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Research and collection of best practices/testimonials useful for developing competencies related to End Education in adolescents

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Italy

Research on the concept of "End Education" in Italy: how Italian adolescents face various "endings" and how they can be supported in this difficult challenge.

I. Introduction

Description and definition of the concept of "end education" in the growth process of adolescents in the Italian context.

The situation of adolescents in Italy is complex and marked by several challenges at educational, social and emotional levels. In fact, in recent years, Italy has witnessed a significant increase in school dropouts, youth unemployment, social isolation, as well as rising rates of anxiety and depression (Della Vedova et al., 2024). Regarding "endings," young people experience many and various ones, such as the transition from one school to another, the end of a romantic or friendship relationship, the death of a close person, the end of childhood and the beginning of a new life phase.

The Italian cultural context values family and social relationships, emphasizing the importance of social support. However, it shows shortcomings in providing support regarding endings. Some psychologists, including Matteo Lancini, refer to pain and death as a true taboo, recognizing that recently Italy has partially freed itself from some of the taboos of the past, becoming a more open society, but now facing a new difficulty. Adults, in fact, struggle to talk to young people about pain, endings and death. As a result, young people mostly end up discussing these topics in psychotherapy, out of fear of hurting, for example, their parents by bringing them up in the family.

In particular, schools and socio-educational services lack educational programs that adequately address these issues. Italian schools, despite being the primary educational agency for adolescents, are not always prepared to fully address the emotional and psychological difficulties connected to these moments of endings (Masillo et al., 2016).

Therefore, an integrated approach is essential, involving schools, families and institutions, to compensate for the deficiencies in this area.

II. Types of Endings
The End of School

One type of "ending" that adolescents experience is related to the conclusion of a school cycle, such as the transition from primary school to middle school or from middle school to high school. It has emerged that in Italy, this period sees the highest frequency of school dropouts. These transitional moments can generate uncertainty, fear, anxiety, stress and depressive symptoms (Longobardi et al., 2019). Research suggests that adolescence is particularly

sensitive to these transitions, as they are crucial moments for identity formation, and thus require adequate support. Relationships with teachers, which can act as protective factors, are key in this context, promoting academic performance, adaptive behaviors, and psychological well-being (Longobardi et al., 2016).

The End of Childhood and Adolescence

In recent decades, the transition to adulthood has been taking increasingly longer in western societies, and particularly in Italy, one of the countries most affected by this phenomenon. A recent contribution analyzed this situation through an intergenerational approach, highlighting how prolonged cohabitation with parents and delayed marriage are distinctive features of the difficulty in transitioning to adulthood (Carrà et al., 2014). The crucial role of the family in this phenomenon may be explained by the absence of adequate welfare policies, leading to the compensatory support of family relationships. A generative family and society cares for and lets go of the younger generation, could provide a generative context in which young people can find their roles, both within the family, by creating a new one, and in society, being recognized as adults who contribute to social development (Carrà et al., 2014).

The End of Life

In Italy, the topic of death education is addressed by some scholars, psychologists, and educators, but it is not yet a subject systematically integrated into the school system, as it is in other countries. Some researchers have begun to raise awareness about the importance of addressing the topic of death and mourning in the educational field, as these are crucial aspects in the emotional and psychological development of students, particularly during adolescence (Testoni et al., 2019). An interesting example is a study that analyzed the effects of a death education course in high schools. The course aimed to explore death from various philosophical, religious and psychological perspectives, attempting to reduce death anxiety and improve students' existential understanding. This study showed positive results, such as reduction in anxiety and greater spiritual and existential understanding, suggesting that death education can be an important resource to help adolescents better cope with difficult and traumatic themes related to the end of life (Testoni et al., 2018). The difficulties related to the "taboo" culture surrounding death and educational uncertainties result in this topic being addressed sporadically, despite the growing recognition of its relevance for the psychological and emotional development of students.

The End of a Relationship

The end of an important relationship during adolescence is one of the most common events that triggers strong emotions, such as pain, sadness, frustration, and anger (Della Vedova et al.,

2024). Young adolescents, who are experiencing their first love and learning how to manage emotional bonds, face the end of a relationship with difficulty. The breakup of an emotional connection can significantly impact their psychological well-being, leading to a period of identity crisis, emotional confusion, and self-isolating behaviors. In Italy, the topic of relationship endings is addressed in the psychological field, with particular attention to how adolescents learn to manage emotional pain and how they can be supported through socio-emotional education programs (Veltro et al., 2015). Research shows that the inability to process the end of a romantic relationship can increase the risks of developing social anxiety, depression and other psychological issues (Veltro et al., 2015).

III. Italian Context

How the concept of endings is addressed by adolescents is also strongly influenced by the Italian cultural context, which emphasizes values such as family, group, and community. A study revealed that adolescents feel poorly understood by adults, while they find their main sources of support in friendships, as they prefer confiding in friends rather than adults (Longobardi et al., 2016). This highlights the need for improved intergenerational dialogue to manage the psychological and educational challenges faced by young people. It should also be noted that many adolescents in Italy are first- or second-generation immigrants with very different socio-cultural backgrounds. These differences also have a significant impact on how young people experience and address the concept of "end" and the challenges associated with it. Therefore, it is necessary to find support and training programs that take into account these intercultural differences. Furthermore, the pandemic period has exacerbated the social and psychological difficulties of young people, with an increase in anxiety and depression (Della Vedova et al., 2024). School pressure, interpersonal problems and anxiety have been identified as significant causes of stress. Many adolescents have also expressed emotional difficulties such as fear of failure, low motivation, and suicidal thoughts in response to relational problems and academic pressure. The results highlight the need for preventive measures and intervention programs, especially in the school environment, but not only, to promote well-being and prevent emotional and psychological difficulties (Della Vedova et al., 2024).

Currently, some programs have been proposed in Italy to support the emotional and psychological difficulties of young people. For example, it has been observed that a mindfulness-based program significantly reduced internalizing problems (Scafuto et al., 2022). Additionally, other programs providing social and emotional skills have led to increased well-being and psychological health among adolescents. These types of interventions should be expanded and disseminated across the country to promote the well-being of young people (Veltro et al., 2015).

Psychological problems, therefore, associated with compromised psychosocial functioning, are very common among young people in Italy. Despite this, adolescents rarely access mental health care and services, not only due to the still-present stigma associated with psychological problems in Italy but also because of the barriers presented by the Italian community mental health system, which struggles to meet citizens' needs and is often structured based on the needs of adults. The need for a strong, stigma-free, youth-oriented care system has emerged (Monducci et al., 2018).

IV. Conclusions

The concept of "end," not only as death but also as the end of a relationship or a school cycle, is an increasingly relevant topic in the study of the emotional challenges faced by adolescents. These "endings" can trigger a range of psychological, emotional and behavioral reactions that adolescents are not always prepared to face, making it important to examine how they experience these transitions and how institutions can support them. Studies suggest that adequate educational and psychological support can help young people manage these moments of ending, preventing negative emotional consequences and fostering a functional growth path (Masillo et al., 2018).

In Italy, educational and social projects are increasingly being developed, particularly in schools, focusing on adolescents' life skills to help them develop competencies for dealing with the challenges associated with change and growth (Masillo et al., 2018). Furthermore, courses on emotional and affection education, along with psychological support activities, are tools used to address topics such as grief processing and adaptation to change (Testoni et al., 2019).

However, there is a lack of specific and structured interventions regarding the theme of endings" and how to cope with these difficult phases of transition, both in school projects and in individual or private interventions. Teachers, educators and other reference adults often struggle to provide adequate support, as they do not receive sufficient education in this area (Monducci et al., 2018). Therefore, despite the clear urgency of helping adolescents during this transitional phase and the fundamental role of teachers and educators in the growth of young people, there are currently no specific training courses on these topics in Italy. Offering teachers opportunities for discussion with professionist of mental health, along with structuring training interventions, could strengthen the educational role of each professionist and provide greater support for the adolescents.

The Netherlands

Research on the concept of "End Education" in The Netherlands: how Dutch adolescents face various "endings" and how they can be supported in this difficult challenge.

I. Introduction
Defining "End Education" in the Context of the Netherlands
In The Netherlands, adolescents face various challenges related to "endings" as they navigate significant life transitions, such as moving from primary to secondary school, academic failures, changing social roles, and family dynamics. Cultural attitudes in The Netherlands, which often emphasize open communication and progressive education, provide a unique backdrop for exploring how youth handle these transitions. However, gaps in support systems, especially in schools and youth counseling services, highlight the need for a specialized curriculum addressing these challenges.

II. Adolescents' Emotional and Practical Coping Mechanisms with "Endings" (The Netherlands)
Adolescents in The Netherlands often encounter "endings" such as transitions between academic stages, changes in friendships, and family restructuring due to divorce or relocation. The country's progressive approach to youth well-being, including open discussions about mental health and resilience, sets a foundation for understanding coping mechanisms. However, research highlights that Dutch youth still face psychological challenges during these transitions, including anxiety, depression, and stress.

A 2019 Dutch study on educational transitions found that students often experience stress and anxiety when moving from primary to secondary education due to increased academic expectations and changes in social dynamics (Meijer et al., 2019). While parental support plays a role, gaps in school-provided emotional guidance are evident.

Research on Dutch adolescents' responses to peer relationship changes indicated that 65% of youth feel isolated or misunderstood when friendships end. Adolescents often lack structured tools to manage the grief associated with such losses (de Vries et al., 2021).

Divorce rates in The Netherlands, one of the highest in Europe, have a notable impact on adolescents' mental health. A longitudinal study revealed that children of divorced parents report higher instances of anxiety and difficulties in adapting to new family structures (Bakker et al., 2018).

III. Youth Vulnerabilities to "Endings" in the Netherlands
Adolescents in The Netherlands are particularly vulnerable to the emotional and psychological effects of unaddressed "endings," such as changes in relationships, academic failures, and family disruptions. Research highlights that unprocessed transitions can lead to increased rates

of anxiety, depression, and engagement in risky behaviors. For instance, a longitudinal study by Bakker et al. (2018) found that adolescents experiencing parental divorce reported higher levels of emotional distress and were more likely to exhibit risky behaviors, such as substance use and disengagement from academic activities. This underscores the importance of addressing the vulnerabilities tied to familial endings.

Another critical area of concern is the impact of academic setbacks. Dutch adolescents, especially those transitioning from primary to secondary education or between academic tracks (e.g., HAVO to VWO), often experience heightened pressure to succeed. Meijer et al. (2019) reported that students who fail to meet academic expectations are prone to self-doubt and may exhibit symptoms of depression. These academic endings are frequently exacerbated by insufficient emotional support within schools, where the focus is often on achievement rather than well-being.

Cultural attitudes in The Netherlands play a dual role in shaping youth vulnerabilities. On the one hand, the Dutch culture emphasizes open communication about emotions, which can provide a foundation for addressing endings. On the other hand, societal norms often frame the seeking of professional help as unnecessary or stigmatized, particularly among adolescents. Hofstede et al. (2017) revealed that many Dutch teenagers hesitate to access mental health services due to concerns about being perceived as weak or overly dependent.

Additionally, the loss of peer relationships is another significant area of vulnerability. Adolescents often experience social isolation when friendships end, either due to relocation, school changes, or interpersonal conflicts. De Vries et al. (2021) highlighted that nearly two-thirds of Dutch adolescents reported feeling misunderstood or unsupported during such transitions, with many relying on informal coping strategies that are often ineffective in the long term.

These vulnerabilities demonstrate clear gaps in existing support systems. Despite the Netherlands' progressive stance on mental health and well-being, there remains a lack of structured programs in schools to help adolescents navigate these transitions effectively. Teachers, often untrained in addressing emotional challenges, struggle to provide adequate support to students facing life changes (van Dijk & Janssen, 2020). This gap, combined with cultural barriers, highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions to mitigate vulnerabilities and foster resilience.

IV. Best Practices for Teaching Coping Mechanisms in The Netherlands

The Netherlands has long been recognized for its progressive education system, yet addressing the emotional aspects of life transitions, such as "endings," remains underdeveloped in schools. Some successful models exist, particularly in the areas of emotional well-being and resilience training, which could serve as a foundation for incorporating "End Education" into the curriculum.

One notable example is the implementation of mindfulness programs in Dutch schools. Research by Schoemaker et al. (2020) found that mindfulness-based interventions significantly improved emotional regulation and reduced anxiety in adolescents. These programs often focus on teaching students how to process emotions and maintain a sense of balance during times of change, offering a potential template for teaching coping mechanisms related to "endings." While mindfulness has gained traction in some schools, its integration into the broader educational framework remains limited.

Another promising practice is the inclusion of socio-emotional learning (SEL) in some Dutch secondary schools. These programs emphasize the development of skills such as emotional awareness, empathy, and decision-making. Studies, such as one by Verhoeven et al. (2019), highlight the effectiveness of SEL in improving students' ability to cope with interpersonal conflicts and social changes. However, these programs often focus on current challenges rather than preparing students for future transitions, leaving a gap in addressing "endings."

The Netherlands can also draw inspiration from international examples of Death Education, particularly in Northern European countries. In Finland, for example, schools incorporate lessons on grief and loss into their broader emotional well-being curriculum. Dutch educators and policymakers could adapt these practices to fit the cultural and educational context of the Netherlands. By addressing both emotional resilience and the practicalities of navigating life transitions, such programs could provide adolescents with a comprehensive toolkit for managing endings.

Teacher training is another critical area for development. Van Dijk & Janssen (2020) found that many Dutch teachers feel unprepared to guide students through emotional challenges, as current training programs often lack content related to mental health and life transitions. Integrating modules on emotional resilience and "endings" into teacher training programs could empower educators to play a more active role in supporting students.

While some schools in the Netherlands have implemented effective practices, such as mindfulness and SEL programs, there is a clear need for a more systematic approach to teaching coping mechanisms for "endings." Adopting and adapting best practices from both domestic and international contexts could form the foundation of an innovative "End Education" curriculum tailored to Dutch adolescents.

V. Youth Educators' Role in Facilitating End Education in The Netherlands

Youth educators play a great role in helping adolescents navigate the emotional and practical challenges associated with "endings." However, research suggests that many Dutch educators lack the training and resources needed to address these issues effectively. While the Netherlands boasts a progressive education system that emphasizes student well-being, teachers often report feeling unprepared to guide students through transitions such as relationship changes, academic failures, or family disruptions.

A study by van Dijk & Janssen (2020) highlighted a significant gap in teacher training programs, which rarely include modules on mental health or socio-emotional learning specific to life transitions. Educators often rely on intuition or ad hoc approaches to support students, which can lead to inconsistent and, at times, inadequate responses. For example, teachers interviewed in this study expressed difficulty in identifying signs of distress related to personal or academic endings, such as withdrawal, declining performance, or behavioral changes. Moreover, cultural norms in the Netherlands, which encourage openness in communication, can sometimes clash with teachers' professional boundaries. Hofstede et al. (2017) found that while educators often encourage students to talk about their feelings, they frequently lack the tools to facilitate meaningful discussions about sensitive topics such as grief, loss, or failure. This leaves many students feeling unsupported despite their educators' willingness to engage.

Programs that provide targeted training for teachers have shown promise in addressing these gaps. For example, a pilot initiative in Utrecht trained educators to incorporate mindfulness and emotional resilience practices into their classrooms. Preliminary results indicated improved teacher confidence in addressing students' emotional needs and better student outcomes in terms of coping with academic and personal challenges (Schoemaker et al., 2020). Expanding such programs nationwide could significantly enhance teachers' ability to address the emotional aspects of endings.

Furthermore, collaboration between schools and mental health professionals could strengthen the role of educators. By providing teachers with access to psychologists and counselors, schools can create a support system where educators serve as the first point of contact for students in distress, while more complex cases are referred to specialists. This model has already been successfully implemented in some Dutch schools, but its reach remains limited. Empowering Dutch educators with the necessary training and resources is essential for the successful implementation of "End Education." By addressing gaps in teacher training and fostering collaboration with mental health professionals, schools in the Netherlands can create a supportive environment where adolescents feel equipped to handle life's transitions.

VI. Cross-Cultural Perspectives on "Endings" in The Netherlands

Cultural attitudes toward endings, transitions, and loss significantly influence how adolescents cope with these experiences. The Netherlands, with its emphasis on progressive and open communication, offers unique insights into these dynamics. However, the multicultural composition of Dutch society also brings diverse perspectives on endings, shaped by various cultural, religious, and social norms.

In the Dutch cultural context, open dialogue is encouraged, particularly in schools and families, which provides adolescents with a foundation for addressing life's challenges. This cultural trait is evident in the country's educational policies, which often prioritize emotional well-being alongside academic achievement. Research by Hofstede et al. (2017) highlights how Dutch

adolescents, in general, benefit from environments that encourage self-expression and emotional honesty. However, this openness does not necessarily extend to all aspects of life transitions. Topics like death and grief, for example, remain less discussed in schools, creating gaps in the emotional preparedness of students facing these endings.

The Netherlands' multicultural landscape adds another layer of complexity. Adolescents from immigrant or minority backgrounds may approach endings differently due to cultural norms and traditions. For instance, a study by Aartsen et al. (2018) found that adolescents from Middle Eastern and African backgrounds living in the Netherlands were less likely to discuss personal losses openly, often relying on familial or community-based coping mechanisms instead. These differences can create barriers in a school setting where open dialogue is the norm, potentially alienating these students.

Similarly, cultural diversity influences how Dutch youth perceive academic and social transitions. Adolescents from Dutch-majority families may be more accustomed to seeking individual solutions to challenges, while those from collectivist cultures might prioritize family or community support. This dynamic can complicate how educators address the needs of diverse student groups, as they must balance general strategies with cultural sensitivities.

The Netherlands can benefit from creating culturally responsive training modules for educators, equipping them to recognize and address the varied ways adolescents from different backgrounds experience and cope with endings. Cross-cultural workshops, peer mentoring programs, and collaborations with community organizations could further bridge these gaps, fostering an inclusive environment for discussing and managing life transitions.

In summary, while Dutch cultural attitudes toward openness and emotional expression provide a strong foundation for "End Education," the diversity within its society necessitates a nuanced, inclusive approach. By integrating cross-cultural perspectives into the curriculum and educator training, the Netherlands can ensure that all adolescents, regardless of background, are equipped to navigate life's endings.

North Macedonia

Research on the concept of "End Education" in North Macedonia: how Macedonian adolescents face various "endings" and how they can be supported in this difficult challenge.

I. Introduction

Defining the Scope of Youth Education and Challenges

North Macedonia, a country with a dynamic youth demographic, is at a critical juncture in adapting its educational systems to align with contemporary economic, social, and technological demands. Youth, defined as individuals aged 15-29, constitute a significant portion of the population. This group faces a series of interconnected challenges, including unemployment, skill gaps, and underutilization of innovative teaching methods. The research delves into four main areas: non-formal education, skills development, unemployment, and the unique challenges of rural youth. By examining existing programs and policies, it aims to highlight both the successes and gaps in youth education initiatives.

II. Empowerment Through Non-Formal Education

The Role of Non-Formal Education in Skill Development

Non-formal education in North Macedonia plays a pivotal role in equipping youth with practical, transferable skills that complement formal education. Programs in this sector often emphasize experiential learning, which has proven effective in enhancing adaptability, problem-solving, and leadership abilities.

- **Focus on Marginalized Groups**:
Many initiatives specifically target vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities (e.g., Roma communities), rural youth, and economically disadvantaged populations. These groups are often at a higher risk of social exclusion and lack access to quality education. Programs aim to bridge this gap by fostering inclusivity and reducing inequalities.
Example: Workshops organized in rural regions emphasize cultural preservation and community problem-solving, which resonate with the youth's lived realities.
- **Skill Development Strategies**:
Programs integrate creative methods such as team-building challenges, design-thinking sessions, and interactive mentorship. For instance, community-driven problem-solving projects provide youth with opportunities to directly address local issues, fostering a sense of ownership and practical skill acquisition.
- **Collaborative Efforts to Maximize Reach**:
Partnerships with NGOs, such as the European Youth Network, local educators, and volunteers, have significantly expanded the scope of non-formal education. These

collaborations enhance access to financial and technical resources and ensure that programs are implemented in both urban and rural settings.

Outcome:
Non-formal education contributes significantly to building competencies in communication, teamwork, and adaptability, positioning youth to meet societal and professional demands more effectively. However, scalability remains a challenge due to resource constraints.

III. Challenges and Initiatives in Youth Skills Development

Bridging the Gap Between Education and Labor Market Demands
The mismatch between formal education and labor market needs presents a pressing issue. Current curricula often fail to equip students with the practical skills necessary for a competitive workforce.

- **UNICEF's UPSHIFT Program**:
This flagship initiative focuses on integrating social innovation with mentorship. Through workshops, adolescents learn collaboration, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship. The program also empowers youth to identify and address challenges within their communities, providing seed funding for promising solutions.
Impact: Participants report higher levels of confidence in problem-solving and stronger connections to their communities.
- **Global and Regional Partnerships**:
International programs such as Generation Unlimited bring a global perspective to youth empowerment. These partnerships introduce best practices from other countries, enabling North Macedonia to adopt innovative skill-building models.
- **Skill Adaptation Frameworks**:
Initiatives encourage integrating soft skills such as adaptability, creative thinking, and emotional intelligence into formal education. These frameworks address the growing demand for hybrid competencies in an evolving job market influenced by automation and digitalization.

IV. Youth Unemployment and Skill Gaps

Addressing Structural Challenges in Youth Employment
Youth unemployment, which remains one of the highest in Europe, poses a critical challenge. High rates of underemployment and precarious job conditions exacerbate this issue.

- **Misalignment of Curricula and Labor Market Needs**:
Secondary school curricula often emphasize theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical training. For instance, career guidance is underdeveloped, leaving students ill-

prepared for real-world demands. According to recent studies, 57.1% of employed youth are underemployed, working in roles that do not match their qualifications.

- **Reform and Vocational Training**:

Programs are being developed to modernize secondary education by integrating vocational training. These efforts aim to enhance employability by fostering industry-relevant skills. The Ministry of Education collaborates with NGOs to align educational policies with labor market trends.

- **Career Orientation Initiatives**:

Pilot programs in secondary schools include internships, job shadowing, and career counseling, offering students insights into various professions and skill requirements.

V. Addressing Rural Youth Challenges (NEETs)

Rural Exclusion and Targeted Interventions

Youth in rural areas face compounded challenges, particularly those classified as NEETs (Not in Employment, Education, or Training). Social exclusion and lack of resources contribute to their disengagement.

- **Challenges of Social Exclusion**:

Rural regions often lack access to quality education, career opportunities, and infrastructure. This creates a cycle of poverty and unemployment, disproportionately affecting young people.

- **Community-Centric Programs**:

Agricultural and entrepreneurial initiatives serve as key intervention areas. Programs focus on skill-building workshops related to agricultural innovation, eco-tourism, and local leadership. These activities not only provide livelihood opportunities but also strengthen community ties.

- **Networking and Institutional Support**:

Institutions like the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food-Skopje collaborate with NGOs to connect rural youth with resources and mentorship opportunities.

Outcome:

Such programs have shown promising results in reducing social isolation and fostering economic participation. However, more systemic investments are needed to ensure sustainability and scalability.

VI. Conclusion

Toward a Holistic Approach to Youth Empowerment

The analysis underscores the critical need for multifaceted strategies to empower youth in North Macedonia. Efforts must focus on:

1. Expanding non-formal education to bridge gaps in the formal system.
2. Modernizing curricula to align with labor market demands, emphasizing soft and technical skills.
3. Creating targeted programs for marginalized groups, particularly rural youth and NEETs.
4. Strengthening collaboration among stakeholders, including NGOs, government bodies, and international partners.

By addressing these areas, North Macedonia can build a resilient, adaptable youth workforce ready to meet the challenges of the modern economy while fostering inclusion and social cohesion.

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Testimonials from youth and experts

Comparative Analysis

1. Youth (North Macedonia)

- **Challenges Faced by Youth**: Common challenges include dealing with significant life changes, such as moving away from close friends and family, and experiencing loss. Emotional responses vary from sadness and emptiness to fear and anxiety.
- **Support Systems**: Family and friends play a crucial role in providing emotional support. Conversations with family members and seeking advice from those who have experienced similar situations are common coping strategies.
- **Coping Mechanisms**: Activities like talking with family, writing in a journal, and engaging in hobbies are mentioned as ways to cope with significant changes or losses.
- **Perception of Death**: There is a general fear and uncertainty about death, with some respondents expressing a need for more support and understanding from society and schools.

2. Experts (North Macedonia)

- **Challenges Faced by Youth**: Experts highlight internal conflicts, societal stereotypes, and lack of emotional support as significant challenges. Young people often struggle with expressing their emotions and dealing with societal pressures.
- **Support Systems**: Experts emphasize creating a safe environment for open communication and providing emotional support. Techniques like breathing exercises, creative expression, and physical activities are recommended.
- **Coping Mechanisms**: Experts suggest using various techniques such as EMDR, photolanguage, and collage to help young people develop self-awareness and cope with changes.
- **Perception of Death**: Discussing death is seen as challenging but necessary. Experts use books, games, and activities to help young people process the concept of death.

3. Youth (Italy)

- **Challenges Faced by Youth**: Significant life changes, such as moving away or losing a loved one, are common challenges. Emotional responses include sadness, emptiness, and a sense of loss.

- **Support Systems**: Family and friends are crucial in providing emotional support. Engaging in activities like listening to music, creating art, and spending time with loved ones are common coping strategies.
- **Coping Mechanisms**: Young people often seek support from family and friends, and some find comfort in creative expression and reflection.
- **Perception of Death**: There is a general acceptance of death as a natural part of life, with some respondents finding comfort in the idea of energy continuing in another form.

4. Experts (Italy)

- **Challenges Faced by Youth**: Personal changes, emotional conflicts, and the end of significant relationships are common challenges. Young people often feel isolated and struggle with societal expectations.
- **Support Systems**: Family, friends, and teachers are seen as important support systems. Active listening and open dialogue are emphasized as key support strategies.
- **Coping Mechanisms**: Techniques like EMDR, photolanguage, and therapeutic conversations are used to help young people cope with significant changes or losses.
- **Perception of Death**: Death is viewed as a natural part of life, but discussing it can be challenging. Experts suggest using books, movies, and creative activities to facilitate discussions about death.

5. Youth (The Netherlands)

- **Challenges Faced by Youth**: Significant life changes, such as moving abroad or losing a loved one, are common challenges. Emotional responses include vulnerability, sadness, and a sense of loss.
- **Support Systems**: Family and friends are important sources of support. Engaging in activities like yoga, writing, and spending time with loved ones are common coping strategies.
- **Coping Mechanisms**: Young people often seek support from family and friends, and some find comfort in creative expression and reflection.
- **Perception of Death**: There is a general acceptance of death as a natural part of life, with some respondents finding comfort in the idea of energy continuing in another form.

6. Experts (The Netherlands)

- **Challenges Faced by Youth**: Personal changes, emotional conflicts, and the end of significant relationships are common challenges. Young people often struggle with expressing their emotions and dealing with societal expectations.
- **Support Systems**: Experts emphasize creating a safe environment for open communication and providing emotional support. Techniques like breathing exercises, creative activities, and group discussions are recommended.

- **Coping Mechanisms**: Experts suggest using various techniques such as EMDR, photolanguage, and therapeutic conversations to help young people develop self-awareness and cope with changes.
- **Perception of Death**: Discussing death is seen as challenging but necessary. Experts use books, games, and activities to help young people process the concept of death.

Summary per Country

North Macedonia

- **Challenges**: Significant life changes, loss of loved ones, internal conflicts.
  - **Support Systems**: Family, friends, and teachers.
- **Coping Mechanisms**: Talking with family, writing, engaging in hobbies.
  - **Perception of Death**: Fear and uncertainty, need for more support.

Italy

- **Challenges**: Personal changes, emotional conflicts, end of significant relationships.
  - **Support Systems**: Family, friends, teachers.
- **Coping Mechanisms**: EMDR, photo language, therapeutic conversations.
- **Perception of Death**: Viewed as a natural part of life, but discussing it can be challenging.

The Netherlands

- **Challenges**: Significant life changes, loss of loved ones, internal conflicts.
  - **Support Systems**: Family, friends, teachers.
- **Coping Mechanisms**: Yoga, writing, spending time with loved ones.
- **Perception of Death**: Acceptance of death as a natural part of life, comfort in the idea of energy continuing.

Comparative Summary

Common Challenges

Young people across Macedonia, Italy, and the Netherlands face several common challenges when dealing with significant life changes and internal conflicts. These challenges include:

1. **Significant Life Changes**: Moving away from home, changing schools, or starting a new job are common transitions that bring both excitement and anxiety. These changes often lead to feelings of vulnerability and a sense of loss of familiar routines and relationships.
2. **Loss of Loved Ones**: The death of a family member or friend, or the end of a close friendship or romantic relationship, is a deeply emotional experience. Young people often feel a profound sense of sadness, emptiness, and sometimes even guilt or anger.
3. **Internal Conflicts**: Personal growth and self-awareness can bring about internal conflicts, such as questioning one's identity, values, and future. These conflicts can lead to feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and a need for validation.
4. **Societal Expectations**: Young people often feel pressure to meet certain standards set by society, media, or their peer groups. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and a fear of not living up to expectations.

Support Systems

The importance of support systems is universally recognized across all three countries. Key support systems include:

1. **Family**: Family members, particularly parents and siblings, play a crucial role in providing emotional support and guidance. They offer a sense of stability and continuity during times of change.
2. **Friends**: Friends are often the first line of support for young people. They provide a sense of belonging and understanding, and can offer practical help and encouragement.
3. **Teachers and Professionals**: Teachers, counselors, and other professionals can offer valuable advice and resources. They can help young people navigate educational and career transitions, and provide a safe space for discussing personal issues.

Coping Mechanisms

Young people use a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with significant life changes and losses. Common strategies include:

1. **Talking with Family and Friends**: Open communication with trusted individuals helps young people process their emotions and gain perspective. Sharing experiences and feelings can alleviate feelings of isolation.
2. **Creative Expression**: Activities such as writing, drawing, or creating art provide an outlet for expressing complex emotions. These activities can help young people make sense of their experiences and find a sense of control.
3. **Physical Activity**: Engaging in sports or other physical activities can help reduce stress and improve mental well-being. Physical activity releases endorphins, which can improve mood and provide a sense of accomplishment.
4. **Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques**: Practices such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing exercises can help young people manage stress and anxiety. These techniques promote relaxation and mental clarity.
5. **Professional Support**: In some cases, young people seek professional help, such as therapy or counseling. Professionals can provide specialized techniques like EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) and photolanguage to help process traumatic experiences.

Perception of Death

The perception of death varies among young people, but there are some common themes:

1. **Acceptance**: Many young people view death as a natural part of life. They understand that it is an inevitable event and that it can bring about a sense of closure and new beginnings.
2. **Emotional Impact**: The loss of a loved one can be deeply emotional, leading to feelings of sadness, grief, and sometimes even anger. Young people often struggle with how to express these emotions and find comfort.
3. **Support and Understanding**: There is a general consensus that more support and understanding from society and schools are needed. Young people appreciate open discussions about death and the opportunity to share their feelings without judgment.
4. **Cultural and Religious Beliefs**: Cultural and religious beliefs play a significant role in how young people perceive death. These beliefs can provide comfort and a framework for understanding and coping with loss.

Detailed Comparative Summary

North Macedonia

- **Challenges**: Young people in North Macedonia face significant life changes, such as moving away from home or losing a loved one. They often feel a deep sense of sadness and emptiness, and struggle with internal conflicts related to personal growth and societal expectations.
- **Support Systems**: Family and friends are crucial sources of support. Conversations with family members and seeking advice from those who have experienced similar situations are common coping strategies.
- **Coping Mechanisms**: Activities like talking with family, writing in a journal, and engaging in hobbies are mentioned as ways to cope with significant changes or losses. Some young people also find comfort in creative expression and reflection.
- **Perception of Death**: There is a general fear and uncertainty about death, with some respondents expressing a need for more support and understanding from society and schools.

Italy

- **Challenges**: Personal changes, emotional conflicts, and the end of significant relationships are common challenges. Young people often feel isolated and struggle with societal expectations.
- **Support Systems**: Family, friends, and teachers are seen as important support systems. Active listening and open dialogue are emphasized as key support strategies.
- **Coping Mechanisms**: Techniques like EMDR, photolanguage, and therapeutic conversations are used to help young people cope with significant changes or losses. Some young people also find comfort in creative expression and reflection.
- **Perception of Death**: Death is viewed as a natural part of life, but discussing it can be challenging. Experts suggest using books, movies, and creative activities to facilitate discussions about death.

The Netherlands

- **Challenges**: Significant life changes, such as moving abroad or losing a loved one, are common challenges. Emotional responses include vulnerability, sadness, and a sense of loss.
- **Support Systems**: Family and friends are important sources of support. Engaging in activities like yoga, writing, and spending time with loved ones are common coping strategies.

- **Coping Mechanisms**: Young people often seek support from family and friends, and some find comfort in creative expression and reflection. Techniques like EMDR and photolanguage are also used.
- **Perception of Death**: There is a general acceptance of death as a natural part of life, with some respondents finding comfort in the idea of energy continuing in another form.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis reveals that young people in North Macedonia, Italy, and the Netherlands face similar challenges when dealing with significant life changes and internal conflicts. The importance of support systems, such as family, friends, and professionals, is universally recognized. Coping mechanisms vary but often include talking with loved ones, creative expression, and engaging in physical activities. The perception of death is generally accepted as a natural part of life, though discussing it can be challenging. Across all countries, there is a need for more support and understanding from society and schools to help young people navigate these difficult experiences.