

PROJECT NAME

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING MODELS

PRESENTATION TITLE

The School Counselor between Autonomy and Control: A Comparative Study in Nine European Countries

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Who is the school counselor?

School counseling is the most multifunctional position in the school system, with too many variable tasks, with a huge number of functions and a large circle of contacts. There is no other position in the school system that is given so many roles. A school counselor is expected to care about the mental, emotional, social and academic development of students; to prevent them from various risks; to discover, diagnose and understand problems students face.

Advisor, advocate, agent, believer, collaborator, conductor, consultant, coordinator, diplomat, educator, enthusiast, expert, explorer, guide, initiator, leader, listener, mediator, mentor, motivator, navigator, negotiator, observer, pedagogue, professional, psychologist, researcher, specialist, supporter, teacher – these are just a part of most frequently used words describing the school counselor's roles.

Introduction

The mission of the project is working towards establishing a research field that could be called comparative school counseling, where research methodology of comparative education is applied to school counseling policy, practice and education worldwide. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the regulation of school counseling and the level of autonomy and control in the work of school counselors in nine European countries.

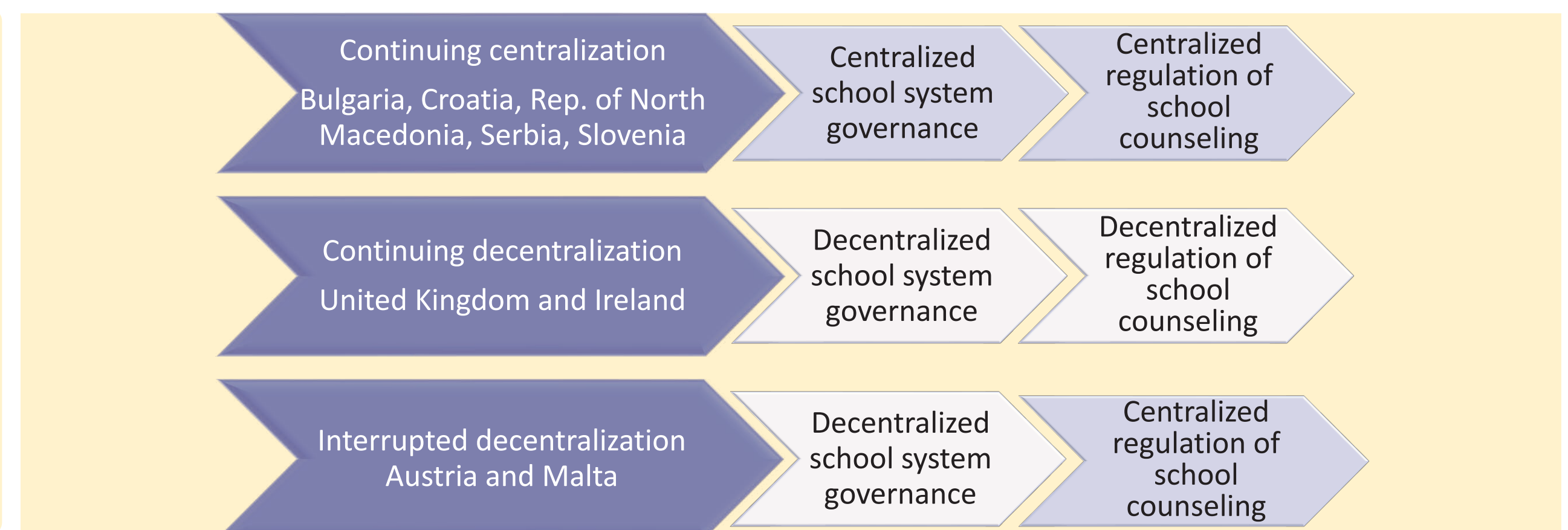
Countries included in the study

Austria	Bulgaria	Croatia	Ireland	Malta	Rep. of North Macedonia	Serbia	Slovenia	United Kingdom
								
Schülerberater	Педагогически съветник	Stručni suradnik	Guidance counsellor	School counsellor	Стручен соработник	Stručni saradnik	Svetovalni delavec	School counsellor

School system governance and school counseling regulation

Examining the type of school system governance, the nine countries can be divided into:

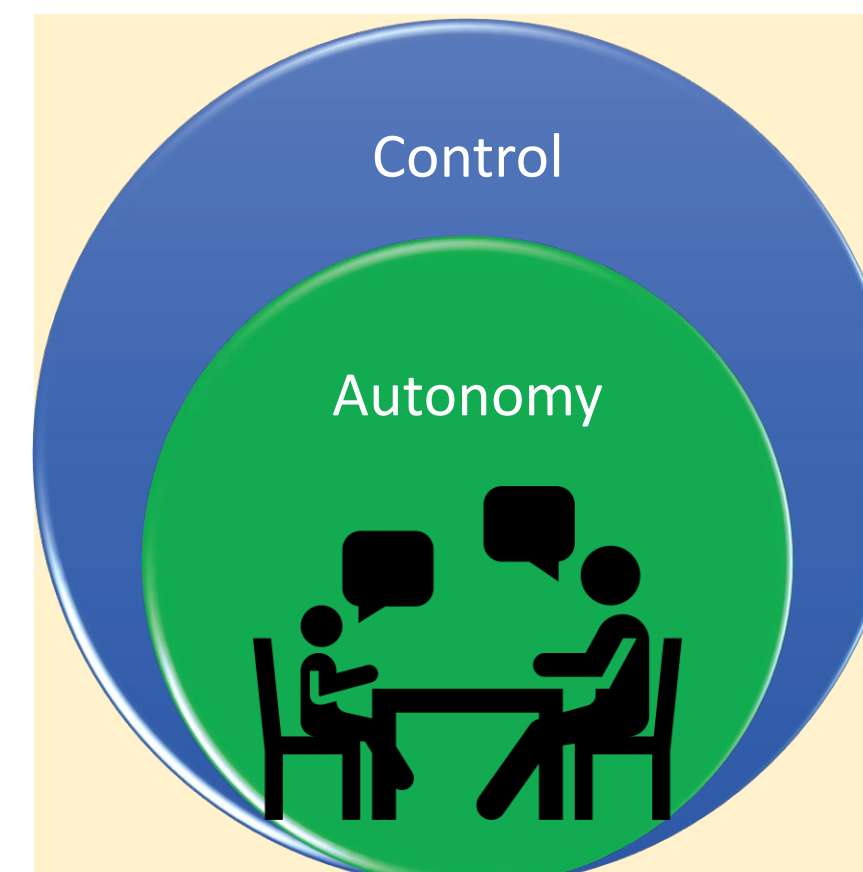
- Countries with centralized school system governance – Bulgaria, Croatia, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia. In these countries the regulation of school counselors' work could be called *continuing centralization* – the centralization of the school system continues over the regulation of school counselors' work.
- Countries with decentralized school system governance – Austria, Ireland, Malta, and the United Kingdom. In countries with decentralized school system governance the regulation of school counselors' work varies. In the United Kingdom and Ireland, the regulation of school counselors' work is decentralized. It could be called *continuing decentralization* – the decentralization of the school system continues over the regulation of school counseling. In Austria and Malta, the regulation of school counselors' work is centralized. This could be called *interrupted decentralization* – the decentralization of the school system does not continue over the regulation of school counseling.



Autonomy and control

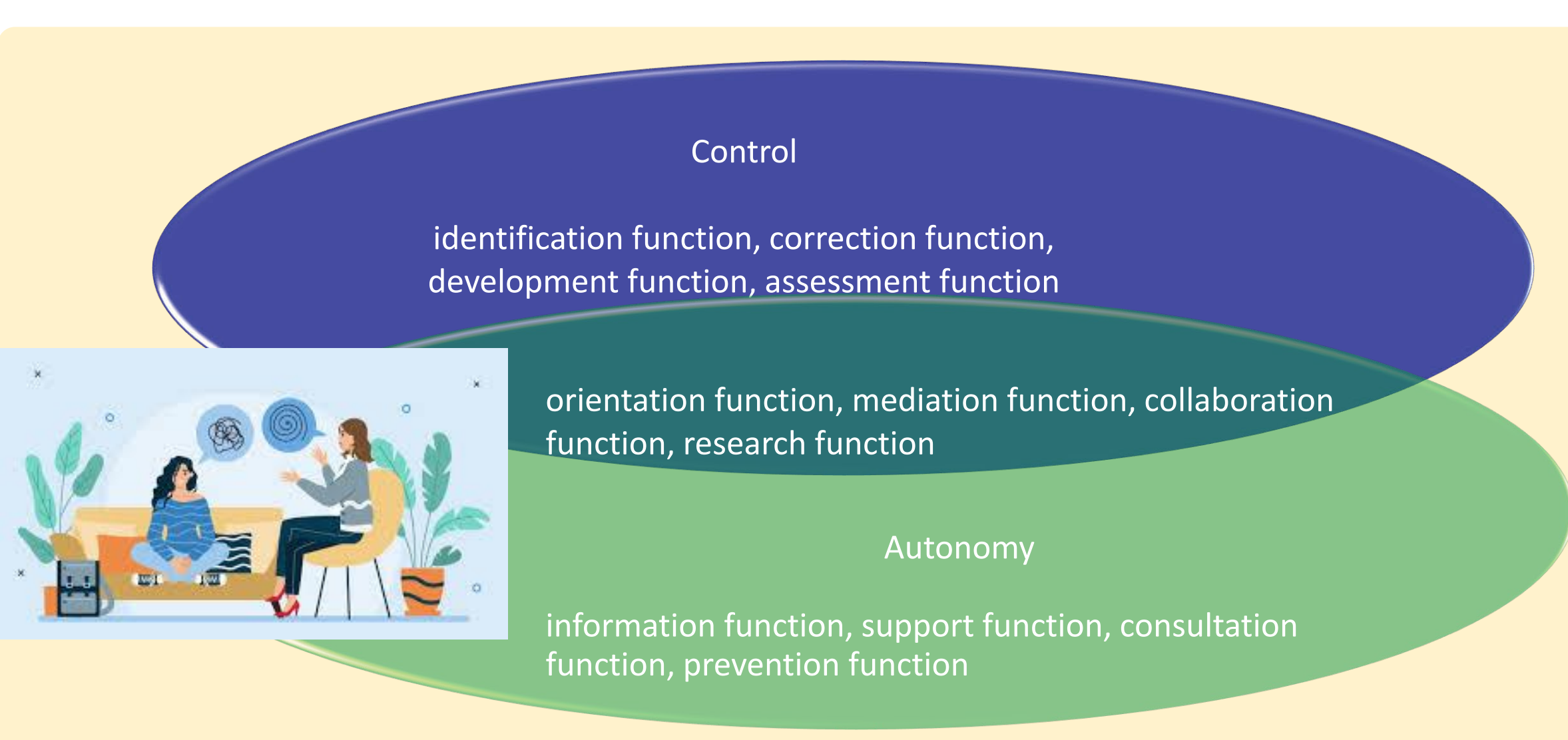
Autonomy is a typical feature of the work of the school counselor. The daily work of school counselors is much more autonomous than the work of teachers and most of other school-based specialists. The school counselor is functionally, organizationally, and administratively less dependent than other school staff. A high level of autonomy may include the following positives: functionally far from the governing center; freedom in taking decisions; having a larger horizon of acting; sovereignty in advising, consulting, and mediating; objectively advocating students; better options of being active, careful, creative, flexible, honest, inspiring, open, reliable, sensitive, tolerant, and variable; protecting the independence of those who are supported, assisting them to make their own decisions; respecting individual values and beliefs. At the same time, autonomy requires professional moral responsibility, and is usually a factor of facing risks and taking incorrect decisions. The value of autonomy in school counseling should be seen as both a moral constraint and a goal of action.

Autonomy and control are often given as two opposing, conflicting, and mutually exclusive phenomena, they are often viewed as two farthest ends of a continuum, which are negatively correlated with one another. However, in school counseling, autonomy and control exist simultaneously, they are usually not in conflict, and are mutually inclusive phenomena. In the work of school counselors, autonomy and control are two parts of an entirety, where they occur positively correlated.



Being considered as an important figure in school life, who works with students, parents, teachers, school administration, and out-of-school experts, the school counselor is always a subject of governing that includes a set of values, principals, and aims. Any extent of control over the work of the school counselor helps this professional to comply with education laws and regulations and prevent inappropriateness. A high level of control over the work of the school counselor may include the following features: functionally close to the governing center; limited freedom in taking decisions and acting; obligations to follow strictly framed patterns of advising, consulting, and mediating; restricted options of being active, creative, flexible, inspiring, open, and variable; frequent monitoring by governing authorities. At the same time, the high level of control gives confidence in doing professional activities, provides guarantees that the school counselor firmly follows the state requirements, and can be seen as a factor of avoiding risks and wrong decisions in the counselor's daily work. A high level of control often helps the school counselors to develop their own proficiency.

Autonomy and control in school counselors' functions



School system governance, school counseling regulation, autonomy and control

Country	School system governance	School counseling regulation	Level of autonomy in the work of school counselors	Level of control over the work of school counselors
Austria	Decentralization	Centralization	Medium	High
Bulgaria	Centralization	Centralization	High	Medium
Croatia	Centralization	Centralization	Medium	High
Ireland	Decentralization	Decentralization	High	Low to Medium
Malta	Decentralization	Centralization	Medium	Medium to High
R North Macedonia	Centralization	Centralization	Low	High
Serbia	Centralization	Centralization	Medium	High
Slovenia	Centralization	Centralization	Medium	Medium to High
United Kingdom	Decentralization	Decentralization	High	Low