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In our paper, we will focus on presenting the results of qualitative research conducted in upper secondary schools in Warsaw – group and individual interviews with the staff (principals, teachers, tutors, pedagogical counsellors) on the difficulties and challenges that they face in their daily work, taking various actions directed at students at risk of school failure, including early school leaving. Since the issue of ESL in Poland is not particularly noticeable, the preventive actions taken up by the schools focus on helping students with various difficulties. These are mainly individual measures (e.g. psychological-pedagogical assistance, financial support) and seldom projects directed at the entire school community. The interviewed staff's statements also indicate that the prevention strategies taken by the schools are selective in nature rather than universal - it means they are undertaken when difficulties are already manifested. The interviewees mention that they face a number of obstacles to the implementation of different school-based measures. They give a number of possible sources of difficulties: reluctance of students to participation in any extra-curricular activities and to the school in general; limited cooperation with parents or lack thereof; lack of support (also financial) from the superior institutions (school authority, regional office of education). On the other hand, teachers declare that within the school there is an atmosphere of mutual support and cooperation. However, to reconcile the requirements connected with the implementation of the core curriculum with taking various activities beyond the obligatory "minimum" and to prepare students for final exams is a great challenge for schools.