Chapter 8
Social pedagogues in Lithuania

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8.1 Definition of an pedagogue and regulatory system

Like schools in other European countries, the Lithuanian school aims to provide every child with an education appropriate to his or her nature, and to ensure the provision of high quality and comprehensive social pedagogical support.

Who is a social pedagogue in Lithuania? The main goal of a social Pedagogue in a Lithuanian school is to help children to realise their right to learn, to strengthen the child's and pupil's social and emotional competences, and to foster a safe learning environment that meets the child's and pupil's learning capacities and needs[2]. The social Pedagogue is identified as the essential and main organiser of a child's education (Alifanovienė and Kepalaitė, 2007; Ivanauskienė, 2009; Hamalainen, 2014; Cameron and Moss, 2011), who represents the child's best interests and strives for the child's well-being. Researchers (Kvieskienė, 2003; Alifanovienė and Kepalaitė, 2007; Misiukevičienė and Putauskienė, 2009; Ivanauskienė, 2009) distinguish the following roles of a social pedagogue: administrator, planner, service provider, educator, defender of the child's best interests – an advocate, counsellor, behaviour modifier, mediator, evaluator, expert, advisor, friend, manager, mediator, supporter.

The following areas of social pedagogical support for children and pupils are outlined in the Description of the Procedures for the Provision of Social Pedagogical Support to Children and Pupils (2016, the new wording 2023)[3]: 1) helping children and pupils to adapt to school and child care institutions and educational learning environments; 2) developing children's and pupils' life skills in cooperation with the child's and pupil's parents (guardians, carers), pedagogical staff, social workers and social partners, in order to ensure the child's and pupil's safety and right to education; (3) mediating and assisting in addressing the reasons why children and pupils are prevented from participating in compulsory education, from attending school or from avoiding it;

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[2] Socialinės pedagoginės pagalbos teikimo vaikams ir mokiniams tvarkos aprašas", TAR, 2016 m. lapkričio 2 d. Nr. V-950, naujas redakcija 2023-10-03.

[3] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2016 m. lapkričio 2 d. įsakymas Nr. V-950 „Dėl socialinės pedagoginės pagalbos teikimo vaikui ir mokiniui tvarkos aprašo patvirtinimo", TAR, 2016-11-03, Nr. 26187., nauja redakcija 2023-10-03.

(4) supporting the return to school of children and pupils who are absent from school or who are not participating in the educational process, in cooperation with their parents/guardians and the responsible authorities.

The Description of the Procedures for the Provision of Social Pedagogical Assistance to Children and Pupils in Lithuania (2016, the new wording 2023)[4] distinguishes four types of assistance:

1. counselling, carried out to help resolve social pedagogical problems of children and pupils through various forms and methods of counselling;
2. research, carried out to understand and assess the impact of the environment on the child and pupil, as well as the educational and learning difficulties, in order to ensure effective strategies for assistance;
3. preventive activities, to ensure a safe learning environment for the child and pupil and the development of personal, social and other general competences through targeted means and methods;
4. mediation, to assist in finding the most appropriate solution to the problem, in the exercise of the child's rights and legitimate interests;
5. support networking, to ensure the provision of comprehensive support to the child and pupil.

In summary, social pedagogical work in Lithuanian schools is still mainly oriented towards personal support, where the main task of the social Pedagogue is to help individual pupils to manage difficult or risky situations at school in order to help them to learn and avoid exclusion. This usually involves an analysis of the pupil's current needs, based on observations and interviews with others, followed by individualised solutions, which may include academic, emotional and social support. In Lithuania, social Pedagogues usually address students' problems through a range of interventions. These often consist of counselling, supportive and motivational conversations about specific problem situations. With the help of social Pedagogues, pupils also develop their social skills by participating in various group activities and then gradually take more personal responsibility for their learning at school.

Social Pedagogues usually work with individuals in their whole context, which includes the pupils' home environment, leisure environment, etc. Those activities may include providing advice, guidance and support to parents, guardians and other key people involved in the pupils' lives.

In Lithuania, the role of the school social Pedagogue in the provision of social pedagogical support to children and pupils is also emphasised (Description of Procedures for the Provision of Social Pedagogical Support to Children and Pupils, 2023), including the role of the social Pedagogue as a mediator, working in collaboration with other support professionals, and the education and involvement of the school community in the provision of support.

[4] Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania No V-950 of 2 November 2016 «On Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Provision of Social Pedagogical Assistance to a Child and a Pupil», TAR, 03-11-2016, No 26187., new version 03-10-2023.

The development of the professionalisation of social Pedagogues in Lithuania covers more than 20 years. The Government of the Republic of Lithuania by Resolution No 471 of 24 April 2001, approved the Programme for the Establishment of Social Educators in Educational Institutions 2001-2005[5] (hereinafter referred to as 'the Programme for the Establishment of Social Educators'), which has been recognised as one of the components of the programme of the reform of education in the Republic of Lithuania and as a means of implementing the Programme for the Creation of Conditions for the Social and Educational Education of Children[6], the National Programme for Prevention of Child and Adolescent Delinquency[7], and the Programme for National Prevention of Drug Addiction and Control of Drugs for the period 1999-2003[8]. The Programme for the Establishment of Social Educators (2001) aims to "intensify social and preventive work in schools,<...> to organise work with children at risk, parents, <...> to create better social and educational conditions for all schoolchildren and young people[9]". In parallel, the Qualification Requirements and Duty Instructions for Social Educators (Order No 1667 of 14 December 2001)[10], which regulated the activities of social educators in educational institutions, were approved in 2001.

The Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania identifies student support (informational, psychological, social pedagogical, special pedagogical and special) as one of the components of the education system[11]. On this basis, the General Regulations on Social Pedagogical Assistance[12] were approved by Order No ISAK-941 of the Minister of Education and Science of 15 June 2004, which set out the aims, objectives, principles, forms, types, recipients, providers and organization of social pedagogical assistance to pupils.

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[5] Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2001 m. balandžio 24 d. nutarimas Nr. 471 „Dėl socialinių pedagogų etatų steigimo švietimo įstaigose 2001–2005 metų programos patvirtinimo", *Valstybės žinios*, 2001-04-27, Nr. 36-1220.

[6] Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 1999 m. birželio 9 d. nutarimas Nr. 764 „Dėl socialinių ir pedagoginių vaikų mokymosi sąlygų sudarymo programos ir bendrojo ugdymo modernizavimo programos patvirtinimo", *Valstybės žinios*, 1999-06-16, Nr. 52-1696.

[7] Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 1997 m. kovo 6 d. nutarimas Nr. 197 „Dėl vaikų ir paauglių nusikalstamumo prevencijos nacionalinės programos", *Valstybės žinios*, 1997-03-12, Nr. 21-510.

[8] Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 1999 m. rugsėjo 6 d. nutarimas Nr. 970 „Dėl nacionalinės narkotikų kontrolės ir narkomanijos prevencijos 1999–2003 metų programos patvirtinimo", *Valstybės žinios*, 1999-09-10, Nr. 76-2291.

[9] Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 1999 m. birželio 9 d. nutarimas Nr. 764 „Dėl socialinių ir pedagoginių vaikų mokymosi sąlygų sudarymo programos ir bendrojo ugdymo modernizavimo programos patvirtinimo", *Valstybės žinios*, 1999-06-16, Nr. 52-1696.

[10] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2001 m. gruodžio 14 d. įsakymas Nr. 1667 „Dėl socialinio pedagogo kvalifikacinių reikalavimų ir pareiginių instrukcijų patvirtinimo", *Valstybės žinios*, 2002-03-06, Nr. 24-896.

[11] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo įstatymas, *Valstybės žinios*, 1991, Nr. 23-593.

[12] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2004 m. birželio 15 d. įsakymas Nr. ISAK-941 „Dėl bendrųjų socialinės pedagoginės pagalbos teikimo nuostatų patvirtinimo", *Valstybės žinios*, 2004-06-29, Nr. 100-3729.

The meaningful work of social Pedagogues and targeted research[13] after more than a decade of development of a legal framework for social Pedagogues have highlighted new, contextual educational challenges that have prompted a reassessment of the existing legal environment. This has led, first of all, to the amendment of the General Regulations on Social Pedagogical Assistance[21] approved by Order of the Minister of Education and Science No. ISAK-941 of 15 June 2004 (Order No. V-950) on 2 November 2016, and to the adoption of a new wording of the 'Description of the Procedures for the Provision of Social Pedagogical Assistance to the Child and the Pupil[14]'), which is a guiding document for social Pedagogues[15].

Currently, the activities of the Social Educator are regulated by the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania (2023)[16], which defines the purpose of social pedagogical assistance, and by the provisions of the Law on Minimum and Average Care of Children[17] (2023), which deals with solution of issues related to the child's well-being in the case of the need for complex assistance.

The purpose of social pedagogical assistance, the ways of providing assistance, and the functions of the social Pedagogue are specified in the description of the procedure for the provision of social pedagogical assistance to children and pupils (2016, the new wording 2023)[18].

The Lithuanian Association of Social Educators and the Lithuanian Association of Educational Assistance are active in Lithuania, and Lithuanian social educators are involved in their activities.

8.2 Training and competences of social Pedagogues

The training of social Pedagogues in Lithuania is carried out in accordance

[13] Rita Ilgūnė-Martinėlienė ir Žana Rympo, „Bendrojo ugdymo mokyklos socialinio pedagogo galimybės taikyti mediaciją savo darbe", *Socialinis ugdymas* 41, 2 (2015): 111–123; Sigita Burvytė, „Socialinės pedagoginės (kompleksinės) pagalbos poreikis", *Socialinis ugdymas* 41, 2 (2015): 144–162; Valdonė Indrašienė ir Romas Prakapas, „Vaikų elgsenos stebėsenos kaip socialinio pedagogo darbo priemonės taikymo galimybės", *Pedagogika* 124, 4 (2016): 105–116; Milda Ratkevičienė, „Narrative Perspective of School Social Pedagogue's Assistance of Social Risk Children: One Child's Story 'One out of Five'", *Tiltai* 79, 2 (2018): 125–139 ir pan.

[14] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2004 m. birželio 15 d. įsakymas Nr. ISAK-941 „Dėl bendrųjų socialinės pedagoginės pagalbos teikimo nuostatų patvirtinimo", *Valstybės žinios*, 2004-06-29, Nr. 100-3729.

[15] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2016 m. lapkričio 2 d. įsakymas Nr. V-950 „Dėl socialinės pedagoginės pagalbos teikimo vaikui ir mokiniui tvarkos aprašo patvirtinimo", TAR, 2016-11-03, Nr. 26187., nauja redakcija 2023-10-03

[16] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo įstatymas (1991), *Valstybės žinios*, Nr. 23-593; nauja įstaatymo redakcija nuo 2011-07-01, *Valstybės žinios* Nr. 38-1804

[17] Lietuvos Respublikos Vaiko minimalios ir vidutinės priežiūros įstatymas, Žin. 2007, Nr. 80-3214, nauja redakcija 2023

[18] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2016 m. lapkričio 2 d. įsakymas Nr. V-950 „Dėl socialinės pedagoginės pagalbos teikimo vaikui ir mokiniui tvarkos aprašo patvirtinimo", TAR, 2016-11-03, Nr. 26187., nauja redakcija 2023-10-03

with the Regulation for the Training of Teachers (2010, 2020, 2023)[19], the Description of the Competence Framework for Teachers and Pupil Support Specialists (2023)[20] and the Description of Education and Development Study Group (2015)[21]. Social Pedagogues are trained through first-level university study programmes. Currently, these professionals are trained at two higher education institutions: Mykolas Romeris University and Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University. Social Pedagogue training programmes are classified as social sciences in the field of pedagogy, and must comply with the requirements for the type and level of university studies (the first level being bachelor's degree) as regulated by the Law on Science and Higher Education. The Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy and the qualification of a teacher are awarded upon completion of these studies. The typical duration of study programmes is 3.5 years (7 semesters) for full-time studies and 4 years (8 semesters) for part-time studies. The structure of programmes for the training of social Pedagogues consists of general university subjects, subjects in the field of study and subjects in pedagogical studies. A strong emphasis is placed on practice-based learning.

According to the Teacher Education Regulations (2010, 2020, 2023)[22], the Description of Competence Framework for Teachers and Student Support Professionals (2023)[23], the competences required for the qualification of a teacher are in the areas of professional behaviour, cognitive, collaborative and emotional-motivational (see Figure 1).

The emphasis of the social pedagogy study programmes is the orientation of the subjects taught towards the holistic educational competences of a social pedagogue, which help to successfully combine the solution of social and educational problems, the development of positive socialisation and the creation of a harmonious environment for the child, and the search for alternatives and innovation. Social Pedagogues in training should be able to holistically address a wide range of socio-educational problems, and their training is based on relevant socio-educational activities: representation of the child's interests, management of socio-educational support at individual, group, institutional and community levels, creation of a positive environment for the socialisation of the child, research of the environment, and a flexible response to change.

[19] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministro 2010 m. sausio 8 d. įsakymas Nr. V-54 „Dėl pedagogų rengimo reglamento patvirtinimo". Valstybės žinios 2010-01-23, Nr. 9-425.

[20] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministro 2023 m. lapkričio 27 d. įsakymas Nr. V-1499 „Dėl mokytojų ir pagalbos mokiniui specialistų kompetencijų aprašo patvirtinimo". TAR, 2023-11-27, Nr. 22836.

[21] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2015 m. gruodžio 10 d. įsakymas Nr. V-1264 „Dėl švietimo ir ugdymo studijų krypčių grupės aprašo patvirtinimo". TAR, 2015-12-11, Nr. 19677.

[22] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministro 2010 m. sausio 8 d. įsakymas Nr. V-54 „Dėl pedagogų rengimo reglamento patvirtinimo". Valstybės žinios 2010-01-23, Nr. 9-425.

[23] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministro 2023 m. lapkričio 27 d. įsakymas Nr. V-1499 „Dėl mokytojų ir pagalbos mokiniui specialistų kompetencijų aprašo patvirtinimo". TAR, 2023-11-27, Nr. 22836.

8.3 Areas of activities

Graduates of the Social Pedagogy programme can work in regional and municipal departments, educational and other social institutions (all types of general education schools, vocational schools, pre-schools, etc.). Social Pedagogues may work in district and city education departments, pedagogical-psychological institutions, institutions for the protection of children's rights, family support, rehabilitation and specialised centres, hospitals, prisons and other educational and social institutions.

There is a continuing need for these professionals. Both researchers and practitioners point out that the provision of educational assistance to educational participants is a prerequisite for ensuring effective education and development, overcoming barriers to learning and reducing exclusion (Expert evaluation of the Lithuanian model of pedagogical psychological assistance, 2021). Helping every pupil, avoiding the stigma of being a weak person, but empowering every pupil to act within his/her own limits, is a particularly relevant issue in Lithuanian schools. According to the study «Expert evaluation of the Lithuanian pedagogical psychological support model», carried out in 2021, it was found that not all pupils in Lithuania are provided with the necessary support. Students with low academic achievement (poor or satisfactory performance) are in a situation of vulnerability because they do not receive or receive less help from teachers and peers, are more likely to experience bullying and discrimination, and have a more negative perception of the culture of help and the effectiveness of help.

In today's society, the problems of children and young people are becoming more and more complex, and every educational institution is looking for means and ways to mobilise the energies and potential capacities of its members in order to achieve the ultimate goal of providing a teaching and learning environment that enables the acquisition of competences and skills in problem-solving and decision making (Šapelytė et al, 2021). This means that the socialisation of children must involve all educators, parents, and institutions that can help to ensure the provision of quality social pedagogical and support services. Timely provision of social pedagogical support to pupils can help to prevent poverty and social exclusion in the future and help society to alleviate socio-economic problems such as unemployment, crime, and morbidity resulting from harmful habits.

8.4 Case study

The cases are presented by a social Pedagogue at a gymnasium in a major Lithuanian city. The case was conducted in the school year 2023/2024.

8.4.1 Case 1

In her presentation of the case, the social educator noted that the most challenging pupils are the ninth graders (students in the first level of gymna-

sium), as they are entering a new school and are monitored for the first month. In this urban school, there is a tradition that all the educational support professionals go to selected ninth grade classes to get to know the newly arrived pupils and their work during the lessons. Children who are absent or are irregular attenders are then observed, and a conversation is held with the class teacher to discuss what difficulties he or she sees. The class teacher is often the first to spot a child who has attendance or other problems and starts working with the parents and the student independently.

In the case of Rokas (14 years old boy, name changed), we noticed that he was periodically absent from school, and we spoke to his teacher, who said that she had already noticed the problem and was talking to him, but there was no reaction. The school has involved the mother in the support process (the parents are divorced, the father lives abroad and is not involved in the child's life) and meetings have been organised. During the meeting with the class teacher, the educational support specialist, the pupil and the mother, it became clear that the problem has been present for 2 years, which means that the pupil has come to year 9 without a year 7 and 8 course, as he was almost completely absent from the online classes for one year (during the Covid-19 quarantine) and practically absent from the school during the second year.

An individual support plan was drawn up for Rokas. A child's individual support plan is drawn up when there is no change after the interviews. The plan is drawn up by the professional who is advising the child or by the one who is in charge of the whole case, in this case the social pedagogue. Very often, the class teacher is involved, as he or she is the one who sees the situation best, and the parents and the child are involved. The child's strengths are identified first, even his or her moods, if the child is coming for the first time. Atypical behaviour of the child is discussed with the parents, what they notice. All the additional information about the child is gathered - hobbies, extra-curriculum activities, what they like to do - and then a maximum of 2 or 3 achievement expectations are set (for the social Pedagogue and the child), because it is not possible to achieve more than that at the same time. The plan defines the objectives, the milestones: time, teacher, classroom, etc. The specialist can undertake to accompany the pupil to all the planned appointments so that he/she comes and there is no misunderstanding with the teacher.

Rokas' class has a teacher's assistant. Although Rokas is not assigned a teaching assistant by law, it is possible to ask for help for a while, as there are gaps in his learning over the last month and a half, and a teacher's assistant could help him to be as successful as possible. Although it was agreed that the teacher's assistant would help – Rokas' attendance has not improved despite the efforts of the school and his mother. Rokas would not come to school.

As the joint efforts of professionals, teachers and the mother were not successful, it was decided to convene a meeting of the school's Child Welfare Committee. At the meeting of the school's Child Welfare Committee, Rokas was recommended to receive psychological counselling (psychological coun-

selling can only be recommended and is not obligatory), and was obliged to attend counselling with a social pedagogue. After the actions taken, an improvement in the child's attendance was recorded, which lasted for 2 days, after which the child was absent from school again. The mother said that Rokas was at home, but she simply cannot force her son to go to school, as she said «*I will not push him out and I will not pull him out*». The school's Child Welfare Committee was then convened again, which unfortunately again did not lead to any result.

At the institutional level, if the assistance provided by the social Pedagogue is insufficient or ineffective, a referral is made to the school's Child Welfare Committee, whose purpose is to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for the child that is focused on personal success, well-being, maturity, educational achievement and progress in accordance with the individual child's potential, and to carry out other functions relating to the child's welfare. The Child Welfare Commission shall address child welfare issues by analysing aspects of personal growth, self-expression, participation in school life, the learning environment, the learning community and other aspects, by seeking new opportunities and solutions to problems and by mobilising the necessary human and material resources.

According to the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania, a child is not obliged to attend a meeting of the Child Welfare Commission if he/she has certain fears. His/her opinion must be heard in his/her absence. In the present case, Rokas participated in the proceedings together with his mother. The Child Welfare Commission is normally composed of the Deputy Director for Education, who is also the Chairperson of the Child Welfare Commission, the Secretary, who is an independent person, all the educational support specialists working in the school (social pedagogue, special pedagogue, public health specialist) and a psychologist, and 2 teachers from different concentres: from the ninth grade concentre and from the tenth grade concentre. The members of the Commission are not necessarily the teachers of the pupil in question, which is good because they see the child from a 'new angle' and do not have a preconceived opinion of the child. During the meeting, everyone discusses the case from different perspectives: whether the pupil may have special needs, whether he/she may have school fears, etc. (The school psychologist conducts a study on pupils' school fears every September. This is a fairly comprehensive survey in which all ninth graders participate. If a child is found to be struggling, the survey is repeated in the second half of September to analyse how he or she is coping with school fears). After the meeting, the child is usually given a period of very intensive observation and it is agreed when the case discussion meeting will take place again.

In Rokas' case, a period of 2 weeks was set. Unfortunately, there was no change either after the first meeting of the school's Child Welfare Committee or after the second. The Child Welfare Committee failed to make an impact, even though there was constant contact with his mother during that time.

Rokas spent all his time at home on the computer, did not pick up the phone, did not log into the school register. The only information about what was going on at home came from his mother, who cooperated in good faith, and for whom it has been a problem for three years.

As the Child Welfare Committee had no effect, it was decided to organise an interview between Rokas and the school's Board of Directors. The whole school administration is involved in these meetings. Only the mother came to the meeting and said that she «*could not drag the child out of the house*». During the meeting, the mother was also given information about other educational institutions, and it was suggested that maybe the gymnasium was not the right school for Rokas, because the curriculum was too difficult, and that maybe a good solution would be to transfer Rokas to a vocational school - in Lithuania, vocational schools have the ninth grade. Another option could be a craft centre, where only apprenticeships are taught, without a compulsory secondary education programme.

It is important to mention that the mother initially refused to have the child examined by the city's Educational Psychological Service for learning disorders, on the assumption that information might have been missed that the child had a learning disability and that he did not want to go to school because he found it too difficult. After several meetings, the mother gave her consent and the documents have now been submitted for assessment.

After the Board of Directors, as no changes took place, Rokas' case file was sent to the city's Social Welfare Department. The Social Welfare Department of the municipality organised an initial interdepartmental meeting with representatives of the municipality, school representatives and the case manager. During this meeting, the views of the child and the mother were heard and the way forward was discussed. Rokas was present at the meeting, he came to the Municipality and listened to everything. He did not come to school the next day.

Since the inter-departmental conversation at the municipality had no effect on Rokas, a meeting of the city's Child Welfare Committee was called. The City's Child Welfare Committee is made up of a wide variety of professionals, such as a representative of the educational psychological service, a representative of the youth department, a representative of the education department, a representative of the addiction centre, a representative of the educational establishment, a representative of the police, etc. The meeting was long (normally 30 to 40 minutes per case study). This time the meeting lasted about one and a half hours. Rokas made it clear that he did not want to learn: «*I don't want to*». The reasons he gave were «*I am lazy*», «*I am fine at home*». In Lithuania, schooling is compulsory by law until the age of 16 and he is only 14.

The alternative of home schooling for Rokas was considered. A psychiatrist was consulted for this purpose, but the psychiatrist did not see any reason to apply home-schooling on Rokas, arguing that the child needed to be socialised. He did not diagnose him with any serious diagnosis. Thus, at a meeting of the

city's Child Welfare Committee, decisions were taken and Rokas was obliged to attend counselling sessions with a psychologist, counselling sessions with the school's educational support specialists, an examination at the Pedagogical Psychological Service and to take part in extra-curricular activities (clubs).

After this City meeting, Rokas came to school one day and said «*well, after this meeting, nobody will ever see me at school*». And we don't have him in school today, even though we have child rights specialists, a case manager working on the case, and the Educational Psychological Service doing an assessment. There is no coercion. There is no way to 'force' the child to attend school. Rokas continues to spend all his days on the computer.

This case is still being addressed. As the child is only 14 years old and education is compulsory for him, there are attempts to organise home schooling or to transfer him to a school that organises remote learning (there is one in the city). Solutions are still being sought.

8.4.2 Case 2

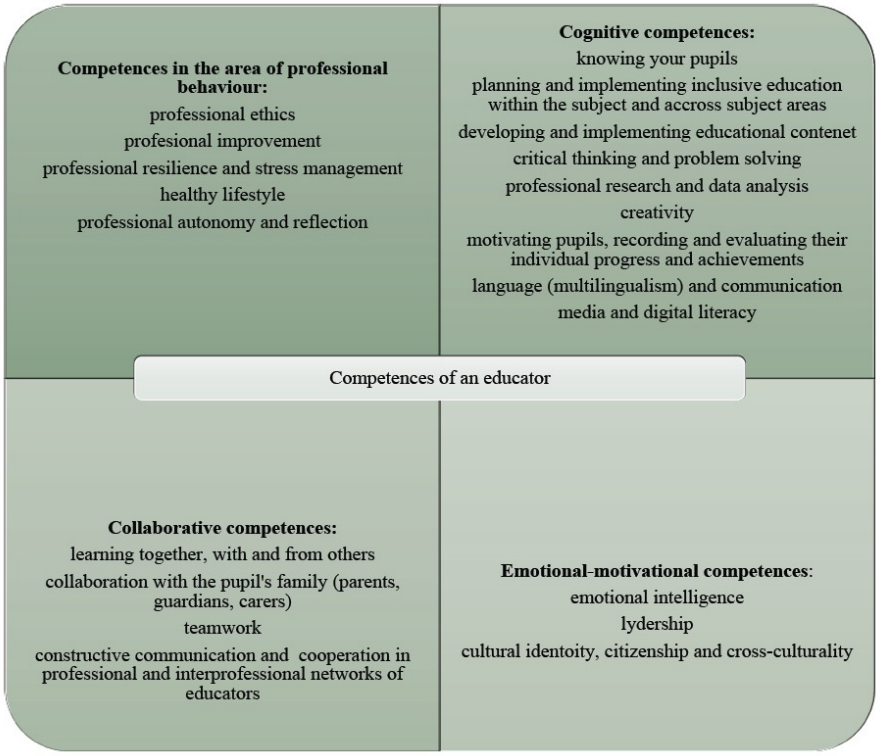
A ninth-grade girl, Greta (name changed), has been out of school. She came to our school from another school where she was practically absent. She has special educational needs (general educational needs). Her friends attend a youth school. When her mother goes out to work (her mother is a single parent and her father lives abroad), these friends come to her place.

As she was practically out of school, three interviews were organised with her mother by the school's education support specialists to discuss Greta's special needs. It was agreed that she should receive counselling from a special educator, a psychologist and a social educator. The girl only agreed to see a special educator, but she never came to the appointment.

Greta is assigned a teacher's assistant, which she initially shied away from and avoided because «she doesn't need it, she understands, she will do everything». After three conversations with her mother, nothing had changed, and we organised a meeting of the school's Child Welfare Committee, during which Greta was once again obliged to attend specialist counselling. For this child, a clear individual plan, a clear structure is appropriate: when to come, what to do, etc. We would meet once a week and discussed what we had managed to do and what we were planning for the following week. During the Child Welfare Committee meeting, Greta made a commitment that she would do everything and there was no change. And something else happened: her mother sternly asked her to wash the dishes at home and took her by the hand and led her to the sink. The girl called the Child Rights Protection Service on her own, which started investigating the case for domestic violence. When I tried to reason with her that I had to write Greta's profile for the Children's Rights Protection Service, only I couldn't write a good one if Greta didn't go to school, she agreed to everything. But she still didn't go to school, she was absent about 50% school time. Then we called the mother and her child to

the headmaster, who explained that we had no other option but to go to the municipality. This affected Greta. She missed only 6 lessons in 3 weeks. Yesterday we had two meetings and saw improvement in Greta's situation. She spoke during the meeting, she committed to attending counselling with a social pedagogue. We do not know how long this will last, but we are very happy with her attendance for 3 weeks. So, we may not get to the City Child Welfare Committee. So far, Greta lacks motivation to learn, but there is a teacher's assistant and the tasks are being adapted. If she puts in some effort, she should be able to do it. This case is successful, at least at this stage.

Figure 1 – Pedagogue Competence Structure
(Description Of The Competences For Teachers And Pupil Support Professionals, 2023)



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ANNA ALUFFI PENINI, FABIO OLIVIERI
(EDITED BY)

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