RESL.eu Policy Briefing

Closing Conference of the ET2020 Working Group on School Policy

Brussels, November 16th 2017

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Introduction

➢ **General project info**

- Comparative study in 9 EU member states (BE, ES, PL, PT, NL, SE, UK, *AU & HU*)

- Financed by EU 7th Framework Program

- Period: February 2013 – January 2018

- Main Academic Partners:

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Reducing Early School Leaving in Europe

RESL.eu Research Plan

WP1: Theoretical en Methodological Framework

WP2: Policy Analysis and Field Exploration

WP3: Quantitative data:
➜ Exploring existing databases
➜ Longitudinal student survey
➜ Staff survey

WP4: Qualitative data:
➜ Longitudinal study of (ESL) Trajectories
➜ School-based Prevention and Intervention
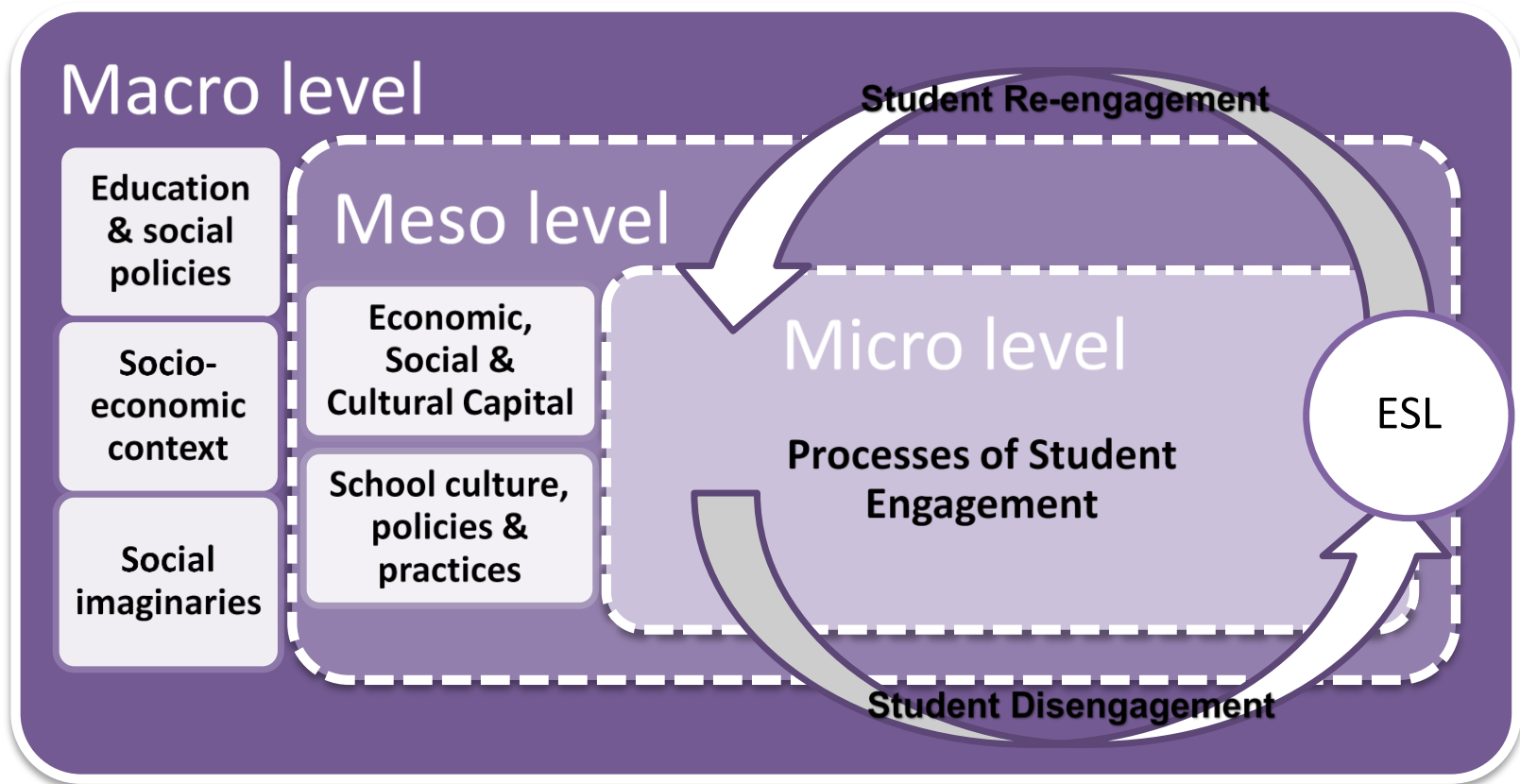➜ Alternative Learning Pathways

WP5: Triangulation and Development of an Early Warning System

WP6: Policy Briefing

RESL.eu Publication 7:
On the finalization of theoretical framework on the process and tackling of ESL (online soon)

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RESL.eu Conceptual Framework

RESL.eu Research Plan

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WP5: Triangulation and Development of an Early Warning System

WP6: Policy Briefing

RESL.eu Publication 1:
Policies on Early School Leaving in nine European countries: a comparative analysis

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Selection of Research Areas

➢ In 7 of the partner countries, 2 research areas were selected for being:

- An urban area/district (Pop. 100 000 – 500 000) under the same local authority on education, training and work

- Characterised by *relatively* high levels of youth unemployment *(~ data availability – ESL proxy)*

➔ Research areas are therefore <u>not representative</u> for the countries and should rather be considered **high risk areas for ESL**

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RESL.eu Publications 2 and 4:
- Attitudes of school personnel to Early School Leaving
- Early School leaving: Risk and Protective Factors

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RESL.eu Survey Data

➢ **Student survey**
- 1st wave (Spring 2014):
  - 19 586 students in 2 different age cohorts were surveyed in regular secondary schools
  - focussed on students' socio-demographic and educational background, perceived support, (self-)perceptions and school engagement
- 2nd wave (Spring 2016):
  - Students from the 1st wave contacted through personal contact info (e.g. email, phone, Whatsapp, social media, …)
  - ➔ 36% participated in the 2nd wave (response ranged from 30% to 47%)
  - 2nd wave aimed to get update on educational and labour market status

➢ **Staff Survey** (Spring 2015)
- Collected in the same research areas and schools (N=1977)
- Staff survey focussed on educational professionals' views on:
  - Main causes of ESL
  - Availability and efficiency of school-level measures and EU/national/regional/local policies to RESL

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RESL.eu Publications 3 and 5:
- School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures and Alternative Learning Approaches to RESL
- On understanding the process of ESL

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RESL.eu Qualitative Data Collection and Analyses

In one of both research areas per country:

- **Longitudinal study of individual students** with '*at-risk trajectories*'
  - 3 types of 'at risk profiles' selected (mainly through the survey) and interviewed twice over a period of at least 6 months (N=253)
  - Additional focus group discussions (FGDs) with NEETs
- Comparative case studies of:
  - **School-based prevention and intervention measures** (56 measures across 28 secondary schools)
  - **Compensatory/alternative pathways** (61 measures across 28 alternative learning arenas)
  - Data collected and analysed: school policy documents, interviews and FGDs with school staff and learners

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RESL.eu Publication 6 and Toolkit for Schools:
- Finding inspiring practices on how to prevent ESL and school disengagement
- Toolkit for Schools (online soon)

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Development of an EWS

➢ **Aim:** to support practitioners in identifying and monitoring students and schools in need of additional support

➢ **Target audience:**

  ▪ **School staff** (i.e. principals, pedagogical counsellors, school psychologists and teachers)

  ▪ (Local) **policy makers** in education and training

➢ **Main parts:**

  ▪ Guidelines on **how to use (school-level) administrative data** in the process of identifying and monitoring learners and schools at risk of early school leaving

  ▪ An **assessment tool based on the RESL.eu student survey** for gathering information on students' attitudes and beliefs, including detailed instructions on how to use the assessment tool on a student and school level

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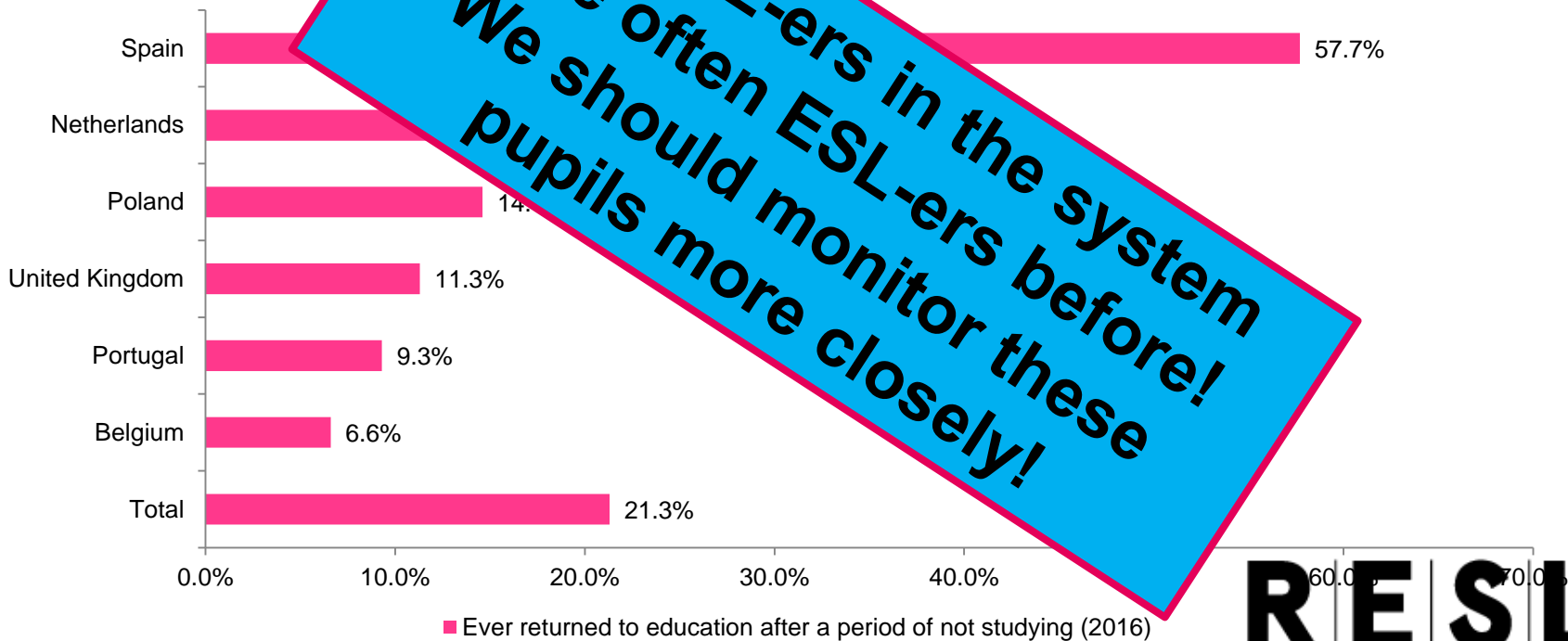
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OVERVIEW:

➢ ESL as an instrument

➢ ESL as a moving target

➢ ESL and school system characteristics

➢ ESL and school level protectives factors

➢ ESL and alternative learning arena's

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Is ESL a good measure?

- ➤ Low ESL countries according to our RESL.eu survey do have large groups of at risk pupils (truancy and non compliance).

- ➤ Does the focus on ESL make us loose sight of important groups of pupils at risk?

- ➤ Is an upper secondary diploma or equivalent enough to make the transition to the labour market? Value of high school diploma is declining.

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ESL as moving target

Ever retu[...]ion after a period of not studying [...]rvey 2016)

Country	Value
Spain	57.7%
Netherlands	
Poland	14.[...]
United Kingdom	11.3%
Portugal	9.3%
Belgium	6.6%
Total	21.3%

0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0% 40.0% 60.0% 70.0%

■ Ever returned to education after a period of not studying (2016)

Non ESL-ers in the system were often ESL-ers before! We should monitor these pupils more closely!

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SCHOOL SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

ESL and Early Tracking

➢ Tracking one of the main predictors for PISA.

➢ International research shows that early tracking is especially negative for students performing at the middle level.

➢ **But,** which school system characteristics are negative **especially** for pupils at risk?

➢ No straightforward relation between early tracking and ESL: example of the Netherlands and Portugal.

➢ **Main explaining factors**: Concentration of pupils at risk in lower tracks and lack of good apprenticeship places.

➢ Early tracking: early and heavy concentration of pupils with learning and behavioural problems; but strong apprenticeship system.

➢ Late tracking: Less concentration (pupils only tracked in programs, tracks or schools in upper secondary school); but without a strong apprenticeship component.

➢ More research into what system characteristics are important for pupils at risk!

➢ Ideal is a system that takes positive elements of both systems.

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ESL and Complusory School Age

➢ Low compulsory school age (15-16) makes combatting ESL very difficult. Pupils can leave school before ESL threshold is reached.

➢ Extending complusory school age is positive for lowering ESL rates, but also creates new issues:

➢ Unmotivated students in class.

➢ A lot of switching.

➢ <u>Solutions:</u> More flexible trajectories and more mixed trajectories (learning and working).

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SCHOOL LEVEL

Protective factors given the national school system characteristics.

Protective Factors

➤ Based on the RESL.eu survey and qualitative research in schools:

System:
➤ Early warning system (incl. emotional well being) .
➤ Safe school environment (esp. early tracked systems).
➤ Care structure in school (holistic approach).
➤ Good apprenticeship places (related to aspirations and labour market opportunities) in cooperation with companies.
➤ Flexible learning trajectories.

People:
➤ Positive Teachers – Pupils relationship.
➤ Monitoring of anti-bulling policies.
➤ Voice and co-ownership of pupils at risk in the interventions.
➤ More open and inclusive approach to involve parents from lower class and or immigrant background.

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ESL and Alternative Learning Arena's

➢ The schools we studied usually did not manage to fulfill these protective factors.

➢ Lack of budget; rigid rules; lack of apprenticeship places; overburdened staff; blaming pupils and families etc. **Ideal world doesn't exist?**

➢ **But one of our main findings:** Alternative learning arena's often are able to create these circumstances.

➢ Schools should start to understand and make use of methods developed in alternative learning arena's.

➢ **Holistic approach**: Students (or partners) have debts (debt plan); Students have children (day care); have an abusive home environment (own housing); have disciplinary and motivation problems (ownership); are not competitive enough for good apprenticeship places (need reserved places and training on the job); cannot be in regular training (need individual flexible learning arrangements).

➢ This calls for a very different school organisation.

But we know the ingredients!

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Thank you for your attention!

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