UP-RES

ERASMUS+ PROJECT

UP-RES · WORK PACKAGE 2

Research Report
Pilot Study 2026

Feasibility and preliminary outcomes of the Up-Res resilience programme for immigrant and refugee students in four schools in Germany and Greece

57	4	7	52/55
students in the pilot	pilot schools in Germany and Greece	resilience modules	students with complete data improved

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents the research of Up-Res work package 2 (WP2). It was compiled by Mindeltal Schulen, the project coordinator, from the pilot study designed and analysed by the research team of the Universidad Católica de Murcia (UCAM); the statistics were recalculated from the raw pilot dataset (Section 4). Full scientific details are in the research paper (preprint, 28 September 2026).

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Up-Res – Promoting academic achievement and inclusion of students through resilience building

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AT A GLANCE

The Up-Res programme proved feasible and promising

In a pilot with 57 immigrant and refugee students in four schools in Germany and Greece (April–June 2026), the mean CD-RISC-25 resilience score of the 55 students with all three measurements rose from 60.0 to 75.8 out of 100. Scores rose in all seven sub-dimensions and at all four sites ($p < 0.001$ overall), and 52 of the 55 students improved.

57
students took the pre-test in four schools

55
completed all three measurements

60.0 → 75.8
mean CD-RISC-25 score (0–100), pre-test to final post-test

52 of 55
students improved

Teachers' reports and student interviews explain the change: students engaged more, found the migration-sensitive scenarios relevant, coped better with stress and emotions, and trusted adults more. Without a control group, the study cannot show that the programme alone caused these gains; a larger controlled study is the next step.

Key findings

- Every resilience score rose, and most of the gain came with the first module; hardiness (W = 0.58) and coping (W = 0.56) changed most.
- Girls started lower than boys and gained slightly more; all 19 girls with complete data improved.
- Resilience rose at all four pilot sites, and the change from pre-test to final post-test was significant at every site.
- Teachers found the programme feasible but asked for more time, careful pacing, smaller groups and more teacher training.

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01 Background and aims

Students with a migrant background still lag behind their peers in European schools. In PISA 2022, immigrant students scored 57 points lower than non-immigrant students in mathematics in Germany, 40 points lower in Greece and 32 in Spain, against an OECD average of 29 points. Many newly arrived students also carry the stress of war, displacement and resettlement.

Resilience, the capacity to adapt well in the face of adversity, protects well-being and learning, and schools can strengthen it. In an earlier Erasmus+ project, Mindeltal Schulen found low resilience to be one of the main reasons for the low achievement of its refugee students. Yet school-based programmes for this group are rarely described in enough detail to be replicated, samples are small, and studies use different scales, so results are hard to compare.

Up-Res responds with a fully documented programme of seven resilience modules, a Teacher Guide and an online platform, tested with a widely used scale. WP2 aimed to develop and test an evidence-based method for measuring and building the resilience of immigrant students in grades 5–8. The pilot study asked four questions:

1. What is the preliminary effect of the seven modules on students' resilience, measured with the CD-RISC-25?
2. How relevant and useful do students and teachers find the content for their migration experience?
3. What helps and what hinders implementation in schools?
4. How do participants explain the changes in their resilience scores?

02 Methodology

Design	The study used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design: a quantitative phase measured change in resilience, and a qualitative phase explained how and why it happened.
Setting and participants	The pilot ran in four schools of the consortium with a high share of students with a migrant or refugee background (Section 5). Students were eligible if they were 12–15 years old, had refugee status or a migration background, had arrived in the host country within the previous five years, gave their assent and had written consent from their legal guardians. In practice, 7 of the 56 students with a recorded age fell outside this range: six were 11 and one was 16. Eight of the 54 students with a recorded length of stay had lived in the host country for six to eight years. In Greece, where primary school lasts six years, the pilot covered grades 5–6.
Intervention	Seven modules, each matched to one sub-dimension of the CD-RISC-25: emotional-cognitive regulation, coping, adaptability/flexibility, meaningfulness/purpose, realistic optimism, self-efficacy and hardiness. They were delivered in in-person workshops of at least three hours each (at least 12 contact hours per group), using stories and scenarios, games, role play, group discussion, art-based tasks and individual reflection. The Up-Res online platform reinforced the workshops with interactive videos, self-assessment tasks and reflection journals. Facilitators followed the

	trainer guidelines of Lifelong Guidance and Nova Education, and the intervention is described according to the TIDieR checklist.
Instrument	The 25-item Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25), used under licence from its authors in validated English, German, Greek, Turkish and Ukrainian versions. Items are rated from 0 (not at all) to 4 (almost always), giving a total of 0–100. UCAM grouped the items into seven sub-dimensions that mirror the modules: emotion regulation (items 14, 19), coping (2, 7, 13, 15, 18), adaptability/flexibility (1, 4, 8), purpose (3, 9, 20, 21), optimism (6, 16), self-efficacy (17, 25) and hardiness (5, 10, 11, 12, 22, 23, 24). A short questionnaire recorded age, gender, country of origin, status and years in the host country.
Procedure	Students completed the scale on paper three times: before the first workshop, after the first module and after the last module.
Qualitative data	The protocol foresaw focus groups with students and families and individual interviews at each school. Signed consent for sharing recordings was not available at every site, so the recordings analysed were 12 from one German school: 4 individual interviews and 8 focus groups with students of Turkish origin. Automated transcription and translation of Turkish and Ukrainian proved unreliable, so facilitators at each site also wrote an analytical report on their sessions. Reflection journals from the platform completed the material.
Analysis	UCAM analysed the data in SPSS 25 and NVivo 12. For this report, the quantitative results were recalculated from the raw pilot dataset with the same tests: descriptive statistics, Friedman tests across the three time points (with tie correction) and Wilcoxon signed-rank post hoc comparisons with Bonferroni correction, with Kendall's W and r as effect sizes. Students who missed a whole measurement were left out of the longitudinal analysis (n = 55), and up to two missing items per test were replaced by the student's mean at that time point (5 items in total). Qualitative data were coded in NVivo 12 by inductive thematic analysis and triangulated across recordings, reports and journals.
Ethics	The protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of UCAM (CE062611) and followed the Declaration of Helsinki. Consent and assent forms were available in five languages, the schools gave written authorisation, and data were pseudonymised with ID codes. Because the dataset contains data on minors, it is available only from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

03 Participants

57 students from the four pilot schools took the pre-test and 55 completed all three measurements; their mean age was 12.8 years (range 11–16), and almost two thirds were boys.

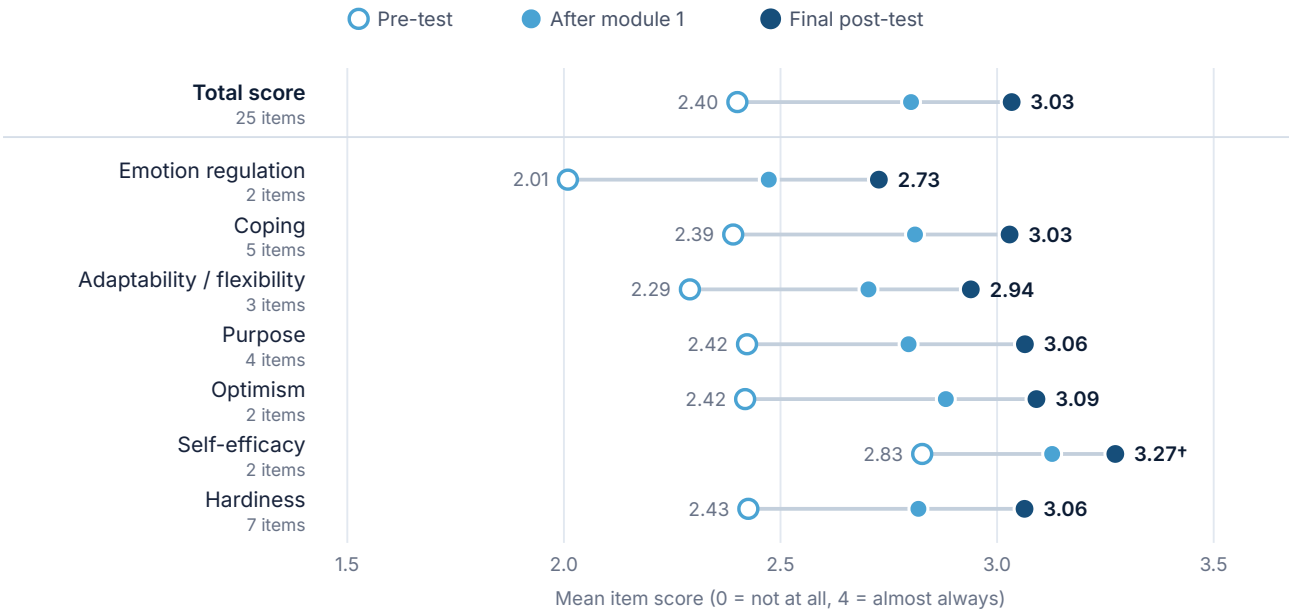
Table 1 Participants

Characteristic	Value
Students with a pre-test	57: Mindeltal Schulen 20, Schulen Eringerfeld 15, Ukrainian Saturday School 15, 4th Primary School of Kallithea 7
Students with all three measurements	55: 19, 15, 14 and 7 respectively; one student at Mindeltal Schulen missed the final post-test and one at the Ukrainian Saturday School the post-test after module 1
Girls / boys (pre-test sample)	20 (35.1%) / 36 (63.2%); no information for one student
Age	Mean 12.77 years (SD 1.16), range 11–16; no information for one student
Years in the host country	Mean 4.04 (SD 1.69), range 1–8; no information for three students

To reduce the gender imbalance, Lifelong Guidance ran a supplementary pilot with additional female students under the same protocol after the main pilot. Those data are not part of the analysis in this report.

04 Quantitative results

Figure 1 Every score rose, and most of the gain came with the first module



Source: Up-Res pilot dataset (four school sheets), recalculated for this report · 55 students with all three measurements, April–June 2026 · item mean = sum score ÷ number of items. † Self-efficacy did not rise significantly between the two post-tests.

Among the 55 students with all three measurements, every score rose, and most of the gain came with the first module. Item means make sub-dimensions with different numbers of items comparable; Table 2 gives the sum scores.

Table 2 Resilience scores at the three measurements (n = 55)

Score	Pre-test	After module 1	Final post-test	Friedman $\chi^2(2)$	Kendall's W	Effect size r pre–mid · pre–final · mid–final
Total score	**60.01 ± 12.68**	**70.03 ± 12.81**	**75.84 ± 12.43**	**78.06**	**0.71**	**0.79* · 0.83* · 0.65***
Emotion regulation	4.02 ± 1.97	4.95 ± 1.95	5.45 ± 1.84	33.60	0.31	0.50* · 0.66* · 0.33*
Coping	11.95 ± 2.81	14.05 ± 3.76	15.14 ± 2.83	62.14	0.56	0.63* · 0.78* · 0.43*
Adaptability / flexibility	6.87 ± 1.92	8.11 ± 2.11	8.82 ± 2.03	38.81	0.35	0.54* · 0.71* · 0.46*
Purpose	9.69 ± 2.79	11.18 ± 2.81	12.26 ± 2.26	38.12	0.35	0.45* · 0.69* · 0.42*
Optimism	4.84 ± 1.81	5.76 ± 1.49	6.18 ± 1.35	28.20	0.26	0.44* · 0.62* · 0.40*
Self-efficacy	5.65 ± 1.36	6.25 ± 1.16	6.55 ± 1.23	22.83	0.21	0.37* · 0.50* · 0.25
Hardiness	16.98 ± 5.21	19.73 ± 4.84	21.44 ± 4.58	63.71	0.58	0.62* · 0.75* · 0.52*

Sum scores, mean ± SD (total 0–100). All Friedman tests $p < 0.001$ (n = 55); pairwise Wilcoxon signed-rank tests with Bonferroni correction; * significant at $p < 0.05$. Pre–mid = pre-test vs after module 1; pre–final = pre-test vs final post-test; mid–final = after module 1 vs final post-test.

The effect on the total score was large (W = 0.71). Hardiness (W = 0.58) and coping (W = 0.56) changed most and self-efficacy least (W = 0.21); self-efficacy was the only sub-dimension without a further significant gain between the two post-tests.

> **Note on the figures.** These results were recalculated from the raw dataset. In version 1 of the preprint, the two missing post-tests were counted as scores of zero, which lowers the reported post-test means (68.9 and 74.5) and widens their spread. Leaving them out confirms the overall result and slightly strengthens the effects. It changes three pairwise results: emotion regulation (narrowly, $p = 0.047$ after correction) and purpose also rose significantly between the two post-tests, and self-efficacy rose significantly after module 1 but not further. The next version of the paper should be aligned with these figures.

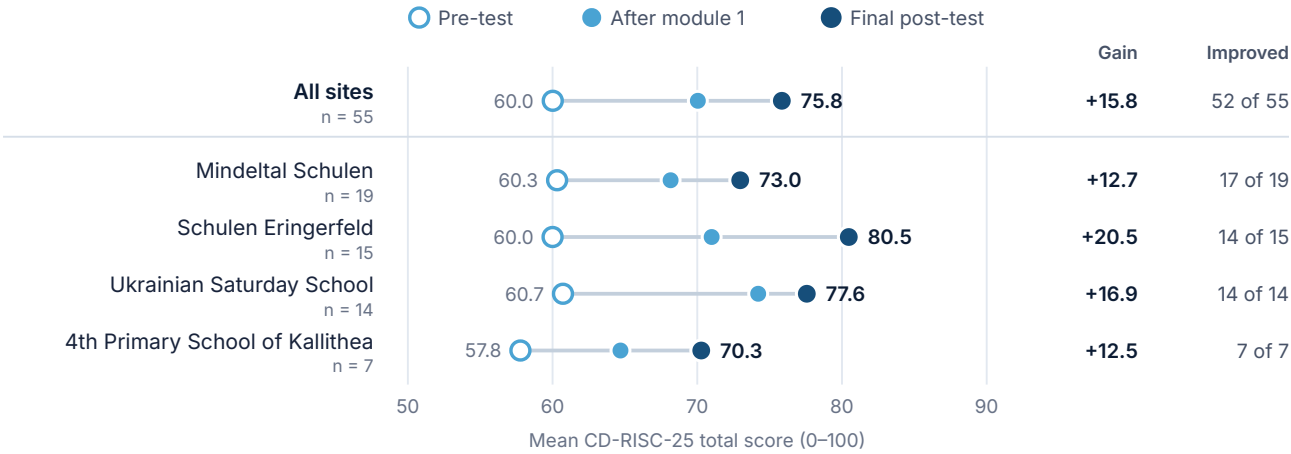
05 Comparison of the pilot settings

The four sites differ in country, school type and student background, so the programme was tested in very different conditions.

Table 3 The four pilot settings

Site	Country	Type of school	Grades or ages	Context
Mindeltal Schulen, Jettingen-Scheppach	Germany	State-approved private secondary school	Grades 5–8	About 65% of students have a migrant or refugee background; many families have low incomes
Schulen Eringerfeld, Geseke	Germany	State-recognised private secondary school	Grades 5–8	54% of students have a migrant background, many from Turkey, Syria and Ukraine
Ukrainian Saturday School, Augsburg	Germany	Weekend school of the Ukrainischer Verein Augsburg	Ages 12–14	All pupils were displaced from Ukraine by the war
4th Primary School of Kallithea, Athens	Greece	Public primary school	Grades 5–6	About 100 of 240 pupils are migrants or refugees

Figure 2 **Resilience rose at all four pilot sites**



Source: Up-Res pilot dataset (four school sheets), recalculated for this report · 55 students with all three measurements · up to two missing items replaced by the student's mean.

Nearly every student improved: 17 of 19 at Mindeltal Schulen, 14 of 15 at Schulen Eringerfeld, all 14 at the Ukrainian Saturday School and all 7 at the 4th Primary School of Kallithea. The change from pre-test to final post-test was significant at every site (Wilcoxon signed-rank test, $p < 0.05$). The site samples are small, so the differences between sites describe the pilot and are not a ranking.

Girls started lower than boys (56.4 vs 61.4 points) and gained slightly more (+17.7 vs +14.9); all 19 girls with complete data improved. The 7 students in Greece, the youngest group (mean age 11.9 years), gained 12.5 points, against 16.3 points for the 48 students in Germany.

Despite these differences, the reports from Germany and Greece agreed on the main points: students engaged more over time, responded strongly to migration-related scenarios and showed better coping. The sites differed in practical ways. The Greek site worked with grades 5–6 only; sessions in Turkish and Ukrainian could not be transcribed reliably with automated tools, so facilitators' reports carried more weight; and only one German school could share recordings for analysis.

The pattern matches multi-country European evidence. The Horizon 2020 project RefugeesWellSchool found that classroom-based, creative and participatory psychosocial interventions can strengthen peer support, social connectedness and school climate among newcomer youth, and that success depends on pacing, language access and concrete activities. The Up-Res pilot points to the same conditions.

06 Qualitative findings

Teachers at all sites described the programme as acceptable and suitable for the age group, with participation that held steady or grew over time. Five themes emerged from the analysis.

1 Growing engagement

Participation rose when resilience concepts came as concrete, experience-based activities: games, role play, group discussion, art-based methods, scenario analysis and stories. Combining group discussion with individual reflection helped students process the material personally.

2 Relevance of migration-sensitive content

In Germany and Greece, students responded most strongly to stories about migration, bullying, language barriers and starting at a new school. Framing these difficulties as common human experiences rather than personal deficits raised participation and reduced the feeling of being singled out.

3 Perceived gains in resilience skills

Teachers saw better coping with stress, more positive thinking, more self-confidence, better problem-solving and an understanding that resilience can be learned. Students also showed more empathy and cooperation, and knew better when and how to seek help.

4 Trust and help-seeking

Talking repeatedly about emotions and coping built trust between students and facilitators. In Germany, some students later approached facilitators outside the sessions or asked to stay in touch, seeing them as adults they could turn to.

5 Implementation conditions

Teachers found the programme feasible but asked for more time, careful pacing, smaller groups and more teacher training, especially for students who need encouragement to speak in front of their peers.

07 Discussion and lessons for implementation

The quantitative and qualitative strands point in the same direction. Scores rose in every sub-dimension, and teachers described gains in the very skills the modules target: coping, emotion regulation, optimism and self-confidence. Gains were visible after the first module and continued to the end in every sub-dimension except self-efficacy, which suggests that the full sequence adds value beyond a single session.

Three mechanisms seem to matter most:

1 Concrete activities

Abstract psychological ideas became accessible through concrete scenarios, games and stories.

2 Strengths-based framing

A strengths-based framing of migration reduced stigma and made students willing to take part.

3 Trusted adults

The workshops created a space in which students identified trusted adults, which may matter as much as the skills themselves.

How the programme is delivered matters as much as its content. Time, pacing, group size and facilitator preparation shaped the experience at every site, in line with feasibility research that stresses fidelity and delivery conditions before larger trials. Evaluations of structured skills programmes delivered by trained professionals, such as START NOW, suggest that on-site staff can deliver such modules and that benefits may grow as students apply the skills in daily life.

08 Limitations

No control group
The gains cannot be attributed to the programme alone; maturation, attention from adults, familiarity with the test and regression to the mean may also play a part.

Small convenience sample
57 students from four schools that are members of the consortium; the results may not apply to other schools. Two students missed one post-test and were left out of the longitudinal analysis.

Gender imbalance
63% of the analysed students were boys; the supplementary pilot with girls is not yet included, although the 19 girls in the main sample improved at least as much as the boys.

Self-report and short follow-up
Resilience was self-reported, and the last measurement took place at the end of the workshops, so lasting effects are unknown.

Limited qualitative sample
Recordings came from one German school only, and the facilitators' reports, written by people involved in the sessions, may be positively biased.

No link to achievement yet
The pilot measured resilience, not school results, so the link to academic achievement and inclusion, the project's general objective, remains to be tested.

09 Research gaps and recommendations

For schools and teachers

- Deliver the seven modules as a sequence, at most two modules a day, with time for reflection; start with the Teacher Guide's quick-start route.
- Keep groups small and prepare facilitators beforehand.
- Use concrete scenarios, games and stories, and frame migration challenges as common experiences rather than deficits.
- Offer private ways to respond (writing, drawing, talking with a partner) and never require students to disclose personal experiences in front of others.
- Measure resilience before and after with the CD-RISC-25 in a language the student knows well, and involve families from the start.

For education authorities

- Make resilience-building part of the reception and induction of newly arrived students, not an extra activity.
- Give school staff time and training to run such programmes, and fund language mediation and validated translations of instruments.

For research

- Test Up-Res in a larger, controlled and longitudinal study, for example with waiting-list control groups, and follow students for 6–12 months.

- Examine who benefits most: by age, gender, baseline resilience, years in the host country, school type and number of modules received.
- Link resilience to school outcomes such as grades, attendance and sense of belonging.
- Plan consent for sharing recordings across sites from the start, and budget for professional transcription and translation.

10 Outputs and next steps

Table 4 Outputs of the research

Output	Status
Research paper "Feasibility and Preliminary Outcomes of the Up-Res School-Based Resilience Intervention for Immigrant and Refugee Students" (UCAM with Ukrainischer Verein Augsburg)	Open-access preprint since 28 September 2026 (CC BY 4.0); under peer review in an international journal
Teacher's Guide for Resilience (166 pages) and Printable Activity Pack (32 worksheets)	Completed; free under CC BY-SA 4.0
Up-Res online platform with seven modules in five languages	Online at up-res.eu, free of charge
Presentation at UCAM's II International Scientific Seminar, Cartagena and online	Held on 21 July 2026
Abstract for the ESCAP 2027 congress in Athens	Planned; submission deadline 15 December 2026

Next steps: publish the journal version, add the supplementary data on female students, and prepare a larger controlled follow-up study. The consortium is exploring EU funding for it and a possible cooperation with researchers at Ulm University.

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UP-RES

Up-Res – Promoting academic achievement and inclusion of students through resilience building

The free Up-Res platform, the Teacher's Guide for Resilience and the Printable Activity Pack are available at **up-res.eu**.

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