# Press Release

*New HORIZON Research Project MTSS-K*

# Innovative and evidence-based kindergarten organisation and teaching practices for high-quality education across Europe

*On the 12-14th of February 2024, the newly launched research project MTSS-K officially kicks off its activities in Luxembourg. The project consortium, led by coordinator Dr Christophe Dierendonck from the Department of Education and Social Work at the University of Luxembourg, comprises seven European institutions. Jointly, they have set out to adapt, implement and assess the effectiveness and efficiency of a Multi-Tiered System of Support in kindergarten (MTSS-K) across five European countries with the aim to reduced inequalities within the education system and strengthen pupils' early skills in literacy, numeracy and socio-emotional behaviour. Funded through the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme, the project will receive nearly EUR 3 million over the next four years.*

Effective and inclusive education systems are the foundations of successful and cohesive societies. Yet, several European education systems are regularly pointed out as being underperforming, inequitable or segregated, as is the case for Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, France, Italy, and Switzerland. Their prevalent 'wait-to-fail' model of education particularly affects the most vulnerable students who only receive appropriate pedagogical support when they encounter significant academic challenges. This calls for a drastic change through preventing learning difficulties and providing early intervention measures.

**Equipping schools and teachers with an effective model to intervene early**

The new research project MTSS-K sets out to challenge the status quo by using the most rigorous scientific methods to promote a new effective and efficient education model in Europe. The Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) approach is an early intervention framework that has been established in the North American education systems for nearly two decades with the aim to increase equity and inclusion by improving education outcomes for all students, yet especially for the most vulnerable ones.

"One of the aims of the MTSS approach is to better distinguish between students with real learning difficulties who need special - and expensive - measures and those who have simply not received sufficiently effective first instance teaching.", says Dr Christophe Dierendonck, Research Scientist at the Department of Education and Social Work at the University of Luxembourg and Coordinator of the MTSS-K consortium. "MTSS is a data-driven approach piloted by a school team, with three levels of support of increasing intensity. The key feature of the model is the use of evidence-based education. This refers to education practices that

have been found to be effective through rigorous research designs and aims at moving beyond personal impressions or beliefs about the practices that should be favoured. With MTSS-K, we want to introduce evidence-based practices in kindergarten, support the early academic and social-emotional skills of all pupils, and equip teachers with appropriate tools and skills to do so. Consequently, we aim to contribute to building a fair and social education in Europe."

**Introducing the MTSS approach to kindergarten**

The project pays special attention to early intervention at kindergarten-aged students which promises to yield particularly impressive benefits with long-term academic and behavioural improvements for children.

Beyond the kindergarten focus, MTSS-K includes further unique aspects not previously considered in studies. As part of the rigorous study, MTSS-K examines the cost-effectiveness of the entire MTSS approach in order to establish the merit of spreading the model widely.

Through the results of the study, which will be conducted in the five European countries Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Switzerland, the project strives to establish the MTSS model in European kindergarten. This includes the provision of the first European evidence-based resources website, effective and efficient practices and programmes for teachers, policy makers and educational scientists to utilise as well as implementation tools. Teachers will also benefit from user-friendly assessment tools for pupils screening and progress monitoring.

"With the welfare of students at the heart of our research and the desire to offer a credible alternative to teachers faced with the difficulty of managing heterogeneous classes, we now have the opportunity to improve the reality for many on individual, class, and school levels with significant knock-on effects for Europe's social and economic welfare in the future," adds Dr Christophe Dierendonck.

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## Project Key Facts

*Full Name:* MTSS-K – Early identification and remediation of literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional difficulties in kindergarten: an examination of the efficacy of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS)
*Start Date*: 1st of January 2024
*Duration:* 48 months (until 31st December 2027)
*Budget*: € 2,998,188.75 (EU funding) + € 792,567.00 (*Swiss associate partner)
*Coordinator:* Université du Luxembourg
*Website*: www.mtss-k.eu
*X:* @MTSSK_EU
*LinkedIn:* @MTSS-K

## Project Partners

- Université du Luxembourg, Luxembourg (Christophe Dierendonck)
- Université de Liège, Belgium (Ariane Baye, Patricia Schillings, Annick Fagnant)
- Université de Lorraine, France (Youssef Tazouti)
- Universita Degli Studi di Cagliari, Italy (Marta Pelleggrini)
- Universitaet Rostock, Germany (Stefan Blumenthal)
- EURICE European Research and Project Office GmbH (Marina Lorenz)
- Haute Ecole Pédagogique du canton de Vaud, Switzerland* (Anne-Francoise de Chambrier)

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