



Feedback Report 3rd National Stakeholder Meetings

Introduction

To further enhance impact of the KIDS4ALL project activities and results all partners who implemented the pilot phase in their national contexts engaged in meetings with national representatives from public and civil society organisations. The National Stakeholder Groups were composed of representatives of teachers, headmasters and social workers' organizations, parents' organizations, and children and youth organizations at regional and national levels.

All NSG meetings aimed at stimulating synergies, enhancing cooperation patterns amongst teachers, educators and families and receiving valid hands-on feedback for all KIDS4ALL activities from practitioners working daily in the field. This last objective had been specifically envisaged with the 3rd NSG meeting, that focused on the third year of the project and the related data retrieved, activities implemented and problems encountered, specifically with the implementation of the 1st and 2nd pilot phase.

All partners implemented the meeting in either online or hybrid format in the months of June and July 2023. The NSGs were mainly represented by local NGO members, practitioners (teachers and educators) in public educational institutions and officials from national Ministries for Education. The meetings were led by researchers and/or local team leaders who had been actively involved in the Pilot phase(s).

Main Discussion Points

Most partners started their meetings with a presentation of the KIDS4ALL contents, objectives and activities of the 3rd year to then dive in to the specifics of the KIDS4ALL material, methods, instruments and testing phases.

The project team had prepared predefined questions, that were used by most partners to focus on the expected data outputs and structured the meeting according to the target groups involved:

Teachers and educators

1. Can you see an easy way for a platform like the KIDS4ALL platform to be integrated into your workday or workweek?
2. Would you be interested in trialing the platform? If not, what would incentivize you to trial the platform?



NGO and school leaders/administrators

1. Can you see an easy way for a platform like the KIDS4ALL platform to be integrated into your current work?
2. Do you currently have a budget or opportunities to help promote the project? What do these look like?

Local policy makers

1. How can the KIDS4ALL project help promote the platform in these spaces? (giving water bottles and/or bags for verified users, posters, flyers to advertise the platform in libraries?)
2. Are there spaces or places (health clinics/ legal clinics/ library/ parent services/ after school clubs/NGOs) where you could implement the platform?
3. Do you have a budget to provide tablets and facilitators in these locations?

Feedback and Sensitive Elements

From the data collected we could provide for the following two thematic categories:

Potential of platform implementation into the ordinary educational scenario

According to the beliefs of most interviewed teachers and educators, integrating digital teaching platforms into the curriculum is a complex task.

Especially formal contexts are often facing a large number of children in class and thus an unbalanced student-teacher ratio as well as strict national regulations for the curriculum.

Most schools still need to adapt to the technological requirements and be equipped with sufficient technical tools and skills; in fact, all participants mentioned the issue of not having enough (or even any) tablets/laptops/etc in school settings for all students as well as internet and infrastructure issues.

Additionally, most teachers still use traditional pedagogy and mainly conduct frontal lessons. They should be thus prepared and get ready to change their teaching methods and to adopt the principles of independent, constructivist learning, according to which the children consolidate knowledge on their own through research, dialogue, and feedback processes. In fact, the platform and the materials may provide and are recognised as being a great toolbox for practitioners to generate ideas, inputs and inspiration for an innovative lesson design.

Another issue is the perception of learning contents by students and the interrelation with their utilisation in the different learning contexts. Indeed, the platform and the contained learning contents are perceived as interactive and innovative in formal contexts, presenting a novelty to rather static learning and training forms. However, in informal settings they are likely to not being accepted as they are too similar to contents conveyed in school, even though they are actively promoting critical thinking, exchange between the students and own small-scale research projects, for which normally is not a lot of room in schools. In fact, in non- and informal educational settings the students' expectation are more related to fun and entertaining activities, such as meeting with friends, playing games, etc. which the platform actually does offer but in a rather structured way.

Practitioners from different national contexts also observed the challenge of creative peer work and the related dialogic approach, which must be continuously fostered in the educational context. Indeed, most students still need to learn how to deal in a constructive way with the free space they get and the chance to fill it with their own ideas, knowledge and interest. Above all the ones who are not used to learning in a collaborative manner, and thus working freely, must be guided in how to discuss with each other, how to research on their own, how to be creative. These competencies are not as common in schools as they should be and it therefore takes some time to get the students acquainted with the methodology and help them develop the according competencies.



This issue is further hampered in contexts with severely disadvantaged pupils. Indeed, often segregated learning environments, in which children meet only peers from their own social background represented often a challenge, especially for pairing them and receiving satisfactory learning results. At this point it must be noted however that there is no limitation on how to set up and change pairs, as long as the goal of social inclusion is being kept a priority.

Furthermore, the rather frequent relocation of children of migratory background was mentioned as a problematic issue for using the KIDS4ALL platform – especially for those LUs that last more than one meeting (45-60' usually). The same occurs for the frequent switch of educators and students in non-formal settings, who have most of the time heterogenous knowledge and experiences with the work on the platform.

Thus, from a theoretical point of view - the idea of peer working on collaboration-steered platforms is excellent, but from an applied point of view it is a very complex endeavour.

Opportunities for project promotion and implementation

Several NGOs of the different national contexts mentioned that they can explore using the platform in their future classrooms. They do not have specific budget apart from the funding they receive to run afternoon classes. For schools it is important that the whole platform and processes gets the approval of the Ministry of Education (applications are submitted in spring for materials and tools to be used in the following school term).

In general, it must be noted that the success and efficiency of the learning platform and related materials highly depends on the teachers and educators, who act as ambassadors of innovative, creative and inclusive pedagogy in the different local educational settings.

Their personal commitment and desire to use technology and digital novelties as well as their understanding of its benefits are essential for a fruitful implementation.

Informal organizations, non-governmental organizations, libraries, or children's clubs are perfect spaces where the KIDS4ALL platform can and should be implemented. Although the platform is designed for working with couples and school-aged children, it could be also a valuable tool for individual work and, of course, for older people. Accordingly, there is potential for its use in a variety of contexts, which however requires the adaption of contents.

In order to promote the effective use of the KIDS4ALL platform in spaces such as libraries, clinics, and clubs, mainly human capital is needed, i.e. a set of well-trained and supportive instructors able to convey the benefits of the platform and materials.

Recommendations

Provide for extensive staff formation & guidance

Teachers and educators need pedagogical assistance and continuous guidance throughout the school year. At the beginning of the year, the training should be even more intense because it should also address issues such as: dividing into pairs, providing instruction, and understanding the role of the teacher. Also, the teachers are required to familiarize themselves with the content of the study units in advance. That means in-depth preparation should be done.

Also, the typical education scenario provides for a rather teacher-centred approach that does not foresee a predominant autonomous work of the students. Accordingly, more tools for educators should be available, that include short briefs for each LU and ideas on how to overcome the unavailability of resources to create posters, videos, etc.

Another issue that should be considered is the possibility of opening teacher training courses on the subject. In this way, teachers will be rewarded for the hours of learning, and the assimilation will be more formal.



Promote KIDS4ALL benefits

Main benefits of the learning platform and elaborated materials can be summed-up as follows:

1. It provides cross-disciplinary content.
2. It strengthens literacy skills directly in topics relevant to children.
3. It allows learning outside regular school hours.
4. The contents can be updated, and a personal library can be created.
5. If progress can be assessed through it.
6. It creates a calmer atmosphere in the classrooms.

Make sure to provide an easy access to resources

All the learning resources should be easy to access through and not limited to computer, pads, mobile phones, and be connected to other learning platforms.

Create learning contents that are very practical and easy to read. Decrease as far as possible the text and instructions, offer related practical activities. All editors of the learning material should keep in mind that most probably students see the platform through a projector with the educator/teacher in front of them who tracks the process.

Create attractive and inclusive educational resources with transformative character

The actual core challenge and contemporary objective of the KIDS4ALL project should be considered to transform formal education as well as enrich non- and informal contexts. The elaboration of the layout, the increase of access typologies to the contents as well as the realization of gamification ideas can make the platform even more successful, especially in informal contexts.

Prioritize and further promote the collaborative aspect of the KIDS4ALL methodology

Research confirms that children and young people tend to be alone in online learning spaces. Therefore, KIDS4ALL should take extra effort to make the peer-to-peer learning really functional on the platform.

Stay in touch with the field

Keep in close and continuous contact with educators and teachers to further improve the tools and allow for optimization.

It would be interesting to hear children's feedback, i.e. if the platform is simple and easy for the children to understand and use, for a further development and implementation of the platform. There should be more space to collect their opinion and feedback not only on the provided resources but also on the process of peer-working.

Open up to the public – build a network

It was also recommended to open up the platform for the public or more pilot organizations as soon as possible to recruit new users and make sure an implementation in the different institutions is possible while the project is still running so that new users can have support from the project staff during the implementation of the tools.

It was further retained useful to participate in conferences, educational conventions and to get in contact with different other institutions to widen the KIDS4ALL network.