germany as part of a programme of continuing professional development. One of the presentations was to teachers and school administrators at a teacher training centre and formed part of a continuing professional development programme for serving teachers. The other presentation was open to members of the general public which also included school teachers and educators. The presentations were well received and have resulted in expressions of interest about becoming involved in the FRIENDS Project**.**

Latvia: After negotiations and meetings with representatives of the Education, Youth, and Sports Department of Riga City Council, they approved the implementation of the QT/TM programme in an interested very difficult school in Riga. The next step is to meet with school teachers, parents, and proceeding with implementation of the QT/TM Program. In parallel the FRIENDS project was discussed with Latvian MEP Andrey Mamikin, who is one of the most influential Latvian politicians, and Mr. Mamikin expressed his willingness to help in finding schools interested to participate.

Sweden: MIKI, associated partner of the FRIENDS project, is connecting future 2019 activities with the FRIENDS project exploitation. Welcome Centres for migrants in Borlänge and new Welcome centres are interested in Malmö and other parts of the country which would like to join the exploitation of the FRIENDS project, utilizing their own funds for the training of migrants. New opportunities arose (from the EUROPE project) to expand in the Health sector with the involvement of the Malmö Neurocognitivism Clinic, of which an head of department and researcher was present to the FACE TO FACE FIRST EUROPEAN DISSEMINAITON MEETING OF LOCAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN Brussels, and to the EUROPE project final conference.

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Fostering Resilience-Inclusive Education and Non-Discrimination in Schools

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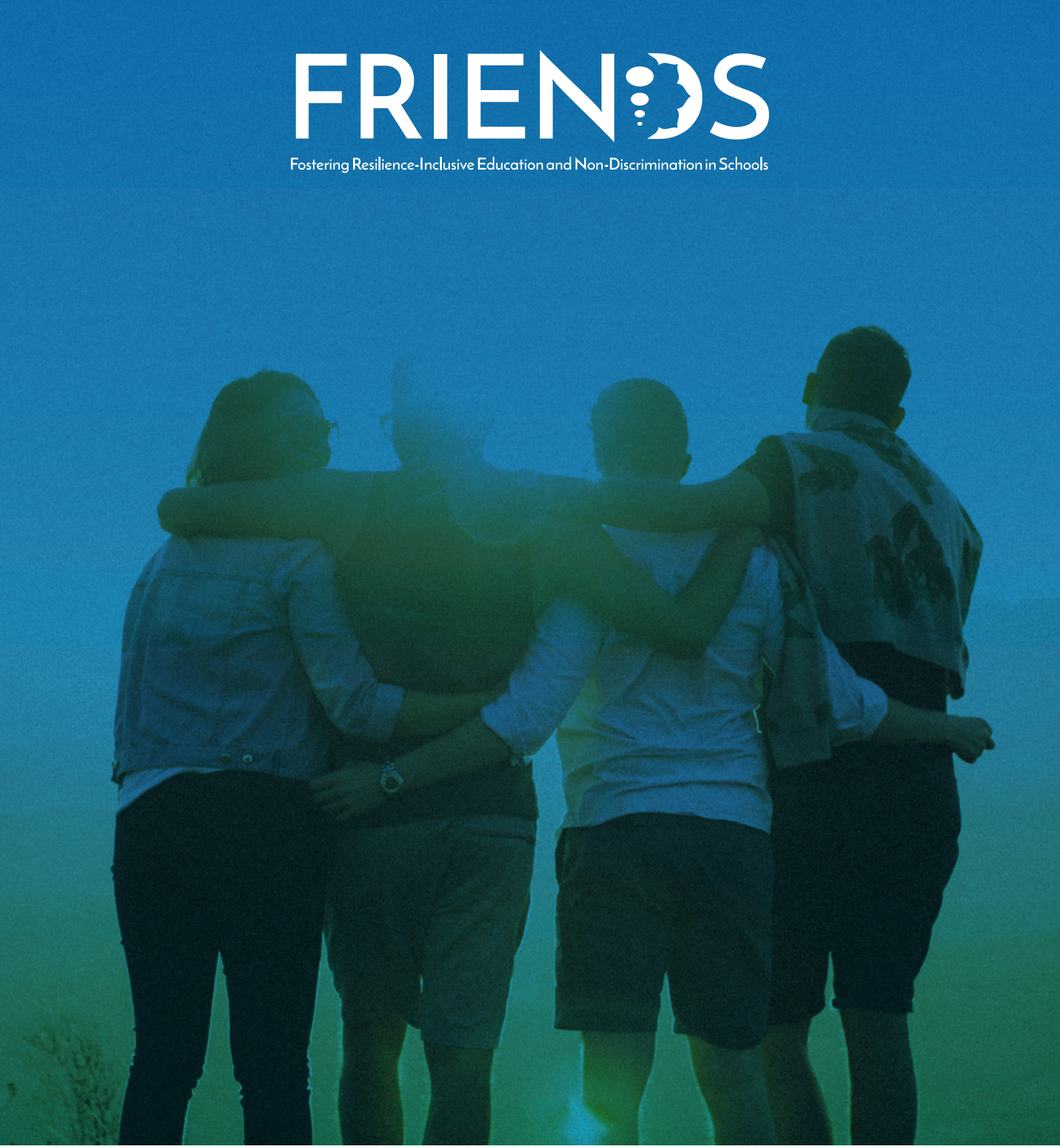

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