

**RAISING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION  
IN EUROPE BY REDUCING THE RATE OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING  
THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

**INAUGURAL-DISSERTATION  
ZUR ERLANGUNG DES DOKTORGRADES  
DER PHILOSOPHIE AN DER LUDWIG-MAXIMILIANS-UNIVERSITÄT  
MÜNCHEN**

**VORGELEGT VON  
*ISABELLA CALVAGNA***

**aus Torino (Italia)  
2015**

REFERENT:  
PROF. ECKERT THOMAS

KORREFERENT  
PROF. TIPPELT RUDOLF

KORREFERENT  
PROF. MEHLTRETTER FLORIAN

DISSERTATION

DATUM DER MÜNDLICHEN PRÜFUNG:

MÜNCHEN, 20/7/2015

*To my family:  
Enzo, Eleonora, Alison  
My father, my mother & sisters*

*To my dearest friends*



**COMMUNICATION FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION EUROPE**

*The Commission is proposing five measurable EU targets for 2020 that will steer the process and be translated into national targets:*

*For **employment**; for **research and innovation**; for **climate change and energy**; for **education**; and for combating **poverty**.*

*They represent the direction we should take and it means we can measure our success.<sup>1</sup>*

J.M. Barroso  
Former President of the EU

**EDUCATION**

*Education gives you the opportunity to discover the best of what you have in you. And whatever you want to do in life, you'll need a good education. [...];*

*True success is hard to achieve, requires persistent efforts regardless what if you are studying, whether you like it or not.<sup>2</sup>*

Barack Hussein Obama  
US President

*Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you're right!*

Henry Ford

---

<sup>1</sup> J.M. Barroso, *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*

<sup>2</sup> Speech of Barack Obama about Education, year 2010



# S U M M A R Y

<b>INAUGURAL-DISSERTATION ZUR ERLANGUNG DES DOKTORGRADES DER PHILOSOPHIE AN DER LUDWIG-MAXIMILIANS-UNIVERSITÄT MÜNCHEN .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PREFACE .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<b>CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>The indicators set up by the EU 2020 Strategy.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Seven targets to foster progress.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<b>CHAPTER 2 - HOW IS ESL DEFINED AND MEASURED .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<i>Definition of ESL in Europe.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Why a definition is important?.....</i>	<i>43</i>
<b>CHAPTER 3 - WHY IS EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING A PROBLEM?.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<i>EU Programs: Europe 2020, ET 2020, HORIZON 2020. ....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>The Working Group on ESL.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>The Working Group on ECEC.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Related acts.....</i>	<i>52</i>
<b>CHAPTER 4 - LEARNING PROCESS .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<i>The concept of balance .....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>The Neuroscience approach .....</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Childhood .....</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Adolescence .....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>The Neuroscience Holistic Approach .....</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Learning disorders: .....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Dyslexia .....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Dyscalculia .....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Dementia.....</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Mental disorders.....</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder .....</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>Schizophrenia .....</i>	<i>72</i>
<i>Bipolar disorder .....</i>	<i>72</i>
<b>CHAPTER 5 - CRITERIA TO IDENTIFY PUPILS AT RISK.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<i>Target group approach vs. Individual approach. ....</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>Criteria.....</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>Target group approach.....</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Cultural and/or linguistic criteria .....</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Socio-Economy Status criterion (SES).....</i>	<i>77</i>

Geographical criteria.....	77
<i>Individual approach</i> .....	78
Support Measures for children with additional needs .....	79
Working with special needs children .....	83
Effect on disadvantaged children’s reading scores .....	84
School autonomy and financing of ESL policies in the EU.....	87
<b>CHAPTER 6 - WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING? .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<i>What is the problem of early school leaving and who are the ESL?</i> .....	91
The Nesse Report.....	93
<i>The causes of ESL</i> .....	96
Individual causes .....	96
External and systemic causes.....	97
<i>How are ESL classified by current research</i> .....	98
<b>CHAPTER 7 - ALL FACTORS FRAMEWORK/BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>101</b>
<i>Family and Community</i> .....	101
<i>Parents Schooling</i> .....	103
<i>Family expectations</i> .....	104
<i>Pupils and Peers</i> .....	106
<i>The Education system</i> .....	108
<b>CHAPTER 8 - DIFFERENT SCHOOL ORGANIZATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE.....</b>	<b>111</b>
<i>How the Education System affects school achievement?</i> .....	111
School/ systemic based factors. ....	112
<i>How does school organisation affect ESL?</i> .....	115
The importance of the school composition/organisation/culture. ....	115
Why students lose engagement and motivation? .....	117
The effects of the education system related to ESL .....	118
<i>Interrelations between individual and external factors</i> .....	119
<b>CHAPTER 9 - CONSEQUENCES/RISKS RELATED TO ESL.....</b>	<b>121</b>
<i>Individual or internal consequences</i> .....	121
<i>Social and external consequences.</i> .....	122
Unemployment: a multi-level consequence.....	125
<b>CHAPTER 10 - ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ESL.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<i>Individual and social costs of early school leaving</i> .....	127
<i>Social return of investments in education</i> .....	128
<i>Economic Impact of Early School Leaving</i> .....	131
<i>Social Impact of Early School Leaving</i> .....	132
<b>CHAPTER 11 - MEASURES: PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, COMPENSATION .....</b>	<b>135</b>
<i>Measures to tackling ESL</i> .....	135
<i>Governance and cooperation</i> .....	136
Data collection System and Monitoring.....	136
Action Plan .....	136
<i>Prevention</i> .....	138



Supportive measures for children at risk.....	139
<i>Intervention</i> .....	140
Systemic support frameworks within schools.....	142
Focus on the needs of individual pupils.....	142
Learning offer.....	143
Support to teachers.....	143
Family support.....	144
Raise parental awareness of ESL.....	144
<i>Compensation</i> .....	144
Remedies.....	145
<b>CHAPTER 12 - QUALITY EDUCATION IN ECEC: EU 2020 STRATEGY TO RAISE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>153</b>
<i>Quality education in ECEC</i> .....	155
<b>CHAPTER 13 - QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION.....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>CHAPTER 14 - SECOND CHANCE SCHEMES.....</b>	<b>163</b>
<i>Second chance schemes</i> .....	163
Flexibility in the curricula.....	164
Second chance schemes: systemic factors.....	164
Teacher involvement and support:.....	164
Second chance education and mainstream education.....	165
Second chance schemes: multi-level approach to fight ESL.....	166
Second chance schemes should be high quality.....	166
Personalised and comprehensive approach to second chance education.....	167
<b>CHAPTER 15 - MIGRANT STUDENTS.....</b>	<b>169</b>
Recommendations.....	171
<b>CHAPTER 16 - CASE STUDIES: SOME BEST PRACTICES IN EUROPE.....</b>	<b>177</b>
<i>The European Experience</i> .....	177
<b>CHAPTER 17 - THE DUTCH EXPERIENCE.....</b>	<b>179</b>
<i>The Education system in the Netherlands</i> .....	180
Policy in the Netherlands.....	181
Targets and results.....	182
Prevention of ESL in the Netherlands.....	182
High-quality education.....	183
<i>Case study in the Netherlands: Bron</i> .....	184
How are ESL data collected? (Bron a new student).....	185
Which information is provided with (Bron)?.....	185
How is BRON disseminated?.....	186
Who are the beneficiaries of Bron?.....	187
The beneficiaries of ESL data in the Netherlands.....	187
Reliability and accuracy of the ESL data.....	189
Data privacy protection: how to deal with it?.....	190
Governance and cooperation.....	191
Bron Funding system.....	193
Reducing ESL in VET.....	195
Key lessons for PLA.....	196
ESL data collection.....	197
Formulation and implementation of a coordinated strategy on ESL.....	200
New management model: account managers.....	202
School autonomy and financing of ESL policies.....	203

<b>CHAPTER 18 - THE BELGIUM EXPERIENCE .....</b>	<b>205</b>
<i>Education system .....</i>	<i>205</i>
Pre-primary education.....	206
Primary education .....	206
Secondary education .....	207
Doubling (grade retention).....	208
Higher education.....	208
<i>Case study: Antwerp, Belgium–Flanders.....</i>	<i>210</i>
Overview of the current situation with regards to early school leaving .....	210
The Antwerp approach to early school leaving.....	211
Sectorial Networks and Houses of Talent.....	214
Together to the finish.....	215
Drop-out prevention.....	215
How does the network approach work in practice? .....	216
The Antwerp context .....	217
Youth coaches and peer coaches.....	218
<b>CHAPTER 19 - THE SPAIN EXPERIENCE.....</b>	<b>221</b>
<i>Different terms for ESL in Spain.....</i>	<i>221</i>
<i>Education system in Spain .....</i>	<i>222</i>
Primary education .....	222
Secondary Education .....	223
The medium-grade training cycle. ....	223
Higher Education .....	223
(Source Ministry of Education) <a href="http://sage.esu-online.org">http://sage.esu-online.org</a> .....	224
<i>Case study: Proyecto Abjoves.....</i>	<i>225</i>
Phases of the project .....	226
Phase 1 .....	226
Phase 2 .....	226
Phase 3 .....	227
<b>CHAPTER 20 - THE ITALIAN EXPERIENCE .....</b>	<b>229</b>
<i>The Education system .....</i>	<i>229</i>
A critical issue: Neet rate in Italy .....	231
Country overview .....	232
European Commission's recommendations to Italy (2014).....	233
The Italian Educational and Training System: critical issues .....	234
Two areas of disadvantage: education and the labour market .....	237
Educational disadvantage .....	237
Training and vocational education in Italy .....	238
The mismatch between education/training systems and the labour market .....	242
The demand side .....	243
Measures to support the transition are “empty boxes”.....	244
Young people and unemployment: Italy in context .....	246
The youth question and the North-South issue .....	246
New contexts and complexities .....	248
The consequences of unemployment: “forever young” .....	249
Youth unemployment as an example of inter-generational parallelism.....	249
Why is the Italian case different?.....	250
Little funding for education .....	250
Conclusions: the persistence of old inequalities .....	251
Some recent Reforms on Italian Public investments.....	253
The Gini index .....	255
Educational projects: Torino Municipality-Education Department .....	256
IAEC: Project Turin Educating City.....	256
PROVACI ANCORA, Sam! Project .....	260

The approach .....	261
Targets .....	263
<i>SCUOLA DEI COMPITI</i> .....	264
Targets .....	264
Implementation of the activity .....	264
Management of the project .....	265
Partnerships.....	266
Coordination of the project .....	267
Monitoring and evaluation.....	267
<i>TUTELA INTEGRATA</i> .....	268
Targets: .....	268
<i>CPIA Centri Permanenti Istruzione Adulti (ex CTP)</i> .....	272
Target.....	272
<i>COSP</i> .....	274
<i>Centre for Orientation to School &amp; Vocational Training</i> .....	274
Arianna ICT tool.....	275
Intervention model.....	276
The Orientation process .....	276
The phases of the project .....	278
The archive of historical data.....	279
Experimenting Arianna in remote version .....	279
<i>ANNEX I</i> .....	281
<i>The Protocol of Agreement for Provaci ancora, Sam!</i> .....	281
<b>CHAPTER 21 - INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION .....</b>	<b>289</b>
<i>International cooperation: an effective strategy to tackling ESL</i> .....	289
<i>RESL</i> .....	291
Targets .....	292
Policies and existing evidence .....	293
ESL targets.....	293
Innovative approaches to tackling ESL .....	293
Who RESL.eu addresses.....	293
Beneficiaries of the project .....	293
How does and where the project operate? .....	294
<i>RESLEA</i> .....	295
What is RESLEA? .....	296
Who will benefit from RESLEA? .....	297
<i>RANLHE</i> .....	298
Partners .....	298
Targets .....	298
<i>RESTART</i> .....	299
<b>CHAPTER 22 - LEARNING FROM BEST PRACTICES IN EUROPE .....</b>	<b>301</b>
<i>School 'transition' services aimed at Early school leavers and their parents in the UK</i> .....	302
Connexions Service, England .....	302
<i>Vocational transition programs for young people</i> .....	304
FAK project (training integrated into employment), Hungary .....	304
Production Schools, Denmark .....	305
Vocational Preparation Courses, Austria.....	307
Trace: 'Roads to employment', France.....	308
Entry to Employment (E2E), England .....	310

<i>Financial incentives aimed at increasing participation in education and training</i> .....	311
Back to Education Allowance, Ireland .....	311
Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), UK: .....	312
The Youth Guarantee and Financial Incentives, Denmark .....	313
<i>Strategies aimed at reducing early school leaving</i> .....	315
PRIDE: Pathway for students at risk of leaving, Wales.....	315
TIME OUT: Flanders, Switzerland.....	316
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION, Great Britain.....	317
<b>CHAPTER 23 - EU COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>321</b>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EU COMMISSION</i> .....	321
<i>The four targets</i> .....	321
Strategic objective 1: Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality.....	321
Strategic objective 2: Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training .....	322
Strategic objective 3: Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship .....	323
Strategic objective 4: Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship .....	323
<i>European benchmarks (2010-2020)</i> .....	324
<b>CHAPTER 24 - EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH .....</b>	<b>327</b>
<i>The challenges</i> .....	327
<i>Key Policy Messages</i> .....	328
<i>Integrated approach</i> .....	328
<i>A holistic approach</i> .....	330
<i>Early school leaving: a priority issue</i> .....	332
Mandate Thematic Working group on ESL.....	332
Policy challenge 1: EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING .....	333
Policy challenge 2: TEACHERS' EDUCATION.....	333
Results .....	336
<i>Creating a wider impact</i> .....	336
<b>CHAPTER 25 - HORIZON 2020: A BRIDGE OVER THE FUTURE.....</b>	<b>339</b>
<b>CHAPTER 26 - CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>343</b>
<i>REFERENCES</i> .....	347
<i>National References</i> .....	347
<i>Foreign Authors References</i> .....	350
<i>Academic studies</i> .....	353
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	357

## PREFACE

---

This doctoral thesis is focused on one of the five targets set up by the Europe 2020 Strategy: Education system and Early school leaving:

*“By 2020, the share of early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) should be less than 10 %”( Europe 2020 strategy)<sup>3</sup>*

*The Strategy 2020* is aimed at reducing the rate of Early School Leaving rate in Europe below 10% and the international strategies to tackling this difficult social issue.

Early school leaving is a barrier against economic growth and employment in Europe. It reduces productivity and competitiveness, fuels poverty and preventing social inclusion at the same time.

This work is the result of my experience gained, while working for the Education Department of Torino City Council for over 10 years from the late '90s until year 2005 and was finalized during my academic studies at *Ludwig Maximilian Universität*.

When I started working on this field of education, the idea of writing a dissertation on this topic was still very far. I use to consider the *Dropouts* or *Early school leaving* issues a social problem related essentially to my job and merely a professional area of interest.

At that time the *City of Torino*, as the majority of industrial cities in the North part of Italy, was undergoing a radical process of political and social challenges.

---

<sup>3</sup> COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION *EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, 3.3.2010, Brussels

Policy makers, institutions, educational officers and schools, were well aware at that time that Torino, being a multi-cultural industrial city, with a high incidence of migrants from North Africa, Eastern Europe and China, and needed urgent reforms in terms of education.

The phenomenon of *dropouts* was a cause of main concern for our City and the current educational policies were very demanding in terms of engagement within our Department and fighting the Early school leavers problem a top priorities.

The City had been engaged for many years in the international network called *IAEC* (International Association of Educating Cities). The *IAEC* Chart was signed in 1990 and was ratified in 1995 by the city.

From year 2000, Torino has been the national secretary of *IAEC* for the Italian cities, with coordination and organization functions.

The main approach to preventing and tackling with dropout students started in Torino more than 20 years ago, when the local project *Provaci ancora, Sam*. (Try it again, Sam) was developed and carried out.

*Sam* is a multi-institutional project, which is still working, whose methodological approach involves a local network among schools, municipality offices and local associations. The project born in year 1996 is aimed at 14-15 years' old retained students.

During this long period, since the project started, *Provaci ancora, Sam* has proved to be one of the best practices related to ESL in Italy and the monitoring and evaluation of the project has given good results in terms of efficiency and positive outcomes.

When I started working in the Education Department, I started comparing the ESL rates in Europe, and I soon realized that, even if the Sam Project was working well, there was still a long way to achieve the goal to keep the ESL rate under the 10%, and that we had a lot to learn from other countries in terms of results. In fact over the year, even if with a positive trend, in Italy and most EU countries we were very far from the EU target.

Since the *Provaci ancora Sam*, was providing good results in terms of achievement and outcomes, shown by the monitoring and evaluation phases, I realized that Torino experience was worthwhile to be disseminated

and I started thinking about the best way to provide an active contribution to this difficult social issue.

I assumed that there could not be a better way to reach my goals than putting the two experiences together. By combining my job experience with an academic research, my dissertation was definitely ready to take shape.

Since I was living in Munich at that time I applied for a PhD to the LMU University and presented my project to Professor Thomas Eckert of the Department of Pedagogy asking to back my dissertation.

He agreed and in a short time I was ready to start my Seminars in order to fulfill the needed requirements for Dissertation.

After one year spent on seminars and exams, a period of research and investigation on the local schools and institutions of Munich, I started gathering statistics, studies, experiences, and interviews and started collecting and analyzing best practices and outcomes deriving from other countries experiences.

I realized soon that many other countries had also shown a strong commitment and some of them, like Finland or Denmark, had already achieved the target of keeping ESL rate under 10%

This social issue revealed to be very engaging and demanding for the high level of professionals and skills needed.

During the last years some countries have been doing better, having reached the goal of keeping the national figures related to ESL under the 10%, like the Finnish and Dutch colleagues, while there were others still struggling around it and had higher rates of ESL, like Spain or Italy.

I wanted to know what was really working and what was missing and how far those partners had gone. This was pretty hard, because tackling ESL is a long-run process, which could last many years, before the results become evident. And at the same time since, the approach was often local and national and data were difficult to get.

After this period of getting materials for my research I realized that, in order to come to an end, I needed to gather some case studies in order to analyze them.

I started making interviews and enquiries to schools and institutions, in Munich. Here, I got a special “*Erlaubnis*” (Permission) from the *Head of the Education Department of Landeshauptstadt München*, to visit local schools and institutions as the *Deutsches Jugend Institute* were I interviewed a Pedagogue. I was also introduced to some schoolmasters, policy makers, and teachers, social-pedagogues, which I use to meet periodically and interview them. All of them, were very professional, polite and exhaustively replied to my questions, providing fact and figures at the same time. From the picture emerged that Germany had a long tradition on tackling with ESL, and that a long story of migratory flows from less industrialized countries, had made it one of the most wanted destination for immigrant families and young people looking for a job from other countries. And this process is still going on. Integration policies and social welfare was at the centre of the political debate.

I understood that ESL issues were reasons of main concern and action in Germany, since the country hosts a large proportion of migrants’ families, from Turkey, Italy, Spain, etc. and the rate of ESL was still high because of the SES and linguistic problems at school. In many schools the incidence of foreign people could reach 60% and in some areas at high incidence of SW (*Sozial Wohnungen-social housing*) like Riemer Area in Munich, could reach 80-90%. This meant that public schools in those areas were hardly attended by German pupils.

I realized that finding best practices would have been easy but, when it came the time to fill the task of finding case studies, i.e. individual cases like pupils, in order to complete my research, because of the law protecting data on minors and school pupils, which would have been a very hard task.

I also found some difficulties in interviewing students since many seemed to be reluctant to tell their schooltime story. Many of them declined so I decided that personal experiences were difficult to find.

I started being worried about how I could get over this obstacle and find a solution, and go ahead with my research.

So, in agreement with my supervisor, we decided that rather than concentrating on individual cases, I could work on existing best practices in



the EU. This methodology approach would have worked better, because I didn't need to access sensible data and results were open.

One day, while I was considering this new perspective of research, I got a phone call from a friend of mine in Munich. She was in despair because of the difficult relationship and behavior of her son at school. He was an ESL, have already tried many alternative educational paths, but nothing worked. He was 18 years old at that time.

The boy had been retained for many years at school. He had lost 3 years schooling at least. He underwent school Counseling advice, school support, had left *Real schule* for vocational school, but never came to complete his school career. All the options or chosen alternatives had been unsuccessful.

I started wondering why, here in Germany where the organization of schools and educational support was so efficient, was it so hard bring back to track a pupil, then? My question remained open for another while.

I had known that he was early diagnosed by the school as a “difficult student”, could never adapt to his school mates; he was feeling older and more mature, among the childish behavior of his classmates that were obviously much younger than him.

This is what he referred to me on the only occasion ee had spoken about school. He ended up as one of the cases feeding statistics about the growing number of ESL in Germany.

Family was helpless, school system was helpless, and after a while he decided to start a military career in the German Alpine trooper; but was soon he was unsuitable to rigid protocol of military services.

After some disorders and troubles and some support offered by Social Services, he started working as a barman in the family business.

While running his own business he seemd to have settled down and started making projects about his future life and wanted to engage in a family projects.

But this was only external appearance and something went wrong and he made uu his mind getting depression and despair. Soon, something more tragic was about to happen.

On an ordinary Saturday afternoon, on the 18th of November 2014, less than 6 months later I had received the last call from my his mother, he decided to put an end to his life. He committed suicide.

In the middle of my research I started wondering that all the theories and best practices to bring students back to school, could not only be unsuccessful, but also lead to major consequences and danger for a young person. After the initial shock, many questions came into my mind. What didn't work, why nobody understood? Was he left alone? Why the people around him were helpless and didn't notice such despair. Even now, after research, I probably still have no real answer to why this misfortunate event could happen.

I still have no answer to why a young boy, after so much effort, committed suicide despite all the school system or family seemed working, but it didn't, and even if I had one, none of them would be enough to bring him back to life. But, certainly this gave me an even more important reason, a sort of "Kick" I needed to come to an end of this process and find a reason behind the despair which can affect a family. The aim of my research had definitely changed. Not only raising awareness about a difficult social issue but something I had personally felt on my skin.

I do hope that my research and other studies like this, will at least, make people think, make policy makers reflect, ask institutions and schools to be aware about the great responsibility we have when young people are struggling at school, and what could happen when the system does not prevent, intervene or recuperate early enough.

I do hope that all those involved in the hard task of being teachers or professionals, institutions, all stakeholders will find some reason for understanding, how difficult it might be and to which personal consequences failure at school might tragically lead, if the system is unable to responding quickly and efficiently to the struggle some pupils might face in their life. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this work, to those who want this never happen anymore and to all those who have been unable to hear that cry for help and regret it now in vain.

## ABSTRACT

---

*Early school leaving<sup>1</sup> is an obstacle to economic growth and employment. It hampers productivity and competitiveness, and fuels poverty and social exclusion. With its shrinking workforce, Europe has to make full use of its human resources. Young people who leave education and training prematurely are bound to lack skills and qualifications, and to face serious, persistent problems on the labor market. The latest Education and Training Monitor showed that there are nearly 5,5 million early school leavers across Europe and that the average unemployment rate amongst them is about 40%<sup>4</sup>.*

### Key statistical indicators

The EU average rate of *early leavers* from education and training in 2013 was 11.9%, down 0.8 percentage points from 2012. The improvement is in line with recent progress and, if continued, means that the *Europe 2020* headline target below 10% is within reach.

Eighteen Member States have rates of early leavers from education and training below the Europe 2020 headline target (CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, FR, HR, CY, LV, LT, LU, NL, AT, PL, SI, SK, FI, SE). This number was 13 in 2012, meaning that in addition four countries dropped below the 10% for the first time in 2013 (DE, EE, CY, LV)

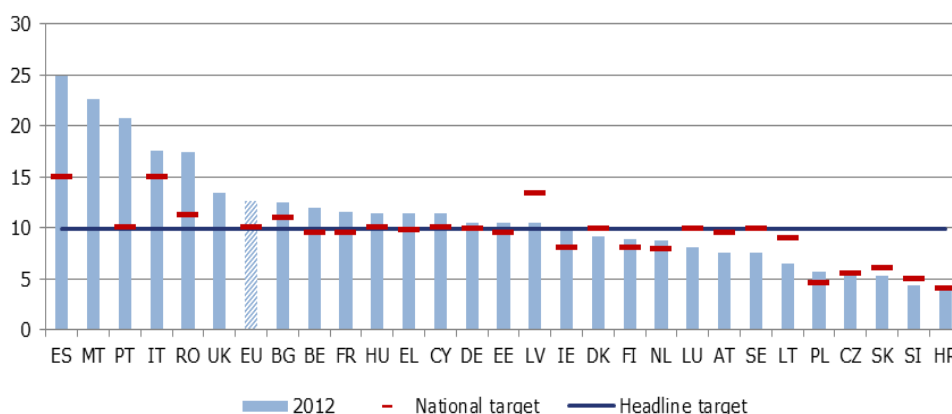


Figure 1: Rate of Early school leavers in Europe in year 2012

Source: Eurostat 2012

---

<sup>4</sup> See: [ec.europa.eu/education/monitor](http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)

Eleven EU Member States have now reached their national targets for early leavers from education and training (CZ, DK, DE, HR, CY, LV, LT, LU, AT, SI, SE). Some of these countries had not yet reached the national targets in 2012 (DE, HR, and CY).

SK is the only State Member, which has reached its national target before (in 2008) but now featuring a rate of early leavers slightly above its national target.

According to the definition used by *EUROSTAT* and the European Commission, ESL *early school leaving occurs when an individual aged 18 to 24 has attained at most lower secondary education and is not engaged in education and training*<sup>5</sup>.

Currently, one student out of seven European students leaves school early without gaining a basic qualification.

The aim of *EUROPE 2020 Strategy* is to reduce the average percentage of early school leavers from 14.1% to less than 10% by 2020. This means all young people aged between 18 and 25, who are not undertaking education/training and increasing the rate of tertiary qualification to 40 %.

The aim of this research is to provide evidence that international co-operation is needed in order to achieve the set goals.

Since some countries have already achieved their target, whilst others have not, it is important to share those countries best practices.

In order to carry out its task, this research has analysed a wide range of literature on the subject, from articles, to books, researches, and EU educational projects outcomes.

In order to understand the complexity and dimension of the problem, I have started from defining the problem, identifying its multiple causes and analysing the effective policy responses that should European countries to reach the mutual target of reducing the rate of early school leavers.

---

<sup>5</sup> Brunello, Di Paola, Report *The costs of early school leaving in Europe*, (2009) commissioned by DG EAC of the European Commission

The present research offers a useful tool to compare some best practices in Europe, that thanks to dissemination, can help policy makers, schools or professional, involved in the struggle against school failure, to reducing the rate of early school-leaving below 10%.

By sharing them, it will be possible to reach easily the set target of *Europe 2020 Strategy* among State members in order to guarantee its social and economic welfare. The following paragraph is a short presentation of each chapter.

*Chapter 1* is an **Introduction** to present dissertation followed by the **Targets of Europe 2020 Strategy**.

In *Chapter 2*, different **definitions of ESL** as adopted by different EU partners, will be analysed.

In *Chapter 3*, I will consider what kind of **problem** ESL is, in relation to the commitment undertaken by the EU partners, in view of Europe 2020 strategy.

I thought that some theory about the **Learning process** would be necessary, in order to understand the neuroscience approach behind it, and to better understand and recognize disorders that are sometimes late diagnosed or underestimated(*Chapter 4*).

The main **Criteria to identify children/pupils at risk** and the different approaches, if individually or as an organized target group are the topic of *Chapter 5*.

The study goes deeper looking at the **Causes of ESL**, which will be analysed from an individual and external point of view (*Chapter 6*).

A focus on the pupils' background was needed identifying those **Factors, which are more family or school-related** (*Chapter 7*).

**Systemic factors** or **school-based factors** as the most influential in undermining the students' performances, are better described in the following *Chapter 8*

The *Consequences and risks* related to ESL are discussed in *Chapter 9*.

The *Economic impact of ESL, which is a dramatic burden on Europe economy*, is analysed in *Chapter 10*.

Analysing the *possible actions* from the assumption that preventing is better than cure. *Prevention, intervention and compensation actions* are considered in *Chapter 11*.

*Chapter 12* is about the *Quality of Education in ECEC* and *Chapter 13* is about the *Quality of Education in higher Education*, following the EU 2020 strategy.

*Second chance schemes* have been proposed as alternatives to educational choices in *Chapter 14*.

Special target groups as *Migrant Students* are the content of *Chapter 15*.

There is a section dedicated to some *Case studies* reported as some of the *Best EU experiences*, providing an overview about those countries that are performing better in terms of educational outcomes and registering lower ESL rates, and some more examples of countries which, despite active intervention are still above the 10% as the set EU standards (*Chapter 16*).

*Chapters 17, 18 and 19* describe *The Dutch, Belgium and Spain Experience*.

*Chapter 20*, is about The *Italian experience* is analysed in describing the school system first and some actions, which have been undertaken in Turin.

*Chapter 21* describes some good examples of *International Cooperation* in Europe.

In *Chapter 22 Learning from best practices in Europe*, few case studies have been reported, following the grouping in four macro-areas.

*Chapter 23* is about the **EU Commission recommendations** that influence so deeply policy making in Europe and guide the present EU strategy

The *Europe 2020 Strategy* as a comprehensive approach to ESL is provided in *Chapter 24*.

*Chapter 25* opens to the recent view of *Horizon 2020*, the new EU Strategy, which is building a bridge over the future Europe' perspectives to innovation & research, where education places a fundamental role.

Finally, in the *Chapter 26* I draw my **Conclusions** about this research project on ESL, that Europe could fight by using a *holistic/comprehensive approach*, which can provide better results and students' performances.

The research has taken into account some examples of case studies related to ESL which have been implemented either at local level by educational project carried out by EU municipalities.

It will in particular analyse the international Network the *ECEC Early Childhood Education and Care network* and the *Nesse Report*; these independent work was submitted to the EU Commission for the Thematic Working Group on ESL, addressed to local and national policy makers involved in the difficult task of achieving the *Europe 2020* target.

My research will also provide evidence about the experiences carried out by those countries that have already succeeded in achieving the set target of the *Europe 2020 strategy*.

The dissemination of the projects that have already been experienced and were successful can bring better and new perspectives to policy makers or school institutions, working on the difficult task of ESL.

Reducing ESL is an important target for *sustainable, smart and inclusive economy* that Europe needs for a better future.

Better *Quality in Education* in the future will certainly raise the standards of education but also bring welfare and prosperity to its citizens as a benefit if more efforts and investments, but especially motivation and trust, will be put together in a cohesive climate of collaboration, among EU countries.





## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHA .....	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
BPD.....	Bipolar Disorder
COSP.....	Centre for School and Professional Orientation
EC.....	European Commission
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ESL.....	Early School Leaving
ET 2020.....	Education & Training 2020 (Strategy)
EWS.....	Early Warning Signs
EU .....	European Union
GDP.....	Gross Domestic Product
JAF .....	Joint Assessment Framework
NEET.....	Not in Education, in Employment or Training
OECD	Organization for Economic & Cooperation Development
R&D.....	Research & Development
SES	Socio Economic Status
TWG .....	Thematic Working Group
VET.....	Vocational Education and training
VMBO .....	Vocational Secondary Schools
WG.....	Working Group



## COMMUNICATION FROM THE EU COMMISSION

### *EUROPE 2020- A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*

*The 2010 must mark a new beginning. I want Europe to emerge stronger from the economic and financial crisis. Economic realities are moving faster than political realities, as we have seen with the global impact of the financial crisis. We need to accept that the increased economic interdependence demands also a more determined and coherent response at the political level.*

*The last two years have left millions unemployed. It has brought a burden of debt that will last for many years. It has brought new pressures on our social cohesion. It has also exposed some fundamental truths about the challenges that the European economy faces. And in the meantime, the global economy is moving forward. How Europe responds will determine our future. The crisis is a wake-up call, the moment where we recognize that "business as usual" would consign us to a gradual decline, to the second rank of the new global order.*

*This is Europe's moment of truth. It is the time to be bold and ambitious. Our short-term priority is a successful exit from the crisis. It will be tough for some time yet but we will get there. Significant progress has been made on dealing with bad banks, correcting the financial markets and recognizing the need for strong policy coordination in the Eurozone.*

*To achieve a sustainable future, we must already look beyond the short term. Europe needs to get back on track. Then it must stay on track. That is the purpose of Europe 2020. It's about more jobs and better lives. It shows how Europe has the capability to deliver **smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**, to find the path to create new jobs and to offer a sense of direction to our societies.*

*European leaders have a common analysis on the lessons to be drawn from the crisis.*

*We also share a common sense of urgency on the challenges ahead. Now we jointly need to make it happen.*

*Europe has much strength.*

*We have a talented workforce; we have a powerful technological and industrial base.*

*We have an internal market and a single currency that has successfully helped us resist the worst.*

*We have a tried and tested social market economy.*

*We must have confidence in our ability to set an ambitious agenda for ourselves and then gear our efforts to delivering it.*

*The Commission is proposing five measurable EU targets for 2020 that will steer the process and be translated into national targets:*

- 1. for employment;*
- 2. for research and innovation;*
- 3. for climate change and energy;*
- 4. for education;*
- 5. for combating poverty.*

*They represent the direction we should take and will mean we can measure our success. They are ambitious, but attainable. They are backed up by concrete proposals to make sure they are delivered. The flagship initiatives set out in this paper show how the EU can make a decisive contribution.*

*We have powerful tools to hand in the shape of new economic governance, supported by the internal market, our budget, our trade and external economic policy and the disciplines and support of economic and monetary union. The condition for success is a real ownership by European leaders and institutions. Our new agenda requires a coordinated European response, including with social partners and civil society. If we act together, then we can fight back and come out of the crisis stronger. We have the new tools and the new ambition. Now we need to make it happen.*

BRUSSELS, the 3.3.2010

*José Manuel BARROSO*

*Former President of the European Commission (2004-2014)*

## Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION

---

*Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade.*

*In a changing world, we want the EU to become a **smart, sustainable and inclusive** economy.*

*These three mutually reinforcing priorities should help the EU and the Member States deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.*

*Concretely, the Union has set five ambitious objectives –*

***Employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy** to be reached by 2020.*

*Each Member State has adopted its own national targets in each of these areas.*

*Concrete actions at EU and national levels underpin the strategy.*

*José Manuel Barroso*

*Former President of the European Commission (2004-2014)*

*Europe 2020 Strategy* was launched by the former President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso (which has been integrally reported in the Preface) in year 2010, when he delivered the above speech to Europe.

**Education** is considered than, one of the top priorities of the European Commission and its Members. The extract from the speech of the European Commission President shows the strong commitment of the EU Commission to intervene in the area of Education, Employment, Innovation, Social Inclusion and Climate/energy issues.

*Early School Leaving (ESL)* is considered a major consequence of lack of quality education and training and a main problem not only in Europe but also across the world. This is why so much emphasis has been put in investing in ESL.

Since Europe in those years was undergoing a period of radical changes and economy was badly affected by high rates of unemployment, migration, social integration, Europe needed this strategy helping to come out stronger from the crisis.

Turning Europe into a *smart, sustainable and inclusive economy*, capable of delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion, *Europe 2020* sets out a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century.

Despite the commitment undertaken by EU Member States to fulfil Europe 2020 target by reducing the rate of ESL to 10% by 2020, progress is not happening everywhere at the same pace, and some countries performed worse in 2012 than in previous years. Sustained political support is needed to ensure that positive trends continue.

*Europe 2020* is the European Union's 10-years jobs and growth strategy. It was launched in order to create the conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

To summarize the five headline targets which have been agreed from the EU to achieve the targets by the end of 2020 are the following:

- 1. *employment;***
- 2. *research and development;***
- 3. *climate/energy;***
- 4. *education;***
- 5. *social inclusion and poverty reduction.***

When the strategy was launched the EU Commission committed to tackling Early School Leaving as a main priority for Europe by reducing the number of young people who leave education before completion of their education.

It is one of the five key indicators of the *Europe 2020 strategy* to boost growth and create jobs.

It is one of the top priorities of the European Commission. The extract from the speech European Commission President shows the strong commitment

behind the *EU Commission* commitment to intervene in the area of Education, Employment, Innovation, Social Inclusion and Climate/energy issues.

It follows the EU recommendations established by the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009, just before the ET 2020 was delivered, on a strategic framework for European cooperation in Education and Training (*ET 2020*) that were summarized in the following statement:

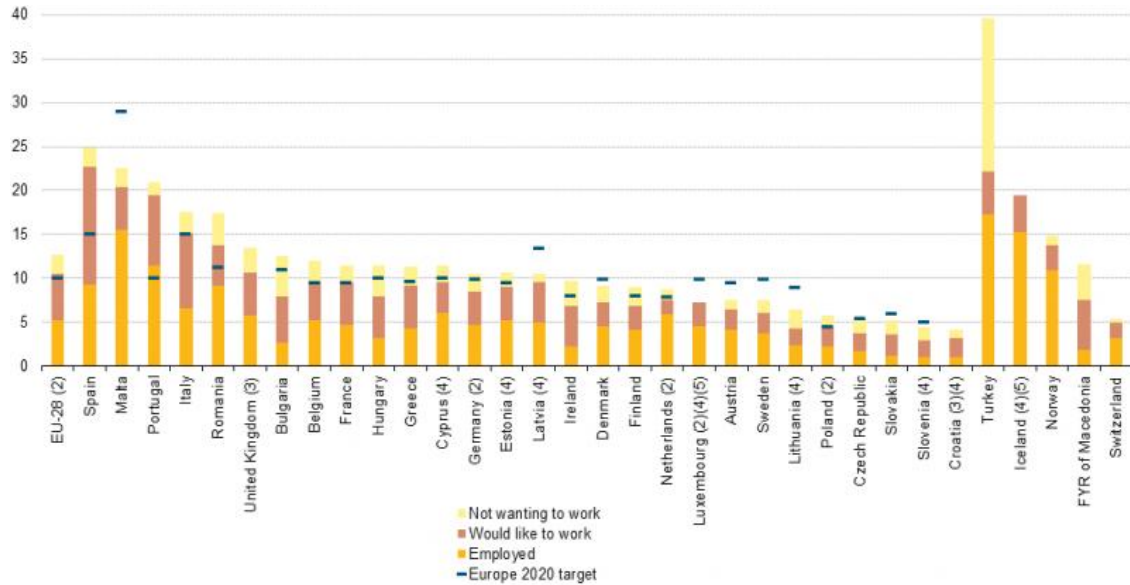
- *Education and training have a crucial role to play in meeting the many socio-economic, demographic, environmental and technological challenges facing Europe and its citizens today and in the years ahead.*
- *Efficient investment in human capital through **education and training system** is an essential component of Europe's strategy to deliver high levels of sustainable, knowledge-based growth and jobs that lie at the heart of the Lisbon strategy, at the same time as promoting personal fulfilment, social cohesion and active citizenship<sup>6</sup>*

The aim to reducing the incidence rate of ESL to 10% by 2020 is one of the key benchmarks of *EU strategy 2020*.

---

<sup>6</sup> Council conclusions of 12 May 2009, Presidency Conclusions, ANNEX 1

Figure 2 shows the 28 European Members in relation to the ESL & employment<sup>7</sup>.



(1) Ranked on the total proportion of early leavers.  
 (2) Provisional.  
 (3) No Europe 2020 target.  
 (4) Includes unreliable data for one or more categories.  
 (5) Not wanting to work: not available.  
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat\_ifse\_14)

Source: Eurostat 2014, available at <http://ec.Europe.eu/statistics-explained>

The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training adopted a benchmark to be achieved by 2020 that the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%, a level already reached in 2012 by 13 of the EU Member States.

Early leavers from education and training may face heightened difficulties in the labor market. Figure ranks the EU Member States according to the share of early leavers from education and training in the population aged 18 to 24 and presents an analysis of whether these early leavers are employed or not: those not in employment may or may not be wanting to work.

## The indicators set up by the *EU 2020 Strategy*

*Europe 2020* strategy puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities:

<sup>7</sup> Source: Eurostat 2014, available at <http://ec.Europe.eu/statistics-explained>



1) *Smart* growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.

- **Education** (encouraging people to learn, study and update their skills)
- **research/innovation** (creating new products/services that generate growth and jobs and help address social challenges)
- **digital society** (using information and communication technologies)

2) *Sustainable* growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy (these are more environmental related but are listed for information purposes)

- building a **more competitive low-carbon economy** that makes efficient, sustainable use of resources
- **protecting the environment**, reducing emissions and preventing biodiversity loss
- capitalizing on Europe's leadership in developing **new green technologies** and production methods
- introducing **efficient smart electricity grids**
- **harnessing EU-scale networks** to give our businesses (especially small manufacturing firms) an additional competitive advantage
- **improving the business environment**, in particular for SMEs
- **helping consumers** make well-informed choices.

3) *Inclusive* growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

Inclusive growth means:

- raising Europe's employment rate –**more and better jobs**, especially for women, young people and older workers
- helping people of all ages anticipate and manage change through **investment in skills & training**
- **modernizing** labor markets and welfare systems
- ensuring the **benefits of growth reach all** parts of the EU

The EU needs to define where it wants to be by 2020. To this end, the Commission has proposed the following Europe 2020 indicators:

1. **Employment**
  - 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed
2. **R&D** (Research & Development)
  - 3% of the EU's GDP ( Gross Domestic Product) to be invested in R&D
3. **Climate change and energy sustainability**

- Green-house gas emissions
  - 20% (or even 30%, if the conditions are right) lower than 1990
  - 20% of energy from renewable
  - 20% increase in energy efficiency
4.       **Education**
- Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%
  - 40% at least of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education
5.       **Fighting poverty and social exclusion**
- At least 20 million fewer people at risk of poverty and social exclusion

Figure 3 shows the data from year 2010<sup>8</sup>. The column on the right shows the targets for each indicator for *2020 Strategy*.

<b>Early leavers from education and training by sex, Total</b> <i>Percentage</i>	12.7	10.0
<b>Employment rate by sex, age group 20-64, Total</b>	68.4	75.0
<b>Greenhouse gas emissions, base year 1990</b>	82	80
<b>Gross domestic expenditure on R&amp;D (GERD)</b> <i>Percentage of GDP</i>	2.01	3.00
<b>Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion</b> <i>1000 persons</i>	124 060	
<b>Primary energy consumption</b> <i>Million TOE (tons of oil equivalent)</i>	1 584	1 483
<b>Tertiary educational attainment by sex, age group 30-34, Total</b> <i>Percentage</i>	35.9	40.0

Source: Eurostat, 2012

From the above figure, it is evident that reducing the rate of early school leaving is among the set goals and a top priority in Europe. In 2009 the EU, 16.9% of boys and 12.7% of girls are *early school leavers* (European Commission, 2009) this means an average percentage of early school leavers of 14.4%

---

<sup>8</sup> Source: Eurostat, 2012

(More than six million young people from 18 to 24 years old, i.e. 14.4%, left the education system early in 2009). This involves all young people aged between 18 and 25 who are not undertaking education/training.

In 2012, 12.7% of all 18 to 24 years olds had not completed upper secondary education and were no longer in education and training. This represents some 5.5 million young people.

The social and personal problems associated with ESL are found in a range of areas labour markets, employment difficulties, schools and vocational training organisations. And if in the short term it can be observed at micro-level as an individual problem for the subjects involved, in the long term it leads to an implication at a macro-economy level, for its impact on the whole welfare of the country. Moreover, the impact of ESL has a direct impact on economy either at national and regional level, than at individual level.

Unfortunately, the 2013 edition of *Education at a Glance* (OECD) showed a youth unemployment as the worst score in the last 20 years.

In fact, between 2008 and 2011 unemployment rates climbed very fast in most countries and have remained high ever since.

*Young people have been particularly hard-hit by unemployment because of the global recession. In 2011, the average proportion of 15-29 year-olds (NEET) across OECD countries was 16%; among 25-29 year-olds, 20% were NEET. (Among this latter group, 40% were unemployed, more than half of them for more than six months; the rest did not participate in the labour market at all)*<sup>9</sup>.

In some countries (Greece, Italy, Spain i.e.) the figures are much higher, with more than one in three people between the ages of 25 and 29 neither in education nor in work. These young people are forced to pay a very high price for a crisis, which hit many sectors of economy, with long-lasting consequences on their skills, moral and social integration.

The demoralising short-term effects for individuals, families and communities demand urgent policy responses, while the long-term ramifications, in terms

---

<sup>9</sup> OECD (2013), “Executive summary: Education and skills in the midst of the crisis”, *Education at a Glance 2013: Highlights*, OECD Publishing.

of skills loss, scarring effects and de-motivation, are real and affect countries' potential for sustainable recovery.

The distribution of unemployment within the younger generation highlights some of the factors that may increase the risk of unemployment, which, in turn, offers insights for policy responses.

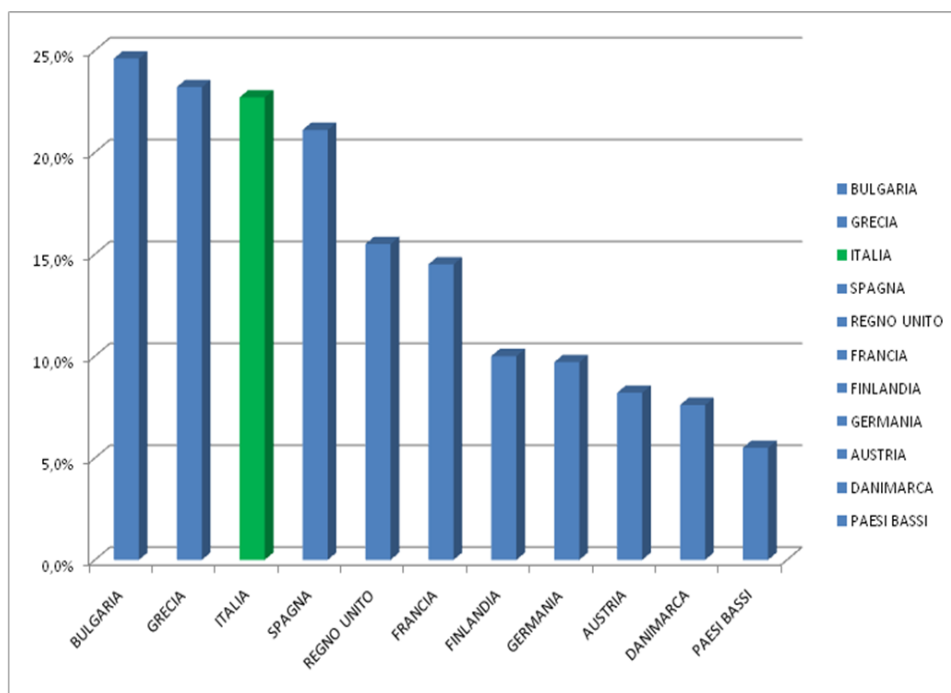
Educational success has a huge impact in terms of employability, and the crisis has strengthened this impact even further.<sup>10</sup> Other pertinent orientation points for assessing a Member State's relative performance and its level of ambition to improve the situation are the **EU28 average** (12.7% in 2012) and the **national target** set by the Member States (see Figure 1 in the introductory chapter).

*Europe 2020* set a headline target to bring down the share of early school leavers to below 10% by 2020. When assessing Member States' performance, data on the current level of early school leaving should be complemented by data on **trends** in recent years. Breaking down the data by sex and country of birth can further refine the assessment. Together with the information, such as age, socio-economic status or language spoken at home, this breakdown provides important additional elements to understand the ESL processes in Member States and to better focus the development of targeted measures against ESL. Knowledge about at-risk groups and reasons for early school leaving can help to improve these measures. It should also be noted that in most countries, ESL is more evident in vocational education training (VET), so comprehensive data on the type of secondary education is another means to strengthen the knowledge base at the national level.

---

<sup>10</sup> Official Journal C 119 of 28.5.2009]; *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators* © OECD 2013, page 13

Figure 4 shows the rate **Unemployment in Europe**<sup>11</sup>.



Since the rate of unemployment in many countries such as Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Spain, UK and France is well above the 10% rate, whilst in Finland, Germany, Austria, Denmark, and the Netherlands have definitely lower rates of unemployment there is still much work to do, in those countries at higher risk of unemployment, similar to countries with better economy how they have reached their goals.

## Seven targets to foster progress

These EU Commission targets are representative of the three priorities of a *smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* but they are not exhaustive: a wide range of actions at national, EU and international levels will be necessary to underpin them.

Europe has identified new engines to boost growth and jobs. These areas are addressed by **7 flagship initiatives**.

<sup>11</sup> Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, 2010

Within each initiative, both the EU and national authorities have to coordinate their efforts so they are mutually reinforcing. Most of these initiatives have been presented by the Commission in 2010.

The Commission has put forward seven flagship initiatives to catalyze progress under each priority theme.

The EU targets for *Smart growth* include:

1. "*A digital agenda for Europe*" to speed up the roll-out of high-speed internet and reap the benefits of a digital single market for households and firms.
2. "*Innovation Union*" to improve framework conditions and access to finance for research and innovation so as to ensure that innovative ideas can be turned into products and services that create growth and jobs. –
3. "*Youth on the move*" to enhance the performance of education systems and to facilitate the entry of young people to the labor market.

For *Sustainable growth* it means

4. "*Resource efficient Europe*" to help decouple economic growth from the use of resources, support the shift towards a low carbon economy, increase the use of renewable energy sources, modernize our transport sector and promote energy efficiency.
5. "*An industrial policy for the globalization era*" to improve the business environment, notably for SMEs, and to support the development of a strong and sustainable industrial base able to compete globally.

For *Inclusive growth* it means:

6. "*An agenda for new skills and jobs*" to modernize labor markets and empower people by developing their skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to increase labor participation and better match labor supply and demand, including through labor mobility.

7. *"European platform against poverty"* to ensure social and territorial cohesion such that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society.

These seven flagship initiatives will commit both the EU and the Member States

Europe 2020 strategy will be sustained by two pillars:

1. The above thematic approach, combining priorities and headline targets;
2. Countries reporting, helping Member States to develop their strategies to return to sustainable growth and public finances.

Integrated guidelines will be adopted at EU level to cover the scope of EU priorities and targets. Country-specific recommendations will be addressed to Member States. Policy warnings could be issued in case of inadequate response. The reporting of Europe 2020 and the Stability and Growth Pact evaluation will be done simultaneously.





## Chapter 2 - How is ESL Defined and Measured

---

The present research, when referring to ESL, will use the definition of ‘*early school leavers*’ as it is used at EU level, which refers to them as ‘*those young people who leave education and training with only lower secondary education or less, and who are no longer in education and training*’.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, the term *early school leaving* describes all forms of leaving education and training before completing upper secondary.

It includes those who have never enrolled and those who have dropped-out of education and training *earlier*. It also includes those who do not continue education and training after finishing lower secondary education or those who failed final exams at the end of upper secondary education.

However the definition is not as simple as this, since in Europe and worldwide it has already been said the definition may vary according to the different school systems and age of pupils considered.

The following chapter will examine why however a unique definition is impossible.

### Definition of ESL in Europe

In statistical terms, European ESL rates are measured as the percentage of 18-24 years old with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education or training.

---

<sup>12</sup> EU Education Ministers in the EU Council "*Reference levels of European Average Performance in Education and Training* ", May 2003.

The different definition of ESL in Europe plays a crucial role in the development of policies to prevent or reduce it. The first problem is the age, in fact, some countries consider early school leavers age differently, whilst others start taking steps to prevent or compensate the problem at a different stage.

In fact focussing on *school dropouts* emphasises the need to prevent drop-out from occurring. It also emphasises the need to intervene as early as possible. Nevertheless, what does “early” means, for some countries it means to intervene as early as 0-6 years old, for others later on? This is why common standards and indicators are needed if effective policies should be adopted. ESL can mean leaving education and training systems *before the end* of compulsory schooling, before reaching a minimum qualification or before completing upper secondary education. Whilst the term ESL may include all forms of leaving education and training prematurely, the term ‘school drop-out’ often refers to discontinuing an on-going course, e.g. dropping out in the middle of the school term.

*Dropping-out from education can occur at any time and can be experienced by different age groups.*

Concentrating on the number of young people who have not completed upper secondary education may shift attention to measures helping them to re-enter education and training systems and to complete their education. The European definition of ESL supports the latter perspective. It refers to *young people beyond compulsory schooling age who have not completed upper secondary education.*

However, most of them may have discontinued their education years before. European data is not available in relation to the number of young people aged 14, 15 or 16 years of age who have dropped out of education each year. As such, more direct attention and action is required for this age group. The above considerations show clearly how difficult it can be to intervene since the approach can be so different and can be started at different school age, and preventative or intervention measures are often taken at different age. If they have been worked out for some pupils it might not work for other age groups or different background or school level reached.

## Why a definition is important?

Finding a definition for ESL is then the first problem we face when thinking about who ESL are and which factors have to be considered when analysing ESL.

It has been said that definition is different from one EU country to another and the measurement of ESL varies. Even the average age range taken into account is different across Europe.

The EU definition of ESL is pragmatic because Member States have different range of definitions of ESL, consequently their approach is different and the policies to address the problem may differ.

This is a comment of the European Court of Auditors: *"the use of varying definitions of ESL within a Member State has not facilitated the targeting of geographic areas for assistance or the measurement of the impact of initiatives. On a wider level, efforts to adopt the Eurostat definition would assist Community efforts in tackling the problem of ESL"*<sup>13</sup>.

This is a list of possible definitions for ESL, following a EU Commission Study, carried out year 2005, the "GHK Study"<sup>14</sup> focused on access to Education & Training related to *Early school leaving*<sup>15</sup>:

- Failure to complete upper secondary education (or high school) and not attending further education or training
- Failure to gain qualifications required for participation in higher education
- Failure to complete compulsory schooling
- Failure to gain qualifications at end of compulsory schooling
- Failure to participate in education/training on completion of compulsory schooling
- Failure to gain qualifications required to access to a range of labour market opportunities

---

<sup>13</sup> European Court of Auditors, EU Commission, *Special Report 1*, (2006)

<sup>14</sup> EU Commission DG, *GHK Study on Access to Education and Training, Basic Skills and Early School Leavers, Final Report*, (Ref. DG EAC 38/04).

- Failure to participate in any form of education and training between the ages of 18-24 years old
- Failure to participate in any form of education and training by 18-24 years old in the period of four weeks prior to the European Labour Force Survey.

To summarize there is no doubt that *a unique definition does not exist* and for this reason the solution to the problem can involve different policies and approaches related to the age of intervention or recuperation.

In year 2009 a set of indicators, which receives further specification and measurement, were set up in the progress report (European Commission, 2009) which breaks down the ESL group in terms of level of education achieved, gender, unemployment and non-national status of early school leavers.

There are some limitations related to the *indicators* identified in the research literature<sup>16</sup>.

This analysis is contained in the *Nesse Report*, which was authored by Professor Roger Dale as an independent team of experts, which supported the European Commission from January 2007 to February 2011.

- *The focus on 18-24 years olds means that it is a retrospective measurement<sup>17</sup>.*

Since the focus are 18-24 years old people , it means that the problems have occurred already

- *The US measurement of status and event drop out and the Canadian cohort measurement are more robust and specific. Measurement of who drops out, when and with which level of qualification should be the aim, if measurement have to be more successfully contributing to the policies.<sup>18</sup>*

This means that policies have to be targeted after defining the status of who, when and which level of education is achieved.

---

<sup>16</sup>European Commission DG EAC, *Study on Access to Education and Training, Basic Skills and Early School Leavers, Final Report*, GHK (2005) (Ref. DG EAC 38/04), Brussels.

<sup>17</sup> OECD, NESSE REPORT on Early School Leaving, page 14, can be found at:

<http://www.nesse.fr/nesse/activities/reports>

<sup>18</sup> idem

- *The EU ESL measure on its own, does not tell us much about those who have successfully completed lower secondary education and those who have dropped out of schooling<sup>19</sup>.*

In Europe, with only few exemptions, like The Netherlands, it is not easy to have records about those who have completed lower secondary education

- *The numbers of individuals with lower secondary education tells us nothing about the quality of attainment achieved at that level. There is a gap between the EU ESL and Upper Secondary Education indicators<sup>20</sup>:*

The indicators in fact make it difficult in Europe to take into account the range of different education and training offers beyond compulsory schooling in each country.

- *The Labour Force Survey of Eurostat focus on a four-week period prior to the survey, can seriously underestimate the amount of relevant education and training which individuals will have undergone but which will still not mean that they have achieved a qualification higher<sup>21</sup>.*

Again, this is different from one country to another, so the estimation is not comparable.

- *The definition of what counts as education and training in the EUROSTAT measure is so broad that it tells us very little about the extent to which there has been a meaningful increase in the level or quality of learning<sup>22</sup>.*

The Eurostat measurement are so different and cover wide range of definition of what is meant for quality of education, so that understanding what has really changed in the educational offer is almost impossible. If, for one country for example, more investments in the school laboratories are meaningless because they already existed, in another country it might be relevant to improve those facilities.

---

<sup>19</sup> Nesse, *Report on Early school leaving*, page 14, European Commission

<sup>20</sup> idem

<sup>21</sup> idem

<sup>22</sup> idem

The *EUROSTAT* definition of relevant education and training beyond lower secondary education *'includes initial education, further education, continuing or further training, training within the company, apprenticeship, on the-job training, seminars, distance learning, evening classes, self-learning etc. It includes also courses followed for general interests and may cover all form of education and training as language, data processing, management, art/culture, and health/medicine courses.'*<sup>23</sup>For this reason, under the definition a wide range of educational offer are included.

---

<sup>23</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU\\_labour\\_force\\_survey\\_-\\_methodology](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey_-_methodology)

## Chapter 3 - WHY IS EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING A PROBLEM?

---

Very often, the ESL issue is linked to poor background, to unemployment, social exclusion, and poverty. The reasons why some young people give up on their education and training prematurely are linked to the following problems.

- personal or family problems,
- learning difficulties,
- fragile socio-economic situation.

Since there is not a single reason for early school leaving, there are no easy answers to the problem. Policies to reduce early school leaving must address a range of triggers and combine education and social policies, youth work and health related aspects such as drug use or mental and emotional problems.

Strategies to tackle with ESL have to take a holistic and multi/faceted approach since the problem is very complex.

One of the EU 2020 benchmarks refers to ESL and the target to be reached before year 2020 the rate of quoting below 10%.

The most recent strategies launched by the EU Commission to improve Quality of Education and more widely in context improve European welfare are the following: the Strategy Europe 2020, ET 2020 (Education & Training, HORIZON 2020. These will be better illustrated in the following chapter.

## **EU Programs: Europe 2020, ET 2020, HORIZON 2020.**

The three above programmes are the most recent launched by the EU Commission.

The first Programme EUROPE 2020 was launched in June 2010, when the Education ministers agreed for the first time on a framework for coherent, comprehensive, and evidence-based policies to tackle early school leaving.

They have worked together since then and exchanged best practices and knowledge on effective ways to address early school leaving and to reduce its rate. This methodology builds on the *Joint Assessment Framework* (JAF) developed by the *Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion* (DG EMPL) and the *Employment Committee* (EMCO) to monitor and assess structural reforms under the Employment Guidelines through qualitative and quantitative methods. The JAF methodology has been adapted to analyse performance and progress in relation to the twofold *Europe 2020* headline target on education and training as well as the additional *ET 2020* benchmarks.<sup>24</sup>

## **The Working Group on ESL**

The Thematic *WG on ESL* was set up between 2011 and 2013 and it brought together policy makers and practitioners from nearly all EU countries, as well as Norway, Iceland, and Turkey. In March 2012, the Commission organised a conference on policies to reduce early school leaving. One year later, policy developments on early school leaving in eight EU countries were reviewed.

The EU Commission set up the Thematic Working Group on '*Early School Leaving*', which comprised experts nominated by 31 European countries, and stakeholder organizations. It has looked at good practice examples in Europe and exchanged experiences in reducing early school leaving;

At the end of its mandate the following Report *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support* was issued.

---

<sup>24</sup> EC, ET2020 Indicators Contextual indicators supporting the Education and Training Monitor, 2015



The main contribution of this report was to focus on the state of the art regarding ESL in Europe by looking at the dimension of the problem and providing key targets and support to policy makers.

*Member States are working on the Europe 2020 target to reduce the rate of ESL to below 10% by 2020, and many have made progress. However, developments are not happening everywhere at the same pace, and some countries performed worse in 2012 than in previous years. Sustained political support is needed to ensure that positive trends continue.*<sup>25</sup>

This section starts with an introductory note quoted from the Final Report of the *Thematic WG on ESL*<sup>26</sup>.

In this Report the Working Group presented the EU Key policy messages reinforcing the need for a comprehensive approach to ESL. Here some recommendations:

*Schools cannot and should not work in isolation. The focus on a comprehensive education is strongly recommended by the TWG to EU Members. It provides a definition of the facts and figures related to ESL in Europe, the implication of the high rates of ESL on the European Economy and consequences for its future*<sup>27</sup>.

The report contains further recommendations to policy makers to make educational policies successful.

It focuses on the measures which should be implemented by local school government in order to reduce the rate of school leaving by 2020 to below 10%, considering the prevention action to detect the problem at early childhood stage, the intervention measures once the problem is evidenced, the compensation actions needed to get over the problems and make new paths possible.

The report contains furthermore some recommendations and Annex where more facts and figures around the topic ESL are given, providing good examples of Case studies in Europe of successful strategies or projects carried out by EU Members.

---

<sup>25</sup> *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support-Thematic WG on ESL-Final Repor, November. 2013*

<sup>26</sup> idem

<sup>27</sup> idem

The EU may assist Member States in preparing more coherent and comprehensive strategies to reduce early school leaving.

Several measures are introduced at EU level, laying down a common European Framework for policies to tackle early school leaving and ensuring that comprehensive national strategies are adopted by Member States; strategies should be aimed at<sup>28</sup>:

- Adopting a communication on Education and Early childhood which will highlight their effect on the **prevention of early school leaving**;
- Adopting a communication on European **strategy for integration** which will take into account the necessity to tackle early school leaving by children from a migrant background;
- Implementing a strategy for the **modernisation of vocational education** and training including specific action against school drop-out;
- Proposing reference criteria to measure the **employability of young people**;
- Forming a European-level group of decision-makers to assist in determining effective measures and practices to meet the common challenges for Member States;
- Organising debates, discussions and conferences to promote the adoption of new strategies and measures and highlight **good practices**;
- More intensive use of the **Life Long Learning programs** and the research and innovation related programmes to support innovative approaches to reduce early school leaving;
- Add focus and rigour **to investments** made under European **Structural Funds** to tackle early school leaving.

---

<sup>28</sup> Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("[Education and Training 2020](#)") [Official Journal C 119 of 28.5.2009]

## The Working Group on ECEC<sup>29</sup>

The *Working Group on Early Childhood Education Care* (ECEC) has developed European reference tools to monitor and evaluate the quality of early childhood education and care systems focusing on intervention at an early age in different countries in the education as well as social, family and health sectors.

The group identifies and analyses success criteria of effective policies to develop guidance for national policy makers. It focuses on five main aspects of quality in early childhood education and care:

- Access
- Job market
- Curriculum
- Evaluation
- Governance/Funding

The group brings together representatives from 25 EU Member States plus Turkey and Norway, the *EURYDICE network*<sup>30</sup>, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (*ETUCE*) and the *OECD*<sup>31</sup>. Its final report was issued in the second half of 2014.<sup>32</sup>

Disadvantaged children are often at risk of poor outcomes in their education and may need additional support in order to reach their goals.

However, Participation in early childhood education and care programs (ECEC) from a very young age, improves the likelihood that children from such backgrounds will be successful in their education, and reduces their chances of becoming socially excluded.

---

<sup>29</sup> EU Commission, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*. 2014, Brussels

<sup>30</sup> The *Eurydice network* supports and facilitates European cooperation in the field of lifelong learning by providing information on education systems and policies in 37 countries and by producing studies on issues common to European education systems.

<sup>31</sup> OECD, *PISA 2012 Results: Excellence Through Equity: Giving Every Student the Chance to Succeed (Volume II)*. PISA, OECD Publishing

<sup>32</sup> European Commission, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*. 2014 Edition, Brussels.

One of the main challenges for this stage of education is, therefore, to guarantee:

- Equal access
- Equality of opportunity to all children regardless their socio-economic, cultural and/or linguistic background.

For these and other reasons, improving accessibility to and the quality of ECEC has been included in the European educational policy agenda. The studies provided data on the numbers of children in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion and examined the general arrangements for admission, funding, teaching and learning. This work explores the specific measures introduced by European countries to ensure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds participate in ECEC and, in doing so, lay the foundations for future success in school and later life. The approaches and criteria used to identify children with potential additional needs have been studied. In particular whether the countries use *a target group approach or an individual approach*. The measures introduced by central authorities to provide targeted support for these children, including help with language learning as well as support for other learning and development. It also examines the special staffing, organisational or funding arrangements made to support settings. Finally, the provision of specific training to help *ECEC* staff to meet the particular needs of disadvantaged children, has been analysed.

### ***Related acts***

The two Working Groups issued the following reports:

- ❖ *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, 2014 Edition.*
- ❖ *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support-Thematic WG on ESL-Final Report Nov. 2013*

Council Conclusions on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (“Education and Training 2020”)<sup>33</sup> can be found at the following link:

---

<sup>33</sup> Eurydice, 2013. *Education and Training in Europe 2020: Responses from the EU Member States*. Eurydice Report. Brussels.

[http://www.indire.it/lucabas/lkmw\\_file/eurydice///Report\\_EU2020.pdf](http://www.indire.it/lucabas/lkmw_file/eurydice///Report_EU2020.pdf)

It is divided into 4 sections where ESL is analysed at different levels of intervention.

Section 1: Tackling Early School Leaving

Section 2: Improving Attainment Levels and the Quality of Higher Education

Section 3: Improving Skills and Vet for Youth Employment

Section 4: Increasing Adult Participation in Lifelong Learning<sup>34</sup>

There is a summary about what is going on in some countries, for tackling this difficult issue , even if it doesn't cover all the EU Countries it provides best practices already adopted in Europe.

---

<sup>34</sup> Eurydice, 2013. *Education and Training in Europe 2020: Responses from the EU Member States*. Eurydice Report. Brussels.



## Chapter 4 - LEARNING PROCESS

---

### The concept of balance

Individual needs are often regarded as an expression of an *imbalance* and the satisfaction of these needs are an indicator of rebalancing. In other words the term *balance* can be referred to the idea of *compensation*.

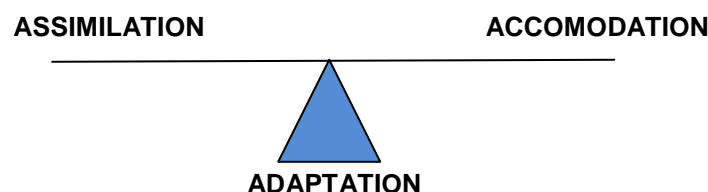
As far as ESL is concerned, it is known that pupils at risk with poor school results face a great deal of discomfort, and they might not be able to integrate in the class group if left behind. At this point a sense of loss might occur while trying hard to find a balance if adults are not able to help and provide support.

In fact, each individual, when facing a problem, needs to compensate in order to find a balance. Many authors and scholars like Piaget, one of the first to theorize this concept, have spent a lot of time discussing and writing about it.

I will consider a theoretical approach following Piaget<sup>35</sup> studies on childhood, where he discusses the concept of *balance* which has been taken up by various psychological schools afterwards.

He stated that all organisms have an innate tendency to create a harmonious relationship between themselves and their environment. For Piaget adaptation is a balance between assimilation and accommodation:

Figure 5 represents this theory:



---

<sup>35</sup> Jean Piaget, *Lo sviluppo mentale del bambino*, Einaudi, pages. 104-116

*Gestalt* theory (Gestalt psychology was a school of thought that looked at the human mind and behavior as a whole, rather than attempting to break them up into smaller parts). Has expanded this method of interpretation to the cognitive structures (perception and intelligence) and K. Lewin<sup>36</sup> has developed this theory in his studies about social psychology.

A living being, in relation to its environment, is able to find a balance, from that position to homeostasis and what is necessary for its life: it is an inner quality and any kind of imbalances can lead to pathological, organic or psychological disorder.

If a child is exposed to an imbalance of any kind, caused by internal or external factors, inevitably he/she will face some kind of disorders that might have a negative impact on his educational or relational responses.

The period of learning has to be considered always in relationship with the environment in which the child is born and grows. Any form of imbalance will inevitably lead to an attempt to compensate for what the environment or the family or the system has caused in him.

In this chapter most of the factors having an impact on the child outcomes at school or in the society will be considered. We have already spoken about the learning process, and it is obvious that the learning process produces a change in the behavior, related to learning by experience.

But learning is different from development process. This is largely influenced by the difficult task to separate internal factors from external as it has been already described in the appropriate chapter describing the different factors influencing ESL and students outcomes.

## **The Neuroscience approach**

Neuroscience should be at the roots of an efficient approach to ESL. It brings value-added to policy educational policies and can substantially contribute to improving their efficacy. The contribution of Neuroscience<sup>37</sup> to education takes different forms and involves other branches of knowledge and research.

---

<sup>36</sup> Kurt Lewin , *The complete social scientist*, Editor Martin Gold, 2013

<sup>37</sup> OECD, *Understanding the Brain: The Birth of a Learning Science*, 2007



On many questions, neuroscience builds on the conclusions of existing knowledge from other sources, such as psychological study, classroom observation or surveys and evaluation.

Some examples related to the pupils' outcomes are often taken into account: (i.e. improving education performances with a better nutrition, the adolescence problems, or that confidence and motivation can be critical to educational success are not new to this scientific approach.

However, the contribution of neurology is relevant even for results already known because:

- it is opening up understanding of “*causation not just correlation*”; and moving important questions from the realm of the intuitive or ideological into that of evidence
- Revealing the mechanisms through which effects are produced, it can help identifying effective interventions and solutions<sup>38</sup>.

On other questions, neuroscience is generating new knowledge, opening up new avenues.

Without understanding the brain activity, it would be:

- impossible to know the different brain activities associated with expert performers compared with new learners
- how learning can be an effective response to the decline of ageing,
- learning difficulties which are apparent in particular students
- deepening the knowledge base of what constitutes learning as a central aspect of human and social life, and in ways, which cut across the different institutional arrangements called “education”.

Neuroscience is developing the means for revealing hidden characteristics in individuals, which can be used for remedial purposes – to overcome reading problems or dyscalculia for instance. Eventually, they may also be used to select or improve performance or exclude, raising a raft of ethical issues.

Neuroscience is moreover able to:

- inform how best to design and arrange different educational practices
- explain the match between findings on how best learning takes place and when

---

<sup>38</sup> OECD, *Understanding the Brain: The Birth of a Learning Science*, 2007

- how education is conventionally organised

Brain research provides important neurological evidence to support the broad aim of lifelong learning and confirms the wider benefits of learning, especially for ageing populations.

One of the most powerful set of findings concerned with learning concerns the brain's remarkable properties of "*plasticity*" to adapt, to grow in relation to experienced needs and practice, and to prune itself when parts become unnecessary – which continues throughout the lifespan, including far further into old age than had previously been imagined.

The demands made on the individual and on his or her learning are keys to the plasticity – *the more you learn, the more you can learn*.

Neuroscience is more concentrated on young people – the powerful learning capacity of young people notwithstanding – even if neuroscience has shown that ***learning is a lifelong activity*** and that the more that it continues the more effective it is.

As the demands for having an evidence-base on which to ground policy and practice, it has become even more important to broaden the understanding of the "wider benefits" of education beyond the economic criteria which so often dominate policy cost-benefit analyses. There is growing evidence to show for instance that educational participation can have powerful benefits in terms of health or civic participation. The effect of the wider benefits of lifelong learning have proved to have a positive outcome also at a later stage on society.

Learning and well-being are strongly linked in our society, but are not always considered as working in synergy, or measured.

A good attempt to investigate into this matter has been found in the research study carried out by a report on "*Social Outcomes of Learning*<sup>39</sup>" (OECD 2007).

---

<sup>39</sup> OECD (2007) "*Social Outcomes of Learning*", page 9

This study takes into account the health benefits of learning. Following this study, the positive aspects of learning are related to better quality of life, related to better career income, and general better well-being. As well as preventing illness, it helps to treat illness more efficiently and can help people to live more positively a healthier life. Education helps people to make healthier choices for them and for their family.

In this view<sup>40</sup>, education is seen as producing three levels of effect:

1. indirect: effect of education on health
2. directly: changing individual competences and level of self-esteem
3. intergenerational: effects of educated parents on the health of their children

In fact education can help people to lead healthy lifestyle, makes better choices for their health and making them stronger and aware when facing health problem. Learning makes people happier, a pre-condition to a healthier lifestyle.

The Neuroscience approach makes easier to understand the brain and its response to learning process and to improve the achievements through the stimulus received by learning process; this is crucial if are trying to improve the pupils' outcomes during their educational career.

Besides, the Neuroscience approach has highlighted the arguments about the wider benefits of learning: like i.e. the enormous and costly problems represented by senile dementia in ever-ageing populations can be addressed through the learning interventions being identified through neuroscience.

Combinations of improved diagnostics, opportunities to exercise, appropriate and validated pharmacological treatment, and good educational intervention can do much to maintain positive well-being and to prevent deterioration.

And this has to start as soon as possible; since the approach to the learning process is not only educational but scientific, understanding the phenomena related to future development of educational outcomes, becomes an interrelated and integrated process, which should start as early as possible.

Learning can improve CSE<sup>41</sup> (civic and social engagement) and this leads inevitably to more self-esteem and motivation in individuals.

---

<sup>40</sup> OECD, *Understanding the Social Outcomes of Learning*, (2007) page 12-13

Policy makers should think about the direct consequences when modify or intervening on education systems, it is logical to look to schools as a means to enhance the CSE of young people.

In fact learning experiences can foster CSE in number of ways:

- it improves people's knowledge that facilitates CSE.
- It develops competencies that help people apply, contribute and develop their knowledge in CSE.
- It contributes to foster values, attitudes, beliefs, and motivations that encourage CSE.
- It increases the social status – making possible to individuals and their children to “*climb the social ladder*”

There could not be a better way to improve the student's performances, prior condition to prevent school failure, than considering the scientific approach and educational choices strongly interwoven.

## Childhood

*The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life.*

*Plato*

Quality Early Childhood Education and Care is central for Neuroscience. This has been partly driven by research indicating the importance of quality early experiences to children's short-term cognitive, social and emotional development, as well as to their long-term success in school and later life. The equitable access to **quality pre-school education** and care has been recognised as **key** to laying the foundations of lifelong learning for all children and supporting the broad educational and social needs of families.

---

<sup>41</sup> idem

In most OECD countries, the tendency is to give all children at least two years of free public provision of education before the start of compulsory schooling; governments are thus seeking to improve staff training and working conditions and to develop appropriate pedagogical frameworks for young children.

Besides this, from early researchers (Piaget, 1968; Carey, 1985<sup>42</sup>) to more recent studies, there is a common understanding about the fact that, early exposure to quality education at this stage brings together better chances of developing skills and competences which in the future will lead to better educational attainments.

Neuroscience will not be able to provide solutions to all the challenges facing early childhood education and care but neurology findings can be expected to provide useful insights for informed decision-making in this field.

Very young children are able to develop sophisticated understandings of the phenomena around them – they are “active learners.”<sup>43</sup>

Even at the moment of birth, the child’s brain is not a *tabula rasa*.

The domain of early learning is wide, includes linguistics, psychology, biology, and physics as well as how language, people, animals, plants and objects work. Early education needs to take good account of both the distinctive mind and individual conceptualisation of young children and this will help to identify the preferred modes of learning, e.g. through play.<sup>44</sup>

According to Alison Gopnik at the New York Forum co-organised by CERI and the Sackler Institute, a child develops theories about the world extremely early and revises them in light of his experience.

Infants have a competence for numbers. Research has indicated that very young infants, in the first months of life, already attend to the number of objects in their environment.

There is also evidence that infants can operate with numbers (Dehaene, 1997). They develop mathematical skills through interaction with the environment and by building upon their initial number sense.

---

<sup>42</sup> Carey, S. 1985. *Conceptual Change in Childhood*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press

<sup>43</sup> US National Research Council, 1999

<sup>44</sup> Gopnik A. “*Cognitive development and Learning sciences: State of the Art*” presentation at the 1st CERI Forum on “*Brain Mechanisms and Early Learning*”, Sackler Institute, New York, 2000

The educational question is then how best to build upon the already-existing competence of children. Is there an optimal timing and are there any preferred modes of learning?

There has long been a general belief among the non-specialists that from birth to 3 years of age, children are the most receptive to learning<sup>45</sup>.

On this view, if children have not been exposed fully and completely to various stimuli, they will not be able to recuperate the benefits of early stimulus later on in life. Moreover, this can cause easier future school underachievement or low marks.

However, even for the skills for which sensitive periods exist, the capacity to learn will not be lost even after the sensitive period.

For more comprehensive understanding of how the experience during early childhood affects later development, a large cohort study would be required.

Sensitive periods do nevertheless exist in certain areas of learning such as language acquisition.

This does not imply that it is impossible to learn a foreign language after a certain age and studies have shown that the effectiveness of learning depends on the aspect of language in question. Neville (OECD, 2000) has noted that *second language learning* involves both comprehension and production calling for the mastery of different processes.

Two of these grammar and semantic processing rely on different neural systems within the brain. Grammar processing relies more on frontal regions of the left hemisphere, whereas semantic processing (e.g. vocabulary learning) activates the posterior lateral regions of both the left and right hemispheres. The later that grammar is learned, the more active is the brain in the learning process.

Instead of processing grammatical information only with the left hemisphere, late learners process the same information with both hemispheres. This indicates that delaying exposure to language leads the brain to use a different strategy when processing grammar.

Confirmatory studies have additionally shown that the subjects with this bilateral activation in the brain had significantly more difficulty in using grammar

---

<sup>45</sup> Bruer, J.T.(1997) *Education and the Brain: a Bridge too far*”, Educational Research, Vol.26(8), pp. 14-16

correctly the bilateral activation indicates greater difficulty in learning. Thus, the earlier the child is exposed to the grammar of a foreign language, the easier and faster it is mastered. Semantic learning continues throughout life and it is not constrained in time.

This topic will be again considered in a further chapter dedicated to migrant pupils, which are very often more more at risk of becoming ESL.

Another example of sensitive periods is during the acquisition of speech sounds.

Studies show that young infants in the first few months of their lives are capable of discriminating the subtle but relevant differences between similar-sounding consonants and between similar sounding vowels, for both native and foreign languages.

New-born babies can learn to discriminate difficult speech-sounds contrasts in a couple of hours even while they are sleeping, contrary to the common opinion that sleep is a sedentary state during which such capacities as attention and learning are reduced or absent.

During the first year of life, however, this capacity in relation to non-native language is narrowed down as sensitivity to the sounds of their native language grows. This decline in non-native perception occurs during the first year of life, with the sharpest decline between eight and ten months.<sup>46</sup>

This change enhances the efficiency of the brain function by adapting to the natural environment. It should be noted that it is not sufficient to just make young infants listen to foreign languages through CDs in order to maintain the sensitivity towards foreign speech sounds.

The acquisition of non-native speech sounds is nevertheless possible outside the sensitive period and 3- to 6-years-old children can learn to distinguish non-native speech sounds in natural language environment within two months without any special training. McCandliss (2000) suggests that, with short-term training, Japanese native adults can learn to distinguish the speech sounds r and l<sup>47</sup>.

---

<sup>46</sup> OECD, *Understanding the Brain: The Birth of a Learning Science*, 2007 Report, pp. 45

<sup>47</sup> Mc Candliss, „*Cortical Circuitry of Word Reading*“, presentation at 1st CERI Forum, June 2000

However, as the most important aspect of language learning is to be able to communicate which does not necessarily require an accurate distinction of speech sounds, it is an open question whether it is necessary to invest time in training to distinguish foreign speech sounds, bearing in mind the level of accuracy required in different situations.

## Adolescence

*The foundation of every state is the education of its youth.*

Diogenes Laertius

Before brain-imaging technologies became available, it was widely believed among scientists, including psychologists, that the brain was largely a finished product by the age of 12.

One reason for this belief is that the actual size of the brain grows very little over the childhood years. By the time a child reaches the age of six, the brain is already 90-95% of its adult size. In spite of its size, the adolescent brain can be understood as “work in progress”.

Brain imaging has revealed that both brain volume and myelination continue to grow throughout adolescence until the young adult period (i.e., between ages 20-30).

Brain imaging studies on adolescents undertaken by Jay Giedd at the *United States National Institute of Mental Health* show that not only is the adolescent brain far from mature, but that both *grey and white matters* undergo extensive structural changes well past puberty<sup>48</sup>.

Some studies show that there is a second wave of proliferation and pruning that occurs later in childhood and that the final critical part of this second wave, affecting some of our highest mental functions, occurs in late teens.

*This neural waxing and waning alters the number of synapses between neurons*<sup>49</sup>.

---

<sup>48</sup> Giedd, J. N. (2004) *Structural Magnetic Resonance of the Adolescent Brain*“, Annals of the NY Academy of sciences, vol. 1021, pp. 77-85

<sup>49</sup> idem



Thanks to the contribution of research<sup>50</sup> the learning process and the stimuli the brain receives, has revealed to be so important at this stage, that any traumatic experience in the educational process undergone, is fundamental to the development.

To a considerable extent, there has been uncritical acceptance or assertion about the early childhood experiences and their later impact on behaviour. The degree to which crime, anti-social behaviour and other societal problems may be eliminated by “prevention” programs in early childhood is yet, not the subject of empirical investigation. The claims stem from a relatively small number of longitudinal studies, based on US populations, attesting an array of benefits, which start from high quality early childhood programmes (Lynch, 2004). Yet it is also clear that brief interventions in the preschool years are unlikely to achieve life-changing and life-lasting benefit for all children (Károly et al., 1998, 2001). Yet early engagement with children is clearly important given the fluidity of development at this period. There is ample evidence that gains from early intervention programmes that address cognitive and other areas, particularly centre-based programmes, are maintained for long periods for many children.<sup>51</sup> The effects of early childhood programmes continue into primary school, although the rate at which effects are sustained may depend on the quality of learning environment encountered by children at school. The early years of a child’s life are pivotal to his/her later social, academic and physiological development.

## **The Neuroscience Holistic Approach**

A scientific approach<sup>52</sup> is needed to focus on the learning process; neuroscience can explain the development of the brain throughout life. The brain development, which takes place from birth to adulthood, during the adolescence period, undergoes a period of changes that have a great influence over future student educational performances.

---

<sup>50</sup>OECD, *Understanding the Brain: The Birth of a Learning Science*, 2007 Report, pp. 45

<sup>51</sup> idem, pages. 172-173

<sup>52</sup> idem, pages 155-158

The secondary phase of education is conventionally covered by this phase, with key decisions to be made with long-lasting consequences regarding personal, educational, and career options.

At this time, young people are in the midst of adolescence, with well-developed cognitive capacity (high horsepower) but are still emotionally immature (poor steering).

It is clear that, if we were not aware of the neuro-cognitive structure of our brain it would be impossible to understand why problems occur more frequently during this stage of the brain evolution of individuals.

Neuroscience covers also those aspects related to other aspects of individual response to the stimulus received at educational level.

It also provides a scientific explanation about the impact produced to pupils when stressful situations occur during their school career. What happens to their self-esteem when school results are not responding to their expectations?

It also tells us more about what it means for our brain to grow and be educated in a safe, respectful context, and how much influence the school system plays on our well-being.

It also tell us much about learning disorders provoked by mental pathologies, like those described in the section dedicated to the mental disorders which might affect learners.

Neuroscience uses a holistic approach based on the interdependence of body and mind, the emotional and the cognitive with such a strong focus on cognitive performance , in countries and internationally. There is the risk of developing a narrow understanding of what education is for.

Far from the focus on the brain reinforcing an exclusively cognitive, performance-driven bias, it actually suggests the need for a holistic approach, which recognise the close interdependence of physical and intellectual well-being, and the close interplay of the emotional and cognitive, the analytical and the creative arts.

The ways in which the benefits of having a good diet, exercise, and sleep enough, affect learning, are increasingly understood through their effects in the brain.

For older people, cognitive engagement (such as playing chess or doing crossword puzzles), regular physical exercise and an active social life promote learning and can delay degeneration of the ageing brain.

For young people, positive cognitive engagement on the other hand might be responsible of their future career choices and success or failure.

This study shows not only how emotions play a key part in the functioning of the brain, but the processes whereby the emotions affect all the others.

Especially important for *educational purposes* is the analysis of fear and stress, which shows how they, for instance, reduce analytical capacity, and vice versa how positive emotions open doors within the brain.

This is just as relevant for the adult student confronted by an uncomfortable return to education as it does for the young person confronted by the unfamiliar demands of secondary or higher education. It has an equity dimension, for fear of failure, lack of confidence, and such problems as “maths anxiety” are likely to be found in significantly greater measure among those from less privileged backgrounds.

We need to understand better what adolescence is (high power, poor steering). This report is particularly revealing about the nature of adolescence in terms of the stage of brain development in the teenage years and particularly in terms of emotional maturation.

The insights provided by neuroscience on adolescence and the changes, which take place during the teenage years, are especially important as this is the period when so much takes place in an individual’s educational career. The secondary phase of education is conventionally covered by this phase, with key decisions to be made with long-lasting consequences regarding personal, educational, and career options. At this time, young people are in the midst of adolescence, with well-developed cognitive capacity (high horsepower) but emotional immaturity (poor steering).

Clearly, this cannot imply that important choices should simply be delayed until adulthood. It does suggest, with the additional powerful weight of neurological evidence, that the options taken should not take the form of definitively closing doors. There needs to be stronger differentiation of further learning opportuni-

ties (formal and informal) and greater recognition of the trajectories of adolescent maturation.

Neuroscience also has developed the key concept “emotional regulation”. Managing emotions are one of the key skills of being an effective learner. Emotional regulation affects complex factors such as the ability to focus attention, solve problems, and support relationships. Given the “poor steering” of adolescence and the value of fostering emotional maturity in young people at this key stage, it may well be fruitful to consider how this might be introduced into the curriculum and to develop programmes to do this.

We need to consider timing and periodicity when dealing with curriculum issues.

The studies of scholars, like Piaget have long influenced our understanding of learning linked to individual development. Educational neuroscience is now permitting the qualification of the Piagetian models (including demonstration of the capacities already possessed by young infants), while broadening the understanding of timing and optimal learning through the study of “sensitive” periods.

The message emerging from this report is a nuanced one: there are no “critical periods” when learning must take place, and indeed the neuro-scientific understanding of lifetime “plasticity” shows that people are always open to new learning.

On the other hand, it has given precision to the notion of “sensitive periods” – the ages when the individual is particularly primed to engage in specific learning activities.

The example of language learning is featured prominently in this report, and is a key subject in an increasingly global world. In general, the earlier foreign language instruction begins the more efficient and effective it can be.

Such learning shows distinct patterns of the brain activity in infants compared with school-age children compared with adults: at older ages more areas of the brain are activated and learning is less efficient. Even so, adults are perfectly capable of learning a new language.

This report has also dispelled myths about the dangers of multilingual learning interfering with native language competence; indeed, children learning another language reinforce the competences in their mother tongue.

These are important questions for education. These findings deepen the basis on which to pose questions about when in the lifespan certain types of learning should be undertaken, grounded on evidence rather than tradition. They support the importance of laying a very strong foundation for lifelong learning, hence further emphasise the key role of early childhood education and basic schooling, not as ends in themselves but as giving the best possible start.

At the same time, the report has warned against over-emphasising the determining importance of the age's birth to three years on later learning.

Neuroscience can make a key contribution to major learning challenges.

## **Learning disorders:**

Neuroscience is already making a great contribution to the diagnosis phase of identification effective interventions that are commonly termed as the "3-Ds": dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dementia.

### **Dyslexia**

Until recently, the causes of dyslexia were unknown, but now it is understood that it results primarily from atypical features of the auditory cortex (and maybe, sometimes, of the visual cortex). Only recently has it been possible to identify these features at a very young age. Early interventions are usually more successful than later intervention, but both are possible.

### **Dyscalculia**

The causes of Dyscalculia are very similar to those as dyslexia, though early identification and hence interventions are well less developed. Very often, as in many of these cases, pupils seem to lack of motivation, or willingness to learning. There is a tendency to reward good students and underestimate to "bad" ones, those having more difficult learning skills.

This is a disorder which, is also late diagnosed, sometimes never, teachers and parents simply think that pupils are "*Not good at maths*", underestimating the

problem, as it can end up in poor school results and consequent failure or demotivation, leading to ESL. Early Warning signs as this, should never be forgotten.

## **Dementia**

The very significant findings about learning and dementia have been mentioned above, and education is being identified as an effective, desirable source of “prevention” to among other things delay the onset of Alzheimer’s symptoms and reduce their gravity.

On the more general understanding of literacy, the dual importance of phonological and direct semantic processing in the brain during reading in English suggests that a balanced approach to literacy instruction may be most effective for non-shallow alphabetic languages. As for shallow orthographies, neuroscience seems to confirm the appropriateness of “syllabic methods” to learn reading, and there is interesting potential to be explored in comparisons between alphabetic and non-alphabetic languages on reading acquisition.

On numeracy, since humans are born with a biological inclination to understand the world numerically, formal mathematics instruction should build upon existing informal numerical understandings. Because number and space are tightly linked in the brain, instructional methods that link number with space are powerful teaching tools.

More personalised assessment to improve learning, not to select and exclude the potential of brain imaging could have very far-reaching consequences for education, as well as raising critical ethical issues. Knowledge about how the brain functions, and about how competence and mastery are reflected in brain structures and process, can be applied at a system-wide level, interrogating conventional educational arrangements and practices to ask whether we organise them for optimal learning. Many conventional forms of assessment, where success can be boosted by cramming, have been shown to be “brain-unfriendly” with low retained comprehension.

Nevertheless, beyond these general findings, the results of neuroscience may eventually also be applied on individual learners to find out such matters as whether they really comprehend certain material, or about their levels of motiva-

tion or anxiety. Used properly, this individual focus may add fundamentally powerful diagnostic tools to the process of formative assessment (OECD, 2005) and personalised learning.

This relates to the pursuit in a number of countries of greater “personalisation” of curricula and educational practices (OECD, 2006).

Neuro-imaging potentially offers a powerful additional mechanism on which to base personalisation. At the same time, studies of the brain show that individual characteristics are far from fixed – there is constant interaction between genetic function and experience and plasticity, such that the notion of what constitutes an individual’s capacities should be treated with considerable caution.

However, on the other side, such individual applications of neuro-imaging may also lead to even more powerful devices for selection and exclusion than are currently available. A biological CV would be open to profound risks, while being potentially attractive to such users as universities or employers.

## **Mental disorders**

### **Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder**

There are some other disorders, which have been frequently diagnosed in recent years, which can badly affect school results and pupils’ life. It is about *Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder* (ADHD).

It is included in this list because some cases are later recognised; sometimes it is resulting in a difficult understanding of the reasons behind the lateness in some pupil learning process.

Nowadays schools and institutions are much aware of the dimension of this deficit and good progress have been made by psychiatrics and psychologist in training teachers to recognise early symptoms.

However, still many cases of pupils of failing diagnosed cases of ADHD are reported, putting the pupils’ and families in despair, as the causes are frequently associated to SES or to lack of motivation, causing sense of guilt in the families.

Despite being the most commonly studied and diagnosed psychiatric disorder in children and adolescents, the cause in the majority of cases is unknown, recent studies show that it might be caused by unbalance in the neurotransmitter of the brain structure. It affects about 6–7% of children.

## **Schizophrenia**

It is a mental disorder, often characterized by abnormal social behaviour and failure to recognize what is real. Common symptoms include beliefs, unclear, reduced social engagement and emotional expression, and inactivity. Diagnosis is based on observed behaviour and the patient reported experiences. The pupils fail to accomplish with school tasks, are often interrupting or retained at school, need extra-support, depending on the stage of the pathology.

They have a shorter life expectancy mainly due to the use of medical treatments and exposure to mental disorder and depression. They need psychiatric support and have a higher tendency 5% of them, commit suicide.

Symptoms begin typically in young adulthood, and about 0.3–0.7% of people are affected during their lifetime. The disorder is thought to affect the ability to think, but it also usually contributes to chronic problems with behaviour and emotion.

Schizophrenia is not necessarily associated with failure to succeed, there have been cases, like John Nash, an American mathematician, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1994, but those are isolated cases rather than the normality, which presents all the drawbacks of a severe pathologies investing the all life of the subject involved.

## **Bipolar disorder**

Also known as bipolar affective disorder (and originally called manic-depressive illness), is a mental disorder characterized by periods of elevated mood and periods. The elevated mood is significant and is known as *mania* or *hypomania* depending on the severity or whether there is psychosis. During *mania* an individual feels or acts abnormally happy, energetic, or irritable. They often make



poorly, cannot concentrate and lose interest in what are studying, take decisions with little regard to the consequences. The need for sleep is usually reduced.

During periods of depression there may be crying, with poor eye contact with others, and a negative outlook on life. The risk of suicide among those with the disorder is high at greater than 6% over 20 years, while self-harm occurs in 30–40%. Other mental health issues such as anxiety disorder and drug misuse are commonly associated.

In a recent study published about the neuropsychological status of youth with bipolar disorder (BPD) it was associated with impairments on subtests reflecting sustained attention, working memory and processing speed after controlling for ADHD.

Additionally, decrements of moderate effect sizes were found for measures of interference control, abstract problem solving, and verbal learning, but did not meet criteria for statistical significance. This leads to scholastic underachievement and future performances.

There is also a connection between the last pathologies described, in fact after controlling for ADHD, youth with BPD show neuropsychological deficits similar to impairments found in adults with the disorder. Further studies are needed to understand the clinical implications of these impairments, as well as their role in the underlying risk for paediatric BPD.

The following chapter looks initially at the approaches and criteria used to identify children with potential additional needs. In particular, whether countries use *a target group approach* or focus on the needs of *individuals*.

Measures introduced by central authorities to provide targeted support for these children, include help with language learning, as well as support for other learning and development.

Finally, the provision of specific training to help ECEC staff meet the particular needs of disadvantaged children.



## Chapter 5 - CRITERIA TO IDENTIFY PUPILS AT RISK

---

### Target group approach vs. Individual approach.

All European countries without exception, have adopted measures to provide support for children who have additional educational and/or developmental needs. There are two main approaches to identifying these children:

- *target groups* that meet defined criteria.
- *Individual approach* may be taken, (where specific needs are assessed and determined on a case-by-case basis).

Most countries/regions have adopted a *target group* approach, while an *individual approach*, on its own, is used in only six education systems (i.e. Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, the United Kingdom –Scotland- and Iceland).

However, about a dozen European education systems use a combination of these two approaches.

Where a *target group* approach is adopted, various criteria are used to identify the groups of children most likely to be in need of additional support in their education.

#### **Criteria**

The main criteria taken into consideration are:

- Cultural and/or linguistic
- Socio-economic and geographical criteria

Some countries (i.e. Belgium (Flemish Community), the Czech Republic, Spain, Greece and Romania) apply all three types of criteria.

Family status (for example, children living with only one parent or with foster parents) may be taken into account, but this is less common.

Cultural and/or linguistic criteria apply in most European countries. Generally, this refers to migrant children and those from ethnic minorities who may have substantial cultural differences from the general population as well as insufficient knowledge of the language of instruction (e.g. Greek and Turkish minorities in Bulgaria; Italian and Hungarian minorities in Slovenia, etc.).

### **Target group approach**

Most countries/regions have adopted a *target group approach*, while an *individual approach*, on its own, is used in only six education systems (i.e. Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, the United Kingdom -Scotland- and Iceland). However, about a dozen European education systems use a combination of these two approaches.

Where a *target group approach* is adopted, the main criteria taken into consideration are *cultural* and/or *linguistic*; *socio-economic* and *geographical* criteria are also widely used.

Some countries (i.e. Belgium/Flemish Community), the Czech Republic, Spain, Greece and Romania) prefer to use a target approach; while others (like Italy i.e.) use an individual approach. Family status (for example, children living with only one parent or with foster parents) may also be taken into account, but this is less common.

### ***Cultural and/or linguistic criteria***

*Cultural and/or linguistic criteria* apply in most European countries. Generally, this refers to *migrant children* and those from ethnic minorities who may have substantial cultural differences from the general population as well as insufficient knowledge of the language of instruction (e.g. Greek and Turkish minorities in Bulgaria; Italian and Hungarian minorities in Slovenia, etc.).

In a few countries (e.g. the Czech Republic, Croatia and Slovenia), Roma children are a target group the main objective here is to increase their participation in ECEC.

In other countries, children of asylum seekers are targeted (e.g. in *kleuteronderwijs* in Belgium (Flemish Community) and *mateřské školy* in the Czech Republic) with a view to facilitating their integration into the respective education system.

Children with cultural/linguistic differences usually receive additional help in learning the language of instruction. They might be supported in maintaining their ethnic and linguistic identity, (as is the case in Poland, Slovenia and Finland).

### ***Socio-Economy Status criterion (SES)***

*Socio-economic criteria* are applied in around half of European education systems in order to identify children with potential additional needs. In most cases, these are income related (e.g. in Belgium, *Flemish Community* and the Czech Republic) or employment related (low work intensity).

However, poor housing conditions or the educational level of parents (e.g. in Slovakia) may also be taken into account. The main objective of targeting socio-economically disadvantaged groups is to reduce the impact of poverty on children's educational attainment.

It is important to note that socio-economic status criteria are different from one country to another. They will of course be different if we are considering a country with a solid economy rather than a less developed or poorer country. These differences are better analysed in the following chapter, where more examples will be given taking into account the geographical position of some country.

### ***Geographical criteria***

Geographical criteria generally refer to economically and socially disadvantaged areas within a town/city or region where children may be at risk of poor educational outcomes or social exclusion. In Greece, France, Italy and Cyprus'

*education priority zones'* <sup>53</sup> have been established based on socioeconomic, as well as specific educational indicators.

In **Greece**, '*education priority zones*' are characterized by low educational attendance, a high percentage of early school leaving and low take-up of higher education.

In **Norway** since 2010, districts with a high proportion of immigrant children have been identified and offered 20 hours of free care per week ('free core time'). The aim behind the demarcation of such zones is to foster inclusiveness and provide targeted support for disadvantaged children so that they can benefit fully from the education provided.

## **Individual approach**

Where an individual approach is adopted, the assessment of a child's needs generally focuses on three main elements: These are related to:

- The children school performances and development (e.g. in Spain, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Finland and the United Kingdom (Scotland))
- The language support, in the case of migrant children or children from ethnic minorities (e.g. in Germany and Latvia)
- Family support and background environment (e.g. in Spain). Often these elements are inter-linked and considered together in order to provide tailor-made support to a child.

Some professionals take normally part in the evaluation of child educational, psychological and social needs and provide assistance to ECEC educational staff and parents. They may work in systemic ECEC settings (e.g. Austria and Slovenia) or be part of external services (e.g. educational guidance services in Spain).

---

<sup>53</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014. *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe. 2014 Edition*. Eurydice and Eurostat Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union

Support may be provided to children on the premises of the setting (e.g. Luxembourg), or in external premises of the service (e.g. Denmark and Malta).

In Denmark, local authorities provide language assessment tests and further support, if required, to children with language difficulties. In Malta, children with learning difficulties are referred to the Early Intervention Service (usually by parents themselves or by ECEC staff), which has its own assessment procedure to determine the type of intervention required.

### ***Support Measures for children with additional needs.***

As mentioned above, most European countries use socio-economic, linguistic, cultural or geographic criteria to identify specific groups of children who may need additional support in their development and learning in almost all these countries, programmes or other measures have been established at central level to provide these groups of children with support tailored to their needs.

Additional support is provided for disadvantaged children<sup>54</sup> in three main ways:

- specific measures to *support children's development*, learning and attainment, especially language development
- the provision of *additional or specialist staff*
- the establishment of *special organisational and/or funding arrangements*

In some cases, a range of measures is introduced for comprehensive programmes designed to support, for instance, language development and inclusive education (e.g. the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Hungary and Slovakia).

Most countries have introduced centralised measures to support **language development**, as lack of linguistic skills can make harder to cope with the learning process. This kind of support is of three main types:

---

<sup>54</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014. *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*. 2014 Edition. Eurydice and Eurostat Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

- support for ethnic minority children to learn *language of instruction*;
- support for *migrants* to consolidate learning of their *mother tongue*;
- Support for any child with *speech and language difficulties*.

1) Support for learning *the language of instruction* is intended to help children adjust and integrate into school life, and to enable them to access the wider curriculum.

**Germany** is a typical example of a country providing language support to migrants or children from disadvantaged areas. A number of different initiatives (at central and regional level) seek to develop children's language skills and give them daily practice in the language of instruction. The national program *Offensive Frühe Chancen*, for example, funds additional staff in settings operating in disadvantaged areas to support children's language development.

**Estonia** is an example of a country that offers support for learning the official language in ECEC settings. Here, the national curriculum provides for the teaching of Estonian in settings where education and care is delivered in another language.

Additional funds from the state budget are allocated to these settings through local authorities. A specific teaching methodology, supported by materials and staff training has been introduced to facilitate the learning of Estonian as second language in the early years.

2) The second group of language measures focuses on *supporting migrants and minorities in learning their mother tongue*. The objective is to give these children an opportunity to keep their identity and grow up in a bilingual environment. Such measures exist in Poland, Slovenia and Finland.

For instance, in the areas with a high proportion of Italian-speakers in **Slovenia**, the ECEC system provides for the teaching of two languages.

In **Finland**, specific measures are decided locally: they may include support for learning Finnish as a second language; interpreter services to assist communication with parents; specific learning and teaching materials; additional training for staff or the recruitment of staff from a minority background.



- 3) The third group of language support measures is designed for all children who need help in developing in *speech and language skills* in their mother tongue, as is the case in Malta and Austria.

In 2009, **Austria** introduced a framework for supporting the language development of children aged 3-6, which has led to specific measures for all children. Accompanying measures include continuing professional development programs (CPD) for ECEC staff.

Other learning/development support measures are intended to reduce the effects of socio-economic disadvantage and promote equity and social inclusion from an early age. Specific, long-term objectives often refer to improving academic outcomes and prevent early school leaving. Therefore, in some cases, these measures include programmes to ensure that children are ready for the next stage of education, or to promote continuity between ECEC and primary school (e.g. in Cyprus, Romania and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)). The main target group is generally children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

Learning and attainment measures or programmes are in some cases directed at disadvantaged children within a specific geographic area. Greece and Cyprus, for instance, have established a number of educational measures within '*educational priority zones*' in the most deprived regions.

In **Greece**, for instance, a specific curriculum exists in such areas. Similarly, United Kingdom (Wales and Northern Ireland) run central programs in the most disadvantaged areas with the aim of guaranteeing the best possible start in life by providing quality day care. Some countries also specifically target children from the Roma community (e.g. the Czech Republic).

Programmes to reduce the effects of socio-economic disadvantage often assist children through family support programmes.

**Romania** operates a Summer *kindergarten* program (lasting at least 45 days) as a type of catch-up program for children who have missed out on ECEC for socio-economic reasons.

In the **United Kingdom** Sure Start projects offer a broad range of services, which include a developmental programme for 2-3 year olds. The aim is to en-

hance social and emotional development, build on communication and language skills and encourage imagination through play.

Most European countries have initiated special **staffing** measures for ECEC settings, which have either higher numbers of children than normal in need of additional support, or those that operate in targeted geographical areas as in Greece and Cyprus. The most popular staffing measures include providing additional staff, employing specialists and offering opportunities for specific CPD programmes. Additional salary payments are rare. Settings dealing with children with additional needs may employ additional staff under specific circumstances.

In **Spain**, for instance, ECEC settings may increase staff numbers with the aim of reducing socio-economic, cultural or geographical inequalities. They may also take on extra staff, usually at the beginning of the school year, to help children adapt to their new environment.

In order to create a supportive environment for children with additional needs, ECEC settings in some countries often employ specialists such as physiologists, speech therapists, etc.

In other countries, if there are a high number of children with learning difficulties who need regular care from permanent specialists in a setting, expert and well-trained specialists are employed. For example, in Liechtenstein additional staff specialised in remedial teaching (*schulische Heilpädagogik*) are allocated.

Eight educational systems (Belgium – the Flemish Community – some *kinderdagverblijven*), Croatia, Latvia, Poland (older children), Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia (older children) and Norway seek to employ staff from a migrant or minority background.

The staffs are involved in the teaching process to provide language support to migrant children and those from ethnic minorities to help them integrate in ECEC. In some cases, staffs undertake specific training for working with these children. For instance, Norway has launched incentives to encourage settings to employ bilingual assistants and develop their skills in multicultural and bilingual education.

Croatia and Slovenia run projects to train Roma assistants to support Roma children in ECEC, and help to build links between settings and the Roma community. In Latvia and Slovenia, bilingual staff is entitled to additional salary payments.

When dealing with children with additional needs, some countries have introduced measures related to the **organisation** of ECEC settings. These often involve teaching in smaller groups with fewer children or a reduced child/staff ratio

It is important to provide opportunities for education establishments to exchange information with other schools about successful ESL practices. Providing opportunities for schools, in particular schools with similar student populations, to exchange experiences in tackling ESL was found to be a good way of improving results for all parties concerned.

### ***Working with special needs children***

European countries have introduced many programmes and initiatives targeting children with additional needs in their future might be at risk of ESL because of their problems. In addition, this is compulsory for most EU countries. ECEC professionals have a very important role in supporting these children in their daily activities.

They interact, systematically observe children's development and provide individual support. Therefore, ECEC staff needs special training to work with these children who may be from widely varying backgrounds and have different abilities. The additional skills and competences required for this role are usually obtained through specific training included in initial education or later through CPD courses.

Specific training for dealing with children with additional needs is incorporated into the initial education of ECEC staff. The length and content of such training is not addressed as these vary considerably both between countries and, in some cases, between institutions within countries. In most European countries, specific training to prepare ECEC staff for working with children with additional needs is integrated into the initial education process. This training may be com-

pulsory, optional or left to the decision of individual training institutions (institutional autonomy). Furthermore, while in some countries specific training is compulsory for all staff in Belgium (French Community), Denmark, Spain, France, Austria, Slovenia and Turkey, in others, it is only compulsory for staff preparing to work with older children (Romania, Slovakia and Switzerland).

Finally, it should be noted that in some countries staff working with children with additional needs might be assisted by specialists.

### ***Effect on disadvantaged children's reading scores***<sup>55</sup>

It has been widely acknowledged that participation in ECEC is very important for disadvantaged children. PIRLS 2011<sup>56</sup> (*Progress in International Reading Literacy Study*) data supports this view, but it also shows that pre-primary programmes can give all children, regardless of background, a good start in their lifelong learning.

The research study provides information on trends in reading literacy achievement of fourth-grade students, while providing baseline data for new countries. Combining newly developed reading assessment passages and questions for 2011 with a selection of secure assessment passages and questions from 2001 and 2006, PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy) offers a state-of-the-art assessment of reading comprehension that allows measurement of change since 2001, and includes a full complement of questionnaires to investigate the experiences young children have at home and school in learning to read).

Data show that the beneficial impact of ECEC on reading skills is stronger for children from families with a low level of education, than for those children who have at least one parent with tertiary level education. On average, in the EU-28, the reading performances of children who attended ECEC for more than one year and came from families with low levels of education was 18 points higher than the scores for children from the same background who attended ECEC for

---

<sup>55</sup> *Early Childhood Education and Care*, 2014 Edition Eurydice Report

<sup>56</sup> PIRLS, *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study*, (2011) Boston College

only one year or not at all. The impact of ECEC on children from highly educated families corresponded to 9 points.

In half of the European countries with available data, 4th grade children, whose parents had no tertiary education, achieved better results after attending ECEC for at least one year. Score point difference in reading achievement associated with attending ECEC for more than one year for children from families with low educational levels was especially high in Romania – reaching 74 points. In Bulgaria, it was 44 points. The difference was also pronounced in Slovakia and Sweden –over 20 points.

The higher impact of ECEC on academic achievement for children from disadvantaged families seems to decrease as they progress through school. PISA 2012 results in mathematics indicate that in almost all countries, ECEC attendance seemed to make no significant difference to the performance of disadvantaged 15-year-olds in comparison with their better off peers (OECD, 2013).

*In Europe, one out of four children in the 0-5 age group is at risk of poverty or social exclusion.*

In 2012, the number of people who were at risk of poverty or social exclusion was estimated to be 124 million<sup>57</sup> for the EU-28. These statistics demonstrate that EU member states will have to redouble their efforts if the Europe 2020 Strategy headline target of lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2020 is to be met.<sup>58</sup>

Recent European Union *Statistics on Income and Living Conditions* (EU-SILC) shows that in the European Union, nearly 26.0 % of children aged between 0 and 5 are at the risk of poverty or social exclusion. This means that 8.4 million children targeted by ECEC services are either at risk of poverty, or severely materially deprived; or living in a household with a very ‘*low work intensity*’. Children can suffer from more than one dimension of poverty at the same time..

There are children in this age group who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in all countries – the proportion being at or above 10.0 %. Denmark,

---

<sup>57</sup> Eurostat:[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/europe\\_2020\\_indicators/](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/europe_2020_indicators/)

<sup>58</sup> European Commission 13/10, European Council Conclusions 17 June 2010.

with a level of 10.0 %, has the lowest rate of children affected by these phenomena. However, this still means that one in ten of these children is either at risk of poverty, or severely materially deprived; or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

Rates are approximately 10.0-16.0 % in the Netherlands, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and Norway.

By contrast, nearly every second child in Bulgaria (51.4 %) and Romania (47.4 %) is at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Other countries with considerably higher rates than the EU average are Greece, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Hungary and the United Kingdom, all exceeding 30.0 %.

The figures mentioned above are particularly significant as they indicate how many children in ECEC might need specific targeted measures to support their educational needs. The sooner these actions take place the better their learning ability and their subsequent school exit will be.

In the following chapter the research, goes deeper into the socio-economic, linguistic and cultural criteria to identify children at risk will be taken into account. One out of ten households with children under six is jobless.

The ECEC points also out that there is another indicator to be considered. It shows the percentage of jobless households amongst the households with children under the age of six. '*Jobless household*' means that no member is in employment (i.e. all members are either unemployed or inactive). Living in a household affected by **unemployment** may not only place a child at risk of poverty or social exclusion, but also at risk of educational disadvantage.

The EU-28 average percentage of jobless households among households with children aged between zero and five is 11.2 %. This means that just over one in ten households with children below the age of six in the EU are affected by this phenomenon.

Children living in these households may be at risk of educational disadvantage due to unemployment and the financial insecurity of his/her guardians. Two-thirds of countries are below the EU-28 average. Luxembourg has the lowest rate with 2.3 % of jobless households with children under six. Other countries that

display relatively low rates (of less than 6 %) are the Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia and Finland. However, three countries, namely Bulgaria (16.7 %), Ireland (20.1 %) and the United Kingdom (17.4 %), are well above the EU average.<sup>59</sup>

### ***School autonomy and financing of ESL policies in the EU.***

As already stated above, there was a wide degree of support for the approach, which gives schools and other local stakeholders the freedom to choose the activities and programmes as they see fitting best to their local context.

This was seen as something difficult to implement in many EU Member States where the *school funding system* is highly centralised with schools not being used to having any, or hardly any, freedom to invest in practices and activities chosen by them as most expenses such as teachers' salaries, renovations, etc. are paid for or determined directly by the state. Thus, many expect a funding system that would give a freedom for schools to choose how they spend additional funding to be unrealistic to achieve in a matter of few years: it would require a fundamental re-organisation and re-think of the way in which the education system is managed.

A comprehensive strategy has to be geared to make a real difference at a classroom level: classroom-level impact is the most important one. No matter what the national strategy is, it is the classroom level actors that play the most critical role in preventing ESL and those are the ones, which need to be supported if a national strategy is to succeed. Additional facilities and equipment may also be provided to settings.

For instance, in **Slovenia**, children from ethnic minorities are placed in groups with lower child/adult ratio and, in addition, the central level (rather than municipalities) funds the investment in property and equipment in ethnically mixed areas.

---

<sup>59</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key\\_data\\_series/166EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/166EN.pdf)

Around half of European countries have designed special **financial** measures to enable ECEC settings to provide specific support for children with additional needs, especially those from low socio-economic groups and at risk of social exclusion. These measures are often translated into subsidies or lump sums paid to settings if they meet specific conditions or run particular educational programmes. However, in a few cases (e.g. Finland and Norway), additional funding is not addressed directly to schools but to the local authorities responsible for ECEC services.

In the **Czech Republic**, settings for older children (*mateřské školy*) are eligible for a subsidy towards salary incentives, if they include at least 15 % of socially disadvantaged children, employ additional staff and create specific conditions to support these children.

In **Hungary**, settings for over 3s (*óvoda*) are entitled to a grant if they provide inclusive teaching in line with the *Integration Pedagogical Program* set up by the Ministry of Education. These grants may be spent on various actions: individual teaching support; employing additional specialists for improving links between the setting and disadvantaged families; organising parent programmes; CPD courses; and bonuses for staff.

The **Slovak** government's subsidies for the final year in *materská škola* have a double objective: first, to help children at risk of social exclusion in developing good eating habits through meals provided in the setting; second, by providing individual support and specific teaching materials, to ensure they are well prepared for primary school.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, primary schools receive extra funds for disadvantaged children in reception classes with the aim of helping these children raise their attainment level.

Finally, of the countries that have set criteria to define children in need of additional support only Denmark, Ireland and France have not implemented any central measures specifically for disadvantaged children.

In **Denmark**, in the areas with a high proportion of migrants, minorities or other disadvantaged groups, local authorities provide extra support for language learning, for instance, by reducing the number of children in groups or providing



extra funds for settings. Education in the most deprived areas is of a major concern in **Ireland**, where 40 primary schools benefit from the *Early Start Preschool Programme*. It caters for children in the year before primary education and is intended to support children's general development, improve educational outcomes and offset the effects of social disadvantage.



## Chapter 6 - WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING?

---

### What is the problem of early school leaving and who are the ESL?

The first part of the question is more related to the definition of early school leaving. *Early school leaving* means before the usual, expected or planned time (premature) deviating from what is assumed a "normal" school life course, and is interrupted before gaining a higher school diploma or a higher qualification.

It implies a failure to make a key transition properly. In fact, it is the wider circumstances of the "failed" transition that makes it socially as well as individually problematic. Here, we can see the value of combining seeing ESL as part of the life course -as the culmination of a series of processes rather than as a single event- with the idea of "transition regime", the political, social and economic conditions in which individual life courses are followed.

The second question is more focused on who are the subjects involved. These ideas were well represented by Walther and Pohl in their report for the EU Commission in 2005.<sup>60</sup>

The 2 authors' studies, which have also been mentioned in the Nesse Report raise an important issue:

*What does 'disadvantage' mean in terms of youth transitions? One may refer to young people as disadvantaged if the central prerequisites for a standard biographical transition process – following the perspective of structure and agency – are lacking. The relationship between the two may be summarized as a lack of ac-*

---

<sup>60</sup> Walther, A. and Pohl, A. (2005), p. 35, *Thematic Study on Policy Measures Concerning Disadvantaged Youth*, Final Report Study Commissioned by the European Commission, DGE

*cessibility, manageability and relevance of education, training and employment opportunities*<sup>61</sup>.

Disadvantaged in youth transitions may face the following difficulties:

- School problems
- Lack of qualifications
- No access to training / studying
- Drop out from training / studying
- Training/study mismatch
- Blocked labor market entry
- Lack of labor demand
- Partial/neglected citizenship

If we fail to meet their needs they will be inevitably be at risk of failure.

Their study shows clearly how combinations of personal experiences and societal conditions, labour market conditions- and the opportunities, resources and motivations that are assembled, lay behind ESL.

In the case of ESL, the wider conditions cause blocked pathways and partial, thwarted and neglected transitions. It is clear that ESL is a problem for the young people involved, and that must always be borne in mind, especially given the tendency to see the young people themselves as the problem.

Let now consider now the *subjects involved*, who they are, from where do they come from and which factors have a greater impact over the chance to be facing this very difficult phenomenon.

---

<sup>61</sup> Walther and Pohl, *Thematic Study on Policy Measures concerning Disadvantaged Youth*, 2005 p. 35 Final Report. Volume 1 EU Commission

## ***The Nesse Report***

The *Nesse Report* in fact is one of the most complete studies on ESL, and for its academic and empirical approach, makes a great contribution to researchers and professionals involved in ESL studies or measures.

The decision to include *Nesse* in this research emerged from the interesting and exhaustive approach carried out by its authors. In addition, it analyses with clear vision the phenomenon; for this reason, I wrote to its author Professor Roger Dale, University of Bristol, who was the project leader at that time. He was happy to give his contribution to my research and gave me some very interesting contact points and ideas and that have been inspiring to me throughout my research.

The *EU Commission's General Directorate* commissioned the *Nesse* report as an independent report, to the EU Commission for Education and Culture lead by Professor Roger Dale, from January 2007 to February 2011.

The *Nesse Report* recognizes that ESL is not an **event**, which occurs at a certain point of a pupil age, but it is a **process**, which starts even before he/she attends school.

That **process** involves both the individual ESLers and their personal histories, and what happens to them when those personal histories meet the public world and life of the school.

One of the main findings of the report is that in very many cases the route to ESL begins before the child goes to school.

*Later academic, behavioural and social patterns are often laid down in the first encounters with pre-school. These patterns become salient, and often negative, before the age of leaving school is reached. They lead young people to become "disengaged" from school, and create problems for schools, especially when they are concentrated in homogeneous institutions<sup>62</sup>.*

---

<sup>62</sup> EU Commission, *NESSE*, EU Commission, *NESSE*, *Early School Leaving: Lessons from Research for Policy Makers* (2009)

The report emphasises the importance of:

- school composition
- social class composition of a school

according to the individual outcomes of its students.

*This works in a range of ways, most of which take forms that propel those vulnerable to ESL in that direction, rather than inhibiting that trajectory. When it comes to considering possible solutions to the problem of ESL, we are faced with ample alternative possibilities. One of the notable features of ESL is its persistence over decades of effort and massive amounts of money and ingenuity in trying to overcome it. Given this, the form of our response has been to focus on ways of "interrupting" the process leading to ESL. This means that we need different solutions for different points in the process<sup>63</sup>.*

The report distinguishes three broad stages and associated strategies

- Pre-emptive (before school)
- Preventative
- Rescue (intervention measures)

The first stage is what occurs before the student gets to secondary school, and the responses here are seen as "*pre-emptive*".

Here, one outstanding example of pre-school intervention is analysed.

This is followed by a *preventative* stage, where we concentrate on efforts to inhibit the pressures experienced by those already at risk of ESL in secondary school. We describe several approaches here, including the difficulty of addressing the school composition effect. The focus is on both (individual and group) students focussed and school wide approaches, looking both inside and outside the school and classroom.

---

<sup>63</sup> EU Commission, *NESSE, Early School Leaving: Lessons from Research for Policy Makers* (2009)

Finally, we consider what we call *rescue* (compensation measures) attempts, aimed at bringing back in, those who have already left school early.

Overall, our feeling is that the seriousness of the issue has neither been properly recognised nor effectively responded to. We find very little reference in the literature to the question of the sustainability of even the more successful interventions. Moreover, while we certainly do not lack for examples of apparently successful interventions, there are rarely attempts to "join them up", in more comprehensive programmes.

Within that broad approach, the *Nesse report* has followed three main strategies.

- The first is to focus mainly on *literature* that is of high academic quality and based on sound evidence.
- The second is to combine literatures across two dimensions. One takes an *individual* perspective that sees ESL as *not a single event but the culmination of a process*. The other recognises that ESL cannot be treated in isolation from other *social, economic and political processes*. Together, these perspectives explain why remedies that are successful in one place may not work in another place.
- The third strategy is to focus on linking apparent causes to interventions designed to address them. This involves identifying, and providing evidence of successful broad *strategies* of intervention as well as details of the *tactics* of particular interventions. Where particular interventions may be seen as exemplary in some way they are elaborated more fully.

Even if the definition of ESL and the approaches are different, the research literature that has been examined for this dissertation has a common understanding about the fact that *early school leaving is the result of a mix of individual, educational and socio-economic factors*, rather than a single cause.

Even if the countries and approaches are so different, there are always multi-faceted reasons for leaving school earlier or interrupting an educational path.

These reasons have been defined as personal/internal/individual or institutional/external/systemic as they depend on which school or institutions the pupils have met.

## The causes of ESL

ESL always occurs in particular contexts that produce and shape it in specific ways. It has both **individual and institutional/systemic** causes. It results from interaction between family and social background. It is a long process that can start even before a young person enters school.

The following part of research will take into account:

- *individual factors* linked to the social background of the children
- *external or systemic factors* more related to the school system and education

### **Individual causes**

The *individual factors* associated with ESL are largely rooted in very poor family and community backgrounds and experiences. However, many ESLs have none of these characteristics, and many with these kinds of characteristics successfully complete schooling.

Regarding the whole problem of ESL as one of individual vulnerability frames policy responses in unhelpful ways. Though few of these factors are easily due to direct policy intervention, it is possible to identify and respond to the kind of experiences and circumstances, especially in schools, that promote or retard the likelihood of young people from similar backgrounds becoming ESLers.

ESLers are likely to have developed patterns of academic achievement, behaviour and poor attendance as early as *pre-school education* that are strongly predictive of the likelihood of their subsequent early leaving. They typically perform badly at school, and are academically and socially disengaged from school. They are more likely to be absent, and to be seen as discipline problems.



ESLers are much more likely to come from schools with low socio-economic status intakes, where the school composition affects the overall social class composition of a school population on the outcomes of individual students- is clearly visible. This effect is reflected through schools' organisation and management, teachers' attitudes and peer effects.

### ***External and systemic causes***

Some researcher define them also as *external or systemic causes*, since they're strongly related to the factors which are linked to the school system that the pupils have experience during their school career.

These are affected by the country educational policies, the teachers training and their motivation, by the school facilities etc.

School system may vary from a country to another so that the rate may change across the Member States. It is influenced both by the structure of education systems and by the local labour market and economy, and the pattern of vocational or professional training education.

Generally, children from low education and socially disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely than others to leave the school system early. The same applies to disabled children, those from a public care background and young people with a migrant origin. Boys are also more affected than girls by this phenomenon.

Transitions between schools and between different educational levels may prove hard for pupils facing difficulties.

Following the Nesse study<sup>64</sup> ESLers are more likely:

- *To come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, such as workless households or households, which would be described as the working poor, with insecure conditions of employment.*

---

<sup>64</sup> EU Commission, *NESSE, Early School Leaving: Lessons from Research for Policy Makers* (2009) page 15

- *To be male rather than female; In the EU, 16.9% of boys are early school leavers compared to 12.7% of girls. In all countries with the exception of Bulgaria and Romania, boys are significantly more likely to be early school leavers than girls. At the same time, reductions in rates of ESL have been faster for girls than for boys.*
- *To come from vulnerable groups, such as the "Looked After", the disabled, those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), teenage mothers and those with physical and mental health problems*
- *To have had a history of disengagement from school, for instance of absence, truancy, expulsion*
- *To have achieved poorly in school*
- *To come from minority or migrant backgrounds. Minority ethnic and/or migrant groups are seen as over-represented within early school leavers in the Netherlands, Austria, Norway, Spain and England.*
- *To have experienced high rates of mobility—both residential mobility and school mobility.*
- *To be concentrated in particular areas.*

The report provides a definition of what is considered a form of class and ethnic "*ghettoization*", this means that it brings together young people from poor background, unemployment, migrants and minorities high rates which increased risks for ESL<sup>65</sup>.

## **How are ESL classified by current research**

A unique definition for ESLers is impossible and there is a common understanding that the causes are always divided into: *individual and systemic or external causes*, therefore many researchers have given different classifications based on these factors.

Early school leavers by no means constitute a homogeneous group, the only thing they "*objectively*" have in common is their age group and the fact that they have left school early.

Despite this, much of the literature tends to impose a broadly common identity on ESLers. This is typically, at least implicitly, a negative identity.

---

<sup>65</sup> Eggees, *Equity in European Educational systems: European Educational Research Journal*, 4,2, 1-151, 2005

They have "*failed*" to do what is expected—and increasingly, what is required to them. They are assumed to be "at risk". They are often considered as "*marginalised youth*".

Referring to them as "*at risk*" youth, shifts the focus to the young people themselves.

At the same time, the responsibility for addressing it and the appropriate means of addressing it are changed as well <sup>66</sup>. While the same factors may characterise a majority of ESLers, representing the whole problem of ESL as one of individual vulnerability may come to frame policy responses in unhelpful ways. This is evident from other ways of classifying ESLers.

Besides the above consideration different authors and researchers have provided other classifications for ESL.

According to their definitions, ESL is defined as such:

Classification based on the ***actual working and schooling careers*** after leaving school<sup>67</sup>:

- successful unschooled manual workers
- school returners
- money earners
- voluntary unemployed
- enforced unemployed

Classification based on the basis of ***individual characteristics***.<sup>68</sup>

- maladjusted, who have poor grades and who behave poorly at school
- under-achievers, who just have poor grades
- disengaged,
- who perform better than the dropouts, but simply do not like school
- who other than having slightly lower grades resemble graduates more than dropouts.

---

<sup>66</sup> Kitty Te Riele , Learning choices: A Map for the future, (2012) Victoria University, Melbourne

<sup>67</sup> Dekkers and Driesen,( 1997)

<sup>68</sup> Janosz,( 1994)

Classification based on *young people's reasons* for leaving school early<sup>69</sup>:

- positive leaver, making a positive career choice with employment or further training
- opportune leaver, there is no definite career path, taking the opportunity to change life patterns
- would-be leaver, does not leave but reluctant to stay
- circumstantial leaver, forced to leave for non-educational reasons
- discouraged leaver, interest and performance in education is low
- alienated leaver, discouraged and non-compatible with school life.

---

<sup>69</sup> Dwyer & PRC, ( 1996)

## Chapter 7 - ALL FACTORS FRAMEWORK/BACKGROUND

---

Throughout the analysis of the literature on the ESL topics which has been carried out for this research, it has to be said that there is a common understanding that similar patterns occur when a student drops out from education/training. In fact the conditions leading to school underachievement and poor students' outcomes, are also very similar.

Since the individual and external causes have been already considered in the previous chapters; this section will take into account another interesting classification which is more linked to the background and SES of the students.

This classification is commonly adopted in Europe since this was the outcome of the Nesse research study proposed to the Commission

It is about an all factors framework involving five different factors

- Family and Community factors (individual/social factors)
- Schooling
- Pupil and Peers
- Wider society and education system-related factors
- Education System

### **Family and Community.**

Why are family and community associated with ESL? Family and household level variables are:

- single-parent family,
- parents with a low level of education,
- large family size,
- dropouts in the family,

- house hold stress;

These are also background factors affecting ESL:

- household mobility across different countries (migration)
- dynamics in the family;
- lack of social support for continuing education;
- culture conflict (religion, ethnic minorities);
- adaptation to adult roles (for example, minding younger children, high levels of employment or pregnancy/childrearing).

These are also more social issues, at the level of the society and community rather than at the level of the family that have to be taken into account.

These include the following factors:

- low socio-economic status/social class;
- minority group status;
- male gender (following the most recent studies, males are more likely to drop out from school -18%- than girls (12,7% OECD 2013);
- some community characteristics (migrants, ethnic groups).

In the EU, 10% of children live in families, which are below the poverty threshold<sup>70</sup>.

Absolute poverty influences the ways in which parents can support their children; relative poverty influences the social distances, status of employment types and sense of well-being of young people and their families. High levels of ESL are strongly correlated with high social inequality<sup>71</sup>.

For families and communities, poverty both relative and absolute, is linked with a higher likelihood of risky lifestyles involving substance abuse and criminality, mental and physical health problems, precarious living arrangements including homelessness.

---

<sup>70</sup> (Egrees, 2005).

<sup>71</sup> (Walther and Pohl, 2005).

For particular minority groups, physical and cultural segregation provides the most visible demonstration of how economic and social inequality produces "vicious circles of deprivation"<sup>72</sup>.

*The clustering together of young people from poor families, in communities with particular patterns of occupation, employment and unemployment, of migrant and minority populations, with low community levels of educational achievement, produces a form of class and ethnic "ghettoization" with increased risks and consequences for ESL.*<sup>73</sup>

Similar pattern for ESL causing economic and social inequality that are very often reproduced from generation to generation. They underlie the perception of early school leavers as disaffected, alienated and resistant youth<sup>74</sup> Disaffection, alienation and resistance are linked and produced over long periods of time in conditions of persistent economic and social inequality.

## Parents Schooling

Education success is largely influenced by parents' schooling and it seems to be higher where parents' education is higher; on the other hand low level of education means frequently lower school attendance. The same problem is caused by large family size with lower income.

It's widely recognised that families with a low socio-economic status/social class are more likely to influence the children attendance to school system; in poor communities children are frequently working from an early age, especially in those countries where education is not compulsory, and are frequently employed to low paid jobs or occupation.

Especially in minority group status; male gender; and some community characteristics are more likely to result in school failure for its younger community members.

This is especially marked for girls, since they seem to be more affected by the mothers' level of education.

---

<sup>72</sup> Walther and Pohl, *Thematic Study on Policy Measures concerning Disadvantaged Youth*, 2005 p. 10 Final Report. Volume 1 EU Commission

<sup>73</sup> (Egrees, 2005).

<sup>74</sup> (Pemberton, 2008).

The biggest difference between ESLers and other young people is the level of parental education, though some of this may be explained by increasing educational opportunities in many countries (GHK).

It has been frequently observed that ESLers' parents are more likely to be unemployed, in manual rather than intellectual work.

However, the relative advantage of having more educated parents varies significantly across countries. It is strongest in the Eastern European countries (except Slovenia) and smallest in Sweden and Finland<sup>75</sup> because in these countries parents' education is higher than in other countries.

Parenting practices represent a key link between home and family circumstances and early school leaving. The consistent findings of research\* are that dropouts come more often from families characterized by:

- a parental permissive education with lack of supervision where children are left in autonomy to organise their studies and free time
- children get used to make their own decision
- poor motivation conveyed to their children's schooling
- poor aspiration regarding their children career
- less engagement with their children's schooling
- negative reactions to school underachievement
- low communication level between parents and children,

## Family expectations

Though parental socio-economic status is clearly an important factor, parental aspirations and expectations for their children education appear to be even more influential<sup>76</sup>.

This appears to hold almost irrespective of children's actual academic performance and engagement in school.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Ianelli, (2004).

<sup>76</sup> Fan and Chen , ( 2001).

<sup>77</sup> Looker and Thiessen, ( 2006).



These expectations exert a strong independent effect on educational trajectories after controlling for marks and parental SES.

The evidence is however not wholly consistent<sup>78</sup> and found out that neither the prevalence of parents reading to their children nor children's readiness to confide in their parents regarding school had a significant effect on graduation rates. However, young people who did confide in their parents at age 16, and whose parents were involved in school organizations, were more likely to graduate. Those who reported strict discipline in the household were significantly more likely to graduate from high school; for females, this mitigated the effect of earlier low levels of achievement.

Some authorities have suggested that the evidence in this area is strong enough to justify processes of screening and targeting young people at most risk from these factors. On the basis of a finding that the difference between students who *unexpectedly* failed to complete high school in Quebec, and those who expectedly either completed or failed to complete, was almost entirely accounted for by three factors:

- Having a mother that did not finish high school
- Being from a single-parent family in early childhood
- Repeating a grade in primary school.

Pagani and colleagues wrote<sup>79</sup> "*having experienced all three factors practically guaranteed not finishing high school, thus defining a crystal clear target group for policy*". They suggest that: *without screening (for attention-related difficulties), intervention (such as helping parents better understand supervision during adolescence), and follow-up, individuals facing such cumulative risk are most unlikely to graduate.*

---

<sup>78</sup> Alexander, Entwistle, and Horsey, (1997)

<sup>79</sup> Pagani et al (2008), p. 175-6.

## Pupils and Peers

*Peer tutoring* is a term that's been used to describe a wide array of tutoring arrangements, but most of the research on its success refers to students working in pairs to help one another learn material or practice an academic task. Peer tutoring works best when students of different ability levels work together<sup>80</sup>

It has been widely recognised that, a peer-to-peer relationship can improve the students' performance, in particular low competences achievements/results can take advantage from a relationship and model coming from another student.

It does improve motivation and self-confidence, and leads to better results in terms of school grades. This is particularly relevant if we are considering students at risk of dropping out.

Peer teaching is an old concept. It dates back to *Aristotle's* use of *archons*, or student leaders, and to the letters of *Seneca the Younger*.

Over the past 30-40 years, peer teaching has become increasingly popular in public schools as a more financially efficient method of teaching.

Not to be confused with peer instruction—a relatively new concept designed by Harvard professor Eric Mazur in the 1990s<sup>81</sup>—peer teaching is a method by which one student instructs another student in material on which the first is an expert and the second is a novice.

Some authors<sup>82</sup> note that academic *peer tutoring* at the college level takes many different forms. Surrogate teaching, common at larger universities, involves giving older students, often graduates or advanced undergraduates, some or all of the teaching responsibility for undergraduate courses. Proctoring programs involve one-on-one tutoring by students who are slightly ahead of other students, or who have successfully demonstrated proficiency with the material in the recent past.

***Cooperative learning*** divides classmates into small groups, with each person in the group responsible for teaching others, and each contributing a unique piece to the group performance on a task. Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT), a more

---

<sup>80</sup> Kunsch, Jitendra, & Sood, (2007).

<sup>81</sup> <http://www.opencolleges.edu.au>

<sup>82</sup> Goodlad and Hurst (1989) and Topping (1998)

specific version of cooperative learning, group's classmates into pairs to tutor each other.

The main benefits of peer teaching include are the following:

- Students receive more time for individualized learning
- Direct interaction between students promotes active learning
- Peer teachers reinforce their own learning by instructing others
- Students feel more comfortable and open when interacting with a peer
- Peers and students share a similar discourse, allowing greater understanding
- Peer teaching is a financially efficient alternative to hiring more staff members
- Teachers receive more time to focus on the next lesson

Research also indicates that peer learning activities typically yield the following results for both tutor and tutee: team-building spirit and more supportive relationships; greater psychological well-being, social competence, communication skills and self-esteem; and higher achievement and greater productivity in terms of enhanced learning outcomes.

Various peer teaching programs have cropped up at universities around the world in the past few decades, promoting the notion of peer assisted learning. Nearly every institute of higher education in the world provides peer-tutoring opportunities for struggling students and teaching assistant positions for advanced students. In this research further practical examples of P2P learning will be considered in the examined case studies, i.e.: *Scuola dei Compiti* educational projects carried out by Torino city council, Education department, has been very successful so far since it was launched in year 2012 following a Protocol of Agreement between Torino Municipality and the Università di Torino. It uses a peer-to-peer model and has considerably been used, improving pupils school results leading to higher marks in the subject they had poor achievement: young university students (normally 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year University) have been employed for homework and small class groups.

A more detailed description of the Scuola dei Compiti project is provided in Annex 1 where case studies are mentioned.

## The Education system

School-based or systemic factors do have a great impact on ESL; the evidence suggests very clearly that ESL is a consequence of the interaction between school-based factors and home/family/community-based factors.

For this reason this dissertation has dedicated a specific chapter to the issue. There is a clear relationship between family socio-economic status and the risk of ESL even if it is clear that not all young people from disadvantaged backgrounds leave school early.

While there are multiple possibilities—poor parents; unsupportive communities; poor health; need for children to work outside the home—their individual and combined effects on eventual ESL are not clearly known.

Establishing the relative importance of these factors, and the nature of these causal links and mechanisms, is a crucial step towards enabling policy makers to formulate evidence-based, and possibly targeted, pre-emptive measures.

The process leading to school dropout is often established early in the school career. Starting school with poor grades handicapped both males and females, but especially males. In addition, maternal education, family poverty and aggressive behaviour during first grade are related to graduation 12 years later, either directly or indirectly<sup>83</sup>. Several studies have shown that ESL is the culmination of a very long process that starts for many before they go to school.

One study carried out in the USA, found out that first-graders from an urban community who were deemed "at-risk of dropping out" found that by the time they reached graduation age 57% of the males and 45% of the females had dropped out of school<sup>84</sup>.

The exceptions were students who achieved A's or B's, as opposed to C's and D's, in the first grade. This effect was more pronounced for males than for females, though only little more than 50% of males in this category graduated.

---

<sup>83</sup> Alexander, Entwistle, and Horsey, (1997), p 110.

<sup>84</sup> Ensminger and Slusarcick, (1992).

Resilient children - those who were identified as living in poverty, but had achieved A's or B's in first grade – were much more likely to graduate.

These individuals were thought of as "especially competent". By contrast, students living in poverty with poor first-grade academic results had very low graduation rates. Children's behaviour during the first grade was also an important predictive factor: those considered as aggressive during the first grade were less likely to graduate 12 years later.

Another major study<sup>85</sup>, found that about 60% of children in lower SES families drop out of school versus 40% overall and 15% of those in higher SES families. The strongest association with ESL was family socio-economic level. Alexander suggests that this association was so strong that 'the dropout problem in Baltimore, at its core, is a problem of economic and social disadvantage'. Other factors of the kind that appear, such as family structure, mother's age, family stress, and maternal employment were also associated with the risk of dropping out<sup>86</sup>; it also found out that later school performance was related to early influences of parents (and also of teachers), even when controlling for cognitive ability. They found that parents' estimate of their children's academic ability in the third grade were related to children's academic outcomes four and nine years later.

In another study that followed children from birth to age of 19 years old<sup>87</sup>, confirmed the importance of early family and school experiences for the likelihood of later drop out. They also point out that while school attendance, problem behaviour, and academic achievement may identify likely dropouts, by the time these effects occur, it is too late to do very much about them.

They therefore recommend assessment programmes before age 5, even if they run the risk of over identifying those at risk of later dropout.

All these findings suggest that patterns of academic performance are established early and that the social context within the family and the classroom are important in the establishment and maintenance of these patterns. However, without that support, the risk of dropout increases.

---

<sup>85</sup> Alexander et al, (1993; 1997, 2001)

<sup>86</sup> Entwistle and Hayduk (1988)

<sup>87</sup> Jimerson et al (2000)



## Chapter 8 - DIFFERENT SCHOOL ORGANIZATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE

---

### How the Education System affects school achievement?

Education system is a systemic factor involved in educational outcomes. For this reason in year 2013 the OECD<sup>88</sup> published a major study reviewing the indicators assessing the four different areas related to education system, divided by indicators in the 4 different section of the 36 OECD countries including USA, Australia, Chile, Mexico, Korea, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Turkey and Switzerland and EU countries.

The 4 areas are:

1. The output of Educational institutions and the impact of learning: (what level have adult studied, how many students are expected and how many have completed their studies subdivided in age groups and school levels - secondary, tertiary, which are the investment in education, effect of education on the labour market, earning premiums from education etc.)
2. Financial and Human Resources Invested in Education (how much public or private money is invested, which proportion of nation wealth is spent on it, which factors influence investments on education, on which resources and services is funding spent)

---

<sup>88</sup> OECD (2013) *Education at a Glance 2013*: OECD Indicators, EU Commission

3. Access to Education, participation and progression (who participate to education? How Early childhood education system vary around the world, how many students participate in tertiary education, who studies abroad, exchange programs, transition school to work etc.)
4. The Learning Environment and Organisation of Schools (how much time is spent at school, teacher-students ratio, teachers' salaries, training).

To each area a set of indicators are analysed and were represented on a chart. The whole study represents clear evidence about what is meant for Education system and which factors have to be analysed in order to understand the systemic factors.

### ***School/ systemic based factors.***

The evidence suggested by the above<sup>89</sup> recent mentioned OECD study (2013) that ESL is strongly influenced by the interaction between home, family, *community-based factors* and *school-based factors*.

There is a clear relationship between family socio-economic status (SES) and the risk of ESL, and that it has a great impact on school outcomes.

However, not always young people from disadvantaged backgrounds leave school earlier than other pupils, there are fortunately many cases where motivation especially or counselling and support services have been successful.

While there are multiple factors such as: poor parents; unsupportive communities; poor health; need for children to work outside the home—their individual and combined effects on eventual ESL, are not clearly known yet.

Establishing the relative importance of these factors, and the nature of these causal links and mechanisms, is a crucial step forwards which enables policy makers to formulate evidence-based, and possibly targeted, pre-emptive measures.

The processes leading to school dropout are often established early in the school career. Starting school with poor grades handicaps both males and females,

---

<sup>89</sup> OECD (2013) *Education at a Glance 2013*: OECD Indicators



but especially males. In addition, maternal education, family poverty and aggressive behaviour during first grade are related to graduation 12 years later, either directly or indirectly<sup>90</sup>. Several studies have shown that ESL is the culmination of a very long process that starts for many before they go to school.

One study on black first-graders from an urban community in USA, who were deemed "*at-risk of dropping out*", found that by the time they reached graduation age 57% of the males and 45% of the females had dropped out of school<sup>91</sup>.

The exceptions were students who achieved A's or B's, as opposed to C's and D's, in the first grade. This effect was more pronounced for males than for females, though only little more than 50% of males in this category graduated.

However resilient children – who had low SES but had achieved A's or B's in first grade – were much more likely to graduate, because they were stronger and could better react to

These individuals were thought of as "especially competent". By contrast, students living in poverty with poor first-grade academic results had very low graduation rates.

Children's behaviour during the first grade was also an important predictive factor: those considered as aggressive during the first grade were less likely to graduate twelve years later.

Another major study<sup>92</sup>, found that about 60% of children in lower SES families drop out of school versus 40% overall and 15% of those in higher SES families. The strongest association with ESL was family socio-economic level. Alexander suggests that this association was so strong that 'the dropout problem in Baltimore, at its core, is a problem of economic and social disadvantage'. Other factors of the kind that appear, such as family structure, mother's age, family stress, and maternal employment were also associated with the risk of dropout<sup>93</sup>;

---

<sup>90</sup> Alexander, Entwistle, and Horsey, 1997, page 110.

<sup>91</sup> Ensminger and Slusarcick, (1992).

<sup>92</sup> Alexander et al, (1993; 1997, 2001),

<sup>93</sup> Entwistle and Hayduk (1988)

it also found out that later school performance was related to early influences of parents (and also of teachers), even when controlling for cognitive ability.

They found that parents' estimate of their children's academic ability in the third grade were related to children's academic outcomes four and nine years later.

In another study that followed children from birth to age of 19 years old<sup>94</sup>, confirmed the importance of early family and school experiences for the likelihood of later drop out. They also point out that while school attendance, problem behaviour, and academic achievement may identify likely dropouts, by the time these effects occur, it is too late to do very much about them.

They therefore recommend assessment programmes before age 5, even if they run the risk of over identifying those at risk of later dropout.

All these findings suggest that patterns of academic performance are established early and that the social context within the family and the classroom are important in the establishment and maintenance of these patterns. However, without that support, the risk of dropout increases.

*"Recovery from a shaky beginning at school is always possible; but by the time dropout-prone youths get to high school, the battle for many effectively has been lost. How does one "reengage" children who exit the primary grades plagued by self-doubt, alienated from things academic, over-age for grade, prone to "problem behaviours", and with weak academic skills?"(Alexander et al: 2001)*

There are few references in these studies to the quality of the school experience. This is significant, especially in light of the evidence that poor quality Early Childhood Education (ECEC) is worse than none<sup>95</sup>; Finn found out that three years or more of attending small classes (in primary school) affected their graduation rates *"by about 67% for three years and more than doubling the odds for four years"*<sup>96</sup>.

However, these effects were not explained by improvement in academic performance, even if it was carried through later grades. This is taken as evidence

---

<sup>94</sup> Jimerson et al (2000)

<sup>95</sup> NESSE/Penn , (2009).

<sup>96</sup> Finn et al, (1997), p. 220.

of changes in students' attitudes and motivation, pro- or anti-social behaviour, and learning behaviour.

The effect of early experiences on staying on at school is social and behavioural, rather than merely cognitive. This has very important implications for designers of policies aimed at attenuating ESL; it is not just a matter of cognitive performance, but of what will be referred to below as "engagement" with school.

### **How does school organisation affect ESL?**

As noted above, ESL is a product of the interaction between home, community, family factors and school factors. Research on school composition, school organisation and school culture shows how all of them are related to ESL.

- School composition
- School organisation
- School culture

### ***The importance of the school composition/organisation/culture.***

It refers to the ways that the characteristics of the student body as a whole, especially its social class make-up, affect its processes and influence the achievement of its students, even after taking into account individual students' socio-economic status (SES). Going to a predominantly low SES school will depress students' average scores, while going to a high SES school will tend to raise them.

The effect is that a young person -with the same mix of dis/advantages and the same history of school achievement- will leave one school early but would not necessarily leave a better-organised school early. This is widely noted and recognised. It is statistically significant in every country in PISA.<sup>97</sup>

This has an important effect on how we view ESL and possible remedies, if it is limited; it is schools that should be held accountable if it remains high. In so far as the compositional effect is the crucial factor in ESL, it limits how far it

---

<sup>97</sup> Willms, 2006, p. 52

might be possible to reduce ESL through school improvement<sup>98</sup>. Different kinds of remedy are called for, such as policies directed at changing the social class make up of schools. This is discussed in the next chapter.

Knowing how the *school composition* works may be another way of finding effective ways to solve the problem.

*Disadvantages of attending low SES schools derive in part from organisation and management processes. They have more discipline problems than high SES schools, and many more very difficult guidance or discipline cases. They experience more non-teaching related problems, and have less time to spend on planning and monitoring performance. Fundamentally, they have less time available for actually teaching, at the same time as they encounter much less compliant and less able students.*<sup>99</sup>

Peer effects also play a part in young people leaving school early. In low SES schools, students may actively try to subvert the school, and disparage any students who seek to succeed in the school terms.<sup>100</sup>

On the other hand, peer interaction around shared hobbies, books and out-of-class activities, may rise overall academic performance.

School size has been found to have an effect on ESL, above and beyond its relationship with the quality of relationships among school members<sup>101</sup> Teacher support and guidance, and students' trust in their teachers reduce the likelihood of students' dropping out of school early. This is especially the case for socially at risk students who enter high school with low educational expectations and a history of school-related problems.

*"When adolescents trust their teachers and informally receive guidance from teachers, they are more likely to persist through graduation...those who benefit, most are students most at risk of dropping out of high school..."*<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> EU Commission, *Nesse Report Early school leaving*, (2010) Brussels

<sup>99</sup> idem

<sup>100</sup> Lee, V.E. & Smith, J.B. (1993). *Effects of high school restructuring on the achievement and engagement of middle-grade students*. *Sociology of Education*, 66(3), 164-187

<sup>101</sup> Lee, Bryk (2003) *Dropping out of high school: The role of school organisation*, *American Educational Research Journal*, 2 pages 353-393

<sup>102</sup> Croniger, R., & Lee, V. (2001). *Social capital and dropping out of High School: Benefits to at-risk students of teachers' support and guidance*. *Teachers College Record*, 103 (4), 548-581.

The same authors point also to the importance of the neighbourhood effect of schools, which seems closely related to the compositional effect. They point out that the environments where young people live can overwhelm not only them but also the teachers they rely on.

### ***Why students lose engagement and motivation?***

One key reason through which these effects may become ‘factors leading to ESL’ appears to be their effect on young people’s “engagement” with school. This shifts the focus from “*structural characteristics*” such as *SES or race to ESL* ‘as a process of disengagement from school, perhaps for either social or academic reasons’<sup>103</sup> which is consistent with the ‘ESL as process’ view outlined above.

So, a response to these issues involves developing means of enhancing and improving levels of student engagement.

In a review of literature on disengagement, Fredricks et al (2004)<sup>104</sup> start from the possibility that engagement may help to protect individuals from dropping out of school, and that it is crucial to know how this works if we are to be able to design effective interventions aimed at reducing ESL. For instance, is it more important to change student–teacher relationship or to change academic tasks? Or is it equally important to deal with both?

Among the key elements mentioned in these literatures is that dropouts:

- do less homework
- exert less effort in school
- participate less in school activities
- have more discipline problems at school

---

103 Rumberger, (1987) p.111.

104 Fredricks et al (2004) *School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence*, Paris Page 59-109

- show low behavioural engagement
- have social difficulties and negative attitudes towards school
- are more likely to truancy, and to be suspended

### ***The effects of the education system related to ESL***

One final set of causal questions asks how far and in what ways the nature of education systems themselves might be associated with ESL. It is based on the assumptions (a) that neither problems nor solutions are found only at "ground level", but are also the result of factors taking place at other levels of the system, and (b) that the solutions to "immediate" problems may be found only at other levels, especially if it can be demonstrated that they are the origin of those problems.

Each young person's educational career is framed by schooling opportunities and choices that differ cross-nationally as the result of educational policy decisions made at the national level. These are themselves framed by both economic and structural conditions such as labour markets and international trade and competitiveness, and cultural and social differences within and between countries. While variation between countries does constitute a major difficulty, some broad generalisations are possible, such as the finding that comprehensive secondary school systems seem to produce better overall academic results (EC 2006).

Key "*education governance*" factors linked to ESL includes:

- the length of compulsory education
- pupil-teacher ratio
- class size
- comprehensive versus differentiated compulsory education
- post-compulsory educational programmes
- repetition of class
- public (and private) expenditure on education and the quality and efficiency of the spending

## Interrelations between individual and external factors

Looking at the intersection between individual and external factors I came across a very interesting research which is worthwhile to mention.

It was carried out in the UK by Stephen Gorard, University of Birmingham.

Analysed projects were related to the theme of equity, in formal education, in wider family and social settings, and with inequity expressed as the stratification of a variety of educational outcomes.

The project was based on a standard mixture of pre-existing records, official documents, large-scale surveys, observations, interviews and focus groups. The educational experiences and the in-depth data were used to try and explain individual decisions and disparities at each stage of the model.

Some authors like Egree agree about the fact compulsory school system has given to all the families, regardless of their background, the same opportunities, so that it is easier nowadays having equality of education. Participation is wider, even at a later stage of education; thanks to the formative offer of colleges and universities, regardless their socio-economic background. Definitely an important step towards *social mobility* and *equal opportunities*.

*One of the chief purposes of universal, compulsory, free, and local education for children in the UK has been the equalisation of family resources (Harris and Gorard 2010).*

*Similarly, one of the main reasons for post-compulsory educational initiatives, from 14-19 reforms to widening access to higher education and third-age provision, has been to increase equality of outcomes in the system, so reducing the link between origin and opportunity for all individuals. Schools – and increasingly, pre-school settings, colleges and universities – are intended to widen meaningful participation, to have a formative and transformative impact on the lives of all young people regardless of their social, ethnic or economic origin. Where achieved, this would promote both social mobility and equality of outcome. Simi-*

lar approach and purposes for education have been adopted in other developed countries)<sup>105</sup>.

The study agrees that external factors like the school system are strongly linked together with the individual factors.

Bernstein (1970) who wrote “*Education cannot compensate for society*”<sup>106</sup> describes the strong interrelation between individual and systemic factors.

Pring (2009) illustrates this point with a list of examples that include extended adolescence, changing family patterns, an increase in families in which no member has been employed, and the mental health problems and reported unhappiness of many young people in the UK. What all of these examples have in common is that they are not directly the results of schooling, nor are they directly addressable via education or schooling. But they may well influence behaviour and outcomes in schools. To a very large extent then, schools simply reflect the local population in their intakes, while being relatively ineffective in addressing the stratification of attainment that results.

---

<sup>105</sup> Egrees, *Equity in EU Educational systems:European Educational Research Journal*, (2005)

<sup>106</sup>B. Bernstein, ‘*Education cannot compensate for society*, *New society* 344-347, 1970



## Chapter 9 - CONSEQUENCES/RISKS RELATED TO ESL

---

### Individual or internal consequences

Some of the individual consequences of ESL; can lead to several problems, from failure to succeed in their career, failure to meet the job market requirements, and more specifically they are more likely<sup>107</sup>:

- to be unemployed, as those that complete their education.
- to be in blue collar jobs, with less employment security and more part-time work.
- to draw on welfare and other social programs throughout their lives
- have a shorter life expectancy (health problem, suicides, violence)
- to be more involved in early pregnancy cases, crimes, violence, alcohol, drug abuse, and suicide cases.

Furthermore they are less likely:

- to become involved in lifelong learning.
- to complete their education

In financial terms, it has been calculated that the additional lifetime income for a student who stayed at school for an extra year, was more than €70.000.<sup>108</sup>

*Although ESL is not a homogeneous group, ESL is associated with a wide range of economic and social disadvantages. ESLers are more likely to come from workless households; be male rather than female; come from vulnerable groups, such as the disabled, those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), teenage mothers and those with physical and mental health problems; come from minority or mi-*

---

<sup>107</sup> EU Commission, *Youth Forum*, (2007).

<sup>108</sup> idem

*grant backgrounds (in the EU as a whole, 30.1% of non-nationals are early school leavers compared to 13% of nationals); and to be concentrated in particular areas<sup>109</sup>.*

In many cases more than one of these risks is present, and multiple disadvantages increase significantly the likelihood of negative outcomes. This subject will be better analysed in a specific chapter dedicated to the social impact of ESL on economy.

ESL produces 2 levels of consequences:

- Individual consequences
- Social or macro consequences

## **Social and external consequences.**

Consequences of early school leaving are different in the:

- Short term
- Medium term
- Long term

In the **short-term**, ESL can be associated with immediate unemployment, precarious low paid jobs and difficulties to gain a place in vocational training.<sup>110</sup>

In the **medium-term**, ESL is strongly associated with ‘social’ costs (social breakdown, increased demand on the health system, and lower social cohesion) and ‘economic’ costs (lower productivity, lower tax revenues and higher welfare payments).<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup> EU Commission, *Nesse Report*, 2007

<sup>110</sup> Wößmann and Schütz, (2006)

<sup>111</sup> SWP European Commission, 2008; Psacharopoulos, 2007)

In the **long-term**, ESL constitutes a tremendous waste of potential for social and economic development. Because of demographic change in Europe, "*young people are becoming a rare and yet undervalued resource*"<sup>112</sup>. (CEC, 2005).

From year 2000 European population has entered a "negative momentum", with the likely consequence that by 2065 the 'support ratio' (working age to post-65) would shift from around 4:1 to around 2:1<sup>113</sup>. One consequence of this may be that availability of employment may increase for ESLers, but they may not be equipped to take it up. Against this, it should not be forgotten that education generates wider social benefits in terms of crime reduction or higher civic participation. It is suggested that this occurs "*because it mainly improves the non-cognitive abilities of individuals for example motivation and discipline*" (EC 2008, 64) as reported in the *Nesse Report*.

ESL also perpetuates its own cycle of failure, as *under-educated parents* continue to produce children who we know will they be at greater risk of ESL. ESL, when associated with an extended period of inactivity and disengagement from education and training and the labour market, amounts to a wasted opportunity for society to invest in its own future.

ESL as part of a wasted opportunity for individuals and society is clearly central to the significance of early school leaving as a failure of schooling, the labour market and social policy more generally. Considering the investment on education and social policies, poor outcomes which produce disengagement and disadvantage, can clearly be termed failures of investment and as both school and societal failures. *It is clearly significant too because of what it represents as a sign of societies' failure to look after for the most disadvantaged*<sup>114</sup>.

ESL also carries very high costs for national economies. One calculation based the assumption that ESL have 6% lower productivity than qualified leavers, and using the 2005 figure of 23% unqualified leavers, suggests that ESL cost the European economy a productivity loss of 1.4%<sup>115</sup>.

---

<sup>112</sup> CEC; 2005

<sup>113</sup> Lutz et al., 2003

<sup>114</sup> Lutz et al., 2003

<sup>115</sup> European Commission, (2006), Staff Working Paper).

In an earlier but very influential study of the effects of school dropout in the US researcher, Levin<sup>116</sup> identified seven social consequences of the failure to complete high school:

- (lower) national income
- (lower) tax revenues for the support of government services
- increased demand for social services
- increased crime
- reduced political participation
- reduced intergenerational mobility
- poorer levels of health.

He analysed the major consequences deriving from poor education and low investment on educational policies in the USA.

---

<sup>116</sup> Levin, H.M., and Belfield, C.R. (2007). *The price we pay: Economic and social consequences of inadequate education*

## ***Unemployment: a multi-level consequence***

Unemployment deserves a special section because even if it seems to be a personal matter, higher rates of unemployment in a country have a tremendous impact on economy and welfare, as the statistics show.

The general global economy crisis in Europe, where many less rich countries, such as Italy, Spain and Greece have been affected, is an evidence of the complex multi-dimensional impact of unemployment.

Very often higher rates of unemployment are common among early school leavers, since lower qualification implies less job opportunities.

It happens very frequently that poor economies show a greater incidence of unemployment, because poorer family cannot provide education for their children.

The effects of ESL are greater in some countries than others. But in general it might be concluded that ESLers earn less than the non-ESL<sup>117</sup>. The clear general view is that ESL strongly curtails labour market opportunities.

However, we need to ask how far this clear disadvantage is due to poor academic skills, irrespective of school completion status.

Evidence based on a major longitudinal study<sup>118</sup> of adolescent predictors of adult unemployment found that such predictors started to effect labour market outcomes well before they entered the workforce. The study was carried out by Avshalom Caspi, University of London and published in the American sociology Review. The study argues that, “...*these effects remained significant ...for the duration of education and educational attainment*”.<sup>119</sup>

This suggests that the factors affecting ESL also have an independent direct effect on labour market behaviours and outcomes, and not just because they lead to early leaving.

---

<sup>117</sup> GHK, EU Commission, Brussels, 2005:106)

<sup>118</sup> Caspi et al (1998), *American sociology Review*, 1998, Volume 63 (p. 424-451)

<sup>119</sup> idem

Finally, it is important to register that ESL could sometimes benefit some young people; to say nothing of the schools they attend. *“Some students are not able or willing to get anything out of school; others choose other alternatives over going to school, alternatives that in some cases can be more fulfilling and rewarding. And some students who remain in school can be very disruptive to those students who want to be there and to learn”*.<sup>120</sup>

In fact sometimes young people do not choose an educational path which leads to a qualification attainment rather than a longer course of study, because families sometimes have higher expectations regarding their children career, or they have made a wrong choice during their school transition.

Having more young people willing to learn a profession thanks to a well organised vocational or professional training is far a better choice rather than indulge in longer high school or academic studies with poor outcomes.

This has been understood for many years, and the best alternatives paths offered by some countries have proved to be very successful like in Denmark and in the Netherlands. This topic will be widely discussed in the section dedicated to the best practice experiences of EU countries.

---

<sup>120</sup> Rumberger, ( 1987 ) p.112.

## Chapter 10 - ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ESL

---

### Individual and social costs of early school leaving

This chapter will analyze the economic impact of ESL on EU economy and how can social welfare be affected by high rates of ESL

There is a widespread concern in Europe of the high rates of ESL. Europe is facing one of the worst economy crises after the II World Wars.

Poverty and unemployment are growing and the rates of school leaving is not decreasing everywhere as expected, since lower income has affected families so badly that less money can be spent on the education of their children.

According to the EUROSTAT and the European Commission definition, *early school leaving occurs when an individual aged 18 to 24 has attained at most lower secondary education and is not engaged in education and training.*

In European countries, where individuals are free to choose their optimal level of education and the effects of individual choice do not spill over into society at large, the question could make little sense: the chosen level of education seems to be more a private matter. But this is not the case for ESL. Some author gives their opinion:

*What are the individual and social costs of early school leaving? In a frictionless economy, where individuals are free to choose their optimal level of education and the effects of individual choice do not spill over into society at large, this question makes little sense: the level of education each of us chooses or has chosen is both privately and socially optimum. In practice, however, economies and societies are far from frictionless, and optimal choice may be restrained both*

*by the presence of credit constraints – both short and long term – and by other market frictions. Moreover, since individual choice has effects that are typically ignored when choosing education, there are externalities driving a wedge between the social and private costs and returns to education<sup>121</sup>.*

That is to say that economies and societies are far from being the result of individual choices, which may be restrained both by the presence of fixed economic conditions – both short and long term – and by other market frictions.

Moreover, since individual choices have effects that are typically ignored when choosing education, social impact of wrong individual choices are far from being a private area.

With reason, many authors consider early school leaving as a serious economic and social phenomenon that has important consequences both on individuals and on society.

## **Social return of investments in education**

If it is true that ESL implies social costs, on the other hand investments in education are always rewarding. The recent economic literature has highlighted that the benefits of education are broad and some authors argue as follows.

*According to Oreopoulos<sup>122</sup> (2006) compulsory education can be either not binding – for those individuals who are already investing in higher education – or binding for those who would have attained less education in the absence of the law. If we believe in the investment model of education, which predicts that each individual chooses her optimal level of investment by equating perceived marginal benefits to marginal costs, and if we are prepared to assume that there are no obstacles for individual choice, then compulsory school reforms cannot be optimal, because they force some individuals to invest more than their private optimum, at a level where marginal costs are above marginal benefits. While changes in minimum school leaving age are often justified by the presence of positive externalities – for instance because education reduces crime – or because individuals are constrained by lack of financial resources or finally because they are not able to*

---

<sup>121</sup> G. Brunello, M. De Paola, *The Costs of Early school leaving in Europe*, IZA, Bonn 2013 p. 2- 4

<sup>122</sup> Oreopoulos P (2006), *Do dropouts drop out too soon? Wealth, health and happiness from compulsory schooling*, *Journal of Public Economics*, pages 2213–2229



*predict in a satisfactory way the expected returns to further investment, it is not clear that these changes are the most efficient way to address the dropout problem.*<sup>123</sup>

That is to say that still point of views differs in terms of solutions to be adopte. Matt Dickson and Colm Harmon also wrote some papers related to their research on the economic returns of education. The estimation of the economic return to education has perhaps been one of the predominant areas of analysis in applied economics for over 50 years. In the abstract of the Review they argue that:

*We consider briefly the current trends in the literature on economic returns to education including econometric issues. We argue that the concept of the return to education should include non-monetary returns. We consider how research interests and the focus of policy makers may be at odds. We conclude with some suggestions for future research directions including data collection needs.*<sup>124</sup>

For most of the population education generates benefits and welfare, not only because it improve occupational opportunities, salaries and job satisfaction, but also because it leads to more informed decisions affecting health, marriage, parenting and retirement. Moreover, schooling affects individual non-cognitive skills and attitudes, such as, patience and motivation, which influence economic choices.

Further education have social consequences for individuals and society and affect both the economy by raising tax revenues and reducing welfare benefit payments - and social welfare, because of their effects on crime, attitudes toward minorities and immigrants and political participation.(Moretti, 2007). In his paper the author wrote:

*The goal of this paper is to find a credible methodology for identifying and measuring the social return to higher education. In the first part, the social return to education is estimated by pooling together all education groups. I consider the possibility that cities with a more educated labor force also have higher levels of unobserved ability....The second part of the paper presents separate estimates of the effect of an increase in the percent college graduates on the wages of four education groups. Economic theory predicts*

---

<sup>123</sup> G. Brunello, M. De Paola, *The Costs of Early school leaving in Europe*, IZA, Bonn 2013 p. 21

<sup>124</sup> *Economics of Education Review*, Volume 30, Issue 6, December 2011, *Economic returns to education: What We Know, What We Don't Know and where we're going*, pages 1115-1117

that the effect of an increase in college share on the wage of low education workers is positive.<sup>125</sup>

More and better education is associated to higher wages both in standard human capital models and in signaling models where education acts as a signal of valuable innate abilities.

The broad perception that early school leaving affects in a significant way both society and individuals, who could benefit from increased educational attainment, has induced policy makers to design policies that try to address the problem.

Since reducing early school leaving to less than 10 percent of the relevant population by 2020 is a headline target in the Europe 2020 strategy and one of the five benchmarks of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (European Commission, 2010). Designing adequate policies to combat early school leaving is, however, a difficult task, that requires the identification of causal links and the evaluation of the expected costs and benefits. Unfortunately in the European policy debate these requirements are often overlooked or receive limited attention.

There is still a great deal of discussion about how to better measure the costs of early school leaving to individuals and societies.

I have investigated into some policies that have already been implemented, while others in incubator and are expected to affect the percentage of early school leavers in the next future.

I have considered both kind of approaches, by distinguishing between *broad* policies, such as changes in minimum school leaving age, tracking and school resources and *targeted* policies for the sub-population of early school leavers. I have mainly looked into European best practices.

---

<sup>125</sup> E. Moretti / *Journal of Econometrics* 121 (2004) pages 175 – 212

## Economic Impact of Early School Leaving

The cost of early school leaving has an impact on economy but it also has are private, fiscal and social consequences.

Some authors<sup>126</sup> distinguish between private, fiscal and social benefits.

*Private* benefits include the immediate impact on the individual personal life:

- Better salaries
- Improved health
- Longer life expectancy
- welfare

*Fiscal* benefits, which have more an impact on economy, include:

- increased tax payments
- lower reliance on government transfers
- less crimes
- Less criminal justice costs.

If the government subsidizes education, the public costs of additional schooling should be subtracted from expected benefits.

*Social* benefits include all those factors which are related to the development or under-development of society if it doesn't happen:

- Productivity
- better health
- less costs from reduced crime.

In order to better evaluate the costs of early school leaving and the benefits of additional education which are expected— typically high school graduation — is a difficult task, based on the comparison of many other variables.

---

<sup>126</sup> GOOS, Maarten, et al. *Explaining job polarization in Europe: the roles of technology, globalization and institutions*. Centre for Economic Performance, LSE, 2010.

## Social Impact of Early School Leaving

It has been said that early school leaving typically reduces lifetime earnings and leads to higher unemployment incidence and duration, because of the low paid jobs or reduced carrier opportunities. Besides we are living in a growing high tech society where higher profiles are requested and the demand for higher profiles has increased. This is even more relevant nowadays as it used to be in the past.

While this assumption is necessary in practice to estimate lifetime earnings, it is important to be aware of its limits. Relative wages by education are the outcomes of the interaction between demand and supply.

We consider first the *demand*.

There is a well - documented tendency of modern labor markets to become increasingly polarized, with an expansion of jobs in the upper and lower part of the wage distribution and a reduction of “middle class” routinized jobs.<sup>127</sup> This issue is well discussed by a research paper issued by a joint initiative of Ludwig-Maximilians University’s Center for Economic Studies and the IFO (Institute für Ökonomie) Institute for Economic Research.

The authors speak about *Job Polarization*<sup>128</sup>. It implies that the relative demand for high school graduates, who have typically filled middle class **jobs**, is bound to decline relative to the expanding *demand for professionals*, who have a college degree or more, and for the less educated, which fill elementary occupation.

With increasing polarization and given relative supply, it is expected that the income gained from completing high school – relative to early school leaving – might be reduced in the future. If this is the case, estimates that rely on current earnings profiles run the risk of over-estimating the costs of early school leaving.

Next we can consider relative *supply*.

---

<sup>127</sup> GOOS, Maarten, et al. *Explaining job polarization in Europe: the roles of technology, globalization and institutions*. Centre for Economic Performance, LSE, 2010.

Policies that encourage individuals to complete high school, if successful, will increase the relative supply of high school graduates. Given the demand, this increase will trigger a decline in the relative wage paid to high school graduates compared to early school leavers.

In this case, using current wage ratios to estimate future ratios may lead again to over-estimating the costs of early school leaving. A key ingredient is the difference of earnings by education. This difference should be measured for individuals who differ only in their educational attainment.

We also notice that, if education signals certain characteristics that individuals have, a change in terms of higher educational level might produce a change in the signaling value of the qualification and in the associated wage and labor market experience. Inevitably, important un-observables are omitted.

When these reforms are used as instruments for education, average estimated returns are typically much higher than those uncovered using standard ordinary least squares techniques. In the presence of heterogeneity in the returns to schooling, this result is often interpreted as showing that the individuals affected by these reforms (*compliers*) have higher returns to schooling than those who are not affected.



## Chapter 11 - MEASURES: PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, COMPENSATION

---

### Measures to tackling ESL

Early school leaving requires a long-term response with sustained political and financial commitment together with strong leadership from all key actors. This includes policy makers, educational authorities as well as parents, pupils, teachers and their representative associations.

Measures involve three different phases:

<b>Governance and cooperation</b>	<b>Data collection System</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Networking of local, regional, national stakeholders National coordination</li> <li>➤ Sustainable funding</li> <li>➤ Cross-sectorial cooperation</li> <li>➤ Learning cooperation</li> <li>➤ Mentoring and evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Data collection system</li> <li>➤ Sensitivity of data</li> <li>➤ Timeline and transparency</li> <li>➤ Use of data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Monitoring</li> <li>➤ Evaluation</li> </ul>

### ***Governance and cooperation***

Cooperation at local, regional and national institutions level should be a priority, especially if carried out at central level, in order to guarantee a comprehensive approach. Funding to local and national level should be guaranteed by the central government in order to provide more investment on educational policies fostering higher quality of learning. Mentors, addressing the pupils' choices and evaluated at the end of the process, should support the whole process.

### ***Data collection System and Monitoring***

It has been already observed that, without an effective scheme of data collection, any action and approach to ESL is useless and ineffective. Records in each school are needed and central data collection will ensure that the phenomenon is under control.

Users of the data become all the actors involved into the action plan, institutions, schools, students, families, policy makers, government.

### ***Action Plan***

A set of core principles are equally relevant in prevention, intervention and compensation actions:

- **prevention:** detecting early signs of disengagement or lack of motivation
- **intervention:** difficulties encountered by pupils as soon as problems arise;
- **compensation:** offering opportunities for education/training to drop out.



The following possible actions of the 3 different stages about ESL interventions, will be analysed throughout the chapter:

Action Plan<sup>129</sup>

PREVENTION	INTERVENTION	COMPENSATION
Access to good quality ECEC.	Effective EWS.	Second chance education.
Relevant and engaging curriculum.	Focus on individual needs.	Recognition.
Flexible educational pathways.	Systematic support.	Commitment/Governance.
Transition between educational levels.	Extra-curricula and out-of-school activities.	Personalised and holistic approach.
High quality VET.	Support to teachers.	Distinctive learning experience.
Teachers education.	Empowering families and parents.	Flexibility in curricula.
Guidance system.		Teacher involvement and support.
		Links to mainstream education.

Comprehensive strategies to reduce ESL must address the entire education system and include prevention, intervention and compensation measures. Preventing ESL requires initiatives at system level; intervention takes place at the level of individual schools. However, the distinction between prevention and intervention is not always so simple. This chapter follows the definition of prevention, intervention and compensation proposed in the *2011 Council Recommendations* on policies to reduce ESL. Strategies for fighting early school leaving have to take as a starting point, *an analysis of the national, regional and local specificities of the phenomenon*. They have to include all range of social policies such as social protection, youth, family, health and employment.

<sup>129</sup> EU Commission, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe. 2014 Edition*. Eurydice

## Prevention

Prevention seeks to avoid the conditions from arising where processes leading to ESL can start.

Early detection of problem should start from *early childhood education*. Learning should be focused on building self-esteem, strength and talents. Individual abilities and specific needs should be recognised at an early age, in order to build gaps of competence or attitudes. Pupils should feel respect, regardless of their SES or religion.

Schools therefore, have to establish the ideal conditions in which young people can grow. All the pupils should have access to equal high-quality early childhood education (ECEC). Measures, such as language support for children of immigrants, should be introduced that ensure all children can take part in the classroom.

Access to good quality education at an early age is proved to contribute positively to the development of key competences. Good quality ECEC increases also educational achievements and reduces the risk of ESL later in life.

Access to good quality ECEC is particularly important for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and makes entry into the education system much easier.

***Cooperative learning*** should be introduced in schools and P2P (peer-to-peer) education should be introduced where needed.

Prevention measures seek to tackle ESL before first symptoms are visible.

Successful prevention of ESL considers the pre-conditions for successful schooling and the design of education and training systems. It must ensure that education and training institutions and their learning environment (including the physical environment) provide a stimulating learning climate for all pupils. This includes equal access to quality education for all children and young people. However, in some countries the costs and mobility restraints can limit access to education. This happens especially in poorer, weaker countries with high inci-

dence of public debt and expenditures as it is in Greece, Spain and Italy in recent years.

### ***Supportive measures for children at risk***

Disadvantaged children are often at risk of poor outcomes in their education and may need additional support in order to reach their full potential. Participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) from a very young age, however, improves the likelihood that children from such backgrounds will be successful in their education, and reduces their chances of becoming socially excluded.

One of the main challenges for this stage of education is, therefore, to guarantee *equal access and equality of opportunity* to all children regardless of their socio-economic, cultural and/or linguistic background<sup>130</sup>.

Data on the numbers of children in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion are provided and the general arrangements for admission, funding, teaching and learning in ECEC are examined.

Specific measures have been introduced by *European countries* following EU Recommendations, to ensure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds participate in *ECEC* and lay the foundations for future success in school and later life.

Thanks to the WG on *ECEC* since 2012, a lot of efforts have been made by EU members, and most educational policies are seeking to implement educational strategies aimed at improving the standard of education at this stage.

Given the importance of this topic a special chapter of this research is entirely dedicated to the *Quality of education in Early Childhood Education and Care*, as crucial part of the EU 2020 strategy.

---

<sup>130</sup>EU Commission, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe. 2014 Edition*. Eurydice

## Intervention

Learners require learning environments that are welcoming, open, safe, and friendly and where pupils feel noticed, valued and part of a community.

Schools have the potential to empower young people with a sense of ownership, belonging and self-fulfilment, skills and knowledge that enable them to be active citizens and play a positive role in society.

Schools should provide students with the opportunities to help learners to build their confidence and increase their desire for learning.

*EWS* (early warning signs), such as *truancy or poor performance* should be detected with tutoring or mentoring support, and cooperation with parents.

The definition for **intervention** is: measures addressing emerging difficulties at an early stage. Many intervention measures apply to all pupils, but are especially beneficial and relevant to those at risk of ESL. Other intervention measures are more focused on students and build on the early detection of support needed for learning.

Intervention measures should take a *multi-professional and holistic approach* and provide individual guidance in addition to practical and emotional support.

Educational staff is sometimes not close enough to pupils with learning difficulties/disabilities or those who face personal, social or emotional challenges and are therefore unable to support them, because in some countries like Italy or Spain, or Greece and less developed countries schools, do not receive enough investments from the Government.

This is why many countries are focusing on teachers training; especially those countries, which are the worst scorers in terms of quality of education, where the school system education is still under reformation, should invest a lot on teachers training.

In fact, the most recent educational policies are requiring EU countries to invest more on teachers and new approaches to help them recognize early warning

symptoms of distress or discomfort or mental disorders when these are not easily detectable from professional staff.

Pupils need easy access to teachers and other professionals supporting their educational and personal development. They also need guidance and mentoring together with cultural and extra-curricular activities to broaden their learning opportunities.

### ***Early Warning Systems (EWS)***

*Early Warning System (EWS)* <sup>131</sup> refer to different methods and routines aimed at identifying and responding to early signs of disengagement in students.

There are different approaches among Member States in early detection of EWS in Europe. The target is to intervene as soon as possible, when early signs of disengagement are recognised.

Although often driven by national policies or legislation, their implementation tends to be local. In many countries, *EWS* are part of ‘mainstream’ school monitoring systems. (such as in the Netherlands for example).

School staff plays a key role in recognising early signs of disengagement in pupils at risk of school underachievement.

They are important actors in providing an early reaction to these signs, and intervene where necessary, in conjunction with youth and social workers and/or other professionals working with young people. Responses to early warning signals should be fast and include parents and pupils. Individual action plans should be created to help and guide at-risk pupils.

Most existing *EWS* monitor *absenteeism* (regular *absence* from work or school without a good reason) as a signal for ESL; some also take into account marks and the exam results of pupils. However, this approach provides a narrow perspective on the individual and their situation. Early detection should be based on a comprehensive view on the individual that also includes social, family-related and emotional factors. The impact of critical life events (including trau-

---

<sup>131</sup>EU Commission, *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support*-Thematic WG on ESL-Final Report Nov. 2013

matic events) on the personal development of a young person, should always be taken into account.

The challenges associated with *EWS* include having a clear understanding of their scope, context, methodology and benefit. *EWS* should be evaluated and monitored, to ensure their efficiency, effectiveness and relevance to the specific context of the school.

### ***Systemic support frameworks within schools***

Early intervention should be carried out, within the schools, in order to receive the support they need on time. It should be based on a strong multi-professional approach and teamwork.

Professional staff and teachers should be employed and coordinate involving a network operating inside and outside the school. Positions should be assigned in order to define roles and responsibilities of the whole system, a team should be lead by a coordinator and should be appointed in order to assist and support pupils at risk. The coordinator or the team should involve a range of professionals inside or outside school; one staff member may also be assigned to an individual or a family in need of targeted support. Counselling support service should also be provided to parents and teaching staff.

### ***Focus on the needs of individual pupils***

If the focus is on individual needs the following measures should be adopted:

- Individual learning support,
- flexible learning pathways,
- high quality teaching,
- learning based on student focused methods should be a substantial part of school policies aimed at reducing ESL.
- greater flexibility in the choice of subjects/courses and the provision of additional learning support,
- measures to improve the motivation and resilience of young people.

- special support should be provided to pupils with learning difficulties/disabilities and to those who experience difficulties balancing education with their home life
- learning support after long periods of interruption, should also receive special attention.

### ***Learning offer***

Extra-curricular and out-of-school activities can enrich the school learning offer.

Many young people at risk of ESL lack a sense of identity or connection with the school.

- Extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for young people to develop such a sense of belonging.
- Extra-curricular and out-of-school activities should be compatible with educational aims to avoid potential disconnection between school and out-of-school life experiences.

### ***Support to teachers***

Developing the capacity of school staff to create and maintain learning environments that support at-risk pupils is of crucial importance to reducing ESL.

Teachers may need:

- support to develop and adapt different methodologies
- develop skills to meet the needs of the pupils.
- get more time and space for teamwork
- get expertise from other professionals.
- networking chances among schools experiencing similar challenges in relation to ESL

### ***Family support***

Schools and local community services should develop approaches that enable parents to become a resource in their children learning.

Some parents need to be supported in their role to encourage and motivate young people to aim higher in their educational aspirations and achievements.

Family involvement is important for gaining recognition, demonstrating and celebrating achievement, raising self-esteem and self-respect.

### ***Raise parental awareness of ESL***

It is important to involve parents as partners in identifying early signs of disengagement, academic difficulties or problems that may lead to ESL. Pro-active parents, who are attentive to their children experiences towards education, play an essential role in EWS and in supporting them in their educational endeavour.

## **Compensation**

Compensation measures offer opportunities for education and training for those who have dropped out. *Second chance* schools should provide smaller classes as well as more personalised and flexible teaching methods in comparison with mainstream schools.

Education staff must be aware of the scope and challenge of ESL, its main triggers and ways to prevent it. Schools and teachers should be equipped with the skills, expertise and resources to provide all pupils with the learning support they require. Countries should define the right balance between different types of intervention, depending on the structure of their education and training system. Co-ordination of measures at school, local, regional and national level should help to avoid overlaps and gaps in provision. Young people at risk of ESL and those who have already left education and training prematurely should have easy access to different learning opportunities and targeted support. Students who drop out



should be given the chance to gain the qualifications they miss out on at a later stage.

Whilst preventing ESL is more efficient than compensating its effects, compensation measures will always be necessary for those young people who have had their education interrupted due to various reasons. Compensation measures aim to re-engage people in education and training. This section of the report focuses on *second chance schemes* as alternative education and training opportunities for young people.

It is acknowledged that other approaches exist across Member States, for example, individually tailored programmes that focus on re-integration into mainstream education or on providing practical work experiences in combination with schooling.

## **Remedies**

At system level, the following characteristics of the education and training system can help reduce obstacles to completing upper secondary education providing a preventative action on ESL, this is what should happen everywhere but it relatively difficult to put into practice:

➤ Access to good quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) Evidence shows that access to good quality education at an early age facilitates the development of key competences. The evidence also shows that good quality ECEC increases educational achievements and reduces the risk of ESL at a later Stage. Access to good quality ECEC is particularly important for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds makes entry into the education system easier.

*Level of criticality: ECEC needs more investments on educational policies and services provided at early stage of development and education.*

➤ Relevant and engaging curriculum: A curriculum that is relevant and coherent can motivate pupils to fully develop their strengths and talents. Curricula should be designed in such a way that it reflects the different affinities of the pupil, takes into account different starting points, and is adapted to the pupil's ambitions.

*Level of criticality: Motivation and tailored programs should be provided but it requires more teachers training and constant feedback with pupils and families, and this is still not happening in all EU members.*

➤ Flexible educational pathways: the strict design of educational pathways can create severe obstacles to complete upper secondary education. Situations where pupils and their parents are required to make premature obligatory choices (see Germany) between different educational tracks at an early age make education systems highly selective and can result in demotivating those who have been incorrectly oriented.

*Level of criticality: Political reforms on education are needed, but some countries do not want to change their education system for a variety of reasons, that can be economical, political or social.*

➤ Research also shows that grade repetition risks undermining pupils' confidence. It can trigger ESL while not being effective in addressing possible learning deficits. Many countries have started to substitute grade repetition with investment in individualised learning and targeted learning support.

*Level of criticality: Only few countries in Europe are investing enough in learning support, but in some countries like Italy and Spain, pupils are still retained at school, rather than meet support during the school year. Pupils' self-esteem is very often under-mined when grade retention is used.*

➤ Better integration of newly arrived migrant children: children from newly arrived migrant families need targeted support to acquire the language of tuition and to catch up with the curriculum. Inclusive learning environments can support their integration and increase their educational success. Migrant children should be placed within the same age group as their native peers to ensure their successful inclusion. The administrative process for enrolling newly arrived migrant children needs to be timely and adapted to the specific situation of their families.

*Level of criticality: some countries like Germany, have adopted very successful strategies to improve integration of new migrant families, but some countries with unstable economy are not able to face the difficulties that migrant children might meet. This topic is better discussed further on in my research.*

➤ Smooth transition between different levels of education: measures to facilitate the process of adaptation should start from transition from home to the world of education. Transition from primary to lower-secondary education and from lower to upper secondary should be made easier.

*Level of criticality: lack of vocational guidance, of information, of parental guidance may result in wrong choices that very often affect the whole school career of the students, especially those that are weaker students.*

➤ Closer cooperation between schools, induction programmes and targeted support for children facing difficulties in adapting to the new school environment can avoid alienation as a result of difficult transition experiences. Stronger permeability of educational pathways is also necessary, offering concrete transfer options for young people realising that they may prefer a different course of study.

*Level of criticality: Orientation courses, more guidance should be offered to students and families, but sometimes orientation is offered only at school level, instead of opening to other Institutions of higher education the chance to provide and give their educational offer.*

- High quality, attractive and engaging vocational education and training (VET): High quality VET, of equal value to academic education, provides opportunities for all young people to explore and learn more about the world of work and ease transition to the labour market. It is important that high quality VET allows progression to higher education in the same way general upper

*Level of criticality: labour market has become very demanding in terms of professionalism and high skills, so only very high standards of VET can respond to the need of the market. Very often lower achiever can hardly find a job, and better schools seems to be deserved to better off families. Social background still matters when it come the time to make a choice for the families. This could be avoided if all pupils could get same educational opportunitie, regardless their social status.*

- Involvement of pupils and parents in school decision-making: Young people's opinions should be highly valued. The active participation of pupils in the school community increases their engagement and motivation and facilitates school effectiveness.

*Level of criticality: many schools have opted for a network of collaboration with parents, but many other are still far from building a real participation into schools.*

- There should be space for pupils to influence their schools and take ownership of their educational path. They should have the opportunity to voice their opinions and be involved in decisions affecting the school and functioning. Schools could facilitate their participation through school councils or student consultations for example. Parents, as the primary educators of their children, should

also represented in the decision-making process of the school. Securing the active involvement of parents in the school is essential to ensure conducive and supportive learning environments in general and especially in preventing ESL and addressing it early.

*Level of criticality: some attempts have been made in few countries or cities, with election of students representatives and school council, but parents are very often kept out of it, since one representative for each class does not have enough decision-making power. I have seen this happen only in private school such as the European Schools in Europe where parents do have some stronger power regarding school services. Rarely they are able to influence curricula which is delegated to teaching staff only.*

➤ Initial and continuous education for education staff: The quality of teaching and the competences of the teachers are a determining factor in the contribution teachers can make to reduce ESL. High quality teaching and learning calls for the continuous professional development of teaching staff. Adopting a learner-centred approach in teacher education with a focus on diversity and inclusion is recommended.

*Level of criticality: this is another critical point where investment do count a lot and some countries having doing this for ages, like Sweden and Finland, and others never started because of lack of funding. Travel expenses, refreshing courses, these are all costs which should be covered by government.*

➤ Teachers should be capable of identifying different learning styles and pupils' needs and be equipped with the skills to adopt inclusive and student-focused methods, including conflict resolution skills to promote a positive classroom climate.

*Level of criticality: high skilled teachers are need in this case, but it is a matter engagement, professionalism and motivation and funding.*

➤ Teachers should be supported in dealing with diversity in terms of the social and ethnic background of pupils as well as supporting individuals with special learning needs and/or learning disabilities. They need to understand ESL, its different triggers and early warning signs and be highly aware of their role in preventing it.

*Level of criticality: some countries have been used to deal with migrants for ages, but the recent intense migration flows occurring now are not to be compared with the past. So teaching staff should meet the culture, the language and the diversities of so many migrants, going at the same pace as migration numbers are increasing.*

➤ Teachers need the skills and ability to work with other professions and partners to prevent ESL. These skills should be developed and strengthened during initial and continuous teacher education.

*Level of criticality: education normally stops after getting a University degree or diploma and many still think that they are too old for life long learning.*

➤ Teachers should have the opportunity to participate in work placements in schools with high levels of ESL during teacher education to get a better insight in ways to address ESL at school level. Whole school approaches: Quality initiatives such as a whole school approach encourage the creation of conducive and supportive learning environments.

*Level of criticality: special attention should be paid to those area where the rate of ESL is particularly high and these schools definitely need better organisation, more investments, more learning support to address ESL.*

➤ Strong leadership and careful planning with clear and smart objectives for all school staff should be provided. It entails the provision of training and support to teaching staff in their pedagogic approach, external monitoring and opportunities for self-reflection. A whole school approach encourages and supports positive and caring relationships for and between teachers, school staff and pupils. A strong and well-developed system of emotional support in schools is needed, especially for those at risk of ESL.

*Level of criticality: governance, leadership plays an essential role in preventing ESL, but a whole school support is not easy to implement everywhere*

➤ Strong and well-developed guidance system: high quality, up-to-date guidance made available at an early stage is essential for providing young people with the information they need to make the right career choices. Helping young people understand their own strengths, talents, different study options and employment prospects is essential. It is important that guidance goes beyond the simple provision of information and focus on the individual in relation to their particular needs and circumstances. Guidance could be provided through interactive methods (mentoring, coaching, one-to-one guidance, work placements) and through online services. Ensuring young people have access to all relevant information, advice and guidance under a single entry point should be encouraged.

*Level of criticality: : Orientation courses, more guidance should be offered to students and families, but sometimes orientation is offered only at school level, instead of opening to other Institutions of higher education the chance to provide and give their educational offer. This requires a network among schools, institutions and universities but it cannot happen if educational policies are not adopted.*

➤ Cooperation with the job market. providing opportunities at an early stage that allow young people to experience the world of work, for example through (stages) in enterprises for example, could help raise their motivation to continue in education and training and to focus better on future career choices.

*Level of criticality: one example of best practice is the happening which every year takes place in my city Torino, the event is IO LAVORO, it is a 2-days event, where students, job seekers and enterprises meet in the same place. That is to say demand and Job offer meet under the same umbrella. Many cities have adopted this kind of job placement and the statistics show a growing trend.*

In this chapter I have tried by analysing each recommendation, providing the critical point for each of them, showing that theory may differ very frequently from the state of the art, but is only by considering the weakness or breaking points of the school system, that it is possible to provide solution.

A lot of solutions have something in common of course, that is to say better educational policies and investments which are the ground to make remedies work out better and efficiently in solving the problem of reducing the ESL rate in EU.

But as in the following chapter there is a quotation saying :

*More Money, doesn't buy better education. (Obama)*

It is to say that money wouldn't be enough if it would not be followed by political engagement, motivation of all stakeholders involved in the educational progress.



## Chapter 12 - QUALITY EDUCATION IN ECEC: EU 2020 STRATEGY TO RAISE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

---

*More Money, doesn't buy better education.*  
(Obama, USA President)

This quotation of the USA President Obama, is at the core of raising the educational standards everywhere not only in the USA but worldwide. It makes clear that it is not enough to invest more money in education, if we are not investing in higher Quality Educational standards, at the same time.

Since in my title, I referred to International Cooperation as a way to compare best practices and studies in order to improve the Quality of Education in Europe and fight against ESL, I believe there is not probably another country with so much ethnic diversity, as the USA.

This means that USA had to fight, from the very beginning of its History, starting from the colonisation period, with such a variety of ethnic groups and nationality and language and cultures, that integration policies has always been cause of main concern for the American government.

I have also quoted some authors, as the following, since it helped me to introduce the next discussion which is about Early Childhood Education&Care.

*If better Quality of Education, is the target, this means that the process has to start **very early** in childhood education. Children that have poor stimuli in early childhood start school in a disadvantaged position if compared with children that started early childhood education soon<sup>132</sup>.*

---

<sup>132</sup> Schweinhart, L.J., & Weikart, D.P. (1985) *Evidence That Good Early Childhood Programs Work*. Phi Delta Kappan 66, 8, 545-551.

For this reason, many efforts have been put in this phase 0-6 years old in terms of investments to prevent Early School Leaving consequences.

In the USA more investments have been provided in the last years; President Obama has put more than 100 Billion \$ to ECEC, in order to giving equal and accessible education to all children, especially those belonging to poor backgrounds or ethnic minorities.

In Europe in June 2011, given the importance of ECEC, the Education Council adopted a set of Recommendations on policies to improve the Quality of teaching in ECEC and set up a WG to reduce early school leaving (ESL)

This policy recommendation was called *Europe 2020 Strategy*.

Two different working groups were created:

- *WG on ECEC (2012-2014)* final issue was the report *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe 2014*.
- *WG on Early school leaving*, which is the main topic of my research.

Investing in education helps to break the cycle of deprivation and poverty leading to the social exclusion of too many young people across Europe.

It highlights the need for evidence-based and comprehensive policies to reduce ESL. In order to be effective, policies against ESL need to address all levels of education. They should be cross-sartorial and involve stakeholders from different policy areas such as youth, social/welfare, employment and health. They should focus on prevention, intervention and compensation. This approach requires a shift from implementing individual ESL measures to introducing comprehensive policies starting from the very beginning of the children life.

Moreover, Europe 2020 strategy aims at creating more investments in the educational achievement of *young people* that is essential for the employment prospects of every young person. It is important for the growth of our economy and for social cohesion, especially at a time when the current financial and economic crisis is having a serious impact on young people and their families.

## Quality education in ECEC

High quality *early childhood education and care* (ECEC)<sup>133</sup> is at the centre of research and educational policies in Europe at the moment.

For this reason, the quality of ECEC, has been included in the European educational policy agenda.

It is the focus of many projects and programmes undertaken by the European Commission and Member States and it is the reason why in year 2012 a Thematic **Working Group** on *Early Childhood Education and Care* was set up.

The emphasis on ECEC was already the focus of the 2011 Council Conclusions on ECEC, and the importance of *early years provision* has been considered to be important not only for the giving better chances to working parents, but also to mitigate socio-economic inequalities and most important, for children's personal development.

Research, authors and policy makers agree that intervention at an early stage, when the first problems become evident, is the most efficient and compensating way to reduce the rate of ESL in a country. In fact only those countries, which started soon with early intervention educational strategies, have met the desired target of showing an ESL rate below 10%, (see the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden).

The outcomes of the Thematic **WG**, as the final reports, were relevant for policy makers and all the actors involved in the educational policies, since it provided all stakeholders with the basis of what is meant for *quality early childhood education*. Which in other words was the target of the European strategy for *smart and sustainable growth*, of the mentioned *EU 2020 strategy*.

In 2014 a report *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe 2014* was jointly published with Eurostat. It contributed to informing about policy on *early childhood education and care* by combining statistical data

---

<sup>133</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014. *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*. 2014 Edition. Eurydice and Eurostat Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the EU

and qualitative information to describe the structure, organisation and funding of early childhood education and care systems. It analyses issues, which are important for the development of quality services, identified through European policy co-operation, such as:

- Access governance
- Quality assurance
- Affordability
- Professional staff
- Parents' involvement
- Support to disadvantaged children

It aims to provide insights into what constitutes *high quality early childhood education and care* through internationally comparable indicators. This is the second report on the topic, following the 2009 report that focused on tackling social and cultural inequalities through ECEC. It covers 32 countries (28 EU and 5 not EU countries) and 37 education systems.

It is widely acknowledged that early childhood education and care leads to:

- better child well-being and learning outcomes as a foundation for lifelong learning;
- more equitable child outcomes and reduction of poverty;
- increased inter-generational social mobility;
- more female labour market participation;
- increased fertility rates;
- better social and economic development for the society at large.

The research agreed that all the benefits are depending on the good *quality* of the services.

Expanding access to services without attention to *quality* will not deliver good outcomes for children or the long-term productivity benefits for society.

Furthermore, if the services quality is low, it can have long-lasting negative effects on the child development, instead of bringing the positive effects they should.

## Chapter 13 - QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

---

It has been said so far that *Quality in Education* is one of the top priority to reduce the rate of ESL in Europe. This is the reason why many investments in the EU are oriented to provide adequate educational standards.

But, if it is true that intervention needs to start from an early stage of the children's development, it is also true that raising the quality of education, means keeping the same standards also in Higher Education, that is to say throughout the students career studies.

There is a general agreement that where quality is guaranteed, it will certainly pay-off. In recent years, a growing number of OECD countries have made considerable efforts to encourage quality teaching especially in the ECEC; however, countries are at different stages of policy development and implementation.

However, in some countries it happens that, if it is true that during compulsory school education students receive enough attention, at a later stage, when they grow up, are frequently left alone, struggling in making the right educational choices which should be a process where all actors should be involved.

This lack of attention, unfortunately leads to bad results in their future career and welfare. In fact, if during childhood education, children are supported and followed by the parents, at a later stage, and it seems to be much more difficult helping them or give advice, for lack of competence or experience.

Sometimes they are not able to make choices, and nobody seems to be able to help to re-address them or provide counselling support. And if it is important for some students, it is even more important for those at risk.

Some countries have adopted a sort of counselling desk where students can address themselves for getting optional educational paths.

I will speak about Torino experience in this field of orientation as adopted by the Educational Services of city council.

There is no doubt that the family and social background play an important role in creating the conditions where ESL might occur, as those “*systemic factors*” which have been considered so far, no matter when individual factors are not to be identified.

For instance ESL might occur also in Social class where families are well-off, but school has been unable to motive students to learning and to developing learning skills and commitment to formative success.

OECD has carried out a research, under the super-vision of the authors Fabric Heard and Deborah Roseaveare, which contains guidelines for Higher Institutes to fostering *Quality teaching in higher education*.<sup>134</sup>

*Quality teaching* is the use of pedagogical techniques to produce learning outcomes for students. It involves several dimensions, including:

- effective design of curriculum
- focused course content
- Variety of learning contexts (including guided independent study, project-based learning, cooperative learning<sup>135</sup>, experimentation, etc.),
- Feedback (soliciting and using feedback)
- Effective assessment of learning outcomes.
- Learning environment (well-adapted)
- Student support services.

We could consider the above study extended to the methods of prevention and intervention carried out by EU Members for tackling the ESL issue.

In fact if *Quality teaching* is important for successful students, it is even more true if applicable those at risk.

Experience showed that fostering quality teaching is a multi-level endeavour. Support for quality teaching takes place at three inter-dependent levels:

---

<sup>134</sup> Fabrice Hénard and Deborah Roseveare, *Fostering quality teaching in Higher Education*, September 2012, OECD

<sup>135</sup> Gobbo F. *Il Cooperative Learning nelle società multiculturali*, Edizioni Unicopli, pp. 8-21

- *Institution-wide level*: including projects such as policy design, and support to organisation and internal quality assurance systems.
- *Programme level*: comprising actions to measure and enhance the design, content and delivery of the programmes within a department or a school.
- *Individual level*: including initiatives that help teachers achieve their mission, encouraging them to innovate and to support improvements to student learning and adopt a learner-oriented focus.

These three levels are essential and inter-dependent.

However, supporting quality teaching at the programme level is the key to ensure improvement in quality teaching at the discipline level and across the institutions.

Support for quality teaching can be manifested through a wide range of activities that are likely to improve the quality of the teaching process, of the programme content, as well as the learning conditions of students.

If it is possible to transfer this to the ESL issue, since it is clear that the problem starts far before the higher education level.

Since ESL is to be seen at different level and is a multi-factors causes of school failure which leads to ESL, where social background is important to be considered but also School systemic factors with poor standards of education are responsible of it.

Academic institutions often think that creating initiatives such as:

- Centre for teaching and learning development
- Professional development activities
- Teaching excellence awards and competitions for remarkable improvements
- Teaching innovation funds
- Teaching recruitment criteria
- Support to innovative pedagogy (cooperative learning)<sup>136</sup>
- Communities of teaching and learning practices
- Learning environments (libraries, computing facilities)

---

<sup>136</sup> Gobbo F. *Il Cooperative Learning nelle società multiculturali*, Edizioni Unicopli pp.8

- Organisation and management of teaching and learning
- Support to foster student achievement (e.g.counseling, career advice, mentoring)
- Students' evaluation (i.e. programme ratings, evaluating learning experiences)
- Self-evaluation of experimentations, peer-reviewing, benchmarking of practices
- Community service and work-based programmes, development-based programmes
- Competence-based assessments

The topic of Cooperative learning is particularly helpful if we are taking into account the multicultural dimension of the nowadays society. This is based on the idea of setting up a learning environment based on collaborative learning, opened to different perspectives and possible answers.

*Cooperative learning is very appropriated to valorise diversities and to promote intellectual and socio-cultural abilities that better respond to a fast changing society, characterized by intense migration flows and global exchanges at economic and knowledge level, changing everyday life and educational process of the different countries<sup>137</sup>.*

Nowadays, due to its innovative pedagogical approach, which was first introduced by Pieter Batelaan in 1998, with his studies on intercultural education, and effective outcomes given is used by schools institutions, it is rapidly grown and adopted and disseminated at international level. and in 2008 an international conference “*Cooperative Learning in Multicultural Societies: critical reflections*” was held at Palazzo Nuovo, University of Torino, organized by professor Francesca Gobbo, presently teaching *Educational processes in multicultural societies* at University of Torino, *Education Sciences Department*.

A number of factors have brought quality teaching to the forefront of higher education policies. But these are very similar to the standards needed in ECEC.

Almost every education system has experienced substantial growth of student numbers in recent decades and the student profile has become diverse. (multiethnic society).

---

<sup>137</sup> Gobbo Francesca and Pieter Batelaan, *Il Cooperative Learning nelle società multiculturali*, Edizioni Unicopli pp.8



At the same time, higher education faces greater challenge from students, parents, employers and taxpayers to account for their performance and demonstrate their teaching quality.

Institutions engage in fostering quality teaching essentially for the following reasons:

- Responding to the growing demand for meaningful and relevant teaching. Students as well as employers want to ensure that their education will lead to gainful employment and will equip them with the skills needed to evolve professionally over a lifetime.
- To demonstrate that they are reliable providers of good quality higher education, while
- Operating in a complex setting, with multiple stakeholders, each with their own expectations (ministries, funding agencies, local authorities, employers...)
- To balance performance on teaching and learning achievements along with research performance, since even for elite, world-class universities, research performance is no longer sufficient to maintain the reputation of the institution.
- To more effectively compete for students against the backdrop of higher tuition fees and greater student mobility.

If to these reasons, we add the fact that ESL is one of the main strains on the welfare of a nation, we cannot think about improving Educational standards if schools are not prepared to face the challenge of a society facing a constant technological evolution and development.

If the same criteria are not applied to all level of education, starting from pre-school age up to University it is clear that the required educational standards will never be met.

Only starting from the basis of the early signs of discomfort a child might face, supporting him/her, guiding them through the wide range of educational choices at his disposal, which takes into account his competences/attitudes besides his socio-economic background, the pupils will be able to reach the set targets of his school career. Education should be adequate to the growing economy of our society.



### Second chance schemes

*Second chance schemes* are programmes and new opportunities offered to students, to re-engage in education and training. They are at the top of the list of compensation measures, which are intended to provide new chances to re-enter education, together with a wider approach of making learning more flexible, personalised, and attractive, etc.

They should make possible to:

- Provide students with positive learning experiences.
- Encourage young people to leave negative learning experiences behind and focus on building self-confidence, trust and motivation.
- Enable young people to think more positively about their future as a first but necessary step to gain qualifications at a later stage.

The key factor to success of *second chance schemes* is the awareness of the systemic and individual factors that have contributed to ESL.

It is also important to recognize factors that have influenced a young person's decision to re-engage in education and training. A physical learning environment that is safe and stimulating is particularly important for second chance education. Providing common areas where teachers and students share facilities and space helps to build relationships based on mutual respect and trust. Young people should have an active role in shaping their physical learning environment.

### ***Flexibility in the curricula***

The curriculum should be:

- innovative
- relevant
- flexible (in terms of the structure and timing of provision).

### ***Second chance schemes: systemic factors***

Teachers should use pedagogic approaches that respond to the needs of individual students in *second chance schemes*.

National legislation should allow for greater autonomy in relation to second chance schemes. It should be possible for staff to decide in relatively short time frames the study programmes and mobility of students within the system.

This is especially important in VET oriented second chance schemes. Flexibility should also include measures to allow students to return to mainstream education.

### ***Teacher involvement and support:***

Teachers' role in second chance education is typically broader than in mainstream education. Teachers often provide advice and guidance, and mentor students on issues not always related to learning. Teachers in second chance schemes help young people (re) develop positive relationships with adults and engage with other young people outside lesson time. A teachers profile and motivation to work in second chance education are important consideration in teacher recruitment.

Second chance education requires teachers to be innovative and flexible. The continued professional development of teaching staff should be ensured.

Teachers will need to draw on the expertise of specialist services/interventions outside and inside the school environment, (e.g. access to psychologists).

Teachers should also receive recognition for their work. Stability and continuity in the teaching workforce is important for students.

### ***Second chance education and mainstream education***

Easy access to compensation measures makes school more attractive to some young people and schools with high numbers pupils at risk of dropping out. At the same time, research demonstrates that second chance schemes are most successful where they offer a genuine alternative to the formal school system. Maintaining links between second chance provision and mainstream education remains important from both a student and teacher perspectives<sup>138</sup>.

From the student perspective, it is important that students do not become isolated and distanced from mainstream education.

From the teacher perspective, ensuring synergies with mainstream schools or co-location within the same building offers opportunities for shared staffing, training, and for the reciprocal exchange of pedagogical experiences and expertise. The successful elements of second chance schemes have the potential to inform change and practice in mainstream schools to prevent ESL. Some elements are more difficult to replicate in mainstream education than others. A recent European study outlined possible adaptations and ways to profit from experiences in second chance education.

Whilst there is need for more practical experiences in transferring good practices from second chance schemes into mainstream education, the starting point is a political will for change. Public acceptance of new approaches, pedagogical expertise, strong school leadership, sustainable funding and a strengthened role of local authorities are also required. The transfer of good practices should also be part of teachers' training. As discussed above, second chance schemes that

---

<sup>138</sup> EU Commission, *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support*, November 2013

are located within the mainstream schools provide opportunities for teachers from both schools to work closely together and enhance transferability of experiences and expertise.

### ***Second chance schemes: multi-level approach to fight ESL***

*Second chance schemes* focus on a holistic and personalised approach, though provision might differ in its emphasis and orientation. Some second chance schemes provide the opportunity to gain formal upper-secondary qualification; others focus on preparing young people for VET or employment. Provision can vary in terms of the intensity of support provided to young people. This will depend on the specific needs of the young person.

For second chance schemes to be successful, the following aspects should be considered:

- Accessible and relevant second chance schemes: Second chance schemes are located within different institutional frameworks.
- Second chance schemes should ensure they are easy to reach and accessible to all people interested in continuing their education and training.
- They should be responsive to the diversity of the youth population and the local labour market. This requires opportunities for flexible study that enable young people to access on-going provision and resources at different points of the day, week, term, or year.

### ***Second chance schemes should be high quality***

They should offer an alternative way to re-engage with education and gain qualifications. The recognition and validation of learning gained in second chance schemes is crucial and should provide young people with qualifications that are recognised on the labour market. They should also provide access to other education/training pathways.

Commitment and governance: Political commitment and strong school leadership is essential for second chance education. School management should consider a whole school approach and encourage multi-service collaboration in second chance education. It is recognised that some schools and teachers need support in developing such approaches.

### **Personalised and comprehensive approach to second chance education**

Greater emphasis on personal development supports young people re-develops their relationship with learning, the world of work and society. Young people should be involved in the development of their own learning and development plans. A personalised and holistic approach implies:

- targeted second chance provision focused on personal development with opportunities to develop life skills and employability skills;
- access to specialised support (such as psychological or emotional support), counselling, career guidance and practical support (such as financial support or help with securing accommodation);
- new pedagogic approaches such as cooperative learning, peer learning, project work and more formative assessment.





## Chapter 15 - **MIGRANT STUDENTS**

---

Immigration is a main feature of European societies. And the relationship between migration and education is complex. Achievement and under-achievement of this target group in education is a cause of main concern for policy makers and their decision regarding educational policies.

There is still a lower number of migrant children in pre-school education and primary school, and they enroll in secondary schools the enrolment takes place normally in less academically demanding schools or of shorter duration, since the families have poor income to support their studies.

Another aspect related to their education is that migrant students are very often sent to special education schools in the hosting countries, which is cause of distress for them and their families' decision that seems to segregate them from their class group.

Nowadays, the successful integration of children with migrant background in European schools and societies is both an economic necessity and a precondition for democratic stability and for social cohesion.

There is an urgent need for more integrated actions to support migrant families and their integration in the immigration country because of increasing migration into and within an already quite culturally differentiated EU.

There are still a high proportion of immigrants from countries with different social and political culture, where levels of economic prosperity are much lower than most EU Member States.

The education (formal, informal or non-formal) of children, adults and community leaders can play a vital role in this process and there are important benefits to be gained from sharing knowledge about successes and failures to date.

Since migration is one of the main causes of ESL, as integrating in a foreign country and language can be cause of main strain on pupils of different nationalities. If early linguistic or learning support is not provided from the very beginning, schools might face with higher incidence of dropouts or early school abandon rates among migrant pupils.

One of the most complete works on migrants of the recent years was carried out by Nesse, which has been already mentioned for the report on ESL. But in this case the project leader was University of Bamberg not Bristol (UK).

In year 2008 the Nesse Network (a network of experts in social sciences of education and training), drafted an analysis in a Report<sup>139</sup> about *Education and Migrant Children* containing some recommendations to policy makers and schools willing to tackling with the phenomenon.

The title of the report is *Education and Migrants- Strategies for integrating migrant children in European schools and societies*. The main author was Professor Friedrich Heckmann, currently the director of the European forum for migration studies at the University of Bamberg. (Two years later professor Roger Dale took the lead of Nesse network and wrote the Report on Early school leaving.)

It is well known that migrant students are disadvantaged in terms of enrolment in type of school, duration of attending school, indicators of achievement, dropout rates, and types of school diploma attained.

The Nesse Report contains a list of Recommendations to policy-makers in order to improve the Quality of Education, especially in those countries where the migration flows have been more frequent.

But the changes should be more “structural” and sustainable as stated by the Nesse Report<sup>140</sup>:

*One addresses the problem by attempting to change the composition of low SES schools through more "structural" reforms aimed at decreasing socioeconomic segregation between schools. The aim would be to provide better access for chil-*

---

<sup>139</sup> EU Commission, Nesse, *A Report on education and migrant children*, 2008

<sup>140</sup> Idem page 37

*dren from low SES backgrounds to schools with higher SES composition, where their achievements might be "lifted" rather than "depressed" by the composition effect. Essentially, this entails controlling the conditions of entrance to the school, as a means of ensuring a broader social class "balance" in its population ...However, as research has shown this presents a range of political difficulties, for instance with middle class families' strategies for defending their privileges. The other approach is to introduce reforms aimed at bolstering the achievement levels of low SES schools. Here, though, the solution runs up against the fact that this has been shown to be difficult to achieve when low SES or low ability students are concentrated in particular schools. It is also the case that the reforms which have proved most effective for low SES children are those that have proved effective for all students ....*

## **Recommendations<sup>141</sup>.**

The degree to which migrant student achievement is related to social origin depends much on national education system context. The educational attainment of migrant students is comparatively higher in countries with lower levels of economic inequality, high investments in child care and a well-developed system of pre-school education.

### **Recommendation 1:**

*Install an effective preschool system and child care system; it improves the educational opportunities, attainment and school careers of migrant students.*

The educational attainment of migrant students is better in comprehensive system with late selection of students to different ability tracks and worse in a system of high selectivity.

### **Recommendation 2:**

---

<sup>141</sup> EU Commission, Nesse, *A Report on education and migrant children*, 2008

*Make educational systems more comprehensive and less selective in order to improve the opportunities, attainment and school careers of both migrant and native students.*

Integration into the culture of the immigration country is a major function of schools in immigration countries. Therefore, the relative absence or distorted presentation of migrants in the curriculum, in textbooks and on other school materials and in school life harms the self-image and self-esteem of minority group children and youth and negatively affects their chances of school success.

**Recommendation 3:**

*Integrate elements and symbols of the cultures of origin into school life, in the curriculum, textbooks, and in other school material. Do this in consultation with representatives of the new communities.*

The single school matters. Quality of school research supports the hypothesis that schools of good general quality are also good for migrant children and their educational opportunities.

**Recommendation 4:**

*Improve the general quality of the school via measures that include good management of the school, good cooperation among teaching staff, high expectations of teachers with readiness to give support, good quality of teaching, good discipline, good equipment of the school and strong parent involvement.*

Peers have a substantial influence on the achievement of migrant children. Concentration of migrant children in schools hinders their academic performance. Minority children exposed to classmates with better performance and higher educational aspirations tend to increase their own.

**Recommendation 5:**

*Desegregate schools and classes where there is concentration of minority students. Desegregation via housing policies and magnet schools is recommended and preferred over bussing.*

There is an over-representation of migrant children in schools for children with special needs.

**Recommendation 6:**

*Educational authorities should scrutinise the procedures for assigning migrant children to schools for children with special needs.*

Discrimination is a major factor affecting the achievement of migrant students. Research shows that denied support is the most significant form of discrimination in the education of migrant children.

**Recommendation 7:**

*Initial teacher education and in-service training should prepare teachers adequately for teaching migrant students. The element of support should be increased in the role of the teacher and positions of teacher assistants should be introduced for practising with students and helping underachievers. Homework centres should be created in schools for learning and support after classes.*

Strengthening the support function of schools with large numbers of migrant students will need specific and additional financial resources.

**Recommendation 8:**

*Schools with large proportions of migrant students should be allotted additional financial resources. This funding should be perceived as an investment rather than a cost.*

The teacher-student relationship is central in any school and system of education. Low teachers' expectations towards minority students generally have a negative influence on their performance.

**Recommendation 9:**

*Teachers should have high expectations for possible improvement of minority students. Raising expectations has to be combined with additional emotional and academic support. Increasing the rigour of minority education is an-*

*other measure. At the same time third and fourth chances should be given to underachievers in tests and examinations*

Teachers of a migrant and minority background have a positive influence on migrant achievement in schools.

**Recommendation 10:**

*Encourage young people of migration background into teaching careers. Schools should hire more teachers with a migration background.*

Parent involvement is positively associated with achievement of children in school. Immigrant parents generally do not seek contact with schools.

**Recommendation 11:**

*Schools have to act proactively toward immigrant parents. These have to be mobilized via community liaison coordinators of the same ethnicity as the parents.*

Mentoring in different forms and by different actors can substantially improve school attainment.

**Recommendation 12:**

*School authorities and school management should encourage and coordinate mentoring activities from outside the school by voluntary associations, welfare organisations, migrant associations and municipalities. Ethnic mentoring seems to be a particularly successful form of mentoring.*

Weak family resources and activities for the socialization of children in migrant and low income families can be somewhat compensated by different kinds of early childhood programmes. They support general development and learning the language of the immigration country. Many programmes have been scientifically evaluated and proven effective.

**Recommendation 13:**

*Migrant families and low income families should be encouraged and enabled to take part in early childhood education development and language learning programmes.*

Apart from compensatory policies and programmes diversity policies and “soft “forms of affirmative action can contribute to raising educational opportunities of migrant children.

**Recommendation 14:**

*Educational authorities and schools should regularly set goals for improving minority student education, like increasing rates of enrolment in academically demanding schools or school tracks, lower rates of early school leaving or improving discipline and grades.*

*Goals should also be set regarding hiring greater numbers of teachers with a migration background. Monitoring must accompany such efforts.*

The above recommendation makes clear that integrating migrant pupils requires a multi-level approach, where all the institutions, schools and families have to be involved. Effective integrated actions have to take place and should be carried out by a network system where all the counterparts are involved.

Globalisation is one of the main society changes, people are moving fast from one country to another, boundaries are not a limit anymore and new projects aimed at migrant families should be welcomed and fostered.

Those countries that have already managed to better integrate migrants are those better developed and successful at the moment.





## Chapter 16 - CASE STUDIES: SOME BEST PRACTICES IN EUROPE

---

### The European Experience.

In this phase few examples of European projects are provided. It is about projects carried out by EU states for tackling ESL.

The projects are carried out at different level of education, have been successfully undertaken for many years and offer a great contribution to the struggle against school failure. They have been chosen because they were very successful in their respective countries, contributing substantially to the ESL rate. Their experience could be adopted and disseminated in other countries if other EU Member states would adopt them.

In order to understand the organization of the Education System of each country a brief description is given at the beginning of the related chapter.

The first example the Dutch experience, has been analyzed in all its phases, since the approach was successful in the reduction of ESL rate, and the country managed to reach the set goal of below 10% rate of ESL, many years before 2020.

Belgium was chosen because it is a country with a multi-linguistic background.

But not all the countries are in a good position in terms of results; this is why I have reported two countries with still high rates of ESL, like Spain and Italy. In these two countries, in fact, despite the fact that the described projects were successful, the national rate of ESL is still high. For these two countries, some best experiences were chosen, because they produced really excellent results, despite the fact that Spain and Italy, still maintain a negative record for being among those country with the highest ESL rate. In fact if in Italy the rate

has some differences between the North and the South of the countries, so that in the North it is kept below the 14%, whilst in the South it's over 20%, in Spain the average is 26%.

Let us now analyzed the following EU countries separately in different sub-chapters where some best practices have been analyzed. By thinking about their experience it might be possible to better understand their education system, their goals and approach to early school leaving:

Chapter 17 The Dutch experience (*Bron*)

Chapter 18 The Belgium experience (*Resl.eu*)

Chapter 19 The Spain experience (*Proyecto Abjoves*)

Chapter 20 The Italian experience (*Provaci ancora, Sam, etc.*)

Chapter 21 International Cooperation.

Chapter 22 Learning from best practices in Europe

The above countries were chosen for many reasons. First of all, some of them, where chosen, as they have been very successful in fighting the drop out issues, like the Dutch experience. For many years their results meant decreasing year by year the number of *ESL* in their country.

As example of best practice they were representative of all the efforts a multi-level approach can bring better results in terms of school achievement.

On the other hand Spain and Italy represent the dark side of the medal, since the rate of *ESL* is still above the 10%, with big discrepancy between North and South. More than this, with some of these countries like The Netherlands, Belgium and Spain, I have been working for EU Educational Projects related to *ESL* for many years; thanks to the cooperation with some expertise and colleagues, facts and figures for my study were provided. I have met them, have been working with them and we all struggled together to find the best solution to overcome this social issue.

In the case of Italy of course, it was my experience in working within the Education Department of Turin City Council, which gave the chance to me to better understand, to work on it, to research on *ESL*, for the project which will be better described ahead, and on the other hand has given to me access to data, which otherwise would have been impossible to analyze.

## Chapter 17 - THE DUTCH EXPERIENCE

---

*“Tackling early school leaving is a challenge because it means so many sectors have to work together. In most Member States, this does not yet happen in a systematic way, though some countries such as the Netherlands show the way forward.”*

*Androulla Vassiliou (EU Commissioner)*

The Dutch programme for the reduction of early school leaving – *Aanval op schooluitval* is based on a number of key principles and areas of actions. A focus on prevention, early intervention and school based provision (in partnership with other actors), and a multi-stakeholder approach are at the heart of the programme.

The programme involves the state, municipalities and schools working together. Four-year agreements are signed between the Ministry of Education and regions, which stipulate the progress each region is expected to make in reducing ESL within a specified target, in the time frame. In total, 39 covenants were signed for the period 2008-2011 and new contracts were drawn for the period 2012-2015. Funding is based on achievement in the reduction of ESL. Each region, city and school is able to decide the type of measures they wish to implement in order to meet the targets assigned to them.

In 2010, the European average fell from 17.6% to 14.1%. In the Netherlands, the figures for 2010 again showed a decrease, from 15.4% in 2000 to 10.9% in 2009 and to 10.1% in 2010, making the country one of Europe’s leaders in tackling the early school leaving problem. A number of European countries have expressed an interest in the integrated approach and accurate record-keeping system adopted by the Netherlands.

Better cooperation between the EU Member States, exchange of know-how, best practices, and focussed use of EU funding can help solve the problem.

## **The Education system in the Netherlands**

The Dutch education system has limited educational facilities for children under the school entry age. Pre-school and early childhood education focuses on children aged 2.5 to 5 who are in risk of developing an educational disadvantage.

Most Dutch children enter primary school in the year they turn 4. Primary education lasts eight years. Pupils who require specialized care and support are accommodated at special (primary) schools and secondary special schools.

On average, children are 12 years old when they enter secondary education. This sector offers three levels:

- prevocational secondary education (VMBO),
- general secondary education (HAVO) and
- pre-university education (VWO).

In addition, pupils have the option of transferring to elementary vocational training (PRO) or secondary special education (VSO). After special (primary) education, the majority of pupils transfer to VMBO or PRO.

VMBO comprises four programmes:

- a basic vocational programme (BL),
- a middle management programme (KL),
- a combined programme (GL) and
- a theoretical programme (TL, comparable to the former MAVO).

After VMBO, at an average age of 16, students may transfer to secondary vocational education (MBO). Those who have completed the theoretical programme can also choose to transfer to HAVO. HAVO is intended as preparation for professional higher education (HBO). VWO is intended to prepare students for

academic higher education (WO). In practice, however, some VWO graduates transfer to HBO.

The school types differ in terms of the duration of their programmes: VMBO takes 4 years, HAVO 5 years and VWO 6 years. MBO comprises a vocational training programme (BOL) and a block or day-release programme (BBL).

There are four qualification levels:

- assistant worker (level 1),
- basic vocational training (level 2),
- professional training (level 3)
- middle management / specialized training (level 4).

The programmes last a maximum of four years. The four-year HBO programmes lead to the award of a bachelor's degree.

In WO, a bachelor's degree can be earned in three years. An academic master's degree programme takes either one or two years. Approximately 95 in every 100 12-year-olds enter mainstream secondary education; 41 transfer directly to HAVO/VWO and 53 to VMBO.

Subsequently, these students transfer to MBO, HBO or WO, either directly or indirectly. Eventually, approximately 11 in every 100 children earn a WO diploma while 25 earn a HBO diploma; 19 in every 100 children earn a basic qualification in MBO, viz., an MBO, i.e. an MBO diploma at level 2 or higher.

### ***Policy in the Netherlands***

Tackling the problem of pupils leaving school early has been for many years one of the priorities of the Dutch government *Rutte-Verhagen*.

The aim is to reach the target of no more than 25,000 new early school leavers each year in 2016.

The Netherlands is one of the leading countries in Europe in having succeed in its aim at tackling the problem of pupils leaving school early and is already far beyond the EU target of keeping ESL rate below 10%.

As it has been said already pupils leaving school early – is an economic, social, and individual problem. Each young person has his or her own aims, wishes and ambitions, and having a good education increases the likelihood of achieving them.

The Dutch knowledge economy requires well-educated employees, while Dutch society also finds itself confronted by the ageing of the population, with the pressure on the labour market consequently increasing.

### ***Targets and results***

Measured according to the European definition, the Dutch target is 8% in 2020.

The Dutch definition for ESL is *a young person between 12 and 23 years of age who does not go to school and who has not achieved a basic qualification* (i.e. a senior general secondary, pre-university, or level-2 secondary vocational diploma).

Since 2002, the “*Drive to Reduce Drop-out Rates*” [*Aanval op de uitval*] has already led to a reduction from 71,000 in 2001 to 38,600 (provisional result for the 2010-2011 school year).

The *Rutte-Verhagen Government* has decided on a more ambitious target than that for the EU, namely a maximum of 25,000 early school leavers by 2016.

### ***Prevention of ESL in the Netherlands***

The Educational policies in the Netherlands which have been adopted for many years go under the statement that: “*prevention is better than cure*”.

To reach this ambitious result many efforts had to be put into action and considering that better qualification leads to better career chances, this means that young people have better prospects on the labour market if they have a basic qualification.

A long-term perspective, systematic efforts and resources, an integrated approach focussing on prevention, and tight organisation at regional level was needed for better perspectives.

Partly due to the decreasing *early school leaving* rate, youth unemployment in the Netherlands is increasing only slightly and is in fact compared to neighbourhood countries relatively low. Studies show that finishing school has the effect of reducing the number of crimes and other offences against property.

Reducing the early school leaving rate is not a project with a beginning and an end. For long-term success, preventing pupils dropping out of school will need to become one of the primary processes at schools and within municipalities. All the various links in the chain – education, the labour market, and care – need to form a good basis for preventing young people dropping out of school.

### ***High-quality education***

It has been said already that high-quality education means better chances to succeed. Education that is effective and interesting will ensure that young people feel involved and remain so. This will allow them to progress from primary education into standard secondary education or secondary vocational education or higher education and ultimately into the labour market.

But high-quality education also means the right kind of guidance in finding a follow-up course of study or training that suits the pupil and that links up with labour market demand.

This is exactly where the Dutch experience has been put into forces in order to succeed.

Here schools have the task of assisting young people to make that choice. This already takes place at secondary school, where pupils learn about the available follow-up programmes and occupations. But at a later stage also, it remains necessary to help young people to find the right programme, for example if they turn out to have made the wrong choice. In order to provide the right kind of guid-

ance and to give them a realistic picture of the labour market, it is very important for schools to collaborate with the labour market (also with a view to work placements).

Besides the difficult choice of a *follow-up programme*, there are other obstacles that prevent young people from focussing on their education or training. They may not feel good about themselves for various reasons, but there may also be larger and more systematic problems preventing them from keeping their mind on school. It is important to call in the right care organisations, particularly where more serious problems are concerned.

This was clear to the central government when the Bron system was implemented. Now a description of the method will be better described. It analyses

## Case study in the Netherlands: Bron

Bron is the Dutch system of collecting data and monitoring ESL.

Knowing and understanding the level and nature of the problem of ESL in the Netherlands is one of the founding principles of the Dutch approach to tackling the problem. When the ‘idea’ for the current programme was being developed it was quickly realised that: *it would be hard to formulate an accurate strategy to address the problem without knowing exactly how many early school leavers there are, where they are located, which schools / training institutions they study in, and why they make the decision to drop out*<sup>142</sup>.

The Dutch stakeholders described this dilemma as ‘*trying to shoot a moving target*’.

Another reason for needing to know the exact scale of the problem was the need to set quantitative targets for the new programme: such target was seen as being essential for monitoring progress and measuring impact.

---

<sup>142</sup>Ministry of Education, *Reducing early school leaving in the Netherlands*, September (2012)



### ***How are ESL data collected? (Bron a new student)***

In the same period new politics on ESL were issued, a new student data system was introduced, offering complete, reliable and up-to-date figures. This data system made it possible to generate ESL figures at national and regional level and for each municipality and district. This has been enabled through an allocation of '*education number*' for every child. An '*education number*' is a unique reference number that identifies each child in the Netherlands uniquely.

It is intended to remain with them throughout their school career regardless of any change in school, local authority or region. This unique reference number makes it possible to track the progression of all students.

The system administering the 'education number' is known as **BRON**, the Basic Record Database for Education. Since 2005, it has been the only nationwide ICT system for recording learners and it is the same as the one used for school financing. Today the system covers **primary education** too, although it first started as a system covering secondary education alone. Those young people who are in registered in the BRON system as being of compulsory school age but not attending education or training and not holding a basic qualification are classified as early school leavers.

Schools and training institutions are obliged to provide accurate information to 'one-stop-shop' called *DUO* information about participation to education. *DUO* is then in charge of pulling the information together on those who are active participants in education and training, and those who have dropped out.

### ***Which information is provided with (Bron)?***

The BRON system and the *unique reference number* of each child capture a broad range of 'intelligence' on children and young people.

This includes *age, gender, address* (in order to determine the locality of the student), *ethnic origin, education / school type and school history*. In practice this means that ESL data can be linked to socio-economic data for each region, city and neighbourhood.

It covers all main forms of education and training and as mentioned above, it was recently expanded to cover primary education too. Aggregate data is available at national, regional and local levels and for each individual school and training institution.

In addition to ESL data collected through the BRON system, the national efforts to tackle the problem are supported by annual surveys of early school leavers designed to shed more light into reasons for ESL. The survey is carried out by the *University of Maastricht* and it covers in the region n. 2,000 early school leavers each year.

### ***How is BRON disseminated?***

From the very beginning the aim was to ensure that ESL data is as transparent and as easily available as possible, within the limits of data confidentiality. This has been ensured through regular reporting and an interactive, easily accessible website.

With regards to dissemination of data collection, a range of reports are published each year:

- ESL figures and rates are published twice a year in a report that is publicly available.
- Each region is provided with a fact sheet on ESL in their region (publicly available)
- Every secondary vocational school is provided with a fact sheet on ESL in their school (publicly available)
- Detailed ESL tables are prepared for regions and schools / training institutions (publicly available)
- A monthly report is drafted for municipalities and schools / training institutions, which are kept as confidential documents (not made publicly available).

Such reports are equipped with comparative tables and other illustrations so as to make them as 'attractive' and easy-to-compare as possible. Schools and training institutions are also compared against one and another by benchmarking

their progress against the progress of other schools or training institutions. To make access to ESL data even easier, ‘a *Drop-out Explorer*’ has been created.

The Explorer is an *interactive tool* that provides quantitative data on ESL. The Explorer compares ESL rates and numbers between regions or educational institutions and can display figures for different school years side by side. This makes it easy to compare performance of different regions, cities, schools and training institutions.

Such data is also linked to socio-economic data for each region, city and neighbourhood including: demographics, ratio of ‘native Dutch’ citizens to ethnic minorities, unemployment rates and social benefits.

A drop-out explorer can be found here:

<http://www.vsvverkenner.nl/english/>

### ***Who are the beneficiaries of Bron?***

This data ensures that national, regional and local authorities as well as all individual secondary schools of both general and vocational orientation have an access to regular, reliable, comparable information on the level and nature of ESL. The main users of the data are all the stakeholders involved in Education.

This is shown in the figure below.

### ***The beneficiaries of ESL data in the Netherlands***

<p><b>National education authorities and agencies</b>  (Ministry of Education Inspectorate in charge of school inspections)</p>	<p><b>Other National Authorities and agencies</b>  (Youth centres, Centre of Job&amp; Income, Public Prosecutions Service)</p>	<p><b>Regional and local authorities,</b>  (including school Drop-out Registration and Co-ordination Centres(RMC))</p>
<p>Truancy offices &amp; School attendance officials</p>	<p>Schools &amp; Training institutions</p>	<p>Parents &amp; students</p>

The PLA (Peer Learning Activities) participants learnt that the ESL data is used at national level:

- to monitor progress towards national targets set for the reduction of ESL;
- to monitor the progress of regional partnerships and individual schools towards ESL reduction targets set out for them;
- to target resources where they are needed most so as to address the problem of ESL in as effective manner as possible;
- to put pressure on under-performing regions, local authorities and schools
- to improve their performance by enabling regular comparisons between regions, local authorities and individual school / training institutions in other parts of the country and / or importantly also with similar student populations.

It was learnt that regional and local authorities as well as individual schools and training institutions follow closely the ESL statistics that are published by the ministry.

Local and regional authorities have an interest to monitor data as their ESL specific financing depends on their performance against the ESL target negotiated between the ministry and themselves. The statistics are also scrutinised by many parents (and students). Thus they can have an important impact on the reputation of schools and the number (and quality) of applications they receive.

*The PLA participants were left with a feeling that the statistics have had a major impact on the way in which ESL is handled and viewed in the country. It has undoubtedly created a climate of 'peer pressure' whereby good, comparable data aggregated by regions, local authorities and individual schools / training institutions with similar student populations can be used for 'like-for-like' comparisons. For example, this has removed the possibility of using 'difficult student population' as an 'excuse' for high ESL rates when the national authorities can show that other regions and schools with similar student populations achieve much lower rates or make more progress in reducing ESL.*

*This has led to 'an element of competition' as well as exchanges of experiences between individual schools and training institutions in particular. It could even be said*

*that competition (caused by the peer pressure), quantitative targets and benchmarks are indeed seen as a cornerstone of the Dutch approach to tackling this problem.<sup>143</sup>*

In addition, a national digital absence counter exists, using the same unique student number as BRON. Interfaces between the systems have been created so that the different school administrative systems can use the digital absence counter without extra administrative procedures.

The data from the national digital absence counter produce indicative, forecasting data that can be used to predict the number of early school leavers for the forthcoming year. Similar forecasting tools have also been developed by some municipalities, including the city of Rotterdam which utilises in- and out-flow statistics from the secondary education system as a way of predicting the forthcoming rates of ESL and create additional programmes when the forecasts predict that the number of early school leavers will be higher than anticipated for the year.

In the future there are plans to link ESL data that with labour market intelligence, for example, in relation which courses provide young people with best employment prospects and what the labour market prospects are for early school leavers.

### ***Reliability and accuracy of the ESL data***

The reaction to the very first published ESL statistics was strong and there was some controversy and question marks over their reliability but the situation has now ‘calmed down’ and the statistics have become a regular / mainstream part of reporting for the education system. Some of the early problems with the data have been resolved by now, although further development work is still being carried out.

The data is also used by the national statistics office.

The data accuracy has been ensured by the fact that the statistics are based on the one national system of student registration, also used for school financing.

---

<sup>143</sup> Ministry of Education, WG on Education & culture, *Reducing early school leaving in the Netherlands* PLA Report, p. 6

In fact, if schools / training institutions were to submit false information, they would be committing a fraud. The records submitted by schools and training institutions are also checked by the accountant who monitors the financing of the education system. So far, there has been no experience of schools / training institutions of supplying inaccurate data.

Improvements are still made to improve accuracy and reliability. For example, it has been recognised, that around 4,000 young people are ‘wrongly categorised’ as early school leavers each year, due to attending private and specialist schools or studying abroad. The statistics also count young people - who have been issued an exemption under the *Compulsory Education Act* on the basis of their physical or psychological conditions - as early school leavers. National legislation is being modified to exclude such young people from the statistics. There are also plans to exclude young people, who have found a job for at least 12 hours a week after obtaining their level-1 secondary vocational certificate, from the ESL statistics.

Finally, the unique student reference number ‘education number’ ensures that it is not possible for any child to ‘*fall through the net*’, for example, as a result of a move to a different city / region. Each migrant arriving in the country are also given a unique reference number as soon as they have been traced and identified as being of compulsory school age.

### ***Data privacy protection: how to deal with it?***

How is the Dutch system dealing with data protection? The Netherlands has not experienced considerable problems in relation to data protection, especially problems that have been experienced in some other countries. For example, there have been no problems in collecting data on the ethnic background of students – something which would be against the constitution to do in some other countries.

Procedures are also in place to ensure that the data does not reveal anyone's identity. This means that individual students or their names cannot be identified from the statistics which are handled by the municipalities or any other agency: the data remains anonymous. Besides, the link between personal details and the ESL figures are deleted from the system after a year.

The work in this field has been guided by a national committee which deals with data privacy.

### ***Governance and cooperation***

The national programme for the reduction of early school leaving – *Aanval op schooluitval* – constitutes the Dutch model of tackling the problem in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. The programme is based on a number of key principles and areas of actions.

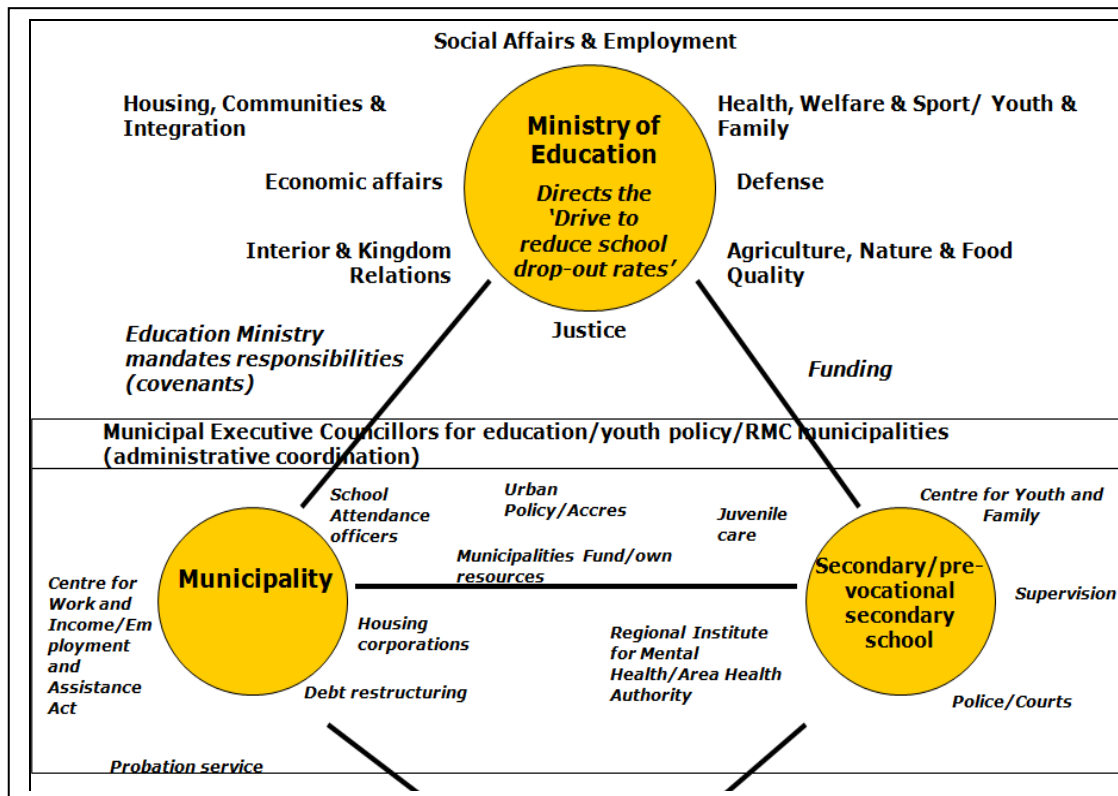
In terms of key principles, the model starts from the concept *that prevention of ESL is a more effective solution than reintegration*. Thus the focus of the Dutch approach is focussed on early intervention and school based provisions (in a partnership with other actors), rather than significant investment on reintegration programmes (although such opportunities exist too).

Prevention starts with a ***high quality education***, which is **relevant, effective** and **engaging** and enables progression from one level of education to another and is accompanied by effective career guidance provision and expert support those facing personal, family or learning related challenges. Another key pillar behind the Dutch approach is the concentration on a **long-term approach**, which recognises the problem as a significant societal and economic problem, rather than as a problem of the education system alone.

Consequently systematic interventions and a multi-stakeholder approach are at the heart of the approach, which involves the state, municipalities and schools working together to address the problem (known as a 'golden triangle'): ESL cannot be solved by schools alone and a national approach needs to leave flexibility and room for local solutions.

While the principles of preventive policies are introduced through a national framework, flexibility is left for it to be interpreted and implemented by individual projects, partnerships and schools.

Figure 6 : is about the main stakeholders involved in the Dutch ‘battle’ against ESL.



(Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2012)

Related to the partnership approach is the expansion of the role of ‘care’ in the education sector. In practice this involves more schools and training institutions been ‘equipped’ with *care committees* which provide socio-educational services for students.

In 2010, 95% of schools had one or more care committee. Particular attention has been paid to increasing and improving the care provision in VET. The overall goal is to ensure that such support is easily and in a timely manner avail-



able in all educational establishments and that they help to provide structure and support which many young people are lacking in their home life.

As already explained in the previous section, the national approach is also built around better understanding of the size and nature of the problem. The programme is also accompanied by measurable targets as a way of assessing its performance and placing focus on results. The original target was to halve the number of drop-outs from 71,000 (5.5 %) in 2002 to 35,000 (2.5 %) in 2012, and a new tougher target has now been introduced for 2016, to further reduce the number of new early school leavers to 25,000.

The responsibility to reduce ESL rates nationally is triggered down to local / regional actors, including schools and training institutions. They are indeed placed with a great degree of responsibility to achieve results. Two four-years agreements are signed between the ministry of education and regions, which stipulate the progress each region is expected to, make in that time in reducing ESL. 39 covenants were signed for the period of 2008-2011 and new contracts were recently drawn for the period 2012-2015. The contracts operate on a 'no cure, no pay' basis, which means that schools / training institutions will not receive their share of ESL funding if they do not meet their target.

### ***Bron Funding system***

Funding has indeed consisted of two main sources:

- A lump-sum fee has been **allocated to regions**, which have had the freedom to use the fund in the way they see best possible manner to fit local needs, although the funding is aimed at encouraging partnership approach to tackling the problem (partnerships between schools, municipalities, youth and care services, employers, etc.). This approach has been encouraged as schools and municipalities have a clearer idea of the situation in

their area (as opposed to national agencies) and can target particular problem schools.

- **Financial incentives** were also given to **schools** during the previous programme period. At first schools received EUR 2,000 for every student that they kept in school in comparison to the year before. However this amount was later increased to EUR 2,500 per student, as the ESL rates came down and it was recognised that the prevention of ESL becomes progressively more difficult as the number of early school leavers falls.

These two sources of funding have now been removed and replaced by a funding based on achievements on ESL on relative (percentage-based) reductions in ESL, no more on absolute figures.

As an additional funding for the period from 2008 to 2011, a so-called ‘Plus programme’ funding was made available for programmes for young people with particularly complex set of support needs. In 2012 this extra funding became an integral (‘mainstream’) part of the overall ESL funding framework.

Overall, each region, city and school is able to decide the type of measures they want to implement to achieve the targets set for them. The decision is made on the basis of research into ESL rates (e.g. which cities/neighbourhoods or types of schools have the highest rates), what the main reasons for ESL are in different schools and the types of methods that have been successful in the past.

In terms of finding out about the most successful types, the ministry of education has arranged a range of opportunities for schools/training institutions to exchange experiences and drafted publications which feature examples of good practice. Exchanges of experiences take place informally too for example through heads of students services who collaborate and interact with one and another for a range of different reasons.

Analysis has shown that some of the most successful approaches in reducing ESL have been actions that have sought to provide a more supported transition from pre-vocational training to vocational education. Improved care provisions for students battling a range of either psychological or social problems have also proven to bring down ESL rates. Career guidance has proved effective when it has

helped to reduce the number of students making a wrong course choice and / or helped them in finding an internship place.

Other two successful solutions have been measures to tackle absenteeism and the Plus programme (mentioned above). The national, new qualification obligation - introduced in August 2007 – has also proved critical. This raised the end of compulsory education from 16 to 18, until young people have achieved at least a basic ISCED level 3 qualification (i.e. at least a senior general secondary, pre-university, or level-2 secondary vocational diploma).

It is also hoped that under the new programme period some of the general weaknesses that were detected in the measures during the first programme period are going to be addressed. For example, more effective practices will be introduced to tackle absenteeism among those who call into schools as being ‘off sick’, but in fact are not. It is also hoped to offer more opportunities for practically motivated students to pursue their studies through more effective integration of on and off the job training opportunities.

### ***Reducing ESL in VET***

The Dutch VET schools concentrate a much higher percentage of early school leavers than secondary schools of academic / general orientation. In 2010 / 2011, the ESL rate of 7.2% in VET schools was around seven times higher than the rate in academically orientated secondary schools of which the rate was just 1%. In addition, VET schools have succeeded in making reductions in ESL rates over the past seven years, but not at a rate of other secondary schools (the ESL rate in VET schools has declined from 9.3% in 2005/2006 to 107.2% in 2010/2011). Thus the national ESL programme has placed particular attention to VET schools, as a way of reducing the overall rate of ESL in the country.

The particular problems of VET schools in relation to ESL have been: insufficient ‘care /support’ provisions, poor permeability between study paths.

But especially between VET and higher education, high dropout rates during transition from one level of VET to another, different schools providing pre-VET and VET courses and early tracking (the choice of vocational vs. academic pathway is made already at the age of 12). The majority of students drop out dur-

ing the first year of their VET studies. The following are some of the key actions that have been introduced to reduce ESL in VET.

Young people are supported during their move from relatively small and familiar pre-vocational secondary schools (VMBO) to much larger upper secondary schools (MBO). This has had a positive impact on ESL rates in many vocational schools across the country. More outreach work: youth workers have been employed to visit young people who are not attending school. They try and encourage them to return to education.

### ***Targets to reduce ESL***

The following services are provided:

- Improved career guidance provision throughout the student life so as to prevent students from making wrong course choices.
- Encouraging students to choose courses with better further study and employment opportunities.
- Improving the quality of VET, by placing an ever-greater focus on high quality handmade artisan skills.
- Providing additional care and support during the first year at a VET school, due to high ESL rates.
- Reducing the overall duration of VET courses but increasing the amount of teaching time during the remaining academic years. This involves cutting down some VET courses from four to three years and others from three to two years.
- Seeking a more accurate match between regional labour market demand(s) and available VET training courses.
- Improvement of school management systems and practices.

### ***Key lessons for PLA***

The following summarises some of the key lessons from the PLA. They have been categorised into four groups, to reflect the discussions that took place during the PLA. It does not summarise however, the work that the PLA group

started on recommendations for comprehensive policies. Instead, the lessons are more specific to this PLA.

### ***ESL data collection***

Any national ESL strategy should be based on full understanding of the scale and scope of the problem of ESL. This requires an establishment of a system that allow regular, accurate monitoring of ESL in the country. The PLA clearly demonstrated that an ESL policy should be informed by a clear understanding of who the early school leavers are (in a country / region / locality / school type, etc) and why they leave education early. PLA showed that such data has a number of practical benefits, but most importantly, it informs both policy formulation and implementation.

It also helps to understand where the problem is the most acute and alert parents as well as local, regional and national stakeholders to pay attention to it. Without having a system, that brings together data on ESL in a reliable and systematic manner; it is difficult to draft plans or strategies on how to address the problem in an effective manner

The Netherlands has chosen the approach of using a unique student reference number as a way of tracking the educational progress of children and young people. This is a method chosen by some other European countries too.

The French authorities have chosen a different approach by creating an “Inter-ministerial information system” to identify the early school leavers. Once identified, the early school leavers are assisted by the local platforms (local networks of partnerships gathering schools, employers, and all the stakeholders of professional insertion). Their role is to help the ESL to find solution: back to school, training, apprenticeship, employment or monitoring and coaching. The so-called SIEI system (Information Exchange Inter-ministerial System) identifies all young people who are over 16 and participating in education or training in the last academic year and who dropped out of school during the current academic year without getting the diploma they were studying towards. The system works by collecting data from all different types of providers of education, training and spe-

cific youth employment services: secondary schools, agricultural secondary schools, training centres for apprentices and the “Missions locales” (access points for employments services for people under 25).

The key here is making sure that the data collection system takes in account all the early school leavers in the different types of establishments and youth employment services quoted above. This data reliability should be quickly improved by increasing awareness of the different actors involved in the data collection.

Peer pressure created by reliable, comparative ESL data can stimulate school improvement and lead to reduce ESL. In the Netherlands, the competition created by the transparency and detail of the ESL statistics has undoubtedly created a ‘sense of competition’ among different education establishments, municipalities and even regions. This is mainly because of the on-going publication of comparative statistics that allow education establishments, municipalities and regions with similar student populations to benchmark their performance against each other. This again creates peer pressure for poor performing schools and regions to take action when they see that their ‘peers’ are more successful than they are, even if they have to overcome similar barriers and have access to same funds.

Having said that many PLA participants were of the opinion that national data collection system should not be only about ‘naming and shaming’ bad practices & schools but that support should be available for schools and training institutions with poor results to improve their practice. This includes facilitating exchanges of experiences between schools with similar student populations but different ESL results.

Better data can help to foster a culture of openness / transparency at all levels. The Dutch approach was created some 7 years ago, with openness / transparency as a starting point. Many participants were impressed by the level of discussion and collaboration between different actors at different levels, however it is important to bear in mind that it took several years to achieve such level of collaboration across the country - and still differences exist between regions, municipalities and schools.

Nevertheless, in order to address the problem, it was essential for key stakeholders to come together to have an open discussion about the problem and the reasons for it. Better data allowed a more open discussion of problems but strong leadership and political commitment were also critical. The approach of national authorities to actively engage in discussions at school, local and regional levels has also aided developments in this regard.

The ministry representatives for example pay visits to schools and hold meetings and discussions with *aldermen* in charge of education as well as heads of schools and training institutions.

Be as transparent with data as possible but as private as possible with personal information. It is important that ESL data collection systems are not geared towards national authorities alone and that access to such data is also given to local and regional actors, including education establishments. It is particularly important to provide schools with data in a user friendly, easily accessible format. Aggregated data by neighbourhood, city, region and country levels and by the background of students help to make policies and responses more focussed and provide data that are more relevant for those working in the field.

At the same time, it is vital to protect personal information and make sure the statistics do not reveal any personal information about individual students.

Quality assurance provisions need to be in place to protect the accuracy and reliability of data. Systems that rely on reporting by schools and training institutions, in particular while being linked to financial incentives and / or bonuses need to be accompanied by a rigorous quality assurance system to prevent inaccurate information being supplied to the system.

Data from truancy/absenteeism portals can be used to forecast ESL rates for the upcoming year. It was learnt that 'live' data from both national and local absenteeism portals can be used to make forecasts of the number of new early school leavers for the upcoming year. Such data tend to show clear links between absenteeism and ESL.

## ***Formulation and implementation of a coordinated strategy on ESL***

A strong desire and solid political commitment to reduce ESL and strong leadership are essential for driving forward a national, coordinated programme to reduce ESL. The PLA participants were impressed by the on-going commitment of different, consecutive governments on the issue of early school leaving in the Netherlands. The original target was to halve the number of dropouts from 71,000 (5.5 %) in 2002 to 35,000 (2.5 %) in 2012. This was a target introduced by the government Balkenende. In 2010, the new Rutte Verhagen Government decided to place further focus on the topic by introducing another, tougher target. A target of 25,000 new early school leavers by 2016 was set. All the main political parties competing over the September 2012 elections also confirmed their commitment to the programme. This on-going commitment helps to ensure that the approach to tackling the problem is a long-term one and emphasises that ESL is seen as a societal and economic problem as well as a problem at the level of the individual, thus an important one to tackle in order for the country to remain competitive in today's knowledge based economy.

Strong leadership is also needed to drive forward such an approach, which has shaken up existing structures and practices at local and regional levels.

There was a wide degree of support for the approach giving schools and other local stakeholders a freedom to seek local solutions to local problems when addressing the problem of ESL. This ensures that the measures chosen fit the local context and it also helps to increase the buy-in of the approach and motivation among local actors.

It was however recognised that a degree of central coordination at the national level can help to deliver a more focussed strategy and autonomy at local level that should be balanced by effective monitoring and accountability. In the Netherlands, during the first programme period the national authorities offered a 'menu' of different types of interventions for local actors to choose from and a number of guiding principles were introduced, such as the focus on prevention and partnership approach. Thus the Dutch approach could be described as being top-down in terms of funding but bottom-up in relation to solutions.



The *Aanval op schooluitval* programme has been accompanied by very clear quantitative targets right from the start, starting from national ambitions which then trigger down all the way to the school level.

Participants welcomed this but reminded that student outcomes in relation to ESL need to be seen in a broader light of soft outcomes too, for example in terms of the relevance of skills and qualifications gained. Figure 6 illustrates the main stakeholders involved in the Dutch 'battle' against ESL.

Impact of education on self-confidence as well as transversal competences such as a sense of initiative and team work, etc. as those are qualities integral to the labour market integration of young people and are qualities valued by employers. Such outcomes however tend to be much more difficult to assess than a result-driven approach focussed on the number of early school leavers.

The participants also pointed out that coordinated ESL policies should also help to foster sustainable changes by bringing about a culture of (on-going) school improvement, which again can help to bring about sustainable changes in school and pedagogical practices, both of which have indirect and direct effects on ESL rates.

A national ESL strategy needs to leave room for ongoing revision and modifications. The PLA demonstrated in a very practical manner that it is essential to leave room for on-going revision (improvement) of the ESL practices and systems created. This is necessary because the more is learnt about the ESL problem, the more modifications may be needed to tailor the strategy to the exact situation of the country. Tackling the problem also becomes progressively more challenging as the number of ESLs comes down.

A number of changes have been made to the Dutch national approach over the years. This includes, for example, a range of improvements to the data collection system. Furthermore, the targets given to local and regional partnerships used to be presented in absolute terms, which have now been changed to a system of relative (percentage) change, which gives a fairer reflection of achievements.

Results in the past do not guarantee success in the future. It is important to keep the topic high on the agenda of all parties and partners. Many PLA partici-

pants were impressed by the on-going national commitment – or even pressure - to achieve even better results.

In the Netherlands, this has been achieved through focus on communication about the problem of ESL and progress made in reducing it, to all key stakeholders from parents and school communities, to municipalities, regions and national stakeholders, including 14 political parties.

This communication takes place through statistical updates on ESL, scientific study results on the (socio-economic) impact of ESL on individual, cities, regions and the country as a whole, and through analysis and dissemination of the impact of the programme. A study calculating the cost ‘no action’ was also commissioned. This study demonstrated that inaction would be more costly than investing in a programme to reduce it.

Now parents also follow the ESL statistics, illustrated by the peaks in visitor numbers on the statistical website every February when the annual results are published. This put another layer of ‘pressure’ on schools as well as local politicians to do more to tackle the problem as it has become an issue campaigned by the parents. Finally, the performance-based financing system, which is tied into targets has also helped to win support from politicians.

The *Aanval op schooluitval* programme is managed through a new management model, which is traditionally found in the private sector.

### **New management model: account managers**

The *Aanval op Schooluitval* programme is managed through six ‘account managers’ employed by the unit in charge of the programme at the ministry of education. Each account manager has several regions which they are in charge of.

They negotiate the agreements with the regional representatives, monitor progress, provide assistance and support for their regional, local and school level actors, facilitate exchanges of experiences with other regions or schools and hold regular meetings with key people from the region. To be more specific, every 6-8

weeks account managers meet working group members from their region, typically consisting of representatives of individual schools and municipalities.

A steering committee meeting, chaired by the local *alderman* for education, together with school directors and other actors, is held twice a year. When necessary, additional contacts are made with account managers. The additional advantage of this approach is that, in case results are not improving, the matter can be brought one step up and the Minister will contact directly the school directors and alderman.

One of the account managers described their approach as being '*strict in our arguments ('points of view') but soft in our manner*'.

The account manager approach has proven to be so successful that it has now been adopted by other government department and programmes too.

It is important to provide opportunities for education establishments to exchange information with other schools about successful ESL practices. Providing opportunities for schools, in particular schools with similar student populations, to exchange experiences in tackling ESL was found to be a good way of improving results for all parties concerned.

### ***School autonomy and financing of ESL policies***

As already stated above, there was a wide degree of support for the approach which gives schools and other local stakeholders the freedom to choose the activities and programmes as they see fitting best to their local context.

This was however seen as something difficult to implement in many EU Member States where the school funding system is highly centralised with schools not being used to having any, or hardly any, freedom to invest in practices and activities chosen by them as most expenses such as teachers salaries, renovations, etc. are paid for or determined directly by the state.

Thus many expect a funding system that would give a freedom for schools to choose how they spend additional funding to be unrealistic to achieve in a matter of few years: it would require a fundamental re-organisation and re-think of the way in which the education system is managed.

A comprehensive strategy has to be geared to make a real difference at a classroom level: classroom-level impact is the most important one. No matter what the national strategy is, the classroom level actors play the most critical role in preventing

ESL and those are the ones who need to be supported if a national strategy is to succeed.

For more investigation see:

See: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2012). *The approach to Early School Leaving: Policy in the Netherlands and the provisional figures of the 2010-2011 performance agreements*

## Chapter 18 - THE BELGIUM EXPERIENCE

---

### Education system

System of schooling in Belgium, from pre-primary to higher education is organised in the following system.

As Belgium is divided into distinct federal regions there are separate education systems that run along very similar lines for each of the communities.

Three regional Ministries of Education have been appointed for the 3 language communities with responsibility for implementing government policy:

- Department for Educational development in the **Dutch speaking community** (Flanders & Brussels)
- Department for Educational Development in the **French speaking community** (Wallonia & Brussels)
- Department for Education in the **German speaking community** (in German)

Within each region there are three types of educational institution:

- community education,
  - public institutions education
  - private (often Catholic) schools.
1. **Community schools** come under the authority of the relevant ministry of education and must be neutral, that is respecting the religious, philosophical or ideological convictions of all parents and pupils.
  2. **Public schools** are subsidised and are organised by provinces and municipalities.

3. **Private schools** (which are also subsidised by the State). These include Catholic schools as well as Jewish, Protestant, Islamic and Orthodox schools. In Flanders they make up the largest group both in number of schools and pupils, however, in the French community they are roughly equal in size to community schools with a larger share of secondary and tertiary education.

### ***Pre-primary education***

**Dutch:** *kleuteronderwijs*

**French:** *enseignement maternelle*

**German:** *Kindergarten*

Free pre-primary school facilities are provided for children who have reached age two and a half. Where places are limited, priority is given to mothers working full-time. These pre-schools are often attached to a primary school.

Attendance is not compulsory but it is very popular (it is clearly cheaper than other childcare alternatives, for example) and more than 90 percent of children in this age bracket attend. By the age of five, 99 percent of children are in school. There are few formal lessons. As children get older there are supervised tasks and specialised lessons in subjects such as music, a second language and gym, and everything is done with an emphasis on play.

### ***Primary education***

**Dutch:** *lager onderwijs*

**French:** *enseignement primaire*

**German:** *Grundschule*

Primary school education begins on the 1 September of the year in which a child reaches the age of six (although some children are admitted at age five if they are considered ready) and is free to all. It lasts for six years and a whole range of academic subjects are studied. There is a strong language emphasis. For example schools in the German community must teach French from the first or second year and in Brussels Dutch schools must teach French and French schools must teach Dutch – commune schools start this during the last year of pre-school.

Primary education consists of 3 cycles:

- First cycle (years 1 and 2)
- Second cycle (years 3 and 4)
- Third cycle (years 5 and 6)

Homework is given from an early age and a high level of parental involvement is encouraged.

### ***Secondary education***

**Dutch:** *secundair onderwijs*

**French:** *enseignement secondaire*

**German:** *Sekundäre Erziehung*

Secondary education is also free and begins at around age 12. It lasts for six years and consists of three cycles each lasting two years. Parents may be expected to make a contribution towards the cost of the text books.

In the first year of secondary education all pupils follow the same programme. From the second year onwards a range of options can be chosen according to preference and ability. These will lead to education of a general nature or with a more technical, artistic or professional slant. Often schools will specialise in one of these streams or will have different sections for different streams. Within the streams pupils continue to choose from further options throughout secondary school resulting in a broad education weighted towards their preferred subjects or career.

Assessment is ongoing throughout secondary education and students receive a diploma at the end of their studies. For those who have followed a general range of subjects the next step is normally higher education.

Technical students often go to university or college to study related subjects or may start working straight after school. Vocational students typically begin working part-time to complement their studies from age 16 and then move into full-time employment.

Those who have followed the artistic options usually go on to higher education, for example to art colleges or specialist music conservatories but may go

to university or college, depending on the options they choose. Some art colleges have a secondary section starting from the third year of secondary school and pupil study for the first two years in a general school.

### ***Doubling (grade retention)***

Children are tested at the end of each year of pre-school, primary and secondary school to decide if they are ready for the next year. The testing takes the form of assessment and supervised tests for younger children and exams for older children. If they are not ready to move up, they repeat the year or "double". The system continues in secondary school. Because "doubling" is common, there is usually very little stigma attached to it.

### ***Higher education***

**Dutch:** *hogere onderwijs*

**French:** *enseignement supérieure*

Higher education in Belgium is organised by the Flemish and French communities via state or private institutions (often linked to religious bodies). German speakers typically enrol in French institutions or pursue their studies in Germany.

Six universities in Belgium offer a full range of subjects. In most cases, students are free to enrol at any institution as long as they have their qualifying diploma. However, those wishing to continue their studies in medicine, dentistry, arts and engineering sciences may face stricter entrance controls including additional examinations.

The government sets the registration fee for each establishment and reviews it annually. There are three fee levels depending on the student's financial situation and that of their family.

The higher education system in Belgium follows a Bachelor/Master process with a Bachelor's degree obtained after three years and a Master's degree after



a further one or two years. Both universities and colleges can award these degrees. After the Master students can enrol for a PhD program.

Students from outside Belgium coming to study in one of these establishments will have to prove that they have the appropriate entrance qualifications and that they can financially support themselves during their studies.

## **Case study: Antwerp, Belgium–Flanders,**

### **Overview of the current situation with regards to early school leaving**

The 2012 rate for ESL in Belgium-Flanders is 8.7%, compared to an EU average of 12.7%. At the level of Belgium-Flanders, there are two ways to measure ESL:

- indicator based on the Labour Force Survey (EAK)
- indicator provided by the Policy Research Centre for Educational and School Careers (SSL).

Data provided by the SSL provide a rate of 14% for ESL in Belgium-Flanders and a 28% ESL rate for Antwerp for the year 2010. Whilst these figures differ from the EAK data, they serve to demonstrate that there is a significantly high proportion of ESL in Antwerp.

Early school leaving rates for Antwerp are reported to represent a large proportion of the overall ESL rate for Belgium-Flanders.

Early school leavers in Belgium-Flanders typically includes young people aged 17 who are non-native speakers of Dutch, pupils who fall behind and/or change school/form of education<sup>1</sup> and a high number of boys, where the 2010 rate of ESL amongst males was 13.6% compared to 8.6% for females.

Factors contributing to ESL include:

- socio-economic deprivation,
- ethnicity
- gender,
- truancy,
- exclusion,
- changing educational institution,
- school fatigue.

External factors including the ‘pull’ factor generated by the labour market and structural factors that include for instance:

- the quality of pupil guidance services,
- the importance of language support from primary education onwards, and
- the need for alternatives to grade repetition, supported by flexible learning pathways.

The timing of the case study in Antwerp, Belgium-Flanders is pertinent given that there are significant developments currently underway to tackle early school leaving (ESL) as part of the recently launched Action Plan on Reducing Early School Leaving<sup>3</sup>(September 2013).

The Plan (adopted to achieve the targets set out in the Flemish overall strategy PACT 2020<sup>4</sup>) is based on the EU documents related to ESL and includes the implementation of a comprehensive system to collect, collate and disseminate data on ESL between schools, partners and stakeholders across the education and employment sectors.

This Plan includes some quick wins together with more long-term effective action. The Action Plan is accompanied by some main policy implementations concerning specific themes as an action plan against truancy and anti-social behaviour, the introduction and expansion of work-based learning, a reform of the secondary education, a policy note on early childhood education, on languages, student guidance etc.

### ***The Antwerp approach to early school leaving***

The Antwerp approach to ESL is based on a *Network approach*.

It is city wide and schools, together with key partners from a range of different fields (pupil guidance centres, welfare, social work, police, justice department) offering a range of different services (physiological support, guidance) actively and positively participate in a structured yet collaborative approach to tackling ESL. The Pupil Guidance Centres plays a central role in the city.

There is a clear view that a collaborative approach to ESL, focusing on prevention and early detection of problems, is the most efficient and only way to tackle ESL across the city of Antwerp.

Within the City of Antwerp, the General Education Policy Division has a main responsibility for coordinating the approach. The Division is responsible for designing and managing cross-association activities and projects aimed at ensuring all youngsters in Antwerp leave education with a qualification that gives them access to higher education or to the labour market. The Division is organised around four key sections:

1. ***Continuous school careers*** - responsible for early and active participation of young people in education from early child education and care, parents' participation, dropout prevention and finding ways to ensure young people reengage in education.
2. ***Community schools*** - in charge of identifying and creating ways for schools to link with citywide services that aim to support more vulnerable young people. A key focus here is ensuring that schools are a place where young people feel safe and where they can experience a range of activities, including extra-curricular activities.
3. ***Knowledge management***: responsible for providing an evidenced base for developing and monitoring current approaches/activity.
4. ***Capacity*** - in response to changing demographics (baby boom), this section is in charge of ensuring there is sufficient capacity to accommodate increased numbers/diversity of the student population in Antwerp.

The statistics show that the ESL rates in Antwerp represents a significant proportion of the overall ESL rate for Belgium-Flanders. Among the different factors contributing to ESL, the city of Antwerp has given special attention to:

- **Grade repetition** that may occur in kindergarten, primary and secondary education. Latest figures show that grade repetition rates for 1st year of primary school is 6.3% in Flanders compared to 10.5% in Antwerp. In the 3rd year, the rate is 2.3% for Flanders compared to 4.8% in Antwerp, and rates are again much higher in secondary schools. As discussed in the background paper, efforts are currently underway to limit grade repetition even though teachers should also embrace this notion and if doing so, some may need additional support/training.
  
- **Truancy** is seen as a strong predictor of later drop out. The City of Antwerp have investigated truancy and retention rates in relation to both primary and secondary education and highlighted the importance of exploring broader socio-economic factors that are potentially at the root cause of truancy (for some families, for example, the dynamics of the family structure may be one reason why certain children are unable to attend school – e.g. older children looking after younger children, or where single-parents struggle with child care arrangements for younger/sick children at home, making it difficult for them to bring older/other siblings to school). Nevertheless, a clear correlation between truancy and performance is evident. Understanding the root cause of what triggers truancy and that affects performance or indeed the factors that affect performance leading to truancy, highlighted as an issue of key concern.

In Flanders, schools are the first responsible actors and need to establish a preventive policy on truancy. According to legislation, if a student is absent for more than 10 half days, the school must contact the relevant Pupil Guidance Centre (CLB).

In Flanders, an increasing expulsion rates in secondary education can be observed – rising from 556 in school year 2010-2011 to 628 in school year 2012-2013.

Different types and durations of expulsion exist, ranging from short periods to up to two years. Each type of expulsion is accompanied with its own set of procedures and interventions. In the future, the intention is stop the use of expulsion and look towards introducing alternative discipline strategies/approaches.

The high number of individuals who have low education levels because of early school leaving represents a key challenge for the social-economic stability/profile of Antwerp. It was reported that whilst there are high levels of employment opportunities there is a distinct mismatch between the lack of education and skills and labour market requirements. This equates to large numbers of unemployed people in a growing labour supply, where many enterprises struggle to fill open positions.

In light of the key challenges highlighted above, through a network approach, the main aim is to therefore support all education providers across the city address such challenges. As previously noted, there is a clear view that a network approach is the best and only way to tackle issues associated with ESL where there is a complementary approach between the networks, clear focus on prevention and early detention as well as on appropriate and timely reaction to support ESL. The network includes:

### ***Sectorial Networks and Houses of Talent***

In Antwerp, several sectorial networks bring together educational providers and labor market actors, aiming at promoting smooth transitions from education to work. These sectorial networks, (*Sectorale netwerken and Talentenhuisen*) are governed by the City of Antwerp (Department of Economy) and the Flemish Employment Office (VDAB), who have signed a collaboration agreement. These agreements do not only assign responsibility and divide tasks among the partners, but they also include goals and targets to be reached. A project manager is assigned to each sectorial network and experts are engaged.

The financial means are provided by the City and by VDAB, and additional means are funded through the European Social Fund. Sectorial organisa-

tions, sectorial training funds, social partners, educational providers, and regional technological centres support the network. Each network establishes collaboration between stakeholders through a sectorial commission, a core group and thematic working groups.

The aim is to develop action plans (for the short and the long term), starting from a thorough analysis of the local educational system and the labour market. A sectorial network can be converted to a Talent House when a sector is willing to invest in a partnership that requires a strong sectorial organisation, when the development of competences can be an answer to the recruitment problems. Four sectorial networks have been converted to 'Houses of Talent'<sup>144</sup>:

- Construction;
- Industry;
- Harbour – Logistics
- Education

### ***Together to the finish***

This strand brings together good practices from primary, secondary education and together with universities and practitioners: undertakes research in relation to a number of different areas including retention, new didactic approaches, and managerial practices.

### ***Drop-out prevention***

This network provides support in two different tracks. The first track is through system support to pupils and schools; the Central Help Desk is one of the main elements of this strand. The second strand provides individual support to schools, for example through initiatives such as the 'Schools in the spotlight' (a school survey on school climate, as discussed in further detail below), or the 'Tru-

---

<sup>144</sup> Source: OECD, (2014).

ancy officials' (helping schools with truancy problems reflect on their approach by comparing with other schools in similar situations).

The focus of these actions is to support schools to be self-evaluating, reflective in their practice ('look in the mirror'). The way in which these individual networks operate and the services they provide is discussed in more detail below.

### ***How does the network approach work in practice?***

The Background: overview of the Pupil Guidance Centres across Flanders

Before providing detailed information on how the network operates in practice, it is helpful to point out that across Flanders there are n. 72 **Pupil Guidance Centres (CLB)** and every school cooperates with a CLB.

The CLB guides pupils in their development into independent adults and monitors pupils' health and wellbeing, either systematically or in a demand-driven manner.

Parents, teachers, school management teams, as well as the children or young people themselves may turn to the CLB for information, help and guidance.

Various professionals work together within a CLB: doctors, nurses, social workers, psychologists and educationalists.

Together with the school, this team ensures that every child and young person can develop his/her knowledge, talents and skills to a maximum extent at school.

The Pupil Guidance Centre (CLB) operates in four guidance areas:

- learning and studying
- educational career
- Psychological and social behaviour
- Preventative health care

In each of these four guidance areas, the CLB can provide direct support to individual pupils, as well as support to schools.



The pupil-related provision comprises the demand-driven activities for pupils (at the request of the pupil, the parents or the school) and the obligatory pupil guidance (in case of truancy and for certain medical examinations).

Within the pupil-related provision, the school mainly acts as 'notifier'. It may notify the CLB that it is concerned about a pupil, and ask the CLB to start the process of providing guidance. In the first instance, the CLB will always ask for the parents' consent (for a pupil under the age of 12) or the consent of the pupil him/herself to start guidance (for a pupil aged 12 or older who is capable of deciding him/herself).

Guidance by a CLB is not compulsory, except in two situations:

- In case of truancy (obligatory involvement of the CLB as from 10 half days of problematic absenteeism);
- special medical examinations.

### ***The Antwerp context***

Every school in Antwerp is linked to a CLB (Pupil Guidance centre) and each CLB is linked to the Central Help Desk of the Dropout prevention network. The Help Desk works as an umbrella organisation of all the CLB's in Antwerp, which detach their employees to the umbrella unit. The first port of call for schools is the CLB, which can then look towards the Central Help Desk for support. In relation to truancy, the CLB is notified and the information is also provided to the Central Help Desk.

The Central Help Desk intervenes on request of the CLB only for the most problematic cases. The Central Help Desk is equipped with a wide range of support staff and expertise and includes psychologists, criminologist, youth coaches, social workers etc to work together to support the CLB.

The Central Help Desk draws on the expertise and resources offered through the individual services and projects taking part in the Dropout prevention network.

The Central Help Desk does not deal directly with pupils: interviews and contacts with individual pupils are organised by the CLB, which also collects and keeps all relevant data. When a case is referred to the Help Desk, the CLB shares its data with it.

Following an analysis of the case, the Central Help Desk will then look towards the individual services/programmes belonging to the network, in order to offer the most appropriate ‘proposition’ of support to the individual in need.

The offer is typically made within a one-week timeframe (note on terminology - this is a proposition and is therefore non-compulsory). The Central Help Desk establishes an appropriate ‘proposition’ drawing on a suite of services and projects depending on the needs of the individual.

The Dropout prevention network provides a whole suite of services and expertise. Each project is unique, focused on specific target groups and attracts its own level of funding. A key emphasis is on prevention and re-integration (including young people in care or those who have recently come out of custodial care). Some projects provide the services of professional youth coaches or peer coaches as presented in the box below.

### ***Youth coaches and peer coaches***

In terms of the profile and professional development of youth coaches, they are linked to youth competence centres. All youth coaches are vetted and undertake competence-based training. They provide intensive support and personal guidance to individuals and are trained to work in multi-disciplinary teams. Young people are also trained to be peer coaches – though are not permitted to provide therapeutic advice/counselling. Where these types of services are required, young people are then referred to the professional services of qualified coaches/personnel.

The scope of all available projects/services in terms of their capacity is regularly monitored through the Central Help Desk. For instance if more young people require the support from youth coaches but capacity is no longer available, this feedback will inform resource allocation in the future.

If there was a case where no youth coaches were available, then alternative support options are always identified. One area where capacity is limited/ difficult to access is in relation to psychiatric support for young people. This is more related to a systemic issue where the type of psychiatric support available to young people referred through the Central Help Desk is not always available.

Monitoring capacity of the individual projects is part of a wider quality assurance process that monitors the success of the project, the extent to which supply meets demand, thereby influencing the extent to which the network services need to be adapted in the future.

As part of the quality assurance process, all providers are required to sign a written agreement with the Central Help Desk and have to report every 6 months or annually on their results and progress depending on individual project procurement agreements.

Other initiatives under the Dropout prevention network include:

- the '*Schools in the spotlight*' project, where school pupils are invited to provide feedback on how they experience the school. Schools can nominate themselves to be 'school in the spotlight' or where a major incident triggers the school to be identified as a 'school in the spotlight', school policies and practices will be scrutinised.
- Protocol of agreement between schools and the local police, particularly in support of a '*weapon free school*' approach. Simple measures are applied, for example, plain-clothed officers in non-police marked cars visiting the school to meet school personnel.

A downside of the network approach is that there is a fear school may step back from their responsibility for the young person.

As emphasised above, there is a clear view that the school must retain the overall responsibility for each individual child.



## Chapter 19 - THE SPAIN EXPERIENCE

---

The rate of ESL in Spain is still high, with the 24, 9% in 2012, this means that Spain, with Italy, Portugal and Greece, are among those countries in Europe having the highest percentage of ESL.

Few years ago there was a long debate in Spain going on, around the definition of *early school leaving*. The EU definition of ESL is referred to 18-24 years old, but since everybody agrees that that early school leaving starts in childhood it is common to think that the problem start before. Moreover, there are many different definitions around the term ESL.

Jose Gonzales Monteagudo, University of Seville (Spain) in the paper he wrote for the *RANLHE* Project, which will be described in the present research, wrote:

*“A number of terms are used in describing retention issues in Spanish statistics”*  
(Monteagudo):

In another study<sup>145</sup> ESL concept is linked to the concept of academic failure. It is defined as the *difference between the times spent doing the university studies and the typical expected time of completion*.

### Different terms for ESL in Spain

- *Drop out of the studies or student desertion*: it is defined as involuntary abandonment of a course of studies, or to initiate another study in another university course either in the same institution or in another institution, to leave university education and initiate other formative itineraries outside

---

<sup>145</sup> Cabrera et al, (2006).

the university or joining the labour market, interrupting their training period and later to re-enter (Cabrera et al, 2006)

- *Rate of abandon*: number of students who did not enrol in the last two years compared to the number of student enrolled in the year in which they began their studies <sup>146</sup>
- *Re-entry*: Re-entry of the pupil who leaves university studies temporarily<sup>147</sup>.

## **Education system in Spain**

The education before 6 years old is named *pre-primary education* or kindergarten education and is divided into two groups.

- Up to 3 years old
- From 3 to 6 years old

### ***Primary education***

The **primary education** is divided into three cycles:

- From 6 to 8 years (first cycle)
- From 8 to 10 years (second cycle)
- From 10 to 12 years (third cycle)

The primary goal of this level of education is to provide all the children with a common education, it makes possible for them to acquire the basic cultural elements, learning oral expression, writing and arithmetic, as well as a progressive self-sufficiency of action in their environment. The certificate given at the end of this stage is termed as School Graduate. During this stage, the average number of students in a class is around 25 in the Spanish schools.

---

<sup>146</sup> Hernández, (2006), p. 497)

<sup>147</sup> Cabrera et al, (2006)

## ***Secondary Education***

It is divided into two cycles:

- From 12 to 14 years (first cycle)
- From 14 to 16 years (second cycle). During this stage, the average number of students in a class is around 30 in the Spanish schools. The certificate given at the end of this stage is termed as Secondary Education Graduate.

## ***The medium-grade training cycle.***

This stage has two options:

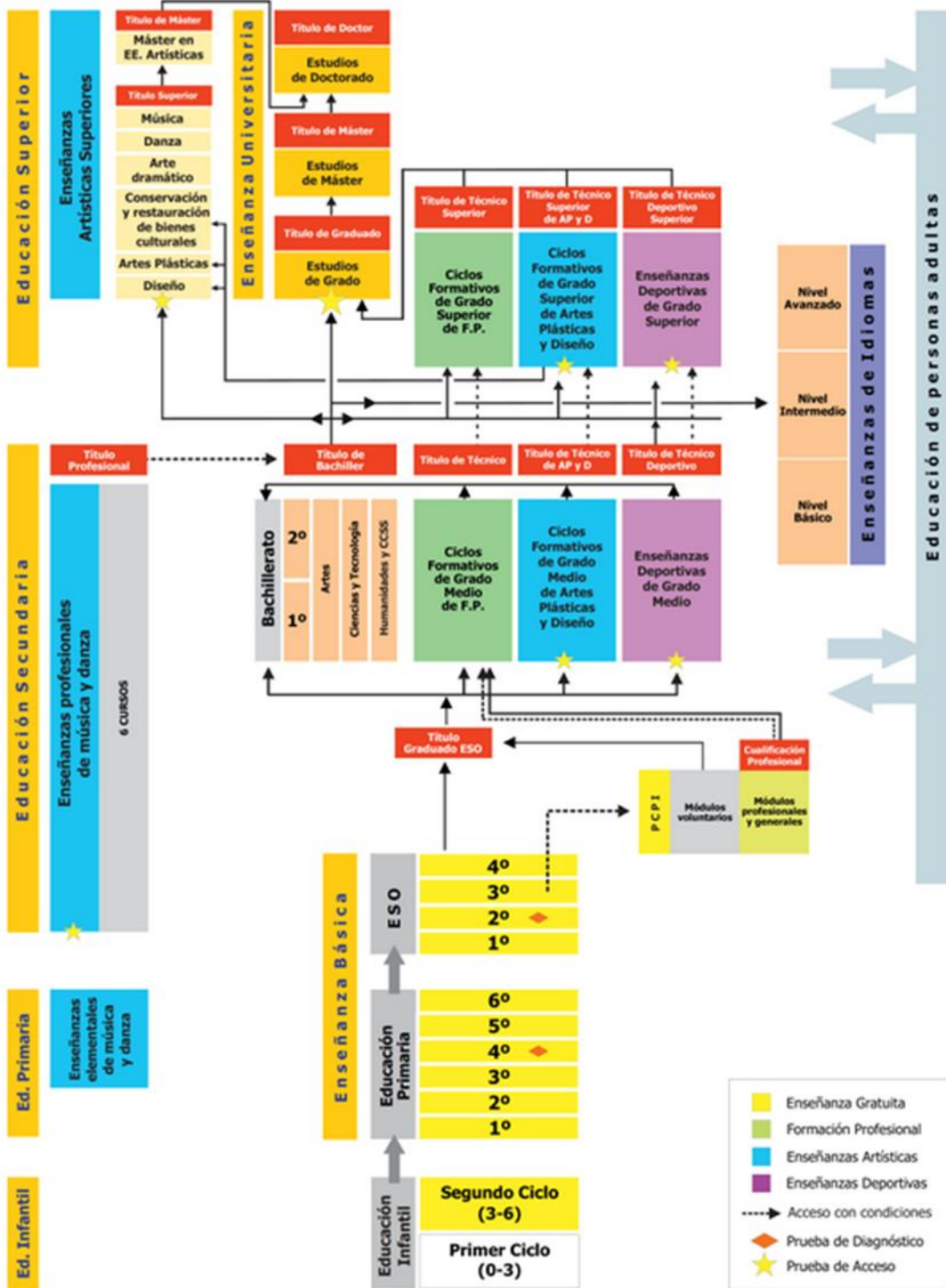
- Bachelor degree and lasts for 2 years. The subject categories available are o Arts o Natural and health sciences o humanities and social sciences o technology
- Training for occupations will allow a student to take their studies for only specific jobs and is often the choice for those who want a less academic course. Upon obtaining this qualification, the student is then allowed to enter the workforce in their field, or can enrol in another technical program that combines all of the specialized courses that are required.

## ***Higher Education***

- Post secondary occupational training, an extension of the occupational training, allows students to lead their training to a higher level and lasts either 1 or 2 years.
- University education and admission into it is determined by a university entrance exam is held in each June.

The short degree program takes 3 years to complete, which can be either University diploma or Engineering Technician are longer programs lasting between four and six years.

# Organigrama del Sistema Educativo Español



(Source Ministry of Education) <http://sage.esu-online.org>



## Case study: Proyecto Abjoves

ABJOVES, (Early school leaving in Spain). An analysis of young people decisions, motivations and educational strategies. It is a R+D project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness for the period 2012-2015

The project is led by the research group GEPS (Globalisation, Education and Social Politics, from UAB, Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona. (Main Researcher Aina Tarabini) and it counts with the participation of 7 Autonomous Communities of Spain (Catalunya, I. Baleares, C. Valenciana, P. Vasco, Andalucía, Asturias y C. León), more than 15 participating investigators and the support of three sponsor and observer entities: Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona, Observatori Català de la Juventut and Fundació Jaume Bofill.

The aim of the project is to analyse the decisions, motivations and educational strategies of young people to continue or drop out school after compulsory secondary education. This is clearly a key object of study in order to make advances in the comprehension, prevention and reduction of early school leaving (ESL).

In fact, several national and international studies<sup>148</sup> have pointed out the lack of research on ESL specifically focused on young people who have dropped out school or are at risk of doing so. This lack of information entails an important deficit for the design of specific policies to properly tackling ESL. Therefore, the ABJOVES project will provide evidence-based information of crucial importance in order to design strategies to prevent and reduce ESL in the different Autonomous Communities studied.

Partners of the project are some Universities of Spain providing with their academic contribution to the implementation of the project. (Among them Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona, de Granada, Valencia, Balears Islands, Oviedo, Universidad de Pais Vasco).

---

<sup>148</sup> (Rumberger, 2001; Fergusson, 2005; Enguita et al, 2010)

## ***Phases of the project***

The project involves 4 Phases:

### **Phase 1**

Design and develop the theoretical and methodological approach of the research.

### **Phase 2**

To provide a state of the art about ESL in Spain, identifying the existing policies and programmes aimed at preventing and fighting ESL.

One of the central objectives of the ABJOVES project consists in exploring the design and characteristics of the policies to combat early school leaving (ESL), defined and implemented at the European, national and autonomic level.

The importance of this objective lies on the need of knowing the proposals of intervention already existing from three central scales of political decision and intervention -Europe, Nation State and Autonomous Community- around our focus of study. Specifically, it is about identifying and systematizing the different policies and programs adopted by different Autonomous Communities to face the challenge of ESL, identifying its similarities and differences, as well as its limits and opportunities to achieve the objectives they set.

One of the strong points of the ABJOVES project is the implementation of a methodology based on an **evaluation list** of the policies tackling ESL.

This methodology, proposed by Ray Pawson, understands that all public policies hide one concrete change theory, being this more or less explicit. That is to say, all social programs are based on hypothesis, on assumptions about the origins and causes of the “problem” which is aimed to intervene in, and the possible improvements that will be generated after the intervention of the program. Then, the target of the realist evaluation phase is to identify the ground on which the policies are based; its internal logics; its reasons to be.

It consists, of the concepts we use to analyse the educational policies and systems a problem, without taking for granted its meaning; it identifies the different representations and interpretations that hide under the concepts and educative

proposals that -at first sight- may look similar or even identical; it identifies the interest -manifest and latent- that lay under the conception, design and implementation of specific educational programs and policies.

The question related to ESL is:

Why in specific contexts priority is given only to some programs?

Why certain political decisions obtain greater legitimacy than others, and how do these decisions is legitimated?

Why certain profile are beneficiaries in relation to others, and how does the selection of these profiles are justified?

Which is the concept of educational success and failure that hides under the design of certain policies?

From this methodology, the ABJOVES project has carried out numerous interviews with technicians and politicians responsible for the design and implementation of policies to tackle the ESL, both in the EU, as in the *Ministerio de Educación* and the Educational Administration of the *Autonomous Communities* object of study in the project. Besides, a rigorous documental analysis of the principal documents produced by the Educational Administrations in relation to policies to combat ESL has been conducted.

Now, the different members of the project are concluding the analysis of each Autonomous Community and after that; the comparative analysis will be carried out.

### **Phase 3**

To analyse the decisions, motivations and educational strategies of young people who have dropped out school (ESLers) or are at risk of doing so.

The case studies of the ABJOVES project aim to address the central finality of the project: analyzing the educational decisions, motivations and strategies of young people that have dropped out school or the ones who are about to do it. Thereby, the core objective of the case studies is to analyse the strategies and choices of young people at risk of dropping out, trying to answer the following research questions:

- How do different structural factors intervene (labour opportunities, economic inequalities, social mobility, etc.) in the configuration of the educational choices, motivations and strategies of youngsters?
- What is activated, what is appealed to, in the decision of young people to continue or drop out school?
- How do the class, gender and ethnic identities are articulated in the configuration of the educational imaginaries of young people?
- How do the different individual, familiar and school factors interact in the daily school experience of the boys and girls that have already left the studies or are at risk of doing it?<sup>149</sup>

Studying the role of educational programs, schools and teachers play on the educational decisions, motivations and strategies of young people. The AB-JOVES project aims to answer some of the next questions: in which way the programs against ESL are implemented and interpreted in different contexts, such as:

- What effects do they have on the educational decisions and opportunities of the youngsters?
- What role do the teachers play in the decisions of formative continuity of the pupils?

Based on these objectives, interviews have been done to a wide representative sample of youngsters and key actors in their process of schooling. All the selected youngsters are beneficiaries of some program or grants against the early school leaving in Catalunya and Balears Islands, PQPIs in Valencia, or Becas 6000 in Andalucía, for example.

**Phase 4** To identify good practices, make proposals for improvement and disseminate the results of the research.

---

<sup>149</sup> Tarabini, A. and Curran, M. (2012), *Habitus or rational choice?*, UAB, Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona

### The Education system

The state school system in Italy differs considerably from school systems in, for example, the UK and the US, particularly regarding secondary and university education.

Schooling is divided into four educational cycles, as follows:

- Nursery school – a three-year cycle from three to six years of age;
- Primary school a five-year cycle from 6 to 11;
- Lower secondary school – a three-year cycle from 11 to 14;
- Upper secondary school – a three, four or five-year cycle from 14-17, 18-19 years old.

In small towns and villages, nursery, primary and lower secondary schools often form one unified school (*istituto comprensivo*), and state nursery and primary schools are sometimes grouped together within one teaching circle (*circolo didattico*).

Attendance at a state nursery school is not compulsory and there are a number of other private pre-school options for children under six. Compulsory schooling begins with primary school and continues until the age of 16 or the first year of upper secondary school, provided a year's schooling has not been repeated.

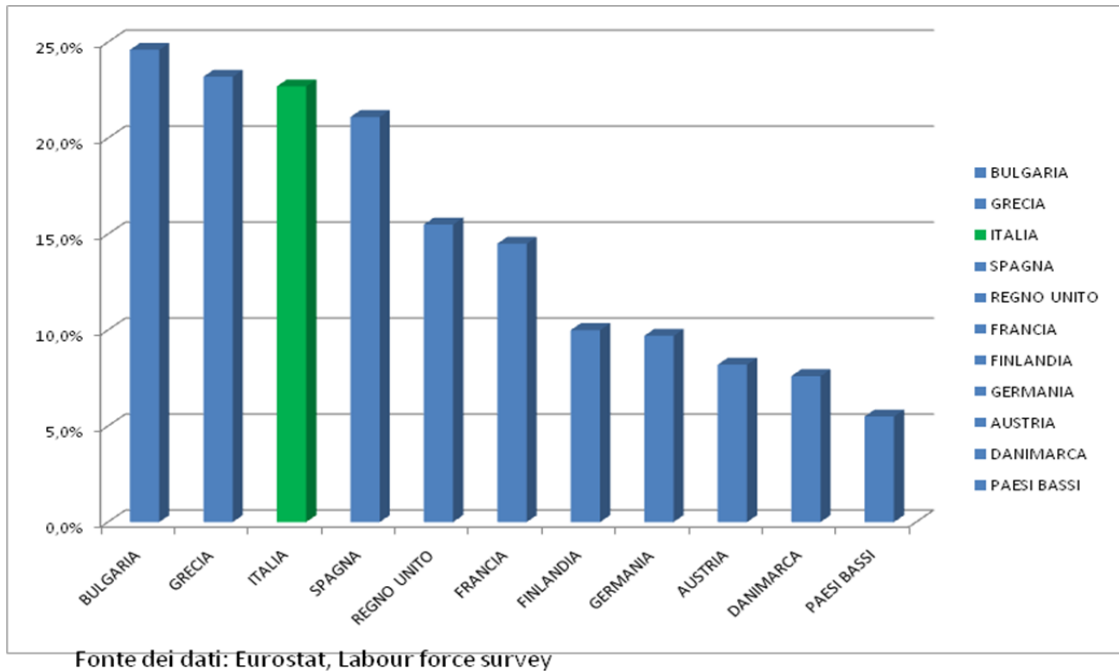
*Scuola primaria* (primary school), also known as *scuola elementare*, is commonly preceded by three years of non-compulsory nursery school (or kindergarten, "asilo" pre-school education for kids between 3 and 6 years old): it lasts five years.

**The Italian School system:**

level	name	duration	certificate awarded	
Pre-school education	Scuola dell'infanzia (nursery school)	3 years (age: 3 to 6)		
Primary education	Scuola primaria (primary school)	5 years (age: 6 to 11)	Licenza di scuola elementare (until 2004)	
Lower secondary education	Scuola secondaria di primo grado (first grade secondary school)	3 years (age: 11 to 14)	Diploma di scuola secondaria di primo grado	
Upper secondary education	Scuola secondaria di secondo grado (second grade secondary school)	5 years (age: 14 to 19)	Diploma di liceo Diploma di istituto tecnico Diploma di istituto professionale	
	Formazione professionale (vocational education)	3 years (age 14 to 17 or 14 to 19) recent school reform has introduced a 4 <sup>th</sup> year leading to Professional licence	Qualifica professionale (3 years), Licenza professionale (5 years)	
Higher education	Laurea (Bachelor's degree)	3 years		
	Diploma accademico di primo livello	4 years, only for "Scienze della formazione primaria" (Sciences of the primary education), necessary for teaching in nursery or primary schools		
	Laurea magistrale (Master's degree)	2 years		
	Laurea magistrale a ciclo unico (Bachelor's + Master's degree)	"Farmacia" (pharmacy) "Chimica e tecnologie farmaceutiche" (chemistry and technologies of pharmacy) "Medicina veterinaria" (veterinary medicine) "Giurisprudenza" (law) "Architettura" (architecture) "Ingegneria Edile-Architettura" (architectural engineering)	5 years only for:	
		"Medicina e chirurgia" (Medicine and surgery) "Odontoiatria e protesi dentaria" (dentistry)	6 years, only for	
	Dottorato di ricerca (PhD) Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca Diploma di Perfezionamento PhD ( <a href="#">Superior-Graduate Schools in Italy</a> )	3, 4 or 5 years		

### ***A critical issue: Neet rate in Italy***

Figure 7 shows the rate of Neet in Italy:



SOURCE :Eurostat (2012)

Before starting any kind of analysis of the Italian situation regarding ESL, it is necessary to draw attention on a very critical point that the above figure related to Neet rates is dramatic.

In Italy almost 23% of young people are Not Engaged in Education, Employment or Training, only Bulgaria and Greece are facing worst records and Spain follows immediately after still over 20%.

Since one of the main reasons, if not the first the most important for high NEET incidence, early school leaving is at the top, this is why the analysis has to start from here in Italy. From the underneath diagram emerges with clear evidence that Italy is place on the 3rd position after Bulgaria and Greece, and very close to Spain. Only 5 countries have reached the goal of keeping the rate under 10% (these nations, from the better performance are: the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria, Germany and Finland.

Although there are huge differences between European countries in terms of incidence of NEET phenomenon, a study by Eurofound (2012) has identified

some characteristics that increase the likelihood of belonging to the category of NEET.

In particular, young people with a low level of education have three times higher risk than graduates to belong to the category of NEET. Young people come from immigrant families or are first-generation immigrants, show a 70% chance of being NEET higher than other young people, while those who reported disabilities or health problems have a probability of 40% higher.

### **Country overview**

To focus on the country overview I have considered an interesting Report issued by **IDIS**, City of Science, which under the *Leonardo da Vinci Programme*, in years 2003-2005, carried out a Pilot Project called *Young Azioni Integrate per il controllo della dispersione scolastica e lavoro minorile*<sup>150</sup>, whose main target was to experiment an innovative methodology for fighting ESL, in a European dimension, putting together Italy, Austria, France, UK and Romania. The outcomes were interesting, as there was a willingness to analyse best practices in Europe and sharing them among other countries contributing to the reduction of the ESL rate.

However, 10 years is a long time and the country during these years has undergone radical changes because of its economic, social and political changes affecting all over the world. After a severe recession translating into a deep contraction of economic activity between 2007 and 2013, the Italian economy is experiencing a slow recovery as of 2014.

These developments should gradually lead to improvements on the labour market. In spite of these positive signals, the Italian economy is facing important challenges, which are exposed and exacerbated by the crisis. As highlighted in the 2014 in-depth review presented by the Commission on 5 March 2014, Italy is experiencing excessive macroeconomic imbalances, which require specific monitor-

---

<sup>150</sup> IDIS, Città della Scienza, *YOUNG-Azioni integrate contro la dispersione scolastica e il lavoro minorile*, Rapporto di Ricerca 2003-2005, p. 129



ing and strong policy action. In particular, the high public debt and weak external competitiveness on the back of sluggish productivity growth continue to weigh on the Italian economy.

Over the last year, Italy's response to the 2013 country-specific recommendations has been limited and little progress has been made. On the fiscal side, the achievement of the medium-term objective has been delayed. Substantial progress to improve market conditions in the energy sector has been achieved. In addition, the steps to alleviate the tax burden on labour, improve the functioning of the labour market, foster firms' access to finance and improve the efficiency of the public administration go in the right direction but need to go further. Limited action has been taken in the other areas, which has led to a series of challenges becoming more pressing.

In particular, there is need for action to restore and sustain sound public finances, in line with the Stability and Growth Pact's requirements. The reform agenda also needs to go forward to address important bottlenecks to competitiveness and growth. Swift implementation of the measures adopted also remains an important challenge for Italy.

### ***European Commission's recommendations to Italy (2014)***

The Commission has issued eight country specific recommendations to Italy to help it improve its economic performance. These are in the areas of: public finances; taxation; efficiency of the public administration; financial sector; labour market and social inclusion; education and training; competition in services; network industries.

The following chapters describes some experiences and intervention carried out so far at local and national level and international network, in order to provide evidence of the strong engagement which is driving the political and systemic forces involved in best practices to tackling with the Early School Leavers. But first the Education system in Italy will be described.

## ***The Italian Educational and Training System: critical issues***

For analysing this section the results an interesting *Thematic study on policy measures for disadvantaged youth*<sup>151</sup> has been considered.

It has been chosen because it provides a clear understanding about the reasons laying behind the early school failure for young people, which are considered at risk in their school performances. The authors, *Walther & Pohl*, by analysing other EU countries, concluded that the two factors *dropping out* and *unemployment* in Italy, as in other countries are strictly related. Starting from an analysis of the different approach to education carried out by vocational/training school system, they sum up the consequences related to this segment of education and its critical points.

Throughout their study, they show why in Italy this phenomenon is more relevant than in other countries and why the percentage of the two problems here is so high.

They maintain the assumption that education and labour market unemployment are linked together and main cause of “disadvantage” in Italy. Moreover, try to provide an answer to it.

In Italy, ***vocational training*** is frequently associated to students getting low marks, in basic education, as better students normally choose better higher education.

It is important to consider the vocational/professional school education first, since most of the dropout students or disadvantaged students have been inserted in this kind of education path, due to lack of skills or motivation, which has been frequently observed among those students attending vocational schools. Normally students with higher marks are sent to Higher Education as considered less at risk of school failure. Gymnasium and Licei are normally attended by students willing to go to University rather than vocational/professional schools.

But, as it has already been said in this research, vocational schools education choice is not always the easier for them as it apparently seems to be, and there is proved evidence that case of school failure is very frequent also

---

<sup>151</sup> Andreas Walther & Axel Pohl, *Thematic Study on Policy Measures concerning Disadvantaged Youth. Final Report, Volume 2, Annex II p. 84*

among these students. They required more key competences and motivational commitment, sometimes more than secondary school education schools like *Licei scientifici and Gymnasium* which require a more theoretical study approach.

The new institutional frame coming from recent reforms listed above foresees nowadays three main paths providing *vocational training*<sup>152</sup>:

- *The first path* takes place in schools: there is a vocational route of upper secondary schools, the so-called “*Istituti tecnici*” and “*Istituti professionali*”, providing both theoretical education and practical skills. Anyway, their collocation in the new two branch system (education/training) at the moment is not very clear. The so-called “*alternanza scuola-lavoro*” (school-work alternation) allows vocational schools to alternate classroom periods with training stages, but implementation rules are too recent to allow a clear assessment of the situation.
- *The second path* is the vocational training in a strict sense, which is competence of the Regions (that usually delegate competences to provinces). Three teenagers out of four are enrolled in upper secondary schools; hence a low percentage of persons are involved in regional training. The second training path takes place partly in educational institutions (not only schools, but also training centers) and partly in collaboration with firms.
- *The third path* is the vocational training in companies – the apprenticeship *strictu sensu*. Apprenticeship was firstly regulated in 1955 and is defined as “a special job contract” that binds the employer to train the young employees in order to make them skilled workers. It happens mainly on the workplace, but training in special centers supervised by public institutions is compulsory. Training is free both for the employers and the apprentices and it occurs during the working hours.

Young employees’ wages are lower than skilled workers and the involved enterprises receive tax benefits from the State.

---

<sup>152</sup> Andreas Walther & Axel Pohl, *Thematic Study on Policy Measures concerning Disadvantaged Youth. Final Report, Volume 2, Annex II p. 87*

As far as apprenticeship *strictu sensu* is concerned, the recent decree 276/03 changed the regulation frame again and designed three types of apprenticeship:

- Apprenticeship aimed at reaching the compulsory level of training and education until the age of 18 (according to the reform of school system: it is the type of apprenticeship consistent with the school-work alternation;
- Vocational training oriented apprenticeship, which recalls the traditional type implemented from 1955 onwards;
- Apprenticeship aimed at attaining a diploma.

Also at the tertiary level there has been a growing concern about the wide school-to-work transition mismatch. The reforms of the higher educational system (university), with the Institutionalization of professionalizing short degrees and of the two-tier system are also aimed at solving this problem.

In order to be authorized by the Ministry, a university program should be discussed with local stakeholders and provide clear employability outlooks. Actually, these measures are mainly met in a formal way, though a general rethinking of the system is underway, even though its effectiveness is still dubious. As a matter of fact, the Italian economic system cannot sustain such a number of degrees and trainings (see paragraph *The demand side* in this chapter for figures), because in the South the entrepreneurial fabric is very poor, while in Central and Northern Italy it is mainly made up by SMEs working with mature technologies and labor intensive processes.

Hence, the Italian Educational and Training System suffer from two major problems, affecting the constellations of disadvantage in Italy:

First, there is a basic difficulty in recognizing and coping with problems whose origin precedes the entrance in the educational system;

Second, there is the mismatch between the educational and training systems and the labour market.

## ***Two areas of disadvantage: education and the labour market***

The project starts from the assumption that “education” and “labour market” are two main areas of disadvantage, which strongly contribute to structure the overall youth condition and the risk of exclusion. Also within these two fields of study, however, in the literature, there is no clear definition of “disadvantaged youth”. For this reason, we will describe the main characteristics of youth's disadvantage in these fields starting from two main indicators:

- Young people’s educational attainment level;
- Young people’s unemployed condition

Both indicators are considered key determinants in the condition of disadvantage, even though they have to be considered dependent variables as soon as we widen our perspective and try to find causal relations. E.g. the educational attainment level depends on social class, specific educational policies and more general redistributive schemes, etc. (see § 2.1. below).

### ***Educational disadvantage***

With respect to educational attainment, the official statistics referred to school year 2002-2003 indicate that at age 19 (when the secondary school should be completed according to the Italian educational system), only 72.8% of young people actually acquire an upper secondary school diploma. This means that the 27.2% is dropping out, repeating classes or already working (Istat 2004).

Compared with other European and OECD countries, Italy still has a wide gap to fill in, in terms of educational attainment, especially considering the lower age groups.

Apart from educational attainment, an indicator, which could be very predictive of future social disadvantages, may also derive from educational achievement.

The 2003 OECD PISA survey results on reading, scientific and problem solving literacy of Italian 15 year olds show a very poor overall competence, which could affect adult life in the future, not only in terms

of working opportunities, but also concerning the exercise of civil rights and social participation (OECD, 2004).

### ***Training and vocational education in Italy***

In Italy training and vocational education has always been considered “lower class” education, in the past job was more “manual “so that and many families willing to climb the social ladder, experienced or aimed at upward mobility. Brain-job for their children was becoming the wish of every family, and guarantee for future success. Especially for those families with a rural or working-class background. The economic boom produced more white collars job than ever before.

None, at that time, could even take into consideration the proletarianization of brain-workforce and the possibility of intellectual unemployment.

Thus, vocational tracks involve a small number of young people enrolled in the training and educational system, but the acknowledgment and the validity of qualifications released is dubious. In case, students prefer the educational track with (mainly theoretic) technical Curricula more than vocational training *strictu sensu*. Also at the tertiary education level, non university programs and curricula enroll negligible numbers of people (some 8-10,000 in the whole country).

In fact, there are still prejudices against vocational training. For this reason pupils enter that path not directly after compulsory education, but often after a failure in the upper secondary education<sup>153</sup> (Tuè, 2003).

If we consider early school leaving data, Italy’s position in the European context is quite worrying: 23, 5% against the European benchmark of 10% by 2010 (according to the objectives of the Lisbon strategy). Italy is antepenult in the list of EU countries. Using another Lisbon benchmark: only 72, 9% of young

---

<sup>153</sup> Tuè, P. (2003), *La dispersione scolastica*, Franco Angeli, Milano.

people aged 22 has achieved an upper secondary school qualification, while the EU goal was 85% by 2010 and below 10% by 2020.

It is important to underline that in the last decades another new phenomenon has grown, i.e. intergenerational disqualification in areas with very dynamic labor markets. In some areas of the so-called *Third Italy*, based on flexible specialization, labor-intensive productions in mature segments of the market, labor demand for flexible manpower is very high and drains human resources from secondary schools and training paths before a qualification is achieved.

Immigrant children's disqualification has a different situation. Their parents have often achieved secondary and tertiary qualifications in their home countries (even if their diplomas are rarely recognized in Italy), but they lack skills to address their children's careers in Italy.

In addition, they suffer from poor language and social skills, so that second generation immigrants usually achieve school qualifications lower than their parents'. Hence, in order to fulfill the Lisbon objectives, an important effort to enhance school and training performance levels is necessary. As a consequence, an education reform has been a top-priority in the last 7-8 years.

Finally, after a revised primary and lower secondary cycle, a two-side upper secondary system, inspired by the German model, was planned. Law 144/99<sup>72</sup> decrees the compulsory training and puts on an equal footing *education* and *training*. Thus, especially after Law 53/03<sup>73</sup>, a professional/vocational education and training route was stated and can be accessed directly after the end of the lower secondary schools.

A training route outside the school system should not be anymore a "blind alley", but certifications achieved supposedly can be spent in the education system in order to get a diploma and (eventually, after an additional year at school) enter the tertiary education institutions.

Professional/vocational training is not intended anymore as a link between school and work, but as part of the educational system. This decision is aimed at keeping school leavers in the educational system for a longer period. Actually, the main part of basic training courses was shorter than 600 hours, and usually no longer than two years. Law 53/03 establishes three-year basic training courses and

a system of accreditation that makes regional courses acknowledgeable at a national level, providing the chance to attend further education if requested.

As a matter of fact, however, the risk is the segmentation of educational skills and the de-schooling process of students which were before included in the secondary schools.

Furthermore, this reform seems unable to affect the traditional bias between training and schooling paths and their class disadvantage segmentation, because it seems neither easy nor clear how a training student can integrate his/her skills in order to enter the upper secondary school or even the university system.

The statement of a two-branch system clearly reproduces the traditional rigidity of upper secondary schools, affected by ineffective didactics and not supported transitions path from low secondary schools. Anyway, as far as implementation rules have been determined by the Government only few months ago, it is too early to assess outcomes.

The potential class bias intertwines with another basic ascription problem, i.e. the territorial segmentation of resources and possibilities in Italy.

PISA reports show adequate skills for students in Northern schools and worrying results for students in Southern schools – the top of the iceberg of a general problem concerning institutional performance in some areas of the Country.

The number and effectiveness of professional/vocational and training paths (apprenticeship included) sets a wide territorial divide, whose solution is far to be addressed effectively. As a matter of fact, qualifications given by the Regions answer to different criteria and the State hasn't still released national standards.

This is also due to the new constitutional setting (constitutional law 03/01), taken into account by decree 276/2003 as far as training activities are concerned:

Regions have the sole responsibility for training programs and concurrent responsibility for labor policies (this means that Regions have legislative power, but basic principles have to be set by the State), while the Ministry of Labor plays only a guaranty role. If the national government doesn't meet its responsibilities and duties (as, moreover, it happens for national standards in social policies, too), an uncontested regional differentiation repeats *ad infinitum* a cumulative causation of disadvantage.



As a matter of fact, measures against *drop-outs and early school leaving* are more and more local and fragmented. Among the many measures implemented, we can consider the following as the most important (though the regional differences should always be taken into account):

- Counseling within lower secondary schools (mainly information of the options young people have in terms of education and training);
- Counseling in upper secondary schools: many schools have “sportelli per l’orientamento” (information and counseling desks) in order to support transfers from one school to another and to re-orient young people after wrong choices;
- Counseling activities within the Centers for Professional/vocational Training, where often an assessment of one owns competences, re-motivation, self-esteem support, etc. is provided;
- Tutoring activities: in some schools there is at least one professor acting as a tutor.
- Within vocational training the tutor is mainly individual;
- Courses to attain the compulsory education diploma: the municipal CEPs (Centri di Educazione Permanente/centres for permanent education) organize courses for young people aged 14-18 (compulsory training age); these courses are accompanied by laboratories of arts, motivation and job counseling;
- The CAGs (Centri di Aggregazione Giovanile/Youth centers), often managed by third sector agencies financially supported by municipalities - - mainly targeting spare time and afternoon activities. Many of them are specialized in “street education” (*educazione di strada*) and popular schools (*scuole popolari*) therefore having a privileged contact with dropped-out people and organizing for them paths back to school, re-motivation and job-counseling;
- *School-work alternation* (dual system perspective): vocational training schools organize for their own student’s stages and on-the-job training at local firms, tutoring them and assessing the single projects while they are carried out;

- The LARSA (*Laboratori per il recupero e lo sviluppo degli apprendimenti/Laboratories aimed at supporting the learning process*) are funded by provinces and are implemented jointly with upper secondary schools. They are aimed at vertical and horizontal transition (school-to-work; school-to-school), but often they end up helping the most problematic pupils to do their homework.

The last two measures included in the list above are mostly tied with the last reforms and legislative innovations. Anyway, the overall effects and outcomes of such measures are far to be clear, because their implementation is too recent. Furthermore, data retrieving and collecting is very difficult, since these projects are funded via different sources and managed mainly at the regional/local level.

As far as immigrant students in secondary schools are concerned, at the moment there is neither a national program of inclusion nor any relevant interest at the local level: local education policies and ministry circulars target much more primary and lower secondary schools, with a wide range of action aimed at introducing 'intercultural education' in school curricula and supporting immigrant children with intercultural mediators.

According to some interviewees in the Emilia-Romagna region, the main action carried out in secondary school is a deeper attention in the post-secondary education, often redirecting young immigrants out of schooling paths in favor of training 'on the job' or direct insertion in the labor market.

### ***The mismatch between education/training systems and the labour market***

As soon as we consider the Western European context, the Italian situation is worrying and anomalous at the same time. Among the OECD countries Italy's average transition period was— at the end of the Nineties – one of the longest: 11 years, while the OECD average was 7. In 2000, Italy was the OECD Country with the lowest share of young people entering the labor market directly after leaving school and with the highest share of young long-term unemployed.

The mismatch concerns both the level and the type of qualifications; both the demand and the supply side. According to recent studies, business demanded 54,000 graduated people (demand from public administration not included), while

in the same year the university output was 225,000, with enormous potential brain unemployment.

The mismatch is substantial for those who graduated in Law, Literature and Political & Social Sciences. As a matter of fact, the Italian university system is for many people a long-term parking lot for unemployed. It is not accidental that in Italian tertiary system completion rates and completion times are among the most problematic in Europe. This is true especially for the courses suffering from a significant mismatch, so that many graduated in these sectors accept jobs not requiring a university degree and are hence unsatisfied.<sup>154</sup>

Due to long-term education expectations, transition from school to work is often a second choice and happens in a subordinated way, after education failures.

As for immigrant youngsters, the second generation is still too small to recognize specific transition patterns. In the last couple of years, anyway, their futures is becoming an issue at least for social researchers (see Ambrosini & Molina 2004), stressing risks of expectation mismatch between young people of immigrant origin with an expectation set similar to

Italians of the same age and a demand locking them in dirty-dangerous-demanding positions, i.e. in their parents' ethicized niches.

On the other hand, there are also immigrants youngsters in Italy who enter the labor market without any contact with the Italian education system, so that they are trapped in secondary labor market positions if they don't manage to enter the training system (quite developed in some regions, also for immigrants, but not targeting explicitly young immigrants).

### ***The demand side***

On the demand side, the Italian economic structure is for many aspects backward. In 2004 enterprises foresaw 673,000 new jobs, but 41% of the demand concerned lower secondary School diplomas and only 18% a university degree.

These data are well-known, but families, schools and universities foster wrong choices and can't cope effectively with this mismatch. For many young

---

<sup>154</sup> Iris, *Thematic Study on Policy Measures concerning Disadvantaged Youth*, Eu Commission

graduated, their university degree is a sign of the ability of mastering a commitment, but the skills achieved aren't useful on the labor market.

On the other side, enterprises rarely invest in training. This is true for many reasons: structurally, the Italian business system relies on very small firms, with no resources and skills for training; furthermore, the national regulation system, when not effectively supplemented by active, proficient and affluent local authorities, doesn't foster adequately training investments.

### ***Measures to support the transition are “empty boxes”***

Even actions and measures designed (and sometimes used in the past) to train people in transition is now empty boxes, whose aim shifted from training to flexibility.

In Italy, in this field, a useful example comes from the apprenticeship system. Apprenticeship was quite effective in the 1960s, but later it became less used and more misused.

Other instruments (for example the *contratti di formazione-lavoro* – training-on-the-job contracts) were considered to have a better status, while the training aspects of apprenticeship were usually totally disregarded, so that informally it became just a job-insertion contract aimed – implicitly – at reducing labor costs.

As a consequence, apprentices passed from 900,000 at the end of the Sixties to 250,000 in 1996. Law 196/97 (the so called *Treu Law*, named after the Minister of Work at that time) reformed apprenticeship:

- Age limits (15-24) were raised for southern and deprived areas (15-26) and for disabled persons (15-28);
- Secondary education diploma doesn't hinder any more an apprenticeship contract;
- The term is longer (up until five years in artisanship);
- Training outside the workplace is reasserted and delegated to the Regions (at least 120 hours per year).

Then, Law 144/99 states that apprenticeship can be used to reach the compulsory training and educational levels and becomes a part of the education system. As a consequence, apprentices, which were some 345,000 in 1998, grew up to 482,000 in 2001. However, training outside the workplace is still scarcely implemented, even if the State has devoted some 90 million euro between 2000 and 2006 to this objective. Regional training classes involved only some 20,000 apprentices till the year 2000, 60,000 in 2001 and (supposedly) some 100,000 in 2002: in the best case, only an apprentice out of five achieved a real and certified training.

We have to bear in mind that no actual national standard for company-based training exists<sup>155</sup>. Also in this case, the territorial divide is very important: due to the disparities in regional labor markets, with Southern Italy unable to promote development processes and characterized by a high unemployment caused by a structural deficiency of labor demand and a bad quality of jobs (informal and non-standard arrangements are there more widespread), school-work transition and matching problems are exacerbated in Southern regions.

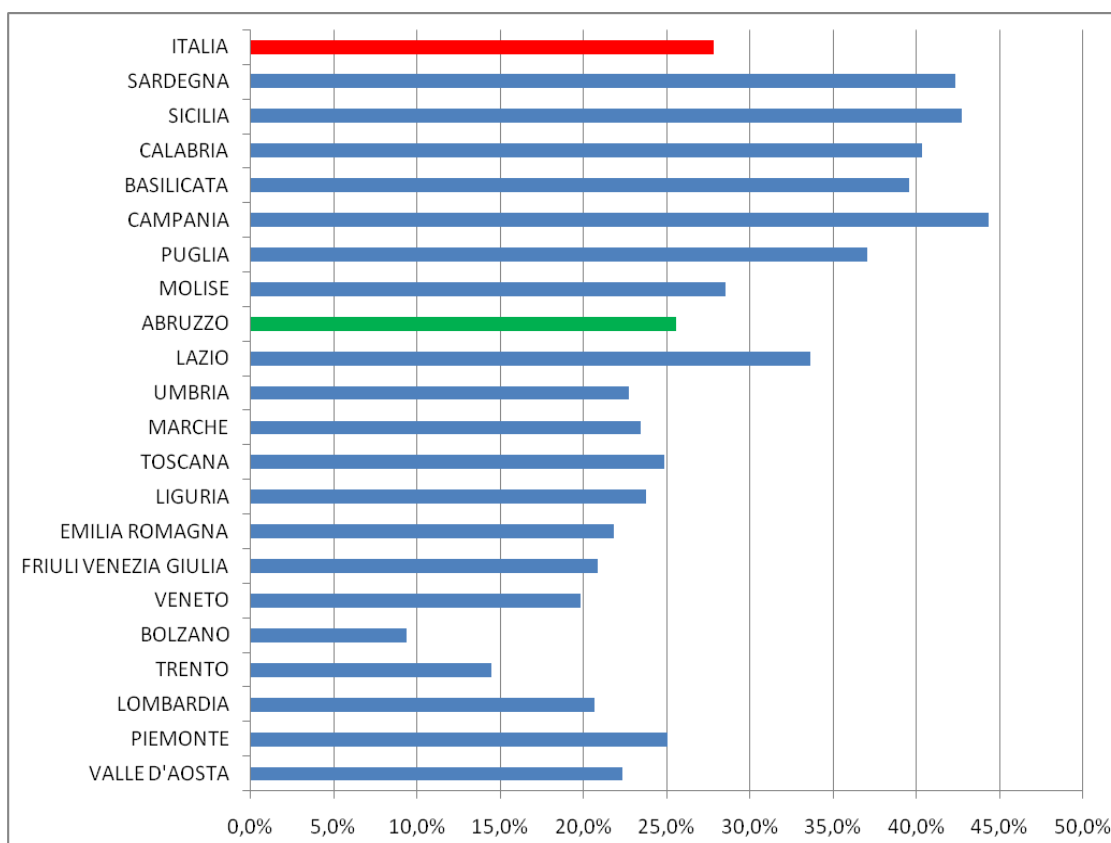
---

<sup>155</sup> *Thematic Study on Policy Measures concerning Disadvantaged Youth. Final Report, Volume 2, Annex II*

## Young people and unemployment: Italy in context

Youth unemployment in the Italian regions.<sup>156</sup>

Figure 8 is a chart about unemployment in Italy according to the different Regions:



Source: Istat *Labour Force survey* (2010)

If it is true that the average rate of unemployment is around 25-27%, it is also true that in Italy there is a wide gap between regions of the South (where the rate in Campania, with its 45% is the worst than any other region 45%), and the North (where in few regions like Bolzano is under 10%(only case!). That is to say there is an unequal division of resources and family income.

### ***The youth question and the North-South issue***

The main employment problems in Italy are distributed unevenly at the regional level. In particular, they are concentrated in the southern regions, where

<sup>156</sup> Istat, *Rilevazioni sulle forze di lavoro, 3-months Report, Labour Force Survey*, (2010)

youth unemployment reaches its climax as shown in the above diagram issued by the Italian Institute of Statistic (Istat)

In this context young people (and in particular young women) are also those with smaller job opportunities, like adult women whose low employment rates are due to discouragement in entering the labor market (Calza Bini, Mingione, Pugliese 1993; Reyneri, 1996; Bernardi 1999; Mingione, Pugliese 2002; Carbone 2005b).

Longitudinal studies on the Italian labor market dynamics (Bison et al., 1996, Schizzerotto, 2002) showed that in the southern regions the greater risks to lose one's own job are concentrated, the same applies for fewer opportunities of insertion for young and women and to longer times to re-enter the labor market after an unemployment spell.

This evidence, together with the official statistics (ISTAT, 2004), point to the fact that – despite the employment crisis in the industrial sector and the growth of the service sector in recent years - the structure of the Italian unemployment model has not changed (Pugliese e Mingione, 2002).

This confirms that employment problems in these areas, are necessarily linked to a structural deficiency of the labor demand (Pugliese 1993, Reyneri 1996) deriving from the low economic development ability of these regions.

It is clear that the southern regions record an unemployment rate is four time higher than that of the Center-North and, in this contest young people and, above all, young women represent the part of population in which it is concentrated, much more, the risk of exclusion from the labor market.<sup>157</sup>

This picture gets even worse when we consider the quality of work. It is in southern regions that there is a greater diffusion of non-regular jobs and of temporary job arrangements. The latter are the 8, 2% of the total job arrangements in Italy, while in the southern regions they reach the 14, and 4% (ISTAT, 2004).

---

<sup>157</sup> Source: ISTAT, *Labour Force Survey* (2004).

## ***New contexts and complexities***

Close to the structural difficulty of overcoming the school-to-work mismatch – which represented always one of the main Italian problems – we witness nowadays the emergence of new problems that make the picture even more complex. Despite the fact that labor relations are changing for everybody, young people are more exposed to these transformations. Indeed they are asked implicitly to take distance from the working models internalized in their socialization processes and to adapt to the new labor market conditions and regulatory frameworks.

In particular, greater obstacles are given for those who were born from the second half of the sixties onwards. Compared to their parents' generation, they have fewer probabilities to find their first job in a short period of time. On the contrary the probability to spend longer periods of their working life in unemployment, to experience higher job instability and slower career developments, to reach the economic independence from their parents in an older age is much higher (Schizzerotto, 2002).

These features are common to most advanced economies, even though intensity might differ quite considerably. In Italy, in particular, these changes have a greater impact than in many other countries, because of the chronic incapacity of the labor market to employ young people.

Comparing young and adults unemployment rates in four European countries, with different labor market regulations (*unemployment welfare regimes* according to Gallie and Paugam 2000), it emerges that young people in Italy are more disadvantaged than others in the probability of finding a job.

This underlines a spread weakness and a greater exposition to the unemployment risk for young people compared to the adults in all four countries, even though in Italy the gap between the two is higher and shows a tendency to increase during periods of high unemployment. This implies that during an employment crisis, it is mainly the young who are in a condition of greater vulnerability (Pugliese *et al.*1996). Figure 1 shows how between 1992 and 1994,



without doubt the most difficult years for the European labor market in the recent past, the youth's unemployment rate increased more than the adults one.

Within this general picture youth's condition in Italy is extremely worrying. The unemployment rate (15-29) is constantly around 30%, while in any other country – during the last twenty years – it has never exceeded 20%. Besides, the youth unemployment rate in Italy shows a high stability over time.

### ***The consequences of unemployment: “forever young”***

One of the direct consequences deriving from the difficulties of young people on the labor market in Italy is the extension of the youth condition and the delay in overcoming all phases of transition to adult life.

Among the numerous researches on the subject, the EUROSTAT survey on the “Youth condition in Europe” (EUROSTAT 2000) has showed that in the four European countries taken as a reference (but east and central European countries should be also considered), the share of young people among 20 and 24 years still living with their parents are the 87% in Italy, 55% in Germany, 47% in the United Kingdom and 43% in Denmark. In most cases in Italy the whole transition to the adult life – of which the participation to the labor market represents one of the fundamental steps – is completed quite late: beyond the age of thirty.

### ***Youth unemployment as an example of inter-generational parallelism***

A longitudinal survey on Italian households (Schizzerotto, 2002) has underlined how the two final steps in the transition to the adult life – exit from the family and birth of the first child – are completed by young people today at the same age in which their grandfathers became adults. The reason of this intergenerational parallelism is easily understandable if we consider that the first generations of the XX century lived economic and labor market conditions that, for many aspects, were similar to those of their grandchildren which were born after the second half of the sixties.

The first aspect shared by the two generations is an unfavorable economic context characterized, in both the cases, by low productivity deriving (for the grandfathers) from the effects of the overproduction crisis and the war and (for the grandchildren) from the low productivity that characterizes most services in the contemporary economy (Esping-Andersen, 1999).

The other common element is the weak covering mechanisms of protection against labor markets risks, deriving from the retrenchment of welfare regulations. However, there is a crucial difference: people that were born in the three first decades of the XX. Century was in a period during which the mechanisms developed and were newly defined. Those who were born in the second half of the seventies, on the contrary, live in a period in which the low coverage derives both from the adaptation of social policies to the changed economic conditions and from the strong financial crisis that in the last twenty years reduced the capacity of the welfare state.

As a consequence, the transition to adult life of the two generations share a context of prevailing market exchange relations as the most important mechanism for the allocation of resources (Polanyi, 1974) and from the predominant role of the family as the main welfare agency (Mingione,1997).

### ***Why is the Italian case different?***

There are several factors that explain the differences between Italy and the other European countries in relation to the incidence of youth employment. Many of these are related to *the persistent school-to-work transition mismatch*.

As it has been showed before, the distance between skills that young people acquire in the school system and the skill requirements of the productive system is very high.

### ***Little funding for education***

First of all we must consider that despite long lasting discussions (among politicians, economists and academics), the level of public expenditure for the highest degrees are still less that those of other European countries. Recent

reforms are providing some more resources to schools and research, but there is still a wide gap in terms of investments in Italy and other countries.

Recently some funding should be raised from European Commission EU program for education, and training , like the Erasmus plus Program which many institutions in Italy are currently joining. It is about EU projects aimed at exchanging or studying abroad for pupils and teachers.

Erasmus+ is a European Union (EU) program which runs from 2014 to 2020. It supports activities in education, training, youth and sport across all sectors of lifelong learning, including higher education, vocational education and training, adult education, schools and also youth activities.

So the Education system will entirely benefit with other EU countries for the opportunities of getting funds.

This action is still going on and many are applying to the *Call for proposals* following the guidelines of the EU Commission

However some schools or public institutions might be unable to join it because European projects management requires high skilled professionals, which represents a considerable costs if people are not already trained.

The Erasmus plus should also overcome this initial difficulty since Erasmus+ is a new approach to previous EU funding programs in education and training. It provides a simpler and more streamlined approach, bringing together a range of different programs and initiatives which were previously separated such as the Lifelong Learning Program and Youth in Action.

### ***Conclusions: the persistence of old inequalities***

In both educational and labor market regulations, Italian policies do not seem to be able to prevent disadvantage and its reproduction. This becomes clear when we consider the degree of income inequalities existing in Italy (e.g. measured through the Gini index (which is shown in page. 246) and the redistributive impact of social policies. Italy is on the one side unable to reduce inequalities, and on the other it keeps reproducing them through its policies.

The profound differences existing between social classes and the various regions involve both the “quantitative” capabilities for implementing policies and the attention devoted to monitoring and evaluating them.

The increased regionalization of regulatory powers and policy design does not seem to help overcoming these differences. As far as active labor market policies are concerned, for instance, in many regions framework-agreements play a fundamental role, enabling trainees to be placed in firms which signed a general agreement between the promoting body and employers’ associations. However, the success rate of these measures is in the southern regions half than in the North.

Regarding gender differences, it should be underlined that, although the female patterns of participation in the labor market are changing radically in latest years, young women involved in education and training paths continue to orientate mainly toward activities characterized by low social prestige, low wages and low career attainment.

The analysis on trainees’ labor market inclusion shows that the “education” sector continues to have a central role, and it represents, together with other public services, both in social and personal assistance, about 40% of the activities for young women. Thus also in this case, despite the success of some of these measures, there are some relevant drawbacks.

In fact, as a result of these differences in policy design and implementation, disadvantage affecting young people is mainly concentrated in the South, where young people attain lower educational levels, are more unemployed or work in the informal economy.

These differences related to gender and to the territorial divide suggest that new labor market action plans are path dependent to a great extent, and thus their impact risks to be a multiplier of the inequalities already existing, if they are not coupled to specific policies aimed at removing the consolidated system of social stratification.

The over-reliance on family solidarity – consolidated in an institutional framework which does not support its social responsibility with adequate resources, strengthens the intergenerational reproduction of poverty.

It also does not seem that there is a concrete political will to overcome the existing fragmentation, on the contrary the reforms of the last years seem to

institutionalize these difference in regulatory contexts which will be increasingly difficult to change in the future.

Expert's recommendations concentrate on the need to find a solution to these problematic areas, in particular providing a safety net able to couple security and flexibility (fashionably identified as flexicurity in the Netherlands and Denmark). These imply the support to human capital building processes and – specifically – the revision of all those social security instruments which penalize the young: particularly unemployment benefits based exclusively on contributory seniority, but also maternity benefits linked exclusively to wage work.

### ***Some recent Reforms on Italian Public investments***

Due to the recent year's economy crisis in Europe, which has been affecting many countries in Europe, Italy was badly hit by depression and inflation.

Unemployment rate have grown dramatically, assessing that especially Youth Unemployment is at the historical minimum rate, at around 43% of the young population. This esteem means that almost half of the total number of young people looking for an occupation, probably most of them with a secondary high school education or University degree, is unsuccessfully looking for a job.

Many young people are migrating to other countries with more stable economic situation, which can offer better chances of careers. It is the phenomenon called “fuga di cervelli” (brain drain) is very high in Italy. The most visited countries in this case are: Germany, Switzerland, North Europe like Denmark and Sweden. Followed by UK and USA and Canada. It seems that for Italian migration has become the only chance of getting a stable, better paid job.

Recent reforms of the Public Administration under the new government have shown some radical changes in the level of investment, in the labor market and in R&D and Education.

In the last semester, while Italy was taking the lead at the EU Parliament, the prime Minister announced the commitment to increase the level of occupation in the country and has shown some positive intention to increase the investments

in Education and Social Welfare and reducing taxation in order to make our country more convenient for foreign investments.

In Italy the level of poverty has been increasing to levels never seen before since the Second World War. The Gini index describes better the gap between equal and unequal income families normally get. And the results are not surprising if they show an evident unbalance in Italian households. Unfortunately the rate of poverty in Italy has dramatically increased and recent statistics, show a

## The Gini index

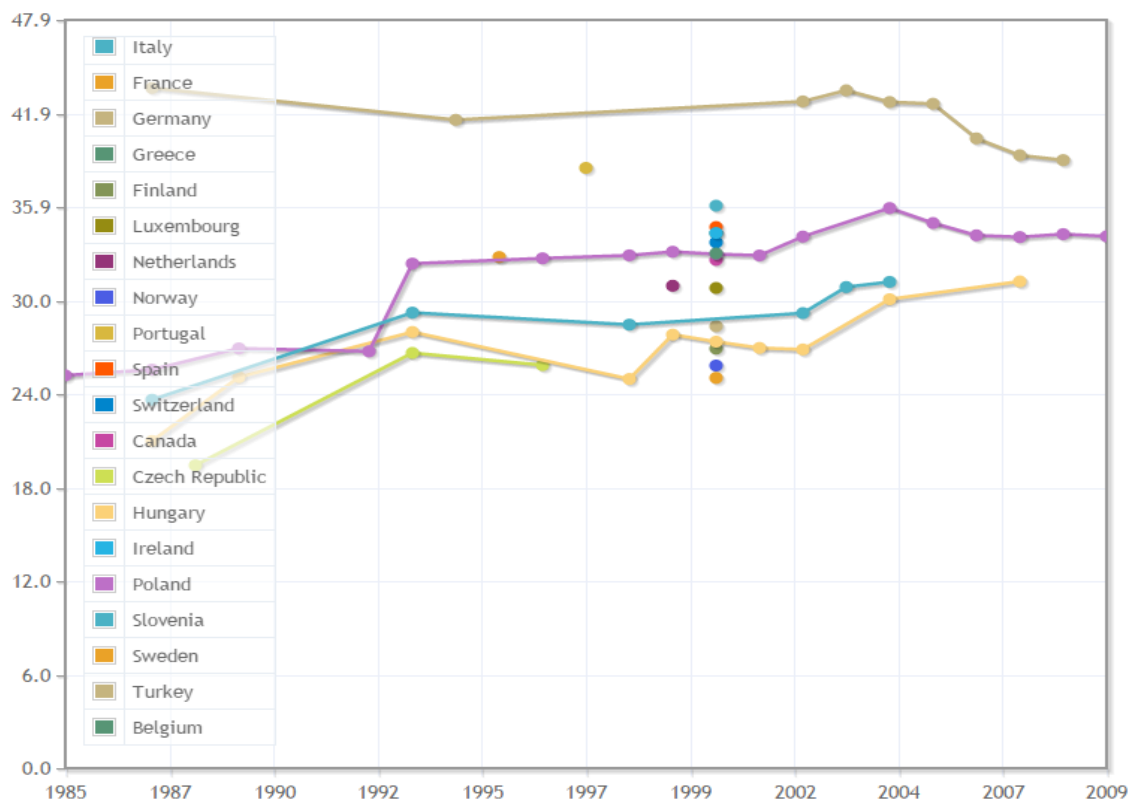
The Gini index (World Bank 2009) is a composite measure of the degree of inequality of income distribution and is calculated on the equivalent household income that is made comparable by applying an equivalence scale that takes into account the changing composition of households.

It really shows how different the income distribution can be in the different countries

Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or, in some cases, consumption expenditure) among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Lorenz curve plots the cumulative percentages of total income received against the cumulative number of recipients, starting with the poorest individual or household. The Gini index measures the area between the Lorenz curve and a hypothetical line of absolute equality, expressed as a percentage of the maximum area under the line. Thus a Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality.

*World Bank, Development Research Group.*

*Source: World Bank, Research Department 2009*



## Case study: TORINO

### ***Educational projects: Torino Municipality-Education Department***

The City of Turin has been engaged for many years in local projects that aim to promote academic success and to prevent ESL, as well as promoting the return to school of the students in the lower secondary school level and in the second degree education (high school). It is also involved in offering second chance schemes and re-entering education for the migrant community, and language courses for migrants, whose number is rapidly increasing (from China to North Africa and Latin-America and Eastern countries like Romania and Ukraine, are the biggest communities).

Turin is involved in the following main educational projects, which i will diescribe in details:

1. *IAEC (International Associations of Education Cities)*
2. *PROVACI ANCORA, Sam (prevention and recuperation action.)*
3. *SCUOLA DEI COMPITI (homework school)*
4. *TUTELA INTEGRATA (integrate approach)*
5. *COSP (Centre School Orientation/Vocational Training guidance)*
6. *CPIA (Centre for Adults Education)*

### ***IAEC: Project Turin Educating City***

In year 1990 the City of Turin signed with 60 other cities around the world the "*Chart of Educating Cities*". In 1995 the enrollment was ratified to the IAEC. By signing of the *IAEC Chart*, the Administration committed to adapt its interventions, covering both the organization of the services, to a "educational" city-sized, in order to develop opportunities for discussion and elaboration with the resources of the city territory; these resources have been urged to reflect and rethink the educational responsibilities, collective and individual as reflected in the "city system".



The *Chart of Educating Cities* provides guidance about the requisites that an "educational city" should have. Just to mention a few:

- Widespread awareness about the vital importance for all citizens of lifelong education that combine all the local actors.
- Promoting service available to the family and schools playing a role as educators.
- Educational and vocational guidance, culture of work & business for young people to plan their future.
- Information service about all the opportunities.
- Promotion of equal opportunities to promote understanding of different cultures, the social integration of immigrants, the mutual human enrichment, the consolidation of the historical values.
- Improving physical location of the city to the needs of space, social meetings, and citizens' safety.
- Opportunities to promote the meeting and communication among citizens.
- Fostering the citizens' participation to the decision-making.

### **The National Secretary**

In January 2000, the IAEC recognized the City of Turin, the role of the National Secretariat in Italy in order to support the principles embodied by the *Chart of Educating Cities* and to develop and systematize the information network and links among the Italian cities. As part of the promotion of the Association, the Secretariat shall provide information about the various activities of IAEC provides documentation and supports the City interested in joining the Association in carrying out the necessary procedures to enrolment.

### **Executive Committee**

The activity of IAEC is expressed through the work of the Executive Committee, of which Turin is member and founder, alongside the work of the International

Secretariat based in Barcelona. The Executive Committee meets regularly in annual meetings to establish strategies of the Association, the educational issues for debate at the conference, review the nominations made by the different network Cities that offer themselves as seat of the IAEC Congress.

The *City of Turin* has been engaged for many years in local projects that aim to promote academic success and to prevent ESL, as well as promoting the return to school of the students in the lower secondary school level and in the second degree education (high school). It is also involved in offering *second chance schemes* and re-entering education for the migrant community, and *language courses for migrants*, whose number is rapidly increasing (from China to North Africa and Latin-America and Eastern countries like Romania and Ukraine, are the biggest communities)

Since 1998, in order to achieve the set targets, the city has implemented initiatives and interventions for school guidance aimed particularly at young students in their last year of middle school (*Scuola media* in Italy).

The City of Turin, in collaboration with the Educational and Social Services, as a measure to combat *Early school leaving*, has been engaged for many years, in the "***Provaci ancora, Sam***" (PAS), an integrated and inter-institutional project, developed in close collaboration with the Office *Ufficio Pio of the Fondazione per la scuola of Compagnia di San Paolo*, the Regional School Office and the Ministry of Education (MIUR) with a Network of local organizations.

Starting in 2008 as part of the Protocol of agreement with the Province of Turin, the City has developed orienteering and counseling activities by consolidating and expanding the activities already in place.

In particular for adolescents under the age of 16 years, the Service Orientation and Training of the Educational Services, through the Center for Educational and Vocational Guidance (***COSP***), has implemented guidance intervention for students of the 2nd and 3rd classes of secondary school first instance, interventions for students in the two years of secondary school degree and the ***CPIA***, as well as accompanying actions and awareness raising families.

Orientation, success / failure and school dropout issues are closely related to each other because an effective guidance action counteracts the school failure that appears to be the major factor of school abandon.

Despite the measures implemented, the phenomenon of ESL continues to be very important: among hundred pupils entering the first grade of secondary school, only 60 reach graduation; to this it must be added that only *20 % of the young population of our country has got a University degree*, this data is correlated, not considering other economic factors to the high rate of youth unemployment, a phenomenon that affects mainly young people with low education.

It is therefore necessary to implement interventions aimed at integrating the orientation action and contrast the early school abandon already in place through the provision of support activities at school.

The difficulty with certain subjects in the approach, a method of study which is not appropriate for inclusion in a completely new reality are often at the core of school failure, which can be reduced by measures to support the study and development of skills, in particular through methodologies of innovative teaching (e.g. learning with e-learning platforms integrated with specific programs that allow even moments of distance tutoring).

In 2012, the Municipality started planning of the new project "*Scuola dei Compiti*" which started in school year 2012/2013 by using innovative learning methods.

"*Scuola dei Compiti*" contributes to increasing the students' performances, their educational success, reducing the phenomenon of school abandon or dropping out.

The activities and actions undertaken are intended as complementary actions and additional to the school educational offer it does not substitute traditional learning inputs.

## ***PROVACI ANCORA, Sam! Project***

*Actions against dropping out of school and ESL aimed at improving school success and social inclusion.*

Turin Municipality has a long tradition in fighting the school early abandon and drop-out students.

"*Provaci ancora, Sam*" project was born in fact Turin in 1989 with the aim to prevent and recover early school leaving.

It is a project that is focused on youth problems with the primary purpose of fostering social inclusion and prevents early failure in education, giving young people at high risk tools to address the social and cultural education and subsequent inclusion in the job market.

It is based on a broad meaning of the concept of abandon which is combined with that of discomfort; it is difficult to adapt relational and cultural phenomena that result in isolation, feelings of inadequacy and confusion in the face of educational goals or a real failure and dropping out increasingly accompanied by clear signs of deviance.

It is widely recognized that the social, emotional and behavior of the children is significantly related to academic achievement and social integration in the school community.

From the school year 2000-2001 the city of Turin has proposed to develop intervention actions, expanding initiatives for the prevention of discomfort and to achieve educational success.

From an analysis of the studies plans (POF in Italy) for the year 1999-2000 and the number of cooperation requests received by the City from the schools, emerged that the issue of prevention of ESL was a major concern for which the schools offer and activate initiatives.

The City of Turin aims to enhance and support these projects in order to reduce through integrated interventions the phenomenon of dropping out of

school, with early intervention with those who from the beginning of the lower secondary school have been reported by services and / or primary school or show early signs of disengagement.

### ***The approach***

In the school year 2009-2010 a review of the project has been implemented for the ***Sam project*** in order to ensure an accurate and integrated intervention with the specific features of the various partners: the City of Turin, the Ufficio Pio della Compagnia di San Paolo, primary schools and second grade, USP (Ufficio Scolastico Provinciale) e USR (Regional) both local Office of Ministry of Italian Education), as a result of collaboration with the vocational training agencies, with some formation agencies of Turin, the Piedmont Region and the Province of Turin.

In order to encourage also the interaction between schools and territory resources and to emphasize the commitment of all partners, in September 2000 a unique *Protocol of Agreement* was signed, bringing together two areas: *prevention and compensation*.

The structure of the project involves a collaboration with several primary and secondary schools (prevention) and n. 2 CPIA (Centri Permanenti per l’Insegnamento degli Adulti-local) in the city of Turin (*Sam, recupero*).

It is offered to young people at risk of dropping out or those who have already left school, kind of support to have more opportunities for success in school, middle school, and of inclusion in subsequent training.

To do this, a contribution to non-profit organizations is offered: they provide facilities, educators and volunteers, according to the requests made by teacher, municipal social services and educational courses in schools and extra-schools.

The main objective is to recover the dropouts’ cases and the pupils which have failed school for more years, supporting children who experience severe discomfort and risk of dropping out in primary and secondary school and build around difficult social cases, a support network between school and territory.

This commitment has placed the emphasis on the predominantly social discomfort of the pupils followed by the knowledge that fighting dropping out of school requires special attention to achieve educational success, as a tool to increase self-confidence and self-esteem, improving cultural level and investment on education to promote social welfare.

The intervention action was improved by individualized programs starting from the needs related to the emotional and relational area with attention to the inclusion in social groups.

With this background, the aim of the project is therefore based on individual educational intervention, whose target is the student with his relationship problems and learning.

Given that for each child reported by the school and included in the project, an individualized course is set up with objectives geared to the characteristics, skills and potential of the single case, where the following specific objectives about educational, relational, social, and social skills can be found:

- *Specific objective 1 : ( for drop out of the recovery Plan and school workshops) Attainment of secondary school license.*
- *Specific objective 2: Relational education. Entering into the class / Self-Esteem / Overcoming bullying / Support attendance/ Synergy with the family*
- *Specific objective 3: educational-cognitive re-motivation / organization of school life / improving poor disciplinary skills*
- *Specific objective 4 :Social: Educating for legal / compliance with rules / Favor 'integration into the social opportunities of leisure alternatives to the street / Encourage a network of positive support and Social Inclusion*
- *Specific objective 5: (especially for drop outs of the recovery plan and of the Tutela Integrata and CPIA and paths "School Workshops") Enter into pre-professional workshops to orient towards further education and / or training to professional.*

## **Targets**

For primary prevention aimed at children of the first classes of secondary schools and some elementary schools: they are young people with special educational needs, temporary and reversible, in favor of additional resources such as school and outside it is combined to offer educational support and facilitate learning.

In this context it likely to meet:

1. children who are in need of support of school and family;
2. children reported by social services;
3. pupils which have started a working path in the previous year and for which they need continuity of intervention.

The path is the result of a joint activity of a working group that follows certain stages: school, through a preliminary investigation by the Class Council wishing to participate in the initiative, identify common needs of users, provides a list of students who seem to need interventions to prevent and / or containment.

School Absenteeism Working Group (School Services Association) defines the appropriate actions, supported by observation, by associations, students in the classroom context (6/10 per module) with the compilation of a monitoring grid that takes into account the preliminary observations and indicate the starting levels, the minimum objectives and expected results; the periodic monitoring of activities undertaken; a final report indicating the outcome of education, educational objectives achieved and prospects of the pupil for the following year.

## ***SCUOLA DEI COMPITI***

The activities and actions undertaken are intended as complementary actions and additional to the school educational offer it doesn't substitute traditional learning inputs.

Every year more than 20-25 secondary schools are involved.

### ***Targets***

- Provide students of the 3rd year of secondary school degree and two years of upper secondary school degree, integrated educational support in order to strengthen skills in the core subjects by reducing their bad marks.
- Provide support for students in setting or improving their method of study
- For students in their last year of secondary school degree , contribute as part of the guidance system, to raise the level of awareness of the pupils and their parents with respect of their potentiality, limitations and reasons, with a direct reference to the future educational choices.
- For students in the two years of upper secondary school level , to prevent the risk of failure and dropping out of school by encouraging , if necessary , a re-orientation alternative.
- Experiment with innovative teaching methods (eg. Mathematics teaching through e-learning platform Moodle and the + Maple).

### ***Implementation of the activity***

The activity took place within the School 2012/2013, on an experimental basis, in Torino schools (10 secondary schools of grade 1 – 3<sup>rd</sup> year-classes - and 10 secondary schools of the second degree, first two years with priority given to first-year classes).



The schools taking part to the experiment were identified by Torino City Council – Direction of Educational Services - in agreement with the Regional School Office, after consultation with the Local Districts, (which are distributed as evenly as possible over the territory).

The intervention is carried out within local schools in collaboration with the municipality, which has an organizational and coordination function organization in the management of the project.

In particular, schools are required to:

- Provide suitable premises where the intervention of support will take place and provide the necessary teaching materials and computers. In particular, for pupils who follow the testing of mathematical method (Moodle + Maple) a computer room with at least five computers was needed.
- Organize and take care of the management aspects related to interventions under the project at school, for the above mentioned functions,
- choose one or more teachers of its teaching staff, such as managers / representatives within the project. These teachers will have to interface with the representatives of the City of Turin (Educational Services Direction), with university students and already retired volunteer teachers.
- Sign a Protocol of Agreement whose scheme is approved by the City council in consultation with the Regional Educational Offices.
- Give its willingness to accommodate students not attending specific schools, but residents in the local area.

### ***Management of the project***

The activity of school support is carried out in the afternoon, outside normal school time and is made, as a rule, in homogeneous groups, organized by subject and degree of difficulty, composed of up to 5/6 students each and tutoring carried out by University students.

The support activities coordinated by one or more teachers of each school should aim at promoting actions of *peer to peer* education among troubled teenagers and university students (tutors). The intervention will be insured by students attending University courses relevant to the subject matter of the intervention support, identified with specific selection made by the two Universities of Turin. For this reason the Protocol of Agreement was signed with Politecnico and Università degli Studi.

The students, selected on the base of merit and expertise, are able to carry out such activities in collaboration with the City Council, in compliance with the *art. 11 of D.L. n. 68 of 29 March 2012*.

It also involves voluntary retired former teachers, having integrative functions, in order to provide an effective method of study and the relational aspects of teaching. This role is of significant importance in terms of experience, knowledge of the methods of teaching and authority relationships (inter-relationship).

The project does not qualify as an ongoing activity of "*after-school - doposcuola*", but aims at improving some core subject's marks that are more difficult for the pupil, especially mathematics and foreign languages: an aid to overcome the initial difficulties and limit the risk of school failure.

### ***Partnerships***

The project is carried out in partnership with the Universities of Turin: the Università di Torino and the Politecnico, that offer advice, scientific and technical support made available to their students for the support activities. The University makes a selection for their recruitment and deal with payment of the salaries for the activity (technical and administrative management) which is financed by the Municipality.

The University encourages also the application of new teaching method which uses innovative learning methods (such as the integrated *moodle + maple*

*platform*) and which have been used for several years with success for the learning of mathematics by the *Faculty of Science* of the University.

The project takes also advantage of the collaboration with the *Agnelli Foundation*, which plays an important supporting role, from the design of the intervention, analysis of the outcomes and data collection, providing guidance and encouragement from its research activities and similar initiatives aimed at supporting the project.

### ***Coordination of the project***

The overall coordination of the activity is held by Torino Educational Services Department, which is supported by representatives of all stakeholders for the comparison and monitoring phase of the intervention.

### ***Monitoring and evaluation***

Appropriate monitoring tools (questionnaires, interviews with students, tutors, and teachers) have been built specifically to evaluate the performance of the project and to improve the following years based on the emerging strengths /critical points.

## **TUTELA INTEGRATA**

### **Targets:**

The Tutela Integrata (*part of a Ministerial Program*) is aimed to pupils who have at least 9 years of schooling, ranging age from **14 to 15 years**, usually with more than one year of grade retention, which did not reach the middle school.

An average of about 50 pupils are split into 4 modules and are referred by schools, social services, by families, associations and organizations that are in contact with families with serious socio-economic problems.

These are mainly young drop-outs who have behind them a rough schooling, characterized by irregular attendance and difficult personal and family situations.

Each pupil receives an individual project, from which to develop an educational-teaching that leads to the achievement of middle school and inclusion in vocational training courses. The children were followed from the start of an equipe composed by: the school headmaster of the comprehensive institute Turolfo, teachers, social services, educational services, voluntary organizations and offices of the Ufficio Pio di San Paolo. The activity starts in the morning in presence of an educator and a teacher following groups of 12-13 children, and two afternoons with individualized activities or small groups organized by the association for each module with the teacher in the morning and finally the activities of professional workshops in the afternoon.

The *Tutela integrata* covers pupils repeating a school year aged between 14 and 16 years, with basic knowledge of the Italian language and who have not yet reached middle school diploma.

The operation of the *Tutela Integrata* is accomplished through four modules of integrated training involving the combined efforts of:

- teachers
- care organizations (no-profit companies and agencies)

- Educational and Social Services of the City

It is implemented in four locations of the city, and made available by organizations and associations involved into the project.

The class takes place from Monday to Friday, with a weekly commitment of about 18 hours in the morning and a number of afternoons evaluated according to the needs of the boys, but not less than 4 hours a week. These non-curricular educational activities and/or guidance scholastic-professional form an integral part of the school timetable.

The plan "*Educational activity test of the Piedmont Region and USR*" provides that part of the school timetable is carried out in laboratories at the pre-vocational training agencies.

In the morning the presence of the teacher and operators of the territorial organizations is always included. Some organizations collaborate closely with school activities, making a contribution to support all educational initiatives, and support the inclusion in the laboratories (pre-professional), support guidance initiatives in close collaboration with the COSP<sup>158</sup>, (whose activity will be better described in appropriate section at the end of this chapter) directing children towards educational activities, support school attendance and integrate the relationship of the school with their families.

The educational and training activities are carried out with the setting up of modules for which registration is expected to be a minimum of 12 to a maximum of 15 students.

It is a working group, made up of teachers, representatives from the organizations, the coordinator of Minor Service and the referent of Educational Services of the City of Turin, the Ufficio Pio of the Compagnia di San Paolo and the Office of the Director of the CI Turollo, which evaluates the entries in September and, according to the eligibility criteria, fix the four modules, monitors activities and supplementary laboratory.

---

<sup>158</sup> *Cosp* Centro d'Orientamento Scolastico e Professionale (Vocational guidance centre) of Torino Municipality, Education Department

Individualized monitoring frequencies of the laboratories, whose disciplinary assessments are an integral part of the overall assessment of the pupils performance are organized.

The Working Group may also consider it appropriate to collaboration with outside professionals for useful activities to supplement the planned start of the year. Therefore, the Comprehensive School *Turoldo* under ministerial regulation is committed to:

- Plan with services and organizations across the country in full respect of each other's roles and responsibilities, and shared pathways;
- Participate in planning meetings, collaborating in the drafting of curricular design that will be introduced in relation to the potential of each student, indicating the actions and resources aimed at achieving the minimum targets identified;
- To promote a wider knowledge of the project with families in order to make them responsible and involve them as much as possible, in what working with services and organizations;
- According to those involved, the compilation of tabs and grids for monitoring;
- Cooperating in student's guidance services: COSP<sup>159</sup>, Training Agencies;
- Promoters to provide timely data and information on the members, attending students and dropouts that occur during the year;
- Taking part in training courses offered by the Promoters;
- Work with the training agencies in the identification of shared and cross-disciplinary minimum competencies to be achieved;
- Ensure the secretary taking care of organizational and administrative documents and official communications to families and agencies involved in the planning.

The organizations involved in the Project area are committed to:

- Appoint a contact teacher for the coordination of the Project;
- Identify staff and volunteers to ensure the project;
- Attend meetings and work with the school and the Services to the definition of steps to be taken;

---

<sup>159</sup> idem

- Collaborate with the educational network, with Social Services and organizations of the District in which student live in order to integrate its operations for the extra time school with the resources and opportunities in the area of residence;
- To be a point of reference for vocational training agencies on the frequency of the pupils in the workshop activities for pre-orientation and inclusion of young people themselves in programs designed to further education;
- Ensure the completed forms and grids for monitoring in accordance with the school;
- Ensure continuity with the relationships with their families, according to the teachers;
- Taking part in training courses offered by the Promoters;
- Accompany the children at the end of the path of the Privacy Integrated in enrollment and start training to achieve a school license;
- Ensure the planning of targeted and specific courses to be held in the afternoon moments, placing children in activities in the area, also carried out by other entities.

The Promoters, undertake the commitment to:

- Integrate with its expertise in education and training network consists of the Organizations of the area and the school;
- Facilitate the meeting between the representatives of the training agencies and operators involved in the project;
- To promote coordination meetings to monitor the progress of the Project and to be an active part in identifying pathways needed to achieve the objectives;
- To promote opportunities for discussion and relevant training to the entire team.

In particular the following subjects are willing to:

- The representative of the Social Service verify the presence of children in the modules followed by social services operators and facilitate meetings with the representatives of the territory;
- The representative of the Educational Services Office - "Provaci ancora, Sam!" with the operators consider the possibility of including the pupils in need, in courses sponsored by the City of Turin;

- The referent of Educational Services - COSP follow the guidance and coaching of children to vocational training courses;
- The representative of the Office Pio foster possible collaborations with other organizations, to make complete the proposed route with the pupils and the operators involved;
- The referent of the U.S.R. participates in coordination meetings and monitoring, verifies the effectiveness of intervention and propose any additional change to the project.

## **CPIA Centri Permanenti Istruzione Adulti (ex CTP)**

### ***Target***

The activities of the Project, aimed at children between 16 and 17 years old, is accomplished through the identification of a group of 15 children with the involvement of local organizations working for at least 8 hours per week.

The "Provaci ancora, Sam!" project is also included in the new programs of ex-CTPs (Local territorial centers) which are now named CPIA, to follow the underage pupils and adults in order to lead them, by personalized pathways, to the achievement of low middle school education diploma and possible inclusion in the training and / or in high school.

Interventions at the CPIA want to be an opportunity of the interaction between educational experiences and opportunities offered by the area of training. The children who attend C.T.P. are for the most part foreigners, with a strong need to learn the Italian language in order to achieve a license and a willingness to be included in training programs and have the opportunity to start a career path.

The educational and training activities, carried out by the joint action and co-designed by teachers, staff and volunteers of the organizations and the project promoters, is devoted to preparing for the exam in middle school and the inclusion



of children in the social territory context. These activities experimental laboratory relevant to the establishment of one or more models that may in future be implemented and disseminated.

The territorial organizations also collaborate closely with the local school, giving a contribution in support of educational initiatives, and support the inclusion in the laboratories.

In addition, they support the initiatives of orientation in close collaboration with the COSP, directing the children toward educational activities supporting them to attend the courses, and promoting the relationship of the school with their families.

For planning the intervention a working group, consisting of teachers, representatives of the organization, the services area, the coordinator of the Minor Services and the referent of Educational Services of the City of Turin, the referent of *Ufficio Pio della Compagnia di San Paolo* and the Executive office of the CPIA, which co-design, monitor and review the activities and an additional laboratory evaluates the pupils in observation.

A contact person identified by the technical working group also will monitor the frequency of the pupils attending the laboratories and keep in touch with the network of the Vocational Training agencies.

Interventions need to be flexible to adapt to the specific needs that emerge during the course and the group of central coordination will be involved during the year.

Therefore the C.P.I.A. is committed to:

- Plan with services and organizations across the country in full respect of each other's roles and responsibilities, and shared pathways;
- Participate in planning meetings collaborating in the drafting of curricular design that will be introduced in relation to the potential of each student, indicating the actions and resources aimed at achieving the minimum identified targets;

- Identify, through negotiation of the Institute, the number of hours necessary to the implementation of the Project;
- To promote a wider understanding of the project among families;
- Work with the Services for the orientation of the pupils: COSP and training agencies;
- Promoters provide data and information about the members, attending students and dropouts that occur during the year;
- Taking part in training courses offered by the Promoters;
- Ensure the completion of the different phases set up for the implementation and monitoring of activities in collaboration with local organizations;
- Work with the training agencies in the identification of shared tracks that take into account the cross-cutting of the minimum to be achieved;
- Ensure that staff takes care of organizational and administrative documents and official communications to families and agencies involved in the planning

## ***COSP***

### ***Centre for Orientation to School & Vocational Training***

*COSP* is located in Torino and is the Centre for Orientation and vocational training of Torino City Council, Direction Educational Services of Torin City Council.

#### **Target**

12-14 years lower secondary school's students. (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> classes). About 6.000 tested every year and 10% are interviewed by the Counseling Service.

## **Actions**

It helps young people, to decide and make plans about their future career. Besides the orienteering service, it also helps preventing school failure, since the methodology is aimed at addressing them to the best educational choices according to the students' learning abilities and personal motivation, which are assessed on the basis of attitudinal tests discussed with professional staff (psychologists, professional educators, and teachers) and the pupils' families.

Making the right choice can result in the most effective way to prevent future failure. This service is also offered to the first 2 years of secondary schools' students.

It was founded in 1980, and it works and collaborates jointly with the local secondary schools and some provincial municipalities in the vocational guidance area.

Since 1990 it has developed an evaluation methodology named "*Arianna*", which involves a theoretical model able to analyze the potential knowledge of the examined subjects (between 12 and 18 years old) and professional figures and diagnosis instruments (tests, clinical talks about their expectations and socio-cultural information).

### ***Arianna ICT tool***

Since 1990 up to today, the number of schools which uses the "*Arianna*" system has been progressively increasing-

"Arianna" analyses:

- Subjects involved and their families
- Educational system
- Job market

"Arianna" has also the function to render easier the link among them, providing a reciprocal guidance and counseling services carried out by professional advisers.

### ***Intervention model***

The intervention lines followed by COSP in the vocational guidance activity are the following:

- Prevention school failure in 1st cycle (3<sup>rd</sup> year of secondary school)
- Prevention school failure in the first 2 years of high school (achievement of compulsory school license-*licenza di scuola media dell'obbligo*)
- Checking the school failure rate in compulsory school education.

Those addressing to the COSP obtain their personal profile in consideration of their capacities and abilities, identifying which aspects of their formation and knowledge must be taken into account for choosing a suitable study and professional choice, helping them to reduce the risk of failure.

The classification of possible future professions, which identifies 6 professional categories involving similar competences, provides the opportunity to reflect about the students' future needs, putting into relation attitudes and motivations with the different activities characteristics and to provide the aspects of the present job market.

### ***The Orientation process***

The prevention activity in the first 2 years of the high school is realized through a network where the schools, teachers, families and students are involved.

These activities involve the following actions:

- Teachers training
- Identifying cases at risk by the school
- Registration of the subjects characteristics
- Motivational check by an individual talk
- Evaluation and vocational guidance proposal discussed with the students, families and teachers
- Vocational alternatives provided
- Checking the results (monitoring and assessment through school reports)

The counselor uses three interacting programs to make the orientation assessment:

1) The first program is a set of aptitude tests. The software allows grasping the characteristics related to the competence and motivation of the subject, adapting to its characteristics according to his objectives and expectations. This dynamism of the software is an original feature of the project.

2) The second program is given by the archive of professions: technically it is a relational database. This configuration allows a continuous updating of the professions recording the changes and developments that occur over time. The analytical model used for the classification of professions is the same that characterizes the aptitudes and motivations. This program uses the calculation technique called "motor comparative", another motivation element of the program.

3) The third and final program is related to the evaluation system; the test results, properly processed, highlight the lines of development of potential expressed in tests and also allows to identify, in detail, the difficulties met by the subjects, both in the understanding, and in that processing.

The counselor, during the development phase of the evaluation, integrates its activities using the information and conclusion provided by the program as elements of analysis and reflection.

The Aptitude Tests are referred to the following areas of knowledge:

- Logic
- Symbolic calculation
- Strategies
- Linguistic
- Spatial

Each test is presented by different learning codes (textual semantic, iconic-figurative, symbolism) and rules expressed and to be perceived (as the semiotic model of knowledge). Thus learning situations characterized by increasing

difficulties are produced. All the tests are realized by using a personal computer x each student.

The motivational tests, ran by informative system, are realized by a story whose plot is built up by the tested student.

### ***The phases of the project***

There are 6 different phases for each analyzed case:

- the *1<sup>st</sup> phase* is for teachers and trainers, implies an introduction course to the theoretical model of vocational guidance. The contents of the course are the basic and conceptual theories, the modalities of the project development and the features of the tests which are submitted.
- The *2<sup>nd</sup> phase* is relative to the use of the COSP laboratories. The pupils do the Arianna tests (5 or 6 on pc). As far as high school is concerned this phase is preceded by a meeting with the teachers for the analysis and the collection of the information about the tested pupils.
- The *3<sup>rd</sup> phase* is relative to the elaboration of the individual results, this means that the analysis of the answers received and the elaboration of an individual report to be discussed during individual meetings. This information has an enormous value for the school that thus gets an historical trend of those entering education.
- The *4<sup>th</sup> phase* involves teachers and pupils with Meetings and conferences on the problems connected to vocational guidance, the Arianna model and the structure and features of the job market. For the high school in this phase the meetings with parents and students take place by individual meetings whose target is to identify an alternative path to follow in collaboration with the school.

- The 5<sup>th</sup> phase involves counselors and teachers. In the Class Council the results of the tests are shown and a guiding opinion is given to the parents.
- The 6<sup>th</sup> phase implies for difficult cases an individual talk between the pupil and family and counselors whose target is to help a future choice.

### ***The archive of historical data***

The experience gained by the counselors of the COSP has enabled a large collection of data on subjects ranging from 11 to 16 years relative to the low and high secondary schools. The current data are contained in archives and refer to about 60000 people. This set of information guarantees the "maintenance" of the tests and the processing of some research hypothesis about the characteristics of the study population at the same time.

### ***Experimenting Arianna in remote version***

The testing program at distance through the Internet is given to local schools:

- By installing the diagnostic software for the administration of the orientation tests, with the technical guidance and methodologies.
- By installing the software for processing the results of the tests and the technical operations.

During the experimental phase, the COSP follows both the phase of providing the tests, and the processing of the results, by providing all the methodological instructions. The number of students to be involved is at the discretion of the schools involved.

The COSP will perform the reading and evaluation of individual records of the students 'profile also using the Internet. This is the longest and more delicate phase, because it requires an exchange of information between the counselors and teachers. It provides an online service discussion for orientation (only for professors and teachers).

Individual session is provided on the basis of scheduled meeting throughout the school year or under request of schools or parents.





## ANNEX I

### **The Protocol of Agreement for *Provaci ancora, Sam!***

*"Provaci ancora, Sam" is an integrated project aimed at institutional and combat Early school leaving, which is characterized as a complex phenomenon investing different aspects of children's lives, from education to the school environment.*

*This requires close cooperation between the institutional actors: Educational Services and Social Services of the City of Turin, the Piedmont Regional Education Office, the Ufficio Pio and the Foundation for the School of the Compagnia di San Paolo and a regional network of organization with a social and educational measures to create significant synergies and implement targeted interventions and disseminated.*

*The overall objective of the project is therefore to encourage integration between the reality and the reality-of-school education, creating conditions for dialogue. In this regard, the project uses the wide number of local non-profit associations, parishes and oratories, using their potential social and educational experience.*

*School and other actors can thus, in a joint work, promote learning processes, taking into account the history of each child, give each a space of listening and self-expression, providing meeting places and areas in which to strengthen their self-esteem and find support for educational success, in more general logic of contrast to the dispersion*

*The authorization for the trial of the inter-institutional "Provaci ancora, Sam!" was sought on the basis of art. 3 "Trials of systems and structures" of the Presidential Decree 419/74 and granted by order dated August 5, 1996. The subsequent legislation, Law 59/97, which contains provisions related to the autonomy of educational institutions and, specifically Art. 21, the Legislative Decree n. 112/98 with the transfer of administrative functions and duties granted to local authorities and the DPR n. 275/99, supports and strengthens the Project.*

#### *Specification of the Project*

*The projects is aimed at students of secondary schools having difficulties and is at high risk of dropping out or have interrupted their schooling but have not yet obtained a low secondary education diploma, promoting the inclusion in personalized training.*

*The project is divided into two areas of activity: **Primary Prevention and Secondary Prevention.***

*In both these areas Specific Intervention can be activated.*

*The **Primary Prevention (Annex 1)** is directed mainly to the students of the first year of the Secondary School with special educational needs, temporary and reversible. In this context, school and organizations outside combine to offer educational support and facilitate learning.*

*In special cases, defined in accordance with the schools, the project can be extended with designs aimed at kids in the class 2nd - 3rd Secondary School.*

*The **Secondary Prevention (Annex 2)** is divided into two modules of operation:*

*- TUTELA INTEGRATA covers children between the ages of 14 and 16 years with basic knowledge of the Italian language, multi-repeating class and which did not reach the middle school. The school of reference of this paper is the local comprehensive school "Turolto";*

*Interventions in support and recovery of school dropouts at some of the local CTPs for obtaining the license and the low secondary school certification can continue in education or training.*

*In special cases, upon the proposal of the project both within the school and in the Primary and Secondary Prevention, specific plans can be activated during the year, as temporary and intensive actions undertaken for individual children who express a serious social and school discomfort.*

*The access to the initiative and the project must be part of the school POF<sup>160</sup>.*

*The interventions need to be flexible, to adapt to the specific needs arising with a constant co-ordination and monitoring.*

*The institution involved into this Protocol of agreement signed the document: the City of Turin, the Ufficio Pio of the Foundation for the School of the Compagnia di San Paolo and the Regional Piedmont School Office.*

## **FOCUS ON PRIMARY PREVENTION**

*Actions in relation to primary prevention should be aimed at achieving full inclusion of each child in the class, while providing individualized and / or small groups, comprising both school activities and those extracurricular and family involvements.*

*The integrated intervention, in this view, aims to strengthen the motivation to study and enhance the skills of the student through at specific laboratory or learning support. These activities can not be a substitute for courses required by curriculum planning, which must take into account the characteristics of the project.*

*The students in the targeted project have special educational needs temporary and reversible; in their favor school and the district, Organizations and Services collaborate to offer,*

---

<sup>160</sup> Piano Offerta Formativa (Annual Courses Plan)

*each with their own skills, opportunities and tools to overcome difficulties and achieve educational success.*

*The project is therefore intended for children with relational problems and at school which are at risk of dropping out and providing support measures to disability.*

*In each class, the educational and training activities are carried out for a number of hours weekly not less than 5, of which at least 2 in the class and for a number of pupils not less than 3 and not more than 5.*

*Now, therefore, secondary School Institutions and the comprehensive schools participating in the project are committed to:*

- Carry out interventions and the program under this Protocol of Agreement;*
- Identify the Class Councils wishing to participate in the project, pointing out the situations of the students for whom subscribe the operations covered by this Agreement, explicitly stating the reasons;*
- Identify, through negotiation of the Institute, the largest number of hours necessary to the implementation of the Project;*
- Formally identify a contact person to ensure the sharing of the lines of the Project and its implementation along these lines, giving continuity of action between the Class Council, Organizations and Educational Services and Social and participate in further meetings scheduled to run from authorities promoters and signatories;*
- Identify a faculty coordinator for each Class Council, defining and recognizing a number of hours operating properly;*
- Ensure the completed forms and grids prepared earlier this year for the implementation and monitoring of activities in collaboration with the organizations involved in the project;*
- Design, with Services and organizations in accordance with their mutual roles and responsibilities, and shared pathways, indicating the actions and resources aimed at achieving the minimum targets identified;*
- To promote, including through the involvement of volunteers and the organizations to Class Council, communication and exchange of information on the evolution of educational paths;*
- To promote a wider understanding of the project among families, involving them as much as possible in its implementation, even signing a pact with them Educational Training;*
- To foster the connections between this and other projects in the school, creating synergies between them;*
- Facilitate the participation of teachers in the training courses promoted by the Promoters;*
- Promote research and experimentation with alternative and innovative forms of teaching;*

- Provide annually to the Technical Group data and information relating to the school population (number of children enrolled, counted and final results) and the initiatives taken at national level, regarding the containment and prevention of early school leaving;

- Providing data and information for students followed in Prevention Project related to educational outcomes in three years.

*Organizations involved in the project are committed to:*

- Carry out interventions and the program under the Protocol of Agreement;

- Identify a point of contact for the coordination of the Project;

- Identify staff and volunteers for the implementation of interventions;

- Attend scheduled meetings to run by the Promoters for programming, monitoring, testing, and training;

- Collaborate with the School facilities and the preparation of project proposals for the definition of the operations covered by this Protocol of Agreement;

- Support the inclusion of children in after school clubs and extra-curricular time proposals in the area, as well as other stakeholders in sports, educational, cultural,

- Cooperate in the completion of the ballot and grills set up for the implementation and monitoring of activities;

- Liaise with the families;

- Work with the Services and foster connections with the network of the territory of Private Social.

*The Headmaster agrees to comply with the conditions contained in the Agreement, to promptly report any difficulties and to cooperate in all aspects.*

*If the authorities were to establish non-compliance with this Agreement, will work actively to collaborate with schools and other stakeholders to identify the causes and overcoming obstacles, reserving the right to terminate the Agreement if there were no conditions for successful cooperation between bodies and educational institutions.*

*Timing for the completion of the project.*

***Start of the project (September to November every year):***

*The Network:*

- *The school, which has signed a formal membership with the participation in the Project, defines the contact person and launch of the project at the beginning of the school year.*
- *The Class Council who wish to participate in identifying the common needs of the students and communicate their willingness to join the project.*

- *The working group of the area: School, Social Services territory, organizations and representatives of the technical operating, produces a first preliminary meeting to define how the observation of the first classes involved, observation activities of the organizations and initial screening of Social Services on the indicated pupil..*

*The technical operation defines the number of classes involved in the project in each educational institution and records the names of the recipients of the activities students (class 3/5).*

*The school indicates the actions and resources that believe it can be put in place in relation to the potential of each child, aimed at the achievement of the objectives defined minimum, of both a school and cognitive and behavioral relational character.*

*The working group preparing the project for students identified, taking into account the group-class and specifying a schedule of proposed activities in and outside school hours.*

*No later than the beginning of November, the activities promoted in the school and in extra-school, according to the identified needs and agreed objectives will start.*

*The Promoters promote specific stages of joint training between operators and exchange of good practice.*

#### ***Activities and Monitoring***

*The working group organize at least one meeting of the monitoring of the activities undertaken and, in November, the table indicates the possible occurrence of coordination of social significance identified for specific interventions: individual members and / or small groups, with the completion of joint and shared a grid must contain an application or that will highlight aspects of character education is both relational and cognitive - behavioral, indicating the starting levels, minimum objectives and expected results.*

*It stresses the need for interventions involve both activities to be implemented in the class, the type of work to be performed outside school hours. In these cases the group, after the project proposal is approved, evaluates how to proceed by signing a protocol of agreement of formative education with the family.*

*Specific interventions cannot be lodged on or after February, except in cases of special social significance.*

*The schools participating in the project and organizations undertake to make available to the Promoters all relevant information to the documentation of the experience, the comparison between them, and communication of good practices in order to facilitate its dissemination.*

#### ***Monitoring and evaluation of activities (May-June)***

*The working group thus promotes an integrated evaluation meeting of the intervention put in place and prepares a final report indicating the outcome of the school's educational goals and prospects of the children for the following year.*

*The coordination table collects data on children involved and the activities carried out for verification and analysis of the results of the Project.*

*Organizations also prepare a final report on economic reporting also to be submitted to the Project Promoters. Undersigned by: Director Office Manager Ufficio Pio della Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation, Area Service Manager Social Services of Città of Torino, Orientation, Adolescence and Inclusion, University of Turin and the Headmaster Office.*

## **SECONDARY PREVENTION**

### ***Tutela Integrata***

*The Integrated Plan for Tutela integrata, pupils award-repeating aged between 14 and 16 years, with basic knowledge of the Italian language and who have not yet reached middle school.*

*The operation of the Integrated Plan is accomplished through four modules of return integrated training involving the combined efforts of teachers, careers Organizations, Educational and Social Services of the City at four locations spread throughout the city, made available by organizations involved in the project.*

*The teaching of education for boys takes place from Monday to Friday, with a weekly commitment of about 18 hours in the morning and a number of afternoons evaluated according to the needs of the boys, but not less than 4 hours a week. These non-curricular educational activities and/or guidance scholastic-professional form an integral part of the school timetable.*

*The plan "Educational activity test of the Piedmont Region andUSR" provides that part of the school timetable is carried out in laboratories at the pre-vocational training agencies dedicated.*

*On the morning is always included the presence of the teacher and operators of Organizations of the territory. Organizations collaborate closely with school activities, making a contribution to support all educational initiatives, and support the inclusion in the laboratories, support guidance initiatives in close collaboration with the COSP, directing children towards educational activities, give support school attendance and integrate the relationship of the school with their families.*

*The educational and training activities are carried out with the setting up of modules for which registration is expected to be a minimum of 12 to a maximum of 15 students.*

*It is a working group, made up of teachers, representatives from the organizations, the coordinator Service and the referent of Educational Services of the City of Turin, and contact the Office of the Director of the school Turoldo, which evaluates the entries in September and,*

*according to the eligibility criteria, set up four modules, monitors activities and supplementary laboratory.*

*It also plays an individualized monitoring frequency of the laboratories (pre-professional), whose disciplinary assessments are an integral part of the overall assessment of the performance of the boys.*

*The Working Group may also consider appropriate to collaborate with outside professionals for useful activities to supplement the planned beginning of the year, therefore refer to specific documents when the agreement is made with external partners in the project.*

*Therefore, Comprehensive School "Turoldo "is committed to:*

*- Plan, with services and organizations across the country in full respect of each other's roles and responsibilities, and shared pathways;*

*- Participate in meetings, collaborating in the drafting of curricular design that will be introduced in relation to the potential of each student, indicating the actions and resources aimed at achieving the minimum targets identified;*

*- To promote a wider knowledge of the project with families in order to make them responsible and involve them as much as possible, in what working with services and organizations;*

*- Cure, according to those involved, the compilation of tabs and grids for monitoring;*

*- Cooperating with the dedicated guidance of children: COSP, Training Agencies;*

*- Promoters to provide timely data and information on the members, attending students and dropouts that occur during the year;*

*- Taking part in training courses offered by the Promoters;*

*- Work with the training agencies in the identification of shared and cross-disciplinary minimum competencies to be achieved;*

*- Ensure the secretariat taking care of organizational and administrative documents and official communications to families and agencies involved in the planning.*

*The organizations involved in the Project area are committed to:*

*- Appoint a contact teacher for the coordination of the Project;*

*- Identify staff and volunteers to ensure the permanent;*

*- Attend meetings and work with the school and the Services to the definition of steps to be taken;*

- Collaborate with the educational network, with Social Services and organizations of the District in which the enrolled pupils live, in order to integrate its operations for the extra time school with the resources and opportunities in the area of residence;

- A point of reference for vocational training agencies on the frequency of the guys in the workshop activities for pre-orientation and inclusion of young people themselves in programs designed to further education;

- Ensure the completed forms and grids for monitoring in accordance with the school;

- Ensure continuity with the relationships with their families, according to the teachers;

- Taking part in training courses offered by the promoters;

- Accompany the children at the end of the path of the Privacy Integrated in enrollment and initiation of training subsequent to achieve a license;

- Ensure the planning of targeted and specific courses to be held in the afternoon moments, placing children in activities in the area, also carried out by other entities.

The Promoters are in charge of:

- Integrating with its expertise in education and training network the Organization of the area and the school;

- Facilitating the meeting between the representatives of the training agencies and operators involved in the project;

- To promoting coordination meetings to monitor the progress of the Project and to be an active part in identifying pathways needed to achieve the objectives;

- To promoting opportunities for discussion and relevant training to the entire team.

The representative of the Service for the minors will verify the presence of children in the modules followed by social services and facilitate meetings with the representatives of the territory;

- The representative of the Educational Services Office - "Provaci ancora, Sam!" with the operators set the possibility of including boys in courses sponsored by the City of Turin;

- The referent of Educational Services - COSP - follows the guidance and coaching of children to vocational training courses;

- The representative of the Office Ufficio Pio foster possible collaborations with other organizations, to make complete the proposed route to the boys and the operators involved;

- The reference dell'U.S.R. participate in coordination meetings and monitoring will verify the effectiveness of interventions and will propose any changes and additions to the project.

Director Office Manager Ufficio Pio Fondazione per la Scuola della Compagnia di San Paolo, Area Service Manager Service, the Torino orientation service, Adolescence services, and University of Turin.



## Chapter 21 - INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

---

### **International cooperation: an effective strategy to tackling ESL**

In this section, some examples of European rather than international cooperation undertaken by European partners, have been considered. It is about projects and network, which are focused on reducing the rate of ESL.

It is true that a wider participation from non-Eu countries would be necessary, but EU Commission strategies and funding cannot of course go across the borders, even if Europe problems nowadays, such as migration from non-Eu countries, are putting under stress Europe and a more international collaboration would be needed urgently.

However the following projects could be shared and adopted across the limited borders of Europe, that requires urgent and effective answers to the citizens.

These projects , which follow, were not insert in context of their respective school system, as the actors involved where few organisations, institutions or public bodies.

However, they played a relevant role and were successful in their country, so that for the neighbour regions or transnational partnership they can be considered a model and best practice to adopt.

The aim of this research is to provide some best experiences, of those that working together in network by international cooperation have provide excellent outcomes and provided a substantial contribution to tackling the phenomenon of ESL. Their experience could be disseminated and shared among EU institutions and offer a good starting point for reducing the incidence of the phenomenon.

In some cases, the project outcome has been writing a Manual Tool useful to provide a methodology to be shared and approached in a similar way.

Sharing best practices is one of the most effective ways to provide knowledge and culture; in this sense, transnational and international cooperation is considered a milestone to reach the set targets.

While thinking about which example could better suit this objective, I have chosen the following best practices because some of the project leaders or authors, have given a practical contribution to the present research, offering their experience, their advise and expertise.

## Some best practices of cooperation

1. RESL
2. RESLEA
3. RANLHE
4. RESTART

Some more examples have been included, in the following Chapter 22, because of their innovative methodology regarding four areas of intervention carried out by some EU and other not EU membership:

- School ‘transition’ services aimed at early school leavers and their parents
- Vocational transition programmes targeted at young people
- Financial incentives aimed at increasing participation in education/training
- Strategies aimed at reducing early school leaving

### RESL

The project funded by the **EU Seventh Framework Programme (FP7)**.

**European countries participating:** Belgium, UK, Sweden, Portugal, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Hungary and Austria.

**Period:** between 1/2/ 2013 and 31/1/ 2018.

Project Leader: University of Antwerpen, Center for Migration and Intercultural Studies.

UK Team Leader: Prof Louise Ryan -Alessio D’Angelo

UK Team Members: Neil Kaye - Magdolna Lőrinc

EU Project Coordinators: Christiane Timmerman and Roos Willems, University of Antwerp, Center for Migration and Intercultural Studies, Belgium

The team uses a mixed-method design, working at local, national and international level. Fieldwork will include over 1,100 focus groups and interviews and an international survey, coordinated by Middlesex University's team, with over 28,000 participants, which will generate in-depth data and allow systematic comparisons and quantitative generalisations.

Results will be targeted at different audiences and stakeholders: EU and national policy makers, school staff, academics and civil society.

The project **Reducing Early School Leaving in Europe** (RESL.eu) aims to provide insights into the mechanisms and processes that influence young people's decision to leave school or training early, before gaining adequate qualifications for today demanding labour market. The project also focuses on the vulnerable group of young people that are not in education, employment or training (**NEET**). In addition, RESL.eu intends to identify and analyse the intervention and compensation measures that succeed in keeping pupils in education or training, in spite of their high risk of early school leaving.

### **Targets**

- To design common EU definitions and concepts on Early School Leaving and conduct comparative policy analyses
- To collect data on young people, schools and families in particular locations across nine European countries
- To identify characteristics of youth at risk of ESL as well as (such as social support mechanisms, resiliency and agency) which may encourage potential Early School Leavers to gain qualifications via alternative learning arenas
- To identify good practice in schools and alternative learning arenas to prevent and/or compensate for ESL

## ***Policies and existing evidence***

The project will investigate the development and implementation of education policies and review the existing knowledge including academic literature and official statistics on Early School Leaving and young people at risk of ESL. This will compile a body of existing data, allowing us to identify knowledge gaps.

## **ESL targets**

The project seeks to understand the causes and consequences of ESL through its focus on the attitudes, aspirations and actions of young people (ESL and non-ESL) as well as those of significant others (family, peer groups, schools, alternative learning arenas and communities).

## ***Innovative approaches to tackling ESL***

The project intends to build on the success and efficacy of specific measures to tackle ESL and develop creative and innovative approaches for knowledge and skill transfer in a school context and in alternative learning areas across partner countries.

## ***Who RESL.eu addresses***

- Local, national and EU policy makers and practitioners
- Schools and alternative learning arenas
- Civil society and NGOs in the field of Early School Leaving
- Universities and research centres throughout Europe and beyond.

## ***Beneficiaries of the project***

For policy-makers and stakeholders:

- To create a wider dialogue about this critical issue with local network

- To inform policy debates and initiatives and to share good practice across local, national and EU level
- To give access to relevant, comparative, national and international evidence on young people at risk of ESL and NEET and on effective interventions.

For schools:

- To enable students to have a listening centre, share ideas and raise concerns about education, careers and aspirations for the future
- To provide an opportunity for teachers and parents to discover strategies for increasing rates of education completion.
- To raise awareness on the interaction between individual students, staff, school environment, curriculum, family and community.

For Students:

- An opportunity for you to have your voice heard, share your ideas and raise concerns about education, careers and aspirations for the future.

For Teachers:

- To discover strategies for increasing rates of school completion by collaborating more effectively with the students
- To actively enhance understanding of the interaction between individual student, staff, school environment, curriculum, family and community.

For School Principals and Administrators:

- To create a school wide dialogue about a critical issue
- To inform policy debates and initiatives and to share good practice across local, national and EU level.

### ***How does and where the project operate?***

Nine countries across Europe are involved in the RESL.eu project: Belgium, UK, Sweden, Portugal, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Hungary and Austria.

New survey data will be collected among 2,000 young people in each country across two different research areas and four different schools (except Hungary and Austria).

Two years later, in February 2015 the same participants have been approached for a follow-up survey enquiring about their trajectory during the intervening period.

In the meantime, qualitative interviewing have taken place through contacts with selected young people consisting of both school staying (at risk of ESL) and school leaving pupils. In each country, a group of 100 school staff and school administrators are surveyed.

In addition, focus group discussions and interviews with policymakers and stakeholders are taking place in each country.

## **RESLEA**

**Partner countries:** Portugal, Hungary, Slovenia, Germany and the UK.

**Project leader:** Tavistock Institute, located in London, which has carried out the actions, on behalf of Menon in Belgium.

**Outcomes:** Model & Toolkit to reducing ESL

The European partners involved in the RESLEA project are working together to scope the situation related to early school leaving in their partner countries, identify existence evidence of good practices, and develop an intervention model and toolkits to be used to prevent early school leaving. The aim is to validate and exploit the developed toolkits in close cooperation with stakeholders by piloting in different learning settings in the four partner countries (Portugal, Hungary, Slovenia and the UK).

The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) applies social science to contemporary issues and problems. It was established as a not for profit organization with charitable purpose in 1947, and this is why its reputation and experience it's worthwhile to be mentioned.

## **What is RESLEA?**

*RESLEA* is a research project, led by the Tavistock Institute situated in London, under the European Commission's *Lifelong Learning Program*. The project aims to develop a model and toolkit for reducing early school leaving across Europe. The project runs across five countries (the UK, Slovenia, Hungary, Portugal and Germany) with partners across all countries. The implementation of the project is divided into 7 Working Packages, whose papers are now available online on the Reslea website, including the different national contributions to the Project.

**Partners:** CEPCEP (Portugal), MENON (BE), SCV (Slovenia), HCC (UK), NTL (Germany), EPIS (Portugal), CECO A (Portugal), ISOB (Germany), SZAMALK (Hungary).

The project includes:

- **research** on policies, programs and initiatives for reducing early school leaving in the five countries;
- **analysis and collection of good practices** for reducing early school leaving;
- developing a **pilot project** and model in four partner countries and outcome indicators to assess and compare results across countries;
- developing **toolkits** to identify young people at risk of dropping out and describing methods for intervening at schools, families/communities and teach/trainer level;
- **validating** and exploiting the model and toolkit in close cooperation with stakeholders and target groups;
- **dissemination** research results via a project website, seminars and international conferences;
- on-going **quality assurance** and **evaluation** of the project.

The project takes a systems and participatory approach to the work and stakeholders and target groups will be involved in all stages of the project. The Tavistock Institute is responsible for developing an exploitation strategy for the



project and is also contributing to other elements of the work. The Institute is doing this work on behalf of Menon (Institute of Research).

### ***Who will benefit from RESLEA?***

The target groups of this project include:

- **Teachers and trainers:** they will benefit from materials supporting their work with pupils at risk.
- **Policy makers and social partners:** will benefit from a tested model of intervention and a range of best practices from European Countries. This will support their policymaking.
- **Families** will benefit from the improved quality of working with youth at risk and guidelines on what they themselves can do.
- **Facilitators** also will benefit from tested guidelines for action.
- **Researchers, experts and academics** will benefit from an enhanced understanding of the issue of early school leaving from a European perspective and from a researched model of intervening in different countries and settings.
- **Local authorities** will benefit from tested interventions, which will be appropriate for including in comprehensive local policies for the prevention of underemployment, dependency and poverty.

## RANLHE

### **Partners**

Project Leader: University of Warwick, UK (England)

- Barbara Merrill University of Warwick, UK (England)
- Rennie Johnston University of Warwick, UK (England)
- Georg-August University Goettingen, Germany
- University of Stirling, UK (Scotland)
- Canterbury Christ Church University, UK (England)
- Stockholm University, Sweden
- University of Lower Silesia, Poland.
- University of Seville, Spain
- Jose Gonzales Monteagudo
- Miguel Ballesteros
- National University of Ireland Maynooth, Ireland

### **Targets**

Retention and drop – out in higher education is an under-researched area in Europe. This project will fill an important gap in the research field. In recent years, policy concern at national and European levels has focused largely on access. However, widening access policies for non-traditional groups (younger and adults) to higher education are not going to succeed unless the learning experience is a positive one.

Higher education institutions need to change to meet the needs of such groups to avoid failure and non-completion, otherwise issues of equity will not be addressed and this research will identify strategies for such changes. Access is now well established in some European countries but the accessibility of knowledge through both appropriate pedagogies and ‘adult friendly’ supports including accessibility of library and other resources is less so.

Key objectives of the *RANLHE* project are:

- to identify the factors which promote or constrain the access, retention and non-completion of non-traditional students (working class, gender and ethnicity issues) to higher education
- to increase knowledge and understanding through interdisciplinary research of what promotes or limits the construction of learner identity of non-traditional students to become effective learners and which enables or inhibits completion of higher education
- to identify the policy, cultural and institutional processes, including disciplinary sub-cultures which help or hinder completion
- to illuminate and theorise, using in-depth biographical and collaborative methods, the structural, cultural and personal dialectics of learning and agency in students' lives
- to assess the benefits for individuals and society of participating in learning in HE, whether or not study is completed, and reassess the proposition that it may be worse to withdraw than not to begin
- to consider the implications of the study for the development of policy and practice across Europe in widening participation, promoting lifelong learning and enhancing the learning experiences of students from under-represented groups
- to disseminate the findings of the research through regional workshops, national and European conferences and a range of publications aimed at practitioners, policy makers and academics.

[www.dsw.edu.pl/fileadmin/www-ranlhe/index.html](http://www.dsw.edu.pl/fileadmin/www-ranlhe/index.html)

## RESTART

The Restart project is aimed at creating a peer review exchange network made up of partners involved in services that contribute to reducing early school leaving and improving the prospects of disadvantaged young people. These case studies were prepared following the first peer review workshop held in Amsterdam in April 2006.

The selected case studies detail a range of programs that were selected in recent study by Dan Finn<sup>161</sup>, author of the report “*Restart: Tackling Early school leaving in Europe*”.

He has divided the analysed into 4 macro-areas, which are detailed in the following chapter.

The case studies have been identified in a literature search and from earlier research projects undertaken by the author. The research revealed many detailed overviews of early leaving in Europe, some of which have been published by the European Commission.

They are organised around the following themes:

- Specialist ‘transition’ services in England, France and Australia aimed at managing the transition between school and work and working with the parents of early school leavers making such transitions;
- Specialist vocational transition programmes from Hungary, Denmark, Austria, France and England, targeted at young people making the transition from school to work;
- Financial incentives in the Australia, Ireland, the UK and Denmark aimed at increasing participation in education and training;
- School based strategies aimed at reducing early school leaving, including pathways and ‘*time out*’ facilities for students at risk of leaving, and ‘*alternative schools*’ for young people who have dropped out or been excluded.

---

<sup>161</sup> Dann Finn, *Restart: Tackling Early school leaving in Europe*, 2000

## Chapter 22 - LEARNING FROM BEST PRACTICES IN EUROPE

---

The aim of this chapter is to provide further best practices in Europe to be disseminated.

While I was studying the projects I observed that there was such a wide range of different measures which EU partners had undertaken and it was hard to decide which one where to be selected or not.

The countries and education system are so different but all have in common the idea of finding better solution to reduce ESL

But since the target is common my approach was looking for some aspects in which they were different in terms of final users or methodologies and/or tools used or that provided an original approach or methodology.

All of them are different, but each of them has in common with the others their innovative and peculiar why to approach intervention on early school leaving.

In order to make this chapter less descriptive I voluntarily omitted the description of the education system in these country.

I have grouped these projects into four macro-areas following Dann Finn research.

## School 'transition' services aimed at Early school leavers and their parents in the UK

### ***Connexions Service, England***

I decided to include this service because of the commitment made by UK in terms of investments and personnel employed.

In fact **Connexions Service** consists of 47 partnerships in England with an annual budget of £450 million. The Staff consist of over 7,700 Personal Advisers and more than 2,400 other front line delivery staffs, partnerships offer a one-stop desk to all young people seeking advice and guidance. Through providing impartial advice and guidance, Connexions aims to help all young people aged between 13-19 (and 20-24 year olds with learning difficulties and disabilities who are yet to make the transition to adult services) make the right choices, giving them the opportunity to learn the skills they need to make the transition to adult life, with a particular emphasis on staying in education or training until age 19.

In Britain the early 1990s concern with youth unemployment has now been replaced by a concern with those who are *economically inactive*; in particular the group defined as the '**NEET**' population (Not in Education, Employment and Training). Following publication in 1999 of the seminal report on 'Bridging the Gap' by the Social Exclusion Unit the Government introduced what is called the Connexions service.

(<http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/downloaddoc.asp?id=31>).

In 2001 Connexions integrated previously fragmented youth services with the traditional Careers Service for young people. The primary aim of the new organization has been to provide *personalized advice and support for all young people* with the particular aim to encourage (re)connection with learning. Table 1 explains the difference in approach introduced by Connexions.

*Figure 9: How careers advice and guidance in schools has changed since the introduction of Connexions*

	Before Connexions	Now
Access to a careers adviser	Advice was supplied by careers advisers who visit the school. The careers advisers tended to hold a career interview with most pupils in the school. In 1998, policy changes focused the work of career advisers on young people deemed to be ‘most in need’.	Schools identify young people in need of support and arrange for them to see a Personal Adviser. Young people may choose to contact Personal Advisers themselves, e.g., via their school or college, by calling the Connexions Direct helpline or by visiting a Connexions one-stop-shop. There is a presumption that not all young people need to see a Personal Adviser.
Getting other types of advice	Young people needing advice on issues such as drugs, sexual health/abuse and financial matters needed to seek out specialist advice.	Personal Advisers can offer access to advice on a wide range of issues of concern to young people.
The role of schools	Schools have a duty to deliver a curriculum-based program of careers education. They also had a duty to provide the careers service with access to young people in order to provide careers advice and guidance.	Schools still have a duty to deliver a curriculum-based program of careers education. They also have a duty to provide the Connexions service with access to young people in order to provide careers advice and guidance.

*Connexions* is at the heart of government policy to reach those young people who are in the NEET group. Before introduction of the service the proportion of the 16-18 group who were not in education, employment or training had remained fairly constant for some years at about 10%, or approximately 181,000 people.

Connexions has introduced major improvements in previously fragmented information collection systems and in identifying and tracking the young people involved and is on target to reduce the identified NEET group by 10%.

The Connexions Service has introduced a number of innovations in its approach to young people including extensive use of the internet. A wide range of information about the work of Connexions can be found on their web site, including detailed inspection reports on the work and impacts of individual partnerships (see: <http://www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships/index.cfm?CategoryID=3>).

## **Vocational transition programs for young people**

I have selected this project because the target are Roma students, an ethnic minority which is sometimes forgotten because of the difficulty to integrate them into society. But since in Hungary the numbers of Roma are definitely higher than in Northern Europe countries, it comes evident that educational policies have to be focused on them.

Crime rates and social exclusion is frequent among them, and the secluded community life they run, is cause of difficult social integration and political concern.

### ***FAK project (training integrated into employment), Hungary***

This is an initiative of OKI (National Institute of Public Education) with the support of the National Employment Fund and Ministry of Education. The FAK project is targeted at **Roma students** who have not achieved secondary school certification. It provides them with an opportunity to achieve secondary school certification, along with a vocational qualification, whilst employing them in primary schools.



The expectation is that students complete their secondary education and they in turn are employed as educational assistants. Primary schools have a free teaching assistant and in return they provide learning mentors and other resources to help the students with their studying, preparation of learning plans, etc. OKI provides training and support materials for all the participants involved. The project began in January 2004 with 50 Roma students and now has 150.

Participants applied to participate in the program and schools submitted proposals jointly with the Roma students (aged 18–35). Students have to take an examination at the end of each year.

An evaluation reported that the program has provided the students with long-term employment and also helped develop communication and relationships between the Roma and non-Roma population, e.g. addressing issues of non-attendance and other preventative measures. It is particularly important that the Roma students are working with teachers as colleagues and vice versa, which has led to a reduction in prejudice and discrimination. The intervention has also helped make mainstream institutions more flexible in meeting the needs of these young people, e.g. by providing flexible examination opportunities, and has given school staff opportunities to develop their own mentoring skills and put personalized learning into practice. Currently there are very few Roma teachers in education in Hungary. It is anticipated that this intervention will help increase those numbers and that inter-generational benefits of this project will be seen.<sup>162</sup>

### ***Production Schools, Denmark***

When I first visited Denmark at the beginning of year 2000, I was impressed by the amazing organization of Vocational Schools. I remember visiting many schools involved in the *Eurocities Network*.

I realized that the quality of education offered by the schools, teachers and laboratories could really offer a strong motivation in students. They were really

---

<sup>162</sup> Source: NFER (2005) points also to an OKI English language publication from 2003, *Integration vs. Segregation: Hungarian Roma Education Policy Note*, available at: <http://www.oki.hu/publication.php?kod=integration>

able to build up motivation and skills in the students attending the professional schools.

There are about 110 production schools in Denmark with about 1,800 pupils.

*Production schools* were developed in the 1980s to combat youth unemployment by offering young people who do not complete regular education alternative education to improve labor market integration. ***The main goal is young people's personal development through education.*** The focus is not only on academic skills but a life skills approach building social, personal and physical skills, which are complemented by more formal knowledge, and skills.

Learning processes are organized through workshops and ordinary teaching but every young person is free to organize an individual course in which challenge and confidence building are balanced. The production schools are built upon learning by doing in a range of different production workshops depending on the specific school: e.g. catering, construction, health, etc. Everything that is produced whether it is a material good, a service or performance is sold so that the young people get recognition for their work.

The workshops co-operate both with each other but also with other production schools and the local community. In addition, pupils are taught math, languages and computer skills. All classes are voluntary without any exams and pupils can be accepted at any time over the whole year. Parallel with their stay at the school students may also attend other certified courses for up to 12 hours per week, an opportunity that is widely used. Participants receive a weekly allowance: ca. 70 € under 18 years, 140 € over 18 years.

Since 2005 eligibility for participation has been restricted to those under 25 years who have difficulties in acquiring academic qualifications, those who have dropped out of secondary education; and those with social or behavioral problems.

Evaluations report that the production schools succeed in motivating and challenging young people in ways the formal education system cannot. Production schools are administrated according to specific legislation and supervised by the national Ministry. Each school has flexibility to interpret, construct and develop their aims and activities in accordance with regional demands. Funding consists of

basic grants from local or county authorities and state funds related to running costs.

Source: IRIS, 2005. The results of a detailed evaluation undertaken by the Danish Ministry in 1999 can be found in English at: <http://pub.uvm.dk/2000/prod/16.htm>

### ***Vocational Preparation Courses, Austria***

Vocational preparation courses offer *additional apprenticeship* training places in special institutions for young people who have not found a suitable apprenticeship after compulsory education, including the young unemployed, young people with learning difficulties and school drop-outs. The general prerequisite for participation is registration with the Public Employment Service as seeking an apprenticeship and the evidence that at least five applications for apprenticeship have failed. The measure is a temporary bridging solution until a regular apprenticeship place can be found while attention is given to improving skills and personal capacities.

The courses include vocational guidance and/or vocational preparation with specific support for young women to expand their range of occupational choices. Young people participate on 10-12 month courses in training institutions, where they are taught first-year apprenticeship skills and knowledge in occupations in demand in the regional labor market.

At least 60% of the program is practical including search and applying for apprenticeship posts. If the young person does not get an apprenticeship place their participation can be extended, sometimes to completion of the apprenticeship.

In 2004, 67% of participants obtained an apprenticeship 12 months after ending the program and 21% were unemployed. Other impacts identified were personal 'stabilization' and the acquisition of soft skills. The experience of employers is positive reflected in the additional apprenticeship places created. The provision is part of the Youth Training Consolidation Act (JASG) and the main agency is the Public Employment Service. In 2003/04 the programme had 5,500 participants with a budget of 57 Million €, and in 2004/2005 6,800 participants

with a budget of 71 Million €. Because of a continuing decline in apprenticeship places it was anticipated that provision would expand further to cover 8,000 training places in 2005/06.

Source: IRIS, 2005.

### ***Trace: 'Roads to employment', France***

This scheme is interesting because it provides not only individualized programs to help them find a job but it covers also social benefits (like housing, health and economic support).

The innovative feature of the program is the individual *contractual commitment* between the young jobseeker and a *case manager or mentor* responsible for following up the young person's progress.

The 'road to employment' (Trajectoire d'Acces à l'Emploi, TRACE) program was introduced in 1998. It is designed to assist those young people under 26 years of age seen as the most marginalized in terms of employment (those with no diplomas or vocational qualification, or suffering social, personal or family-related disadvantages) to find jobs.

The program is managed by a complex partnership structure involving the state, regional and local government, public services and social partners. It is delivered by 'case managers' through the network of Missions Locales that were set up in 1982 as information and resource centers for young people.

The TRACE program offers participants an individualized program to help them make the transition to employment over a maximum 18-month period. The scheme focuses on training (acquisition of basic skills or a vocational qualification), employment measures (mainly in the non-market sector) and social benefits (housing, health and financial support). It is designed to enable 50% of participants to find long-term employment (permanent positions or jobs on a fixed-term contract of over six months).

The mentor makes a commitment to follow the young jobseeker in his or her transition to actual employment and to assist him or her in applying for social benefits. Each mentor tracks an average of approximately 30 young people. An

initial so-called 'diagnostic phase' is undertaken to identify the difficulties facing the young person. This is geared to developing a personal plan and to identifying the various steps required in implementing it, as well as the various services to be involved.

Another important feature of the program is that it provides access to financial support. In France young people under the age of 26 have only limited access to financial support and are largely excluded from unemployment benefits and RMI (Occupational integration minimum income). Until 2001 most young people who were not actively participating in a program would not receive any benefit (in 2000 only 7.5% of TRACE participants were in receipt of family support or RMI payments). There was, however, a system of selective assistance for emergency payments and transport and in 2001 a new employment access grant of about 300 Euros a month was introduced for those who were not yet placed or ready for placement.

About 60% of the 100,200 young people who went through the program between 1998 and 2001 had no formal qualifications. Their average age was 21 and there slightly more women than men and the women had better qualifications. Most program participants had been out of the school system for several years. Of the young people who began the TRACE program in 1999 and completed it in February 2001, more than half found jobs either in the form of assisted (10.4%) or non-assisted (31.7%) employment, or on combined work/training contracts (8.3%). This performance does not, however, guarantee stable career paths for these young people. More than a third (35.2%) of participants was unemployed, with 30.4% receiving no benefits and 4.9% eligible for benefits.

Source: Peer Review EES (2001) *Access routes to employment for young people in danger of exclusion*, Peer Review Program of the European Employment Strategy, DGV, European Commission, accessed on 5 May 2004 at <http://www.almp.org/en/FRANCEoct01.htm>

## ***Entry to Employment (E2E), England***

This program was introduced in England in 2002/03 to provide work-based provision for unemployed young people aged 16-18 who are not ready or able to start an apprenticeship, a job or further education.

Personal advisers are largely responsible for referring young people to the program and it is delivered in partnerships that can involve colleges, training providers and other statutory organizations.

Unlike the earlier program it replaced E2E is not dominated by rules about length of participation or qualification outcomes. It should be clearly structured but is intended to be flexible with the aim of motivating and equipping young people for employment and/or further training. The program caters for about 50,000 young people, who until 2006 were paid £40 a week whilst participating and the annual budget was set at £238 million. About 25,000 young people are on the program at any point in time.

An independent assessment of the first year of the program reported that the delivery of the vocational element of the program was haphazard although performance in other core strands – basic and key skills, and personal development - was better.

The report found out, however, that few providers had successfully drawn the three together. In the first year about 6% of participants went on to start a formal apprenticeship. Overall a third of the leavers went on to jobs, college or work-based learning. The review expressed disappointment with the results but emphasized that they should be seen in the context of the employment and other barriers faced by the young people involved.

The Government has announced that it will introduce E2E into school provision and from 2007 there will be places for up to 10,000 14-16 year olds. The program, which will be tailored to each young person with intensive personal support, is likely to include 2 days of work-based learning per week, leading to a diploma and further options.

[http://www.ali.gov.uk/Publications/Publications/FEB2006/e2e\\_newHorizons.htm](http://www.ali.gov.uk/Publications/Publications/FEB2006/e2e_newHorizons.htm)

More detailed program and policy information is available on the website of the Learning and Skills Council at:

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/PolicyandDevelopment/EntrytoEmployment/default.htm>

## **Financial incentives aimed at increasing participation in education and training**

This project is aimed at providing financial support to support education and prevents students from leaving school before completing their school qualification. They normally get a sort of grant or income support if they *keep on going*.

### ***Back to Education Allowance, Ireland***

The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is an educational opportunities scheme for unemployed people, lonely parents and people with disabilities in receipt of particular social assistance payments. It enables participants to return to full time second or third level education, while continuing to receive income support. The objective of the scheme is to enhance the employability skills of vulnerable groups who are distant from the labour market.

The programme is part of a range of what are called 'second chance' education programmes, administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Participation and take up has grown significantly, from less than 100 people participating in 1990/1991, when the original scheme commenced, to 7,648 by 2003/2004. Over fifteen years BTEA has helped over 10,000 people attain qualifications in a range of skills thereby enhancing their employment prospects.

A survey of participants in the BTEA scheme showed that there was a high take up of the Third level option from the top socio-economic groups while there was a higher take up of Leaving Certificate courses from the lower socio-economic groups.

The scheme is accessed principally by persons in receipt of unemployment assistance (75%), who are under 35 years and on the social welfare payment for less than 12 months (63%). In relation to employment, status following completion of the BTEA the survey showed that 63% were in full-time or part-time employment while a further 9% were pursuing further education. Factors determining employment were age and socio-economic group.

Source: Review of Expenditure Program: Back to Education Allowance Scheme (2005), at [http://www.welfare.ie/publications/exp\\_rev/btea.pdf](http://www.welfare.ie/publications/exp_rev/btea.pdf).

### ***Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), UK:***

The British Government is using financial incentives, by giving an allowance based on the family income, as one of its key tools for increasing participation, retention and achievement for those who otherwise leave full time education and training. The principal instrument is the EMA that was first introduced as a pilot programme in 1999. It was extended nationally in 2004 and is a ‘something for something’ financial support scheme helping young people to fulfill their potential.

Students must sign a learning agreement that sets out the terms of the allowance, and what is expected of them by way of attendance, completion of course work and behavior. If a student breaks the conditions of this agreement, the weekly payment can be withheld.

The EMA is paid to young people between 16 and 19 who are in full-time education or training on a means-tested basis (with three levels according to three household income thresholds). Where household income is £13,000 or below, young people receive the full £30 per week. Young people are eligible for two or three bonus payments per year depending on their attendance and performance.

The national EMA can amount to £1,500 per year in weekly allowances and bonuses for eligible young people, as long as they adhere to the terms of their EMA contract.

Rigorous and detailed evaluations of the pilot phases of EMA found that the allowance had increased participation among eligible young people by nearly 6%. The national extension of EMAs is expected to increase participation rates by 3 %, and in April 2006 EMA rules were extended to unwaged trainees aged 16 to 19.

The Government has decided to further extend the use of financial incentives to improve participation rates amongst two additional groups – 16 to 18 year



old young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), or who are in Jobs Without Training (*JWT*).

The Government has committed £140 million over 2 years to pilot Activity and Learning Agreements for the NEET and JWT groups in 12 areas in England. The pilots offer financial incentives to young people in both groups to reintegrate and encourage them back into learning. The payments will be conditional on the young people fulfilling obligations in individual agreements negotiated with Connexions Personal Advisers.

The Learning Agreement pilot, for example, has two aims. First, it will test the effectiveness of mediation and learning agreements, with 16 and 17 year olds in JWT, as a tool for re-engaging them in accredited learning. Second, it will test the effectiveness of financial incentives (through bonus payments to young people and employers and employer wage compensation) as a means of encouraging the JWT group and their employers to take up this offer.

Connexions personal advisers will negotiate learning agreements after undertaking a learning needs assessment with the young person. The personal advisers will also monitor progress in relation to the learning agreement. It appears likely that where necessary the employer may be legally required to provide paid time off for the young person to complete the course<sup>163</sup>.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR678.pdf>

### ***The Youth Guarantee and Financial Incentives, Denmark***

This Danish Youth Programme was introduced in April 1996. It combined compulsory training and education program for young unemployed people with financial incentives for those with low qualifications to return to education. The aim of the program is to motivate young unemployed people to undertake education or find a job on their own initiative. If young people fail to do so, within six

---

<sup>163</sup> Source: *Evaluation of Education Maintenance Allowance Pilots: Young People Aged 16 to 19 Years, Final Report of the Quantitative Evaluation*, Centre for Research in Social Policy and Institute for Fiscal Studies, at:

months of unemployment, they have '*the right and duty*' to participate in full-time vocational education or training for at least 18 months.

After three months unemployment a young person has to agree to an individual action or education plan. This indicates the education services the Public Employment Service will offer the young person if they enter the activation period. The objective is to incentivize the young person to enter education where they would be paid standard education allowances. Most of those who not choose education will be offered places on 18-month training program delivered by vocational schools.

To create an incentive for youngsters to accept a job or take part in regular education before they have been unemployed for six months, unemployment benefits are cut during participation in the 18-month course. Young people without any formal education have their payments reduced by half. This reduced benefit is more or less equal to the support allowance paid to those in ordinary education program. Refusal to participate in the special education courses is followed by a loss of entitlement to the unemployment benefit and the youngster then has to claim social assistance. Young people with formal education receive 82% of their unemployment benefit once they participate in additional education or training.

Evaluations have shown that the program me has a strong motivation effect. Two thirds of the young unemployed had left unemployment by the time they would have become eligible for the mandatory 18-month educational courses. Of those young unemployed who participated in the special 18-month vocational courses only 10 to 15% are still unemployed after participation. Others are either in paid employment or in ordinary education. The completion rate for the courses is 65%. In addition, the program has succeeded in stimulating many young unemployed to reenter the education system<sup>164</sup>.

---

<sup>164</sup> IRIS, 2005

## Strategies aimed at reducing early school leaving

### ***PRIDE: Pathway for students at risk of leaving, Wales***

Pembrokeshire is an area with high rates of early leaving and significant social problems associated with high levels of unemployment. The PRIDE project provides an alternative and vocational curriculum for 14–16 year olds offering a range of learning and training opportunities. It is an individually tailored program with a flexible timetable based both in and outside of school.

The program runs for two years starting in year 10 when students are 14 years old. Training organizations, providers and an FE college provide a range of vocational activities. Students are released from school for one to two days a week. Five schools are involved, along with the behavior support service that provides education for students out of school (these students will attend five days a week). The program runs for 40 weeks.

The provision consists of:

- personal development program, e.g. personal and social skills development, outdoor activities and sport;
- basic and key skills development;
- vocational work-related training; and
- Vocational skills development (organized by the local college and training providers).

In the first year students experience a range of taster courses and in the second year they specialize in one area.

Schools have reported an improvement in attendance and behavior amongst students on the project and it has contributed to a reduction in the number of young people leaving school with no qualifications: 90% of students achieved a minimum of 1 GCSE.

The project has highlighted the importance of tailoring program to suit local contexts and needs and the support of an active, involved coordinator to determine success. It is also important that students achieve some form of accreditation as this is seen as important as a motivating factor. Close monitoring of attendance and support for students is required while they are out of school. The

project provides ‘learning support assistants’ who support students whilst they are out of school<sup>165</sup>.

## ***TIME OUT: Flanders, Switzerland***

### ***Flanders***

Projects were set up in four cities in 2001. They are supported by the Ministries of Education and Welfare<sup>166</sup>. The projects aim to prevent students dropping out of school and permanent exclusion. They focus on giving students who are experiencing difficulties in school ‘time out’ (a maximum of eight weeks) to receive intensive individualized support and guidance, with the aim of reintegrating them back into school. Schools also receive support on how to manage students’ behavior. In the first 21 months, 173 people aged between 12 and 18 had been involved, with the majority being 15 years old. In total, 67% had repeated their school year and 85% had changed schools, with 33% attending five or six different schools.

The main reason for attending the project was because of behavioral difficulties (56%). Other reasons given included truancy (48%), disengagement and psychological problems (31%), crimes (17%) and physical violence (6%). The students attended the projects for between 24 and 56 days. The projects provide individualized program with individual and group activities in the following phases:

- ‘Getting acquainted’ building confidence and self-esteem, working with peers etc.
- Individualized training with a focus on the specific needs of each youngster, including the ‘deconstruction’ of negative patterns of behavior and building

---

<sup>165</sup> Source: NFER, 2005

<sup>166</sup> Source: NFER, 2005: [www.kbs-frb.be](http://www.kbs-frb.be).

positive patterns of behavior, taking responsibility for their own actions, dealing with peer group pressure etc.

- Re-orientation to mainstream education.

### **Switzerland**

*Time out projects*<sup>167</sup> have been set up in nine Swiss cantons. The first were introduced in 2001 and last a maximum of 12 weeks. The students attend projects that provide educational and pastoral support from craftsmen, social workers and/or special educators. The aim of the projects is to reintegrate young people back into school, either their existing school, or a new school. In practice, however, it was used as the last of a series of curative treatments and usually imposed in the last year of compulsory school.

A retrospective evaluation of 16 cases (two girls and 14 boys) found an unexpected effect: ‘time-out’ improved the situation far more for the other students and the teachers rather than helping the disengaged student.

### **ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION, Great Britain**

In the UK arrangements for alternative educational provision for pupils out of school varies between local areas. Only about a third of excluded pupils return to mainstream education, the rest receive ‘education otherwise’. This can take a number of different forms, including receiving education in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), home tuition, or they may attend alternative educational initiatives (AEIs).

AEIs<sup>168</sup> tend to work with young people permanently excluded from school or who are out of school for other reasons. An evaluation of best practice by the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) reported that the best

---

<sup>167</sup> Source: NFER, 2005 [http://www.kl.unibe.ch/kl/sla/fsf/retrospektive\\_evaluation.html](http://www.kl.unibe.ch/kl/sla/fsf/retrospektive_evaluation.html).

<sup>168</sup> Source: Kendall S., Kinder, K., Halsey, K., Fletcher-Morgan, C., White, R., Brown, C. (2003). *An Evaluation of Alternative Education Initiatives*. (DfES Research Report 403), London: DfES.

AEIs offered educational programs which allowed young people to experience success and focused on establishing relationships which were adult-like and based on respect, features which were often said to be lacking in mainstream educational environments. Examples of AEIs included:

➤ **AEI 1:** Young people participated in a full-time program of activities. For Year 10s (14-15 year olds) the majority of activities were offered on site. There was an emphasis on improving basic skills, alongside personal and social education. Although young people followed a generic timetable the curriculum was differentiated to cater for a range of abilities. An extensive tutorial support and enrichment activity program underpinned the provision. By Year 11 (15-16 years) young people accessed external provision through college and work experience placements. Each young person had an individual education plan, with personal goals and targets. Weekly personal tutorials provided opportunities to discuss and review these targets.

➤ **AEI 2:** Individual programs were devised for young people dependent on their age and areas of interest. A member of staff mentored every young person individually. Educational activities included math, English, ICT, cookery and electronics/science sessions. Pupils, who attended regularly and demonstrated their commitment to learning, could benefit from a program, which allocated more time for IT, arts and craft, leisure and outdoor activities. During year 10 pupils were encouraged to consider full-time courses at the local community college. The AEI program tapped into external providers including, college, specialist music provision, work experience, training providers and leisure activities with a personal and social educational focus. Staff and young people reviewed individual program together and evidence of pupils work was kept in a portfolio.

➤ **AEI 3:** The project offered each young person up to 25 hours a week full-time provision. This was gradually built up from eight to 10 hours, depending on each young person's needs. Staff came from a youth work background, so offered a holistic education package, formulating a programme based on young people's individual needs. Staff delivered many parts of the programme

and also offered support to the young people through a key worker system. The activities provided included a substantial amount of personal and social education covering drugs, budgeting, team building, sex education, health, hygiene and safety and a first aid course. Young people reviewed their progress every four weeks with their key workers and staff recorded progress daily in case records.

The NfER evaluation of 6 AEIs reported that where data was available, it showed that nearly three-quarters of the students had previous attendance problems, with nearly a quarter described as long-term persistent non-attendees, and just under half were believed to have been bullies. The majority (two-thirds) of young people in the study were male and a third were female. A tenth of young people were classified as 'looked after' and a large number (69%) were classified as having some kind of special educational need.

The evaluation reported that approximately half of all the young people registered at the AEIs during the evaluation were awarded some form of accreditation. Young people themselves highlighted a change in their attitude as a result of attending the AEI: they were more willing to learn, they were enjoying learning and furthermore, they were considering the inclusion of education in their future progression.

Overall 71% of the young people surveyed went on to 'desirable' destinations, primarily further education and training. The average cost per young person enrolled at the AEIs was £3,800 (equivalent to 165% of the average cost for full time pupils).

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR403.doc>





## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EU COMMISSION

### **The four targets<sup>169</sup>**

This chapter is dedicated to the 4 Strategic Objectives defined by the EU Commission aimed at providing higher Quality in education. It gives priority to Lifelong learning to quality and efficiency of education and training, to promoting equity, social cohesion, to enhancing creativity and innovation at all levels of education and training.

#### ***Strategic objective 1: Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality***

The challenges posed by demographic change and the regular need to update and develop skills in line with changing economic and social circumstances call for a lifelong approach to learning and for education and training systems which are more responsive to change and more open to the wider world. While new initiatives in the field of lifelong learning may be developed to reflect future challenges, further progress with ongoing initiatives is still required, especially in implementing coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies.

In particular, work is needed to ensure the development of national qualifications frameworks based on relevant learning outcomes and their link to the European Qualifications Framework, the establishment of more flexible learning pathways — including better transitions between the various education and train-

---

<sup>169</sup> Official Journal of the European Union C 70/17-19 / 8.3.2013

ing sectors, greater openness towards non-formal and informal learning, and increased transparency and recognition of learning outcomes. Further efforts are also required to promote adult learning, to increase the quality of guidance systems, and to make learning more attractive in general — including through the development of new forms of learning and the use of new teaching and learning technologies.

As an essential element of lifelong learning and an important means of enhancing people's employability and adaptability, mobility for learners, teachers and teacher trainers should be gradually expanded with a view to making periods of learning abroad — both within Europe and the wider world — the rule rather than the exception. In so doing, the principles laid down in the European Quality Charter for Mobility should be applied. To achieve this will require renewed efforts on the part of all concerned, for instance with regard to securing adequate funding.

### ***Strategic objective 2: Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training***

High quality education and training systems, which are both efficient and equitable, are crucial for Europe's success and for enhancing employability. The major challenge is to ensure the acquisition of key competences by everyone, while developing the excellence and attractiveness at all levels of education and training that will allow Europe to retain a strong global role.

To achieve this on a sustainable basis, greater attention needs to be paid to raising the level of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, making mathematics, science and technology more attractive and to strengthening linguistic competences. At the same time, there is a need to:

- to ensure high quality teaching,
- to provide adequate initial teacher education,
- to provide continuous professional development for teachers and trainers,
- to make teaching an attractive career-choice.

- to improve the governance
- to improve leadership of education and training institutions
- to develop effective quality assurance systems.

High quality will only be achieved through the efficient and sustainable use of resources — both public and private, as appropriate — and through the promotion of evidence-based policy and practice in education and training.

### ***Strategic objective 3: Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship***

Education and training policy should enable all citizens, irrespective of their personal, social or economic circumstances, to acquire, update and develop over a lifetime both job-specific skills and the key competences needed for their employability and to foster further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue. Educational disadvantage should be addressed by providing high quality early childhood education and targeted support, and by promoting inclusive education. Education and training systems should aim to ensure that all learners — including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with special needs and migrants — complete their education, including, where appropriate, through second-chance education and the provision of more personalised learning.

Education should promote intercultural competences, democratic values and respect for fundamental rights and the environment, as well as combat all forms of discrimination, equipping all young people to interact positively with their peers from diverse backgrounds.

### ***Strategic objective 4: Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship***

As well as engendering personal fulfilment, creativity constitutes a prime source of innovation, which in turn is acknowledged as one of the key drivers of sustainable economic development. Creativity and innovation are crucial to enterprise development and to Europe's ability to compete internationally.

A first challenge is to promote the acquisition by all citizens of transversal key competences such as digital competence, learning to learn, a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness.

A second challenge is to ensure a fully functioning knowledge triangle of education-research-innovation. Partnership between the world of enterprise and different levels and sectors of education, training and research can help to ensure a better focus on the skills and competences required in the labour market and on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in all forms of learning. Broader learning communities, involving representatives of civil society and other stakeholders, should be promoted with a view to creating a climate conducive to creativity and better reconciling professional and social needs, as well as individual well-being,

### **European benchmarks (2010-2020)<sup>170</sup>**

At the end of the present research, the Europe 2020 benchmarks are reported close to the section where the strategic objectives are indicated since they are strongly linked together. As a means of monitoring progress and identifying challenges, as well as contributing to evidence-based policy making, the following European average performance "*European benchmarks*" should support the strategic objectives outlined in the above conclusions for the period 2010-2020.

- Adult participation in lifelong learning.

By 2020, an average of at least 15 % of adults should participate in lifelong learning.

- Low achievers in basic skills.

By 2020, the share of low-achieving 15-years olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15 %.

- Tertiary level attainment Tertiary level attainment

---

<sup>170</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/edu/imhe/OT%20policies%20and%20practices.pdf>

By 2020, the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40 %.

➤ Early leavers from education and training.

By 2020, the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10 %.

➤ Early childhood education

By 2020, at least 95 % of children between 4 years old and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education.<sup>171</sup>

---

<sup>171</sup> Fabrice Hénard and Deborah Roseveare *Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education:*



## Chapter 24 - EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

---

Successful policies against ESL were included in the Report issued in November 2013 by the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, following the recommendations of the EU Commission for the EU 2020 strategy. This contains the following key policy messages, which have to be considered when planning the EU educational policies.

It is important that EU member countries will focus on policies that cover the whole education cycle removing the causes that trigger ESL, while giving a second chance at the same time to young people who did not choose the right school career.

The actions to be undertaken are:

- ❖ Prevention
- ❖ Intervention
- ❖ Compensation

### **The challenges**

Tackling early school leaving is primarily an investment in the future. Young people face an increased risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. They are often in more precarious and less well-paid jobs than those with training.

Completion of the school curriculum is beneficial from both an economic and a social point of view.

It produces qualified workers who drive growth and innovation.

Through its positive effect on employability and the fight against social exclusion, a reduction in early school leaving will contribute to meeting other Europe 2020 strategy targets: attaining a 75% employment rate for those aged 20-64 and lifting 20 million people out of poverty.

## Key Policy Messages

*Early school leaving (ESL) is a multi-faceted and complex problem caused by a cumulative process of disengagement. It is a result of personal, social, economic, education or family-related reasons. Schools play an important role in addressing ESL but they cannot and should not work in isolation. Comprehensive approaches that focus on the root causes of ESL are required to reduce ESL<sup>172</sup>.*

Reducing ESL can help towards the integration of young people into the labour market, and contribute to breaking the cycle of deprivation that leads to the social exclusion of too many young people.

## Integrated approach

- Ensure long-term political and financial commitment to reducing ESL and keep it high on the political agenda.
- Ensure children and young people are at the centre of all policies aimed at reducing ESL. Ensure their voices are taken into account when developing and implementing such policies.
- Develop and implement a sustainable national strategy to reduce ESL. This strategy should address all levels of education and training and encompass the right mixture of preventative, intervention and compensation measures.
- Invest in the knowledge base of ESL, through regular and timely collection of accurate data and information.
- Ensure that data and information on ESL is accessible and used effectively in policy development.

---

<sup>172</sup> Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, November 2013



- Ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of ESL measures steers policy development.
- Ensure policy development and implementation is based on strong, long-term Co-operation between national, regional/ local authorities and stakeholders, as well as between different policies, through for example establishing a coordinating body.
- Remove obstacles within the school education system that may hinder young people in completing upper secondary education.
- Ensure smooth transition between different levels of education.
- Ensure access to high quality education throughout life (including early childhood education and care), and the provision of high quality Vocational Education and Training (VET).
- Support schools to develop conducive and supportive learning environments that focus on the needs of individual pupils.
- Promote a curriculum that is relevant and engaging.
- Promote and support multi-professional teams in schools to address ESL.
- Support cooperation between schools, local communities, parents and pupils in school development and in initiatives to reduce ESL.
- Promote strong commitment from all stakeholders in efforts to reduce ESL at local levels, including local businesses.
- Promote a better understanding of ESL in initial education and continuous professional development for all school staff, especially teachers. Enable staff to provide differentiated learning support for pupils in an inclusive and individualised way.
- Strengthen guidance to ensure young people are aware of the different study options and employment prospects available to them.
- Ensure counselling systems provide young people with both emotional and practical support.
- Reinforce accessibility to second chance schemes for all young people. Make second chance schemes distinctive and ensure they provide a positive learning experience.
- Support teachers who work in second chance schemes in their specific role.

## A holistic approach

Approaching ESL in a comprehensive way requires a critical revision of the entire education and training system. Too often is the case that policies against ESL address only those at risk of dropping out or those who have already left education and training without qualifications.

The TWG on ESL, whose final report issued in November 2013 has been already analysed takes the view that effective policies need to take a holistic view and to look at all aspects within the education system that may trigger ESL even before the problem start. In particular it emphasis the need of:

- Reducing ESL as an important European goal and of benefit to all pupils, teachers, parents and communities.

This means that the beneficiaries, if the rate of ESL is lower, will be the whole community not only the individuals.

- Reducing ESL requires a collective sense of responsibility and action for the benefit of the individual, of Member States, for Europe and for financial and social reasons.<sup>173</sup>

In this case, the all system and society has to be involved in the action plan.

The work of the ***TWG on Early School Leaving*** has confirmed that, good results in reducing ESL can only be obtained if a comprehensive strategy is in place, based on strong and continuous political commitment of all stakeholders in its implementation, at all levels.

The TWG has highlighted the importance of striking the right balance *between central and local measures, and between preventative, intervention and compensation measures.*

It has confirmed that the strong involvement and commitment of parents, students, local communities, youth, social and employment services and business

---

<sup>173</sup> Final Report of the *Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving*. November 2013

is essential in developing and implementing policies against ESL. The key policy messages presented in this dissertation reinforce the need for a comprehensive approach to ESL.

Schools should work together in an integrated and comprehensive way by networking with all the actors involved into the educational process.

- Reducing ESL in a comprehensive way requires a critical revision of the entire education and training system. Too often is the case that policies against ESL only address those at risk of dropping out or those who have who already left education and training without qualifications.

The TWG on ESL takes the view that effective policies need to take a *holistic view* and to look at all aspects within the education system that may trigger ESL.

- Reducing ESL is an important European goal and benefit to all pupils, teachers, parents and communities.
- Reducing ESL requires a *collective sense of responsibility* and action for the benefit of the individual, of Member States, for Europe and for financial and social reasons.

During this time, the group has focused on certain aspects of ESL and there is clearly more work to be done in the future.

Cooperation at EU level on ESL will continue in the framework of the *Open Method of Cooperation on Education and Training*; issues such as the role teachers in addressing ESL, parental involvement and a whole school approach to ESL will be developed further in this context.

## Early school leaving: a priority issue

The mandate reported in each point the EC commitment to help EU Members to proceed in the direction of the *EU 2020 Strategy*.

### ***Mandate Thematic Working group on ESL***

As stipulated in its mandate, the primary purpose of the Working Group on Schools Policy is to benefit the Member States in their joint work to fostering policy development on schools policy through mutual learning and the identification of good practice.

The WG will focus on the two most pressing challenges of schools policy, which will be dealt with in parallel by different constellations of the Group, cooperating and interacting continuously:

- Reducing early school leaving
- Improving **the quality of teaching** by supporting teachers

The WG will look at approaches to better support schools in their ambitions to prevent and reduce ESL, based on the conclusions of the previous Thematic Working Group on ESL, which between 2011 and 2013 worked on the concept of comprehensive policies at system level and produced policy recommendations.

In order to both improve pupil attainment and reduce early school leaving, it is necessary for Member States to review the effectiveness - and academic and pedagogical quality - of both initial Teacher Education and continuing professional development.

The WG will build on extensive work by the Thematic Working Group on Teacher Professional Development (2010-2013), which primarily covered continued professional development. As stipulated in the mandate, through its work the WG will have the possibility to arrange for advice or peer counseling to support Member States.

### ***Policy challenge 1: EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING***

A range of EU policy developments have contributed to the creation of the Working Group (WG), including: ▪

- Setting the 10% headline target on the level of early school leaving (ESL) as one of the five EU targets for 2020, as part of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. ▪
- The June 2011 Council Recommendations on policies to reduce early school leaving, which called on Member States to ensure that comprehensive strategies on ESL are in place by the end of 2012 and asked the European Commission to support Member States' strategies through the exchange of experience and good practice, and to facilitate effective peer learning, networking and experimentation.
- The Thematic Working Group on early school leaving and its Final report of November 2013, including key messages for policy makers, a checklist on comprehensive policies and an annex with practice examples from several EU countries.

### ***Policy challenge 2: TEACHERS' EDUCATION***

Teachers are the most important in-school factor affecting student outcomes. This is why national policy reforms to support teachers and make their own education more effective are likely to bring the greatest returns in terms of efficiency of education systems.

The Commission's policy work in support of the teaching professions has been based on a range of Council conclusions on teachers (2007, 2008, and 2009) and on leadership in education (2013). Council Conclusions on Effective Teacher Education are currently under negotiation.

Previous generations of Working Groups have dealt with policies in support of the teaching professions and focused, in particular, on policy guidance on the development of teachers' competences, teacher's education and early career support (induction).

In November 2012 the Commission summarized the outcome of its work with Member States, and additional research, in "Supporting the teaching professions for better learning outcomes".

The TWG has further analyzed these collaborative practices and map to which extent they are implemented in the Member states, what are the main conditions to implement them and how they can be transferred to different contexts.

The whole education spectrum will be taken into account to the extent possible. Owing to high proportions of pupils with a migrant background among early school leavers, special attention will be paid to necessary support for pupils with a migrant background or coming from an ethnic minority.

Through discussions and peer learning in different forms (in-depth country focus workshops, case studies, etc.) the WG will collect evidence on the interventions and stages necessary to successfully implement collaborative practices in and around schools with a view to preventing ESL.

It is interesting to learn that the Mandate which was given to the TWG on ESL drew a list of pre-conditions which could be taking into account the different contexts focusing on:

- key drivers and conditions for introducing collaborative practices within and beyond school (both at the policy and at the school level);
- stages and trajectories of developing collaborative practices within and beyond school;
- interventions (measures) at the policy and at the school level;
- obstacles and possible solutions to overcome them;
- ways of monitoring and evaluating the development of schools in the direction of learning hubs;

- "dos and don'ts" to use in classroom, in schools and in linking with the community;
- possibilities of transfer of measures/practices to other national/cultural contexts.

The analysis will be done by focusing on different and yet strongly interrelated and complementary aspects which are necessary to implement "the whole school approach" to prevent ESL, as follows:

- School organization/culture (focusing on design and implementation of school development plans and development of collaborative practices within and beyond the school) with focus on the role of leadership;
- Support for teachers (in cooperation with the members of the WG working on initial teacher education, focusing e.g. on the necessary competences of teachers to cooperate with other professionals, students, families and partners beyond the school; skills and competences needed to address at risk pupils or pupils of different ethnic background);
- Support framework for learners (focusing on how to develop relevant learning environments, including through new curricula and methods; access to learning support, including language support for pupils whose native language is not the teaching language; access to other forms of support, to guidance etc.);
- Involvement of parents and extended families (as a crucial measure to reduce ESL, particularly in case of parents/communities of different ethnic background);
- Involvement of other relevant local stakeholders: local communities, professionals, services, civil society, local authorities and businesses.

## **Results**

On the basis of the above work<sup>174</sup> it is suggested that the WG produce a Guidance Framework and a toolkit for schools.

The Guidance Framework, addressed to policy-makers at different levels, will identify policy conditions which need to exist in order to enable schools to develop "whole school approaches" to ESL and promote school success for all.

The toolkit will consist of a set of conditions and recommendations for co-operation in and around schools. Schools will find therein-concrete examples of the steps to be put in place to prevent and combat ESL.

The final outputs will refer to different types of education systems and provide recommendations for different school systems. Depending on the specific country conditions and the different starting points, they will seek to propose diversified steps ("next steps").

A proposal for a network of schools applying any of the "whole school approaches" could be made, depending on the number of examples gathered by the WG members.

## **Creating a wider impact**

A special emphasis will be placed on how to support WG members in taking lessons learned outputs and conclusions of the WG further at the national level. WG members are asked to use or create their own network to obtain relevant information for their activities in the WG, to test themes and draft outputs for their relevance and usability, and to disseminate the outputs of this and previous Working Groups.

The Commission will regularly report to Directors-General for Schools about work progress and outputs of the Working Group and will seek their feedback both on process and content. The Commission will disseminate the outputs of the Working Group to its networks of stakeholders, including its Policy Networks and National Agencies for the Erasmus+ program. At the end of the WG in

---

<sup>174</sup> European Commission, ET2020 *WG on School policies*, 2012



autumn 2015 the Commission will aim to present the output to a larger group of European and national stakeholders, including national decision makers, with a view to giving the WG outputs high visibility and a wider impact.

Having discussed the topic widely from different point of views and aspects, in its multi-faceted dimension of the problem, a better understanding makes clear that early school leaving is a *complex phenomenon*, that *cannot be ascribed solely to schools* or solved by schools alone: reducing ESL will depend on the capacity of schools to create *supportive and conducive learning* environments, that are welcoming, open, safe, and friendly and where all pupils can grow and succeed.

To ensure school success for all and prevent early school leaving, schools need to develop into *learning hubs*, providing *support to their community* as well as receiving support from the community, while keeping the learner at the centre.

This implies on one hand more collaborative approaches within the school community, involving all relevant actors (principals, teaching and non-teaching staff and pupils), and on the other hand cooperation with the outside world (parents, local communities, professionals and services such as social workers, youth workers, outreach care workers, psychologists, nurses, speech and language therapists and occupational guidance specialists, etc.). It also requires that schools are able to organize and gear effectively all school dimensions towards a clearly defined and agreed objective.

The work done so far on ESL shows that such a "*whole school approach*" already proved to be successful to prevent school-drop out.



## Chapter 25 - **HORIZON 2020: A BRIDGE OVER THE FUTURE**

---

This research would not be complete if we did not have a look at the future of Europe and the future for Europe is the new EU Framework Programme launched in year 2014: *Horizon 2020*.

*Horizon 2020* is the biggest EU *Research & Innovation* program me ever with nearly € 80 billion of funding available over 7 years (from year 2014 to 2020), in addition to the private money that this money will attract. It promises more discoveries, more challenges to Europe.

The EU Members will be entitled to have access to funding by responding to the Call of Proposals of Innovation projects in different areas of intervention. Horizon 2020 is the financial instrument implementing Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness.

Seen as a mean to drive economic growth and create jobs, Horizon 2020 has the political backing of Europe's leaders and the Members of the European Parliament. They agreed that research is an investment in our future and so put it at the heart of the EU's blueprint for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs.

By coupling research and innovation, Horizon 2020 is helping to achieve this with its emphasis on excellent science, industrial leadership and tackling societal challenges. The goal is to ensure Europe produces world-class science, removes barriers to innovation and makes it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation.

Horizon 2020 is open to everyone, with a simple structure that reduces red tape and time so participants can focus on what is really important. This approach makes sure new projects get off the ground quickly – and achieve results faster.

The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation will be complemented by further measures to complete and further develop the European Research Area. These measures will aim at breaking down barriers to create a genuine single market for knowledge, research and innovation.

Europe faces huge challenges in reducing inequality and social exclusion. 80 million people are at risk of poverty and 14 million people are not in education, employment and training (NEET). Europe has not yet overcome the economic crisis, which has led to unemployment rates of 12% in general and 20% among young people.

Reducing inequalities and social exclusion in Europe (80 million people at risk of poverty, *14 million young people not in education, employment or training*), overcoming the economic and financial crisis and tackling unemployment (12% in EU and above 20% of youth unemployment in 2012) are crucial challenges for the future of Europe. At the same time, there is great potential for Europe through opportunities provided, for example, by new forms of innovation and by the engagement of citizens. Supporting inclusive, innovative and reflective societies is a prerequisite for a sustainable European integration.

The emergence of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), and therefore of a multipolar world, the ageing of the EU population and the need for more innovation call for a renewed understanding of this rapidly changing world. This understanding is supported by strong multidisciplinary approaches, including social sciences and humanities and information and communication technologies. European and national policies need to continue modernization while acknowledging the socio-economic and cultural diversity in Europe, and improved knowledge about how our modern societies work.

EU research and innovation will address social exclusion, discriminations and various forms of inequalities.

It will explore new forms of innovation and strengthen the evidence base for the Innovation Union, the European Research Area and other relevant EU policies. It will promote coherent and effective cooperation with third countries. Finally, it will address the issues of memories, identities, tolerance and cultural heritage.

Key future research and innovation actions started in year 2014, will carry on in 2015 and last until year 2020 in order to meet to set EU targets which will foster:

- New ideas, strategies and governance structures for overcoming the crisis in Europe (resilient economic and monetary Union, EU growth agenda, *EU social policies*, the future of European integration, emerging technologies in the public sector).
- Young generation in an *innovative, inclusive and sustainable Europe* (job insecurity, youth mobility, adult education, social and political engagement of young people, modernization of public administrations).
- Reflective societies: transmission of European cultural heritage, uses of the past, 3D modeling for accessing EU cultural assets.
- Europe as a global actor: focusing research and innovation cooperation with third countries, new geopolitical order in the Mediterranean, EU eastern partnership and other third countries.
- New forms of innovation in the public sector, open government, business model innovation, social innovation community, ICT for learning and inclusion.

In short, this Societal Challenge of the Horizon 2020 program me aims at fostering a greater understanding of Europe, by providing solutions and support inclusive, innovative and reflective European societies with an innovative public sector in a context of unprecedented transformations and growing global interdependencies.



## Chapter 26 - CONCLUSIONS

---

In my research I have looked at the *Early school leaving* issue, and how can Europe reach the target of reducing the rate of ESL to below 10% by 2020.

At the beginning of my research I have defined what kind of problem ESL is and who is more “*at risk*” to be included in this broad definition.

I have discussed the problem from different points of view, classifying the categories at risk, according to the main stream of authors and researchers’ opinion that have approached the phenomenon and in general terms agree to different classifications.

I have shown how the EU definition can be very different from one country to another, and also how measurements and evaluations are carried out. In defining the dimension of the problem, it was difficult to find a unique definition.

But I have found common understanding about criteria, factors, causes, consequences and solutions related to the issue.

I have analyzed the pre-conditional features, at *internal* and *external* level, that might create lower school outcomes leading to early school abandon in young people.

I have observed in particular, how unequal SES conditions may cause poor motivational background to learning, or poor relational conditions. Inducing disengagement at school and resulting in students’ poor school achievement and distress at the same time.

The individual and external factors have been analyzed by assuming that there is an interrelation between them and cannot be considered separately, to provide a global vision about the pre-conditions that make pupils more vulnerable and more likely to suffer from lack of motivation and commitment. Factors that lead to ESL are largely rooted in very poor family (low SES) and community backgrounds.

There is evidence that families and school do affect the likelihood of ESL but it is also true that through parental cooperation it is possible to give better chance to pupils at risk.

But not only family and SES are decisive factors to be causing ESL. Poor school organization and in general school-related factors are friction factors inducing to leaving school earlier.

The education system plays a substantial role and has a primary responsibility, when it fail to providing the fertile background which fosters students' motivation and commitment, rather than provoking ill-effects on individuals.

When the school fails to recognize Early Warning Signs predisposing to ESL; when the school does not provide Quality of Education through teachers 'support, teachers' education, facilities and systemic factors; when the school is unable to respond to the students' needs, poor outcomes will follow.

I have shown which is the impact of Early school leaving for individuals, but also which is the impact on society. The financial implication and increased costs for the economy, the negative trend of the growing unemployment rates, as ESL have lower qualifications and educational attainments; have more likelihood to get a lower paid job, with less or part-time job opportunities (if none).

And making some reflections about the economic crisis of the last decade, it becomes clear the ESLers will be more hit than those who are more academically qualified, since the labor market is growingly demanding in terms of skills and competences.

*Lifelong learning* is also less likely to be accessed by dropout students, given that if they have been low achievers before, for obvious reason they will not choose alternatives or more educational options.

I have provided a framework where the preventative, intervention and compensation measures are explained and described.

*Second chance schemes* have been considered as an alternative to previous educational choices, since they have been very successful with some ESL.

Second chance schemes should be offered more frequently, as alternative options from school to succeed. In terms of financial and educational returns they should not be considered of secondary importance but second *best chance* that can change people welfare.



Providing some examples of best practices in Europe, I have tried to focus on some cases studies which were chosen for having succeeded in their country (like the Netherland case) or other were chosen because they are successful in trying hard to reduce the ESL rate in their country (like Italy and Spain). Those project plans have been tested and evaluated and proved to be effective in reducing the numbers of ESL and can be considered a model or best practice to be followed and disseminated.

I have seen and shown that in Europe we have a way out for reaching the EU goals, by following the Recommendations given to its States Members.

In fact EU Community Policies and the commitment undertaken by the EU commission in establishing the *Working group on ESL and ECEC*, offers a relevant contribution to improve our performances in terms of educational choices. Especially when guiding our action towards to best and effective measures to be undertaken.

As a guideline in Europe we are following three programs, which have been issued starting from 2010, until the most recent in 2014.

These are: *Europe 2020 Strategy*, *ET 2020* and *Horizon 2020*.

If this is the policy answer of the European Union, it should be implemented by the Members States, should be aimed at creating structured and sustainable responses, providing comprehensive strategies and services.

However the SES is so different in Europe, and the economy of the different countries does not follow the same trend everywhere.

This is even worst at international level, since at the same time non-Eu countries are facing a very bad moment, due to unemployment, poverty, wars and conflicts and terrorism.

But we know that without a common understanding and cooperation, starting from education, is the only ground where we could foster the progress of our world, and build a better future.

We are aware that early intervention, by detection of *Early Warning Signs* is important and necessary but not enough.

We are aware that we need to invest more money and energy on this, but we should aim at preventing the problem from occurring by activating all possible measures we have learned so far.

This means that policy makers need to be focused on primary intervention, rather than crisis intervention, once the problem has already occurred.

Structural reforms are needed, and proved to be efficient, as some best performing countries in terms of lower ESL rates, have shown to succeed even before year 2020.

Innovative Programs should be adopted such a counseling, mentoring, better educational offer, curricular changes to make learning *accessible, equal* and *engaging*.

Europe is heading towards 2020 very fast and we do hope that international cooperation will raise the *Quality of education in Europe*.

We need to join our mutual effort providing a *holistic, comprehensive, multi-faceted* approach, which demands that all stakeholders become engaged, in order to make the best endeavor to reduce the ESL rate in Europe.

We still need to break the walls of boundaries which still affect our changing world.

It is a challenge and it is going to be a long, difficult process.

But we must be aware that every single, little breach in the wall of ignorance, of racism, of intolerance and prejudice, will allow the light of progress go through, and make possible to give our children a better world, where everyone is respected, educated and raised with dignity.

## REFERENCES

### National References

- M. Ambrosini & S. Molina (eds.) (2004), *Seconde generazioni*. FGA, Torino.
- Benvenuto, G., Rescalli, G. e Visalberghi, A. (a cura di) (2002) *Indagine sulla dispersione scolastica*. La Nuova Italia: Firenze.
- Bernardi F., (1999), *Donne fra famiglia e carriera. Strategie di coppia e vincoli sociali*. Angeli: Milano.
- Bison I. Pisati M., e Schizzerotto A., (1996), *Diseguaglianze di genere e storie lavorative*, Piccone-Stella S., e Saraceno C., (a cura di), *Genere. La costruzione sociale del femminile e del maschile*. Mulino: Bologna, pp. 253-280.
- Blangiardo G. C. (a cura di), *L'immigrazione straniera in Lombardia*. La quarta indagine regionale. Rapporto 2004, Fondazione ISMU, Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multietnicità, Milano, 2005.
- Borghini, V. (2000) *Il rischio d'esclusione sociale dei giovani disoccupati. Il caso italiano, tra divaricazione territoriale e strategie di trasformazione*, in *Osservatorio Isfol*, n. 6.
- G. Brunello, M. De Paola, *The Costs of Early school leaving in Europe*, IZA, Bonn 2013 p. 2- 4
- Calza Bini, P., Mingione, E., e Pugliese E., (a cura di), (1993), *Scenari regionali della disoccupazione in Italia*, numero monografico di "Inchiesta", n. 99.
- Carbone D. (2005a) *Percorsi incerti. Traiettorie di uscita dalla disoccupazione in Italia, Danimarca, Germania e Regno Unito*. Edizioni Lavoro, Roma.
- Carbone D, *I giovani nel mercato del lavoro delle Marche*. (2005).
- Farina F. (a cura di) *Giovani della società dei lavori*, Angeli, Milano.
- Cobalti A.& Schizzerotto A. (1994) *La mobilità sociale in Italia*. Mulino Bologna.
- Checchi, D. & Jappelli, T. 2004. "School Choice and Quality," CEPR Discussion Papers.

European Commission (2002) *L'Europa della conoscenza. Nuovi orizzonti per l'istruzione e la formazione*. Office for official publications of European Communities: Bruxelles.

Sansoé R., *Figli dell'immigrazione: nati da famiglie immigrate e cresciuti nella scuola italiana*. (2007).

Gobbo F. *La ricerca di una scuola che cambia*, Imprimerie, Padova pp. 115-140.

Gobbo F. *Il Cooperative Learning nelle società multiculturali*, Ed. Unicopli.

Gobbo F. (2007) *Teaching teachers Cooperative Learning: An Intercultural challenge*, Unicopli.

Anna Maria Mariani, *Dal punto di vista dell'educazione*, Edizioni Sei.

Giorgio Chiosso *Elementi di Pedagogia*, Editrice La Scuola.

F. Galloni, R. Ricucci, *Crescere in Italia*, Edizioni Unicopli.

Flebus G.B, *Tematiche e ricerche sull'orientamento*, Mulino. Milano (2005)

IARD (2001) *Essere giovani oggi – IV Rapporto Iard sulla condizione giovanile in Italia*. Il Mulino: Bologna.

IARD (2001) *Essere giovani, oggi – V rapporto Iard sulla condizione giovanile in Italia*. Il Mulino: Bologna.

IDIS, Città della Scienza, YOUNG-Azioni integrate contro la dispersione scolastica e il lavoro minorile, Rapporto di Ricerca 2003-2005, p.129.

IReR (1992) *La dispersione scolastica negli istituti professionali. Un'indagine qualitativa*. Angeli: Milano.

ISFOL (1999), *Vocational training and education in Italy*, CEDEFOP: Thessaloniki.

ISFOL (2003), *Relazione ex lege 845/78 art. 20 sullo stato e sulle previsioni delle attività di formazione professionale*, Roma. [www.isfol.it](http://www.isfol.it)

Istat, (2003), *Forze di Lavoro, Trend storici dei principali indicatori del mercato del lavoro*, Roma

Istat *Indagine sulle forze lavoro (Labour force survey)*. ISTAT: Rome.

Mingione E. & Pugliese E. (2002) *Il lavoro*. Carocci: Roma.

Mingione E. (1997), *Sociologia della vita economica*, NIS: Roma.

Ministero dell'Istruzione, Università e Ricerca (2005), *Alunni con cittadinanza non Italiana , school year 2005*. MIUR, Roma.

- MIUR (2004), *Indagine campionaria sulla dispersione scolastica. Scuole statali elementari e medie. Anno scolastico 2002/03*. Roma (downloadable at [www.istruzione.it](http://www.istruzione.it))
- MIUR (2005) *Indagine sugli esiti degli alunni con cittadinanza non italiana*. Roma (downloadable at [www.istruzione.it](http://www.istruzione.it))
- Ministry of Education, *Quaderni degli Annali dell'Istruzione* n.100, 2003.
- Polanyi K., (1974), *La Grande Trasformazione. Le origini economiche e politiche della nostra epoca*. Einaudi: Turin.
- Pugliese E., (a cura di), (1996), *Una disoccupazione mediterranea. Giovani e mercato del lavoro nel Mezzogiorno e a Napoli*, Libreria Dante: Napoli.
- Pugliese, E. (1993) *Sociologia della disoccupazione*. Mulino: Bologna.
- Reyneri, E. (1997) *Occupati e disoccupati in Italia*. Il Mulino: Bologna.
- Reyneri, E. (1996) *Sociologia del mercato del lavoro*. Mulino: Bologna.
- Saraceno C., (a cura di), (2001), *Età e corso della vita*. Mulino: Bologna.
- Saraceno C., 2003, *Mutamenti della famiglia e politiche sociali in Italia*, Il Mulino, Bologna.
- Schizzerotto, A.(2002) *Vite ineguali. Disuguaglianze e corsi di vita nell'Italia contemporanea*. Il Mulino: Bologna.
- Tuè, P. (2003), *La dispersione scolastica*, Franco Angeli, Milano.
- Welfare and Labour Minister (2004), *Piano nazionale d'azione per l'occupazione (NAP)*, Rome.
- Zanfrini (2001) *Learning by programming. Secondo rapporto sui fabbisogni delle imprese italiane e la politica di programmazione dei flussi migratori*. F. Angeli: Milano
- Zurla, P. (a cura di) (2001), *Percorsi di scelta: giovani tra scuola, formazione e lavoro*. Angeli:Milano
- N. De Piccoli, A.Rosa Favretto, F. Zaltron, *Norme e agire quotidiano negli adolescenti*, Il Mulino, 2001
- IDIS, Città della Scienza, *YOUNG-Azioni integrate contro la dispersione scolastica e il lavoro minorile*, Rapporto di Ricerca 2003-2005.

## Foreign Authors References

- Archer, L.; Hutchings, M.; Ross, A. (2003) *Higher education and social class: Issues of social inclusion*. London, Routledge Falmer.
- Barnett, R. (2003) *Beyond All Reasons: Living with Ideology in the University*, Buckingham, SRHE /Open University Press.
- Batelaan P. (1998), *Towards an Equitable classroom. Cooperative learning in Intercultural Education in Europe*, IAIE Drukkerij Giethoorn Ten Brink, Meppel.
- Bhatti G., Gobbo F., Leeman Y. *Social Justice and Intercultural education: an Open dialogue*, Tretham Books, Stoke on Trent, pp.75-88.
- Bruer, J.T.(1997) *Education and the Brain: a Bridge too far*”, Educational Researcher, Vol. 26(8), pp. 14-16.
- Bryk, Lee (2003) *Dropping out of high school: The role of school organisation*, American Ed. Research Journal, 2 pages 353-393
- A. & Binner, J. (2004) *The Benefits of Learning. The Impact of Education on Health, Family Life and Social Capital*, London, Routledge Falmer.
- Crompton, R. (2008), *Class and Stratification* (3rd ed.), Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Croniger, R., & Lee, V. (2001), *Social capital and dropping out of High School: Benefits to at-risk students of teachers' support and guidance*. *Teachers College Record*, 103 (4), 548-581.
- Dann Finn, *Restart: Tackling Early school leaving in Europe*, 2006
- L. & Heagney, M. (2008), *Improving Student Retention in Higher Education*, London, Routledge.
- Delanty, G. (2001) *Challenging Knowledge: the University in the Knowledge Society*, Buckingham, SRHE /Open University Press.
- Devine, F., Savage, M., Scott, J. & Crompton, R. (2005), *Re-thinking Class: Cultures, Identities and Lifestyle*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Egrees, *Equity in European Educational systems: European Educational Research Journal*, 4,2, 1-151, 2005
- Fredricks et al. (2004), *School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence*, Paris Page 59-109.
- Field, J. (2009), *Social Capital*, London, Taylor & Francis, 2nd edition.

- Giedd, J. N. (2004) *Structural Magnetic Resonance of the Adolescent Brain*, Annals of the NY Academy of sciences, vol. 1021, pp. 77-85.
- González Monteagudo, J. (2010) *Learning Careers of Poor University Students in Dominican Republic: Cultural, Institutional and Personal Dimensions*.
- B. & J. González Monteagudo, (eds.) *Educational Journeys and Changing Lives. Adult Students Experiences*, vol. 1, Seville, 48-63.
- Gopnik A. “Cognitive development and Learning sciences: State of the Art “ presentation at the 1st CERI Forum on “Brain Mechanisms and Early Learning”, Sackler Institute , New York, 2000.
- Kazepov, Y. & Sabatinelli, S. (2001) *How Generous Social Assistance Schemes are. A Comparative Analysis of Benefit Levels in Europe*. Stakes Series: Helsinki.
- Kitty Te Riele , *Learning choices: A Map for the future*, (2012) Victoria University, Melbourne.
- Kendall S., Kinder, K., Halsey, K., Fletcher-Morgan, C., White, R., Brown, C. (2003). *An Evaluation of Alternative Education Initiatives*. (DfES Research Report 403), London: DfES.
- Lee, V.E. & Smith, J.B. (1993). *Effects of high school restructuring on the achievement and engagement of middle-grade students*. *Sociology of Education*, 66(3), 164-187
- Kurt Lewin, *The complete social scientist*, Editor Martin Gold, 2013
- Levin, H.M., and Belfield, C.R. (2007). *The price we pay: Economic and social consequences of inadequate education*, Brooking Institution Press, Washington
- Jhonston, R. (2009), *Access and Retention: Experiences of Non-traditional Learners in HE*. *European Lifelong Learning Project*, 2008-2010.
- [www.ranlhe.dsw.edu.pl; date of access: 08/02/2010]
- Lucio-Villegas, *Transforming/researching communities*, Xativa, Valencia,
- Merrill, B. (2007), *Recovering Class and the Collective in the Stories of Adult Learners*, in West, Alheit.
- Merrill, B. (1997) *Working in Teams: Implications for Method in Cross-National Contexts in International Journal of University Adult Ed.*, Vol. XXXVI, No.3.
- Merrill, B. & González Monteagudo, J. (eds.) (2010) *Educational Journeys and Changing Lives. Adult Students Experiences*, 2 vol. Spain, pp. 78-82.

- Mc Candliss, *Cortical Circuitry of Word Reading*, presentation at 1st CERI Forum, June 2000.
- Merrill, B. & West, L. (2010) *Using Biographical Methods in Social Research*, London, Sage.
- Nizinska, A. (2009) *A Community of Support* Magdeburg, Nisaba Verlag, 241/9 P. & Andersen, A. S. (eds.) (2007) *Using Life History and Biographical Approaches in the Study of Adult and Lifelong Learning: European Perspective*, Hamburg.
- Jean Piaget, Baerbel Inhelder, *La Psicología del Bambino*, Einaudi  
 Jean Piaget, *Lo sviluppo mentale del bambino*, Einaudi.
- Peter Lang. Merrill, B. (1999) *Gender, Change and Identity: Mature Women Students in Universities*, Aldershot, and Ashgate.
- PIRLS, *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study*, (2011) Boston College
- Quinn, J. (2004) *Understanding Working-class 'Drop-out' from Higher Education through a Sociocultural Lens: Cultural Narratives and Local Contexts. International Studies in Sociology of Education*, vol. 14, 1, 57-73.
- Quinn, J. (2007) *First Generation Entry into Higher Education*, Maidenhead, Open University Press & McGraw Hill.
- Reay, D.; David, M.; Ball, S. (2005) *Degrees of Choice: Social Class, Race and Gender in Higher Education*, Stoke-on Trent, Trentham. Reinharz, S. (1992).
- Savage, M. (2000) *Class Analysis and Social Transformation*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Schuller, T. (2004), "*The Benefits of Learning: The Impacts of Formal/ Informal Education on Social Capital, Health and Family Life*", Routledge Falmer.
- Schweinhart, L.J., & Weikart, D.P. (1985) *Evidence That Good Early Childhood Programs Work. Phi Delta Kappan*, 66, 8, 545-551.
- Skeggs, B. (1997) *Formations of Class and Gender*, London, Sage.
- Thompson, J. (2000) *Women, Class and Education*, London, Routledge.
- Thompson, P. (2000, 3rd ed.) *The voice of the past*, Oxford University Press.
- Tobarra, S. (2010) *Es simple: a más formación menos paro*, El País, 02/02/2010 [<http://www.elpais.com/articulo/sociedad/simple/formación/paro/elpepisc/2010;date of access: 08/02/2010>].



Walther, A. and Pohl, A. (2005), *Thematic Study on Policy Measures Concerning Disadvantaged Youth*, Study Commissioned by the European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs in the Framework of the Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion 2002-2006, Tübingen: Institute for Regional Innovation and Social Research (IRIS).

West, L. (1996) *Beyond Fragments: adults, Motivation and Higher Education*, London, Taylor Francis.

## **Academic studies**

### **Reports, Journals, Reviews**

Ministry of Education; *The approach to school drop-out: Policy in the Netherlands and the results of the 2007-2008 performance agreements*, NL <http://www.aanvalopschooluitval.nl>

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, *The approach to Early School Leaving: Policy in the Netherlands and the provisional figures of the 2010-2011 performance agreement*. (2012)

Source: Peer Review EES (2001) *Access routes to employment for young people in danger of exclusion*, Peer Review Program of the European Employment Strategy, DGV, European Commission, accessed on 5 May 2004 at <http://www.almp.org/en/FRANCEoct01.htm>

EU Education Ministers Council, *Reference levels of European Average Performance in Education and Training*, May 2003.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1999). *Social Foundations of Post-industrial Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

EUROSTAT (2000), *Youth condition in Europe*, Office for official publications of European Communities, Luxembourg.

EUROSTAT, (2002), Labour force statistics. Results 2000, *Office for official publications of European Communities*, Luxembourg.

EUROSTAT (2003) *Education across Europe 2003*. European Communities: Luxembourg.

GHK (2005) EU Commission DG, *Study on Access to Education and Training, Basic Skills and Early School Leavers, Final Report, (DG,EAC38/04),Brussels*.

Official Journal C 119 of 28.5.2009, *Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* (“Education and Training 2020”)

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*. (2014), Edition. Eurydice.

Heckmann F. (2008), *Education and migraton strategies for Integrating Migrant Children in European Schools and societies*, A synthesis of research findings for policy makers, Nesse Network

<http://www.nesse.fr/nesse/activities/reports>

Caspi et al 1998), *American sociology Review*, 1998, Volume 63 (p. 424-451)

E. Moretti, *Journal of Econometrics* 121 (2004) pages 175 – 212

OECD, (2002), Labour force statistics: 1991-2001, OECD: Paris.

OECD (2004), *Pisa Executive Summary*. OECD: Paris.

OECD (2005a), *Pisa 2003 Data Analysis Manual: Spss Users* OECD, Paris.

OECD (2005b), *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2007), *Understanding the Brain: The Birth of a Learning Science*, 2007.

OECD (2008) Nesse, *A Report on education and migrant children*, 2008.

OECD (2008), *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society*, OECD Publishing

OECD (2005) *Thematic Review of Tertiary Education – Country Background*

*Report for Spain*, Ministry of Education and Science –Spain

OECD (2009) The National Academy for Academic Leadership *Leadership & Institutional changes*, OECD Publishing

<http://www.thenationalacademy.org/ready/change.html#requisites>

OECD (2010), *Learning our lessons, Review of quality teaching in higher education*, OECD Publishing.

OECD (2012), *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives: A Strategic Approach to Skills Policies*, OECD Publishing.

OECD (2012) Fabrice Hénard and Deborah Roseveare, *Fostering quality teaching in Higher Education*, OECD Publishing.

Official Journal; *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators 2013*, p. 13

Economics of Education Review, Vol. 30, Issue 6, December 2011, *Economic returns to education: What We Know, What We Don't Know and where we're going*, pages 1115-1117

EU Commission, NESSE Network, *Early School Leaving: Lessons from Research for Policy Makers* (2009)

EU Commission: *Access and Retention: Experiences of Non-traditional Learners in Higher Education* (Ref. 135230-LLP-2007-UKKA1SCR), 2008-10.

EU Commission, *Study on Access to Education and Training, Basic Skills and Early School Leavers, Final Report*, (Ref. DG EAC 38/04), European Commission DG EAC, Brussels.

EU Commission, *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*. 2014 Edition, Brussels

EU Commission, *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support*, Final Report of the TWG on ESL, November 2013

IRIS (2005) *Thematic Study on Policy Measures concerning Disadvantaged Youth*, Study Commissioned by the European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs, Institute for Regional Innovation and Social Research, Tubingen.

NFER (2005) *Reclaiming those disengaged from education and learning: a European perspective*, Kendall S. and Kinder K., National Foundation for Educational Research.

NFER (2005) points also to an OKI English language publication from 2003, *Integration vs. Segregation: Hungarian Roma Education Policy Note*, available at: <http://www.oki.hu/publication.php?kod=integration>

Oreopoulos P (2007), *Do dropouts drop out too soon? Wealth, health and happiness from compulsory schooling*, Journal of Public Economics, pages 2213–2229

Pahl, R E (1989) *Is the Emperor Naked? : Some questions on the adequacy of Urban and Regional Research*, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 13, 711-720.

Schultz, T.W. (1961), "*Investment in Human Capital*", American Economic Review LI American Economic Association Presidential Address, Vol. 1-17.

Walther, A. and Pohl, A. (2005), *Thematic Study on Policy Measures Concerning Disadvantaged Youth*, Study Commissioned by the European Commission, DG

## Acknowledgements

*I'd like to thank all the following people for making my research possible.*

Professor Eckert, University LMU for Tutoring and supervising my thesis,  
Professor Tippelt for his contribution as Lehrstuhl for Department of Pedagogy  
during his seminars of the Psychology of Excellence courses.

Professor Roger Dale, University of Leeds, for his contribution with the Nesse  
Report and precious collaboration in guiding me to more findings.

Professor G. B. Flebus, Università La Bicocca for his contribution with his studies  
in Orientation and vocational guidance.

Dottor Garbarini Aldo per la gentile collaborazione e autorizzazione ad accedere  
agli atti d'ufficio presso i Servizi Educativi.

Un ringraziamento particolare all'Assessora alle Politiche Educative, Mariagrazia  
Pellerino, per il suo contributo nel dar slancio all'innovazione e allo sviluppo delle  
politiche educative in modo sostenibile per la Città di Torino , per la sua compe-  
tenza, professionalita' ed entusiasmo nel coinvolgere tutti gli attori sul territorio  
legati ai temi educativi ed anche i collaboratori attivi sui progetti istituzionali, sui  
quali ho avuto la fortuna di lavorare.

Dott. Tosco Luciano, Servizi Educativi, per le sue doti umane e pazienza, nell'aver  
speso una buona parte del suo prezioso tempo, pochi giorni prima di andare in  
pensione, nel fornirmi indicazioni e suggerimenti di ricerca sul fenomeno  
dell'abbandono e le azioni intraprese dalla Città di Torino.

Dott. Giuseppe Pelazza, per le doti professionali ed umane, nell'accogliere tutte le  
mie richieste permettendomi di seguire la mia ricerca e studio all'estero, rendon-  
domi il percorso verso il traguardo meno difficile.

A Michele Covolan, per essere stato un *vero problem solver* dei mille problemi di  
questo lungo percorso, dalle trasferte ai permessi, *last but not least* per la sua cor-  
dialita' e professionalita' ed il suo entusiasmo che mi ha permesso di lavoare con  
il medesimo entusiasmo per gli studenti di Torino Citta'universitaria.

Alla mia collega dott.ssa Tina Crisci, per il suo apporto professionale nella consu-  
lenza sui progetti del COSP e per il SAM ed alla sua attività pluriennale come o-  
rientatrice. Un ringraziamento particolare per aver contribuito sia in fase iniziale

d'incubazione del progetto nel delineare le linee guida, sia nella fase finale di verifica degli obiettivi del progetto di ricerca. Un aiuto imprescindibile.

Al collega Alfredo Cacciatori per la contribuzione attraverso le innumerevoli domande a lui rivolte in qualità di orientatore ed a cui con infinita pazienza ha sempre risposto con grande competenza e professionalità.

Alle colleghe del *Provaci ancora Sam*, per le dettagliate informazioni fornite sui progetti dei Servizi Educativi. In particolare un ringraziamento va a Maria Riso, per l'incredibile numero d'informazioni e dati forniti sui progetti educativi della Città.

Un ringraziamento anche alla Dott.sa Anna Venuti per il supporto sul progetto *Sam Torino*.

Ai colleghi di Torino Città Educativa, Renzo e Antonella, per i preziosi riferimenti forniti sui dati sull'abbandono scolastico a Torino e sull'operato di IAEC, come segreteria nazionale.

Ai colleghi del mio Ufficio Torino Città Universitaria in cui ho condiviso quasi 3 anni, tra cui Cosimo Cardea per avermi illuminato su Piaget, grazie alla sua esperienza pedagogica e di educatore professionale a cui si aggiungono le doti personali di umanità e cordialità. A Elena Ortolani, per la sua professionalità ed amicizia che mi manca.

Ringrazio Giacinta Cavalieri d'Oro, che conosco da meno tempo essendo arrivata nel nostro ufficio recentemente, ma con la quale ho condiviso le mie giornate e la sua esperienza come psicologa, su alcune tematiche pedagogiche trattate nel mio studio. E ovviamente a Luca Cipriani per aver "addolcito" le nostre giornate con le sue *hand made* golosità e per la sua *verve*, mai di sorprendermi.

*Last but not least* le persone senza le quali tutto il mio dottorato di ricerca sarebbe stato impossibile: la mia famiglia a cui dedico ogni parola scritta: sono ben 89.070 ma nessun numero di parole sarebbe sufficiente per esprimere l'amore per voi: to my husband Enzo and my daughters Eleonora and Alison, per aver perdonato le lunghe assenze davanti al computer e ai viaggi interminabili.

Un ringraziamento speciale va infine a tutti gli amici di Monaco di Baviera, con i quali, oltre ad aver condiviso sette anni incredibili ed indimenticabili in Germania dal 2006-2012, mi hanno sostenuto anche dopo il mio ritorno in Italia ed in

quest'anno trascorso tra continui trasferimenti e viaggi tra Torino e Monaco, per raggiungere la Ludwig Maximilian University, ho sempre trovato una porta aperta per ospitarmi sempre con un sorriso e tanto affetto. A *big. Thanks* Grazie! Alle mie amiche Simona, Marisa, Lucia, Annamaria e rispettive famiglie.

Un grazie particolare a un'amica speciale, Marianna, che quest'anno ha purtroppo dovuto affrontare il grande dolore della perdita di suo figlio.

Ed è proprio a suo figlio va questo mio pensiero finale.

A lui e a tutti quelli come lui, che non ce la fanno a uscire dal tunnel dell'abbandono scolastico e del dolore, dedico questo lavoro.

E se anche il suo estremo gesto è stato una scelta disperata, non per questo possiamo esimerci dal ritenerci responsabili.

Dietro una morte voluta da un ragazzo così giovane, c'è sempre una responsabilità della società, che non deve essere un concetto astratto, perché la società siamo NOI!

E se questo ragazzo è uno dei tanti di cui ho parlato nella mia tesi, uno dei tanti che aveva abbandonato la scuola, uno dei tanti ragazzi incompresi, ma per chi l'ha amato, rimane un vuoto incolmabile e un dolore immenso.

Riflettiamo su questa morte, perché non sia avvenuta invano; ogni volta che un ragazzo nelle nostre scuole, nelle nostre famiglie, nei nostri giorni qualsiasi, chiede il nostro aiuto, non rinviemo al domani il nostro supporto.

E' necessario che tutti coloro coinvolti nel sistema educativo in *network*, attraverso la consulenza di ricercatori universitari, medici, psicologi, assistenti sociali, associazioni, politici, rendano possibile l'uscita dal tunnel.

Servono investimenti, competenza professionale, motivazione e tanto amore.

Senza dimenticare che Ogni minuto, ogni istante è prezioso, e *domani* potrebbe già' esser troppo tardi.

Grazie a tutti di cuore.

(*Isabella Calvagna Manco*)

8 marzo 2015  
Festa della Donna

# Zusammenfassung

## Title:

*Verbesserung der Qualität der BILDUNG  
In Europa durch die Verringerung der Rate des  
Schulabbruchs mit internationaler Zusammenarbeit*

"Bis 2020 soll der Anteil der vorzeitig der aus- und Weiterbildung (im Alter von 18-24) weniger als 10 % sein" (Europa 2020-Strategie)<sup>175</sup>

*Europa muß wieder auf Kurs zu bringen. Dann muß es auf der Strecke bleiben.*

*Das ist der Zweck von Europa 2020. Es geht um mehr Arbeitsplätze und ein besseres Leben.*

*Es zeigt, wie Europa hat die Möglichkeit, intelligenten, nachhaltigen und integrativen Wachstum rechnen, um den Weg, um neue Arbeitsplätze zu schaffen und ein Gefühl der Richtung unserer Gesellschaft anzubieten zu finden und 2010 muß einen Neuanfang markieren.*

*"Ich will Europa gestärkt aus der Finanz- und Wirtschaftskrise hervorzugehen.*

*(J. Manuel Barroso)*

Diese Doktorarbeit konzentriert sich auf eines der fünf Ziele, die von der *Europa-2020-Strategie* abzielt, die Rate des vorzeitigen Schulabbruchs Rate unter 10 % eingerichtet.

Schulabbruch ist eine Barriere gegen Wirtschaftswachstum und Beschäftigung. Es verringert die Produktivität, Wettbewerbsfähigkeit und sollte Armut und soziale Eingliederung zur gleichen Zeit verhindern.

Diese Arbeit ist das Ergebnis meiner bisherigen Erfahrungen, während ich in der Ausbildung Abteilung von Turin Landeshauptstadt und mein Studium an LMU gearbeitet habe.

Als ich anfang, auf diesem Feld der Erziehung zu arbeiten, war vor einigen Jahren die Idee des Schreibens einer Dissertation zu

---

<sup>175</sup> Communication from the Commission *EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, 3.3.2010, Brussels



diesem Thema noch sehr weit. Ich benutze, die *Dropouts* oder Schulabbrecher im wesentlichen im Zusammenhang mit meiner Arbeit und Pflichten zu prüfen.

Zu dieser Zeit in der Stadt Turin, da die Mehrheit der Industriestädte im Norden Italiens, einen Prozeß der erheblichen politischen Veränderungen und gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen unterzogen wurde.

Die Stadt hatte seit vielen Jahren in ein internationales Netzwerk namens *Educating City* tätig. *IAEC Chart (International Association of Educating Cities)* eine Internationale Erziehung Städtebund) wurde im Jahr 1990 unterzeichnet, und es wurde im Jahr 1995 ratifiziert.

Ab dem Jahr ist 2000 Turin auch der National Sekretär der IAEC für Italien, Funktion der Koordination und Organisation von Hauptversammlungen.

Politikers, Institutionen, Bildungseinrichtungen Offiziere und Schulen, wußten schon damals, daß wird eine Multi-Kulturelle Industriestadt, mit eine hohe Inzidenz von Migranten aus Nordafrika, Osteuropa und China, daß Turin dringende Reformen nötig.

Mit der Unterzeichnung der *Weiterbildung Städte Chart* die Stadt engagiert zu Turin, das Projekt ein Arbeitsprogramm, das mehr und mehr ein Bildungssystem, das ist wird durch die Konzentration auf die wachsende Größe und Bildung der Bürger, insbesondere von Kindern, die Interaktion einer Pluralität von Menschen fördert, darstellt von denen jeder einen Mehrwert und pädagogische Verantwortung: Institutionen, Verbände, Gruppen in den urbanen Kontext tätig.

Das Phänomen der *Dropouts* war eine Hauptursache von Interesse für unsere Stadt und die aktuelle Bildungspolitik waren sehr anspruchsvoll in Bezug auf Engagement innerhalb unserer Abteilung und das ESL-Problem zu kämpfen galt als eine der obersten Prioritäten.

Der wichtigste Ansatz zur Verhinderung und Bekämpfung von mit Dropout Schüler in Turin wurde realisiert von der lokalen Projekt *Provaci Ancora, Sam* (*Versuch es noch einmal, Sam*)

*Sam* ist ein Multi-institutionellen Projekt, dessen Methodik ein lokales Netzwerk zwischen Schulen, Gemeinde Büros und lokale Vereine beinhaltet.

Das Projekt wurde im Jahr 1996 geboren, es richtet sich an 14-15 Jahre alten Schüler beibehalten.

Während dieser langen Zeit (fast 20 Jahre) da das Projekt gestartet wurde, *Sam* hat erwies sich als einer der *best Practices* mit Bezug zu ESL in Italien und die Überwachung und Auswertung des Projekts gute Ergebnisse in Wirtschaftlichkeit und positive Resultate.

Ich habe das Projekt gründlich analysiert und ich glaube, ist eines der *best practices* in Italien, in der Lage, mit solch eine schwierige Aufgabe als ESL anzugehen.

Als ich anfang, in der pädagogischen Abteilung zu arbeiten, in Vergleichung der ESL Statistik in Europa, daß selbst wenn die *Sam* Projekt gut arbeitete, wir eine ganze Menge viel zu lernen aus anderen Ländern, in bezug auf die Ergebnisse.

In der Tat über der Jahre, selbst wenn mit eine positive Entwicklung, wo wir noch sehr weit davon entfernen das EU-Ziel.

Ich erkannte, daß Turins Erfahrung sinnvoll, verbreitet werde.

Ich überlege, über die beste Möglichkeit, einen aktiven Beitrag zu diesem schwierigen sozialen Thema Auswirkungen auf unsere Gesellschaft zu bieten.

Ich nahm an, daß es mußte, ein besserer Weg, um meine Ziele zu erreichen, als setzen die beiden Erfahrungen zusammen. Durch die Kombination meiner Berufserfahrung mit einer akademischen Forschung, war meine Dissertation auf jeden Fall bereit zu anfangen.

Da ich in München zu dieser Zeit lebte ich ging zu meiner Universität, der LMU und fragte Professor Eckert der Abteilung von Pädagogik, meine Dissertation zu sichern.

Er stimmte und in kurzer Zeit war ich bereit, meinen Seminaren zu beginnen, um die notwendigen Anforderungen für Dissertation zu erfüllen.

Nach einem Jahr auf Seminare und Prüfungen verbrachte, begann eine Zeit der Forschung und Untersuchung auf dem Gebiet in München, während ich bewährte Methoden und Ergebnisse aus anderen Länder-Erfahrung gleichzeitig sammeln war.

Bald erkannte ich, daß viele Länder ein starkes Engagement gezeigt hatten und einige hatten bereits ihre Ziele erreicht.

Diese soziale Frage ist sehr engagiert und anspruchsvoll auf das hohe Niveau von Fachleuten und Fähigkeiten erforderlich.

In den letzten Jahren jemand getan haben, besser, erreicht das Ziel, die nationalen Zahlen mit Bezug zu ESL unter die 10 %, wie die Finnisch und Niederländische Erfahrung zu halten während dieser Zeit wurden andere immer noch kämpfen, um ihn herum und hatte höhere Raten von ESL wie Spanien oder Italien.

Ich wollte wissen, was funktionierte und was fehlte und wie weit, diesen Partnern, gegangen wäre. Das war ziemlich hart, denn Bekämpfung ESL einen langfristigen Prozeß, der viele Jahre, bevor die Ergebnisse deutlicher dauern könnten. Und zur gleichen Zeit, da war der Ansatz oft lokaler und nationaler und Daten waren schwer zu bekommen.

Nach dieser Zeit der erste Material für meine Forschung hatte, ich erkannte daß um zu Ende zu kommen, mußte ich einige Fallstudien zu sammeln, um sie zu analysieren.

Ich fing an, Interviews und Anfragen an Schulen und Institutionen.

In München ich habe eine spezielle "*Erlaubnis*" aus dem Leiter von der Bildung Abteilung der *Landeshauptstadt München* be-

kommen, und lokale Schulen zu besuchen und Institutionen wie der deutschen *Jugend Institut* alle Lehrer interviewt.

Ich wurde auch eingeführt, Schule-Leiter, politische Entscheidungsträger und Lehrer, Sozialpädagogen/innen, die ich regelmäßig traf. Alle von ihnen, die Bereitstellung von Daten und Fakten zur gleichen Zeit gebracht haben

Das Bild entstand, daß Deutschland eine lange Tradition zur Bekämpfung mit ESL hatte und eine lange Geschichte den Migration-Ströme von weniger industrialisierten Ländern gemacht hatten der meistgesuchten Destination für Ausländer Familien und Jugendliche, die einen Job suchen.

Integrationspolitik und Soziales Stand im Mittelpunkt der politischen Debatte.

ESL Ausgaben Hauptgründe für Sorge und Maßnahmen in Deutschland, waren da das Land einen Großteil von Migranten-Familien aus der Türkei, Italien, Spanien, etc. Beherbergt und die Rate der ESL wegen der Sozial Ökonomie Untergrund und Sprachprobleme in der Schule immer noch hoch war.

In vielen Schulen die Inzidenz von ausländischen Menschen könnten 60 % erreichen und könnten in einigen Bereichen auf hohe Inzidenz von SW (Sozial Wohnungen) (wie Riemer-Bereich in München, 80-90 % erreichen). Dies bedeutete, daß die öffentlichen Schulen in diesen Bereichen kaum von deutschen Studenten besucht wurden.

Ich erkannte, daß bewährte Erfahrungen wäre einfach zu finden, aber wenn es die Zeit kam, die Aufgabe der Fallstudien zu füllen, z.B. einzelne Fälle wie Schüler, um abzuschließen meinen Recherchen wegen der Schutz von Daten auf Jugendschutz und Schülerinnen und Schüler, die eine harte Aufgabe gewesen wäre.

Ich begann, wird besorgt, wie ich dieser Probleme überwinden und eine Lösung zu finden und meine Arbeit beenden konnte..

In der Tat entschied ich mich im Einvernehmen mit meinem Doktorvater, daß Beispiele für Fallstudien könnten Projekte/Erfahrungen in die EU und wurden nicht unbedingt im Zusammenhang mit einer Person insbesondere. Aber einige wichtigste Grund war geschehen.

## ABSTRACT

---

*Early school leaving<sup>1</sup> is an obstacle to economic growth and employment. It hampers productivity and competitiveness, and fuels poverty and social exclusion. With its shrinking workforce, Europe has to make full use of its human resources. Young people who leave education and training prematurely are bound to lack skills and qualifications, and to face serious, persistent problems on the labor market. The latest Education and Training Monitor showed that there are nearly 5, 5 million early school leavers across Europe and that the average unemployment rate amongst them is about 40%<sup>1</sup>.*

### Key statistical indicators

The EU average rate of *early leavers* from education and training in 2013 was 11.9%, down 0.8 percentage points from 2012. The improvement is in line with recent progress and, if continued, means that the *Europe 2020* headline target below 10% is within reach.

Eighteen Member States have rates of early leavers from education and training below the Europe 2020 headline target (CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, FR, HR, CY, LV, LT, LU, NL, AT, PL, SI, SK, FI, SE). This number was 13 in 2012, meaning that in addition four countries dropped below the 10% for the first time in 2013 (DE, EE, CY, LV)

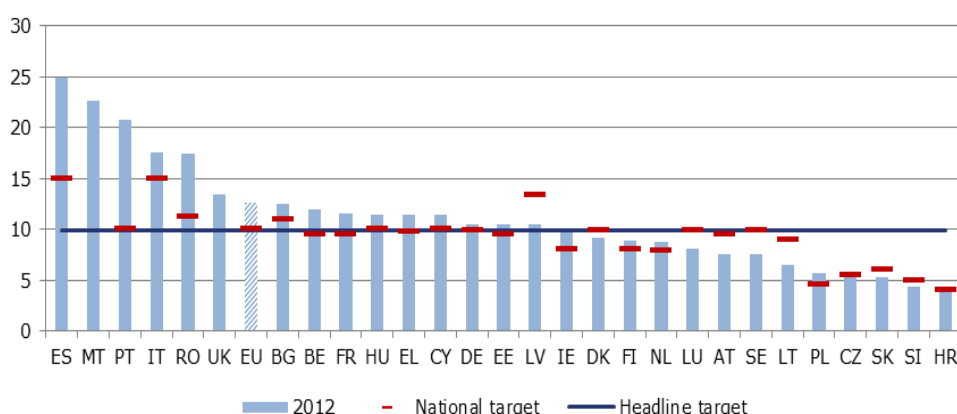


Figure 1: Rate of Early school leavers in Europe in year 2012

Source: Eurostat 2012

---

<sup>1</sup> See: [ec.europa.eu/education/monitor](http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)

Eleven EU Member States have now reached their national targets for early leavers from education and training (CZ, DK, DE, HR, CY, LV, LT, LU, AT, SI, SE). Some of these countries had not yet reached the national targets in 2012 (DE, HR, and CY).

SK is the only State Member, which has reached its national target before (in 2008) but now featuring a rate of early leavers slightly above its national target.

According to the definition used by *EUROSTAT* and the European Commission, ESL *early school leaving occurs when an individual aged 18 to 24 has attained at most lower secondary education and is not engaged in education and training*<sup>2</sup>.

Currently, one student out of seven European students leaves school early without gaining a basic qualification.

The aim of *EUROPE 2020 Strategy* is to reduce the average percentage of early school leavers from 14.1% to less than 10% by 2020. This means all young people aged between 18 and 25, who are not undertaking education/training and increasing the rate of tertiary qualification to 40 %.

The aim of this research is to provide evidence that international cooperation is needed in order to achieve the set goals.

Since some countries have already achieved their target, whilst others have not, it is important to share those countries best practices.

In order to carry out its task, this research has analysed a wide range of literature on the subject, from articles, to books, researches, and EU educational projects outcomes.

In order to understand the complexity and dimension of the problem, I have started from defining the problem, identifying its multiple causes and analysing the effective policy responses that should European countries to reach the mutual target of reducing the rate of early school leavers.

The present research offers a useful tool to compare some best practices in Europe, that thanks to dissemination, can help policy makers, schools or professional, involved in the struggle against school failure, to reducing the rate of early school-leaving below 10%.

---

<sup>2</sup> Brunello, Di Paola, Report *The costs of early school leaving in Europe*, (2009) commissioned by DG EAC of the European Commission

By sharing them, it will be possible to reach easily the set target of *Europe 2020 Strategy* among State members in order to guarantee its social and economic welfare. The following paragraph is a short presentation of each chapter.

*Chapter 1* is an **Introduction** to present dissertation followed by the **Targets of Europe 2020 Strategy**.

In *Chapter 2*, different **definitions of ESL** as adopted by different EU partners, will be analysed.

In *Chapter 3*, I will consider what kind of **problem** ESL is, in relation to the commitment undertaken by the EU partners, in view of Europe 2020 strategy.

I thought that some theory about the **Learning process** would be necessary, in order to understand the neuroscience approach behind it, and to better understand and recognize disorders that are sometimes late diagnosed or underestimated(*Chapter 4*).

The main **Criteria to identify children/pupils at risk** and the different approaches, if individually or as an organized target group are the topic of *Chapter 5*.

The study goes deeper looking at the **Causes of ESL**, which will be analysed from an individual and external point of view (*Chapter 6*).

A focus on the pupils' background was needed identifying those **Factors, which are more family or school-related** (*Chapter 7*).

**Systemic factors** or **school-based factors** as the most influential in undermining the students' performances, are better described in the following *Chapter 8*

The **Consequences and risks** related to ESL are discussed in *Chapter 9*.

The **Economic impact of ESL, which is a dramatic burden on Europe economy**, is analysed in *Chapter 10*.

Analysing the **possible actions** from the assumption that preventing is better than cure. **Prevention, intervention and compensation actions** are considered in *Chapter 11*.

*Chapter 12* is about the **Quality of Education in ECEC** and *Chapter 13* is about the **Quality of Education in higher Education**, following the EU 2020 strategy.

**Second chance schemes** have been proposed as alternatives to educational choices in *Chapter 14*.

Special target groups as **Migrant Students** are the content of *Chapter 15*.



There is a section dedicated to some *Case studies* reported as some of the *Best EU experiences*, providing an overview about those countries that are performing better in terms of educational outcomes and registering lower ESL rates, and some more examples of countries which, despite active intervention are still above the 10% as the set EU standards (*Chapter 16*).

*Chapters 17, 18 and 19* describe *The Dutch, Belgium and Spain Experience*.

*Chapter 20*, is about The *Italian experience* is analysed in describing the school system first and some actions, which have been undertaken in Turin.

*Chapter 21* describes some good examples of *International Cooperation* in Europe.

In *Chapter 22 Learning from best practices in Europe*, few case studies have been reported, following the grouping in four macro-areas.

*Chapter 23* is about the **EU Commission recommendations** that influence so deeply policy making in Europe and guide the present EU strategy

The *Europe 2020 Strategy* as a comprehensive approach to ESL is provided in *Chapter 24*.

*Chapter 25* opens to the recent view of *Horizon 2020*, the new EU Strategy, which is building a bridge over the future Europe's perspectives to innovation & research, where education places a fundamental role.

Finally, in the *Chapter 26* I draw my **Conclusions** about this research project on ESL, that Europe could fight by using a *holistic/comprehensive approach*, which can provide better results and students' performances.

The research has taken into account some examples of case studies related to ESL which have been implemented either at local level by educational project carried out by EU municipalities.

It will in particular analyse the international Network the *ECEC Early Childhood Education and Care network* and the *Nesse Report*; these independent work was submitted to the EU Commission for the Thematic Working Group on ESL, addressed to local and national policy makers involved in the difficult task of achieving the *Europe 2020* target.

My research will also provide evidence about the experiences carried out by those countries that have already succeeded in achieving the set target of the *Europe 2020 strategy*.

The dissemination of the projects that have already been experienced and were successful can bring better and new perspectives to policy makers or school institutions, working on the difficult task of ESL.

Reducing ESL is an important target for *sustainable, smart and inclusive economy* that Europe needs for a better future.

Better *Quality in Education* in the future will certainly raise the standards of education but also bring welfare and prosperity to its citizens as a benefit if more efforts and investments, but especially motivation and trust, will be put together in a cohesive climate of collaboration, among EU countries.

# Zusammenfassung

## Title:

*Verbesserung der Qualität der BILDUNG  
In Europa durch die Verringerung der Rate des  
Schulabbruchs mit internationaler Zusammenarbeit*

"Bis 2020 soll der Anteil der vorzeitig der aus- und Weiterbildung (im Alter von 18-24) weniger als 10 % sein" (Europa 2020-Strategie)<sup>1</sup>

*Europa muß wieder auf Kurs zu bringen. Dann muß es auf der Strecke bleiben.*

*Das ist der Zweck von Europa 2020. Es geht um mehr Arbeitsplätze und ein besseres Leben.*

*Es zeigt, wie Europa hat die Möglichkeit, intelligenten, nachhaltigen und integrativen Wachstum rechnen, um den Weg, um neue Arbeitsplätze zu schaffen und ein Gefühl der Richtung unserer Gesellschaft anzubieten zu finden und 2010 muß einen Neuanfang markieren.*

*"Ich will Europa gestärkt aus der Finanz- und Wirtschaftskrise hervorzugehen.*

*(J. Manuel Barroso)*

Diese Doktorarbeit konzentriert sich auf eines der fünf Ziele, die von der *Europa-2020-Strategie* abzielt, die Rate des vorzeitigen Schulabbruchs Rate unter 10 % eingerichtet.

Schulabbruch ist eine Barriere gegen Wirtschaftswachstum und Beschäftigung. Es verringert die Produktivität, Wettbewerbsfähigkeit und sollte Armut und soziale Eingliederung zur gleichen Zeit verhindern.

Diese Arbeit ist das Ergebnis meiner bisherigen Erfahrungen, während ich in der Ausbildung Abteilung von Turin Landeshauptstadt und mein Studium an LMU gearbeitet habe.

Als ich anfang, auf diesem Feld der Erziehung zu arbeiten, war vor einigen Jahren die Idee des Schreibens einer Dissertation zu diesem Thema noch sehr weit. Ich benutze, die *Dropouts* oder Schulabbrecher im wesentlichen im Zusammenhang mit meiner Arbeit und Pflichten zu prüfen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Communication from the Commission *EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, 3.3.2010, Brussels

Zu dieser Zeit in der Stadt Turin, da die Mehrheit der Industriestädte im Norden Italiens, einen Prozeß der erheblichen politischen Veränderungen und gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen unterzogen wurde.

Die Stadt hatte seit vielen Jahren in ein internationales Netzwerk namens *Educating City* tätig. *IAEC Chart (International Association of Educating Cities)* eine Internationale Erziehung Städtebund) wurde im Jahr 1990 unterzeichnet, und es wurde im Jahr 1995 ratifiziert.

Ab dem Jahr ist 2000 Turin auch der National Sekretär der IAEC für Italien, Funktion der Koordination und Organisation von Hauptversammlungen.

Politikers, Institutionen, Bildungseinrichtungen Offiziere und Schulen, wußten schon damals, daß wird eine Multi-Kulturelle Industriestadt, mit eine hohe Inzidenz von Migranten aus Nordafrika, Osteuropa und China, daß Turin dringende Reformen nötig.

Mit der Unterzeichnung der *Weiterbildung Städte Chart* die Stadt engagiert zu Turin, das Projekt ein Arbeitsprogramm, das mehr und mehr ein Bildungssystem, das ist wird durch die Konzentration auf die wachsende Größe und Bildung der Bürger, insbesondere von Kindern, die Interaktion einer Pluralität von Menschen fördert, darstellt von denen jeder einen Mehrwert und pädagogische Verantwortung: Institutionen, Verbände, Gruppen in den urbanen Kontext tätig.

Das Phänomen der *Dropouts* war eine Hauptursache von Interesse für unsere Stadt und die aktuelle Bildungspolitik waren sehr anspruchsvoll in Bezug auf Engagement innerhalb unserer Abteilung und das ESL-Problem zu kämpfen galt als eine der obersten Prioritäten.

Der wichtigste Ansatz zur Verhinderung und Bekämpfung von mit Dropout Schüler in Turin wurde realisiert von der lokalen Projekt *Provaci Ancora, Sam (Versuch es noch einmal, Sam)*

*Sam* ist ein Multi-institutionellen Projekt, dessen Methodik ein lokales Netzwerk zwischen Schulen, Gemeinde Büros und lokale Vereine beinhaltet.

Das Projekt wurde im Jahr 1996 geboren, es richtet sich an 14-15 Jahre alten Schüler beibehalten.

Während dieser langen Zeit (fast 20 Jahre) da das Projekt gestartet wurde, *Sam* hat erwies sich als einer der *best Practices* mit Bezug zu ESL in Italien

und die Überwachung und Auswertung des Projekts gute Ergebnisse in Wirtschaftlichkeit und positive Resultate.

Ich habe das Projekt gründlich analysiert und ich glaube, ist eines der *best practices* in Italien, in der Lage, mit solch eine schwierige Aufgabe als ESL anzugehen.

Als ich anfang, in der pädagogischen Abteilung zu arbeiten, in Vergleichung der ESL Statistik in Europa, daß selbst wenn die Sam Projekt gut arbeitete, wir eine ganze Menge viel zu lernen aus anderen Ländern, in bezug auf die Ergebnisse.

In der Tat über der Jahre, selbst wenn mit eine positive Entwicklung, wo wir noch sehr weit davon entfernen das EU-Ziel.

Ich erkannte, daß Turins Erfahrung sinnvoll, verbreitet werde.

Ich überlege, über die beste Möglichkeit, einen aktiven Beitrag zu diesem schwierigen sozialen Thema Auswirkungen auf unsere Gesellschaft zu bieten.

Ich nahm an, daß es mußte, ein besserer Weg, um meine Ziele zu erreichen, als setzen die beiden Erfahrungen zusammen. Durch die Kombination meiner Berufserfahrung mit einer akademischen Forschung, war meine Dissertation auf jeden Fall bereit zu anfangen.

Da ich in München zu dieser Zeit lebte ich ging zu meiner Universität, der LMU und fragte Professor Eckert der Abteilung von Pädagogik, meine Dissertation zu sichern.

Er stimmte und in kurzer Zeit war ich bereit, meinen Seminaren zu beginnen, um die notwendigen Anforderungen für Dissertation zu erfüllen.

Nach einem Jahr auf Seminare und Prüfungen verbrachte, begann eine Zeit der Forschung und Untersuchung auf dem Gebiet in München, während ich bewährte Methoden und Ergebnisse aus anderen Länder-Erfahrung gleichzeitig sammeln war.

Bald erkannte ich, daß viele Länder ein starkes Engagement gezeigt hatten und einige hatten bereits ihre Ziele erreicht.

Diese soziale Frage ist sehr engagiert und anspruchsvoll auf das hohe Niveau von Fachleuten und Fähigkeiten erforderlich.

In den letzten Jahren jemand getan haben, besser, erreicht das Ziel, die nationalen Zahlen mit Bezug zu ESL unter die 10 %, wie die Finnisch und

Niederländische Erfahrung zu halten während dieser Zeit wurden andere immer noch kämpfen, um ihn herum und hatte höhere Raten von ESL wie Spanien oder Italien.

Ich wollte wissen, was funktionierte und was fehlte und wie weit, diesen Partnern, gegangen wäre. Das war ziemlich hart, denn Bekämpfung ESL einen langfristigen Prozeß, der viele Jahre, bevor die Ergebnisse deutlicher dauern könnten. Und zur gleichen Zeit, da war der Ansatz oft lokaler und nationaler und Daten waren schwer zu bekommen.

Nach dieser Zeit der erste Material für meine Forschung hatte, ich erkannte daß um zu Ende zu kommen, mußte ich einige Fallstudien zu sammeln, um sie zu analysieren.

Ich fing an, Interviews und Anfragen an Schulen und Institutionen.

In München ich habe eine spezielle "*Erlaubnis*" aus dem Leiter von der Bildung Abteilung der *Landeshauptstadt München* bekommen, und lokale Schulen zu besuchen und Institutionen wie der deutschen *Jugend Institut* alle Lehrer interviewt.

Ich wurde auch eingeführt, Schule-Leiter, politische Entscheidungsträger und Lehrer, Sozialpädagogen/innen, die ich regelmäßig traf. Alle von ihnen, die Bereitstellung von Daten und Fakten zur gleichen Zeit gebracht haben

Das Bild entstand, daß Deutschland eine lange Tradition zur Bekämpfung mit ESL hatte und eine lange Geschichte den Migration-Ströme von weniger industrialisierten Ländern gemacht hatten der meistgesuchten Destination für Ausländer Familien und Jugendliche, die einen Job suchen.

Integrationspolitik und Soziales Stand im Mittelpunkt der politischen Debatte.

ESL Ausgaben Hauptgründe für Sorge und Maßnahmen in Deutschland, waren da das Land einen Großteil von Migrante-Familien aus der Türkei, Italien, Spanien, etc. Beherbergt und die Rate der ESL wegen der Sozial Ökonomie Untergrund und Sprachprobleme in der Schule immer noch hoch war.

In vielen Schulen die Inzidenz von ausländischen Menschen könnten 60 % erreichen und könnten in einigen Bereichen auf hohe Inzidenz von SW (Sozial Wohnungen) (wie Riemer-Bereich in München, 80-90 % erreichen).

Dies bedeutete, daß die öffentlichen Schulen in diesen Bereichen kaum von deutschen Studenten besucht wurden.

Ich erkannte, daß bewährte Erfahrungen wäre einfach zu finden, aber wenn es die Zeit kam, die Aufgabe der Fallstudien zu füllen, z.B. einzelne Fälle wie Schüler, um abzuschließen meinen Recherchen wegen der Schutz von Daten auf Jugendschutz und Schülerinnen und Schüler, die eine harte Aufgabe gewesen wäre.

Ich begann, wird besorgt, wie ich dieser Probleme überwinden und eine Lösung zu finden und meine Arbeit beenden konnte..

In der Tat entschied ich mich im Einvernehmen mit meinem Doktorvater, daß Beispiele für Fallstudien könnten Projekte/Erfahrungen in die EU und wurden nicht unbedingt im Zusammenhang mit einer Person insbesondere. Aber einige wichtigste Grund war geschehen.