Project Paper 6

Cross-case Analyses of School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures

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Glossary

BE – Belgium

Cedefop - European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

DG EAC – Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission

ES – Spain

ESL – Early School Leaving

EU – European Union

EWS – Early Warning Systems for detection and monitoring of ESL risk indicators

Extra-muros measures – Measures implemented outside of mainstream education

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

Intra-muros measures – Measures implemented within secondary schools (*i.e.* school-based)

Macro-level factors – factors on the level of societal structures; the (educational) system level

Meso-level factors – factors on the institutional level; the school, family, neighbourhood, …

Micro-level factors – factors on the individual level; attitudes, beliefs, behavioural traits, …

NL – Netherlands

PT – Portugal

PL – Poland

RESL.eu – Reducing Early School Leaving in Europe Research Project

SEN – Special Educational Needs

UK – United Kingdom

VET – Vocational Education and Training

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Executive Summary

Positioning and main research question of the Project Paper

This sixth Project Paper of the RESL.eu Research focuses on the measures secondary schools design and implement to address the issue of early school leaving (ESL).[1] This paper is part of the RESL.eu Project Paper series and builds upon the insights gathered in Project Paper 1 on the definition of ESL; Project Paper 2 on the theoretical and methodological framework; Project Paper 3 on the institutional policy analysis; Project Paper 4 on the methodology for the qualitative fieldwork and Project Paper 5 on the preliminary analysis of the survey among youngsters in seven EU member states.

In the current Project Paper we present the findings of the cross-case evaluation of school-based prevention and intervention measures that focus on tackling ESL within the school environment by studying the perceptions and discourses of stakeholders (i.e. designers, implementers and target group).[2] The case studies included in this paper focus on measures that target youngsters still in mainstream secondary education, with a particular focus on those considered to be at risk for early school leaving. Our guiding research question is: "What school-based prevention and intervention measures can be identified as promising in reducing ESL?"

Methodology and fieldwork approach

For the evaluation of school-based prevention and intervention measures – being part of the qualitative work package (WP4) of the RESL.eu-project – we applied an evaluation method that is qualitative in nature. Given the fact that the measures we evaluated were already implemented, it was not possible to perform a (quantitative) pre- and post-evaluation focusing on the input and outcome of the measures. Based upon a review of literature on intervention studies, the theory-based stakeholder evaluation method promised to be most relevant for our research design. The theory-based stakeholder evaluation builds upon the analysis of perspectives from stakeholders regarding the scope and aim, problem orientation, participation, ownership and outcome experience of the prevention and intervention measures. For the qualitative data collection we mainly focused on three types of respondents: the designers, who were mostly school management; the implementers, who were often teachers and educational support staff; and the recipients or target individuals/groups, who were the students (and sometimes their parents).

The seven partners participating in this project paper all used a similar methodology, so as to enable cross-case analyses of school-based measures from a selection of secondary schools in particular research areas in Belgium (Flanders), the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain (Catalonia), Sweden and UK (England).

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[1] In the RESL.eu Project, early school leavers are defined as those individuals between 18 and 24 years-old leaving mainstream education without having attained an ISCED 3 level qualification.

[2] In the following project paper 7 we study the measures designed and implemented in institutions providing compensatory pathways for individuals that have left mainstream secondary education without an ISCED 3 level qualification.

The selection of focus schools was based upon the preliminary analysis of the first wave of the student survey.[3] In each school we applied a similar approach to the case studies of prevention and intervention measures. In a first phase we collected and analysed the school policy documents; these findings were then further elaborated on in an interview with the school principal to gain insights into the institutional context of the school as well as into the range of school policies and measures addressing ESL. In a next step, we organized focus group discussions to study the viewpoints and experiences of the implementers (teachers and other staff) and the target individuals/groups (students and to some extent their parents).

To enable the cross-case comparison, for each of the studied schools we used similar fieldwork documents, strategies and protocols, and in particular, similar topic lists and coding trees. The analysis was performed in two phases. First, each partner performed a case study analysis of each measure, contextualized within the institutional level. In a second phase, the work package coordinator performed the cross-case analyses based on the seven country papers and by using an overall digital database of coded summaries and transcripts translated into English. The cross-case analysis is based on data from a total of 28 schools, in which 48 school-based prevention and intervention measures were studied.

Main findings

This summary of main findings is divided in two parts: the first part addresses the findings regarding the concrete measures while categorizing them in four broad categories, i.e. early warning systems, academic support, emotional and behavioural support and career guidance support. The second part discusses the contextual preconditions that are argued by the staff and students involved to be crucial for measures to be designed and implemented effectively. As for the full Project Paper, we choose to present the contextual preconditions after discussing the more concrete measures because our analyses of the measures informed the contextual preconditions that were stressed by the stakeholders.

   A. School-based prevention and intervention measures

- **Early Warning System (EWS)**

Our findings regarding early warning systems (EWS) showed that the idea of approaching early school leaving as a process that can be altered by timely prevention and intervention measures is broadly supported by school staff. Like many educational policy makers, school staff in general seem to be convinced that the detection and monitoring of early risk indicators is necessary. Because schools often receive government funding for EWS, schools often subscribe to a broader policy framework designed by local and regional/ national governments. Schools however often have a certain amount of flexibility and responsibility to apply funds in the areas and for the issues they see as most relevant in their institutional context. Most EWS focus on the detection of more overt cognitive and behavioural indicators like students' grades, truancy or transgressive behaviour. Only a few EWS also systematically aim at detecting and monitoring student's emotional well-being. Staff members (e.g. class teachers and support staff) often aim to detect early signals of emotional difficulties during their one-on-one contact moments with students.

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[3] For an in-depth discussion of the case selection procedure see RESL.eu Project Paper 4.

Our findings show that designing and implementing these EWS requires schools to have the capacity to interpret risk indicators and design measures that respond to them. We will discuss the importance of support and professionalization of teachers as a contextual precondition below. Another risk factor for EWS is that they mostly focus on overt indicators of 'reduced' engagement such as students' grades, truancy or transgressive behaviour, while these indicators do not grasp emotional issues that could influence the process of ESL. Students who do not display their high risk status via diminishing achievement or transgressive behaviour could therefore risk slipping unseen past the radar. Finally, the efficiency of EWS should be evaluated based upon the intervention measures schools can design and implement to respond to low levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural school engagement.

- **Academic Support**

Tutoring support measures

One of the main measures responding to EWS's detection of risk indicators at the cognitive level is the provision of academic support through tutoring. Its prominent place in school's intervention measures can at least in part be explained by its close connection to what stakeholders perceive as the core tasks of teaching and education in general. Crucial protective elements for tutoring are the high awareness and commitment of educational actors about their necessity and relevance; the (perceived) effect on students' achievement; and the often school-wide approach.

A major risk factor of tutoring support measures – and additional tutoring support in particular –is that they are mostly limited to students that show sufficient motivation to participate (voluntarily). School staff repeatedly argued that students considered most at risk only seldom participate in additional tutoring. Moreover, due to budgetary constraints, teachers often take up these additional tutoring tasks on a voluntary basis, on top of their 'regular' teaching courses. These constraints make tutoring all too often dependent upon the willingness of the stakeholders involved.

Special Needs Education (SEN) support

School responses to special educational needs[4] (SEN) discussed in this paper are restricted to accommodating SEN students within a regular school context. Across the different country reports, different SEN measures included schools providing specialised SEN staff and support as a basic provision, having explicit inclusive whole-school policy approach with integrated classes and by setting up separate classes to accommodate students with learning disabilities. Based upon the data from the different country reports, special educational needs measures are often implemented by use of multidisciplinary teams, smaller teacher-student ratios and adapted curricula.

In several cases the findings show that the special attention for SEN students is often part of a 'caring and supportive nature' of a specific school and/ or institutionalized in the educational system, and as such can also depend heavily on government investments. It is often part of a more comprehensive support policy where there is a deeper awareness and commitment to support students with learning difficulties.

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[4] In this section limited to mainstream secondary schools responding to diagnosed special educational needs (SEN) on the cognitive dimension. Measures responding to emotional and behavioural needs are discussed below.

Providing children with special educational needs with appropriate support raises important questions with which several schools struggle. A major risk factor resulting from our analysis is that the lack of funding or cut-backs in governmental investments causes problems for the feasibility of inclusive education. The amount of funding is mainly reflected in schools' ability to provide smaller class groups and specialized staff. Furthermore, for schools providing SEN support in separate groups, the risk of stigmatisation of SEN students became apparent from the discourses of both students and staff.

Flexible learning pathways and (ability/ remedial) grouping

Flexible learning pathways are primarily created for students who struggle with a more rigid course and educational track structure, which was directly linked to reducing ESL by some stakeholders. Another type of academic support measure – although in practice often linked to flexible pathways are the development of ability/ remedial groupings.[5] A central success factor for both measures – as highlighted by the stakeholders – lies in the flexibility of the programmes to adapt teaching styles and individualize curriculum to the specific learning needs and ability levels of students. An important aim of such structural adaptations of study pathways and grouping found in our data is avoiding grade retention and having to move between study tracks and/ or levels, which in turn was also acknowledged by most stakeholders to (indirectly) target ESL. While the opportunities for schools to provide flexible learning pathways – and to a lesser extent ability/ remedial grouping – is constrained by educational legislation and structures, many schools can decide on its specific scope and practicalities. The eligibility of students to participate mostly depends on decisions of staff and is in some cases obligatory rather than voluntary for students and their parents. Programmes allowing students' voices to be heard in this decision-making process often see this being reflected positively in students' participation and outcome experience. Where the selection of participants takes into account the readiness and commitment of students, our analyses showed that flexible pathways and grouping can overlook those at high risk of ESL, particularly when government cut-backs makes these measures more selective. Furthermore, in the case of homogenous ability grouping, the stigmatisation of students in lower ability groups is a risk factor. In a specific case, this consideration among stakeholders has led to a successful reshuffling of the grouping to promote peer tutoring in a more heterogeneous learning environment.

- **Socio-emotional and Behavioural Support**

One-on-one support: counselling, coaching and mentoring

Our analysis shows that while a proactive approach towards one-on-one emotional and behavioural support is to be preferred – because it aims to prevent motivational/ behavioural problems and is often less punitive and stigmatizing in nature – most schools predominantly react upon more visible symptoms like absenteeism, disruptive behaviour and diminishing study behaviour. Individual emotional and behavioural support often comes too late and the schools' responses are (therefore) conceived by the target individuals as punitive rather than supportive. Furthermore, such a reactive approach is also mostly non-voluntary, allows little room for students' voices and hampers the development of a caring and trusting relationship between the student and a potential adult trustee.

[5] Ability/ remedial grouping needs to be distinguished from curriculum tracking in non-comprehensive systems for secondary education. For more info please see the full paper section on ability and remedial grouping.

The involvement of staff in providing individualised care tends to be mostly tiered with a primary school-wide signalling role for teachers and involvement of specialized staff for students showing high support needs. The timing, coordination and task differentiation, however, shows strong variation. The structure of the individualised support ranges between highly structured weekly care team meetings including cross-sectorial partnerships, to ad hoc reactions to students' needs that are picked up by chance rather than through systematic early warning systems. Also, the level of professionalization of support staff varies from regular teaching staff without specific training, to care professionals like student counsellors, social workers and school psychologists. Again, the access to and availability of funding for professional support are considered essential by the designers and implementers. Nonetheless, while specialised support staff are usually better trained in providing this support – when provided only symptomatically – students often prefer more proactive support provided by someone they recognise as a person they trust.

Truancy and disciplinary policies

Our findings show that truancy and disciplinary interventions predominantly punish students for not being compliant with school regulation about attendance, punctuality and class behaviour rather than rewarding them for compliance or positive behaviour. These truancy and disciplinary policies are often formally stipulated in procedures and applied as a stepwise approach going from notifying the parents to drafting behavioural contracts with sanctions such as detention, suspension and ultimately (temporary or permanent) exclusion from regular class or the school all together. While being mainly punitive in nature, many of the disciplinary actions are often combined with more supportive actions provided by multi-disciplinary teams involving youth care and mental health professionals. In some cases the disciplinary actions are also enforced in cooperation with local and national authorities and can have legal consequences for the students and their parents.

As participation of students in disciplinary measures is generally based on overstepping behavioural rules, they are mostly mandatory. The non-voluntary participation and the fact that disciplinary measures are mainly unilaterally designed and implemented by school staff are often reflected in the low sense of ownership among the target group. Nevertheless, the low sense of ownership towards school regulations and sanctions does not mean students overall do not value the importance of truancy and disciplinary policies. Similar to school staff, students recognize the value of regulations for the school's reputation and climate. More distributed leadership that recognizes the voice of the target group in the disciplinary actions can therefore increase students' ownership.

Regarding the (direct) relation to reducing ESL, designers and implementers primarily evaluate the outcome of truancy and disciplinary measures based on short-term indicators such as truancy and expulsion rates, rather than ESL rates. Furthermore, disciplinary policies are often a school's response at a point where truancy and student misconduct have reached an advanced stage wherein neither staff nor the youngsters are motivated to restore their relationship and invest in staying in school. Moreover, sanctioning students for non-attendance or showing disruptive behaviour, especially by excluding them from the school, can further increase the risk of early school leaving for those students considered most at risk.

Social skills training & extra-curricular activities

The prominent representation of social skills development in ESL intervention studies was not reflected as strongly in our case studies. Furthermore, those measures that have social skill training characteristics – e.g. small class sizes, supportive student-teacher relations, adapted curricula and teaching styles – were not provided school-wide but rather tended to segregate students who show high levels of emotional and behavioural risks. While a more intensified student-focussed approach can be beneficial for students at risk, segregating them in special teaching groups shows risk for stigmatisation, which was confirmed by both participating students and staff. Furthermore, because providing social skills training is often not considered to be the core business of schools, the (human) resources and knowhow for providing social skills training often lies with youth care and mental health professionals. Herein lies a major risk factor, because school staff often reported a difficult relationship with outside agencies and the lack of continued government funding. Although most schools claimed to be open for cross-sectorial cooperation, cooperation was often described as demanding and (therefore) lacking timely responses to students' needs.

When considering the provision of extra-curricular activities, we found some level of extra-curricular activities in all schools. The scope of these activities did, however, vary widely. Some schools only provide very limited access to activities outside of the school curriculum, while other schools offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities: from sports, arts, crafts, to voluntary work or specific skills training. Most of the aims involve social skills development and increasing students' school belonging. Different from most measures that provide emotional and behavioural support, participation in extra-curricular activities is almost exclusively voluntary and some schools also allow students to help steer the schools provision of these activities, often increasing their feelings of ownership.

Career guidance support

Stakeholders in general argue that the provision of quality career guidance support with respect to students' educational and further professional trajectory is crucial. While school staff mostly acknowledged that career guidance support needs to go further than information about the general supply of educational pathways, individualised career guidance that speaks to students in a direct and relevant way was rather scarce. Various schools do engage with this issue and invite role models, try to give students a high degree of ownership of career guidance activities, or try to find meaningful internships for their students. A longitudinal and integrated school approach towards career guidance support can prevent it from becoming too dependent upon the willingness and commitment of specific staff members.

With regard to workplace learning as a career guidance tool, stakeholders reported a risk in balancing educational aims - supporting students to attain their ISCED 3 qualification – and catering to labour market aspirations by providing opportunities for workplace learning. Some educational actors fear that employers can attract students with (short-term) labour contracts before they attain a diploma. In other cases, however, cooperation between schools, students and labour market organizations appeared to be very fruitful for students' engagement in education.

Again, it was shown that it is critical to provide students with a feeling of ownership in the measures that are developed, not only to heighten their engagement but also to provide opportunities for learning through doing.

B. Contextual pre-conditions

Next to the more concrete measures that were discussed and evaluated above, our analysis shows that stakeholders often refer to some underlying processes that can have great influence on the success of a measure. We grouped these underlying processes together as the broader contextual preconditions that need to be in place and/or addressed for specific measures to be considered successful by its designers, implementers and target group.

- **Addressing Basic Needs of Students**

Perhaps the most elementary contextual precondition for schools to keep students on track for attaining an educational qualification is to ensure basic human needs like nourishment and shelter are provided for. Although the stakeholders did not often discuss addressing these basic needs explicitly, for some schools the poor living conditions of students made this issue an important precondition for successfully supporting student's educational attainment. In several of the studied research areas, national and local education authorities provide schools and students with resources to support basic needs like free meals in schools (e.g. UK and Portugal) and study allowances (e.g. Flanders). Some schools that pick up on living conditions that do not enable students to actively engage in education worked out school-based actions and cross-sectorial partnerships to provide these students with after-school study facilities, allowances for study materials, free meals and clothing.

- **Promoting Parental Involvement**

Parents are considered to play a crucial role in the educational trajectory of their children and are perceived as a crucial actor in tackling ESL. School staff in particular (management, teachers and support staff) expressed the central role of parents. The schools show a wide variation of actions and practices that aim to raise parents' engagement in their children's education like organizing parent-teacher meetings, home visits, providing interpreters, drafting commitment agreements, parent satisfaction surveys, workshops on parenting skills, and local community outreach programmes. All these actions have different scopes and aims but are often based on the problem orientation that parents need to be more involved in the child's educational career. A major risk factor found in various (but not all) school actors' discourses is the negative representation of parents with socially disadvantaged and/ or ethnic minority backgrounds. Based on these deficiency-based ideas about students' living conditions and family support, school staff is often not optimistic about involving parents more in the school and often directly link this to the problem of ESL. Yet, a more positive and less stigmatizing approach in some schools has been able to engage parents successfully in the school practice.

- **Promoting Professional Development and Support of Staff**

Another recurring thread is the focus on the need for further professionalization of staff. School staff in particular expressed that tackling ESL necessitates staff that is able to detect and monitor early signals of risk and to address these issues, sometimes by being able to refer students to

specialized staff. This is crucial especially for those students that do not show any overt and explicit signs that are often missed or not picked up by staff.

While our findings show that most schools employ some kind of support staff responding to emotional and behavioural needs of students, the professionalization level widely differs between schools and designated staff members. Moreover, where some schools motivate and support (class) teachers to build caring one-on-one relationships through mentoring and individual meetings, some staff expressed that they did not feel equipped for taking up this role. Therefore, it is not surprising that several staff members explicitly expressed the need for further professionalization and in-service training. These staff members sometimes indicated that the initiative for in-service training lay with the staff itself and that management – often restricted due to financial cutbacks – needs to be convinced to allocate resources for additional training. Another difficult issue is that some staff felt that in-service training did not always provide them with the tools they felt are needed for addressing the needs of students at risk.

- **Promoting Supportive Student-teacher Relationships**

As became apparent throughout the interviews and focus group discussions with students, the most important actors in a student's educational trajectory is the teacher. This person can take up the role of trustee and can become a reference person for students when discussing educational – but sometimes also more personal – issues. Many designers and implementers of school-based interventions in our study acknowledge the strong role a single staff member - and especially a teacher - can play with respect to a student's risk for ESL. In some schools, personnel is therefore made aware of their decisive role and are motivated to connect with students in order to pick up on and respond to potential risk indicators. Typically, schools who are investing in teacher-student relationships tend to introduce regular one-on-one talks between students and specific teachers or support staff members in the form of regular feedback interviews with (class) teachers, talks with mentors, youth coaches and student counsellors.

- **Promoting Student Voice and Ownership**

The underlying assumption of the theory-based stakeholder evaluation method we applied is that it is important to recognize and appreciate the voices, experiences and perceptions of all stakeholders involved in specific measures. In our case this implies focusing on the designers (often principals and management), implementers (often teachers and other school staff) but also on the recipients (mainly students and their parents). Although it is important to understand if students share a similar view on the scope and aims of the measures, the problem orientation behind the measures and on their feasibility, our findings show that they are often absent in the design and implementation of measures. Measures are usually considered less effective when students do not feel motivated to participate. The fieldwork in the focus schools also showed that school personnel is not always interested in students' voices or do not have the time and/or competencies to acknowledge them. Students are also, however, sometimes simply not interested in expressing their voices to school staff, often due to negative past experiences. Nonetheless, several focus schools show interesting examples of how students are invited to express their voices and feel recognized for it. One important way to facilitate the expression of student voice is to provide specific avenues of expression, such as student councils or boards, through which ideas, complaints and issues can be conveyed. Other schools implement one-on-one feedback

moments for students to express their voice in a more intimate context, while others use a questionnaire to probe students' perceptions about the school's policies and actions.

- **Taking on a Holistic Multi-professional Approach**

Our short literature review showed that there seems to be consensus about the need for a holistic and multidimensional approach to tackle ESL efficiently. A comprehensive approach can be instituted by not only responding to cognitive and behavioural risk factors, but also targeting potential emotional disengagement from school. In practice, prevention and intervention measures focus mostly on one or two dimensions separately. Separating students for providing additional tutoring by using ability grouping, for instance, can have stigmatising effects on students with lower ability and therefore on their personal well-being and school belonging.

At the same time, holistic policies also do not approach ESL as a (rational) decision made by an individual, but as a process leading up to a potential ESL decision that is always embedded in a broader and complex context. Our findings showed that it is important not to lose sight of the influence of the other dimensions on the institutional and structural level. A holistic approach thus implies that the micro-level of the individual student is studied taking into account the opportunities and limitations provided at the meso- and macro-level. While many stakeholders are in fact convinced that ESL is a complex process that needs to be addressed in a holistic and multidimensional way, a lack of strong relationships with students' parents and partnerships with other relevant actors outside of the school limits a school's opportunities for a more holistic approach. Nevertheless, our findings show that various schools do succeed in building these enabling relationships, yet also reveal that a crucial element to achieving this more holistic and multidimensional approach are sufficient resources.

- **Sufficient and Stable Funding for Reducing ESL**

A final overall contextual precondition that is a recurring thread throughout the discourses of school staff is the issue of sufficient and stable funding of schools. Many schools have argued that they are in favour of taking on a more holistic approach, that they encourage continuous professionalization of their staff, want to provide a broad range of extra-curricular activities or provide for the basic needs of their students. However, on numerous occasions throughout the interviews and focus group discussions, school staff reported that they feel hampered by insufficient and unstable funding. The consequences of the economic crisis and the cut-backs are discussed regularly and as a consequence some hard choices needed to be made. Promising (pilot) measures and policies had to be terminated and some management feel there is not even enough funding available to employ sufficient teachers and support staff to engage with students at risk of ESL. This leads us to conclude that one of the most important risk factors for the success of the measures lies on a structural level and concerns the availability of funds and resources to support educational stakeholders. Nonetheless, in some of the focus schools we found sophisticated and comprehensive policies tackling ESL that were built on strong early warning systems and policy responses, committed staff and good relations with parents and cross-sectorial actors. The availability of sufficient and stable government funding was often indicated as being crucial for designing, implementing and maintaining these efficient policies and supportive relationships.

1. Introduction

Project paper 6 discusses the findings of the evaluation of school-based (intra-muros) measures to reduce early school leaving (ESL). This paper comprises the cross-cases analyses of the different measures analysed in the country reports provided by seven project partners: Belgium, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands and The UK.[6]

In each country a research area and four focus schools were selected and in each school at least one measure was studied. The measures were defined as school-based, implying those measures that were implemented within the concrete boundaries of a school. The nature of the evaluation of the school-based measures can be defined as an adapted theory-driven stakeholder evaluation. This implies - as is discussed in Project Paper 4 - that measures are studied based upon the policy documents (made) available to the researcher and on the understanding and interpretation of the measures by the stakeholders involved: the designers (mostly school management), the implementers (mostly teachers and support staff) and the recipients (i.e. students). The discourses of these three groups of school actors were studied by means of in-depth interviews and/or focus group discussions.

The general aim of project paper 6 is to study interesting measures designed to tackle ESL in such a way that we can single out certain risk and protective factors we argue to be important when designing and implementing these measures. The analyses presented in this paper will be paired with the analyses of the subsequent project paper 7 on extra-muros compensatory measures, and will feed into work package 5 on the development of conceptual models of good practices in tackling ESL.

Project paper 6 builds upon the theoretical and methodological framework developed in Project Paper 2. In the latter, we designed a theoretical framework and tried to situate the process of early school leaving (ESL) within a dual interactive and holistic approach:

- The process of ESL approached from the micro-individual level of the student takes a holistic stance and studies the (whole of the) cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of school engagement as a proxy for potential ESL at an individual level;

- The process of ESL approached from the macro- and meso-level situates the individual process discussed above within a specific educational and structural context and within the (whole of the) interactions between individual students and significant others, such as teachers, other school staff, peers and parents. The school as a contextual element as well as the family and the broader contexts are the focus of this approach.

The macro- and meso-level elements were to a large extent discussed in Publication 1 and more in detail in the country reports for WP2 where we focused on the systemic and policy level of education in the nine partner countries. This publication provides the broader structural and educational background against which the particular measures we discuss in the current paper can be situated.

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[6] The country reports on which the cross-case analyses are based can be provided on request.

In Project Paper 4 we designed the methodological framework for the qualitative fieldwork and the analysis of the school-based measures that will be recapitulated more briefly in this report. In this Project Paper 6 we focus more concretely on the actions taken and measures developed in specific schools in a specific research area in each partner country. To some extent it grasps preventive school-based actions, but more concretely it focuses on intervention measures aimed at students perceived as at risk of ESL. These measures cannot be seen as representative for a specific country or even for a specific area. Rather they are individual cases to be studied as such. Nevertheless, in a cross-case analysis, broader emerging patterns and processes are discussed and studied without claiming to be representative.

The more comprehensive findings on the general process of Early School Leaving will be discussed in subsequent project papers and publications.

1.1 EU Policy framework for school-based prevention and intervention

In this section we will concisely elaborate on the specific EU policy documents and other EU funded research on the prevention of and intervention in the ESL process. Whereas Publication 1 and the related country reports for WP2 focused on the more general educational and policy context, the current project paper 6 will focus on more concrete school-based measures developed (in)directly to tackle ESL. The following policy-oriented publications will be discussed briefly: Reducing Early School Leaving in the EU studied by GHK Consulting (2011); Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support, Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on ESL (EU Commission 2013); Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe Strategies, Policies and Measures (Eurydice & CEDEFOP Report, 2014); and Preventing Early School Leaving in Europe – Lessons Learned from Second Chance Education (ECORYS, 2013).

The fact that reducing the ESL rate across the EU Member States is one of the EU 2020 headline targets illustrates that early school leaving is a core policy issue for the EU Commission. To reach this target the European Commission has set up a Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving that published its final report on November 2013. The aim of the Thematic Working Group (active between 2011 and 2013) was to provide a comprehensive policy framework for tackling ESL, and this was based upon regular meetings between policy makers and practitioners, and to some extent also academics. The framework presented argues for a comprehensive strategy to tackle ESL, focusing on identification and analysis, monitoring, policy coordination, prevention, interventions and compensation. The policy framework also offers policy makers and practitioners a checklist to analyse the comprehensiveness of their measures (EU Commission, 2013).[7]

In the same year of the start of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving a report was published by GHK Consulting (2011) on Reducing Early School Leaving in the EU. This comprehensive study brought together a state of the art compilation of the existing literature on this issue and produced in-depth country reports on nine European countries (Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Finland and UK (England)). New empirical data was gathered through 83 interviews with various stakeholders. It studied the process of ESL from a multitude of perspectives and these findings and frameworks were used as the basis for subsequent policy actions and research.

[7] For a more thorough discussion of EU policy on ESL, see Publication 1 Resl.eu (2014).

Besides the study performed by GHK Consulting and the final report of this working group on ESL, the European Commission published another study, this time on the insights from second chance education and how these might help in preventing ESL in secondary education. The aim was to focus on certain good practices in this compensatory measure and how these practices might be transferred and adapted to benefit students in 'mainstream or initial' education. The report, also published in 2013, used a mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, paired with workshops with experts and practitioners and 'fact-finding visits' (ECORYS, 2013). Their main findings focused on 'planning and organisation', on 'teaching and learning' and on 'assessment and progression' related to the issue of ESL, and showed that second chance schemes can often innovate more easily and can focus more on the individual profiles and needs of their students. However, the question remains to what extent these lessons can be transferred to mainstream education. (ECORYS, 2013).

The most recent publication of the EU Commission on the topic of early school leaving was titled 'Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe' and was presented in 2014 as the final report of a collaborative study by Eurydice and Cedefop[8]. In this report the focus was broadened from 'early *school* leaving' (ESL) to 'early leaving from *Education and Training*' (ELET), while the threshold of ISCED 3 was retained. Rather than contributing new information and insights, the report summarizes the state of the art on strategies, policies and measures with respect to ELET, also incorporating academic publications (Eurydice and CEDEFOP, 2014). Several key points were named with respect to ESL prevention: the detection and monitoring of early signs of decreasing school engagement; the importance of quality education and career guidance in tackling these early signs; the importance of multi-professional and cross-sectorial teams to engage with youngsters; and the importance of quality vocational education and training (VET) in reducing ESL rates by creating a relevant and strong alternative for youngsters not in general education.

These important insights from EU policy documents and EU policy-oriented studies – together with some theoretical insights and empirical findings from academic publications – will be used to contextualize our findings from the cross-case analysis. The next section will present our conceptual framework for the cross-case analyses of school-based prevention and intervention measures. This framework was based on academic as well as policy-oriented literature and guided the comparative analyses of different types of school-based measures. We start off each section in chapter 3 by presenting some concrete findings regarding specific types of measures and contextual risk and protective factors from previous empirical studies.

1.2 A Conceptual Framework for the Cross-case Analyses of School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures

We concisely describe the way the report is structured and how insights from the academic and policy literature available are fused with our empirical findings. The starting point was our core variable of school engagement, which the literature showed to be one of the main predictors for early school leaving and which focused on the three dimensions of engagement: the cognitive, behavioural and emotional dimension (Wang et al. 2011; Lamote et al. 2013). As discussed in the literature, it is interesting to apply this more nuanced and multi-layered perspective on the concept

[8] The European centre for the development of vocational training

of school engagement, insofar as it allows us to tailor prevention and intervention measures, which in turn enables us to focus on a specific dimension with which a student seems to struggle (Finn & Rock, 1997; Wang & Eccles, 2012). Many of the measures we discuss in this project paper 6 focus on one or more of these dimensions and this is also apparent in the qualitative interview and focus group data we collected.

Based upon these insights, we designed the following conceptual framework representing the different types of measures studied in 28 schools in seven countries discussed in this paper (see figure 1). As will be elaborated upon in more detail in the following sections, the application of early warning systems (EWS) is often in place in the schools we studied. These systems are used - as the name already clarifies - to signal and reveal early signs of a decrease in one or more dimensions of school engagement. Approached from a chronological perspective, these EWS can be seen as a first step in detecting and monitoring engagement and educational issues. In a next step, schools design and implement more concrete measures that engage with one or more of the three dimensions we discussed before: the cognitive, the behavioural and the emotional dimension. Although many of these measures incorporate elements that relate to various dimensions, we tried to categorize them according to their main aim and strategy. Thus, we could differentiate these measures based upon their focus on 'academic support', 'emotional and behavioural support' and 'career guidance'. In the results, we discuss these different types of measures in more detail and we give a short overview of the academic literature related to each type. Next to these measures we aim to distillate some underlying processes that we feel are contextual preconditions necessary for the success of the more concrete measures designed and/or implemented by schools. Also for this section we bring together existing academic insights to underpin our findings.
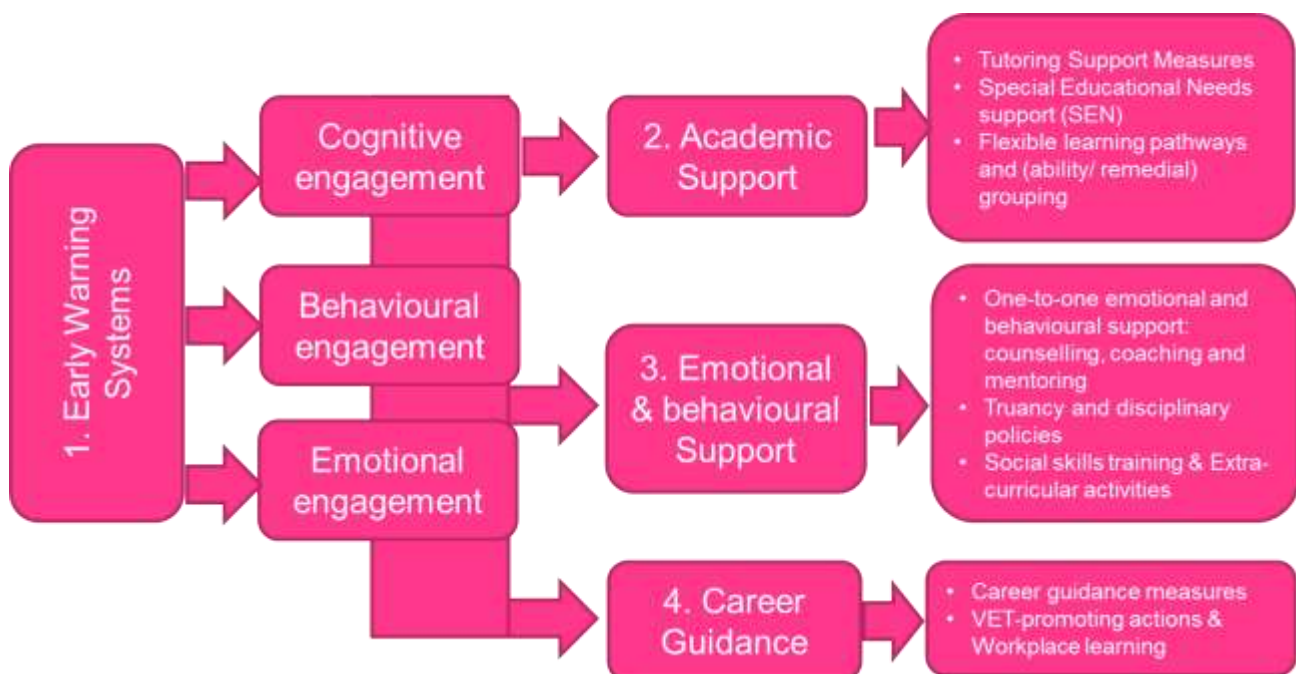

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for cross-case analyses of school-based prevention and intervention measures to reduce ESL

2. Methodology

Within the context of the Resl.eu Project[9] the categorization of measures to reduce early school leaving (ESL) is made between intra-muros measures implemented within the school and extra-muros measures implemented outside of the school. In general, the measures designed to address the issue of ESL can focus on prevention, intervention or compensation. The intra-muros or school-based measures within secondary schools – which will be the focus of this Project Paper 6 – can be categorized as school-wide or student-focused prevention and intervention measures. The difference between those measures identified as 'prevention' and those as 'intervention' is based upon the report from the EU DG EAC Thematic Working Group on ESL (EU Commission, 2013). The rationale for this categorization is as follows:

"Prevention measures seek to tackle ESL before its first symptoms are visible. Successful prevention of ESL considers the preconditions for successful schooling and the design of education and training systems" (EU Commission, 2013: 18). School-based prevention of early school leaving thus consists of the measures taken within the context of a school to provide the preconditions for a stimulating learning context for all students.

"Intervention measures are defined as measures addressing emerging difficulties at an early stage. Many intervention measures apply to all students, but are especially beneficial and relevant to those at risk of ESL. Other intervention measures are more student-focussed and build on the early detection of support needed for learning and motivation" (EU Commission, 2013: 21). School-based intervention of ESL therefore includes all specific measures taken in the context of the school that directly or indirectly aim at reducing early school leaving. These intervention measures can be built upon school-wide or student-focused strategies:

> School-wide strategies address all students, but are especially beneficial to those at risk of dropping-out. They look at school development in general, early warning systems and networks with outside actors to support the work of the school.

> Student-focused strategies build on early detection of support needed for learning and motivation and take a multi-professional and holistic approach in addressing them, and provide individual guidance and support." (EU Commission, 2010: 23).

As argued, we define school-based measures as those measures taking place within the school environment. External partners can be involved in these measures, however, the measure itself is executed within the school and the student is not taken out of the school for a longer period.

Each partner selected four schools in one specific research area and at least one measure per focus school, of which at least one can be categorized as a student-focused intervention. Thus, in total each partner at least selected four school-based intervention measures (one per school), and at least one of these is a student-focused intervention. School-wide intervention measures were studied from a more holistic ESL related school policy perspective while student-focused measures are studied with a focus on this specific measure. For student focused intervention measures, focus groups were organized with staff and youngster's peers participating in this measure.

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[9] This methodology section is based on RESL.eu Project Paper 4

One of the main goals of the RESL.eu-project is to compare practices with respect to reducing ESL in different educational systems and local conditions. A strong focus is placed on enabling such comparisons by structuring the fieldwork, the data coding and analysis. This also implies that the cases – i.e. the school-based measures - need to have some specific features that make it possible to compare them and to assess the context specificity of each of these measures. Besides the similar case selection, topic guides, coding scheme and report template, the school-based measures were analysed along the lines of the conceptual model based on the theoretical framework presented in RESL.eu Project Paper 2 and outlined in the previous section (i.e. section 1.2).[10]

2.1 Theory-driven Stakeholder Evaluation Approach

Since the measures we focus on had already been implemented at the time the fieldwork was carried out, it was impossible to do a pre-assessment and post-evaluation of intervention measures targeting ESL; we therefore opted to do an adapted theory-based or theory-driven stakeholder evaluation of the school policy targeting ESL (Hansen & Vedung, 2010; McDavid, et al., 2013). This was to some extent also the underlying rationale for developing this type of evaluation methodology. As a reaction to the dominating input-output evaluation paradigm, the focus in theory driven evaluation was redirected towards studying 'what is it about the measure that makes it work, for whom and under what circumstances?' (Pawson & Tilley 1997; Weiss, 1997). This approach is theory-based in the sense that every measure has an underlying (programme) theory, which refers to the set of theoretical assumptions amongst the stakeholders involved in, i.e. what the problem is and how the measure will address it (Chen 2005). Theoretically in each measure one can distinguish between designers, the implementers and the target group(s) of the measure. In a theory-based stakeholder evaluation, the evaluator tries to make these (theoretical) assumptions underlying the design and implementation of the measure explicit via analysing discourses of the stakeholders involved based upon document analysis and/or interview or focus group data (Rossi, et al., 2004).

To understand why a measure is designed the way it is, the viewpoints of the designers need to be studied. In the case of the school-based measures studied in this project paper 6, the designers are often school boards and school management (and in some cases local/national government). However, the assumptions and intentions of designers do not always correspond to those of the implementers and it is (also) for this reason that the viewpoints of implementers need to be studied, as they can implement a measure quite differently than is intended by the designers. In our study the implementers are often teachers and other (support) staff. However, in some cases the distinction between designers and implementers will be less clear, as both groups can overlap. While these two groups of stakeholders (can) have their specific theoretical assumptions about designing and implementing a measure, the target group should certainly not be forgotten. If, for example, the target group of the measure feels they need another measure, approach or strategy, then it is more likely their engagement in the measure will be low and the efficiency of the measure will be low (McDavid, et al., 2013). As we do not reconstruct the complex (programme) theory underlying these measures for each stakeholder individually and in its entirety to enable comparison on this level, which is common practice in these evaluations, we argue to apply an 'adapted' theory-driven stakeholder evaluation.

[10] The fieldwork documents can be found in Annex 3.

As a final remark, it is paramount to underline that this evaluation of measures does not imply that each project partner was asked to study and present an exhaustive overview of all the measures designed and/or implemented in a selected school. Instead, in each of their selected schools, partners studied one or more interesting and relevant measures more in-depth. As a consequence, we do not aim to list all existing measures, but to analyse the way specific measures are designed, implemented, perceived and appreciated by the stakeholders involved. The results of the cross-case analyses of school-based measures presented in this RESL.eu Project Paper 6 are therefore in no way representative for all existing measures at the country, local, nor school levels.

2.2 Applied Methodology and Fieldwork Approach

With respect to the methodology used for the fieldwork on the evaluation of school-based measures, this implies that these measures are evaluated based on two types of analyses:

- an analysis of the available documents (e.g. school policy on ESL, design of the specific measures, administrative data on resource allocation for the measure), and;
- an analysis of perspectives of the stakeholders engaged in the school policy and specific measures.

To assess the school-based intervention measures in each of the four selected schools, we started with a short analysis of the school policy documents before interviewing respondents in a school. Reading and scanning these documents on issues (in)directly related to ESL allowed us to have a more focused discussion with respondents. In Annex 2 these school descriptions as well as the descriptions of the specific measures and the broader institutional context are presented together. Based upon our knowledge and analysis of this general information, we started interviewing the respondents. We developed a specific interview sequence starting with the respondents able to give us a broader perspective on school policy and the design of the measures (the principal and/or management); next, we compared these ideas to discourses emerging in a focus group discussion with members of the target group and a focus group with staff members implementing the measures; to finally end with the case study of youngsters and their parents.

Our ideal timeframe for the following sequencing of the fieldwork for the evaluations was between October and December of 2014. Nonetheless, this proved not to be feasible in each case.

1. Analysis of school policy documents per school (N=4)
2. One interview with each school principal (N=4)
3. One focus group discussion with students in each school (N=4)
   - Student-focused measure: students involved in the specific measure
   - School-wide measure: case students in a class with a high risk of ESL
4. One focus group discussion (FGD) with school staff in each school (N=4)
   - Student-focused: school staff involved in the specific measure
   - School-wide: school staff relevant for selected case youngsters
5. Four interviews with case students still in school for each school (N=8)
   - Interviews will focus both on evaluation and biographical topics
6. One interview with parent(s) of one case pupil per school (N=4)

This makes a total of 4 document analyses and 28 interviews/ focus group discussions per partner to inform the evaluation of at least 4 school-based measures directly or indirectly targeting ESL, of which one per partner country is a student-focused measure.

Topics focused on the evaluation of intra-muros measures

Given the aim of this project paper, it was key to collect as much relevant data as possible for making evaluations of school-based measures. As argued, the topics used for the evaluation of the measures were mainly discussed in the interviews/focus group discussions with the management, staff, peers and parents related to the individual students (the case youngsters). The main topics discussed with these respondents related to 1) their awareness of the issues of ESL and if the school has designed measures to tackle it; 2) their reasons for participating in the measure (as designer, implementer or target group); 3) their ideas about the scopes and aims of the measure; 4) their perception about the problem(s) the measure tries to address; 5) their feeling of ownership in co-designing/implementing the measure; 6) their idea of the feasibility of meeting the aims and intentions of the measure; 7) the support they did or did not feel and 8) their perception about the outcome; 9) finally, we also focused on the idea if the school was able to adapt to the local realities they are confronted with. More information on the topics lists can be found in Annex 3.

Another main focus during this period of fieldwork (October – December 2014) was on building a relationship of trust and rapport with the case youngsters (students), as we aim to interview them two times in the course of the research (the next interview is planned for 2016). The interviews with the youngsters focused mostly on their broader educational and social context and their aspirations, and partially on their evaluation of school-based measures. This also implies that not all of the information collected at this stage is analysed and reported in this project paper but will feed into the following project output. The main topics discussed with the case youngsters focused on 1) their perspective on education and personal trajectory; 2) past experiences and present situation; 3) perspective on interactions and processes of exclusion and inclusion in school; social and cultural capital; 4) perspective on intra-muros evaluations (if involved); and 5) future plans and perspective on the labour market. More information on the topic lists can be found in Annex 3.

As the RESL.eu-project is a European comparative research project involving different countries and educational systems, we developed topic lists that are sufficiently similar to allow for a comparative analysis. A comparative evaluation of school-based measures also demands a stricter approach to one's fieldwork and the development of topic lists.

3. The Cross-case Analysis of School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures

In this section, we present the findings of the cross-case analyses of the case studies presented in the seven Country Reports. We divided this section in two parts: the first part addresses the more concrete intervention measures developed in the schools, while categorizing them in four broad categories, i.e. early warning systems, academic support, emotional and behavioural support and career guidance support. The second part discusses the contextual preconditions that are argued by the staff and students involved as being crucial for the former intervention measures to be designed and implemented effectively. Preconditions that were broadly acknowledged by the different school actors are addressing students' basic needs; promoting supportive student-teacher relations; promoting student voice and ownership; promoting professional development and support of staff; promoting parental involvement; and promoting a holistic multi-professional approach towards ESL. We choose to present the contextual preconditions for successful school-based intervention measures after discussing the more concrete intervention measures because our analyses will inform the contextual preconditions as indicated by the stakeholders.

Before presenting the results of the extensive fieldwork and cross-case analyses we want to direct the reader's attention to Annex 1, in which a complete overview of all studied school-based measures is provided. These case studies are also represented as a grid that shows an overview of which case studies are used in the analyses, per section. The grid cannot, however, be interpreted as an overview of the availability of certain types of measures or contextual preconditions, because neither the schools nor the measures were selected for being representative for a certain country or research area. Identification codes are used in the grid and in the text. Belgian School A, for instance, is represented as 'BE School A' and the school-based intervention 'Open Classroom' in Spanish School B is shown as 'ES B2'. These identification codes can be easily linked to the intervention overview presented in Annex 1. Furthermore, Annex 2 contains one-page descriptions of the country-specific educational backdrops, the selected focus schools and information on the studied intervention measures.

3.1 School-based Intervention Measures to Reduce ESL

Most schools acknowledge the academic conceptualisation of early school leaving as a process and stress the need to tackle educational difficulties at an early stage. Therefore, much weight is placed upon Early Warning Systems (EWS) across the partner countries. Concrete measures are often based upon these findings of EWS. As a consequence, we start the discussion in this section with the EWS that were found in the country reports, and subsequently discuss the more concrete intervention measures that focus on providing students with academic, emotional and behavioural support. Next to this, a different set of measures are discussed, namely those focusing on career guidance support and actions promoting VET and workplace learning.

3.1.1 Early Warning Systems

Researchers, policy makers and educational practitioners in general agree early school leaving (ESL) is a process and not a spur of the moment decision of an individual student (Lamb, et al., 2011). Conceptualizing ESL as a process occurring over a longer period of time implies that early signals can be detected that could lead to the actual dropout. However, what is also implied in this conceptualization is that a mere detection is insufficient and that a constant monitoring will reveal how certain detected difficulties or problems evolve (Heppen & Therriault, 2008). These two main approaches - the detection and monitoring of (early) risk indicators - comprised the Early Warning Systems (EWS) many schools design and implement. EWS are therefore often seen as the basis upon which more concrete actions, strategies and measures can be designed. It starts from the idea that one first has to know where problems and obstacles are situated in order to develop more concrete measures to engage with these findings. Even though few of our focus schools develop EWS explicitly with the aim to tackle ESL, the EWS that are developed can contribute (in-)directly to the reduction of ESL, as they often focus on (early) indicators predicting educational success or failure (Eurydice & Cedefop, 2014).

Early Warning Systems can have different methodologies from more quantitative (focusing on family (SES) indicators, grades and truancy rates) to more qualitative (developing trusting one-on-one relations to detect early signals), but they are often a combination of both. EWS can be comprehensive - incorporating students' family conditions, behavioural, cognitive and emotional dimensions - or can focus on specific dimensions (e.g. mainly the behavioural and the cognitive). In this section, we first discuss some of the empirical findings from previous studies on EWS before we link these insights with the findings from the country reports.

- **School-wide Detection and Monitoring systems**

Early warnings systems (EWS) are detection and monitoring systems on various levels (e.g. school, local, national) to prevent the actual event of early school leaving (ESL). By definition these measures should have a school-wide approach, considering that all students could potentially become early school leavers (even though some students are theoretically more at risk than others). EWS focus on the so-called early signs of ESL, and approach ESL primarily from the perspective of the youngster. Given their rationale that some signals of decreasing school engagement or learning difficulties already manifest themselves in primary education, these systems are best implemented in the early stages of one's educational career but they are also designed as important 'more acute' warning systems in the later stages of one's educational career. In secondary education the focus of EWS is mostly directly related to the identification of acute signals and the steering of concrete intervention programmes that could be implemented on a short notice to alter a students' situation (see for a country overview: Eurydice & Cedefop, 2014). In this part of the project paper on early warning systems we focus on this 'signalling effect or function' of the EWS programmes we found across the RESL.eu partner countries. In subsequent sections, the more concrete intervention programmes – often steered by the EWS – are discussed.

- **A multidimensional school engagement approach**

Although early warning systems are often conceptualized as comprehensive systems using a holistic approach to educational processes, research shows that when EWS are designed and implemented, this is often not the case (Gresham et al, 2003). Similar to our conceptualization of the three-dimensional socio-psychological school engagement approach of the youngsters involved in our project[11], research indicates that EWS should also focus on the cognitive, behavioural and emotional aspects of the students involved in educational processes. However, educational policy makers primarily detect and monitor students' specific behavioural and cognitive dimensions as the first indicators of risks for ESL. More specifically, grades and prior academic achievement are often used as an indicator for the cognitive dimension, while truancy rates are used as an indicator for the behavioural dimension. Together with certain socio-demographic background variables, these indicators do have a high predictor value, but they often miss the more covert emotional dimension intersecting with these more overt characteristics (Downes, 2011a).

- **A multi-level and holistic approach of the process of ESL**

Another limitation of most early warning systems could be that they focus too strongly on the individual student. While gaining understanding of a student's educational trajectory starts by necessity from (the meaning students attach to) their trajectory and his/her own social context, it could miss the broader contextual and structural dimensions wherein these trajectories develop. Moreover, in particular the interactions with significant others such as teachers, counsellors, school principals and classmates needs to be involved (Downes, 2011b). Applying a holistic approach to the process of ESL implies a holistic approach towards the individuals involved but also towards the surrounding institutional and structural framework. An example that shows the necessity to take into account institutional elements is when designers or implementers are seen as part of 'the problem' by the target group.

Nevertheless, in the country reports some interesting examples of EWS can be found in specific schools. We discuss them now, and try to single out the risk and protective factors. While many schools may state not to design specific measures tackling ESL as it may not be a salient issue, it becomes clear from the abundance of measures developed that they try to address a broad range of educational issues, even though they might not be directly linked to ESL.

The scope and aims of the measures under study

A first finding is that EWS are often more or less obligatory programmes designed and disseminated by national or local educational policy makers to which schools have to adopt. One could even argue that part of the detection is already done by governmental agencies, as specific schools can receive extra funding depending on the number of students classified to be at risk: e.g. coming from a family with a lower socio-economic status, being born in another country, speaking a language other than the instruction language at home, being eligible for free school meals, etc. Examples of these programmes are the local RONI (Risk Of NEET Indicators)-scheme in UK School C or the national Free School Meals (FSM) in UK schools. Another example is the regional

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[11] See Project Paper 2 and the operationalization in survey A1

GOK (EEO or Equal Educational Opportunities) scheme in Belgium (Flanders), where specific risk indicators are developed by policy makers based upon which schools receive extra funding to develop programmes to engage with educational risks for socially disadvantaged students.

Moreover, in various countries schools are obliged to detect and monitor their students based upon their grades and truancy rates. The LWOO (*Leerwegondersteunend onderwijs*) funding in The Netherlands is an example of funding received by schools based upon their number of individual students with behavioural or learning difficulties. A similar programme is the School Autonomy Plans that are developed in Catalonian schools and is funded by the regional educational authorities to design innovative ways to tackle educational difficulties. As schools are highly dependent upon governmental funding, to a large extent they have to subscribe to the broader 'detection and monitoring programmes' put forward by the national or local government. These programmes seem to focus primarily on the more overt social background, cognitive and behavioural dimensions of students, and seldom on the more covert emotional dimension. However, even though schools are limited by the broader framework designed by policy makers, in some contexts schools have a certain amount of agency and self-direction to allocate these funds where they deem it necessary, as will be discussed below.

Our findings show that schools to a large extent share the idea that tackling educational difficulties and ESL should be based on data collection of early signals for a potentially problematic educational trajectory. With respect to the aims of the EWS, we can state that as expected, most schools stress the necessity of EWS to be able to design and implement more tailored measures addressing these early signals. The importance of this is not disputed even though few schools actually relate it to the issue of (preventing or tackling) ESL.

In practice, most schools incorporate 'typical' elements of EWS such as grades and truancy rates into their scope. Some schools, however, are able to design more holistic EWS and systematically measure cognitive, behavioural and emotional aspects such as the RONI-scheme developed by the local authorities in the district of UK School C. Sufficient governmental support in setting up these more holistic EWS is often crucial, given their broad scope.

Other schools complement the detection and monitoring of students based upon truancy rates and academic progress (e.g. the Dutch Digital Monitoring System), with more qualitative approaches as done in Belgian School A. In BE School A periodic reflection talks between teachers and their students are set-up and have a strong signalling function while being complemented with formal detection and monitoring systems, such as a systematic registration of truancy and the permanent evaluation monitoring day-to-day academic progression. In this measure, a teacher is designated as the primary contact point for students and is encouraged to act as a trustee to the students. When a teacher detects socio-emotional difficulties, s/he signals it to the school's care team. The advantage of such an approach is that a more fine-grained assessment of the emotional dimension can be made by the trustee. However, a lot depends on the way the 'trustee' takes up his/her role and is able and willing to detect and monitor these issues. We will discuss this school policy more in detail in section 3.1.3.

A similar but more formally developed EWS measure can be found in the Tutorial Action Plans of schools in Catalonia (Spain), where each class has a teacher-tutor (and sometimes a co-tutor) that monitors the cognitive, emotional and behavioural progress of students. This broadly implemented

measure aims for a continuous and close monitoring of all students, which also allows for designing more specific measures focusing on difficulties specific students experience. An analogous example can be found in PT School A, where an Educational Class Advisor is ascribed to a class in order to pick up and discuss problems regarding performances, behaviour and conflicts with other students and/or staff. Similar measures are in place in UK schools where each class has a form tutor. UK School B has an explicit Tutorial programme, with each student having their Personal Tutor.

Crucial in the rigorous monitoring of these signals is the construction of digital platforms that are often designed by educational policy makers and are implemented by school staff. The way these digital platforms and subsequent referral pathways are structured shows a wide variation across the schools. While some signals find their way to support staff through informal conversations between staff members (e.g. PL School A), other schools have set up a structured referral system (e.g. UK School A 'Referral Pathway; NL School A 'Digital pupil monitoring system'). Some of these referral systems include digital case files that can be distributed to all staff members involved with a specific youngster, sometimes protecting sensitive information of the pupil for teachers who do not have access to information that was obtained during counselling sessions.[12]

> "The teachers can report additional care needs to the pupil coordinator and through the online follow-up system. The signals of students being at risk can be inputted in the digital follow-up system (recently called 'care system'), which is primarily supervised by the pupil coordinator. Regarding the weekly meetings of student guiders, everything that is being said during these moments is written down in a student 'care system' where the school staff can read and write about the particular student."

> (BE School A, Country Report Belgium).

In the UK Country Report a similar system was discussed, called the Referral Pathway:

> "This is a school-wide measure: all staff members have the responsibility to report promptly any cases of concern, discuss them with designated senior child protection staff and refer them to the Inclusion team There is a robust referral system – called the Referral Pathway: if there is a concern about a student - behavioural, attendance and punctuality-related, underachievement, family issues, health, mental health, etc., staff members will make a referral to the inclusion team through email or by completing the Staff Referral Form. Then the panel will discuss it at the next weekly meeting, and a personalised support will be decided upon and put in place, based on the individual needs of the specific student."

> (UK School A, Country Report UK).

A monitoring system is used in SE School A, which allows school staff to monitor in real time students' absence, their grades, and even their task completion. The students were encouraged by school personnel to use this platform to complete their school tasks. The former, however, felt this platform showed that school staff did not trust them as they feel this platform is also used to monitor if students cheat with their tasks. The discursive congruence about what EWS are supposed to entail according to the different stakeholders are discussed more in detail in the next section.

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[12] See Country Report Belgium (BE School A and B)

- **Awareness**

Most school actors – be they management, teaching staff, or students - have a general awareness of the existence of these detection and monitoring systems. Naturally, for the school management the awareness is more apparent, as many (elements of) EWS are part of government funded and (partially) obligatory programmes that schools need to implement. However, also teachers, support and even administrative staff are aware of EWS, as they often implement them concretely by checking student's presence and monitoring their grades.

These latter two elements - the behavioural and cognitive dimensions of EWS - are also clearer to students, although they are not always aware of the broader scope of these detection and monitoring programmes. Students often are aware of the more practical consequences of EWS. They know they are monitored; they, for instance, know how many truancy days one can have before a disciplinary measure is set into motion. These elements are quite clear for the students, especially those students who have been targeted by subsequent measures of the EWS:

> "Further steps are taken starting from 10 B-codes. Then the CLB guidance counsellor is involved and the truancy is reported to the database of the Local Truancy Cell. At the level of 30 B-codes the family risks having their child benefits suspended by the Flemish Government. The CLB counsellor says all students and parents are sufficiently informed about all the different steps of these disciplinary procedures. The students reported some awareness of the different steps in the disciplinary policy in their school. The awareness was mostly limited to the cut-off numbers in B-codes that activate another phase in the disciplinary policy. The awareness was much higher for students that were involved in it, of which some had received a truancy contract."
>
> (BE School A, Country Report Belgium)

With respect to the detection and monitoring of the emotional dimension in EWS, the picture is more diffuse. As already discussed, few EWS capture this dimension. A weak point in this type of measures is that individuals should be trained and able to detect these emotional needs, difficulties and problems (Tilleczek et al., 2005).

- **Participation and ownership**

As discussed above, EWS are often perceived as necessary tools by school staff, while participation is often mandatory. This, of course, influences the feeling of ownership of school staff vis-à-vis these measures, e.g. if a principal feels s/he already more or less 'knows' who is at risk of ESL are but cannot act upon it because the student(s) has not 'failed' yet. An illustrative example is the narrative of a principal discussing the Care Structure imposed by the Dutch Government:

> The designers stressed that the school doesn't always have the ownership over the care structure due to the government rules. The principal elaborates on a situation whereby the school feels that they can already identify potential early school leavers, but they are not allowed to warn the school attendance officers, because these students have not yet made their missteps.
>
> (NL School A, Country Report the Netherlands).

This issue of when measures are put into motion resembles the discussion of the 'wait-to-fail' approach (Gresham et al, 2013). Even though EWS are developed to address this issue and intervene early in students' educational trajectory, some school actors still feel this is too late.

However, how schools apply the (extra) funding they receive based upon the risk factors identified in their schools can be more flexible.

In comparing the different country analyses, it became apparent that teachers are often awarded an important role in parts of these EWS, in particular when it comes to the concrete task of picking up early signals of emotional or mental health issues. However, at this point teachers show differing narratives. Even in cases of promising practices, as in BE school A where reflection talks are set up to detect emotional difficulties, contradictions can arise. The principal, who was the main designer of the measure, argues that some teachers interpret these conversations still too much as moments where they can tell the students what to do and how to behave. This shows that designers and implementers of specific measures can differ in their problem orientation of the measures – detecting emotional problems versus taking a more directive and disciplinary stance – which can hamper the efficiency in meeting the initial aim of the measure.

As EWS are school-wide measures, students are obliged to take part in them. Certain measurements have a more automatic nature such as monitoring truancy and grades, which has an impact on students' sense of ownership. The EWS measuring the emotional dimension are often even more problematic with regard to participation and ownership, as staff sometimes state that the most vulnerable students do not participate in one-on-one student-teacher moments set up as detection and monitoring measures.

A specific concern expressed by students is that they do not always have a say in what gets recorded in monitoring databases. Some students argue that only negative elements are collected and that much more weight is given to the input provided by school staff than to their own input or perspectives. They therefore not only have limited control over what is recorded, they also fear this information can have negative consequences. An example of this is the follow-up card for behaviour in Belgian School C. Some students feel that these follow-up cards are sometimes given by student counsellors without consulting the student. Moreover, as was also shown in other schools, when students perceive certain measures as mainly punitive or focusing on the negative, they feel these measures are imposed on them and can be perceived as stigmatizing.

- **Outcome experience**

The Early Warning Systems we found in the different schools across our partner countries were often initiated and funded by a government. This financial support enables schools to implement measures and develop a broader framework wherein new strategies and measures can be developed engaging with the risk indicators captured by the EWS. Most actors involved do generally subscribe to the underlying rationale of detecting the early signals.

As students are however not always aware of (the motivation for) detecting and monitoring in school, there is generally low ownership felt among students about what is registered about them, which results in their perceptions about the outcome not being very positive. Especially not when the EWS primarily records students' academic and/ or behavioural problems solely from the perspective of the school staff. A more reflexive approach towards the detection and monitoring of students' risk signals that incorporates the students perspective on these issues can heighten their ownership and therefore be perceived as more useful by the target group.

Schools often have the capacity to adapt concrete intervention measures based upon students' needs that were revealed through the EWS. In some cases, schools focus on addressing some basic human needs (e.g. nutrition for some socio-economically vulnerable students) while others can address more education related issues. We will discuss the subsequent measures based on the indicators captured by the EWS in the following sections of chapter 3.

Risk and protective factors for early warning systems

The analysis of the findings across the seven country reports show some common threads, such as the idea of approaching early school leaving as part of a process and the idea that prevention and intervention can make a positive change. Many educational policy makers seem to be convinced that the detection of early signals of difficulties is necessary and therefore request schools to develop early warning systems (EWS) for picking up these signals. To this end, many schools receive government funding for setting up EWS. This broad and structural support for EWS is a clear protective factor, although schools to some extent have to subscribe to the broader framework designed by national and/ or local policy makers and follow bureaucratic procedures. However, even though schools have to work within these boundaries, they do often have a certain amount of flexibility and responsibility to apply funds or prevention and intervention in the areas and for the issues they see as most important in their educational context.

Most EWS focus on the detection of overt indicators like cognitive elements such as students' grades and behavioural elements such as truancy or transgressive behaviour. Only a few EWS also systematically aim for detecting and monitoring student's emotional well-being. Often the detection of early signals of emotional difficulties is left to specific staff members (see also section 3.1.3 on one-on-one emotional and behavioural support). In these one-on-one teacher-student meetings, students can choose which issues they want to discuss with an adult trustee. Nonetheless, it is crucial that this trustee is aware of his/her role and that s/he wants to take up the early detection and monitoring of emotional issues. Our findings show that this is not always the case.

The early warning systems we found across the partner countries show to be interesting and relevant. Most schools have a sense of urgency and necessity for the development of EWS. However, the findings also show that there are certain assumptions at work with respect to designing and implementing these EWS: that the school has the capacity to do this, and that the staff are sufficiently capable to be able interpret risk indicators and respond to them with appropriate measures. We will discuss the importance of support and professionalization of teachers as a contextual precondition in section 3.2. First, the more concrete measures responding to cognitive, emotional and behavioural difficulties picked up by EWS will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

3.1.2 Academic Support

Developing a sense of self-efficacy in the learning environment can engage and motivate students to believe they can succeed in attaining an educational qualification. Particularly struggling learners are most targeted by these academic support measures (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). In this paper we understand academic support to be support measures that target the improvement of cognitive skills and engagement of students. Academic literature shows evidence for the establishment of small learning communities being significantly associated with lower school-wide ESL rates (Kerr & Legers, 2006). Furthermore, different instructional methods and formats for grouping or participating in learning can also play an important (positive) role in engaging students in terms of their school career (Vaughn, et al., 2001).

Based upon the data emerging from the different country reports, a conceptual framework was set up to analyse the specific academic support measures the consortium partners focused on in the 28 focus schools. In general, the academic support measures emerging from our case studies can be classified based on the following characteristics:[13]

- Being student-focused or school/class-wide;
- Taking place during school or during extra-curricular time;
- Consisting of a heterogeneous group of students or of students grouped by ability ;
- Whether the participation of the target group is voluntary or not;
- Whether teachers, external professionals or peers are giving the support;
- And whether the target group are students diagnosed with Special Educational Needs.

Based upon the analyses of the different country reports, we distinguish several ways of providing extra academic support based on the scope and aims of the academic support measures. The measures represented in our data allowed us to distinguish three main groups of academic support measures, namely individual and class-wide tutoring, special educational needs support (SEN) and within-school provision of ability/remedial grouping and flexible learning pathways. We understand these measures as supporting students by providing support for overcoming cognitive difficulties. We start each section on academic support measures with a short literature overview that outlines the main empirical findings on these types of measures as a backdrop for our own analyses.

Tutoring Support Measures

One of the main types of academic support measures we found in our data are tutoring programmes that can best be defined as measures wherein the student receives extra help from a tutor for learning educational content. Tutoring can take place in small class groups or in a one-on-one context. Our data show examples of learning support programmes for students who need additional help with processing general educational contents (e.g. catch-up classes), with the instruction language of the school, homework aid and preparation for state-wide (entrance) exams.

Many studies have focused on the effects of tutoring on students' academic skills. Morrison et al (2000) and Tucker et al (1995) have found that after-school tutoring may not specifically result in

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[13] As indicated above, the selection of specific measures for our case studies are in no way representative for existing measures in a certain country, research area or school.

an improvement of academic performances, but rather prevent a decline in performance for many at-risk youth. A common practice of providing students with tutoring support exists in after-school programmes which offer students structure, supervision, academic assistance and the opportunity to learn study skills. Participation in after-school (homework aid) programmes can help students to maintain their academic competence level, feel more bonded to the school, reduce family stress, and develop attitudes and skills that can facilitate their success in school (Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, and Brown, 2004).

For many students with an immigrant background, the language of instruction in school is often different from the one spoken at home. Non-native speaking children may need extra support to become sufficiently proficient in the language of instruction, which is widely considered to be a key to success in school. Various studies found negative correlations between having a different home language and educational success (Christensen & Stanat, 2007). Therefore, proficiency in the language of instruction is often put forward as one of the most important variables increasing academic achievement.

The scope and aims of the measures under study

Based upon data from the country reports, school-based measures involving tutoring can be found in the large majority of our focus schools and were also the subject of many of the selected case studies (e.g. NL School B, SE School B and ES School B). All of these measures are programmes that provide extra learning support for students. There are, however, differences in whether the tutoring is seen directly in relation to preventing or intervening in the process of early school leaving. Because teaching is seen as the core task of schools, tutoring is generally not seen as being in direct relation to ESL. In the three examples presented above, tutoring was more indirectly designed for preventing ESL by increasing the academic skills of students and thus their chances of graduating.

While applying the classification of academic support measures presented above to the three examples of tutoring measures, we see those in NL School B and ES School B are school-wide and accessible for every student. Nonetheless, in all these focus schools the target group receives tutoring on an individual basis depending on the student's particular needs. The main focus of the measures is on cognitive training in all kinds of subjects. In the Dutch and Spanish practice examples, the tutoring takes place during the existing teaching time.

Across the different country reports, we found tutoring measures explicitly targeting language problems, often linked to the fact students (also) speak a language other than the instruction language at home. In some cases, these measures have a more stand-alone nature, while in other cases they are embedded in a broader school policy programme. In Flanders, for instance, where a lot of immigrant students are enrolled in the selected focus schools, measures are taken to increase the level of Dutch amongst non-native speaking students. Most of these schools (with the exception of BE School B) organize reception classes for newly arrived immigrant students (called OKAN-classes). During the reception classes they are provided with extra language support in separate classes for one whole school year before joining regular classes in the next year. Some schools also design specific measures for ex-OKAN students to catch-up with the instruction language or other courses taught at the school. The Flemish data show that school staff often raise

concerns about the level of Dutch in the classroom. The school staff of BE school C, for instance, feels the level of Dutch is too low to function properly during practical courses and therefore also on the work floor. A school-wide measure is therefore implemented in the form of language posters hanging around in the corridors and classrooms that show students examples of proper Dutch sentences, correcting common mistakes. According to the view of the designers, these language posters support the students in speaking the instruction language. Other examples of academic support measures focussing on language difficulties were found in SE School B where preparatory language classes are designed for recently arrived newcomers. In ES school A, arrangements are made in order to facilitate graduation from compulsory schooling for those students who face difficulties with the instruction language. Additional English language support is also a well-known measure in the studied UK schools, where specific language professionals (i.e. English as an Additional Language (EAL) teachers) are members of the school team.

Another form of extra academic support can consist of homework assistance offered by tutors to support students with making their assignments or with studying large amounts of learning contents in order to be prepared for evaluations. In SE school B, we found an example of extra homework assistance by means of university students assisting the students with their homework. Three afternoons a week, a group of university students assist students in doing their homework outside of regular school time. The scope of the measure is to offer extra educational help to the students who need it, i.e. only students with low grades are allowed to participate three times a week. The educational content that is focused on is diverse and depends on the student's needs.

Next to the tutoring in course contents, instruction language support and after-school (homework) support, several programmes in the country reports aim to support students in passing entrance exams for higher (secondary) education and are therefore directly related to reducing ESL. They are thus important transitory steps in the educational trajectory. In several country reports special preparation trajectories were discussed. In the Portuguese School B, for instance, students are prepared for the national exams by means of free extra academic support classes (PT B1). As national exams cover two or three years of course content, the programme supports students to catch up on former learning material and aims to give them more opportunities to get enrolled in higher education. The measure is school-wide, and all students are free to participate in the exam preparation programme; it is made part of their course schedule if they choose to participate. In this case, an agreement between the student, the parent(s) and the school is made and then the support becomes mandatory for the pupil. The principal and a teacher of the Portuguese school B describe the procedure as follows:

> School Principal: "We cannot force students to attend when this is not part of their curriculum as a compulsory subject. The student takes a document home informing the parent or guardian that he/she has this support for Mathematics, Portuguese, Physics and Chemistry, etc., etc. on a given day at a given time. If he/she accepts it, it assumes, from that moment on, a mandatory nature."

> Teacher: "They have a sign-up option in the space. They are provided a schedule with the support hours in the different subjects and they enrol. From the moment they register it becomes compulsory, it becomes part of their schedule."

> (School principal and teacher, FGD staff, PT School B)

Assessing the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group

- **Awareness**

In general, academic support by means of individual tutoring is one of the most visible and broadly mentioned support measures. In most cases, all participants, as well as actors who are not enrolled in the tutoring measures, are aware of the additional academic support offered by the school. Based upon the findings from the country reports, the direct link between tutoring interventions and ESL is not always, however, that obvious, and varies widely among the actors of the schools. Supporting students academically is mostly seen as 'self-evident' by teachers rather than as a specific measure designed to prevent ESL.

An interesting example is the Dutch support measure (NL B1), where data show different views between students and the school staff/management about the problem orientation behind the measure. School staff and management see students' educational difficulties emerging from their unfavourable social and home environments, while the students argue that the scope of the support measures should rather offer more academic support instead of making issues external to school a base for the programme. Similar views were found in SE School A where the school staff explained the difficulties in the educational pathway of a student predominantly by non-cognitive factors and factors outside the school environment, while students ascribe the educational difficulties to the individual level. The deputy head of the Swedish school A1 described this as follows:

> "That one has failed in school has nothing to do with one being stupid. It has to do with problems at home, that one has an addiction, that one has been bullied, didn't want to go to school. It's more about the fact that things around you have ruined your opportunities of success in school."
>
> (School principal, SE School A)

When talking about the exam preparation programme in the Portuguese school B, all actors in the school seem to be aware of the free extra academic support offered by the school. A youngster in the school expresses what the academic support should look like according to him. His views make clear that the support is not only limited to the mere cognitive support; exam preparation can also support them emotionally by boosting their morale:

> "When I saw myself in the middle of those books didn't even know where to start... Having a person who knows... a teacher, I think it's good, having someone supporting us, it will not be as difficult as we thought; we will get there and... "I can do it" and give us support both in the study and morally... that "it won't be as bad as we think it will"'
>
> (Youngster, PT School B)

In conclusion, while awareness about the existence of tutoring seems to be widespread, different school actors can have different views on what the scope and problem orientation of the measures should be.

- **Participation and ownership**

As was the case for many of the studied EWS measures, tutoring programmes are also mostly part of a broader care structure in the schools, often (co-)designed by governmental policy measures to support students academically. In the examples of school intervention B1 in the Netherlands, B2 in

Sweden and B1 in Spain, the implementers of the tutoring measures must therefore take some governmental regulations in mind while shaping these measures in the school. The ES School B made use of the flexibility of the state design to adapt school intervention measure B1 to their aims, the school context and their possibilities. In the Swedish and Dutch example, the regulations were stricter and there was less margin for the implementers to adapt it to the school context.

As already mentioned earlier, the teaching staff often gets involved in the tutoring measures naturally as it is mostly expected to be part of to their core tasks. The participation of students in the tutoring classes is often voluntary and most of the youngsters were asked to participate by individual teachers, study coordinators or study mentors.

The Swedish school intervention B4 offers homework assistance by the means of university students. The students in SE School B take the initiative themselves to participate in this measure but are only allowed to do so when their grades are below the measure's threshold. Some students criticized this, wanting to get the support provided even though their grades were above the threshold. The students enrolled in the programme have to sign a contract with the foundation funding the university students for the homework support wherein they promise to come to the homework assistance during the hours they are assigned. The school is rather a partner in the intervention, which also limits the ownership of the school management, who reported sometimes feeling uncomfortable with this lack of influence on the programme.

In the Portuguese school D, students are prepared for the national exams by means of free extra academic support classes. The principal, teachers and students voluntarily participate in the programme. In some cases the students reported not being able to regularly participate because of a clash in schedules between regular classes and exam preparation or because of an overall heavy workload. The principal and the teachers also emphasize that the feasibility of the measure depends on the teachers' generosity to take up extra teaching hours outside of what is legally required because of lack of financial support from the ministry. The principal describes it as follows:

> "The ministry gave us credit hours so that we could have this activity, but this year it has withdrawn it. That is, I would put on the teacher's timetable two teaching hours, on a mandatory basis; it was part of the teacher's timetable. This year I convinced teachers in the non-teaching component to give me that kind of support and no one refused to do so, because everyone likes to attain good results... Those teachers who are still in their 40s, 50s are the ones who are most available, also in another sense. They want to show that these students also deserve the opportunity and that everything should be done for them"

> (School Principal, PT School D)

- **Outcome experience**

In general, the tutoring measures are experienced as helpful and efficient, especially by the students. Students overall value tutoring for having a positive impact on their educational performances. Nonetheless, there are critiques formulated by different actors across the schools:

- As discussed in the Spanish Country Report, the implementers of the tutoring measure in ES school B expressed critique on the decreasing financial resources to be able to maintain the positive outcome experiences of the tutoring measures.

- In SE School B, the implementers do see the potential of the tutoring measure, but some teachers wonder how the intervention is able to create a positive change during a very short period of time. The teachers also raised communication issues with the university students providing the tutoring. The Swedish homework support measure in SE School B has not been evaluated yet since neither the school management or the school staff had any involvement in the intervention. Some students, however, expressed not being satisfied with the homework aid because they were taught information that was not compatible with what they learned in school. Furthermore, the external university students don't necessarily study to become a teacher, so the teachers in SE School B expect that they might lack the competences to provide in students' support needs.

- Overall, the Portuguese school intervention B1 was evaluated positively by all actors and designers; implementers as well as the target group have trust in the future of the exam preparation measure. Although the opinions about the exam preparation programme in general are supportive of the measure and teachers recognise its strengths, it is generally not identified as a measure for keeping students in school:

"I do not have the idea that students who are at risk of dropping out attend the exam preparation space, those attending this space are those who have intentions to continue, or complete upper secondary school with a reasonable average, or at least to complete".

(Teacher, FGD Staff, PT School B)

Risk and protective factors for academic tutoring

As described above, academic support through tutoring is a common practice because of its close connection to the core tasks of teaching and education in general. Tutoring is therefore seen as an important task for schools and had a prominent part in the school policies. We can conclude that tutoring is protected by: a high awareness and commitment of educational actors about its necessity in schools; by the (direct) effect on the academic outcomes; and by the fact that the measures are often open for all students (although implemented with attention for individual needs).

Risk factors of tutoring measures could be present in the fact that students participate voluntarily, which means the responsibility for initiating and continuing participation lies solely with the student. Teachers often expressed that the participating students are not those most at risk for educational problems and thus not fully represent the actual target group. Students who participate in the measure can also face difficulties in combining their personal time schedule with tutoring provided outside of regular class hours. Because of a lack of financial resources, the high workload for teachers participating in the measures on a voluntary (after-school) basis is also a risk factor. Overall, concerns about insufficient resources were prominent in discourses of stakeholders and will be elaborated upon in section 3.2.

Special Educational Needs Support (SEN)

Providing children with special educational needs with suitable academic support raises important and contentious questions at the level of research, policy and practice in education. Many of these questions relate directly to the fundamental problem of how education can enact the equal

entitlement of every child in education, while acknowledging and respecting individual differences. One of these questions can be about whether children with special educational needs should be educated in a common 'inclusive project' in a regular school or whether they should attend special/specialist schools that are more adapted to their educational needs (Warnock and Norwich, 2010).

The scope and aims of the measures under study

Across the cases we can distinguish two different target groups for whom the special education needs support measures are designed. On the one hand, school-based measures dealing with special educational needs can focus on learning difficulties and disabilities that can affect the learning process, while on the other hand, emotional and behavioural support measures can be taken in order to address emotional and behavioural disabilities. The latter will be discussed in the section regarding emotional and behavioural support. The data used for the analyses described in this section are also limited to interventions supporting students with special educational needs by adapting mainstream schooling to accommodate youngsters with special educational needs. Across the different country reports, different SEN measures were found such as in all four focus Schools in the UK, where specialised SEN staff and support are a basic provision. In this report we mainly report on two distinct measures, namely inclusive schooling (PL C1) and the 'Diversity Group' (ES A2).

Polish School C is an example of a school that can be characterised as being inclusive in nature for guaranteeing support for students with special educational needs. The aim of school intervention C1 consists of equalizing educational opportunities, preventing stigma and stopping social exclusion of students with special educational needs. The measure itself is implemented in the form of learning support staff helping students on an individual level to compensate for the educational backlog and keeping up with the level of class. Additional therapeutic activities for students with special educational needs are guaranteed and financed by the government and the integrated classes are regulated by law. These classes are designed to consist of not more than 20 students, including a maximum of five students with special educational needs like physical disabilities or mental and learning disabilities. These students are guaranteed five extra teaching hours per week and these classes have two support pedagogical counsellors working with them on a daily basis.

Spanish School A's 'Diversity group' (ES A2) is another example of an inclusive project within a regular school. The intervention targets students with special educational needs but is not restricted to these students. The school intervention can be situated in a framework of increasing (governmental) attention for diversity and also for students with learning difficulties and/or other diagnosed disabilities. The implementation of these diversity focused measures relies on the responsibility of the schools themselves. Within the regular class hours, the school organizes different student groupings depending on the student's specific educational needs. The Diversity Group measure is clearly organized as a separate class group. These classes have a smaller teacher-student ratio and every student is taught and monitored based on an individually adapted curriculum. This measure can therefore also be understood as a flexible learning pathway and a form of ability/remedial grouping measure (see next section).

Assessing the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group

- **Awareness**

Regarding the inclusive nature of the Polish school C, we can say that students are aware that it is an inclusive school because they are in daily contact with students diagnosed with SEN and/or other disabilities. The school staff mentions the added value of an inclusive school environment for both diagnosed SEN students and students who don't face educational difficulties. In the school there seemed to be an atmosphere of mutual respect and students with disabilities have support conditions tailored to their needs. This additional support for students with diagnosed SEN was, however, seldom put in direct relation with preventing ESL. ESL was predominantly ascribed to a lack of motivation rather than cognition, which in turn is more related to external factors rather than individual learning difficulties or disabilities.

Also in the Spanish school A, the 'Diversity Group' (ES A2) was not mentioned in direct relation to ESL by any of the school actors. The students defined it as an 'easier curriculum' for students having (temporary) learning difficulties or other issues. They hardly recognized the special educational needs support in the measure and rarely had a real notion of the problem orientation and aim behind the 'Diversity Group'. According to the school staff and the principal, the 'Diversity Group' has become more of a measure for students with an immigration background who need some language support because in recent years educational resources for reception classes diminished.

- **Participation and ownership**

Based upon the data from the different country reports, special educational needs measures are often implemented by multidisciplinary teams working in the school. In Polish school C, pedagogical counsellors and teaching staff participate in school intervention C1 and it is perceived as an intrinsic part of their job. Students on the other hand often participate more consciously by explicitly choosing to enrol in school C for its inclusive nature. They are also free to ask for support when and from whom they want. The pedagogical counsellor of school C puts it like this:

> "They come when they need to. Whom do they go to? With whom they want to [*discuss their support needs*] ... They might go to the class tutor, to the learning support educator, to a psychologist, to me, to a teacher, anyone. And those kids benefit from this support […]."
>
> (Pedagogical Counsellor, FGD Staff, PL School C)

Although the students are free to ask for support themselves, teachers have a role in the school's early warning system by observing them carefully and identifying students with needs. They are regularly trained and gratefully participate in professionalization courses which they feel are necessary to support students with special educational needs.

According to the Spanish school staff of school A, the 'Diversity Group' targets students with special educational needs; either temporary (language difficulties) or permanently (learning difficulties). As already mentioned, students in the school, see the reason for participation in this adapted curriculum as being able to pass on to the next school year. The school management and staff is in charge of the design and implementation of diversity measures, so everything is decided and monitored at the school level.

- **Outcome experience**

The school staff of the Polish school C is convinced of the positive outcomes for students who are believed to feel less stressed at school. Also, the fact that SEN and other students can go beyond their immediate social environments is perceived as a great step forward by the school staff. Although the teachers do not link the inclusive nature of the school directly to ESL, the pedagogical counsellor expressed that the measure can play an important preventive role against ESL.

Although there has not been any public evaluation of the 'Diversity Group' in ES School A, the principal and the school staff are very satisfied with the outcomes of school intervention A2. According to their views, every year many students complete compulsory education successfully as a result of the special attention, closer monitoring and adapted curriculum. The targeted students are happy with their placement in the measure and believe in its efficiency. Nonetheless, due to financial cuts in education, the education department is no longer able to offer sufficient funding for professional development activities and seminars for teachers, which is deemed to have a negative impact on the feasibility of the 'Diversity Group' in the future.

Risk and protective factors for special educational needs support

A major possible risk factor derived from our data is that the lack of or cut-backs in governmental investments cause problems of feasibility for inclusive education. The most important protective factors of special educational needs education lies in the special attention for SEN students that is often institutionalized in the educational system and in the 'caring and supportive nature' of the school. The special attention for students with special educational needs is often part of a more comprehensive support policy where a broader awareness and commitment is placed in supporting students with learning difficulties.

Flexible Learning Pathways and (Ability/Remedial) Grouping

Whereas the focus of the previous measures was mainly on tutoring and special educational needs support, academic support can also be implemented by schools in terms of broader structural adaptations in the educational pathway of a student in order to prevent them from dropping out. Some country reports showed examples of flexible learning pathways. A motive for flexible learning pathways is to avoid unnecessary delay students' school careers. As is widely acknowledged by scholars, grade retention is one of the main predictors of ESL (e.g. Lamote et al, 2013). Some schools therefore try to avoid grade retention by offering students more flexible study pathways. Flexible pathways can also be introduced to prevent ESL in countries where grade retention isn't a (common) educational practice.

Grouping measures are another structural measure at the school level. Ability/ remedial grouping aims to provide students an educational curriculum and teaching style tailored to their personal needs and can therefore also be categorized as school-based academic support. In the literature, ability grouping refers to dividing students into learning or class groups according to different ability levels (for particular subjects). Burris and Garrity (2008) define ability grouping as a system where educators 'assign students to different classes based on their perceived ability in that subject'. Scholars generally distinguish between ability grouping and (curriculum) tracking. They reserve the

term tracking, for secondary school programmes in which students choose, on the basis of skill level and/ or their educational and job goals, either higher education preparatory or vocationally oriented courses. Tracking differs from ability grouping in at least two respects. While tracking occurs only in secondary education, ability grouping occurs at all levels of education; and whereas same-grade courses in different tracks can have different curricular objectives, all ability-grouped classes in the same grade may have the same objectives (Kulik, 1992). Many scholars have, however, claimed that ability grouping as well as tracking mainly contributes to the achievement gap and fails to rectify or remediate performance inequalities in education (Williams, 2013).

The scope and aims of the measures under study

An important aim of such structural adaptations of study pathways and grouping found in our data is avoiding grade retention (that is in the educational systems that have this feature) by allowing students who fail in a number of courses to move on to the following year, while receiving extra remediation. An interesting case is Belgian School A, where in the vocational track, an F (failure) for a general course can be disregarded during the deliberations as long as the pupil has proven to be sufficiently skilled in the vocational classes and in their apprenticeship. The school principal reported that when students were held back based on one (or maximum two) failed course(s), this tended to increase the risk of ESL, especially when the pupil already had one or two years of delay in his/her school career. Also in BE school A, a system of permanent evaluations is designed to closely monitor the educational progress of the student; curricular adaptations (e.g. changing track or specific courses) could thereby be done swiftly. In the Belgian school D, students are allowed to follow extra courses with the aim of 'climbing up the educational ladder', i.e. moving from the vocational education to the technical or general track.[14]

Another interesting case emerging from the country reports is the Swedish school intervention A1. Preparatory programmes are designed so that students who are not eligible for upper secondary education because of sufficient grades can move forward in their educational pathways. The Preparatory Programme is implemented by means of an individual education plan that lasts for one year. The student is taught in a very flexible way in which the different levels of previously acquired knowledge and skills are acknowledged and students are presented with a personally adapted curriculum that should allow him to attain minimum levels for entering upper secondary education. In this view, the measure is student-focused and voluntary, as students are invited to design their own individual programme together with the school staff. The subjects that are taught are both language and other main courses, depending on the individual needs of the student. The participants can also receive social skills training to heighten their chances for successfully re-entering mainstream education. This measure will therefore also be discussed in the following section.

In Spanish school B, the 'Open classroom' targets students with significant gaps in learning, a low self-esteem and lack of motivation. These students receive extra academic support depending on their educational needs. All actors state that the Open Classroom is designed to help students to complete the compulsory schooling by following an adapted curriculum. The measure is designed

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[14] In Flanders there exists an hierarchical tracking structure that almost exclusively allows for 'downward mobility' between tracks, and pupils are often referred to as streaming down the 'waterfall' from the general to the technical, and finally, to the vocational tracks (Baysu, Phalet, and Brown, 2011).

to cope with school failure, to enhance compulsory education graduation rates and increase the self-esteem, motivation and expectations for students at risk of ESL. The 'Open Classroom' can best be described as remedial grouping where teaching methods and educational contents are adapted to be more practical. The students of the Open Classroom share some general courses with students from regular class groups. In the Spanish school C, one out of the three hours a week of each core subject is used to split in ability level groups, depending on the student's results. The measure is very similar to the remedial grouping example above, as it also groups students according to their level ability for specific courses. In this school, however, the designers recently changed the pupil composition of the split groups to be more heterogeneous in order to encourage peer tutoring.

Assessing the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group

- **Awareness**

The awareness about the Preparatory Programme in SE School A is high, both among staff as well as among the students. The measure is also directly linked to ESL, as the target group consists of students who do not have sufficient grades to move into upper secondary education. For the school staff, measures against ESL are a given during their daily work at the school. While the students express having a clear picture about the scope and aims of the measure, teachers involved described the programme as vague and they often felt unsure about how to implement the preparatory programme in practice because they feel they lack clear guidelines. While this gives them the opportunity to make decisions autonomously, it also leads to both uncertainty and a higher workload.

In Spanish school B, there is no real consensus about whether the measure directly targets the problem of ESL. The school management does not define the 'Open Classroom' as a direct tool to combat ESL, while the implementers see it as an indirect way of preventing students from leaving school early. The students themselves mention this school intervention as a specific and direct measure to combat ESL.

In Spanish School C, the designers, implementers and target group are well aware of the flexible grouping measures. There are, however, some differences in the view on the scope and aims of the measure: whereas the school management and staff are convinced that this grouping measure is efficient in terms of motivating students – and thus reducing ESL – the students see it only as a tutoring measure for those with learning difficulties.

- **Participation and ownership**

The Preparatory Programme in Swedish school A in itself is nationwide, however, it is up to the specific school staff to design the programme in the way they see fit for their school and its population. In practice, teachers and the deputy head decide on the practicalities of the programme such as which courses should be taught, how the schedules should be arranged, as well as which students should be accepted to the programme. Students who are eligible for the programme are invited for an interview with the teachers. During this interview, the teacher, student and parent decide together on which schedule is most suitable. The student has his/her voice thus heard in this decision making process and they expressed positive views on their participation in the

programme. If trouble arises along the way, the teachers can, in cooperation with the student, revise the study curriculum.

The target group of the Spanish 'Open Classroom' in School B are students between 14 and 16 who are selected by the teachers to participate in the measure. According to the teachers, the measure targets a dual participant profile: on the one hand, students with academic difficulties and on the other hand, students showing demotivation and absenteeism. The selection takes into account the readiness and commitment of students, which can lead that those at high risk of absenteeism (and ESL) being overlooked when the government cut-backs make the measure more selective.

With regard to the flexible grouping measure in ES school C, the school management team is primarily responsible for the design of the measure, but the teaching staff feel that their ideas are also heard. The outlook of intervention C1 has been changed recently: the school staff recently adapted the grouping so that groups are no longer homogeneous for ability levels but rather mix ability levels to promote more peer tutoring. This reshuffling of the grouping to promote peer tutoring is an example of how the staff have influenced the decision making process. Furthermore, the students also feel their views on the measure are taken into account. The teachers say the profiles of students that participate in flexible grouping are mostly characterized by a lack of a positive self-image, which is sometimes caused by a stigmatizing attitude of peers, parents and/or teachers. Some teachers are convinced that the measure tends to target students with 'problematic educational profiles'. The students in the Spanish school C – mostly the ones who are not participating in the measure –often do not want to be associated with the grouping measure because they think it will pigeon-hole them as being on a 'path to failure'. On the other hand, students participating in the measure state that many students have insisted on being in the split group in order to have a lesser workload. Some of the targeted students themselves also expressed critical views about the selection and labelling culture of the teachers and other students.

- **Outcome experience**

The outcomes of the Preparatory Programme in SE School A are overall seen as positive. One difficulty reported by the staff is to measure the effectiveness because neither the school management nor the teachers know where the students end up after finishing their time at the Preparatory Programme. The school principal argued that the high numbers of students who became eligible for upper secondary education after the programme had a lot to do with the amount of work put in by the teachers. Nonetheless, both the school management and the teachers mention the lack of sufficient resources in order to assure the positive outcomes in the future. Furthermore, teachers argued to employ a student counsellors to bridge gaps and help to work out possible conflicts between students and teachers in order to motivate more students to stay in school.

The teachers of ES School B expressed that it is difficult to say whether or not an increase in a student's performance is a clear result of the intervention. According to the school principal, the outcome experiences of the Spanish school intervention B2 show that the measure does achieve objectives such as improving the classroom climate and more positive bonds with the school. According to the students, a lot depends on the interest shown by the teachers. Regarding the

support of the programme, the designers and implementers reported a lack of financial resources in order to keep up the positive outcome of the measure. The school staff has doubts about the survival chances of the measure due to expected government cut-backs in education and social services.

With regard to the flexible grouping measure in ES School C, the views on the outcome experiences of the measure (in its original form, i.e. homogeneous ability grouping) are divergent. The school management feels this measure was accentuating the differences between students. The teachers recognise positive outcomes in the integration processes of newly arrived migrants due to peer tutoring efforts (while being in the new heterogeneous flexible groups). The students feel the school is showing a lot of effort to support them. As for ES School B, staff indicated that there is not sufficient funding for keeping the programme running due to the economic crisis. Teachers are therefore not feeling sufficiently supported in implementing the grouping measure.

Risk and protective factors for flexible learning pathways and grouping

As exemplified by the analyses of the measures presented above, flexible learning pathways are created for students who benefit more from a flexible learning trajectory and hereby increase their chances of attaining a degree. Ability/remedial grouping measures are different examples of academic support that give specific attention to a student depending on his/her personal cognitive needs. A protective factor for flexible learning pathways and grouping measures lies in the flexibility of the programme as personal schedules are made and allows for adaptations along the way, especially in case the student can take the initiative.

The most important risk factors of these structural school-based measures exist in the declining financial resources to continue providing these flexible programmes. These financial cut-backs have negative consequences on the selectivity of who is targeted by the measures. As a result, the designers and implementers can take the motivation of the student to participate in the programme into account and the most demotivated and therefore also the most vulnerable students risk being overlooked. Another risk of grouping students by ability is that sometimes feelings of stigmatization arise amongst the targeted students. In some cases, the students don't want to be associated with the grouping measure because of feelings of shame linked to being associated with the lower levels of ability.

3.1.3 Emotional and Behavioural Support

School-based provision of emotional and behavioural support can range from school-wide policies that heighten all students' well-being and school belonging, to student-focused intervention measures that respond to behavioural misconduct and truancy. Our analysis show a continuum in the timing of the emotional and behavioural support actions/ reactions that – on the one end of the continuum – can target the preventive provision of school-wide emotional support like the organizing of extra-curricular activities to heighten students' belonging in the school and – on the other end – can be a reactive, punitive reaction to risk behaviour like misconduct in class and truancy (e.g. behavioural contracts, detention, suspension and ultimately expulsion).

In this respect, emotional and behavioural support can often be regarded as the carrot and the stick of school policies aiming at fostering students' school engagement. Based on the prevalence of policy measures in this cross-case analyses and linked to the EU policy framework towards ESL and academic literature on school-based intervention measures, we can categorize them as follows: one-on-one emotional and behavioural support; truancy and disciplinary policies; social skills training and extra-curricular activities for the cross-case analyses. Within this scope we will also discuss elements of emotional and behavioural support provided mental health professionals in the schools.

One-on-one Emotional and Behavioural support: Counselling, Coaching and Mentoring

Access to one-on-one emotional and behavioural support in the form of a student counsellor, coach or mentor has proven to be among the most effective intervention measures with respect to pupils showing any risk of leaving school early (De Witte & Cabus, 2013; Dynarski et al., 2008; Lehr, et al., 2004; Sinclair, Christenson & Thurlow, 2005). Although there are many different formulas for one-on-one support of students at risk, e.g. counsellors, coaches and mentors,[15] the bottom-line of one-on-one support is the deployment of an adult (or sometimes an older peer) that is matched with a specific student, ideally based on his/her specific emotional and behavioural needs. Many studies have shown that a single – socially skilled and caring – educator, counsellor, coach or (peer) mentor can have a major impact on school completion (Robledo Montecel, 1989).

Most one-on-one student-focused interventions respond to signals picked up by school-wide Early Warning Systems that track cognitive, behavioural and - to a lesser extent - emotional problems. A critical factor in such a personalized relationship between a support actor and an individual student is building a relationship of trust and mutual respect. To achieve this, regular meetings between the student and the support actor are highly recommended (Dynarski et al., 2008; White & Kelly, 2008). The caseloads for support actors should therefore not be too large (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, & Lehr, 2004; Dynarski et al., 2008).[16]

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[15] For a brief conceptual distinction between counselling, coaching and mentoring, please visit: http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vu/coaching-diff.htm

[16] There is no general consent in academic literature on a caseload maximum but the referenced studies report a caseload limit ranging from 15 to 50 students per support actor.

Besides support actors that provide emotional support, school intervention studies also recommend peer mentoring support. In this case, the one-on-one support can be provided by an older student that has (a similar background and) has had a similar (educational) trajectory (White & Kelly, 2008). Furthermore, in addressing emotional and behavioural concerns, support actors often also try to make a link with the home context of the student by involving parents and/ or other significant others from the students' community to strengthen the congruence between the school and home context (Pyle & Wexler, 2012; Scheel et al., 2009).

The scope and aims of the measures under study

Virtually all schools studied within the scope of this study take a tiered approach towards emotional and behavioural support that invests in a school-wide monitoring of potential motivational problems shown in decreasing grades, absences, disruptive behaviour, etc. As is shown in the section on early warning systems, signals of potential increased risk for ESL triggers most schools to provide student-focussed one-on-one support actions. This individualised support takes on different scopes and aims in each school. The individualized support actions studied in our selection of schools can be positioned on at least two dimensions. We will discuss these two dimensions and illustrate how the different measures can be positioned on these continua. Furthermore, we present some practices of how one-on-one support to students (at risk) can be structured in schools.

- ***Dimension 1: a proactive versus reactive approach***

A first dimension concerns the timing and aim of the actions ranging from providing proactive emotional support to more reactive interventions in reaction to disruptive behaviour and truancy. Some of the studied one-on-one support measures can be categorized as mainly proactive, while others more as being predominantly reactive to at-risk behaviour. This conceptualisation in the form of a continuum, however, is mostly ideal-typical, since in reality, many of the individualized support approaches are more balanced proactive/ reactive.

Some schools studied within the scope of this research project automatically assigned a specific staff member to provide each pupil with individualised support in the form of a (class) teacher, mentor or counsellor. These proactive one-on-one contact moments can be planned periodically (see regular reflection talks with a teacher in BE School A, the students' ombudsman in PT School B and regular mentor talks in NL school C) or can be provided on demand (e.g. by the mentor assigned to each pupil in NL School A and SE School B). Furthermore, while schools do not always formally appoint a specific staff member for students to contact for individual emotional and/ or behavioural support, the school management and staff in many schools explicitly claimed that the staff are accessible for the students in need of individual support (see PL School A and more in particular the 'effective detection and intervention strategy').

Some schools reported that empathic capacities are explicitly taken into consideration during recruitment of new teaching staff (e.g. see recruitment of teachers in BE School D). Being open for providing emotional support to students can thus be considered as a job requirement for teachers, particularly in schools where the school perceives itself to teach a high proportion of at-risk students. The following short extract from a focus group discussion in BE School D among school staff confirms the importance given to social skills for the function of a teacher in their school:

> Support staff member 1: "Teachers in this school need to be multidimensional, they have to look broader than 'teaching' and also be willing to educate students and give them broad cultural perspectives."

> Support staff member 2: "They have to gain the respect from the students and for this they have to be self-confident."

> (FGD Staff, BE School D)

While some one-on-one support mechanisms are predominantly proactive, most individualized support responds to signals that can indicate emotional and motivational problems of students, while these do not always have to be accompanied by behavioural problems. This support is therefore responsive but at the same time tries to prevent emotional or motivational problems from being reflected in behavioural problems that can ultimately lead to ESL.

The central aim of the school policy in BE School A, for instance, is to provide the student population with a supportive school climate that is able to pick up on problems that can lead to decreasing academic results, behavioural problems and ultimately to ESL. The school's support staff – consisting of a student coordinator and school-external student counsellor – picks up on the signals teachers provide regarding motivational issues shown in class and based on the occurrence of truancy and lateness. When responding to motivational problems that are reflected in behavioural problems, the emotional support can be accompanied by disciplinary actions (see section on truancy and disciplinary policies). The talks with the school counsellor therefore help to inform how a student (and his/her behaviour) can be approached by teachers and support staff.

Similar examples of such balanced proactive/ reactive approaches could be found in many of the other schools (e.g. PT School A 'Educational Class Advisor'; UK School A 'Inclusion Team'; UK School C 'Connection Team'). The following description of the Inclusion Team's support network in UK School A by a member of the school management is a good illustration of a balanced proactive/ reactive approach:

> "We hold people to account, and we also have behind that system the support network. So it's not just good enough having punitive measures so you know, fining parents whose children they're not coming to school because we continue to fine them. What we need to know is what the underlying factors which is preventing. It's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes kind of mentoring, work with our pastoral support officers, with the school child psychotherapist so there's a broader kind of package of support that lies behind the attendance team and that's the whole inclusion team, because different students don't attend for different reasons and if you just deal with students in one bracket, such as poor attendees you're not going to tackle the issue. So I think it's a mixture of, yeah, the statistics, the data, forensic analysis of the data, having a core group of people whose responsibility who leads on it but also ensuring the responsibility is shared between all staff. And we're making a high profile mission."

> (Assistant Headteacher, UK School A)

Some schools in this study, however, predominantly or even exclusively respond to behavioural problems reactively. Typical behavioural risk indicators that are reacted upon are truancy, transgressive behaviour and diminishing study behaviour. A more punitive approach, however, rarely takes into account the broader emotional context of the student, nor the students' living conditions. The following testimony of a pupil in BE School B is a good illustration of a reactive punitive approach:

> "If you did something wrong, only then will they come to you. […]. Sometimes you can tell your story, but yeah, that's it. You tell your story, yes ok, here is your sanction."

> (Youngster, BE School B)

When discussing the outcome experience of the different actors involved later on, we will see that while the emotional and behavioural one-on-one support can sometimes be described as rather proactive and supportive by the designers of the policy, the actual reactive implementation makes the targeted students describe it as a reactive 'penalty policy'.

- *Dimension 2: support provided by teachers versus counselling professionals*

A second dimension on which the individualised emotional and behavioural support of schools can be positioned concerns the staff involved in the support. Some schools employ specific support staff specialized in emotional or behavioural counselling, other schools appoint (all) teaching staff to take on this role, while many other schools – consciously or unconsciously – apply a more tiered approach to the individualized support from teaching and (specialized) support staff. Furthermore, depending on the specific school, external actors like social workers and school psychologists can be involved in the provision of emotional and behavioural support.

While virtually all schools employ at least some level of support staff, not all schools reported having specialised staff involved in one-on-one emotional and behavioural support. In different schools, the teachers are formally appointed to take up a role of individual support, either implicitly in their day-to-day class practice or more explicitly by organizing individual support moments on a regular basis (e.g. BE School A 'regular reflection talks'). In some cases, this role is formally taken up by the class teacher (e.g. PT School A 'Class Education Advisor'). In Swedish schools, for instance, all pupils are supposed to have a mentor – i.e. a teacher that is involved in the youngsters' school activities and responsible for personal contact with the pupil. The mentor is supposed to handle the communication with parents, have an overview of how the pupil is managing in school and identify the needs of the pupil. The mentor is supposed to have a personal meeting with both parents and pupil at least once each semester. In SE School B and C the mentors were also supposed to have a weekly meeting with the pupils to give them information about activities in school but also to discuss personal matters. Each mentor in these schools is responsible for approximately 10-15 pupils.

In other schools, the teachers in vocational courses play an important role in providing individual support. The teachers of practical vocational courses are sometimes deemed essential to the school's emotional and behavioural support system because the more informal working context of VET sometimes stimulates more positive student-teacher relations (e.g. BE School B and BE School D). While some teaching staff are eager to take on individual support tasks (e.g. being a class teacher or mentor), other teachers are less willing of taking up roles outside the scope of their cognitive learning tasks:

> "I will support a child to get better grades, that's all; even though in the back of my head I know that the kid is in a terrible situation, I do not take that into account, I only look at it grade-wise."
>
> (Teacher, NL School A)

Some schools involve specialised support staff in the one-on-one support towards their students. These job profiles can range from regular teachers taking up a mentor role (e.g. NL School A, NL School C; UK School A to D) to student counsellors (e.g. NL School D; SE School D), social workers (e.g. NL School D1), youth coaches (SE School D) and school psychologists (e.g. ES School C; PL School A and C; UK School A, and all PT Schools as psychologists are assigned by law).

Some of these support profiles are employed by the school, others are involved through cross-sectorial partnerships outside of the school (e.g. social sector, local authorities, psychological counselling centres). Our fieldwork did not allow us to get a full grasp of the level to which the specialised support staff are formally qualified for these functions. What was clear, however, is that there are strong cross-case differences in the way support staff is formally professionalised for providing this emotional and behavioural support. These cross-case differences are at least to a certain extent depending on the specific legislation and funding regarding support staff in schools.

- **Structured care team approach**

As mentioned above, in most schools the individual emotional and behavioural support for students is a shared responsibility among teachers and support staff. Furthermore, many schools approach this task differentiation in a tiered manner. School-wide support is (ought to be) provided by (all) teachers, and those who show higher emotional and/ or behavioural needs are taken on by more specialized support staff. The level to which this is formalized and structured nevertheless differs widely between schools.

A common way to streamline the emotional and behavioural support within a school is the regular team meetings of the support staff providing the individualised support. These meetings sometimes include school management (e.g. BE School D 'Care Cell Meetings'), specific teachers (e.g. PL School D 'Educational Team Meetings') and school-external partners (e.g. in UK A1 'Inclusion Panel Meetings' and UK School C where these meetings include all three groups). Although these team meetings do not concern the actual one-on-one support given to a student, in most support team meetings individual cases are discussed and the staff members involved decide on how to go about the emotional and behavioural support of a specific student. Nonetheless, these team meetings are mostly not limited to the provision of one-on-one emotional support, as additional academic and language needs of students are also often discussed, as well as actions that fall within the scope of the school's truancy and disciplinary policy. Nevertheless, by combining these topics and by taking on a case-by-case approach, schools sometimes explicitly try to find out how students' school-external and/ or socio-emotional problems influence their academic performances and behaviour in school. We present some examples below:

> "Each individual case is often considered at the educational team meetings for each class. All teachers teaching a given class gather there and all the individual cases are discussed, especially the problematic ones. There are two forms of educational teams. There is an ad hoc team for an individual student if there is such a need (consisting of teachers who teach a given student) and the educational team which for the whole school (consisting of all the class tutors)."

> (PL School D, Country Report Poland)

> "The Connection Team - meets fortnightly to discuss cases where students need extra support. This can be related to behavioural problems, attendance, attainment, or a combination of these. Students can be referred by a staff member or can self-refer. The team investigates the issue – speaking to the student, their parents, teachers - as appropriate. During the meeting, they discuss as a group the student's support needs and how to respond to them, and then decide on a personalised support strategy on a case-by-case basis. Cases are followed up on. Usually around eight to ten cases are discussed per session."

> (UK School C, Country Report United Kingdom)

A final remark concerning the scope and aim of one-on-one emotional and behavioural support concerns the involvement of school-external services. While some school staff reported that the

access to and involvement of cross-sectorial services in the school was very limited, other schools were able to work out strong partnerships and even formally included professionals from services outside of the school in their care structure (e.g. UK School A 'Inclusion Team'; Mandatory involvement of Committees for protection of Children and Youth in Portugal). Where these services are not included in the school structure, the schools often appoint a specific staff member – predominantly management or support staff – that operates as a gatekeeper to external services (e.g. BE School B and C). These external services can be social and welfare services, psychological and pedagogical counselling services, (para-)medical services, youth care services, financial and material support services, local authorities and juvenile courts.

Assessing the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group

Based upon the analysis of different measures that focus on one-on-one emotional and behavioural support we can distinguish some overall patterns in how individualised support is perceived by the designers, implementers and target groups involved in these measures. In this section we discuss the findings related to the awareness of, participation in and outcome experiences of one-on-one emotional and behavioural support measures.

- *Awareness*

Due to the concreteness of most one-on-one emotional and behavioural support, the awareness of these measures is recognized among the designers, implementers and target group alike. Nonetheless, those staff members and students who are not involved in additional individual support are – naturally – less aware of the existence or specific implementation of the support. Furthermore, the more this individualised support is formalised and structured, the more the designers, implementers and targeted individuals seemed to have some knowledge about it. The target group does not always know what happens behind the scenes and does not always have a clear idea of the problem orientation and motivation of these measures. This lack of awareness sometimes leads to incongruent views and distrust towards the motives of the staff members providing the support.

Among the designers and implementers, the awareness about the individual emotional and behavioural support was in many cases linked to the idea that many of the students in a school are in need of additional emotional and behavioural support. For many staff members, this need stems from the poor living conditions of the students outside of the school. Staff members reported students' difficulties in school due to poverty, low parental support and sometimes even alleged neglect in the home environment. These needs of students are repeatedly mentioned as the main motivation for providing specialised individual support. The following quote of a school principal in BE School C illustrates how the problem orientation incorporates representations of the students' home environments as deficient and not adapted to the demands of the school (and schooling more broadly), which motivated them to invest in student counselling:

> "Several years ago the student population became more 'diverse'[17] and the school changed from a 'white middle class school' to a school where almost every one of the students has an immigration background and therefore the gap between the school and the home environment of the school population has increased. As an answer to this, we see the four student counsellors as the most important change in the

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[17] The term used was 'gekleurd' – literally translated 'coloured'.

counselling structure of the school."

(School principal, BE School C)

The level to which the responsibility of providing emotional and behavioural support is shared among staff members, is also reflected in the awareness about the one-on-one support among teaching and (specialised) support staff. In schools where the designers – predominantly school management – shared this responsibility explicitly with the teaching staff, teachers seemed to be more aware of the importance given to providing an overall supportive school climate and accepted their role within the broader – sometimes tiered – strategy for emotional support. Their knowledge does not always extend to the more structured care team approach that is mostly relegated to the tasks of the (specialised) support staff.

While the shared awareness about the students' needs for socio-emotional support can lead to an increased involvement of teaching staff in the overall care structure of the school, some schools have explicitly invested in specialised support staff for dealing with emotional and behavioural issues in order to allow teachers to concentrate on their main teaching tasks (e.g. BE School C). This can lead to the fact that teachers will refer their students more easily to specialised support staff. In the next sections on participation and outcome experience, we will show that specialised support staff are not always trusted by the students, sometime because they are often involved in the schools' disciplinary policies. Students often reported that teachers – especially those who are perceived to show empathy and have strong social skills – can have closer relationships with their students because of the large amounts of time they spend with them.

- *Participation and ownership*

The participation and ownership of students in one-on-one emotional and behavioural support provided by their schools is strongly related to one of the dimensions discussed in the scope and aims section. The proactive/ reactive continuum and the level to which the support responds to emotional needs or to behavioural problems is very relevant for the students' participation and sense of ownership. Where the individual support merely responds to risk behaviour, participation in these one-on-one conversations with staff – mostly specialised support staff – is typically obligatory, which has the effect of diminishing feelings of ownership among the students participating. The obligatory character of support measures and the lack of ownership that students can experience is illustrated by the following extract from the Portuguese Country Report regarding the 'OET Class' (PT A1):

> "The youngsters said that the only reason they participate is not to be marked absent, because the discipline is mandatory. If it were optional, they would not go. They go to justify absences and to hear the information from teachers' meetings. They think they are not heard, so it is useless to express their opinion because "teachers are always right" and "there's no action to change anything"."

(FGD youngsters, PT School A)

Many of the students interviewed also reported not having any influence in their participation in talks with school staff in response to alleged motivational or behavioural problems. More proactive support actions, which are often also school-wide, seem to result less often in students distrusting staff and feeling targeted (and therefore stigmatized). Regular proactive one-on-one (reflection or mentor) meetings allow more positive relations with staff, who are thereby more likely to pick up emotional and motivational issues before actual behavioural problems occur. An overall positive

school climate, where students feel that the staff is accessible for discussing socio-emotional problems in- and outside of the school context, is also reported as important by the students. These supportive relationships are often not restricted to specialised support staff but in many cases concern teachers that show special attention in the students well-being. The following quote shows how a teachers' helpfulness adds to the appreciation of their relation by the student:

> "Yes. But I also have a lot of teachers who want to help me with that. Madam K. for example, she's a math teacher and she's been very helpful, I can trust her. […] I could even come to her house. I have a very good relationship with her."
>
> (Youngster, BE School C)

A school-wide provision of one-on-one support might however not reach students who are most at risk of ESL because of their past negative experiences with school and school staff. The following extract from the summary of the FGD with staff members in BE School A shows that those most at risk are not reached by the regular student-teacher reflection talks. This shows that targeted support by (specialised) staff remains important to reach these students:

> I: "Another measure the school takes to motivate the students is, according to the principal, the feedback conversations between teachers and students. What is your opinion about them?"
>
> Teacher 2: "They work very well."
>
> Teacher 1: "The students you want to have a conversation with, because they aren't that motivated anymore, are the ones who need it the most -- to come to these conversations -- but they don't show up at such reflection moments."

Nevertheless, we also found various examples of students with a general distrust towards school staff, which resulted in them not feeling eager to turn to staff members with their personal and/ or socio-emotional problems, especially when these did not concern the school context. In some of these schools, there was, however, a structured care system approach installed by the management and school staff:

> "You know what it is, school is school in the end you know, when you have problems, you go and see your family to talk, they are the best source to talk to. Not school, school is school, you don't know them. […] I don't trust them anyways, they will go to the public official for compulsory education, I do not want any of that. You already hear often enough, that they take people away from their families. I do not want that."
>
> (FGD youngsters, NL School A)
>
> "The respondents are aware of the support they could get at school, but many of them underline that school would be the last place they would turn to for help."
>
> (PL School A, Country Report Poland)

The existence and awareness of a structured care system in schools is therefore not sufficient for students to voluntarily participate and open up to teachers and/ or (specialised) support staff about their personal problems. Developing and fostering caring and trustful relationships seems to be a necessary condition for successful one-on-one emotional and behavioural support provision.

- *Outcome experience*

As is shown in the previous section, investing in students' trust towards staff members can strengthen the (voluntary) participation and ownership of students in one-on-one support provision in schools. Students' outcome experience of one-on-one support provided by the school is

naturally also related to their participation and sense of ownership. Students often expressed more positive and supportive relationships with specific teachers than with specialised support staff because of the reactive nature of their involvement with specialised staff.

For one-on-one support to be experienced as effective by students, a prolonged caring relationship is an important condition. Therefore, targeted support by (specialised) school staff should not be responding (only) to motivational and behavioural problems. The following examples show how the (unbalanced) combination of supportive and punitive tasks can lead to students not feeling supported by the staff appointed to provide emotional and behavioural support within the school:

> "Most target group respondents of school B experienced that the advice given by the care team remains limited. One pupil points out that she went there one time to talk about her bad grades and they advised and motivated her, but the next day she was back where she started; the youngster therefore felt that it did not work."
>
> (NL School B, Country Report The Netherlands)

> "While the school staff primarily calls the school's attitude/approach to these issues 'preventive and supportive' in nature, the students mostly see the pupil coordinator as the school's personification of its disciplinary policy. Contrary to the overall positive image about the teachers in School A, the pupil coordinator of the business-oriented courses – who takes up the role of student counsellor but also coordinates the disciplinary policy – is described by the students as someone who is not very open to their position; she was indicated by multiple students as someone they only see when something goes wrong (calling her '*the angel of death*' for always taking someone out of class to discuss problems and disciplinary sanctions.)"
>
> (BE School A, Country Report Belgium)

While several cases showed positive influences of one-on-one emotional support from their regular teachers, some of the students also pointed out that this support should not interfere with the more strictly academic part of their teaching job and should not result in a situation where teachers do not find the time to teach the actual content of their classes and to provide academic support:

> "Target group respondents would like to receive more school-related support. They feel they are only coming to class to do exercises or activities, but they miss instructions and actual classes. In this way, they don't have any motivation to go to school, as they believe that they could do the exact same thing at home."
>
> (NL School D, Country Report The Netherlands)

> "One of their mentors was described as not providing them with the information the other students received and "not actually teaching them anything**"**. Since she showed emotional support, the students appreciated her anyway. The students feeling of support was, however, only in relation to a small number of teachers, often one or two per pupil."
>
> (SE School B, Country Report Sweden)

Targeted one-on-one support by caring specialised support staff for students showing increased risk of ESL (e.g. by showing disruptive behaviour in class or by having problematic school careers) can therefore be initiated when students do not feel supported by their regular teachers. Some students also expressed that non-judgmental and impartial support staff could help to resolve conflicts between students and teachers by also listening to and acting upon their side of a conflict:

"One of the students in the focus group saw his personal relationship with the teachers as the main problem. The student-teacher relationship was an issue the teachers in the focus group came back to as well, arguing that a student assistant would be a good resource for the programme, since s/he could bridge possible gaps between students and teachers. A student assistant would be a person who didn't have anything to do with grading the students but worked as an adult support for them."

(SE School A, Country Report Sweden).

A final remark to be made regarding the outcome experience of one-on-one emotional and behavioural support is that – when not taking a school-wide approach but rather a student-focused approach focussing on students that show behavioural problems in class/ school – these school policies risk missing disengaged students that are not acting out – they might slip under the radar. In Swedish School B the following findings regarding the outcome experience of students illustrate this risk:

"Pupils feel they are only being acknowledged by their teachers for doing "bad stuff". At the end of the semester, several students that the teachers had failed to acknowledge as having trouble in school were revealed to be failing to pass the criteria for upper secondary school. In the discussions with the study and career counsellor, the students were described as not being rowdy but rather simply slipping under the radar because they were quiet and always did what they were told. Therefore, attention had instead been focused on the other students. Compliant students were not thought to have trouble in school."

(Researchers' notes on fieldwork in SE School B)

It is therefore important to have at least some level of school-wide attention for disengagement among students based on regular one-on-one contact that enables the staff to detect problems of low engagement that does not otherwise show up as behavioural problems in school.

Risk and protective factors for one-on-one emotional and behavioural support

Previous research has shown that investing in one-on-one emotional and behavioural support for students can be among the most effective school policy initiatives to keep students engaged in school and to intervene in processes of potential ESL (De Witte & Cabus, 2010; Dynarski et al., 2008; Lehr, Sinclair, & Christenson, 2004). Our analysis shows that virtually all focus schools have at least some basic level of individualised emotional and behavioural support provision. The way this individual support is organized, however, differs widely among schools. The two main dimensions on which the organisation of the one-on-one support can be positioned are the proactive versus reactive nature and the level to which specialised support staff or regular teachers take up the individual support role.

Regarding the first dimension on the proactive versus reactive approach towards individual support provision, the analysis shows that while a proactive approach is preferred because it aims to prevent motivational/ behavioural problems and is often less punitive and stigmatizing in nature, many (if not most) schools predominantly react to more negative visible symptoms like absenteeism, disruptive behaviour and diminishing study behaviour. Since early warnings about emotional disconnection from school or personal problems in- and outside of school are sometimes not picked up, personalised support sometimes comes too late and is (therefore) conceived as punitive rather than supportive by the target group/individual. Such a reactive punitive approach is also mostly non-voluntary, allows little room for students' voice and ownership and hampers the development of a caring and trusting relationship between the student and a potential adult trustee.

Moreover, problems of disengagement can slip under the radar for those students having low levels of school engagement without being non-compliant to school regulations.

With regard to sharing the one-on-one support responsibilities among staff members, most schools tend to involve teaching staff at least in the signalling of possible signs of emotional and/ or behavioural problems to whomever takes up the one-on-one support role in the school. In most schools there is specialised support staff available that responds to emotional and behavioural problems. The level of professionalization of this support staff, however, varies from regular teaching staff taking up this role without specific training, to socio-emotional and behavioural care professionals like student counsellors, social workers and school psychologists. The access to and availability of funding for this professional support are considered essential by the designers and implementers. We will discuss this issue further in the section on 'promoting professional development and support of teachers' as a contextual precondition for effective interventions. Although specialised and formally appointed support staff is usually better trained for providing this support, when the support is provided only reactively to behavioural problems that are seen as symptoms of underlying emotional difficulties, students sometimes prefer less formalised and more proactive emotional support provided by a teacher that they trust.

The organisation of the individualised care within schools thus tends to be mostly tiered with a primary school-wide support role of teachers and the involvement of specialized support staff for student-focussed interventions for those students showing increased support needs. While this tiered approach seems to be widespread throughout the focus schools, the timing, coordination and task differentiation among staff members involved in the schools' emotional and behavioural support shows strong variation. The structure of the individualised support ranges between highly structured weekly care team meetings including school-external actors from cross-sectorial partnerships discussing digitally shared case files, to ad hoc reactions to students' emotional and/ or behavioural needs that are picked up by chance rather than through systematic early warning systems.

Truancy and Disciplinary Policies

While the previous section on one-on-one support focused on individualized support aiming for supporting youngsters that show emotional and/or behavioural needs, this section targets school policies that specifically aim to reduce truancy and behavioural problems. School regulations towards truancy and other transgressing behaviour are often directed to all students but the actions mostly only target those who do not comply with school regulations.

Furthermore, while most examples in our case studies apply negative responses to non-compliance (with exception of UK School A and B), the literature shows many examples that use rewards for compliance to school codes on behaviour and attendance. Meta-studies on the effectiveness of truancy policies in schools show that the most promising policies use some combination of positive and negative truancy management (Sutphen et al, 2010). Licht et al. (1991) also found evidence for the effectiveness of using tangible rewards (e.g. food coupons, movie tickets) in combination with telephone notification of parents for increasing attendance and punctuality among special education students. Other studies showed positive results for other incentive-based programmes (e.g. Ford & Sutphen, 1996), individual support programmes (e.g.

Baker & Jansen, 2000), relationship-building and monitoring efforts (e.g. Lehr et al., 2004). Larson and Rumberger (1995) recommended to draft attainable behavioural goals in contracts and to recognize students when they accomplish them. By individualizing contractual agreements, students can be supported to determine realistic goals and provide frequent, positive incentives to help students to achieve them. Student ownership of behavioural contracts can also be increased when school staff actively involve students in drafting the contracts.

Many truancy policies that are reported in scientific literature also discuss school responses that are coupled with youth care, social and judicial services. McCluskey et al. (2004) found that a tiered intervention involving progressively punitive interventions, including written notification from school, referral to social and mental health professionals, and visits by law enforcement agencies for students with very high absence rates resulted in improved attendance for chronic truants but not for other students. The early stages in this tiered approach – e.g. the notification of parents – showed to be most effective, whereas the more elaborate punitive approach involving judiciary services showed to have less effects. Another American tiered model for providing a continuum of behavioural support actions is the Positive Behavioural Interventions and Support programme (PBIS). The PBIS programme showed that an estimated 10-15% of students do not respond to school-wide interventions and thereby require more intensive interventions. These youngsters benefited from increased structure and contingent feedback (Reinke et al., 2009).

Based on an international review of research from in- and outside Europe, Downes (2011) identified developing teacher conflict resolution skills and alternatives to suspension among the priority areas on the school system level. These interventions should allow schools to better respond to truancy and behavioural problems. Another central conclusion is that community-based multi-/interdisciplinary teams who also work with and within the schools are a good practice model and can yield significant gains in school attendance and improved behaviour in class. In 2014, Downes identified the lack of alternatives to suspension or expulsion again as a main structural feature increasing exclusion and therefore further increases the risks for ESL among at risk youngsters.

The scope and aims of the measures under study

Although truancy and disciplinary policies are touched upon in many of the school descriptions and as elements of the studied school-based interventions, only a few of the studied measures are in essence truancy or disciplinary policies (*i.e.* BE A2; BE B1; BE C1; BE D1; and NL C1). Furthermore, as indicated above, the school-based interventions that were chosen as case studies showed a preponderance of behavioural policies that predominantly apply punishments to respond to non-compliance with school regulations rather than rewards for compliance. For many of these schools, the truancy and disciplinary policies are the stick to the carrot, embodied by measures that more proactively and/or positively try to engage students emotionally and behaviourally, such as individualized support, social skills training and extra-curricular activities. Many of the disciplinary measures are in practice thus combined with one-on-one support, mostly provided by (specialized) support staff (see previous section). As we will show in the next paragraphs, all of the school-based truancy and disciplinary interventions that were studied in-depth predominantly build on notification of truancy and disruptive behaviour to parents, setting up behavioural contracts, detention, suspension and ultimately expulsion.

With regard to truancy, some of the case studies report stipulated procedures on how schools engage with students playing truant. The following examples from our case studies show that most apply a combination of notifying parents about their child's absence and, in case of unjustified absences, take disciplinary steps that can ultimately lead to permanent exclusion from the school. In many of these cases the disciplinary procedure includes a formal contract between the school and the student who regularly plays truant:

- BE School A, for instance, designed a follow-up plan for students playing truant that can lead to a truancy contract. Starting from five half days of truancy, the parents are informed by a telephone call and by letter. Further steps are taken starting from 10 half days of truancy. From this moment onwards, a school-external student counsellor is involved and the truancy is reported to the database of the Local Truancy Cell (i.e. a monitoring and advisory platform from the local authority). In case the student fails to comply with the truancy contract, the student can ultimately be expelled from the school.

- NL School C digitally records all attendances and requires students to attend all classes and workplace learning activities. All unauthorized absences are considered a violation of the 'Education Agreement' which the students sign at the start of the school year. In the event of regular unauthorized absences, the truancy protocol will be initiated. For underage students, the parents will be informed about their absence and the school's attendance officer is involved. Frequent truancy may result in termination of the study programme.

- In the school description of PL School B, an electronic register is described that facilitates teachers in providing parents with information on the attendance of their children. In addition, teachers keep in close telephone contact with parents. If this brings no results, there are statutory penalties such as a teacher's and principal's warnings and eventually a reprimand from the principal with a threat of expulsion.

When considering disciplinary actions taken by the selected schools towards disruptive behaviour, our fieldwork shows that these schools have similar disciplinary procedures worked out for behaviour that the schools consider as undesirable (*e.g.* use of violence, drug abuse, etc.):

- BE School B makes use of a 'follow-up card' for students who regularly show disruptive behaviour in class. This card is signed by every teacher after class in case of 'good behaviour'. In case a student keeps failing to adhere to behavioural rules, a follow-up contract is drafted and signed. This can be a first step towards eventual expulsion. Furthermore, all disciplinary steps are registered in a digital monitoring system, where a member of the school staff can inform other staff about a student's behaviour of a student.

In the following extract of an interview with school staff in PL School B, the scope and aim of truancy and behavioural contracts in their school is discussed together with the pedagogical counsellor and the school principal:

Pedagogical Counsellor: "The last important element, which have been developing during the last few years, are the mutual commitments agreed upon between a student and a teacher. If he or she notices that a student has some problems, concerning for example repetitive improper behaviour or educational problems, and that the kid does not do anything to make up for it, a special contract may be signed by this student and teacher. "

Next to the disciplinary procedures that include behavioural contracts studied in-depth in the case studies described above, some of the Country Reports mentioned other forms of contracts between schools and students. In NL School A, for instance, next to more general behavioural codes, there also exists a bullying prevention protocol which must be signed by each student at the start of the school year. Another example of a disciplinary procedure can be found in UK School B where a four-stage plan stipulates how the different levels of misconduct are dealt with in the school, going from an official warning to an action plan that, like the procedures described above, can lead to the student being expelled from the school. The school descriptions of UK School A and C also show that misconduct is registered and that there are procedures that can lead to exclusion.

In NL School C, a different measure is taken to tackle disruptive behaviour. A Time Out class is organized to seclude disruptive students from their regular class group. Time Out Class is considered the final option for students who continuously show disruptive behaviour. They have to attend Time Out class full time for a period of at least 8 weeks. In this sense, Time Out class is a rather excluding measure whereby students with behaviour problems will be taken out of their regular class and placed in a special class. In case the Time Out class does not improve their behaviour, the student can eventually be expelled from school. In Belgium, school-external Time Out projects were also reported by the studied schools, but those ones are all headed up by professionals from the social and youth care sector, sometimes with close cooperation of the school. Because of the specialized care provided by youth care experts and mental health professionals, the methods in these school-external time-outs makes them to be categorized more as social skills training instead of being essentially disciplinary measures taken by the school (see next section social skills training and extra-curricular activities).

Although most of the truancy and disciplinary policies outlined above are mostly building on disciplinary procedures involving punishment, a few focus schools also make reference to reward systems for attendance and punctuality. We can report on a few schools that were mentioned for using incentives to enhance students' positive behaviour, attendance and punctuality. UK School A, for instance, actively encourages attendance and positive contributions by rewarding students with positive notification to their parents (e.g. phone calls, letters and postcards), celebration events and awards. UK School B also incentivises their students to attend by rewarding a 100% attendance rate and 0% tardiness through the use of a monthly prize draw. Finally, UK School C also uses incentives for good behaviour by installing nominations, awards, celebration displays, praise postcards and home calls.

Although this section focuses on school's truancy and disciplinary procedures to tackle students' unauthorized absenteeism and disruptive behaviour, our data show that many of these punitive policies are actually implemented in combination with the intervention of multi-disciplinary teams providing students with emotional and behavioural support that tries to tackle the root causes underlying students' truancy and/ or misconduct. Many of the causes are framed outside of the school context and are therefore often deemed to require professional support from outside of the educational domain. We present some multi-disciplinary approaches from the case studies below:

- UK School A supports students with behavioural issues in their 'Comprehensive Behavioural Policy' by involving the school's multi-agency inclusion team. Although the school also holds the option of internal, fixed term exclusions and exclusions as a last resort, they are only used if all other support and sanction systems proved ineffective. So before disciplinary sanctions are taken, the inclusion team builds on a robust referral system: if there is a concern about a student – behavioural, attendance- and punctuality-related – staff members will make a referral to the inclusion team.

- SE school C emphasizes that students' absenteeism should be handled promptly. The school's procedure to handle truancy is to arrange a student health conference ('*elevhälsokonferens*') in which the school's principal, the student's parents and other relevant actors participate. During the meeting, decisions can be made regarding different kinds of measures, such as additional tutoring; increased one-on-one support; remedial grouping into smaller classes; support from the student health team; home-schooling; or an adjusted course of study. A similar student health conference was reported for SE School D.

As a closing remark concerning the scope and aim of the truancy and disciplinary measures, we highlight the fact that many of the school-based interventions are related to policy measures taken by local or national governments to support schools in reducing students' truancy and transgressive behaviour, sometimes in direct relation to the ESL policy of the (local) government. Based on the school-based truancy policies that were mentioned in the country reports, some European educational systems also require schools to monitor and report non-attendance and transgressive behaviour, which can lead to (additional) government actions and sanctions. An example is the involvement of local authority truancy monitoring and truancy officers in the city of Antwerp (Belgium). After 30 half days of truancy, the Flemish Ministry of Education can also start a procedure to reduce the child benefits for the students' family. In the Netherlands, a nation-wide absenteeism policy imposes the rule that each class hour missed due to truancy has to be done over double, and in case of chronic truancy, a school-external attendance officer can be involved by the school. The UK country report also highlights that non-attendance in England can have severe legal consequences for parents. Schools and local authorities in the UK can issue various orders to enforce school attendance, as well as financial penalties. in Portugal, students' truancy can lead to a cancellation of social insertion subsidies, which implies the involvement of the Committee for the Protection of Children and Youth.

To sum up, our data showed that the majority of school interventions and policies try to tackle truancy and disruptive behaviour by punishing non-compliance rather than rewarding compliance. Many of these disciplinary policies are written down formally in procedures that involve a tiered approach using notification to parents and behavioural contracts that can ultimately lead to expulsion. Be it internal or external, temporary or permanent exclusion, expelling students from a school seems to be a common concluding piece of schools' disciplinary policies. Nonetheless, many of these disciplinary procedures are presented to the students as a stick next to the carrot of one-on-one emotional support, extra-curricular activities and social skills training.

In the following paragraphs we present some of the main findings concerning the awareness, (reasons for) participation, sense of ownership and outcome experience of those individuals involved as designers, implementers or as part of the target group of the disciplinary measures.

- **Awareness**

In most of the schools where we studied behavioural policies, tackling transgressive behaviour and particularly truancy was presented as very prominent in their efforts to reduce ESL. The idea that truancy might well be the most overt risk indicator for ESL is widely acknowledged among school staff. The following extracts capture the awareness about the role of truancy and disciplinary policies ascribed for tackling ESL:

> "'The bottom line is if students aren't in school, they're not going to get the grades and your school suffers, so first, you need students in school. So we have an attendance officer and an educational welfare officer."
>
> (Assistant Head teacher, UK School A)
>
> "The school management targets students' absences and behavioural misconduct for being major risk indicators for ESL. School D's pupil counselling and disciplinary policies are also discussed in the light of the school's most prominent measures to reduce ESL. The management team tries to confront all truancy and behavioural problems at an early stage. This is also confirmed by the pupil counsellors and support staff involved in the staff FGD."
>
> (BE School D, Country Report Belgium)

This awareness was especially salient among the management and support staff who are most often involved in the design and implementation of the school's truancy and disciplinary policies. The students are in general well aware of the school's disciplinary procedures for truancy and disruptive behaviour. As these procedures are communicated by the school staff and formalized in school documents and behavioural contracts, students in general know the consequences of being truant or non-compliant with behavioural codes:

> "Since the new structured framework for the disciplinary policy for truancy and misconduct, the staff involved in the FGD indicated that this made the procedures and consequences clearer for all students. The ASP also pointed out that the policy is also explained in each class at the beginning of the school year. During the interviews and FGD with students the school's policy seemed to be well-known among the students."
>
> (BE School D, Country Report Belgium)

Furthermore, sanctions such as detention, suspension and expulsion are also highly visible to students. What seems to be less clear is the relation with the schools' policy to prevent ESL. Almost none of the students interviewed made any direct connection between the school's truancy or disciplinary measures and the school's efforts to reduce the level of ESL in their school. The following extract of the Dutch Country Report that discusses the Time Out Class in NL School C shows how an exclusionary and punitive approach can (further) alienate the target group/individual from the school's aim to reintegrate misbehaving students in the school:

"Time Out is for students that behave like criminals or are behaving badly." The target group believes it is used to scare students so that you don't repeat previous behaviour. But the target group believes that "there is no real goal for a student being in a time-out class, it is a punishment."

(NL School C, Country Report The Netherlands)

- **Participation and ownership**

The involvement of students in the studied truancy and disciplinary measures was always mandatory and based on non-compliance with behavioural codes regarding attendance, punctuality and disruptive behaviour (e.g. conflicts with teachers, fights, etc). The mandatory character of the participation in disciplinary actions and sanctions are in many cases also reflected in a low sense of ownership towards what the school as a community considers undesirable behaviour and the actions in place to tackle this behaviour. The following extract describing the participation and ownership of students involved in a disciplinary programme in NL School C illustrates the lack of ownership regarding their involvement:

"Most of the target group participants in Time Out claim that they have no idea why they are in this measure. One student said that he only received a few warnings when he came late to class, but never had a meeting prior to being sent to time-out and he does not like this. The design of the programme is that students who are assigned to Time Out are obliged to go there if they want to stay at this school. Therefore target group respondents feel that this programme is a "punishment". They all indicate that others have sent them here, and that they are not happy with it at all. Moreover, they don't understand why they are in this measure."

(NL School C, Country Report the Netherlands)

Some of the students also criticised the fact that their parents are notified and involved in their participation in these measures. Especially those students who passed the legal school age did not agree with the school's involvement of their parents.

Student 1: "What I also don't like about this school is that, even if you were 40 years old, your parents would need to come to school […] They must, they must… They already had my father's cell phone number from a previous occasion, they looked it up and got in contact with my father. Even though I am 18+." [and therefore legally considered an adult]."

(FGD peers, BE School A)

Although the involvement of students is not voluntary, the reasons for participation are sometimes disputed and students often do not have a voice in the school's truancy and disciplinary measures, many of the students interviewed did recognize the value of disciplinary policies in the school. Some students indicated that a lack of school regulations would lead to negative repercussions for the school climate and the school's reputation to the outside world:

"In the interviews and FGD with students, the students do acknowledge that the misconduct of some students needs to be sanctioned because it would otherwise have negative consequences for the school atmosphere, for the reputation of the school and therefore also on the value of their degree on the job market."

(BE School D, Country Report Belgium)

The participation of staff in the implementation of schools' truancy and disciplinary policies is mostly limited to administrative and support staff. Many of the behavioural contracts and sanctions are communicated and followed up on by support staff members such as student counsellors.

Many of them therefore often combine a supportive and a sanctioning role (see section on one-on-one support for role conflicts of support staff).

- **Outcome experience**

When discussing the outcome experience with school staff, most of the staff members that are involved in the disciplinary policies as designers or implementers referred to the school's truancy and expulsion rates as an indicator to evaluate its efficiency more than referring to ESL rates:

> "I think we're being successful with the attendance; it increased significantly and hopefully this year we will pass 96%, which would be a fantastic achievement for the school. But a few years ago, you know, just over 93% and that's very fine margins; it's difficult to get those small percentages, but we've done it."
>
> (Assistant Head Teacher, UK School A)

The stakeholders – including students as the target group – also referred to the school's reputation as an outcome indicator of disciplinary policies. A school's image is considered more positive when the occurrence of truancy and disruptive behaviour are (perceived to be) low.

> "The students involved in the interviews and FGD mostly concurred that the new management's stricter and clearer procedures against truancy and misconduct have paid off. Some of the students also explicitly linked the new policies to the new school management and the way this has improved the image of the school for the outside world. […] The students acknowledge the decline of misconduct in the school and indicate that it is also reflected in a more positive image of the school in the outside world."
>
> (BE School D, Country Report Belgium)

Students in general experience truancy and disciplinary policies to be effective in reducing transgressive behaviour in school. Nonetheless, the effects of the disciplinary policies are only described as punitive and students don't express feeling supported by these measures. Next to the target group, some of the school staff involved as designers or implementers of truancy and disciplinary policies acknowledge that many of the efforts are too oriented towards punishing students for non-compliance rather than supporting their emotional and behavioural needs.

Another factor that was indicated by stakeholders to reduce the effectiveness of schools' truancy and disciplinary measures is the late stage in which some of the disciplinary measures take place. Many of these actions are only reactive and many measures respond to absences or misconduct when it has already reached an advanced stage. When behavioural problems have developed to an advanced stage, many schools respond with exclusionary practices like separation from regular class, suspension and expulsion. One of the main arguments to exclude students from their class/the school is based on protecting the rest of the student body from the disruptive behaviour. There is, however, much less attention for the effects of these sanctions on those students who get excluded. The return to a regular classes after exclusion is acknowledged to often be problematic:

> "The protective factor of Time Out class is that it only affects those causing the trouble, while the rest of the class may continue normally. Students in this measure are in smaller groups, whereby individual support is possible, however, the risk factor is that returning to their normal class appears to be difficult, as they have missed some of their regular subjects. Preliminary outcomes experienced by implementers are relatively positive as they see that students who return from the measure into the regular classes have improved their behaviour. Then again, one of them revealed: "To be honest, I do not see these students coming back often."
>
> (NL School C, Country Report the Netherlands)

The discourses of the different stakeholders reveal that the outcome of truancy and disciplinary measures is mostly evaluated based on the short-term attendance and behavioural effects rather than the effects on the extent to which schools succeed in keeping at-risk students in school.

> Learning Support Educator: I think so. Because at the beginning when they come, they are very tense because they had very bad experiences in the lower secondary school. And what they tell us makes our hair stand on end, and besides, this is confirmed by parents who during parent-teacher meetings say that this is the only... I mean, the first school, in which they themselves can find some rest. There are no phone calls every day that something happened, there are no major conflicts, of course we have to work hard, because there is more work with such children, but ... Well, the parent has some rest, the child has some rest, and we learn tolerance from each other."

(FGD Staff, PL School A)

Risk and protective factors for truancy and disciplinary policies

Although the descriptive data on the schools showed some examples of incentives aiming at increasing attendance and school compliance, the cross-case analyses of school-based truancy and disciplinary interventions showed a majority of measures that predominantly punish students for not being compliant with school regulation about attendance, punctuality and behaviour rather than rewarding students for compliance. These truancy and disciplinary policies were also mostly formally stipulated in procedures and applied as a tiered approach going from notifying the parents to drafting behavioural contracts with sanctions for non-compliance such as detention, suspension and ultimately (temporary or permanent) exclusion from regular class or the school all together. Many of these disciplinary actions – often characterised as reactive and punitive – are however often combined with more supportive actions such as one-on-one support, social skills training and extra-curricular activities. Sometimes this support is provided by multi-disciplinary teams involving youth care and mental health professionals. Some of the schools' truancy and disciplinary policies are also enforced in cooperation with actions and sanctions of the local and national government and can have legal consequences for the students and their parents.

Because of the formal character and high visibility of most schools' truancy and disciplinary procedures, the target group is in general well aware of the school regulations and consequences of transgressive behaviour. Nonetheless, only the designers and implementers – in most cases management and support staff – link these measures explicitly with the school's efforts to reduce ESL, while this direct connection is hardly ever made in the minds of the target group. The participation of students in these disciplinary measures is based on them overstepping behavioural rules and is therefore mandatory. Their non-voluntary participation and the fact that disciplinary measures are mainly unilaterally designed and implemented by school staff, are often reflected in the low sense of ownership among the target group. Nevertheless, the low sense of ownership towards school regulations and sanctions does not mean that most students do not value the importance of truancy and disciplinary policies. Like school staff, students recognize the value of regulations for the school's reputation and climate. More distributed leadership that recognizes the voice of the target group in the design and implementation of the disciplinary procedures could therefore increase students' ownership.

Designers and implementers primarily seem to evaluate the outcome of truancy and disciplinary measures based on short-term indicators such as truancy and expulsion rates, rather than effects on the number of students that eventually leave the school without a qualification. A risk factor for

truancy and disciplinary policies reported by different stakeholders is the fact that many of the disciplinary actions are often only a reaction at the point where truancy and misconduct have reached an advanced stage wherein sometimes neither the staff nor the youngsters are motivated to restore their relationship and invest in staying in school. Moreover, sanctioning students for non-attendance or showing disruptive behaviour, especially by excluding them from the school, can further increase the risk of ESL. The staff's motivation for (temporary or permanent) exclusion is often to protect both staff and other students from negative effects on the school's reputation and climate. Nonetheless, excluding at risk students without supporting them in their further trajectory does not provide a long term solution for those youngsters – who are often already in a socially vulnerable position – and merely diverts these youngsters' support needs to other educational and/or youth care institutions.

Social Skills Training and Extra-curricular Activities

Another type of emotional and behavioural support that is provided in or in close cooperation with schools and has a prominent place in intervention studies related to ESL is social skills training and extra-curricular activities. Youngsters who have or are at risk of emotional issues tend to show problems with interpersonal relationships and pro-social behaviour. It can therefore be beneficial to provide social skills training and extra-curricular activities to increase students' well-being and school belonging (Gresham et al., 2013). Social skills development can improve student's behaviour in class and offer training in coping skills, goal setting, time management, problem solving and decision making (Dynarski et al., 2008; White and Kelly, 2008). Emotional and behavioural issues can require different approaches that can involve student-teacher interactions, teaching styles and performance feedback (Gresham, 2010). Dynarski et al. (2008) showed that instructing students on how to appropriately interact and communicate positively with peers and adults in and outside of the classroom is a promising intervention to reduce ESL.

Dynarski et al. (2008) present different approaches to tackle emotional and behavioural problems that – next to one-on-one support and rewarding students' positive behaviour – include teaching problem-solving and decision-making skills within the existing curriculum or in special life-skills courses. In a meta-study on dropout prevention for students with emotional problems or behavioural issues, Pyle & Wexler (2011) indicated that different types of behavioural support should help create a warm and safe school climate where students feel welcomed and accepted. In their recommendations for social skills training they focus on teaching students how to positively interact and effectively communicate with peers and staff; to recognize and respond to problems; to promote constructive problem solving; to develop conflict management skills; and to include cognitive components in behavioural support by role playing and modelling how to become self-aware, self-instruct and communicate effectively.

One way to provide social skills learning opportunities and to heighten students' well-being in the school is the provision of extra-curricular activities. Many youngsters at risk of ESL lack a sense of connection with the school. Extra-curricular activities can provide opportunities to strengthen the school belonging (EU Commission, 2013). Results of intervention studies indicate that engagement in extracurricular activities is linked to a drop in ESL rates and that these positive effects are strongest among at-risk students (Mahony & Cairns, 1997). For students with low school engagement, participation in extra-curricular activities can provide an opportunity to create a

positive and voluntary connection with the school. Moreover, unlike other interventions that mostly target at-risk students for their (presumed) deficiencies, extracurricular activities provide social support networks and promote individual interests, achievements, and goals (Mahony & Cairns, 1997). These authors, however, point out that one has to consider the exclusionary processes of some extra-curricular activities (due to high costs, cultural mismatch, etc.) that may work against socially disadvantaged students who could benefit most directly from involvement.

As discussed in the previous section on disciplinary policies, short-term time out measures provided by or in close cooperation with school-external professionals from the youth care and mental health sector often provide social skills training. Short-term time out measures offer students facing personal difficulties a temporary alternative learning environment outside of the regular classroom or school setting (Eurydice & Cedefop, 2014). Time out projects first and foremost address emotional and behavioural problems by personal and social skills training and then move on to one-on-one and small group support to catch up on their studies. According to Eurydice and Cedefop (2014) the key characteristics of time out projects include small group sizes, a flexible approach, specialist educators/ counsellors who work in close contact with care and mental health professionals and temporary relocation to an out-of-school context, often with little resemblance to regular classrooms. The meta-study of Eurydice and Cedefop (2014) reports on examples from Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Germany, France, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria and the United Kingdom. The best American practice examples in providing social skills training are service learning activities (e.g. Billig, 2002); the Bridges to High School Program (Gonzales et al., 2004); and the Effective Learning Program (Nowicki et al., 2004).

To sum up, social skills training and the provision of extra-curricular activities are an addition to emotional and behavioural support through one-on-one support and disciplinary behavioural policies. Social skills training invests in enhancing students' well-being and connection with the school and provides tools that help students to cope with emotional and behavioural problems and improve their interactions with peers and school staff. Although many examples show that social skills training is provided by schools in the existing curriculum, for example via special life-skills courses and alternative teaching methods, additional social skills development could be provided through extra-curricular activities and – for those students in an emotional or behavioural crisis situation – through close cooperation with short-term school-external time out projects provided by partners in the youth care and mental health sector.

The scope and aims of the measures under study

Among the schools selected for our case studies, we found some that provide some level of social skills training, some that provide extra-curricular activities, and some that work closely with youth care services to provide their students with opportunities for short-term time out. Although not all of these measures are closely linked to reducing ESL, for the most part they are specifically meant to help students cope with emotional and/ or behavioural problems or try to enhance their personal well-being and school belonging. We will report on the scope and aims of those investing in social skills training first, then we will show some examples of extra-curricular activities, and finally we will report on cooperation between schools and youth care services.

The measure that is most closely connected to what the literature calls social skills development is the introductory programme 'Individual Alternative (IA)', provided by Swedish upper secondary schools. The introductory IA programme is designed by the government and the local school boards and implemented by specialized teachers, youth coaches and student counsellors. The 'Individual Alternative' is offered to those students who are not (yet) eligible for upper secondary education programmes due to a lack of educational credentials. The programme can last up to three years, depending on the specific cognitive and socio-emotional needs of that student. The IA programme can also be considered a programme for social training, as it targets students who have stayed at home for a long period, or who have emotional issues or social problems that have made schooling difficult or stressful. The designers and implementers indicated that students in the IA programme rarely have difficulties with studying per se. Many of the students in the IA programme struggle with socio-emotional and behavioural problems or have a history of truancy or drug abuse. The school curriculum is often not the biggest obstacle for these students, it is rather a matter of receiving the right emotional and behavioural support. Specificities of the IA programme include smaller teaching groups, a lower student-teacher ratio, classroom behaviour management, establishing stronger student-teacher relations and more intensive cooperation with parents. The curriculum is adapted to fit the interests and hobbies of young people and the school schedule combines theoretical subjects with cultural activities and sports. The IA programme is therefore also relevant in relation to extra-curricular activities. The aim for IA students is often a bit more abstract than merely making them eligible for upper secondary education. Although the majority of the students interviewed in the IA programme wanted to continue their studies, these students in general are not necessarily eligible for upper secondary school when they have finished the Individual Alternative Programme. The IA programme rather aims to prepare them for a broader spectrum of future opportunities; direct access to the labour market is considered a valuable alternative.

Another example in which some level of social skills training is provided in a school-setting are the *'Aula Oberta'* or Open Classroom programmes in the Catalan Region of Spain. In the Open Classroom programmes provided in ES School B and D, a special grouping with adapted curriculum for students with academic, motivational and/or behavioural difficulties – next to basic skills provision – aims at increasing self-esteem, study motivation and generating aspirations. Within this broader programme, School B created a specific programme called *'Fem Empreza'* or 'Doing Business' where students' social skills such as organisational capacities, interpersonal skills and self-control are the focus. The target group of this and other Open Classroom projects are not only youngsters with cognitive learning issues but also youngsters with low self-esteem and motivational problems. The Open Classrooms provide adapted curriculum contents and subjects, have smaller student-teacher ratios, apply alternative teaching methods and have more individualized attention for the specific needs of students. Similar to the Individual Alternative programmes in Sweden, the Open Classroom aims for preparation for upper secondary education or, if not feasible, guidance towards alternative learning pathways leading to labour market participation.

A final case study that includes elements of school-based social skills training are the *'Orientador Educativo da Turma (OET)'* or 'Educational Class Advisor' provided in PT School A. OET was designed by the school's management board and implemented by the class teachers for at least 90 minutes per week. The OET is, different than the examples presented above, a school-wide

measure that is provided to all students in the school. The class teacher can use the OET time to do assemblies to solve class problems, to control absenteeism, to tackle students' failure in some subjects, to talk about behavioural problems, as well as to develop class projects. Although the aims of the programme strongly resemble those of the IA and Open Classroom projects, the scope here are all students and the methodology is more open-ended for the teachers that take up the role of OET.

Apart from the case studies that at least contained elements of school-based social skills training, the school descriptions provided us with some descriptive information on other examples of social skills training. In NL School A, for instance, assertiveness training, anger management training and anxiety reduction training is provided to the students. Furthermore, UK School A experiments with an innovative programme where 'baby watching' sessions are organized. During these sessions – which were scientifically designed to reduce anxiety and aggression – a group of students observe a mother and baby playing for half an hour.

Next to social skills training, extra-curricular activities are found to strengthen students' well-being and school belonging. We present a wide variety of extra-curricular activities with different scopes and aims provided in the schools under study:

- PL School B tries to keep students in school by providing individual support that includes a variety of additional activities which should enable students to develop individual interests such as in theatre, sports, photography and journalism. The school staff indicated that the organisation of various projects and classes is steered by the needs and abilities of the students.

- In PL School D extra-curricular activities are provided in cooperation with external partners such as labour market institutions, charities, NGOs and local cultural centres. The provision is motivated by the wish to provide students with civic education, increase the students' social, emotional, and aesthetic awareness, and develop their social sensitivity and responsibility.

- BE School A uses the government funding intended for equal educational opportunities also for extra-curricular activities, which students would otherwise have problems paying for, such as school trips, school plays, school fashion shows and an indoor soccer tournament. The principal justifies the use of this funding by attributing it to their overall attention towards the students' wellbeing and by their commitment to involving socially disadvantaged students in extended schooling projects.

- In UK School A, students are expected to complete work related learning and community service. Students have access to structured work experience, a range of leadership opportunities, volunteering schemes and organized trips within the UK and abroad. Furthermore, the school offers a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities for all students, such as sports, performing arts, ICT and technology, crafts, cooking, debate, film, etc.

Apart from the social skills training and extra-curricular activities that are designed and/ or implemented in schools, we briefly report on extra-muros measures aiming at providing emotional

and behavioural support provided by youth care institutions as discussed amongst the school staff. We show how – even within the same metropolitan area – this cross-sectorial cooperation takes on different forms and is evaluated differently by the management of different schools:

- In BE School A cooperation with time out projects is limited to situations where students and/ or classes show behavioural problems that cannot be handled internally. The principal is not enthusiastic about these time out projects. He feels the communication with the actors from youth care services is not going well and the care workers are not visible enough to the school staff. The only time when time out projects are found useful is when the temporary exclusion of a misbehaving student can bring relief to their class.

- When discussing the cooperation with external partners like youth care and time-out projects, the assistant school principal (ASP) in BE School D indicated that the school wants to take up its role in redirecting students to specialized emotional and behavioural support but argues that the waiting cues of these services are often too long and they therefore can't respond to the youngsters' needs on time. Also, the ASP expressed that the support staff is often frustrated by the lack of communication and cross-sectorial cooperation.

Assessing the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group

We will now present some of the main findings on the discursive congruence about the awareness of, (reasons for) participation, the sense of ownership and outcome experience of those involved in social skills training and extra-curricular activities.

- **Awareness**

The introductory programme 'Individual Alternative' for upper secondary education in Sweden is widely provided by upper secondary schools to students who are not yet eligible for upper secondary courses. In the interviews most students highlighted that not being eligible for upper secondary school is a major risk for their future opportunities because an upper secondary education qualification is considered vital for their future. This awareness about the problem of not being eligible for upper secondary education was also high amongst the school personnel. Since the programmes are directed towards students without sufficient grades to continue education, the relation with ESL is very prominent. The programmes invest in creating an atmosphere where the youngsters feel welcome and secure to continue their studies, even if they had previously left education. The staff involved in the focus groups acknowledged the role of providing youngsters with supportive student-teacher relationships to keep youngsters in education but also pointed towards educational and societal structural factors as major causes of ESL.

The Open Classroom classes provided in Catalan schools are well-known by the different stakeholders because of their particularity and the resources allocated for them by the local government. Their role is, however, less directly connected to reducing ESL. The teachers implementing Open Classroom did acknowledge the indirect relation to ESL because of the intensified support within the programme that tries to tackle students' experiences of school failure and provide them with higher future aspirations. The target group is mostly informed about the programme through teachers in lower secondary education and by their own social network. The

parents, however, seemed to be less aware of the availability of the Open Classroom programme. Participating students mostly refer to the relevance of the Open Classroom programme for providing real work experiences through internships while still being in education. Nonetheless, students in general identify students participating in Open Classroom courses as having an immigrant background, being diagnosed with ADHD, learning or mental disabilities. Although students overall seem to be convinced of the support provided in the Open Classroom programme, this stigma makes them fear for being categorized as less able and dysfunctional.

- **Participation and ownership**

In order to be able to participate in the Individual Alternative programme provided by SE School A and D, a student needs to have reached the age for upper secondary education without having met the qualification requirements to enter upper secondary education. Their participation is voluntary and can be initiated by the student, but often it is their former school that has directed them to the introductory programmes for upper secondary education. A student can also be referred to the IA programme through "*Skolslussen*", a special unit within the municipality that works with students who experienced or are at risk of ESL due to special (educational) needs. In SE School A, for instance, the municipality funds ten places in the IA programme, which are reserved for youngsters who have been in contact with "*Skolslussen*" (see section 3.2 for more information). Participation and ownership is generally described as high by both students and parents. Students' cooperation in the design of the individual alternative pathway is also strengthened by the high degree of involvement in the decision making process. In case of problems (e.g. failing courses or truancy), the teachers/ student counsellors will revise the study plan and the individual trajectory together with the student. When in some cases a lack of student participation in the IA programme does occur, students often refer to their own lack of motivation and their will to tackle problems in their own way, which is of course contradictory to the general narrative of students' participation and ownership towards their own trajectory in the IA programme. The staff involved in the IA programme expressed a dual view upon their ownership of the design and implementation of the interventions. The staff feels to have significant freedom in the decision making process and the handling of the available resources while at the same time they expressed to feel constricted by the national curriculum and funding restrictions. Furthermore, in SE School A both staff and students involved in the IA programme feel excluded from school-wide activities organised by the school and the staff reported that cooperation among staff rarely involved teachers from the IA programme.

Participation in the Open Classroom support programmes provided in ES School B and D is open to a dual profile of students: those students who have academic difficulties but also students who show emotional and behavioural issues (e.g. low motivation, truancy). The wide variety of needs underlying students' participation in the programme shows the risk of having to support a heterogeneous target group with a wide range of academic, behavioural and/or socio-emotional needs. Participation in the Open Classroom programme is initiated by the teaching staff. Concretely, the teachers in the second year of lower secondary education propose candidates for the school's Open Classroom, career guidance office and management team, then selects the participants together with the Social Support Specialist. The participation of students (and parents) is therefore passive and often non-voluntary.

Participation in extra-curricular activities is mostly voluntary and based on students' own interests and talents. Nonetheless, the (reasons for) participation and sense of ownership regarding extra-curricular activities show some variation. In PL School B, for instance, students are free to participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities in order to further develop their personal interests. For sports classes involving competitions, however, teachers select students to participate in matches based on their talents. In PL School D, part of the extra-curricular activities revolves around charity events in which students actively participate. The students are encouraged by the staff to participate in various social events in order to support civic engagement. Some students, however, expressed a more instrumental motivation for participation like getting better grades or more appreciation from teachers.

- **Outcome experience**

With regard to the outcome of the introductory programme 'Individual Alternative provided by SE School A and D, the staff reported that the programmes are assessed once a year. About half of the participants in IA are eligible for upper secondary education after one year, and 90 percent are eligible after 3 years. Although the staff indicated an increase of (heterogeneity in) emotional and behavioural problems among the IA participants, it did not have negative consequences on the effectiveness of the programme because of the individualised support approach of the programme. The support is generally strongly appreciated by the participants, even to an extent where having to leave/ leaving the programme can make students anxious about losing the strong support, as is shown in the following quote:

> Interviewer: "Yes. Do you feel like you get enough support here?"
>
> Student: "I have never ever experienced such good support! Really, when I..I have a bit of anxiety of leaving this place actually."
>
> (Interview student, SE School A)

The designers of the programme from their side also pointed towards the staff's drive to work with these youngsters and the small class groups as the main success factors of the IA programme. Finding suitable personnel is therefore also deemed essential for the effectiveness. The students involved in the programmes overall were optimistic about reaching eligibility for starting upper secondary education. The tailored support from teachers in the smaller teaching groups were also highlighted as the most important features of the programmes by the target group. Nonetheless, some students indicated that the introductory programme were rather an "unnecessary step" to take before reaching a professional qualification and to start working.

A major risk factor for the Introductory Programmes in SE School A – as indicated by the staff – are the resources and support the programme receives. A decrease in financial support from the local authority was put forward as problematic for the progress of the programme in SE School A. With respect to the feasibility of the IA programme, SE School A staff more specifically indicated that a lack of resources for outreach limits the programme's ability to support students with low attendance rates. Other risk factors for the effectiveness of the programme indicated by the school staff are related to the difficult communication and coordination with social, youth care and mental health services. Furthermore, while teachers in SE School D indicated that their strong efforts to involve parents in the programme pays off, staff in SE School A reported that the support from parents was lacking. A major issue indicated by some students is the troublesome relationships

they have with certain teachers. This was also confirmed by some teachers who suggested involving a student counsellor for providing students with additional one-on-one emotional and behavioural support.

During the interviews about the Open Classroom programme in ES School B, a designer indicated that while the Open Classroom does not always have an impact on increasing educational results, they do achieve other objectives, such as improving school climate or more positive student-teacher relations. With regard to the feasibility of the programme, an implementer argued that the limited number of places in the programme makes the school select those who are most committed, and therefore students with motivational problems and showing high absenteeism risks can be left out. The effectiveness of the programme might therefore be overestimated because students with the highest risk of emotional and/or behavioural issues are now often left to fend for themselves. Furthermore, the implementers complain about a lack of resources for the programme and even indicated that some of the main success factors of the programme (e.g. two teachers per classroom) are no longer feasible. The staff indicated that because of the shared responsibility between the school and the local authority regarding the provision of the Open Classrooms, there is formal support from the Department of Education but the resources provided for staff and projects do not correspond. Students who are participating in the Open Classroom programme in general are positive about the amount of support received from teachers and indicated that teachers are reaching out to students who do not show up in class.

The OET time provided to each class in PT School A once a week is not yet formally evaluated, as it was only implemented quite recently. Students and staff, however, indicate that 90 minutes of OET per week is too much and that the fixed scheduling makes it not flexible enough to address individual or class-level behavioural and emotional problems. Furthermore, because both implementers and the target group feel that there is too much OET time to discuss potential behavioural or attendance issues, much of OET time is actually spend on heightening class atmosphere through group dynamics activities, although in this case as well, it depends on the efforts of the teacher implementing this measure. Even though a small number value this class time with their OET, many students do not feel that these group activities work to create a more positive class atmosphere and on the contrary often feel treated like children in elementary school. The teachers from their side indicate that classes of 30 students are not a context in which they can discuss emotional and/or behavioural issues in a group discussion and in general opt to deal with more personal matters on a one-on-one basis.

When considering schools' provision of extra-curricular activities, stakeholders indicate that participation in these activities can have effects on the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of students' school experiences and attitudes. In BE School A, for instance, various staff members indicated that those students involved in the yearly school play project show strong involvement in the project and feel responsible for it. This is, according to these staff members, also shown in a reduction of truancy figures for participating students. A staff member also indicated that extra-curricular activities strengthen the class atmosphere. A student reported that the yearly school fashion show is a nice way for her and her fellow students in the fashion course to show the outside world what they are capable of producing during the practical fashion courses. In PL School B, the teachers involved in the FGD are not convinced that the extra-curricular activities directly prevent ESL or truancy but they do think that it helps students to get interested in

the world around them, as well as increasing self-confidence and sense of responsibility. The students mostly recall one-off classes, conducted by health specialists, classes with special guests (e.g. ex-inmates, refugees) and expressed they are important and useful, as they can reflect on and draw conclusions from other people's life experiences.

In sum, the data show that the outcome of social skills training and extra-curricular activities can have a wide range of effects on emotional, behavioural and cognitive aspects of students' school engagement. Some of the programmes and actions are evaluated formally, some even directly by the level of students the school manages to keep on board to continue their educational career. Most of the outcome experiences reported by the stakeholders are, however, related more indirectly to ESL.

Risk and protective factors for personal and social skills development

Although we found some examples of measures in our case studies that involve some level of social skills training, the prominent representation of social skills development in the intervention study literature related with ESL was not reflected as strongly in the case studies. Furthermore, those programmes that have the closest connection with social skill training characteristics – e.g. small class sizes, supportive student-teacher relations, adapted curricula and teaching styles – are not provided school-wide but rather tend to segregate students who already show high levels of emotional and behavioural risks. While a more intensified reactive approach can be beneficial for students at risk, separating them into special classes and study programmes clearly shows risk for segregation and stigmatisation from the rest of the school. These processes are confirmed by both students participating and staff members involved in the provision of such separate programmes.

Other major risk factors for social skills development expressed by the stakeholders in the interviews is the often difficult relationship with outside agencies and the lack of continued funding by the government. Because providing this kind of emotional and behavioural support is often not considered as the core business of schools, the (human) resources and knowhow for providing specialized personal and social skills training often lies with youth care and mental health services. And although most of the schools claimed to be open for cross-sectorial cooperation, the communication and cooperation was often described by schools as demanding and (therefore) lacking timely responses to students' emotional and behavioural needs.

When considering the provision of extra-curricular activities, we found that some extra-curricular activities are available in most schools, but their scope tends to vary across schools. Some schools only provide very limited activities outside of the curriculum while other schools offer their students a very wide range of extra-curricular activities going from sports, arts, crafts, voluntary work to specific skills training. Most of the aims involve social skills development and increasing students' well-being and school belonging. Other aims are the development of personal skills and interest domains, increasing civic participation and engagement. Different from most measures that provide emotional and behavioural support, participation in extra-curricular activities is almost exclusively voluntary. Some schools also allow students to help steer the school's provision of activities, which can increase the students' ownership. With regard to the outcome experience, we found examples where students' participation in extra-curricular activities heightens students self-image, well-being, school belonging and even reduction of truancy.

3.1.4 Career Guidance Support

Making the right (study) choices is often put forward as a crucial success factor in one's educational career. This is particularly important in educational systems characterized by early tracking and hierarchical tracking structures (Crul et al., 2012). The choices made in these first years often have long-term and sometimes irreversible effects. Career guidance systems are therefore deemed crucial prevention and intervention measures in schools within both tracked and comprehensive educational systems. Studies show school staff frequently argue wrongfully chosen tracks or courses as one of the major causes for student disengagement. When a student finds himself in a track or course that does not match his/her interest domains or aspirations, this could indeed decrease his/her school engagement (Elffers, 2011).

A one-dimensional approach to the importance of (study) career choices can, however, shift the responsibility for this choice solely to the student. While this is sometimes found in the discourses of educational actors (Clycq, et al, 2014), the role of orientation or referral systems developed by schools are also found to be acknowledged as being important measures provided by secondary schools. Therefore, in practice schools often develop measures to inform students (and their parents) about educational (and sometimes labour market) opportunities and to support them in making their choices. The orientation process of students has often been the subject of discussion, as research showed that in particular students with and immigration and/or lower SES background have higher chances of being oriented towards lower status tracks (i.e. mostly vocational tracks and courses) sometimes irrespective of their educational achievements (Van Houtte, et al. 2012; Spruyt et al, 2009; Spruyt, 2015).

Although information about what a study course or track involves and how it impacts on future aspirations and opportunities is crucial, a mere provision of general information on the provision of different tracks and courses is not deemed sufficient. Career guidance is often part of a more comprehensive and in some cases whole-school approach. Often it is a combination of a broad strategy to provide information while at the same time more personal one-on-one strategies are designed (often overlapping or going hand in hand with strategies such as personalized academic support) (Dynarski et al., 2008; EU Commission, 2013).

Next to strong career guidance systems, providing high quality vocational education and training alternatives to the provision of academically oriented education is explicitly highlighted as a preventive measure against early school leaving. By tailoring tracks and courses to youngsters with vocationally-oriented profiles, policy makers want to offer alternative learning pathways to youngsters not (exclusively) interested in academically oriented education (Eurydice & CEDEFOP Report, 2014). Nonetheless, research findings on the effects of early tracking, especially in a hierarchical tracking structure, warn us about potential unintended outcomes (Silva, 2014; Van Houtte, et al. 2012). In public perception, but also in discourses of school staff, students and their parents, vocational tracks are often perceived as less prestigious tracks comprised of students not 'capable' enough for the academic tracks (Clycq, et al., 2014; Van Houtte, et al. 2012). Various studies have shown that in non-comprehensive educational systems across EU countries, academically oriented study tracks are often more valued than vocational tracks (EU Commission, 2013; ECORYS, 2013).

Nevertheless, many youngsters show a strong interest in obtaining vocational skills training and a more direct learning pathway for entering the labour market. Many educational systems across Europe also provide these vocational tracks, mainly designed to provide students with professional skills and competencies aiming for labour market insertion. Not only educational policy makers but also individual schools are therefore confronted with the challenge of designing vocational education and training pathways that are perceived as being of high quality, prestigious and relevant for the different stakeholders. By designing such VET promoting measures educational actors hope vocational programmes can become a positive choice and attract highly engaged students.

In this section, we focus primarily on the one hand on the career guidance of students during their educational trajectory and on the other hand on guidance with respect to their future post-compulsory pathway, whether in tertiary education or on the labour market. Throughout the different country reports we have found measures that primarily address the need for career guidance, in some cases by promoting vocational education and workplace learning.

The scope and aims of the measures under study

The measures designed with respect to career guidance support are a mixture of school-wide student-focused measures. The idea that provision of guidance is necessary seems broadly implemented in school practices. In some schools formal career guidance counsellors are present while others incorporate this guidance into the curriculum with a more multidisciplinary, team approach. In several schools, multidisciplinary teams are set up to guide students in their educational trajectory. This is found in more comprehensive educational systems (e.g. The UK or Spain) as well as in more tracked systems (e.g. in Belgium or The Netherlands). In general, career guidance is often a school-wide measure focusing on providing guidance to all students. In these teams there is often a student counsellor (e.g. SE School B) or in some cases specialised career guidance counsellors (e.g. UK School A to D).

The underlying problem orientation for providing career guidance support often found in the school staff discourses is that ill-advised or ill-chosen study courses can have negative effects on students' school engagement and as such can lead to early school leaving. The idea is, as aptly argued by stakeholders in the 'Study and Career Thread' (SE B5 'SYV-traden'), to encourage students to think outside of the box and to explore certain educational or labour market trajectories unfamiliar to them or their home environment. The underlying rationale is to break with the reproduction of social inequalities by increasing students' knowledge of existing labour market opportunities. This rationale is also found in other staff discourses, for example, in the focus group discussion among staff in PL school A:

> "For them, I sometimes get the impression that the world ends here in this neighbourhood. [...] They seem to be stuck in the belief that they themselves will never break away, that they will just copy their parents' way, and therefore studying is not worth it , because they will stay here anyway."

> (FGD Staff, PL School A)

In some schools (e.g. SE School B and BE School A) the career guidance is part of the everyday curriculum, and as such, implemented in an early stage; it is structurally embedded while in other

cases there are specific teams and measures set up to focus on career guidance (e.g. 'Careers team' in UK School B, BE B2 and BE C2).

In BE School C the rationale behind career guidance support is more explicitly driven by the idea that students lack support and guidance within their home environment. This approach can be linked to an overall habit of deficit thinking about students' background, about them lacking the resources and parental support for becoming successful, rather than taking up this role as a core task for school actors working together with students and their parents.

> The principal indicates that parents don't know the educational system in Flanders very well. A lot of mothers do still come from a country other than Belgium. It is also very difficult for female students to study, because they have to manage the household, and parents are not convinced about them getting a degree. The school staff experiences this on a regular basis. Most of the time the degree is more important for the pupil than it is for his/her parents or social environment.

(BE School C, Country Report Belgium)

Another practice in providing career guidance found in various focus schools is that they try to involve role models, mainly defined as individuals that have been enrolled in the same school, track and/or courses and that occupy a labour market position which youngsters can aspire to. It is often felt that these role models inspire students, as they have similar 'at-risk' profiles or ethno-cultural backgrounds, but also that these individuals can provide realistic images of what studying and working on the labour market involves (e.g. UK School B). Nonetheless, in some schools where students feel there is a lack of sufficiently relevant career guidance provided by school staff, students argued they'd rather rely upon the information they obtain from older friends and significant others than from school staff. They thus searched for their own role models, when they were lacking them in the school context (e.g. ES School A).

Some schools also rely upon information gathered through questionnaires to gain insights in the current situation and future aspirations of their students. An interesting example is found in BE School D that organized the 'I like'-test in the first stage of secondary education and repeats this in the second stage to see if students' interest and aspirations fit the track and courses they are enrolled in. If the schools feel there are important discrepancies, it tries to organize 'snooping internships' for students to become acquainted with different courses and tracks. Similar questionnaires were used in other schools, such as by the 'departments of orientation' in ES School A and D, but these focused mainly on the students at the end of compulsory education. An example of a more longitudinal monitoring of students' aspirations and support for future plans is found in UK School D where the IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) team was implemented.

When focusing on the relation between one's educational career and the transition to the labour market, cooperation between schools and labour market organizations is put forward as an important way to provide students with a realistic idea of what a specific job could entail. Various schools have developed such collaborative events and an interesting example is the Investing in Our Future-project (UK School D), which shows that these collaborations not only help students to understand how the labour market works, but also bring them in contact with labour market organizations. Another example of this linkage between educational career guidance and future labour market opportunities was found in PL School D, where school staff encourage students to participate in voluntary work according to their individual choices with the intention to teach ways to

actively look for work and develop interests. In the implementation, the school cooperates with many local actors like the local cultural centre, charities, labour market institutions, employers, etc.

Programmes in vocational education and training, particularly those that provide opportunities for workplace learning, also strongly focus on the entry into the future labour market. These VET promoting actions are mainly set up - as discussed above – to provide an alternative to academically oriented educational pathways and to engage students that do not have interest in proceeding to academic higher education, and/or want to develop other – more vocationally oriented – competencies. Next to these general aims, specific measures are designed to provide students with vocational skills training in school and/or in cooperation with labour market organizations. Vocational skills training not only focuses on the performance of technical skills but in some cases also aims to increase their 'professional behaviour' such as being on time, working as a team and acquiring a technical and professional vocabulary.

Assessing the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group

This section highlights the main findings regarding the discursive congruence about the awareness of (reasons for) participation, the sense of ownership, and outcome experience of those involved in career guidance support. Some of the findings specifically focus on the awareness, participation and outcome experience regarding VET promoting actions and workplace learning.

- **Awareness**

In schools where career guidance is formally structured in the sense that a specific designated counsellor or counselling team are appointed, most actors involved seem aware of their existence. However, in a specific school where this was a fairly new position (e.g. BE D2), it was remarkable that while school staff was well aware of its existence and were very convinced of its influence, students were not even aware of this new contact person. A strong communication to the target group should therefore be central for the career guidance support. Furthermore, some staff also argued that not only students should be focused on, but that parents are equally important (e.g. BE C2 and ES A1). A recurring and relevant discourse amongst school staff was that (social) pressure from parents was sometimes too high for enrolling children into the highly valued academic track, sometimes despite more vocationally oriented competencies and skills. The following quotes illustrate these discourses among school staff:

> "The parents themselves -- those whose kids will not make it through Baccalaureate (ISCED 3A) however much we help them, some of those who we even wonder how could they complete ESO (ISCED 2) successfully... These children come from other places, or from other countries and education systems, and there is no way -- we keep saying this kid is suffering. Even taking into account that there are a few of them who may go through a difficult period in their lives but then they overcome it and go ahead with renewed interest and dedication, there are other ones whose parents say "my kid has to study Baccalaureate because my kid has to go to the University.""

(Principal ES School A)

> "[...] I obviously pointed it out to the boy that he would not get a promotion to the next grade… Incapable, just not capable of studying in a general school; as he saw that he could not cope with the material, his absenteeism increased, and it was like this. I had a conversation with his mother, where I say: madam, they have already begun to reactivate the vocational schools, somehow it started to come back and I think it would be good for him to go to a basic vocational school, get a particular profession... Then the mother says: "but what will his certificate look like? From the vocational school?' And what about not

being promoted in a general school?""

(School Pedagogical Counsellor, FGD Staff, PL School A)

With regard to workplace learning as a career guidance tool, school staff expressed that provision of high quality and interesting workplace learning programmes and apprenticeships can lead to opening up perspectives on future labour market opportunities for youngsters and raise their occupational and educational aspirations. Nonetheless, it also raised important dilemmas among school staff. As 'real life' experience in labour market settings can be very attractive for some youngsters, even more so when there is an accompanying financial provision for students (e.g. PL school A), they are considered by some staff to become too attractive for youngsters who can opt out of education before attaining a qualification. Another risk factor could lie at the side of the employers. Apprentice students could become interesting for employers, as they are fairly well-trained youngsters – in some cases near to fully qualified – but at the time without their ISCED 3 degree. So attracting these youngsters before they attain their ISCED 3 could be, from a financial perspective, beneficial for employers. Moreover, for these youngsters, being an early school leaver can have negative long-term effects on their future labour market opportunities. In BE School B, the management and teaching staff explicitly argued that this short-term and financially-motivated approach of both youngsters and employers contributes to ESL in his school.

- **Participation and ownership**

In general, career guidance measures are school-wide measures and therefore target the participation of all students. The participation of students in these measures sometimes takes a more voluntary approach, while others are compulsory as they are part of everyday curriculum. However, some interesting examples (e.g. UK School D and PL School B) show that sharing ownership of such measures among the participants (school staff, students, parents, employers, …) can have positive outcomes, as students feel much more like active members of the development of the measure:

- The idea underlying the 'Investing in our Future event' in UK School D is to give students more responsibility in the development of a measure and is therefore perceived as more intrinsically relevant for them. Students voluntarily designed and administered a survey among their peers to get a sense of their labour market aspirations. Based upon this information, an evening event was set up in which all stakeholders involved (school staff, students, parents and employers) participated. Students talked to representatives with interesting jobs and learn about future labour market opportunities. Moreover, as mentioned before, afterwards employers provided internships and workplace learning positions for some students.

- In PL School B, the school even designed courses based upon the interest shown by students and while also responding to the changing economic and local environment. New tracks that were developed were the Military Classes, courses in emergency medical services and a European Tourism oriented course. In case of the 'Military Class', students even took in the initiative to contact an organization that could provide teacher-trainers to give the classes. Students were Also strongly involved in the design and implementation of the other new tracks. Moreover, based upon the discourses of the school staff, it can be argued that this is a win-win situation both for the students and for the staff. As the school

wanted to increase student population, it is an interesting strategy to let the students develop or give input on new courses that they find relevant. As a consequence PL School B now has rising enrolment numbers and already set up three 'Military Classes'.

Regarding the participation of school staff, regular teachers are sometimes given an important role, but often specific career guidance counsellors are more represented in the career guidance support. Teachers in these measures often welcome specific counsellors, as that alleviates their task of providing extra information and guidance on students' careers. However, for many students, teachers remain their first contact person and trustee. Several teachers do take up this career guidance by discussing in class why an ISCED 3 degree is important and what skills are necessary to be successful on the labour market and later in life (e.g. BE School B). Nevertheless, in these cases this career guidance often depends on the goodwill, the skills and the workload of the specific teacher.

- **Outcome experience**

Although the two examples presented above (i.e. from UK School D and PL School B) receive high appreciation from students linked to the strong participation and ownership of the youngsters, the outcome experiences of career guidance support measures can also be quite negative when students feel the career guidance is too generic and not sufficiently personalized (e.g. in ES School A and D):

> "The students mention the inadequacy of the tutoring received rather than the feasibility of the activities planned. According to them, too much depends on the individual tutors, including the fact that not all of them are well prepared to respond to their specific demands of orientation."
>
> (FGD Youngsters, ES School D)

With regard to the promotion of vocational education and training, a strong division between the vocational and theoretical programmes can lower students' opportunities for entering higher education, which in turn can lead to students and parents avoiding vocational programmes. Moreover, different country reports (e.g. BE, SE, ES) reported the stigma connected to some vocational programmes, which can lead to students who have difficulties with academically oriented education (and their parents) to (initially) choose theoretically oriented programmes even when it does not match their competences and aspirations. These career choices were reported to lead to unstable school careers later on (e.g. grade retention, changing educational tracks and institutions). School professionals and staff even explicitly reported that as a consequence, these choices stemming from the wrong motives – as an unintended side effect of educational tracking at the structural level of the education system – increase the number of upper secondary school dropouts (e.g. Be School A; SE Country Report).

Risk and protective factors for career guidance support

One of the main findings throughout the discourses of the stakeholders is the acknowledgement that providing quality career guidance with respect to students' educational trajectory, but also with a focus on the transition to the labour market, is perceived to be crucial. School staff is generally aware that the provision of career guidance needs to go a step further than the mere provision of information about educational provision; it should speak to the students in a direct and relevant

way. Therefore, various schools do engage with this issue and invite role models, try to give students a high degree of ownership of career guidance activities, or try to find meaningful internships for their students.

Nevertheless, whether in some schools there is a multidisciplinary team providing career guidance, while in others a counsellor or only teachers takes up this role, what becomes apparent is that it is crucial that this importance of career guidance support should not be underestimated. In some cases students feel that career guidance is given a marginal role or depends too much on the willingness of a specific teacher or student counsellor. This can be destructive to the engagement of students in these measures.

A final risk factor lies in the fact that schools have to balance their educational aim - supporting students to attain their ISCED 3 qualification - and catering labour market aspirations and providing new opportunities to develop professional skills. Some educational actors fear that employers can sometimes lure students with (short-term) labour contracts before attaining their ISCED 3. In other cases, good cooperation between schools, students and labour market organizations showed to be very fruitful for students' engagement in education. Again, it was proven that it is critical to provide students with a feeling of ownership in the measures that are developed, not only to heighten their engagement but also to provide opportunities for learning through doing.

3.2 Contextual Preconditions for School-based Interventions

The analyses of school-based policies and interventions in 28 schools across 7 EU member states has shown a wide variation of measures undertaken by schools with the aim to improve students' school careers and chances at graduating from upper secondary education. We identified measures that could be labelled as early warning systems, cognitive support, emotional and behavioural support, as well as measures that focus on students' career guidance. For all of these types of support measures, we reported main findings from international academic literature, gave an overview of the scope and aims of the studied measures and articulated the main issues linked to the discursive (in)congruence different stakeholders had regarding the awareness, participation and outcome of the measures. Based on the findings per type of measure presented above, we will now report on 'meta-findings' regarding what contextual preconditions the different stakeholders in general put forward as factors for successful school policies and interventions. These contextual preconditions entail addressing the basic needs of students, promoting parental involvement, professional development and support of staff, supportive student-teacher relationships, student voice and ownership, and taking on a holistic, multi-professional approach. Each of these contextual preconditions will be discussed more in detail in the next sections.

Addressing Basic Needs of Students

Perhaps the most elementary contextual precondition for schools to keep students on track for attaining an educational qualification is to make sure basic human needs like nourishment and shelter are provided for. Although addressing these basic needs was not discussed by many stakeholders, for some schools, the poor living conditions of students made this issue an important precondition for successfully supporting student's educational attainment. While in several of the studied research areas national and local education authorities provide schools and students with extra resources for basic needs like free meals in schools (e.g. UK and Portugal) and study allowances (e.g. Flanders), some schools that pick up on living conditions that don't enable students to actively engage in education also worked out school-based actions and partnerships to provide these students with after-school study facilities, school allowances for study materials, free meals, and clothing:

- PL School A supports students that are in a particularly difficult financial situation. When the school finds out about poor living conditions – which is mostly limited to students self-reports to a trusted adult – the deputy principal or pedagogical counsellor are consulted. The school indicated that although their financial possibilities are limited, the school is able to provide free lunches, clothing and Christmas packages in partnership with a local foundation. Furthermore, the school provides scholarships to about 20% of the population.

- In BE School B, for instance, the school sometimes provides work clothing for vocational courses and internships, study materials or even hot meals and Christmas holiday packages. Especially those students living in shelters for refugees and asylum seekers are considered to be in need of additional basic needs support.

- In PT School C, the Social Cohesion Group [*Grupo de Coesão Social*] supports students in financial need. The measure aims at providing support in purchasing different goods, from books to arts class materials, transports or/and food. The school costs can limit student opportunities to successfully complete secondary school, especially for those students commuting from neighbouring cities. Even though the measure falls short of covering all the social-economic problems affecting students, the social cohesion group is considered to play an important role in keeping young people in school.

In some of the partner countries, schools explicitly reported supporting students' basic needs to compensate for effects of the economic downturn and cuts in the state's welfare benefits. The effects of the economic crisis and welfare cuts were indicated to affect not only families in the lowest income groups but also families in the lower middle-class that are above official poverty levels and thus no longer have (sufficient) financial resources.

Some schools also indicated that most of the actions taken to compensate for financial problems are based either on the signals that (class) teachers are able to pick up on, or on the admissions of the students themselves. Students and parents are, however, often hesitant to express these problems because of the fear of being stigmatised by staff or peers in the school. Furthermore, high school costs – sometimes linked to specific vocational or arts courses – can hinder lower SES families to enrol and/or continue in certain secondary education tracks.

Promoting Parental Involvement

As the final report of the Thematic Working Group ESL indicated, parental involvement is perceived as an important contextual precondition for school-based ESL prevention and intervention (EU Commission, 2013). The report more particularly highlighted active involvement of parents in school decision-making, empowering families to support their children's education and raising their awareness about ESL. International literature on school-based measures to prevent and intervene in ESL processes also marks keeping parents informed and involved in their child's education as an elementary feature for raising students' school engagement (Rumberger, 2004).

Previous studies showed that communicating regularly with parents regarding the students' progress in meeting educational goals can increase students' attendance and grades, can foster strong relationships between schools, students and parents and can decrease the likelihood of ESL (Pyle & Wexler, 2011). Best practices in communicating with parents involve regular telephone calls regarding achievements, attendance and behaviour in class (Marvul, 2012); supporting parenting skills; providing parents with low (instruction) language proficiency with adapted information; organizing easily accessible parent-teacher meetings, and promoting positive communication that features optimism rather than (only) addressing students' failures, negative behaviour and attitudes (White & Kelly, 2010).

White & Kelly (2010) showed that an important systemic school feature to promote parental involvement is making a single staff member responsible to oversee and monitor the school's actions to engage parents. Furthermore, to increase parental involvement above existing baseline levels, schools' efforts in engaging parents should be initiated by support staff members that have skills in programme development, system coordination and have sensitivity for parental needs and concerns.

Ziomek-Diagle (2010) also proposes to involve specialised support staff like student counsellors and coaches as liaisons between schools, families and local communities. In outreach to socially disadvantaged and ethnic minority parents it is particularly important to make sure that families know that they are acknowledged as equal partners in their children's education and to show that different funds of knowledge are valued within the school (Robledo Montecel et al 2004). Outreach therefore entails innovative and strategic action planning that allows parents to feel validated in sharing responsibility in education. Specific outreach programmes that have shown themselves to be successful involved home visits and meeting parents in common areas other than the school because schools can have negative connotations for parents who had negative past experiences with education. Schools themselves can also create more welcoming environments for parents from disadvantaged groups (Ziomek-Daigle, 2010).

The data of the school-based interventions in this study show that the importance of involving parents in school practices is stated explicitly by many of the stakeholders. The schools show a wide variation of actions and practices that aim to raise parents' engagement in their children's education, like parent-teacher meetings, school staff doing home visits, the involvement of interpreters, drafting educational commitment agreements, online information platforms, parent satisfaction surveys, workshops supporting parenting skills, educational career guidance support and local community outreach programmes. All these actions have different scopes and aims but are often based on the idea that parents need to be more involved in the child's educational career.

Across the school staff of various schools, the perception about the involvement of parents is rather negative and is often linked to the perception about parents with socially disadvantaged and/ or ethnic minority backgrounds having low involvement. Based on these deficiency based ideas about students' living conditions and family support, school staff is often not optimistic about involving parents more in the school and often directly link this to the problem of ESL.

> "Zero parents were candidate [*for the school's parent association*], everyone got a letter, nobody participates. I'm not saying that I'm feeling sad about it because sometimes I ask myself the question: 'what do we gain from putting more effort into it?'"
>
> (School principal, BE School C) [18]

> "There is a lack of supervision by parents; parents support them in their bad behaviour and are also rude with teachers, parents do not participate and do not care. […] The "greatest root of the failure and dropout" is the lack of family support, which results in lack of monitoring. Teachers say that some students do not even see the parents. Contrary to the principal, who supports partnerships with parents, teachers stress: "I can never rely on parents to help me solve the problems"."
>
> (PT School A, Country Report Portugal)

School staff in some schools, however, acknowledge that previous negative experiences of parents with schools can help to explain parents' reservations towards schools.

> When asked again about the causes of ESL and lack of cooperation with parents, the pedagogical counsellor adds that parents of students with high absenteeism rarely appear in school themselves, e.g. at parent-teacher meetings. According to the pedagogical counsellor, their negative attitude towards school may be due to parental failure, fear of confrontation with the issue, guilt or shame associated with earlier negative experiences connected with contact with the school, etc.
>
> (Notes on FGD with staff, PL School A)

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[18] The same principal also reported that over 90% of the parents do come to parent-teacher meetings.

In fact, we found that one of the most widespread school practices involving students are phone calls, letters and home visits notifying parents about their child's truancy, misbehaviour or decreasing grades. This reactive approach towards parental involvement – often part of the school's disciplinary procedures – responds to a variety of problems and therefore primarily focuses on the negative. Moreover, addressing parents with these issues is often not supported by the students themselves, even less so by older students who might have passed the legal school age.

Furthermore, in case parents are not involved in an early stage of truancy, misconduct or decreasing grades, students and parents also often indicate that notification of parents happens when a situation has become hard to remediate, even when parents get involved. Nonetheless, keeping in regular contact with parents in an open and caring manner can build a relationship of trust wherein discussing negative issues like truancy is not perceived by parents as being negative or patronizing:

> "The mother has regular contact with the school, she attends almost all parent-teacher meetings and if there something goes wrong, the school telephones her. Apart from that, she also checks the online register and knows exactly how many absences and what grades her daughter has. Although she mostly has contact with the teachers during parent-teacher meetings, the mother has a positive opinion about the school. The mother see the relation not as a typical teacher-student relation, but as friendly contacts, unlike in other schools."
>
> *"At any time, I know what is happening, if there are any absences, it's not that I just do not know [about it]. In this way. So I can say that I have contact every other day [laughs]. […] In the previous school they did not care about it too much."*
>
> (Notes and quote from interview with parent, PL School A)

For their part, parents often do not feel invited to participate on an equal basis in the decision making process influencing the education of their children:

> The parent described how he tried to participate in the decisions made concerning his children and that his efforts were seldom met with enthusiasm from the school personnel. He didn't feel invited to discuss the situation, even when participating in the dialogue meetings arranged by the school. […] When one of his children had encountered problems in their education, his efforts to work together with the teachers and principal had been fruitless. He described the reaction from the school personnel as one marked by apathy, not only in specific situations when cooperation was needed but as their overall approach.
>
> (SE School B, Country Report Sweden)

Nonetheless, some school staff are in general successful at making a connection with socially disadvantaged parents. In these schools, the staff are overall more optimistic about the involvement of parents, but also point out that they have conflicting ideas about education with some parents, often the parents of those youngsters most at risk of ESL.

> "For 95% I have the same *[positive]* experience. There are just some parents, and most often it is their children that leave school, who do not see the school as a partner, as a co-parent/fellow educator. They are looking for someone to blame and that is when I have a problem with parents, but there are only few. That is the biggest problem for a child and you know where the problem originates. They blame the school and then it is doomed to fail. Then we can't support the child anymore."
>
> (FGD Staff, NL School A)

Some parents, however, reported that the school strongly invests in supporting parents in the education of their children. These schools can see their efforts paying off in connecting to parents with a socially disadvantaged background.

> "They were really good and they supported me as well. They've been really good. […] They helped me with my kids and if I need any help, like if I have any problems with letters and stuff they usually come and say yeah you come into the office and we'll help you to fill the forms in, they helped me as well 'cause they used to give me support as well." She mentioned attending parents' evenings and other regular meetings with staff, her son's football club, and homework club after school.
>
> (Parent, UK School C)

As a final remark concerning actions for promoting parental involvement – and similar to addressing basic needs of students – is that these policies are reportedly coming under pressure due to cutbacks in government funding. Concrete examples concerned no longer involving interpreters in teacher-parent meetings (BE School C), no longer supporting parents in career guidance due to the increasing workload of support staff (ES School A) and growing uncertainty about being able to employ specialised staff for outreach to disadvantaged parents (ES School B).

Promoting Professional Development and Support of Staff

Strengthening the professional capacity of school staff through ongoing professionalization and organisational support are deemed essential assets for creating and maintaining suitable learning environments for youngsters showing high risk of ESL. Support measures for staff highlighted in the Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on ESL are providing school staff with different methodologies and skills for meeting individual needs of students, time and space for team work and exchange of expertise through networking opportunities across schools and with other societal stakeholders (EU Commission, 2013).

Academic literature on reducing ESL also stresses the importance of providing teachers with support networks and opportunities for professional development. Relevant in-service training can include workshops and learning communities for efficient class management and conflict resolution skills (Dynarski et al., 2008). Other recommended training topics concern the use of technology to expand access to information and connections with external learning opportunities, in responding to different learning styles and training in mentoring programmes for opening up support networks for youngsters (Robledo Montecel, 2004). Pyle & Wexler (2011) highlight the need to build up school staff's capacity to interpret data from early warning systems for students at risk of ESL and to adequately respond to various risk indicators. Furthermore, providing teachers and support staff with career guidance methodologies and adapted curricula can heighten interest and decrease feelings of purposelessness among students (Pyle & Wexler, 2011).

As mentioned in the sections on early warning systems and one-on-one emotional and behavioural support, the need for further professionalization of staff also concerns capacity building in detection and monitoring of risk indicators for ESL, and more particularly regarding picking up on and responding to more covert indicators of the emotional problems that can potentially harm students' likelihood of school completion. While cognitive and behavioural indicators like diminishing grades, truancy and class misconduct are common indicators that are monitored within schools, only a few schools systematically look into emotional issues like personal well-being and feelings of belonging. Furthermore, while most schools employ some kind of specialised staff responding to

emotional and behavioural needs of students, the professionalization level varies widely among schools and designated staff members. Moreover, where some schools motivate and support (class) teachers to build one-on-one relationships of trust through mentoring and individual meetings, some staff expressed that they did not to feel equipped for taking up this role.

Some staff members explicitly expressed the need for further professionalization and in-service training. These staff members sometimes indicated that the initiative for providing and taking on in-service training lay with the staff itself and that management – often restricted due to financial cutbacks – needed to be convinced of allocating resources to additional training. Teachers willing to enrol in courses for socio-emotional guidance of students in BE School C, for instance, took the initiative upon themselves because of the increasing needs among the changing student population and the lack of priority given to these issues by the school management. Furthermore, some of the in-service training did not provide staff with the tools they feel are needed for addressing the needs of students at risk:

> Learning Support Educator: "The teachers feel they need to extend their knowledge and qualifications. They say they look for courses and workshops but are often disappointed with their quality."
>
> (FGD Staff, PL School A)

Staff in some schools, however, explicitly expressed that their school does provide a wide range of internal and external opportunities for in-service training regarding topics like special educational needs (SEN), instructional language as an additional language, behaviour management, curriculum support, life skills, exam support, etc. (e.g. UK School C and D).

Another strategy to increase knowhow among staff members that was found in several schools was the pooling of knowledge through pilot projects, working groups and team meetings. To improve teachers' work and to take collective responsibility, PT School A for instance, installed a new pedagogical model in which staff jointly reflect on new methodologies and practices. Building on the interviews, this new model of self-training increased enthusiasm and exchange of successful practices among staff. In UK School B for instance, the school has established an electronic database to record teaching and learning practices staff has tried out, including their outcomes. This database is accessible for all staff members. UK School A and B also work closely with other schools to exchange ideas around good practice through their networks. Similar practices for pooling knowledge were found within UK School C and PL School A:

> I: "And when someone is invited to take part in your work do they get any training? How do you prepare for your work on this specific.../?"
>
> SEN Coordinator: "No, cause you wouldn't need training for these meetings because people are bringing, you're looking at individual people's expertise so you're looking for people who, who have a role within the school in the specific capacities so they're bringing that knowledge so what you're looking is, is looking to pool all that knowledge, yeah, and then as a team we can make a decision."
>
> (FGD Staff, UK School C)
>
> Learning Support Educator: "We arrange some things, we keep a united front, and this is already a lot, because no one has yet won the war single-handedly."
>
> (FGD Staff, PL School A)

Several other schools installed a middle management structure and working groups to exchange good practices, knowledge and experiences in order to help staff members in their daily (teaching)

practices. Some of these exchanges also changed the involvement of staff in the decision making structure of the school:

- BE School A used additional teaching hours – granted by the Flemish government for teaching socially disadvantaged students – for introducing a middle management by forming teams of teachers based on the course levels of the students they teach, each with their own coordinator. These groups work as a team and have regular meetings to coordinate the course provision and to support each other's daily teaching practices. The coordinator works as a go-between and communicates the concerns and school policy recommendations from the teachers towards the school management.

- In BE School D, both the management and support staff indicated that a management change has restructured the decision making structure in the school from a top-down organisation to a more bottom-up process where teachers and support staff started working together more closely, in a more structured way. Many managerial tasks are also delegated into working groups like working groups on PR, language policy, evaluations, etc. The staff involved in the FGD believed that these changes are the bases for the recent improvements and more positive image of the school.

- In UK School A staff members feel supported by their colleagues and have access to training opportunities, can move between roles and are able to play a role in the design of intervention measures. The staff highlighted the exchange of different experiences and expertise to be among the main benefits from working in a team. The staff can discuss interventions and find the most suitable approach together.

These more bottom-up structured organisations are, however, not found in all of the schools. In both of the other schools studied in Belgium (i.e. BE School C and D), for instance, staff complained about the lack of accessibility of the school management and about the top-down structured decision making process in their school. Similar voices could be heard in PT School A where teachers do not feel that their concerns are taken into account by their local school board:

> "I, and perhaps my colleagues also feel the same… somehow we feel a bit, hhhm... not taken into account because "When are they listening to us?" […] We really want to listen to the students. We want to listen to the students but then they never created a mechanism [*to listen to us*] "Let's hear what teachers have to say about it", "What is wrong?", "What would you change?", "How do you feel now?", "What is the professional pride that you have right now?" "Do you have time to do whatever you want?", "What would you like to do for your students". I answer we do not, we do not."
>
> (FGD staff, PT School A)

On the other side of the distributed leadership spectrum, staff involved in the Individual Alternative Programmes of Swedish schools A and D expressed that they have almost complete freedom in vital decisions regarding the provision of the programme and the allocation of resources. At the same time, they sometimes felt they lacked connection with and support from the school management and the rest of the school staff.

A major issue relating to the staff's needs for support and ongoing professionalization is the concentration of at-risk students in particular schools. In many of the interviews with staff in schools with a large proportion of socially disadvantaged students, staff point out that the quantity of additional support needs of their students is often not reflected in recognition and additional

funding for (specialised) teaching and support staff. Moreover, (expected) budget cuts in education will further impede the support that can be offered by the schools:

> Teacher: "You could say we are a certain kind of special education, without the official recognition. Every student is LWO [*diagnosed for having extra support needs*]. As an inner city school, it is our duty to offer that to each student. LWO funding will stop, which is too bad, because with that money we could do those extra things. [...] With 'suitable education' they [*the local authorities*] think we have a regular school with only ordinary children and for the one or two who have certain issues we have to take special measures. However, at this school it is the opposite, most of the children have issues, and there are only few 'ordinary students'."
>
> (FGD Staff, NL School A)

With regard to the staff's workload, staff working in schools with a high proportion of students at risk indicated that – while they often do not lack the motivation to work with the challenging student population – they feel that responding to ad hoc issues and the high amount of bureaucracy limits the time they can actually use to teach and support their students.

> Teacher: "The balance between ad hoc work and policy or organisational work should be 60 to 40, but here it is 90 to 10. Most of our work consists of ad hoc issues and support issues, even though there is a support coordinator, we try to reach parents, have to do all kinds of things in classes. Then this student has been sent out, it is non-stop actually."
>
> (FGD Staff, NL School A)
>
> Teacher: "I have the feeling that this year... We started working almost two months ago... I have the feeling that I have been working for a whole year. [...] I have 9 classes but the paperwork.... I am overloaded paperwork. And then, we free up some time and, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, there comes more and... and more, and more. And this is how we are... I think that we really have to be teachers. I agree, there is the bureaucratic part and paperwork. But we still have to be able to teach."
>
> (FGD Staff, PT School A)

The work ethic and motivation of staff is often praised by the school's management, particularly when the student composition is assumed to make the working conditions more challenging. Finding sufficiently competent and motivated teachers and support staff is therefore also often put forward as major contextual precondition for providing students at risk with a learning environment that will allow them to graduate. The challenging working conditions in schools with a high proportion of students at risk of ESL often makes it harder to find sufficiently competent and motivated applicants to fill openings and – once appointed – to keep them on board.

Moreover, a general lack staff itself stimulated some schools to enlarge class groups; teachers doing unpaid overtime to employ extra support staff (e.g. BE School C); making support measures more selective (e.g. ES School B); determining cooperation with language and diversity specialists (e.g. ES School A); reducing the school's efforts in career guidance for students (e.g. ES School D); and in cooperation with outside agencies where budget cuts can sometimes be even worse.

> SEN Coordinator: "Yeah, where resources are lacking, not in terms of this team in, as cuts have been made nationally, outside agencies' budgets have been cut. Where we lack resources is the breadth and depth of organisations that we have to refer our students to if they need outside help. Yeah, that's the difficulty... cause that's shrinking all the time."
>
> (FGD Staff, UK School C)

In conclusion, the need for ongoing professionalization and support is widely acknowledged by school staff. While many schools showed some promising practices regarding how to meet these

needs, school staff in other schools expressed frustrations regarding the lack of priority given to these issues by the school leadership, often linked to a lack of budget for such professionalization and support of school staff.

Promoting Supportive Student-teacher Relationships

Another central success factor for school-based efforts to reduce ESL presented in academic literature is providing students with supportive student-teacher relationships. White and Kelly (2010) showed that social support is an important protective factor for school dropout. Next to social support from peers and family, the relationships students develop with their teachers can play a major role in school completion, especially during early adolescence. Early adolescence is a critical period where students can develop oppositional attitudes toward school and authority figures and associate more with peer groups that may have negative perceptions about school. Providing youngsters with positive and supportive relationships with teachers, adult mentors and school counsellors can therefore have important mitigating effects.

Anderson et al (2004) pointed out that although many research findings indicate that relationships with adults are among the most important factors for successful education, these relationships are often overlooked in school-based interventions to reduce ESL. In their study of the quality of student-relations within the large-scale US Check & Connect Programme, Anderson et al (2004) demonstrated that closer, better quality student-teacher relationships were strongly associated with higher school engagement. These results were all the more promising given the fact that the target group in this programme were at high risk for educational failure. Furthermore, Robledo Montecel et al (2004) – in a comprehensive study of school careers of Latino youngsters in US schools – showed that the single most important variable predicting school completion was youngsters reporting the presence of an adult in school by whom they felt supported. The best practice intervention programmes provided opportunities for students to be acknowledged as valuable and had at least one educator committed to the success of a particular student.

In short, being responsive to student needs and personalizing learning environments can facilitate students' sense of belonging in school and reduce students' alienation and frustration. The literature on dropout prevention and intervention studies shows that the role of teachers in students' school engagement should not be underestimated in designing and implementing measures to keep youngsters at risk connected to the school. We will now look how these findings from previous studies are represented in our data.

As discussed in the section on one-on-one emotional and behavioural support, many designers and implementers of school-based interventions acknowledge the role a single staff member can have in decreasing students' risk of ESL. In some schools personnel is therefore made aware of their role and are motivated to connect with students in order to pick up on and respond to potential risk indicators. Typically, schools that are investing in teacher-student relationships tend to introduce regular one-on-one talks between students and specific teachers or support staff members. Examples of these efforts are regular feedback interviews with (class) teachers (BE School A), talks with mentors and youth coaches (ES School B; NL School A; SE School D) and student counselling (BE School B). In the following fragment of a focus group discussion among

teachers in NL School A, teachers discuss the importance of caring student-teacher relationships in order to raise students' chances to graduate:

> Teacher 1 "The highest reachable [goal] for a school is that a child graduates. That is our ultimate goal, but the way to get there varies. Actually we value connection (relation) above result, but with some children it is hard to build that relation. They've built a wall around themselves. Sometimes you will see the child succeeding anyway, and sometimes he does not."

> Teacher 2: "What I see with the child is that she can do more that she is letting on at this moment, and you need to have this bond to see the reason behind that. At school things go well. She might be on her own little island. No problems with the other students. Without contact or connection it is hard to get to know what is really going on. What is happening that causes you to not show the result that I see you could attain."

> Teacher 1: "If you enjoy school, if you have a good connection with your teachers, if you have classmates that you like, the result are better. Then it is dependent on your discipline and work ethos, and the support from home. It is a co-occurrence of things."

> (FGD Staff, NL School A)

What was indicated as being important in building supportive teacher-student relations is that staff members are equipped to connect with students in a positive and supportive manner. Some school managers and staff – particularly in schools with an at-risk population – therefore pointed out that a good teacher's qualities are not restricted to course-related knowledge but actually takes into account empathy and social skills, which in some schools is even a main selection criterion in the recruitment of new staff members.

> "In the hiring procedure the current management not only focuses on the subject-related capabilities but are also looking for strong social skills, a good fit within the teaching team and the pupil population. The management tries to select these teachers because it's crucial for them – as well as for the school – that they are aware that being a teacher in *school D* means more than just teaching subject-related content."

> (Notes on interview with School Principal, BE School D)

> Interviewer: "How would you describe the staff?"

> Teacher: "Involved. You have to want to work here, otherwise soon you'll be gone. The kids are challenging and we have a structure of order, care and attention. If you want to only teach your subject it does not work, you have to really be here for the children."

> (FGD Staff, NL School B)

Those staff members who take up these individualised support roles, in particular teachers who successfully connect with individual students in their day-to-day class practices, tend to be recognized by students (and colleagues) as the most committed teachers:

> "Students and parents refer positively to those teachers whom they trust the best, with whom they start a mentoring relationship beyond ordinary tutoring. […] Students indicated a clear transmission of teachers' concern and expectations towards all the students. Students feel cared for as individual persons."

> (ES School B, Country Report Spain)

> "As the respondents describe it, one of the major resources at school A is the teacher's commitment towards the students. The student-teacher relationship is highlighted as a vital tool against the risk of ESL, where the feeling of being acknowledged as a person also affects a students' school results."

> (SE School A, Country Report Sweden)

> The CLB student counsellor concurred that the teachers – mostly class teachers or other teachers that are considered trustworthy – play an important role in preventing students from ESL. During these talks with students the teachers also discuss risk factors that lie outside of the school. The teachers indicated

that attention needs to be given to positive aspects of the students' school career and the school-external student counsellor acknowledges that teachers in School A are already strongly invested in doing that. Most of the socio-emotional support experienced by students comes from specific teachers who are seen as a person of trust."

(BE School A, Country Report Belgium)

The following excerpts from interviews with youngsters, however, show how a single teacher can make a positive difference, even though a youngster might (temporary) not show much commitment to his/her education:

Youngster: "I actually wanted to stop last year because I'm already 18. I was tired of it."

Interviewer: "You were tired of coming to school?"

Youngster: "Yes, because I still had to do two or three years and normally I should have graduated already. And teachers changed my mind then. Because the teachers said no, continue with it, don't go working yet as an ordinary cleaning lady or something, that's no fun. And they said, three years is not so much. The teachers really… they have changed my mind."

(Youngster, BE School A)

Youngster: "That teacher is gone now, he was good. He came to my house and had a cup of tea. He brought me home with his car because I had made a chair and table for my little niece and nephew. That was the first teacher that really tried to help me."

Interviewer: "Do you feel that a teacher can make a difference?"

Youngster: "Yes, if all teachers were as good, there would be more good boys graduating in this school. They just need more help, that's my opinion."

Interviewer: "More help to motivate young people?"

Youngster: "Yes, also motivate young people. I actually think that it is not going well because look… if you give up on a boy… everyone has had these moments in his youth."

Interviewer: "Everyone has had some difficult moments?"

Youngster: "Yes, there are also nicer things you want to do [*than being in school*] you know. So I would like there to be more support for all students who are having hard times."

(Youngster, BE School D)

While being in a trustful and caring relationship with a teacher can indirectly or directly influence a student's decision to stay in school, a lack of connection or even conflictual relationships with teachers can have detrimental effects on students' engagement in school. Students often do not find themselves in supportive student-teacher relationships and teachers' commitment and ability to support them was openly questioned by students during interviews:

"The interviewed students named some of the teachers as specifically helpful and supportive while questioning the emotional and professional commitment of others. A youngster stressed that not all teachers had the ability to engage the students in their schoolwork."

(Notes on FGD youngsters, SE School A)

"This student doesn't feel comfortable with the teachers and claims that there is only one teacher that she gets along with. […] She describes the school as poor and 'crappy'. The students also had quite a negative perception of the support they were given in school B. All of the interviewed students, with the exception one student, described the school structure as failing to provide the support they needed."

(Notes on FGD students, SE School B)

> "The students believe that the tutors chose their role to receive an extra-salary for the extra-hours. The tutors are not perceived as very close and trustful teachers."

> (Notes on FGD students, ES School D)

Moreover, students showing high risks for ESL – by being delayed in their school career or by showing misconduct in class – are often the ones who feel least supported by their teachers. Some students even indicated that some of their teachers recommended them to drop out of school:

> "The youngsters are not convinced of the willingness of their teachers to prevent them from dropping out. Instead of feeling supported, they indicated that teachers sometimes even advise students to leave school. They also feel that school staff sometimes play with the futures of students when deciding about the certificates at the end of the school year."

> (Notes on FGD students, BE School B)

In case schools do not systematically encourage these supportive practices and the development of such caring student-teacher relationships, the supportive character of these relationships are more strongly dependent on the commitment and willingness of individual teachers. This is often problematic for those students most at risk of ESL who might not show much motivation to graduate or even disrupt the day-to-day practices in class.

Promoting Student Voice and Ownership

In this project paper the general objective is similar to the broader approach of the RESL.eu-project -- to study the process of early school leaving by listening to the views and discourses of the individuals involved. This implies that the perspectives of youngsters are crucial. Their voices are given room and are equally valued as voices of other stakeholders such as teachers, school boards and policy makers. It is crucial to understand the meaning students attach to processes of ESL and the various obstacles and opportunities they encounter throughout their educational career (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Downes, 2013). We therefore also studied the way students' voices are incorporated in the design and implementation of school-based intervention measures.

We start from the idea that when a target group is involved in the development and implementation process of a measure this will increase the effectivity and efficiency of the measure as the target groups' voices are heard and their sense of ownership is increased (Mitra & Gross, 2009; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Throughout the analyses of the various measures discussed in the previous sections the issue of student voice and ownership was often touched upon. However, sometimes school personnel is not interested in these voices or do not have the time and/or competencies to acknowledge them, while at the same time sometimes students themselves are also not interested in expressing their voice to school staff.

Across our case studies we found different practices of how schools deal with student voice and ownership in relation to the measures that are designed and implemented. One important way to facilitate the expression of student voice is the presence of specific pathways and/or student councils or boards through which ideas, complaints and issues can be conveyed. Various schools have implemented these more structural pathways themselves or were initiated by students (e.g.

BE D1; UK A1; PT schools; SE Schools[19]). Other schools implement one-on-one feedback moments for students to express their voice in a more intimate environment (e.g. BE School A). Some schools use a questionnaire to probe for what kind of activities students would like to organize in the schools and what they want to change in the school (e.g. PL B1).

Some of these seemingly positive structural initiatives can, however, be perceived as constraining when students need to voice their issues to a specific tutor even though the former might have the feeling that their questions are not taken seriously or dealt with adequately. When the structural context limits the ways students can express their voice, a measure can become counterproductive.

Whether students feel that school personnel take their opinions and views seriously also depends on the opportunities for students to raise the issues they are concerned about, and the feeling that there are not too many limitations set in how far their participation in development and implementation of specific measures can go. One clear issue that emerged is the feeling that students are targeted by measures but that other stakeholders in these educational processes such as teachers or student counsellors cannot be held accountable for their wrongdoings. For example, a member of the student council BE School D argued that he tried to raise the issue of the behaviour of some teachers several times but that there was no follow-up and this issue was not taken seriously.

In other schools, students are given a lot of room to express their voices but are also given responsibility in developing and implementing relevant measures to increase students' school engagement. Sometimes students can urge school boards to develop new study courses that they feel are relevant and interesting to them (e.g. PL School B). Youngsters are also given the opportunity and responsibility to establish cooperation with labour market organizations. Where measures are co-developed by students, feeling of ownership and school engagement can be heightened:

> [*The Invest in Our Future Event*] is organised by students themselves. The organizers volunteer to this initiative, then form teams and allocate tasks among themselves. The students conduct a survey with their peers to find out what employers/ universities they would like to meet + also what their parents do and whether they can attend the event if there are students interested in that profession. After receiving training in how to communicate effectively on the phone and through email with businesses, students start contacting companies, universities, etc. and invite them to take part.

> (UK School D, Country Report UK)

When students' voice are not heard, feelings of frustration and stigmatization can emerge. Throughout several country papers similar patterns were found of students feeling marginalized when they felt that their needs and feelings were ignored. This is particularly relevant to understanding students' perception about the outcome experience of measures. For example, school personnel can have a very positive perception of the relevance and efficiency of a project while students' may feel it has no relevance for them. The following analysis is illustrative for how designers and implementers can be positive about the opportunities for student voice, while the target group indicates that they are not taken seriously, nor have a real idea of what the measure is about:

[19] Schools in Portugal are legally required to have student councils. Class representatives and student councils are a common school practice in Sweden, as well.

"All respondents have different ideas about the participation and ownership of this measure. The counsellor of *Class as Workplace* feels that this class gives her the opportunity to give customised advice for each student. While most target group respondents in this class are frustrated about the way they are treated by some teachers. *"It is so derogatory. We feel they [teachers] are never taking us seriously."* And the parents wish that school would involve them more as they have *"no clue about what is happening in the school"*.

(NL School D, Country Report, the Netherlands)

In conclusion, giving students opportunities to voice concerns and needs within the school environment are important elements of building a strong connection to school. While some school practices are found to channel these student voices and support students' roles in distributed leadership in school, other schools seem to struggle to promote student voice and ownership.

Taking on an Holistic Multi-professional Approach

The process of early school leaving is explained in academic literature as being due to a variety of factors on different levels (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Scholars look at elements on the micro-level of the individual students, on the meso-level of the social group or institution (e.g. the school, the family, the neighbourhood) and on the macro-level of the broader society (e.g. the educational system and the labour market). All these factors are shown to play intersecting roles in this process. When looking for a solution, a single measure usually only focuses on a single element and thus cannot solve what is inherently a social issue. Many schools and (educational) policy makers are aware of this complexity and therefore try to design more holistic measures, developed and implemented by cross-sectorial, multi-professional and multidisciplinary teams.

For example, to study the process of ESL on the individual level, one can focus on the cognitive, behavioural and emotional components of students' school engagement (Fredericks et al, 2004). This would then require a multidimensional approach on the individual level wherein not only students' progress in terms of test results or students' attendance is registered and monitored, but also more implicit or less overt feelings, aspirations and perceptions need to be taken into account. One of the main risk factors for schools we found discussed in the chapter on early warning systems is precisely this lack of attention for or competencies to detect and act upon multi-faceted factors influencing ESL. This is one reason why different scholars advocate the establishment of multi-professional teams in schools, composed of individuals who are able to address the different aspects of students' attitudes and behaviour (e.g. Downes, 2011 & 2013). Explanatory models become even more complex when ESL is not defined as a solely individual process but is understood taking into account one's surrounding social context and opportunity structures. The multi-professional teams often aim to look beyond the walls of the school by taking on a cross-sectorial approach. Many youngsters enter the educational system from a less favourable socio-economic position and have already experienced many obstacles in life. While schools are not expected to compensate for all these difficulties, the establishment of cross-sectorial teams should address some of these school-external issues (EU Commission, 2013; Downes, 2011).

In the measures studied in the different country reports, we have found interesting examples and promising practices in various shapes and team-constructions. Different case studies show a common idea of a more holistic approach on the individual as well as on the contextual level. The early warning systems in many schools show a holistic approach of the individual student taking into account his/her cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions. However, besides this

detection and in some cases also monitoring of these dimensions, measures need to be developed to holistically engage with the difficulties detected via the EWS. From that moment, a multi-disciplinary team approach seems necessary. In various country reports mention is made of broad structural measures such as the Care Structure in NL School A, the Inclusion Team and Learner Services Teams in the UK School A and B.

In some cases, it is regarded to be beneficial for schools to cooperate with external partners in supporting youngsters in their educational trajectories. In the chapter on career guidance it is shown that various schools (successfully) work together with labour market organizations. Besides this more practical cooperation, sometimes schools also seek help from external agencies for the support of students that experience cognitive, behavioural and emotional difficulties.

An interesting example of cooperation between schools and external agencies is Skolslussen (e.g. in SE School A). This is a municipal agency that focuses on early school leavers and is located outside of the schools but works closely together with them to support youngsters returning to education. More concretely, Skolslussen pays and reserves ten places in the Individual Alternative programme developed in school SE-A1 and this way Skolslussen is ensured that the youngsters they receive can actually have a place in a school-based preparatory programme for upper secondary education. This allows Skolslussen to first address the broader issues youngsters are confronted with before offering them the opportunity to return to education.

The case of measure PL-B1 shows that some schools are convinced of the importance to monitor and address the emotional needs of youngsters but they are also aware that they might not have the capacity and competencies to do this. Therefore the cooperation with external agencies can be beneficial, as argued by the pedagogical counsellor in PL School B:

> "Very helpful is the fact that due to our cooperation with other institutions the students have additional support. They sometimes need to consult specialists individually in the therapeutic centres, especially those kids having emotional problems. Without mental health it is impossible to achieve good educational results. We have lots of such cases, around 5 per cent of the students benefit from therapeutic help and 7–8 per cent receive social and financial benefits. So, altogether, it is quite a lot."

> (Pedagogical Counsellor, PL School B)

Various schools show their broad concern for addressing students' needs and show they are willing to think out of the box when developing solutions for their students. The discourse analyses from different country reports show that there is a growing awareness of the importance of a multidimensional and multilevel approach to the issue of ESL. The staff teams in schools are diversifying and becoming multi-professional, but also cooperation with external agencies was reported to be growing. Mental health and emotional issues are becoming more and more a focal issue in school policy, albeit still receiving less attention than cognitive or behavioural issues.

Nevertheless, some stakeholders involved in this study also argue that one has to be aware that cooperation with external agencies does not evolve into an outsourcing of school internal problems. Sometimes the over-diagnosing of students can occur while the main problems might be situated elsewhere (see e.g. ES School C). In other cases it might alleviate schools from their responsibility when the external agencies take over. These processes might end up stigmatizing students even more and jeopardize their opportunities for a successful educational and future career.

A final overall concern voiced by school staff with regard to the provision of more holistic and multi-professional support – like for many of the other contextual preconditions – is the general lack of and cut-backs in resources for schools and external agencies to meet the needs of students, especially those considered at high risk of ESL.

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Annex 1: Overview and grid of the Studied School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures

1. BE School Intervention A1: Student Counselling
2. BE School Intervention A2: Truancy and Disciplinary policies
3. BE School Intervention A3: Permanent evaluation in the vocational track
4. BE School Intervention B1: Truancy and Disciplinary policies
5. BE School Intervention B2: Student Counselling
6. BE School Intervention C1: Truancy and Disciplinary Policies
7. BE School Intervention C2: Career Guidance Support
8. BE School Intervention C3: Socio-emotional support by teachers
9. BE School Intervention D1: Student Counselling
10. BE School Intervention D2: Career Guidance Support
11. ES School Intervention A1: Orientation
12. ES School Intervention A2: Diversity Group
13. ES School Intervention B1: Tutoring/ Mentoring
14. ES School Intervention B2: Open Classroom *[Aula Oberta]*
15. ES School Intervention C1: *(Ability)* Grouping
16. ES School Intervention C2: Tutoring
17. ES School Intervention D1: Orientation
18. ES School Intervention D2: Open Classroom *[Aula Oberta]*
19. NL School Intervention A1: Care Structure
20. NL School Intervention B1: Care Team: Support for (non) school-related activities
21. NL School Intervention C1: Time Out class
22. NL School Intervention D1: Classroom as a Workshop
23. PL School Intervention A1: "Zawodowiec" (Professional) Programme
24. PL School Intervention A2: Effective Detection and Intervention Strategy
25. PL School Intervention B1: Innovative Educational Profiles
26. PL School Intervention B2: Individualization of teaching
27. PL School Intervention C1: Integrated/inclusive nature of the school
28. PL School Intervention C2: Individualisation of educational support
29. PL School Intervention D1: Actively participating in social projects
30. PL School Intervention D2: Active Educational Teams
31. PT School Intervention A1: Educational Class Advisor (or advisory period) ("OET")
32. PT School Intervention A2: Pedagogical Differentiation and Cooperative Learning
33. PT School Intervention B1: Exam reparation
34. PT School Intervention B2: Students' Ombudsman
35. PT School Intervention C1: Social Cohesion Group
36. PT School Intervention D1: Credit Hours
37. SE School Intervention A1: Individual alternative (IA) and Preparatory programme (Prep.).
38. SE School Intervention B1: School Building Model
39. SE School Intervention B2: Tutorials for Learning
40. SE School Intervention B3: Division of students into small groups instead of classes
41. SE School Intervention B4: Homework Aid
42. SE School Intervention B5: Study- and Career Thread (SYV-tråden)
43. SE School Intervention C1: Special Pedagogic Study Group
44. SE School Intervention D1: Introductory Programme Individual Alternative (IA)
45. UK School Intervention A1: Inclusion Team
46. UK School Intervention B1: Learner Services Team
47. UK School Intervention C1: Support Option (together with the RONI scheme)
48. UK School Intervention D1: Investing in our Future Event

Based on the overall methodological fieldwork approach this study includes an adapted theory-driven evaluation of a total of 48 school wide or student-focused school-based interventions to reduce early school leaving in 28 secondary schools across seven EU member states. Furthermore, the analyses of these intervention measures leads us to discuss some of the most important contextual preconditions for these interventions to be effective, as indicated by the designers, implementers and target groups we interviewed. Based on the prevalence of the measures studied in the selected schools, the EU policy framework and academic literature on school-based prevention and intervention, we categorize these measures in the following typology:

1. Early Warning System(s) (EWS)
2. Academic Support
   - Tutoring (working smaller classes, homework support, ...)
   - Special Needs Education (SEN) support
   - Flexible learning pathways and (ability/ remedial) grouping
3. Socio-emotional and Behavioural Support
   - One-on-one support: counselling, coaching and mentoring
   - Truancy and disciplinary policies
   - Social skills training & extra-curricular activities
4. Career guidance support

Furthermore, based on the analyses of these interventions, we distilled a range of contextual preconditions at the school level that were indicated by the designers, implementers and target groups as crucial for school-based interventions to be successful.

The following overview grid of the 48 studied measures[20] from the seven Country Reports informs the cross-case analyses and shows which measures are (or consist elements of) the types of measures presented above and shows where (elements of) the school-level contextual preconditions are available. Where the code names for measures are represented in bold, the type of intervention and/ or contextual feature was essential for the measure. When the code names for a measure or school are written in italic, this means that the school policy or measure contained elements of this type of intervention or contextual precondition.

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[20] The studied measures are represented by their country (e.g. BE, ES, …)/ school code (A, B, …) and are numbered. For descriptive information on the schools and measures please see the corresponding sections in Annex 2.

		BE	ES	NL	PL	PT	SE	UK
School-based intervention measures	*Early Warning Systems*	A1; A2; A3; B1; C1; D1;	A1; A2; B1; B2; C1; C2;	A1; B1;	A1; A2; A3; B1; C1; D1;	A1; A2; B1; B2; C1; C2;	A1; B1;	A1; A2; A3; B1; C1; D1;
	Academic support							
	• **Tutoring support measures**	*School A School B School C*	*A2;* **B1;** *C2*	*A1;* **B1**	*School A;* **B2** *School C School D*	**B1; D1**	**A1; B2; B4**	*School A School B;* **C1** *School D*
	• **Special Educational Needs support (SEN)**	*A1*	**A2**	*School A*	**C1; C2; D2**		**C1**	**A1** *School B School C School D*
	• **Flexible learning pathways/ grouping measures**	*School A;* **A3** *School D*	**A2; B2; C1;** *C2* **D2**	**D1**	*School B; School D*	*A2*	**A1; B3; C1; D1**	*School A;* **A1** *School B School C*
	Emotional and behavioural support							
	• **One-on-one emotional & behavioural Support**	**A1;** *A2;* **B1;** *B2;* **C1;** **C3;** **D1;**	*B1; C2;*	*A1;* **B1;** *C1;* **D1;**	**A2;** **B2;** *C1;* *C2;* *D2;*	**A1;** **B2;** *D1;*	*A1;* *B2;* *B3;* *B4;* *D1;*	**A1; B1;**
	• **Truancy and disciplinary policies**	*A1;* **A2;** **B1;** *B2;* **C1; D1;**	*B2;*	*A1;* *School B;* **C1;** *D1;*	*School B; School D;*	*A1;*	*A1; B3; School C; D1;*	*A1; School B; C1;*
	• **Social Skills training & extra-curricular activities**	*School A School B School C School D*	*School A* **B2; D2;**	*School A*	**B2; C1; C2; D1**	*A1;*	*A1; B3; D1;*	*School A School D*
	Career guidance support	*School A* School B **C2; D2** *School D*	**A1** *School B* **B2;** **D1;** *D2*	*School A School B School C*	**A1; B1; D1**		**B5**	**B1** *School A; B; C; D;* **D1**
Contextual preconditions	• **Addressing the basic needs**	*School B;*			*A2; D2;*	*B1; C1;*		
	• **Promoting parental involvement**	*A2; B1; C1; C2; C3;*	*A1; B1; C2;*	*B1; C1;*	*C1; C2;*	*A1;*	*D1;*	*A1; B1; C1; D1;*
	• **Promoting professional development & support of staff**	*A1; B1; C1; C2; C3; D1;*	*C1;*			*A2;*	*A1;* **B2;** *D1;*	*A1; B1;*
	• **Promoting supportive student-teacher relationships**	**A1;** *B1; B2; C1; C2; C3; D1;*	*A1; B1; C2;*	*D1;*	*A2; C1; C2; D1; D2;*	*A1;*	*A1;*	*A1; B1; C1;*
	• **Promoting student voice & ownership**	*A1; A3; B1; C1; C3; D1;*		*D1;*	*B1; D1;*		*A1;*	*A1;* **D1;**
	• **Taking on a holistic multi-professional approach**	*B1; D1;*	*A1; A2; B2; C1; C2;*	*C1;*	*A2; D1;* **D2;**		*A1;*	**A1; B1;**

Annex 2: Descriptions of Educational Systems, Focus Schools and School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures

Belgium (Flanders)

Similar to the EU Strategies, Flanders'[21] plans for the future focus on developing a knowledge- and innovation-based economy. The Flemish Community also represents itself as a pioneer and early adopter, trying to be in line with EU recommendations. Consecutive ministers of Education and Training have made efforts in reducing ESL rates since the signing of the EU Lisbon Strategy in 2000. Flanders in particular designed even stricter targets with respect to reducing ESL rates than the EU set out and wants to reduce ESL rates to 5.2% by 2020.

In general, the future objectives and strategies of the Flemish Government, however, show awareness of the fact that many pupils, especially those with a lower SES and/or ethnic minority background, experience problems of grade retention and streaming down the hierarchically organized tracking system and leave education without qualification. It is within this context of growing awareness that the Flemish Minister of Education designed a specific 'Action plan Early School Leaving'[22] next to a general and structural reform of secondary education. The reduction of ESL rates is a top priority and is also one of the main arguments to reform the Flemish educational system. Opinions about the reform of the Flemish educational system are divided, as stakeholders have different drivers and rationales for such changes (see policy analysis and field description WP2). Especially since the start of the economic crisis, more economic rationales predominantly related to youth unemployment rates have stimulated policy action regarding ESL.

Since ESL is mostly concentrated in some of Flanders' larger cities, local authorities have been taking interest in the issue. Cities such as Antwerp (the research area of WP4) and Ghent are confronted with high rates of ESL and have developed specific strategies to reduce ESL. The Equal Educational Opportunities[23] policy aims to assure that every pupil has the chance to develop their full potential. Another central goal is to counter exclusion, segregation and discrimination in education. Secondary schools can use extra GOK resources for prevention and remediation of developmental and learning difficulties, language skills education, intercultural education, school career orientation, socio-emotional development and pupil/parental involvement. The Flemish Government also insists on local authorities developing local policies concerning inequalities in educational outcomes through their Flanking Educational Policy,[24] because it felt issues such as language deficiency, poverty and social exclusion are mainly present in more urban environments.

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[21] In Belgium, Educational policies are a competence of the Flemish Government
[22] Actieplan Vroegtijdig Schoolverlaten:
http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/secundair/Actieplan_Vroegtijdig_Schoolverlaten_def.pdf
[23] Gelijke Onderwijskansenbeleid (GOK): http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/gok/
[24] Flankerend Onderwijsbeleid: http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/lokaalbeleid/wat/

School A is a Catholic school located in Antwerp where a lot of students with an immigration background are enrolled. As in our survey sample, we see 97% pupils with a non-EU origin. According to statistical data from the city of Antwerp, 59,6% of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood where the school is located have a non-native background, the biggest group consisting of people with a Moroccan background; demographically seen, the Moroccan population consists primarily of young people. The majority of the mothers and fathers of the students who participated in Survey A1 are unemployed and low educated. The school predominantly educates female pupils (71% in the RESL.eu data) but a significant number of male pupils are enrolled in the business-oriented courses. The school has a high proportion of pupils who are delayed in their school career.

The school is situated in the top quartile of teacher support for all schools involved in the RESL.eu project. Although being in the first quartile overall, School A ranked 12th of the 41 participating schools in Flanders. Moreover, School A does score exceptionally well compared to the other RESL.eu schools in Flanders for the measurements of global self-esteem (2nd); academic self-concept (3rd); social and school support from parents (3rd /1st); behavioural school engagement – self-reported study behaviour (1st); cognitive school engagement – cognitive strategy use and self-regulated learning (3rd/2nd); emotional school engagement – valuing of school education (4th).

The school provides courses in the vocational, technical and in the general tracks. School A also invests in career guidance, which is primarily targeted at reorienting pupils that have motivational problems or problems keeping up with classes. Career guidance consists of advice on changing study tracks or courses, mostly oriented within the school's provision of tracks and courses. These track changes mostly concern 'streaming down' (e.g. from general to technical) tracks but 'streaming up' (e.g. from vocational to technical) also occasionally happens. Some pupils receive extra guidance and support to change tracks. Some pupils also get offered extra courses on a 'higher' track level to smoothen the transition to another track.

ESL is seen as a result of a problematic school career caused by a high number of school changes and grade retention during the pupils' school career (in other schools). The school management therefore chooses to avoid grade retention as much as possible and allows pupils in the vocational track who fail in a limited number of general courses to move on to the following year, while receiving extra remediation. In the vocational track, an F (failure) for a general course can be disregarded during the deliberations as long as the pupil has proven to be sufficiently skilled in their vocational classes and in their apprenticeship. Also, if pupils were held back based on this one (or max. two) failed course(s) this would augment the risk of ESL, especially when the pupil already has one or two years of delay in his school career. This does not mean that pupils can pass based only on practical courses, but the SP points out that this increased risk of ESL is taken into consideration during deliberations.

Description of School intervention BE A1
- Student counselling
- Designers: school management team in consultation with middle management
- Implementers: (class) teachers, pupil coordinator, CLB counsellor and principal
- Recipients: School wide but with specific attention for pupils at risk of ESL

- Level of the intervention measure: Tiered approach (school wide and focussed)
- Frequency: day-to-day practice and responding to risk behaviour
- Partners: Guidance Counsellor from CLB[25]; the parents

The student counselling and socio-emotional support from teachers is a tiered approach that is mostly school wide but has special student-focussed attention that responds to specific pupil's motivational problems and increased risk of ESL (shown in decreasing grades, absences, problematic behaviour, etc.). The signals of pupils being at risk can be inputted in a digital follow-up system which is primarily supervised by the pupil coordinator or a student counsellor from the CLB. Each month, a meeting with the CLB student counsellor, the pupil coordinators, and the school management is organized and the counselling trajectories of these case pupils are discussed.

Teachers (mostly class teachers) play a primary role in picking up signals from their pupils due to their status or roles of trustworthy adults. The regular one-on-one reflection meetings between a pupil and a teacher helps the teacher to pick up signals and ideally allows both parties to share ideas and feelings with each other. These reflexive feedback moments can consist of course- or non-course-related issues.

Description of School intervention BE A2
- Disciplinary policy towards truancy
- Designers: school management in consultation with middle management
- Implementers: administrative staff, pupil coordinator, CLB guidance counsellor and (to a lesser extent) teachers
- Recipients: pupils who play truant
- Level of the intervention measure: student-focused
- Frequency: responding to truancy problems
- Partners: Guidance Counsellor from CLB; parents; local authorities; Department of education; and sometimes external time-out projects

The disciplinary policy towards truancy in School A can be seen as the stick to the student counselling's carrot from school intervention A1. When responding to motivational problems that are signalled by truancy or behavioural problems, the pupil counselling can be accompanied by disciplinary actions. For those pupils showing high truancy rates, the school has a student-focused disciplinary policy that includes a range of disciplinary sanctions that can ultimately lead to a pupil being expelled from School A. After a certain number of infringements of the school regulations and disregarding warnings, the school can set up a contract with the pupil that stipulates how a pupil should behave to avoid further disciplinary steps. The school has specific contracts for truancy, lateness and disruptive behaviour. The follow-up of truancy contracts is primarily done by the pupil coordinator meeting together with the administrative staff, who then informs the monthly pupil guidance/ truancy meetings about the developments in pupils' truancy and lateness. Starting from 5 half-days of irregular absence (B-codes), the parents of the pupils are involved. Further steps are taken starting from 10 B-codes. Then the CLB guidance counsellor is involved and the

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[25] Centre for Pupil guidance (Centrum voor Leerlingenbegeleiding); school external service financed by the Flemish Government.

truancy is reported to the database of the Local Truancy Cell. At the level of 30 B-codes, the family risks having their child benefits suspended by the Flemish Government. In case a pupil ultimately gets expelled as a result of a disciplinary contract, the school will help to find a new school for the child and is careful not to exchange harmful information about the disruptive behaviour of the pupil in order to allow the pupil to have new start in the new school.

Description of School intervention BE A3
- Permanent evaluation of pupils in the vocational track
- Designers: school management, including middle management
- Implementers: teachers
- Recipients: pupils in vocational education (VET)
- Level of the intervention measure: all courses in vocational education
- Frequency: constant
- Partners: Educational counselling service of the Catholic organizing body

The system of permanent evaluation for pupils in vocational tracks in School A follows a broader trend in Flemish secondary education where predominantly vocational oriented schools introduce a system of continuous evaluation. School A chooses to eliminate examination periods in their vocational courses and replaced the periodic exams by continuous evaluations. This system can still include tests but these are organized more frequently and are smaller in size. Furthermore, pupils are also evaluated on a day-to-day basis. One of the main advantages of the continuous evaluation of pupils is that the evaluation encourages the learner to work more throughout the school year. It is also presumed to be better because the pupils' competences are evaluated more broadly and because all the pupil's achievements in class are taken into account. Permanent evaluations are also a measure that allows the school to give more continuous feedback to the pupils and to keep closer control on the evolution of pupils' grades. Another main motive for introducing the continuous evaluations is to generate extra teaching time for basic academic skills. By eliminating the examination periods, these weeks are freed up to provide extra teaching time.

As was indicated in school intervention A1, formal one-on-one feedback moments between pupils and a teacher are scheduled three times per school year. These feedback moments also give the pupil an opportunity to talk with the teacher about his/her grades. The underlying idea is that the evaluation is part of a more comprehensive policy and a pedagogical process where the pupil is forced to reflect about his/her own educational trajectory. The belief/assumption is that the pupil will feel more responsible for their own trajectory if they are asked to reflect on it and give (and receive) feedback.

BE School B

School B is a Catholic school located in Antwerp where a lot of male students with an immigration background are enrolled. As in our survey sample, we see 90% boys and 82% students with an immigration background; the biggest group consists of pupils with (grand) parents born outside the European Union. According to data from survey A1, most of the respondents have a Moroccan background. According to statistical data from the city of Antwerp, 72% of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood where the school is located have a non-native background, the biggest group consisting of people with a Moroccan background. The majority of the mothers and fathers of the students who participated in Survey A1 are employed, but low educated. More than half of the sample already faced grade retention during his/her school career.

This school is characterized by one of the lowest behavioural school engagement and the lowest school belonging amongst all the vocational students in the Flemish focus schools (Survey A1). The teacher support level is also one of the lowest scores we measured in all of our schools (only two schools do worse).

Educational tracks are all situated in the industrial sector. The school offers only vocational education in seven different study domains (e.g. car mechanics, basic mechanics, bodywork, electrical installations, painting and decorating). We emphasize here also the existence of adult education possibilities located at the same campus as the regular education. Here, students who are older than 18 can attain their ISCED III degree in formal adult education without actually changing schools. School B also offers part-time vocational education where students can enrol in a study track that requires them to attend classes only two days and gain work experience during the other three days. Students who are about to leave school unqualified have a lot of opportunities within the same school and/or campus to reorient their educational career.

Concerning intra-muros measures the school has to undertake to help their students, they have to focus primarily on providing students their basic needs. The school population in general consists of students who are not at all financially advantaged. Sometimes the school has to provide clothing, study materials for students or even has to give them some proper food. The principal as well as the teachers told us about (extreme) poverty and bad living conditions amongst their pupils. The school expressed to be well known for being a 'caring school' where students are assisted as much as possible. The school staff argues that the school, which has to face all these city-related problems, definitely needs more financial resources to provide all of this.

Early school leaving is partly seen as a result of attractive job offers from the labour market. Earning money is a very important pull factor for their pupils, as a lot of them have to work because of their deprived living conditions. Almost every student had already reached the age of 18 when enrolled in the fifth grade (at that point they still have to attend school for three more years) and making money becomes very attractive, sometimes essential. The ex-students are often offered short-term contracts and then become unemployed after a couple of months.

Description of School intervention BE B1
- Disciplinary, truancy and lateness policies
- Designers: Flemish government, the principal and pupil guidance counsellor

- Implementers: Pupil Guidance Centre (CLB), the principal, the student guidance counsellor, teachers and administration staff
- Recipients: Students
- Level of the intervention measure: Student-focused
- Frequency: Every time a pupil shows bad behaviour, plays truant of arrives late at school
- Partners: In case of truancy: The Pupil Guidance Centre (CLB); In case of bad behaviour: Time-out projects; In case of delinquency: Police and justice

In general, the school staff implements disciplinary, truancy and lateness policies in order to make the pupils behave the way they are expected to (in the eyes of the school staff) when they become employed in the labour market. In general, if a student behaves badly, plays truant or arrives late at school, the school staff will look for a suitable punishment. The roll is taken every morning and a student is forced to stay at school after the lessons ended if he/she had arrived too late that morning. When a student doesn't show up and didn't inform the school in advance, the administration staff will contact the student by calling him/her and asking for the reason of his/her absence. When an absence is not justified, the student will get a B-code, which is a measurement against truancy that is implemented in every Flemish school, and is designed by the Flemish Government. A weekly meeting of student guidance counsellors makes clear which pupil needs more attention in the future. In case of bad behaviour, a student can get a 'follow-up card' every teacher has to sign after every class. A next step can be a 'follow-up contract'. Everything is written down in a pupil monitoring system, where a member of the school staff can inform other school staff about the misbehaviour of a student.

Description of School intervention B2
- Career guidance support
- Designers: CLB, the principal and student guidance counsellor
- Implementers: CLB, the principal and student guidance counsellor
- Recipients: Students who are about to leave school (eventually their parents)
- Level of the intervention measure: Student-focused
- Frequency: not regular, only when someone is considered to be needing such a conversation
- Partners (school-internal and -external): CLB; Parents; Adult education (same building); Part-time vocational education (same school)

Concerning the career guidance of students facing difficulties in their current study track, the school staff emphasizes the willingness of teachers and the student guidance counsellor to help them with keeping them in school and to offer them good alternatives. Often a conversation will be held between the CLB or student coordinator and the student. (Different) prospects for the future are explained and the school staff will try to convince the student to stay at school. When the school staff wants the parents to be involved, they will be invited to join the conversation.

BE School C

School C is a Catholic school located in Antwerp where a lot of students with an immigration background are enrolled. As in our survey sample, we see 92% students with an immigration background. The biggest group consists of pupils with all (grand) parents born outside the

European Union. According to statistical data from the city of Antwerp, there is a high portion of young people with an immigration background in the neighbourhood of the school. The majority of the fathers are employed, and parents are mostly low educated: 49% of the fathers and 55% of the mothers. More than half of our sample had already faced grade retention during his/her school career.

This school is characterized as one of the lowest in emotional school belonging and one of the highest in socio-emotional support from parents amongst its vocational students. The teacher support level is on average a little bit higher for students of the vocational track than for students of the technical track. This score is average in comparison with other schools.

The school is divided into three locations according to grades: the first two years are located at one campus, the third and fourth at another, etc. For every campus there is a different principal and student guidance counsellor, so the students switch student guidance counsellors every two years. Based on the our fieldwork we can conclude that the campus where the student attends his/her classes is a very influential factor on feelings of support, wellbeing or school belonging.

The educational tracks offered in this school are all situated in the care and service sectors. The school offers general, technical and vocational education in nine different study domains: economics-modern languages, human sciences, informatics, secretariat-languages, creation-fashion, bookkeeping-informatics, trade, office and retail. We emphasize here the existence of similar schools (i.e. with a similar offer) in the direct neighbourhood. The principal mentioned once that the school suffers from this because students feel free to 'shop around for schools' and also, due to suspension or grade retention, become enrolled in school C after a problematic school year/career elsewhere. Early school leaving is mostly seen as a result of problematic school careers, strengthened by the unlimited possibilities of changing schools, suspensions and grade retention. The school staff and principals blame the side-entry of pupils coming from other schools as a very big risk factor for early school leaving.

Description of School intervention BE C1
- Disciplinary, truancy and lateness policies
- Designers: The Flemish Government, the principals and the student counsellors
- Implementers: the student counsellors and teachers
- Recipients: pupils (and sometimes their parents)
- Level of the intervention measure: student-focused
- Frequency: every time a pupil shows bad behaviour, plays truant or arrives late
- Start date and end date: depends on the kind of misbehaviour and the measure
- Partners: In case of truancy: The Pupil Guidance Centre (CLB); In case of bad behaviour: Time-out projects; Mentors from internships; Parents, as much as possible

Teachers and mentors (from the workplace or internship) have regular meetings about the behaviour of the student. In bad behaviour cases, a follow-up contract for the student will be set in order to change the behaviour in a positive way. In this case, the teachers are asked to sign a behavioural card when the student showed good behaviour during class. Every week the pupil is evaluated on his/her behaviour during a weekly meeting of school staff. In case the bad behaviour continues during a follow-up contract, a student can be expelled from school. After being late,

students are no longer allowed to enter the classroom for the first hour. The student will also be punished with a detention to be served at the end of the school day. Absenteeism is limited as much as possible by implementing a very strict policy of justification of absences. First of all, administration staff calls some students early in the morning to make sure they come to school. In case the student doesn't show up, he/she will be called during the school day to ask about his/her absence. We are told by the students that when a pupil is playing truant (and thus has no justification of his/her absence) he/she will automatically score zero on all evaluations planned that day. We also heard from the school staff as well as the students that some class teachers even go to the homes of the students to check whether they are okay and to ask about their absences. The role of a student counsellor was created to pick up this role. The creation of a function for such a student counsellor was because teachers complained about difficulties or problems with students. In order to make it possible for the school management to frame a student counsellor-function, every teacher had to commit to working one hour more (voluntarily) to have the funds released for the employment of these student counsellors.

Description of School intervention BE C2
- Career guidance support
- Designers: CLB, the principals and student counsellor
- Implementers: CLB, teachers and student counsellor
- Recipients: Students who are about to leave school (in some cases their parents)
- Level of the intervention measure: Student-focused
- Frequency: not regular, only when someone is considered to be helped with a conversation
- Start date and end date: depends on the motivation of the student
- Partners: CLB; Parents; Older students who graduated; De Schoolbrug – The School Bridge

In case students are wrongly oriented; become demotivated or wonder about their possibilities on the labour market, the school will try to find a suitable solution for them. It happens that a student will be reoriented and advised to enrol in another study – this has been known to motivate the student anew, stimulating progress. The school staff states that students are often wrongly oriented in a study track that they are not interested in. The school staff responds to this by reorienting students within the walls of the school. Teachers direct students with questions about their educational and/or labour market career to the student counsellor of their campus to have a conversation with. In the sixth year of their vocational track, the ex-students are invited to come to their former school to explain more about their job experiences and to give current students a clearer view of their future possibilities.

Description of School intervention BE C3
- Socio-emotional support by teachers
- Designers: CLB, the principals and student counsellor
- Implementers: CLB, teachers and student counsellor
- Recipients: Every student of the school
- Level of the intervention measure: School wide
- Frequency: always
- Start date and end date: the whole school year
- Partners: The Pupil Guidance Centre (CLB); Time-out projects

Regarding the socio-emotional support of students, all eyes are focused on the class teachers of the students. Rather than being occupied with the disciplinary measures and the career guidance of their pupils, teachers are preliminarily concerned with the socio-emotional wellbeing of the students. This socio-emotional guidance will be offered by the teachers in case a pupil wants to talk with his/her (class) teacher. When there are signals of demotivation to come to school, some teachers will go on home visits in their pupils' homes and will try to have a talk with the student and/or his/her parents. Sometimes also some informal activities are organised after the school hours in order to improve the wellbeing of the students.

BE School D

School D is a public school operated by the governing body of the Flemish government and is located in Antwerp. The neighbourhood of the school is characterized by a socially disadvantaged and ethnically mixed population which is reflected in the school population. As in our survey sample, we see 99% boys and 95% students with an immigration background. The majority of the fathers of the students who participated in Survey A1 are employed (for the mothers this is only 28%) and mostly low educated. Almost 90% of the school population has a delayed school career.

The pupils in general have a positive self-image, report being cognitively involved in their education but show low behavioural compliance and low emotional school engagement. Furthermore, the pupils in general report experiencing low social support; in this regard, the teacher support is still one of the strongest sources of support reported by the all-male student body of School D.

School D provides predominantly industry-oriented courses in the vocational and technical track and within the same school there is also a provision of part-time vocational courses consisting of two days of school-based and three days of work-based learning per week. In the same school building there is also a provision of industry-oriented courses in adult education. School D is collaborating with another campus outside of its neighbourhood that also provides courses in the vocational and technical track, but these courses are oriented to the business and care sectors. In this 'sister school' there is also a provision of reception classes for newly-arrived migrant youngsters (OKAN-classes) from which pupils often stream to the industry oriented courses in their full-time and part-time provision of courses in School D. Only very recently, this sister school planned a reform towards a middle school and will gradually push off their courses in upper secondary education and concentrate only upon providing comprehensive lower secondary education and on the provision of OKAN-classes.

The main problem behind ESL and related risk behaviour is ascribed to pupils changing schools and streaming into the school at a later stage in their school career. The school management and staff believed that these pupils enrolled in their school for negatively motivated reasons (previous expulsion, conflicts with teachers, avoiding reorientation or grade retention) and therefore are at higher risk of displaying disruptive behaviour, weak grades and truancy. For these pupils, the investments in their socio-emotional well-being are deemed to be less effective.

Description of School intervention D1
- Student counselling
- Designers: School management team and the care cell

- Implementers: Pupil counsellors, school's youth coach, teachers and the ASP
- Recipients: Pupils showing at risk behaviour like high truancy and misconduct
- Level of the intervention measure: Student-focussed
- Partners: CLB guidance counsellor; Local contact point for youth at risk (CMP): Time-out projects and youth care services

The school's truancy policy is communicated in each class at the beginning of the school year. For each irregular absence a text message is sent to the parents. Once a pupil has 5 B-codes, a letter is sent to the parents and the pupil is sanctioned. Once a pupil has collected 10 B-codes, a new letter will be sent to the parents, the pupil receives a truancy contract and the absences will be monitored even more closely by the school's care cell. From the level of 10 half-days of truancy, external partners are also involved and a case file is opened with the CLB guidance counsellor. The school's internal care cell partly takes on this pupil's counselling tasks. Once the level of 10 B-codes is reached, it is also reported to the Truancy Cell of the local Contact Point for Youth at Risk (CMP) as persistent truancy. CMP regularly reports back to the schools with Truancy Mirror Reports. The school's truancy report is discussed with a staff member of the Truancy Cell regularly and possible policy actions are proposed based on experiences from other schools.

School D's system of continuous evaluation explicitly differentiates between grades based on performances in class and the sanctioning of misconduct. If the pupil missed a test while playing truant, he gets a zero on the test.

Description of School Intervention D2
- Career guidance support
- Designers: School management team
- Implementers: (newly appointed) career guidance counsellor, the care cell and teachers
- Recipients: All pupils and additional support on demand
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide
- Partners: The CLB guidance counsellor and the local authority (STAM)

The extra GOK-support is very important for the financing of the school's own career guidance counsellor, who is the pupils' contact person when they are seeking/ in need of (study) career advice.

The school takes actions directed to specific stages in the pupils' secondary education. During the first two years, all pupils get the opportunity to get acquainted with each of the study courses provided by the school and have the opportunity to talk with students that already moved through a few years of this study track. They also need to do the "I Like Test" to find out what their interests and ambitions are. If the pupil does not fit the provision of the study courses of the school, the school organises opportunities for these pupils to get acquainted with study courses in other schools (called *'Snooping Internships'*). During the second stage (year 3 and 4) the "I Like Test" is taken again.

At the moment of the enrolment, a long intake interview is held with the pupil and his/her parents about the study choices, to avoid pupils having the wrong expectations about a course of study. After the intake interviews, they are subjected to some standardised tests to see what their proficiency is in basic academic skills. Their abilities and initial orientation will be evaluated within

the first 25 days and this evaluation can be used to re-orientate pupils if needed. Another career guidance initiative of the school is the pilot project called 'pimp your bike' where the pupils in the vocational auto mechanics course do a short internship in the second stage of secondary education to get an idea about what a future job as a mechanic might look like.

The school also actively looks into possibilities for pupils to move ('up') from the vocational to the technical track when this seems to fit better with the pupils' capabilities and interests. To support this change of educational tracks, the school offers these pupils an individualized additional support trajectory. For some pupils, a switch to part-time vocational education (which is provided in the same campus) is advised after deliberations.

Spain (Catalonia)

In Spain the changes in central and autonomous governments over the years have influenced education very much. Since the mid-nineties, four education reforms have been elaborated and passed at the state level, although core education competencies are transferred to regional institutions. The former social-democratic government's focus on comprehensiveness and the preservation of social cohesion is currently being substituted by an emphasis on assessment and early streaming of students towards VET programmes before the end of compulsory education.

In Catalonia, the progressive coalition policies promoting intercultural schemes, and the joint work of schools and local communities has also been restricted since 2010. The absolute majority of the conservative party and the austerity measures implemented to struggle against the economic crisis have resulted in new moves to recentralise as well as the reduction of educational budgets and grants. Up until then, education had large budgets and there was a strong emphasis on retention and prevention policies.

The economic crisis affected business. Youth unemployment is very high despite there being incentives for employers who hire young people and measures to promote youth entrepreneurship. Municipalities have become instrumental in implementing alternative training through agreements with regional educational administration and with labour departments or other agencies.

Young graduates are inspired to emigrate, while a significant number of immigrant and minority youth is affected by higher rates of school dropout and unemployment. However, education is expected to adapt to the needs of the labour market with emphasis on skills for lifelong learning and employability. The on-going reform is expressed in the throwback of flexibility and decentralisation and the emphasis on a model of development and competitiveness in the European knowledge economy.

There are two post-compulsory tracks (academic and professional) and increased curricular diversification in vocational and professional training, provision of initial professional qualification, among others. Vocational training is seen as necessary to overcome the crisis and combat high rates of ESL but currently has the highest dropout rate (Pérez Benavent, 2013). An important emphasis is made in new VET models to acknowledge skills acquired in the workplace or in non-official training and specific courses, with the aim to ease the access to initial and higher official VET stages that, in the long run, can lead to higher education.

ES School A
School A is known as a prestigious public secondary school in comparison to the rest of public schools in the small industrial town where it is located, with a graduation rate over 90% both in compulsory and post-compulsory education and a low repetition rate (around 5%). It does not serve a specific neighbourhood, but attracts students from different areas. It has around 700 students and 60 teachers. Both Spanish and Catalan are used by students (although 44,8% of students declare they speak only Spanish at home) and although families of middle income are not rare (20,8% of parents have attained lower secondary education or below), a growing share of the students' families have been affected by unemployment and other difficult situations resulting from lower income as a consequence of the current recession. The school used to have a welcoming class for recently arrived immigrant students but in the last years this special provision was

removed by the Department of Education due to fewer numbers of international arrivals enrolled in the school, even though 15,8% of students have a foreign immigrant background.

School A has an active Parents' Association that is in charge of raising funds and organizing after-school study groups in collaboration with the management team, among other activities. Although teachers, students and parents interviewed expressed their pride about the school's focused project and acknowledged outcomes, the results of Survey A1 placed School A in the bottom position of perceived aggregate teacher support levels. In our fieldwork, students with academic aspirations and those from middle class families have proved to be more critical in their appreciation of their teachers' availability and readiness to guide them in their further choices.

The school offers 4 lines/5 groups of ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education, ages 12-16; ISCED 2) and 3 branches of Baccalaureate (two year Post-compulsory academic track; ISCED 3). The school offers two of the four standard branches or fields in BAT: one branch in Humanities-Social Sciences and one branch in Experimental Sciences-Technology. In the Post-compulsory track the 1st year is divided into 4 lines/5 groups and the 2nd year is divided into 4 lines/5 groups. School A does not offer VET programmes.

According to all stakeholders, ESL related behaviours are low and there are no measures specifically targeting ESL. However, efforts to prevent ESL (mostly understood as dropping out before completion of compulsory schooling or without completing post-compulsory tracks) are planned within the monitoring and guidance of the students through the activities of the Tutorial Action Plan, according to which a specific teacher is in charge of every class-group and monitors the students' performance and eventual problems or difficulties, holds conferences with parents and coordinates actions addressed to the whole group or individual students along the school-year. This includes *academic orientation,* and the participation in outreach activities organized by a nearby university. Other efforts are implemented through student-focused measures such as *temporary or permanent* students' *groupings* (to reinforce, accelerate or compensate students' learning), assessments by the school's *Diversity Committee* (CAD), *first term Baccalaureate intervention* (to assess real possibilities to complete it successfully and, if necessary, to re-orientate students), *mediation* and emotional support activities, etc.

The main concerns of the Head Teacher and the rest of the management team in School A are caused by the current long period of reduction of the government investment in public education. They directly point at two factors indirectly related to ESL. On the one hand, there is the growing instability of the teaching staff as a threat to long-established good practices, affecting, for instance, the internal coherence in the kind of tutoring and orientation delivered as part of a whole school project that is driven by the students' wellbeing and academic achievement. On the other hand, being in charge of a public school with a very good reputation and increasing partnerships with the nearby university and the Open Secondary School in Catalonia, among other institutions, the school management team expresses frustration in two directions: the increasing share of students with economic and family problems for which they do not have sufficient resources, and the absence of feedback from the education administration related to the positive or negative impact of their continued efforts and educational interventions on their students' later careers.

Description of School intervention ES A1
- Orientation
- Designers (general target group): Department of Education, Catalan government
- Implementers (general target group): Every school
- Recipients (general target group): All ESO (ISCED2) year 4 students; Baccalaureate (ISCED3) students
- Level of the intervention measure (school wide or student-focused): school wide
- Start date and end date: all year round (most inscriptions in further stages start in February)
- Frequency: once a week, more intensely in the second half of the school year
- Partners (school-internal and -external): internal and external

Description of School intervention ES A2
- Diversity Group
- Designers (general target group): School A, based on Diversity Measures described in the general documents of the Catalan Education Law and the results of School A Autonomy Plan
- Implementers (general target group): School A
- Recipients (general target group): students with low levels in most of the subjects who are at risk of not completing compulsory education
- Level of the intervention measure (school wide or student-focused): student-focused
- Start date and end date: all year round
- Frequency: permanent placement
- Partners (school-internal and -external): generally internal; also external in some cases (resources provided by the local council)

ES School B

School B is a public high school located in a working class neighbourhood severely affected by the economic crisis and the cutbacks in public services. There are 64 teachers and circa 800-900 students. According to the Head Teacher, students are from all over the town and the county area, and half of them – mainly from the local area -- are in compulsory secondary education (ESO, ISCED 2) and the post-compulsory academic track (Baccalaureate), and the other half are in intermediate and advanced VET tracks (CFGM and CFGS).

Most of the students in School B are from families with very low income and very low education levels (64,4% of parents have only attained lower secondary education or below). In compulsory education, 47,5% of students have foreign immigrant backgrounds and 3% are Spanish Roma students. According to the principal, when the students start ESO, most of them have not adequately grasped the primary education curriculum contents. There are hardly any students in the school with Catalan as their mother tongue and students mostly speak Spanish among themselves, a language widely employed in the school even though Catalan is the only official language of tuition in Catalonia. The yearly school report 2013-2014 stated that 65% ESO students speak Spanish at home, 14% of them speak Arabic and 3% speak Catalan at home. The results of Survey A1 placed School B in the top level of aggregative teacher support.

The compulsory secondary education stage (ESO, ISCED 2) is divided into two lines and three groups. Apart from the regular comprehensive groups, one group is an *Open class* in years 9 and

10, VET oriented, including internship training; and another one is an *Initial Professional Qualification Programme* (PIF) on Personal Image Consulting and Hairdresser, a vocational/labour market oriented training for students who will not graduate from compulsory education. School B post-compulsory academic tracks (Baccalaureate) include one branch in Humanities-Social Sciences and another branch in Experimental Sciences-Technology.

The school also offers post-compulsory VET programmes. The initial VET CFGM (one or two year cycles, ISCED 3) includes two of the twenty-four standard branches or professional families of VET in Spain (Socio-cultural and Community Services; Personal image), in three specialties: Care of Dependent People, Hairstyling and Cosmetics (dual modality) and Decorative Aesthetics. School B prepares students for the access course to advanced VET programmes (CAS: access course to CFGS) and has two specialties of CFGS (ISCED 5) in the same professional branches as in initial VET programmes: Nursery/Pre-school education (3 groups) and Tourism and Socio-cultural animation (1 group).

According to all stakeholders interviewed and the documents analysed, ESL related behaviours are high. As in the rest of Spanish schools, School B has no information about the students who complete compulsory secondary and leave the school. Graduation rates are low (only 68% of students enrolled complete ISCED 2). Graduation rates in VET programmes are even lower (57,1% in initial professional training and 39,6% in the official VET post-compulsory track). In the academic post-compulsory tracks (Baccalaureate) the graduation rate is also 68% and in the advanced VET tracks it is the highest in the school, 71% of students enrolled complete them. Drop-out rates are, therefore, high, especially in initial professional training programmes (23,5%).

There are no specific measures regarding ESL in School B because the managing team and the teaching staff concentrate on all kinds of strategies to retain students and offer them different paths and programmes to take them to completion of compulsory education, while trying to encourage those students enrolled in post-compulsory tracks not to give up. School B is predominantly seen by all stakeholders (Head Teacher, teaching staff, students and families) as a trustworthy and committed school, with excellent social relations. Students highlight the teachers' positive attitude towards them and acknowledge their pedagogical efforts as well as the school's good climate. Some students declare they perceive their teachers actually care for them, and families have also confirmed this, since it has a visible impact on attendance. The Head Teacher and the other teachers also refer to their students in very positive ways, emphasizing their potential and qualities. In contrast, they are extremely critical with the educational authorities, the continuous scarcity of resources and arbitrary decisions they have to face. An important share of teachers in School B has decided to voluntarily extend their working hours for free to be able to keep reduced numbers of students per class-group. For these reasons, they are only reluctantly taking part in the RESL.eu project.

Description of School intervention ES B1
- Tutoring/Mentoring
- Designers (general target group): Department of Education, school principal and team, tutors teachers through Tutorial Action Plan [Pla d'Acció Tutorial (PAT)]
- Implementers (general target group): Tutor-teachers
- Recipients (general target group): All students of school and their families. Tutors keep a class group meeting with families at the beginning of classes where families must sign the

Educational commitment Agreement. This is a tool to educate families about the parental involvement and home monitoring of academic work in order to control the school attendance with the necessary school supplies.

- Level of the intervention measure (school wide or student-focused): This is a school wide measure. It is offered in all the years of compulsory secondary school ESO, Baccalaureate, PQPI, and vocational education programmes (A weekly hour of tutoring in CFGM is not officially established in the official documents but the school provides it). We analyse the tutoring strategy in PQPI programmes.
- Start date and end date: From first day until last day of the school-year
- Frequency: Formal tutoring with group class is once a week. Informal tutoring can occur at any time and in any space
- Partners (school-internal and -external): School-internal: other members of the teaching staff who are not tutors are expected/required to be involved in this measure on a regular basis

Description of School intervention ES B2

- Open classroom [Aula Oberta] (vocational track in the two lasts years of compulsory education, specially designed to prevent drop-out before graduation)
- Designers (general target group): Department of Education, school principal and coordinating team
- Implementers (general target group): Tutors of the Open classroom group, teachers of Group A and the Social Support Specialist
- Recipients (general target group): There is a dual profile of participants: boys and girls with academic difficulties and others with demotivation and who are starting to show absenteeism during the first cycle of ESO. The teaching team proposes the participants for this measure. Concretely, the teaching team in ESO year 2 proposes candidates and the orientation department and the school management team select the candidates together with the Social Support Specialist.
- Level of the intervention measure (school wide or student-focused): Student-focused
- Start date and end date: All through the school year
- Frequency: Every day
- Partners (school-internal and -external): An external partner is a "Local firm" where students develop the project called Knowledge of Trades, but also different kinds of public institutions –Council institutions- where students can enjoy a period of work practice.

ES School C

School C is a privately owned, state-funded school. It is located in a working class neighbourhood in the periphery of a large former industrial town and area near Barcelona. It was founded at the beginning of the seventies and it has a well-established reputation in the neighbourhood. The school has been expanding and absorbing other privately owned schools; it is now part of a large foundation that includes six other schools scattered in different areas of the town that offer pre-school education and care (ages 0-3 and 3-5), primary education (ages 6 – 12), compulsory secondary education (ages 12 – 16) and different academic and VET tracks of post-compulsory education (over 16). School C offers preschool (3-5), primary and compulsory secondary education.

School C is highly prestigious among working class families of the neighbourhood and a common opinion is that education there is both academically demanding and strongly committed to discipline, while following a personalized monitoring of students. The school demographics in compulsory secondary education in School C include 240 students and 30 teachers. Most of the students are the grandchildren of Spanish-speaking immigrants from other regions of Spain and 14,7% of them are first and second generation foreign immigrants, a much lower rate that the average of other schools in the neighbourhood. Students mostly speak both Catalan and Spanish at home, with 32,8% of them speak only Spanish at home.

The school management team is proud to declare that absenteeism is non-existent and year repetition is very low in School C, as can also be checked in ESO (ISCED 2) 2013-14 data. All the students enrolled in ESO year 1 were promoted, as were 94,6% of year 2 students, 91,1% of year 3 students and 96,3% of year 4 students. These figures are above the average figures in the area and also above the average figures in Catalonia. This success rate is thought to be due to the small school size as well as the close monitoring of students by tutor-teachers and by the Head Teacher and her managing team. According to the results of Survey A.1, the aggregative teacher support level in School C is very high, among the top positions of our sample of schools in this research area. Our team visits, interviews and FGD in the school have confirmed to an important extent the existence of a "close" and "family-like" atmosphere, as different actors have pointed out. The Head Teacher and the teaching team regard this situation as being pro-active and preventive with respect to ESL, and they argue that academic difficulties are dealt with by a student's follow-up, which goes beyond the frame of formal education and consists of an integral education project of students as young people.

There are no specific policies and interventions to address the risk of ESL in School C. However, there are a series of measures that are highlighted by both the Head Teacher and the teaching team as important preventive strategies, such as the way they implement the Tutorial Action Plan (PAT), which is compulsory in all schools in Catalonia (students are placed in a stable class-group with a tutor-teacher of reference who is in charge of monitoring the students' academic development, among other tasks). School C gives a special relevance to *Academic Orientation* within this general Tutorial Action Plan, which is applied individually to every student. The school also has a specific department of educational psychology that focuses on early detection of students at risk of school failure, and a *Diversity Committee* (Comissió d'Atenció a la Diversitat, CAD) that helps detect the students' special needs. Teachers also stress the importance of a *yearly inner assessment* where measures are evaluated in the prevention or reduction of ESL. Finally, other measures to be mentioned would include the different *students' grouping strategies* and the curriculum adaptation programmes that the school applies to students with academic difficulties in the last years of compulsory secondary education.

Description of School intervention ES C1
- Student grouping [Grups flexibles]
- Designers (general target group): School management with the help of CAD (Commission for Diversity composed of management team, psychologists, teachers in reinforcement activities
- Implementers (general target group): Class-group tutor teachers, teachers of Catalan, Spanish, English languages and Maths; educational psychologist

- Recipients (general target group): Students in compulsory secondary education in all four years of ESO
- Level of the intervention measure (school wide or student-focused): student-focused
- Start date and end date: Throughout the school year. The student groups are assessed and re-placed at the end of each semester.
- Frequency: One out of the three hours a week of each core subject is used to split groups, which makes a total of 4 hours per week of splitting in Catalan, Spanish, English and Maths. Some students may be placed in one subject grouping but not in the rest, depending on his/her results.
- Partners (school-internal and -external): An assessment of the student skills and academic results is done to set the group to which the student will be placed. This assessment is done by the Diversity Commission. Teachers speak in terms of "flexible groups" and "splits". The Maths teacher considers it to be an "extraction" of students, as a small group of 5 or 6 students are taken to set a small group. The school has currently changed the way in which students are placed together: they are not divided in homogeneous groupings according to their results but mixing students to work in peer tutoring.

Description of School intervention ES C2
- Tutoring
- Designers (general target group): School management, through the Tutorial Action Plan (PAT). The PAT is a working strategy and one of the foundations of the School Educational Project (PEC)
- Implementers (general target group): Tutoring is a collective task for the whole staff and represented by the teaching team, but it especially involves the tutor of each group. The tutorial action is specified in the Tutorial Action Plan (PAT). The participants in the Tutorial Action Plan have different roles according to their position in relation to the students: class group tutor, individual tutor, school staff, Head Teacher and the Orientation Department. The staff believes that joint and coordinated action is the key to optimize student learning and their comprehensive education as individuals. They consider the tutorial monitoring of students to be very rigorous, which allows for widespread control of all students.
- Recipients (general target group): Parents and students. All students of all ages.
- Level of the intervention measure (school wide or student-focused): This is a school wide measure. It is offered along all ESO courses, Baccalaureate and Vocational tracks.
- Start date and end date: Throughout the whole school year
- Frequency: The group tutorials are held once a week. At least one annual meeting is held with parents, but often, if the situation of any student requires more attention, more meetings are planned. The tutor also has informal individual interviews with each student that can occur at any time. At least (written in the PAT), each tutor must have an individual interview with each student in his/her class group once a semester.
- Partners (school-internal and -external): The individual tutor participates in the weekly meeting of teachers and the team of tutors and also in the tutors' meetings monitoring the Tutorial Action Plan. The intervention thrives in collaboration with the school's orientation Departement, especially in ESO years 3 and 4. The tutor also counts on the support of local EAP (Educational Psychology Advisory Team) or refers to the teacher of the newcomers' class when individual adaptation plans are necessary.

ES School D

School D is a large public high school situated in the centre of a former industrial town near Barcelona, with 1,300 students and 100 teachers. Most of the students speak Catalan-only or Spanish & Catalan at home, with only 9,9% declaring to speak only Spanish at home. Other languages are also spoken, either from European or from non-EU countries. Families' average income level varies widely and only 16,3% of parents have attained lower secondary education. There are 16,1% of students with a foreign immigrant background and the most common countries of origin include Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Romania and Morocco. Moreover, the diversity of the student body is increased due to a municipal measure that aims to distribute children/youth of some marginalized districts among integrated public secondary schools; School D also receives Roma/Gitano students from one particular distant and partly segregated neighbourhood.

In spite of being one of the most attractive secondary schools in the area (with a high demand from several public and private primary schools), Survey A1 results placed School D in the bottom level of aggregative teacher-support.

School D provides a variety of tracks and curriculum: ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education; ISCED 2); a labour market Integration and Training Programme (PFI/PQPI), intended for students at risk of not graduating from ESO; three branches of the academic post-compulsory track Baccalaureate oriented towards tertiary education (ISCED 3); four different specializations of CFGM (Post-compulsory vocational education, intermediate level; ISCED 3) are offered, as well as the preparatory exam to access CFGM for those students who have not graduated from ESO.

School D develops no key measures regarding ESL, as ESL is not identified by stakeholders as a problematic issue. Rather it focuses its efforts on drop-out, particularly in the vocational training courses. These efforts are claimed by the Head Teacher to be acknowledged both by the Department of Education and the local council. In fact, the school has a very high graduation rate from compulsory education (96,8%) and from the post-compulsory education tracks (91,6% in Baccalaureate and 91,2% in advanced VET tracks) and a relatively high graduation rate in initial VET programmes (81,2%) although this level of success is parallel to a very high retention rate (40%). However, the school implements its own versions of several strategies that are common in other public secondary schools, such students' groupings, an Open Classroom, reinforcement classes, etc., all of them addressed to students at risk of not graduating from compulsory education.

The Head Teacher and the teaching staff describe School D as one of the best public schools in the city, where positive human relations and a supportive atmosphere are predominant among students and teachers. The students and families also perceive attention and care, though mainly in the compulsory stages. As was the case in School A, students' perception of teacher support seems to be influenced by students' family background. While working class students who lack school oriented social capital tend to recognise teachers' effort in motivating and guiding them, middle class students also report teachers' lack of interest and capacity of career orientation. The school staff is apparently satisfied with the support the school receives from the public administration, although the effects of austerity measures and the reduction of funding and services provided by Department of Education and the local council are often mentioned.

Description of School intervention ES D1

- Orientation (Orientació)
- Designers (general target group): within the Tutorial Action Plan, every school designs its interventions and practices
- Implementers (general target group): the school
- Recipients (general target group): ESO year 4 (last) and Baccalaureate year 1
- Level of the intervention measure (school wide or student-focused): School wide
- Start date and end date: Throughout the whole school year
- Frequency:
- ESO, two main activities in year 4:
- 1 counselling week. Students have to produce a final report evaluated by the teachers, with implications in the final average mark of the year.
- 1 questionnaire that the students fill in at home. The results of the questionnaire are expected to be the basis to guide the students towards the programmes or tracks that better adapt to their profile.
- Baccalaureate: One classroom group activity in the school year. Individual orientation is also available on request (details on how it works exactly have not been collected yet).
- Partners (school-internal and -external): school internal mostly.

Description of School intervention ES D2

- Open Classroom [Aula Oberta]
- Designers (general target group): Diversity Commission [CAD] composed of teachers.
- Implementers (general target group): Teachers in charge of classes and activities in the Open Classroom are often members of the Diversity Commission
- Recipients (general target group): Student at risk of dropping out, or with social integration difficulties. They are often described as students with significant learning difficulties, low self-esteem and lacking motivation.
- Level of the intervention measure (school wide or student-focused): Student-focused
- Start date and end date: All the year round. Students are usually placed in the Open Classroom in ESO years 3 or 4, but School D starts placement much earlier, even in year 1.
- Frequency: permanent or semi-permanent placement to carry out adapted activities
- Partners (school-internal and -external): internal and external partners

The Netherlands

Tackling the problem of pupils leaving school early is one of the priorities of the Dutch government, using the 'Drive to Reduce Drop-out Rates' approach. The Dutch target is to have no more than 25,000 new early school leavers[26] each year by 2016. The Dutch approach has already led to a reduction in the number of early school leavers from 71 000 in 2001 to 25 969 in 2013-2014[27]. Monitoring has become a crucial part of Dutch ESL policy and this tool seems to have led to better interpretation of early signalling in the pupils' process of dropping out. As a result, the Netherlands has the best early school leaving registration tools in Europe since 2006, where each student leaving education without a basic qualification is kept on record.

The Dutch ESL-programme has been successful in implementing various measures at national level including the care structure at schools where social services are established within the school setting. This integrative approach involving close collaboration between schools, youth care and youth departments of the municipality has been acknowledged for the early signalling and efficient redirection to relevant services. It also facilitates the transfer of information about youngsters between different professionals.

As ESL is not seen as a much of a problem at secondary schools in the Netherlands, these schools don't have special ESL measures. However, in order to receive a so-called basic qualification at the vocational level, pupils need to transfer from pre-vocational education (VMBO) to senior vocational education (MBO) schools. MBO (in Dutch middelbaar beroepsonderwijs) is the abbreviation for secondary Vocational Education and Training (VET) in the Netherlands. This Dutch VET provides several programmes for young people from the age of 16 to develop their skills and increase their employability. Therefore, two VMBO schools and two MBO schools[28] are taken into account for this evaluation.

At the VMBO schools (school A and B), school wide measures will be evaluated in order to prevent youngsters from leaving school early, while at MBO schools (school C and D), the focus will be on specific pupil-based measures aiming at reducing early school leaving. Nevertheless, all four participating schools have selected parts of their care structures as a good measure for tackling ESL; School A will focus on their care structure in general; school B will focus on their (non) school-related activities; school C on their specific Time-Out measure; and school D on their specific Classroom as Workshop.

NL School A

School A is part of a comprehensive public secondary education school that offers pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO[29]), Senior General Secondary Education (HAVO) and pre-university (VWO). This comprehensive school has approximately 2,000 students spread over three buildings in and around the city of Rotterdam. In this framework, we will focus on one school building that

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[26] In the Netherlands, an early school leaver is a young person between 12 and 23 years of age who does not attend school and who has not achieved a basic qualification (i.e. a senior general secondary, pre-university, or level-2 secondary vocational diploma).

[27] Source: http://www.vsvverkenner.nl/landelijk (visited on June 16, 2015)

[28] The selected MBO schools are officially part of the regional training centre.

[29] The VMBO leaving certificate does not qualify as a basic qualification. Pupils who are not yet 18 upon finishing VMBO are required by law to continue their education until they reach the age of 18 or attain a basic qualification

has 600 students and is located in Rotterdam. It only offers VMBO on the two lowest levels (out of the four levels), namely: (1) Basic vocational programme: a mix between general education and practical, on-the-job experience; (2) Middle-management vocational programme: tailored to pupils aiming at further middle vocational training. Within these two levels, pupils at this school may choose the pathways of sports services and security; business and administration; or care & welfare. Moreover, at these two levels a learning support programme (LWOO) is offered, which is intended for pupils with educational or behavioural problems. Specialized teachers teach these pupils in small classes. The school operates with a maximum number of pupils for this special programme. This is an open school appreciating the differences between pupils/families. The majority of the pupils from this vocational location have an ethnic minority background. The other higher pathways HAVO and VWO have predominantly native Dutch students, but are located in another building. The shows medium-level aggregative teacher support (see quartiles on teacher support in school list MU).

The truancy policy of school A is just as the national policy for secondary schools, namely that when a pupil misses a class, the absence must be doubly compensated. If truancy occurs regularly, the attendant officer will be notified. In all the school documents provided by the school regarding their school policies, early school leaving or school dropout are not mentioned. However, the school policies deal with ESL related problems via school based intervention measures such as tutoring, a learning support programme (LWOO), Remedial teaching for pupils with deficiencies in literacy, numeracy, dyslexia, and dyscalculia, tutoring (focus on subject content); school codes of good behaviour and the bullying prevention protocol; the school's codes of good behaviour and the bullying prevention protocol will be (thoroughly) explained to pupils. Each pupil must sign the bullying prevention protocol. Additionally, the school has in-house expertise and collaborates with institutions to support pupils: counsellor, school social worker, psychologist, school nurse, Youth Care Agency, police officer, school attendance officer, care coordinators, and remedial teachers.

Description of School intervention NL A1
- Care structure
- Designers: Dutch government
- Implementers: the schools
- Recipients: pupils in need
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide
- Frequency: individually dependent on special needs
- Start date and end date: individually dependent
- Partners: both school-internal and -external depending on the needs of the pupils

In the Netherlands, every year approximately 30 000 young people in high school are at risk of leaving school early because of particular problems in the home situation, behavioural problems or specific learning disabilities. These youngsters are located at the intersection of education, labour market and youth care, and need extra care and attention in order to be prepared for the increasing demands of society, education and the labour market. Since August 1, 2014 there is a duty of care Law implemented by the Dutch government. This entails that all secondary schools are responsible for their pupils in terms of providing them the support they need in *or* outside their school. This school has set up a so-called care structure along these lines, as a school wide measure to prevent early school leaving.

NL School B

School B is part of a larger public Christian school community that has five locations in and around the area of Rotterdam. This comprehensive school offers pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO[30]), Senior General Secondary Education (HAVO) and pre-university (VWO). School B is a separate location in one of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. This school location offers the theoretical path within pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO /mavo). Pupils at this school may choose the pathways of sports, economics, or care & welfare.

The majority of the pupils at this location have a Turkish background. However, the school is a practicing Christian school, and the entire school staff is screened to be practicing Christians. Due to their practicing-Christian identity the school has a rather tight approach. It is known for its strict educational policies for both pupils and parents.

There are several school-related activities aiming to keep all pupils on board. Besides the extra lessons available for all pupils after regular school, another well-work system, according to the school, is their absentee approach, where the concierge calls all pupils and their parents in case of an absence from class. Like the national policy for secondary schools, school B truancy policy is when a pupil misses a class, the absence must be doubly compensated by the student. If truancy occurs regularly the attendant officer will be notified.

Description of School intervention NL B1
- Support for (non) school-related activities
- Designers: Dutch national government
- Implementers: the schools
- Recipients: pupils in need
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide yet young people receive it individually if they would like to make use of the measure
- Frequency: individually dependent
- Start date and end date: individually dependent
- Partners: both school-internal and –external, depending on the needs of the pupils

Following the example of school A, school B also selected their school- and non-school-related activities as school wide measures to prevent early school leaving. School B is providing extra support for school-related activities such as extra lessons and career advice, and non-school related activities via a care team.

NL School C

School C is part of one of the two large public regional training centres for VET in Rotterdam that has over 25,000 students divided over fifty locations and 120 training programmes. For School C we have focused on one school location, and the following curriculum: VET in Retail level 2 of the school-based education (in Dutch: BOL), whereby training within a company for two days per week

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[30] The VMBO leaving certificate does not qualify as a basic qualification. Pupils who are not yet 18 upon finishing VMBO are required by law to continue their education until they reach the age of 18 or attain a basic qualification (at least a secondary vocational education (MBO) level 2 certificate.

is part of the course. The duration of this curriculum is two years. This degree leads to a basic qualification. School C is located in one of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. This location is a large school with many curriculums, and has an open approach towards it multicultural student body. Also the school staff has various cultural backgrounds.

Aggregative teacher support levels (see quartiles on teacher support in school list MU): medium.

In the Netherlands, ESL occurs most often at VET schools. School C has two main intervention measures targeted at students at risk of ESL, namely Time In and Time Out. In general, at school C every student has a mentor to discuss his or her study career issues on a regular basis. When a student needs more guidance and support in consultation a student may go to the Time In-class in addition his/her regular curriculum, and when a student shows undesirable and/or aggressive behaviour at school, the Time Out class will be the final measure. If Time Out class does not improve their behaviour, they will be removed from school C.

At school C, students' presence is required at all educational activities (including the training within a company) and is recorded in an online system. School C absence protocol is as follow: "Any absence without notice falls under unauthorized absence. Unauthorized absence is considered a violation of the Education Agreement. With repeated unauthorized absences the absence protocol will be initiated. For underage students, their parents will be informed about their absence as well. The school is required to report deficiencies to the school attendance officer. Frequent absenteeism may result in termination of the programme."

Description of School intervention NL C1
- Time Out class
- Designers: management of school C with the curriculum VET in Retail level 2
- Implementers: school staff
- Recipients: students with behaviour problems
- Level of the intervention measure: student-focused
- Frequency: full-time for eight weeks minimum
- Start date and end date: individually dependent with a minimum of eight weeks fulltime
- Partners: school-internal

Time Out class is a rather extreme measure, whereby students with behaviour problems will be taken out of their regular class and placed in a special class far from the original school location. This class is (on purpose) hosted in an old and dilapidated building. The Time Out class emerged in 2010 when the school wanted to accommodate students who were not performing well, and were disrupting their regular classes. Throughout the year around 25 to 30 students have been allocated to the Time Out class, with a maximum of 15 students at once. The minimum length in this measure is eight weeks fulltime, which can be extended depending on their behaviour and agreement. Time Out class is funded through extra finances meant for special needs (in Dutch, plus middelen) and also through the schools' own educational budget.

NL School D

School D is also part of one of the two public regional training centres for VET in Rotterdam that has over 25,000 students divided over fifty locations and 120 training programmes. For School D

we have focused on one school location, and the following curriculum: VET in Care and Welfare Assistance level 2 of the school-based education (in Dutch: BOL), whereby training within a company for two to three days per week is part of the course. The duration of this curriculum is a maximum of two years. The degree leads to a basic qualification.

School D is located in one of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. This location is a large school with many curriculums, and has an open approach towards its multicultural student body. The school staff also has various cultural backgrounds.

Aggregative teacher support levels (see quartiles on teacher support in school list MU): medium.

As most ESL occurs at VET schools in the Netherlands, school D likewise has several student-based intervention measures targeted at students at risk of ESL, namely: mentor, career coach, school social worker, attendance officer and remedial teachers. At school D, students' presence is required at all educational activities (including the training within a company) and is recorded in an online system. School D absence protocol is statutory and thus similar to school C.

Description of School intervention NL D1
- Classroom as Workshop
- Designers: management of school D with the curriculum VET in Care and Welfare Assistance level 2
- Implementers: staff members
- Recipients: students in need of extra support put together in one class starting in February (instead of the regular start in September)
- Level of the intervention measure: student-focused
- Frequency: throughout the curriculum
- Start date and end date: February until the end of the curriculum (normally after two years)
- Partners: in-school collaboration with external partners

Classroom as Workshop is the measure that is analysed in this report for school D. It is a class with students that all have a lot of individual problems. The designers have chosen for a whole class, as they find the groups process important. This class receives extra counselling, support with both school- and non-school-related activities and with stimulating their motivation. This support is given by one counsellor who gets in touch with social workers, with the city council and helps students with applications for subsides. The aim of this measure is that regular teachers are able to focus more on teaching, instead of assisting students with their personal issues.

The fact that in Poland the rate of early school leaving is lower than the EU target (about 5.5%) may be the reason why there are no national policies deliberately directed at ESL prevention: it may not be perceived as an issue on a legislative level. The low ESL rate in Poland may be a result of many processes directly related to the educational system, as well as due to deep social, cultural and demographic change since 1989, such as: a long cycle of compulsory education, prevalence of upper secondary education, and compulsory education until the age of 18 (Dale 2010; GHK 2005, 2011). Experts participating in RESL.eu interviews also mention high educational aspirations of students and their families, the financing of education (educational subsidies), high youth unemployment rate, the labour market situation, and very little selectivity within the educational system.

In Poland, one of the main problems is the lack of dropout monitoring at the level of compulsory education – the data on the subject are fragmentary and uncertain: they are estimates rather than perfect measures (Marchlik and Tomaszewska-Pękała 2013). However, with the ongoing reform of the Education Information System (*System Informacji Oświatowej – SIO*), it will be possible to track information about individual students' educational careers from 2017 onwards.

Polish educational and social policy makers face a challenge connected with the fact the youth unemployment (persons younger than 25 years of age) is higher than the EU average (since 2008 it was steadily increasing until 2013, when it was 27.3%, in 2014 the percentage was lower: 23.9%).

Far-reaching changes have been made in the field of vocational education, aiming towards a stronger link between vocational education and the labour market, which may be achieved through more flexible forms of training and validating professional qualifications, as well as increasing the availability of vocational training through the introduction of schools into the lifelong education system and a new form of education – a qualification course (Federowicz and Sitek 2011: 178). These curricular reforms, at least in their assumptions, may have a positive effect on the prevention and reduction of the problem of ESL in Poland. The division of professions into qualifications, changes in vocational examinations and the introduction of courses allowing adults to gain new qualifications are a second chance opportunity for young people to return to education and obtain vocational qualifications (Borkowska 2013: 55).

PL School A

PL School A is a public school, located in a district of Warsaw which once was the site of factories and suburban farms. Near the school there were many factories connected to e.g. the processing of crude oil. The school was also connected to one of the factories. This part of the district is cut off from the rest of the district by a busy street and a railway line. It is one the most degraded areas of the city and has long been faced with socio-economic problems, characterized by a low level of activity of entrepreneurs that live in the area, and various developmental barriers. Other problems of the inhabitants of the district are: poverty, high unemployment rate, alcohol problems and lack of prospects for the future. Some students live in the neighbourhood, but many students commute from nearby towns and villages.

PL School A is a complex of vocational schools, consisting of a technical upper secondary school and a basic vocational school. The school provides two types of educational tracks: basic vocational and technical upper secondary (general-vocational). Apart from that, in the same building there is also a general upper secondary school for adults and a postsecondary school. The profiles offered by the technical school are: hairdressing technician, construction technician. In the basic vocational school there are multi-vocational classes, and students of this school may get a vocational qualification in the following professions: automotive mechanic, automotive electrician, cook, salesman, car mechanic, confectioner, electrician, car painter, sanitation and sanitary installations fitter, photographer, baker, carpenter.

As far as the level of truancy is concerned, the level reported by students in Survey A1 is 84.6%. The school principal says that in the basic vocational school, the percentage of notorious truants reaches up to 15-20% in some classes. It is much lower in the technical upper secondary school. As far as grade retention is concerned, around 30% of the respondents have repeated at least one grade in the past. The principal estimated that 50% of students from basic vocational track do not finish the school on time: they are not promoted, repeat a grade or change school. Probably quite a significant percentage is no longer in the system.

PL School A does not have any specific policies regarding ESL, nor does it have any special intervention measures specifically designed to target ESL. However, keeping in mind that the school is in an area with a particularly high unemployment rate and the students in general have poor educational results, the school staff has designed the "Zawodowiec" programme (which is funded from the EU funds -European Social Fund-) to help students find their way on the labour market. The programme involves many additional activities which aim at developing soft skills, vocational skills, and skills in core curriculum subjects: Polish and maths, which are also obligatory subjects in Matura exams. In that programme, the students have an opportunity to gain vocational experience, thanks to paid apprenticeships in the summer. PL School A has an effective detection and intervention strategy in case of individual problems and needs of students. Thanks to focusing on creating positive school climate and relatively young teaching staff team, the perceived teacher support in the school is high and there are good student-teacher relations. PL School A has a TOP aggregative teacher support level, as reported by the students in Survey A1. The number of students in the school is 281 [girls: 135; boys: 146].

Description of School intervention PL A1
- **"Zawodowiec"** ("Professional") programme
- Designers: Deputy Principal together with school staff
- Implementers: the city of Warsaw (as the authority responsible for the school) and the school; school staff, specialists employed for the purpose of the programme and employers participating in the programme
- Recipients: vocational and technical school students, grade 2 and 3
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide
- Frequency: regular classes, taking place once during the week, plus apprenticeships in the summer
- Start date and end date: November 2013 – September 2015
- Partners: school staff, external instructors and specialists employed for the purpose of the programme and employers participating in the programme

The "Zawodowiec" ("Professional") programme was designed by the Deputy Principal, together with the teachers, who designed it because they felt there was such a need, because in their school there are many young people who do not finish school, leave education early and have poor educational results. However, the school or project documents do not mention ESL. This is a school wide measure, for all the students of both the basic vocational and technical upper secondary tracks. The general aims of the programme are raising the vocational qualifications of the students, equipping students with various abilities, and the activities have been designed specifically for the needs of the students who are in the school. The students participating in the programme may improve their professional qualifications by attending monthly (paid) apprenticeships with employers and attend various extra-curricular classes (e.g. English in the workplace, maths and Polish, raising funds for their own business, self-presentation, cv writing, the latest trends in hairstyling (hairdressing track) or a two-step course in AutoCAD (construction and installation fitting track)). The project is co-financed by the European Union under the European Social Fund (85% from the European Social Fund, 2.25% from national funds, 12.75% of own contribution in cash).

Description of School intervention PL A2
- Effective detection and intervention
- Designers: School pedagogical counsellors and teachers
- Implementers: School pedagogical counsellors and teachers
- Recipients: all students in the school, especially those who need additional support
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide, as it is available for everyone, but student-focused the moment a problem is detected and s/he needs intervention from the school
- Frequency: ad hoc
- Start date and end date: all the time
- Partners: school pedagogical counsellors, psychologists from the psychological-pedagogical counselling centre, teachers (esp. class tutors), career counsellor, training managers, social services, parents' council

The implementation of this measure depends on the availability of specialists employed at school (e.g. pedagogical counsellors), effective cooperation with specialists and institutions outside of school (e.g. pedagogical and psychological counselling centres, social welfare institutions) and financial resources (if there are any). The school itself guarantees supporting students in case of individual problems and needs, and thanks to the positive school climate, good student-teacher relations, students are aware that they can turn to the school staff (especially class tutors) with their individual problems. In the cases of family or personal problems, educational backlog, or special educational needs, teachers offer the students their support or the students themselves seek the staff's support. Regarding financial support, the school helps students about whom they know they are in a particularly difficult financial situation and have taken up work. The intervention addresses the issues the students themselves experience and voice. However, there seems to be a mismatch between the real needs of students and the financial resources the school has at their disposal, because the school does not have any own funds for such purposes, and the minimum amount of money per person in a family entitling a student to a social benefit at school is dramatically low.

PL School B

PL School B is a public school, located in one of the formerly industrial districts of Warsaw. After the 1990s, the closing down of many factories resulted in a decrease in the number of jobs. Nowadays, since many of the factories are closed, the biggest problem affecting local residents is poverty. Other problems of the area are risk of social exclusion of the poorest residents, lack of social integration, lack of sense of security. The school's pupils come from various backgrounds and live in the eastern districts of Warsaw and nearby towns. PL School B has a BOTTOM aggregative teacher support level, as reported by the students in Survey A1. The number of students in the school is 339 (girls: 209; boys: 130).

PL School B is a general upper secondary school. It was set up in 1991 and provides a general track of education. Additionally, fairly recently, the school introduced new, innovative, professionally-oriented profiles after 'market research': military, medical emergency services or European profiles. According to school staff, there was a need to introduce such profiles because the school wanted to attract new students. Although the principal and the staff are aware of the ESL phenomenon, they do not say that the purpose of new profiles is to prevent ESL. As far as leaving school early is concerned, the school's principal says that 10 per cent of all the students during the three-year cycle leave PL School B and go to another school – either a school for adults or a different general upper secondary school with lower requirements. Regarding grade retention, around 10.6% of the Survey A1 respondents have repeated at least one grade in the past. PL School B does not favour situations in which students repeat a grade at their school, because they feel that if they did not manage to help the student pass to the next grade, they have exhausted the measures and ways available to them and they often suggest the student changes schools – to a different upper secondary school with lower expectations, to a centre for continuing education, or to a school for adults. Every year in October, the school monitors the career paths of their graduates, but only of those who graduated in June of the same year. Regarding truancy, there is strict attendance control, for which teachers are responsible. An electronic register facilitates teacher-parent contact and parents are provided with information on the grades and attendance of their children. In addition, teachers keep in telephone contact with parents. If this brings no results, there are statutory penalties – the teacher's warning, later, the principal's warning, if it brings no results after a time, later there is a reprimand from the principal with a threat of expulsion.

PL School B does not have any specific policy regarding ESL, nor does it have any special intervention measures specifically designed to target ESL. However, they do want to create a school that is safe, student-friendly and supportive in the processes of their emotional, intellectual and physical development. The school wants to prepare students for active participation in social and cultural life by teaching openness and acceptance of different traditions, cultures and religions. There are many activities at PL School B designed to develop students' individual interests, so that they would like to spend time at school (e.g. theatre, sports club, all sorts of additional activities). The principal and teachers are aware that they have to adjust the teaching methods and requirements to the individual needs of the students to keep the students in school. Therefore they have a very individualized approach to students. Moreover, the school is supposed to be a place where the students learn but also where they develop in many ways.

Description of School intervention PL B1

- Innovative educational profiles (military classes, emergency medical services, European-oriented)
- Designers: school principal, teacher's board
- Implementers: school staff (teachers), the local government also assigned some funds for additional activities for the military classes; partners who organise activities for students: Riflemen's Association, Military Police Training Centre and the National Defence Academy, Higher School of Tourism and Foreign Languages, First Aid and Rescue Centre
- Recipients: School B students
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide
- Frequency: all the time
- Start date and end date: since the school year 2013-2014
- Partners: teachers, class tutors, military instructors, Riflemen's Association, Military Police Training Centre and the National Defence Academy, Higher School of Tourism and Foreign Languages, First Aid and Rescue Centre

Since the beginning of school year 2014/2015, School B has been receiving more money assigned for the extra military lessons for three military classes, four hours per week. The implementation of the tasks and activities connected with the military profile is possible thanks to cooperation with Riflemen's Association. The school also cooperates with a Military Police Training Centre and the National Defence Academy. Thanks to this cooperation, students can practice on the training facilities of the military unit, but also use special equipment used by the Polish Army. Education for safety in this class is supplemented with lifesaving classes or military manoeuvres with the participation of instructors who (also) work with soldiers. Similarly, students from other profiles have courses and activities conducted by instructors from other institutions: College of Tourism and Foreign Languages, First Aid and Rescue Centre.

Description of School intervention PL B2

- Individualization of teaching
- Designers: principal, teachers, pedagogical counsellor
- Implementers: school staff (pedagogical counsellor and teachers)
- Recipients: all students
- Level of the intervention measure: student-focused
- Frequency: ad-hoc
- Start date and end date: all the time
- Partners: teachers, specialists in the therapeutic centres

The principal and teachers know that that to keep the students in education, they need to adjust the teaching methods and requirements to the individual needs of the students, and that is why they have a very individualized approach to students. When necessary, the school signs individual contracts with students who are in danger of educational exclusion and need to be strongly motivated to continue education, in which the students are obliged to organise their own schedule of studying and to take exams. The individualization of teaching and contracts with students focus on developing individual interests and are intended to motivate the students to continue education and to teach the students consistence and responsibility for making decisions regarding their education.

PL School C

PL School C is a public school located in a district which was once the site of many factories and suburban farms. Near the school there were many factories, e.g. connected to the automotive industry. This part of the district is a typically residential area, with many blocks of flats from the 1970–1990s period. The biggest and most common problems affecting local residents are poverty, unemployment, disability, helplessness regarding care and educational issues; and social pathologies. There are also high levels of crime.

PL School C is a general upper secondary school with inclusive classes. The school was set up in 1997. The educational track provided by the school is a general one, but some classes are less numerous, as it is a school of inclusive character. There are also some classes which are sports-oriented, thanks to a sports club which is located in the area, and some of the basketball trainings take place in the school.

As far as truancy is concerned, the school has a system of monitoring attendance and class tutors act quickly in cases of truancy by contacting the parents directly. The staff observes that there is a problem of truancy, and say that absenteeism is more common in non-sports oriented classes, as students from sports classes are more disciplined.

The deputy principal, whom we asked about repeating grades, assesses that the grade retention rate at PL School C is about 5–6%. This is an index calculated at the end of the year, after all retake exams, which take place in August. So if a student changed school before the end of the year, he is not included in it. The Deputy Principal notes, however, that most of the students from PL School C pass retake exams and students repeating a grade often come to them from other schools. As a result, in each class there are a few students with grade repetition experience at some stage of education.

Regarding ESL, cases of dropping out of school occur sporadically, due to fortuitous events or when a young person has to take up a job. The deputy principal's experience shows that those leaving school because of learning difficulties are the least numerous. Pupils with learning difficulties either repeat a grade or move to other schools. Dropping out of the system frequently affects the students who are already of age and who have to go to work, but then they usually take up training in a different mode (evening school, centres for continuing education). The deputy principal estimates that currently at her school, out of 140 students studying in six classes (consisting of 20–25 people), about 2–3 students of each class leave school each year. Students from integration classes do not belong to this category – more often these are students from the mainstream classes.

The school does not have any specific policy regarding ESL, nor does it have any special intervention measures specifically designed to target ESL. However, the inclusive nature of the school, the positive school climate and good teacher-student relations seem to work perfectly in ESL prevention. The school has so-called integration classes for pupils with and without special educational needs. Each integration class may consist of not more than 20 students, including five students with special educational needs and/or other disabilities. Each of these classes has two supporting pedagogical counsellors working with them on a permanent basis.

When asked about the number of students requiring additional learning support, the DP discussed the principles of the integration classes and identified the most common disabilities with which the students come to their school (physical disability, Asperger syndrome, autism, conjugate disorders). These students are subject to intensive support; they are guaranteed rehabilitation activities carried out by a support pedagogical counsellor (10 hours a week per class). Integration class currently has five hours more than that each week. (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 7 February 2012 (Dz.U. 2012 poz. 204) provides each student with a disability two hours per week of rehabilitation classes, which allows for 10 hours per integration class)

PL School C has a TOP aggregative teacher support level, as reported by the students in Survey A1. Total number of students in PL School is 140 (girls: 65; boys: 75).

Description of School intervention PL C1
- Integrated/inclusive nature of the school
- Designers: principal, government
- Implementers: principal, teachers, pedagogical counsellors
- Recipients: all pupils
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide
- Frequency: all the time
- Start date and end date: since the beginning of the school, 1997
- Partners: support pedagogical counsellors, psychologist, psychological and pedagogical counselling centre

The implementation of the measure is regulated by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 21 May 2001 (*Dz.U. 2001 nr 61 poz. 624*). Integration schools/classes have a special learning environment created – the classes are less numerous (maximum 15 to 20 students, including three to five students with disabilities or special educational needs) and they are provided with psychological-pedagogical support and additional therapeutic activities for students with special educational needs (individual and group activities), which are guaranteed and financed by the local government. In contrast, a group of students from the mainstream classes may take part in compensation classes and interest clubs organized by the school. Although the measure is addressed particularly to students from integration classes, other students can also benefit from additional psychological-pedagogical and specialist support.

Description of School intervention PL C2
- Individualisation of requirements and educational support
- Designers: school staff
- Implementers: school staff
- Recipients: all pupils
- Level of the intervention measure: student-focused
- Frequency: when needed
- Start date and end date: since the beginning of the school
- Partners: support pedagogical counsellors, psychologist, psychological and pedagogical counselling centre

School C is a student-friendly school – students are treated as subjects and supported. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation between teachers, parents and students. All students are positively motivated to develop, and students with disabilities have the conditions tailored to their needs. The school offers a wide range of extracurricular activities and specialist activities (speech therapy, social therapy, correction) and supports the individual development of each student. From the beginning of each school year, the teachers observe the students carefully and they quickly notice those who need pedagogical support. Students are offered additional and compensation classes in various subjects. Apart from that, the school provides each student with learning support, and students with a disability can benefit from two hours per week of revalidation classes carried out by a support pedagogical counsellor (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 7 February 2012; Dz.U. 2012 poz. 204).

PL School D

PL School D is a public school, located in one of the oldest districts of Warsaw. After WW2, the district became an industrial zone, the main production centre of Warsaw. At the moment, when many of the factories are closed, the biggest and most common problems affecting local residents are poverty and economic disadvantage of the family. Other problems of local families are: disability, unemployment, educational failure, social pathologies.

PL School D is a technical upper secondary school. The school was set up in 1933. In its current form it has existed since 1992. The school provides general-vocational tracks. The profiles offered by the school are: hotel management technician, tourist services technician, economist technician.

As for truancy, 91.7% of the respondents from PL School D admitted having played truant in the previous year. The deputy principal informed the researchers that the truancy rate is 25–30%. One of the respondents of the Staff FGD says that the attendance at school is 60%. The staff say the students often come to school late or choose the lessons they attend, so there is the issue of poor attendance rather than "real truancy".

As far as grade retention is concerned, only 2.7% of the respondents have repeated at least one grade in the past. There are cases of repeating a grade at the school, but they are not very numerous – according to the deputy principal, it is 5%.

There are also cases of pregnancies among female students, but the school does not consider it a problem – the students usually return to school after giving birth. Such students always receive support from the school.

The school does not have any specific policy regarding ESL, nor does it have any special intervention measures specifically designed to target ESL. However, the school does have an unofficial prevention programme for students at risk of receiving a failing grade and repeating a year – teachers let the students retake tests a number of times until they get a better grade. The teachers are available during breaks or after classes to meet the students and explain difficult issues or let students do a retake. Similarly with Matura exams – students do many mock exams in order to be prepared for the proper exam.

There is a procedure for dealing with truancy: first, the class tutor informs the pedagogical counsellor, but even before, class tutors call the parents and talk to them. Then, if that brings no

results, there are talks with the class tutor, the pedagogical counsellor, student – pedagogical counsellor, parents – class tutor, finally ending with an admonition. Every class tutor has regular contact with parents.

PL School D has a MIDDLE aggregative teacher support level, as reported by the students in Survey A1. The number of students in the school is 354 (girls: 250; boys: 114).

Description of School intervention PL D1
- Encouraging students to actively participate in the school life and social life
- Designers: principal, teachers
- Implementers: school staff
- Recipients: all students in the school
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide
- Frequency: all the time
- Start date and end date: all the time
- Partners: labour market institutions, employers, charities, NGOs, local cultural centre

The staff encourage the students to participate in school events and voluntary work and the students participate in them according to their individual choices. In addition to the professional and intellectual aspects of education provided by the school, the school's objectives are to prevent social passivity, to teach ways to actively look for work and develop interests, also for the future, to develop the students' ability to cope in society, also outside of school, to increase the students' social, emotional, and aesthetic awareness, to develop the students' social sensitivity and sense of responsibility for themselves and others. The school cooperates with many local actors: the local cultural centre, scouts organisation, charities, labour market institutions, employers, etc.

Description of School intervention PL D2
- Active educational teams – individual intervention and support programmes
- Designers: school staff
- Implementers: school staff
- Recipients: all students
- Level of the intervention measure: student focused
- Frequency: ad hoc
- Start date and end date: all the time
- Partners: school pedagogical counsellor, class tutors, psychological and pedagogical counselling centre, social services, specialist support centre

The school provides the students with psychological and educational assistance in cooperation with educational-vocational counselling centres and other institutions; provides support and pedagogical assistance to the pupils and their parents (or guardians) in need. The school also offers mediation in case of family problems, psychological and financial support or directs students to seek specialist support in psychological and pedagogical counselling centres. Each individual case is often considered at the educational team meetings for each class. All teachers teaching a given class gather there and all the individual cases are discussed, especially the problematic ones. There are two forms of educational teams: an ad hoc team for an individual student if there is

such a need (consisting of teachers who teach a given student) and the educational team for the whole school (consisting of all the class tutors).

Identified as a political issue in the early 2000s in Portugal, early school leaving (ESL) follows on the heels of year repetition and school failure, especially among the most disadvantaged groups and young men. Currently, the focus on ESL is not explicit in policy initiatives albeit transversal to the preambles and texts of many. It remains a social and educational concern in spite of the country managing to reduce its rate. From 44.2% in 2001, the rate of early leaving from education and training (former ESL) continued its improvement in 2014, falling to 17.4%, 1.5% less when compared to 2013, and 3.1% less when compared to 2012. The focus on raising the qualifications of the population in line with the EU guidelines, and responding to the Portuguese moderate results in international comparative assessments such as PISA has had positive effects on reducing ESL.

Since 2011, the worldwide financial crisis has had strong impact on Portugal: political instability, economic predicament, volatility of labour, dilapidation of life quality, impoverishment of the population, and strong growth of emigration. In the educational reform, the diversification of the educational offer under the rhetoric of greater freedom of choice and pedagogical autonomy for schools may be seen as a reduction of the government's accountability. The focus on evaluation through tests and examinations (including at the primary level), teachers and schools' assessment, etc., have led to the strengthening of certain disciplines in the national curriculum: Maths, Portuguese and Sciences, to the detriment of education for citizenship and the arts. This includes compensatory measures such as the introduction of an additional support period at the end of the 4th and 6th grades for students who failed national exams in Portuguese and Maths, as well as the opportunity to repeat the exam.

Budgetary reductions have had increasing impact on education and training, jeopardizing the universality and quality of public education, including higher education and scientific research. Neo-meritocratic and conservative policies have emphasised countable results rather than the learning process. Vocational education is presented as a 'solution' for low performers in mainstream education. This became clear in the introduction: i) of an early vocational programme, piloted in 2012, and extended since then to provide work skills to students as early as 13 years old; and ii) in Centres for Qualification and Vocational Education that replaced the existing ones. In what regards the prevention of ESL through the protection of children's rights, there is a nationwide network of Commissions for the Protection of at-risk children and youth-composed municipalities, social security services, NGOs and teachers.

It is worth noticing that between 2000 and 2010, growing investment in education in the vein of modernisation, Europeanization and technological innovation reshaped the field of education and paved the way for the concern about ESL. A milestone in education (in 2009) with a view to educational effectiveness and the consolidation of public schooling was the extension of compulsory school up to grade 12, or the age of 18 years. It came hand in hand with other political measures to reduce dropout and increase young people's skills and qualifications. Meaningful examples are: i) financial support to low-income families to postpone children's entry into the labour market; ii) improvement and expansion of upper secondary and post-secondary vocational education and training, providing skills for the labour market, by partnerships among schools, enterprises and other stakeholders; iii) New Opportunities Programme for adult training and youth education, including certification and recognition of competencies; iv) National Reading Plan to respond to the high levels of illiteracy; v) modernisation of school facilities; vi) Technological Plan

for Education; and vii) introduction of free of charge activities of curriculum enrichment in primary school (English, music, physical education); viii) implementation of the Second Chance School for young people (aged 16-25) for work experience and life skills. Other examples are the offer of prevention, intervention and compensation programmes: i) The Educational Territories of Priority Intervention (TEIP) to support schools located in socio-culturally and economically disadvantaged areas, a political practice currently in its third generation; ii) the Alternative Curricular Pathways; iii) the Integrated Programme of Education and Training (PIEF); iv) the More School Success supporting school projects and pedagogic diversification.

PT School A

School A is one delegation of a national cooperative in urban central Porto. It is a privately managed organization with a contract of autonomy with the State, which implies some financial support. It is composed of six schools (each with its principal and pedagogical board) that offer vocational secondary education. In particular, School A offers technical professional courses: Communication, Marketing, Public Relations and Advertising; Computer Equipment Management; Information Systems Management and Programming; and Banking and Insurance, and the possibility to pursue higher education. The school's crucial focus is in improving the transition to the labour market, and to that end, it develops strong relations with enterprises where students take their internships. The school is regularly equipped with labs and ICT rooms. Classrooms are small and it lacks space for students' conviviality.

Classes consist of about 30 students (School Annual Plan of Activities, 2014-15). In 2013/2014, the school had a total of 135 male students and 84 female students of whom 11 males and 6 females gave up school. The average age of new students is 16; about 32% have already attended a different secondary school, 32.2% never failed any school year and 39% failed once. 72% of the new students live in Porto metropolitan area; the remaining ones are from neighbouring counties. In general, students are from low middle and working 'classes'. A significant number of families have economic difficulties, unemployment and low education. One third of the students are in levels 1 and 2 of the Social Security system (annual household income up to € 2934.54, and between 2934.55 and 5869.08, respectively).

The school's policy for tackling ESL is translated into a set of measures and projects: extra time with the Educational Class Advisor (OET); investment in a new pedagogic model based on differentiation and cooperative learning; periodic reflection among teachers; implementation of the Council of Class Delegates and of the Students' Union to promote democratic participation; increasing parental engagement in the school consulting body, as well as partnerships with enterprises and public institutions; provision of permanent services of psychological and vocational guidance (Serviço de Psicologia e Orientação - SPO) and services for professional and social integration (Serviço de Inserção Socioprofissional - SIP).

Description of School intervention PT A1
- Orientador Educativo da Turma (OET) Educational Class Advisor (or advisory period)
- Designers: principal with the management board of the institution
- Implementers: teachers
- Recipients: students
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide

- Frequency: once a week / 90minutes
- Start date and end date: September 2014 – ongoing
- Partners: not applicable (N/A)

The OET is defined by the school as a warning system measure to prevent school failure and dropping out. It consists of an extra time called Assemblies, dedicated to discussing with students issues regarding absenteeism and bad behaviour. According to the school principal, these discussions take into account everybody's opinions "democratically" and intend to establish commitments on everyone's part in order to find possible solutions. The role of OET is also defined in the School's Rules and Procedures with the following functions:

- Providing educational/pedagogical support
- Developing the curriculum management, namely the class' curriculum project
- Conceiving, monitoring and supporting activities that ensure students' entry into the labour market
- Tracing partnerships and cooperation commitments
- Gathering suggestions and ideas from students
- Identifying and solving class and individual problems of underachievement and bad behaviour
- Identifying early problems (truancy, learning disabilities) and taking measures along with parents
- Coordinating and conceiving "recovery plans" such as the replacement of hours of training

The advisors have a weekly time on the schedule to be with pupils but they are also available to meet them at other time if needed. They are responsible for establishing the connections among the pupils, the teachers, school and parents. Therefore, the implementation of this measure also contributes to bringing parents to the school, increasing families' engagement.

Description of School intervention PT A2
- Pedagogical Differentiation and Cooperative Learning (DPAC)
- Designers: the principal with the management board of the institution
- Implementers: teachers
- Recipients: students
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide intervention
- Frequency: not applicable (N/A)
- Start date and end date: September 2013 – ongoing
- Partners: not applicable (N/A)

Following on the efforts of previous years, schools' education project 2014-2017 has invested in a new pedagogic model to tackle ESL that encompasses: pedagogic differentiation and cooperative learning as a basic daily practice that respects the specificity of each school subject and makes the best of teachers' diverse experience. This measure focuses on the individualisation of training paths through the implementation of "recovery strategies", such as the provision of curriculum modules that pupils did not complete and extra hours of tutorial and training. This measure is introduced to students and parents at the beginning of the school year.

PT School B

School B belongs to a school cluster, from prep to year 12 and is in an area of educational priority intervention covered by the national programme TEIP. As a result, the fight against truancy and early school leaving is central to the school policy. School B provides scientific mainstream courses and technical professional courses in Electronics, Automation and Computing; Electricity; Tourism; Restaurant (kitchen / pastry); Restaurant (restaurant / bar); Sport Management Support; Child Support; as well as one Education and Training Course (two years - Waiter).

According to the General Inspectorate of Education and Culture (IGEC) in 2013/2014, the school cluster had a total of 2284 students, from which 200 were attending upper secondary education, 14 were in a technological course and 136 in vocational education; 99% students had Portuguese nationality. Most of them were "white" and there was a significant number of students of Roma origin; 53% of the students were financially supported by SASE (school social support). The percentage of parents of secondary school students with higher education is 2%, an indicator of an unfavourable socio-economic and cultural context that reduces academic student motivation and maintains high levels of school failure. High rates of truancy and students' exclusion due to it, early school leaving, grade retention, especially at the secondary level, still prevail (IGEC, 2013). No quantitative data was made available.

The school policy to prevent ESL is based on increased the provision of teaching support and the development of independent learning processes. A lot of preventive measures have been implemented: exam preparation; students' ombudsman and tutorial sessions (the educational support occurs in an independent learning space under the supervision of teachers). Alongside these measures, an investment in sports and artistic projects have been carried out to motivate students and to encourage learning: Orff Orchestra, pottery activities and partnerships with the National Theatre.

These mechanisms result from a strong network among teachers, class directors, tutors, technical and pedagogical services and parents that is promoted by a policy of proximity, through the school blog, the school newspaper and its webpage.

The school was the object of requalification and modernization in various aspects including ICT and it therefore has very good facilities. There seems to be a friendly environment of communication among the director, teachers and students. In survey A1, teacher support level was placed in the MIDDLE quartile.

Description of School intervention PT B1
- Exam preparation
- Designers: Principal and teachers
- Implementers: Teachers
- Recipients: All cycles, priority being given to the 12th grade scientific courses and subsequently to 11th and 10th graders
- Level of the intervention measure: School wide
- Frequency: 45 or 90 minutes per week (at upper secondary level)
- Start date and end date: 2013 - ongoing
- Partners: Parents

There is a space of preparation for exams, which encompasses all cycles, including the 12th grade. Each teacher has 45 or 90 minutes on a weekly basis. It is not mandatory, so students and parents can choose to attend it or not. The student takes a document home informing parents they have this free support service. It is entirely sponsored by the Ministry. According to the Principal, "diversified teaching and learning strategies are used according to the difficulties experienced by students".

Description of School intervention PT B2
- Students' ombudsman (or ombudsman's team)
- Designers: principal
- Implementers: teachers, principal, older students
- Recipients: new students, low performers, students in need of 'protection'
- Level of the intervention measure: student-focused
- Frequency: no fixed periodicity, at student request or when the need for support is identified by others
- Start date and end date: September 2013 - ongoing
- Partners: N/A

The students' ombudsman is a pioneering project aimed at making students talk about their problems (learning, emotional, behavioural). Its purpose is to put older students working with the newly arrived ones under teachers' supervision. This is a good support in order to have better results and solve everyday problems. Within the Students' ombudsman office, students have the opportunity to make decisions and be engaged in the planning of activities. The ombudsman's team and the parents' association work together.

PT School C

School C is an upper secondary/vocational school that provides artistic specialization, equivalent to grade 12, preparing students both for entry into the labour market and also for pursuing studies in the university. Located in an urban centre, it provides a set of artistic courses that differ from the ones in mainstream schools: Audiovisual Communication, Communication Design, Product Design, and Artistic Production; as well as more technical courses, such as: 2D and 3D Animation, Graphic Arts, Fashion Design, Jewellery, Furniture Design; and adult training (Educational Project – EP 2014-17). It is widely recognised, and is nationally known for its 'alternative' artistic character. The students are known for their cultural diversity and come from several towns in the Northwest region, some of them quite distant from the main city. Students are also diverse in terms of their SES, as the school is attended by both middle and working class students. In 2013/2014, the school had a total of 900 students. Different from what happens in the technical and artistic component, students show difficulties in achieving the proposed objectives in the general and specific training subjects, as expressed by the results both of the internal and the external evaluation.

When ESL occurs, it is mostly related to financial problems. Although they are not referred to in the axes of concern and action of the school, several measures are being implemented: the Social Cohesion Group (lead by teachers and former parents); the School Social Action (under the national plan); the early detection of risk and dropout by means of a policy of proximity; and more psychological support.

Since the school recently moved to a new location, it has very good facilities, including ICT, labs and fully equipped rooms allocated for specific crafts. The school environment is very friendly, there are several areas for students' conviviality, art work including students' work in display, cultural and leisure adverts and job offers. Students can be heard laughing and talking in the school corridors and in the open areas surrounding the school building.

The school has invested in engaging parents, staff and teachers in learning and sharing, and in partnering with the organizations of civil society, the local power and higher education institutions to advance proposal, ideas and plans to revitalize the knowledge society by re-dimensioning culture and the economy (EP 2014-2017).

Description of School intervention PT C1
- Social Cohesion Group
- Designers: teachers and former parents
- Implementers: teachers and former parents
- Recipients: students in financial need (currently 18 students)
- Level of the intervention measure: student-focused
- Frequency: no fixed periodicity, support is provided on a case-by-case basis
- Start date and end date: from September 2011 ongoing
- Partners: Internal partners - students union, other students

The Social Cohesion Group consists in a fundraising group of teachers and parents who work as volunteers to find support and financial resources for students who are at risk of dropping out. It also collects data about students signalled by psychologists or other school services as suspect, in order to supervise if they are using that support fraudulently.

PT School D

The school is part of a large school cluster that includes seven schools (prep to year 12) and a music academy. The cluster is known for the education of blind students and the offer of two specialized units for students with learning difficulties. Even if this school is in an area that is not particularly affected by poverty or degradation of the quality of life of the population, is part of an educational priority intervention area due to the characteristics of some of the schools of the cluster. In 2013/2014, the school cluster population was 2065, from which 397 students were in lower secondary school, 485 were in scientific courses (19 classes) of mainstream secondary education, 62 in the evening recurrent education (two classes), 38 in the Integrated Education and Training Programme (PIEF) (two classes) and 15 in a vocational programme. The cluster also offers "Portuguese for All" with 178 students (five classes) and an adult training course under the project "Major Arc", with 20 students. From the total of students enrolled, 4% were not Portuguese and 56.8% did not benefit from economic aid of the school social action. School D also privileges environmental projects related to health, arts and sports and volunteering groups.

In 2012/2013 the rates of school dropout were 0.9% in lower secondary education and 1.4% in upper secondary education. The school's policy to tackle misbehaviour has been carried out in partnership with the families. Since 2013 the school cluster has developed some preventive early detection and action strategies regarding ESL as expressed in the four axes of the school's yearly plan 2013-2014 (educational success; meaningful learning; school climate and relation with the

community). The school started to invest in welcoming students: students' support office, room "Despertar Saberes" (knowledge awareness) and the Educational Resource Centre for self-reflection and conflict mediation. The school focus is on the scientific track and education success. Measures in upper secondary include: credit hours (learning support in exam disciplines), vocational orientation and re-orientation of low-performing students in scientific courses, reshuffling of teachers to provide extra support, tutorial, support office, psychological support, school for parents and school sports. It also has the More School Achievement programmes (extra training in Portuguese and Mathematics); Educational Integration, and Entrepreneurs for Social Integration.

The school is well equipped (labs, ICT, classrooms) and has some space for students' conviviality. The environment is very organized and astringent.

In survey A1, teacher support level was placed in the BOTTOM quartile.

Description of School intervention PT D1
- Credit hours
- Designers: Principal and teachers
- Implementers: Teachers
- Recipients: All the 12th graders in Mathematics and Portuguese and the 11th graders in Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Geology
- Level of the intervention measure: School wide
- Frequency: one hour per week, per subject
- Start date and end date: 2014 - ongoing
- Partners: N/A

The Credit hours have been a prize for educational efficiency from the Ministry of Education. This school is provided with 20 hours of credit to use in 12th grade Mathematics and Portuguese because they are keys to pursue education, in 11th grade (Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Geology) and also in 9th grade. These lessons aim at improving students' performance.

Sweden

The Swedish educational system has undergone a vast number of reformations since the early 1990s, when there was an ideological turn in school politics. Both the overarching structure of the school system as well as the underlying logic governing it came to change during this period: the formerly state-governed school system became municipalised, free school choice was implemented and education was opened up for private actors (Lindblad, 2004). As of today, many reforms have followed, with the latest one being the new curriculum for upper secondary- and compulsory school, Lgr11, agreed upon 2011. However, recent studies have shown that the reformations of the 1990s have led to pupils' socio-economic position being more prominent for their relative success in school (SOU 2014:5). Furthermore, segregation has been reinforced by the reforms and children with lower class parents and those with immigration backgrounds have become even more vulnerable to the faults of the educational system (OECD, 2015). While the free school choice reform sought increased mobility amongst all pupils, it seems only to have had that effect on children from affluent families. Pupils from families with a low socio-economic position are instead less likely to change schools, preferring to stay in the areas where they currently live (Östh, Andersson, & Malmberg, 2013).

In Sweden, pupils commonly start school in Year 1 at age 7 and continue until Year 9, aged 16. All pupils follow the same curriculum and there is no tracking. Grades appear the first time in Year 6 and access to upper secondary education is dependent on the pupils' grades in year 9. The municipalities are to distribute resources to schools and to provide upper secondary school for people under the age of 20. A part of the upper secondary schools are owned by private actors but are nonetheless paid by public funding. Formal and non-formal municipal adult education is available at community colleges (county councils, trade unions and non- profit organizations).

In contrast to other European countries, early school leaving has only recently gained political attention in Sweden. The reform in 2011 was an answer to increasing drop-out rates in the vocational tracks of upper secondary education and a call for a clearer distinction between vocational and academic tracks. The political priority was to strengthen the link between education and the labour market, upper secondary education being seen as the minimum competence level for a steady position in it. The focus was smoothing the school-to-work transition, facilitating youngsters' contacts with employers. Today's education and training have more occupational and practical training to increase secondary school students' skills to be able to get a job. However, there has not yet been any clear results that show the reform to have been successful in its aim. Since the vocational programmes no longer give access to higher education, a tendency for students to avoid vocational education can instead be seen. Supplementary courses may still allow one to meet the admission criteria, but are not initially included in the programmes.

SE School A

School A is an upper secondary school located in an old, urban industrial area in a major city in region.

The school has around 750 pupils in eight educational tracks; social science, natural science, business studies, art, music and drama programme, business and administration, introductory programmes as well as two programmes directed towards pupils with learning or intellectual

disabilities. There is a high awareness of the concerns surrounding early school leaving and the school has a variety of measures directed towards tackling the problem:

- Warning- and acting plan when a student displays a risk of dropping out, has a high truancy rate or is failing many courses.
- Review of the different problematic areas three times a year.
- Introductory programmes for youths with insufficient grades.

Two of the introductory programmes have been the focus for the ESL-project, namely the preparatory programme (Prep) and the individual alternative programme (IA)[31]. The education provided within these programmes is tailored to fit the educational needs of each pupil. The students studying at School A come from all over the county, some of them travelling well over an hour to get there. Mainly, the youths enrolled at the school come from families with a low socio-economic position, living in the outskirts of Stockholm and/or having an experience of immigration within the family. According to the school personnel, youths with social-, psychological- and/or neuropsychiatric issues have in recent years become a larger part of the pupil composition.

School A regularly administers surveys to obtain knowledge about how the students perceive their school environment. In the most recent survey, 65% of the students agree that they get the support that they need from the teachers, 34% say that the schoolwork is engaging and creates a desire to learn, and 54% would recommend the school to others. The overall attendance-rate amongst the students is 77,1%. Absence is higher amongst the pupils in the introductory programmes. The attendance in IA is 52% while in Prep it is 69,2%. Most of the youths that stay at home are also enrolled in these programmes. The number of stay-at-home-students was 24 in the autumn term, out of which 9 were enrolled in the introductory programmes. All and all, 103 pupils of a total of 750 dropped out during the autumn semester. Forty-six of these students left the school during the first weeks. Eleven of the remaining 57 students were enrolled in one of the introductory programmes when they left the school. In school A, there are 10,9 pupils per teacher. In the introductory programmes, this number is significantly lower.

Description of School intervention SE A1

Introductory programmes are nationwide measures and can be found at most of the Swedish upper secondary schools, however, it is up to the specific school to design their own programme the way they see fitting. As in all schools, the principal is responsible for the design and format of IA and Prep and therefore is the official designer of the programmes. Nevertheless, it is the teachers and the deputy head that decide over the practicalities in the programmes such as which courses should be taught, how the schedules should be arranged, as well as which students should be accepted to which programme. The dividing line between designers and implementers is therefore not easily drawn.

The youths who are eligible for the two programmes are in general pupils who lack sufficient grades to apply for upper secondary education. There is nonetheless a difference in intake between IA and Prep; the pupils in IA usually lack all, most or many of the grades from secondary school, while the youths enrolled in Prep lack one or more of the grades needed to be accepted into upper secondary school.

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[31] See "Description of measures" p. 6 for information on and differences between IA and Prep.

The intervention is student-focused and an individual educational plan is made for each pupil. The education is on a secondary school level and being taught in a very flexible manner, allowing for different levels of previous knowledge. Prep lasts for one year while IA accepts pupils for an educational length of one up to three years.

SE School B

School B is a municipal compulsory school located in a suburban area in a small municipality in the region.

While the surrounding residential houses were constructed in the 1970s, the school building was built only a few years back due to the total destruction of the former school in an arson attack. Today, the school has approximately 600 pupils studying in grades from pre-school up to the last year of secondary school (9th grade). School B also has preparatory classes for migrant pupils who have recently arrived to Sweden and need to learn the language. The municipality has one of the country's highest percentages of inhabitants with an immigrant background – around 50% of the population is either born abroad or has both parents born abroad (SCB, 2014).

According to Statistics Sweden (SCB), the area where the school is situated has one of the lowest rates of gainfully employed in the region – approximately 45%. A low number can also be found in terms of educational levels: while 35% of the inhabitants have an educational level below upper secondary school, only 15 to 20% have studied at the university level. School documents discussing the challenges for school B point out the low educational levels amongst parents as a factor the school has to compensate for. There is a high awareness of the problems connected to early school leaving and school B has several measures implemented to tackle the issue. Amongst many others, the following are noteworthy:

A specially built school building to create a safe and open environment;

Cooperation with the National Agency for Education (Skolverket) with a focus on language- and cognitive training for the teachers

A study and career focus in every school level to make visible different educational and employment paths the pupils can take.

School B has nevertheless struggled with low grades and early school leaving for many years. The pupils merit qualifications have been decreasing steadily since the late 1990s and out of the pupils who finished 9th grade in 2014, only 44,9% had reached the targets in every school subject. Sixty-five per cent of the students were eligible for vocational programmes in upper secondary school, while approximately 50% of the students could apply for higher education preparatory programmes. According to the school's student guidance counsellor, approximately 1/3 of the pupils in 9th grade continue to a language introductory programme at an upper secondary school. There are 12,7 pupils per teacher at school B, which is close to the national average of 12,1 (Skolverket, 2014).

Description of School intervention SE B1

When the new school building was constructed in 2011, it was modelled on principles of openness and free space. One of the most significant characteristics was that almost no walls were built

between classrooms, eating spaces and teacher lounges. After complaints, walls were erected during the summer of 2014. The school building still has small rooms for individual work and classrooms with windows in all directions so as to create a feeling of openness and visibility. There are three different school canteens and the food is prepared by chefs in the school. There is an open space in the middle of the building where a cafeteria and a climbing wall is positioned. The school has well-equipped classrooms for lessons in music and Home economics, but lacks a school library. The outside area also has a variety of activities for the pupils, with swings, a sandbox, vines for swinging and equipment for football and basketball. The designers of the school building as an intervention were from the municipality, and intended to provide "architectural guidance for an open learning environment". The recipients were all people attending the school, i.e. teachers, students, school staff.

Description of School intervention SE B2

Tutorials for Learning was a project initiated by the National Agency for Education (Skolverket) in which school B participated, amongst nine other schools nationwide. The project was targeting schools with low school achievements and the recipients were both school staff as well as pupils enrolled at the school, hence a school wide intervention. Starting in the autumn term of 2012, the project lasted for five terms and ended in December 2014. The focus of the project was language- and cognitive training and improved cooperation between different functions within the school. To achieve that, the teachers in grades 7-9 got special tutoring by educational coaches who participated in the lessons and gave advice. One of the educational coaches was employed part-time at the school while the others came on an ad hoc basis. An extended communication with parents as well as extra homework aid for the pupils were also a part of the project.

Description of School intervention SE B3

Since school started again after summer break in August 2014, the pupils in 9th grade have been divided into groups instead of classes. The former three classes have been turned into one big class of approximately 60 pupils. This class is seldom gathered together. Instead, the pupils are divided into groups of approximately fifteen pupils, each of which is assigned a mentor amongst the teachers to whom the pupils should turn to when needed. Twice a month, all the pupils come together as a big group/class to discuss issues that concern them; the groups otherwise meet once or twice a week with their mentor. The different school subjects are also divided in a similar manner, with smaller groups of pupils. The groups are, however, not static; rather, the pupil composition changes depending on the needs of the pupils, and in some cases there is a possibility for the pupils to decide themselves which groups they wish to belong to. Designers of this new format are first and foremost the principal but the mentors for grade 9 and the student advice counsellor have also participated in the design to a certain extent.

Description of School intervention SE B4

Three afternoons a week a group of university students comes to the school to help the pupils with their homework. They are contracted by Läxhjälpen, an external foundation which is financed by local commercial actors and offers extra educational help to pupils who need it. The designers are in this case this foundation, while the implementers are the university students. The pupils who come to these sessions have to write a contract with the foundation, where they promise to come

to the Homework Aid the hours they are assigned. The pupils eligible are the ones with low grades. On Tuesdays the Homework Aid is open for all pupils, but on Monday and Wednesdays it's only the pupils who have the lowest grades that are allowed to come. The intervention is on a student-based level and the school is rather a partner than a designer/implementer of the intervention.

Description of School intervention SE B5

The designer of this measure is school B's student counsellor, together with the principal. The implementers are the teachers, and the recipients are all of the school's pupils. The main focus of this intervention is to make the pupils aware of the different alternatives there are in terms of occupational and educational choice for them in the future. From pre-school up to the 9th grade, questions regarding different occupations and educational paths are incorporated into the education in order to encourage the pupils to think outside already known boundaries. SYV-tråden has been a part of the schools education since 2012 and is a school wide intervention.

SE School C

In the municipality where this compulsory school is located, the population is relatively low educated: in 2013 only 26% of the inhabitants had studied at university level. According to Statistics Sweden (SCB), the most common employment for people living within the municipality was in 2012 either in the health care sector (women) or within the construction sector (men). The same year, the average income in the municipality was 273 000 SEK, i.e. 9000 SEK below the national income average. Thus, in the municipality the majority of the inhabitants have a lower socioeconomic status. This is also reflected among the pupils in the school – the majority of these pupils have a lower socioeconomic background. The statistics also show that only 43,8% of the pupils enrolled in 2014 had parents who had studied at university level.

In this school, the aggregative teacher support levels are quite high: there are 10,7 pupils per teacher. The school is a compulsory school that goes from preschool up to the last year of secondary school, the 9th grade. According to statistics for this school, published by The National Agency for Education (Skolverket), in 2014, only 53,1% of the pupils in 9th grade passed all subjects. Only 65,6% were eligible for theoretical upper secondary programmes, while 71,9% of the pupils were eligible for vocational upper secondary programmes. Only 65,6% passed the core subject math, 65,6% passed the core subject English and 71,9% passed the core subject Swedish. In comparison to other schools in the county, school C has the lowest results of all in terms of school performance.

The school policy documents mention a number of measures to improve the students' school achievements and ensure that all students leave school with full eligibility for upper secondary school studies. One of these measures is the "special pedagogic teachers" and "student health team", who have all been hired with the explicit aim of supporting the students. Other measures regard absenteeism/truancy. The school policy is to strive to identify warning signals for absenteeism/truancy and present relevant measures; the documents emphasize that a case of absenteeism should be handled promptly. The different kinds of measures that can be implemented are increased support measures in different school subjects; increased cooperation between the student and individual teachers; participation in a smaller teaching group; advice and

support from the student health team; increased cooperation between the school and the home; home-schooling or an adjusted study course.

Description of School intervention SE C1
- Special pedagogic study group
- Designers: The school's principal and teachers
- Implementers: The teachers
- Recipients: Pupils
- Level of the intervention measure: Student-focused
- Frequency: Always
- Start date and end date: No start date or end date
- Partners: No partners

It is regulated in the Swedish school law that special support for students should be offered at compulsory schools. In this respect, the special pedagogic support measure at this specific school is a national measure, however, the way the support measures are designed and implemented varies amongst different schools and is therefore always locally specific. Thus, the design of the special pedagogic study group at this specific school is locally specific. The designers are the school board and the principal, while the implementers are the teachers. The measure is student-focused and directed towards specific pupils.

SE School D

In the municipality where this upper secondary school is located, the population is relatively low educated: in 2013 only 26% of the inhabitants had studied at university level. According to Statistics Sweden (SCB), the most common employment for people living within the municipality was in 2012 either in the health care sector (women) or within the construction sector (men). The same year, the average income in the municipality was 273 000 SEK, i.e. 9000 SEK below the national income average. Thus, in the municipality the majority of the inhabitants have a lower socioeconomic status. This is also reflected among the pupils in the school – the majority of these pupils have a lower socioeconomic background.

The school provides the following education tracks: the construction programme, the automotive and transport programme, the electricity and energy programme, the health and social care programme, the engineering programme, the trade and administration programme, the economics programme, the natural science programme, the social science programme and the upper secondary special school. The school also provides five different introductory programmes with different orientations and purposes. They all share the same overarching aim to make it possible for the participating pupils to proceed to a national upper secondary programme or, in some cases, other forms of education. The aggregative teacher support levels vary between the school's different programmes – in some tracks the ratio of pupils to teacher are relatively high while in others it is relatively low.

According to statistics, in 2014 the number of students who graduated from practical vocational programmes with a complete qualification was 84,3% and among students graduating from service- and care oriented vocational programmes the number was 73,3%. Among students

enrolled in theoretical programmes the number was 87,8%. Thus the number of students who leave school without a complete qualification varies between different programmes.

The school's policy documents present a number of measures to ensure that all students leave school with complete grades. In particular, school policy documents strive to identify warning signals for absenteeism/truancy and present relevant measures, such as: increased cooperation between the student and individual teachers, class switching, participation in a smaller teaching group, an adjusted study course, advice and support from the student health team, increased cooperation between the school and the home, and home-schooling.

Description of School intervention SE D1
- The introductory programme Individual alternative (IA)
- Designers: The school's principal and teachers
- Implementers: The teachers
- Recipients: Pupils
- Level of the intervention measure: Student-focused
- Partners: Parents as much as possible

It is regulated in the Swedish school law that introductory programmes should be offered at upper secondary schools and IA is one of those introductory programmes. The programme is therefore a national measure but each school is responsible for the design and locally specific implementation. This makes the school board and principal at school D the designers of the programme. The implementers are the teachers, the youth coach and the student advice counsellor. Recipients are pupils lacking eligibility for upper secondary school and the programme has an individual student focus.

Current UK policy discourse interprets the role of education primarily from a labour market perspective and tends to define problematic and/or vulnerable youth predominantly in terms of their labour market outcomes. Therefore, youth policy agenda focuses on young people Not in Education, Employment or Training, and not on Early School Leavers. Reducing ESL has not been the explicit aim of education reforms, and the term ESL is hardly mentioned in the policy discourse. However, this issue is not being neglected; rather, it is articulated using different terminology.

The accepted benchmark of satisfactory achievement in England is attaining at least 5 GCSEs[32] with grades A*-C including English and Mathematics - the equivalent of ISCED 3. The GSCE exams are usually taken at age 16. Until a few years ago, compulsory education ended at this point, although young people could stay in education for longer.

Raising the participation age to 17 in 2013, then to 18 in 2015 can be interpreted as the main policy initiative designed to tackle ESL in England. Participation does not have to be in full-time education; alternative options include work-based learning including apprenticeships, and part-time education for those employed, self-employed or volunteering. The government has also introduced a new initiative to raise attainment specifically in maths and English whereby students who fail to achieve at least a grade C for GCSE will be required to continue studying these subjects till 18, even after they progress onto the next stage of study. In addition, there seems to be a genuine push to equip young people with in-demand skills through reforming the apprenticeship programme. However, the pressure on schools to raise attainment at GSCE and A-Level[33] appears to reinforce the privileging of academic qualifications.

In England, children and young people from low income families[34] are eligible for a free school meal (FSM) each day in all state-funded schools. Schools also receive per head Pupil Premium funding for each student who has been eligible for FSM at any point in the last 6 years and/or are has been in care.

During the 2000s, spending on education in the UK saw the fastest growth for decades. After 2010 however, the most severe cuts to the education budget for over half the century were announced. The 16-19 age group is one of the most affected: the very successful Education Maintenance Allowance35 scheme was cancelled; spending on further education and youth services - including career guidance - reduced.

The rationale behind the current educational policies seems to be that there is a direct correlation between educational achievement and employment outcomes; young people are regarded as 'intelligent customers' who will choose the best possible option from the educational offers available to them.

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[32] General Certificate of Secondary Education
[33] General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
[34] Eligibility for FSM is based on the type of benefits the child or young person, their parents or carers are receiving.
[35] The EMA used to be paid directly to young people between 16-19 to help them continue their studies, depending on their financial situation

UK School A

School A is a comprehensive Academy Converter secondary school. Its governing body is comprised of local community representatives, parent and staff governors, including the school Head Teacher.

Currently, there are 756 students in the school, of which 55.7% are male. The school is ethnically very diverse: only 10.2% of students are of White British ethnic origin. Pupils speak over 70 different languages and 71.8% of them have a first language other than English. The school's ethnic composition is more diverse than its neighbourhood: in the 2011 Census, 43.3% of the local population identified as White British at ward level, and 45.5% at local authority level. 37.7% of pupils are eligible for free school meals (FSM), more than double the English national average, which is 16.2% for state-funded secondary schools. The proportion of students with special education needs (SEN) is well above average at 6.1%.

Aggregative teacher support level was towards the top range.

The school has a diverse and personalised curriculum according to students' individual needs. In many subjects, students are taught in ability groups. In Years 7 to 11 (age 11-15), all students study a number of core subjects. From Year 9, they also have two elected subjects each year – these are mixed age groups. Sixth form (age 16-18, considered to be the academic route) students have access to traditional A level (academic) courses such as English, mathematics, sciences, history, geography, languages, art and design; along with BTEC (vocational) courses such as Business Studies, ICT, sport, drama, music technology, etc. From these, they choose four subjects in Y11. Students are expected to complete work-related learning. They have access to structured work experience, volunteering schemes and trips within the UK and abroad. The school also offers Functional skills courses - in literacy and numeracy – to students who arrive into the British education system with little prior formal education. A few students follow an alternative education path: they have a placement in Further Education colleges for one to two days a week, to study vocational courses currently not provided by the school, such as hairdressing, beauty, construction, etc.

Attendance is currently in the top 20% of all secondary schools in England. The school significantly reduced the number of exclusions. Instead, students with behavioural issues are supported by the school's multi-agency inclusion team. The school is regularly among the 1% of secondary schools in the country whose students make the most progress.

In School A, comprehensive data is collected on students' academic achievement, attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Therefore under-achievement, non-attendance or decline in any of these measures is promptly flagged, so it can be addressed by referring the students to the relevant support measures. The school offers revision classes and focused study support; help with English language; academic mentoring – both by staff and students, homework club and one-on-one sessions for extra help with academic work. They work closely with external agencies that provide relevant services such as speech and language therapy, educational psychology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, nurses and social workers. As part of the careers programme, all students have one-on-one sessions with a career-advisor, which parents may also attend. A wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities are also available.

Description of School intervention UK A1

- Inclusion team
- Designers: members of the Inclusion team, including the Assistant Head Teacher for Inclusion, Inclusion Officers, Educational Welfare officer, Attendance Officer, Pastoral Support Officers, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, School Child Psychotherapist Counsellor, etc.
- Implementers: school staff members
- Recipients: all students in the school
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide
- Frequency: continuous monitoring and support for students; weekly team meetings for the Inclusion team?
- Start and end date: present structures put in place about three years ago, however, the Inclusion team has been working together for much longer time
- Partners: Catch 22 (programmes for potential NEETS); CAMS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health); migrant community organisations; external careers advisors; speech and language therapists; educational psychologist; physiotherapist; occupational therapists; nurses and social workers; family focus practitioners from local authority, etc.

The school has had an Inclusion Team for a long time. However, according to the Assistant Head Teacher for Inclusion, the current structures and protocols have been introduced in the last three years after his appointment, influenced by his previous experiences in another school. They have an Inclusion Panel Meeting every week. The Inclusion Team includes the Assistant Head for Inclusion, Inclusion Officers, Educational Welfare officer, Attendance Officer, Pastoral Support Officers, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, School Child Psychotherapist Counsellor, etc. – so as to include all staff members from the school who have (added) responsibility for student wellbeing and support measures. Representatives from relevant outside agencies can also take part, such as family focus practitioners from the local authority, nurses, etc. This is a school wide measure: all staff members have the responsibility to report promptly any cases of concern, discuss them with designated senior child protection staff and refer them to the Inclusion team. There is a robust referral system – called the Referral Pathway: if there is a concern about a student - behavioural, attendance and punctuality related, underachievement, family issues, health, mental health, etc., staff members will make a referral to the inclusion team through email or by completing the Staff Referral Form. Then the panel will discuss it at the next weekly meeting, and a personalised support will be decided upon and put in place, based on the individual needs of the specific student, for example, informing parents about the specific issue, extra mentoring sessions, attending the homework club, sessions with the child psychologist, etc. School policy outlined in various documents: SEND36 Policy, Behaviour and Relationship Policy, Safeguarding Children Policy, most importantly. These documents provide comprehensive, detailed and exact procedures and action plans. Referrals are recorded and cases followed up. The Ofsted report praised this multi-agency Inclusion Team for the effective support provided for students with behavioural issues. The Assistant Head Teacher argued that this is a very successful model because problematic cases are discussed among professionals with different specialism and experience and decisions are made as a group, which helps in finding the optimum solution for each individual student on a case-by-case basis.

[36] Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

UK School B

School B is a Further Education College, catering to students (mainly) over 16 years old. In academic year 2013-14, there were 3,309 students between 16-18 years old in the college; with an additional 124 apprentices in this age-group. However, the total number of students is over 21,000. Of these, 69% are from a Black or Minority Ethnic background, 51.1% of the learners are female. Eight per cent of all students disclosed having a difficulty, disability or health problem. In addition to staff and community members, the board of governors also includes a student governor.

School B offers approximately 1,500 full- and part-time courses in over 20 subjects, across four campuses located in North-West London, including A levels (academic path) and vocational courses. It also offers specialist education, such as Supported Learning for students with learning difficulties, disabilities and mental health issues; Foundation Learning (part-time literacy and numeracy classes); and full-time entry level courses for young people aged 16 to 18 preparing them for GCSE and/ or vocational courses; full-time and part-time English language courses as Pathways to Employment (ESOL). The 14-16 Centre delivers full-time courses including Year 11 ESOL, 5 GCSEs programme, 3 GCSEs + vocational option; foundation learning; and part-time vocational courses.

In addition, the college offers apprenticeships in a variety of sectors: hairdressing, childcare, care, business administration, customer services, bricklaying, and hospitality. Young people between 16 and 24 years who are unemployed or have little work experience, and are qualified below ISCED 3 level can also enrol on traineeships - training programmes to equip them with skills needed to secure an apprenticeship or employment (CV writing, interview preparation, job searching, self-discipline, inter-personal skills). They also study English and Maths and complete a work placement.

According to the Director of Learner Experience, in 2013-14 attendance was 88%. Last academic year, 70% of students progressed to the next (required) level of their studies. School B's overall success rate was 87.8%, which is the percentage of students who stayed on their course and achieved appropriate progress.

The college places emphasis on helping students to enrol on the right course, to ensure that they remain motivated to stay in education. All learners take part in a comprehensive induction programme where they learn about their course and the range of support and enrichment services available to them. They also complete a range of initial and diagnostic assessments to ensure that they are in the right programme. If they change their minds or are struggling on their course, they can transfer to a more suitable one, according to the Director of Learner Experience. Students are incentivised to attend: those who have 100% attendance with no late arrivals are entered into a monthly prize draw.

Students have access to a wide range of support, including Welfare and Enrichment advisors, Learning and Community advisors, Safeguarding and Equality officers and Careers advisors. The names, pictures and contact details of main safeguarding and advisory staff members are available on leaflets, notice-boards, on the website, even on the doors of toilet cubicles. As a worst case scenario, students can be excluded from the college but that only happens very rarely and only if the student is violent or committed a crime.

Description of School intervention UK B1

- Learner services team
- Designers: the College management team
- Implementers: support staff at the College
- Recipients: all students from the College
- Level of the intervention measure: school wide
- Frequency: continuous
- Start date and end date: November 2011 - present

Through the Learner Services Team, School B offers a wide range of support services - mentors, counsellors, work experience co-ordinators and careers advisors. It is made up of several smaller teams that all work together and are co-ordinated by the Director of Quality and Learner Experience:

1. Welfare and Enrichment team – to deal with barriers outside of education
   - Counsellors – help with emotional issues
   - Student advisors – for help with welfare, housing & health issues
   - Safeguarding team – offers support to very vulnerable students who have suffered from some form of abuse or neglect. They work closely with the respective boroughs, esp. Enfield and Barnet, and can refer students to social services.
2. Learning Resource Centre team/ Learning and Community
   - Supports students individually with their study – offers help with assignments and coursework, referencing, where to find resources, how to search the internet; advice on motivation and methods
   - Assistance using e-resources and the college's virtual learning environment (iLearn)
3. Careers team
   - One-on-one advice and guidance for future study and career
   - Assistance with UCAS and university applications, personal statements
   - Employability skills through helping with job applications, CVs and interview techniques
   - Group and individual workshops helping students making the right decisions
   - Career workshops around particular jobs (working with curriculum areas and employers)

External partners: the Local authority, local university, local schools; and work closely with external services social services; the probation service (for students who committed crime); local, regional and national employers. Staff reported investing in engaging parents. This is a school wide measure: all students can benefit from the student support measures offered by the Learner Services Team. The present structure was developed after the merger between two further education colleges to form the present School B on the 1st of November 2011. It was set up by the college itself taking into consideration desired outcomes and the budget available for it, among others; then decided on the key functions and structured the services around those. Good practice examples from other colleges were taken into account. These were accessed through their networks, such as the National Association of Managers of Student Services.

School C is a Comprehensive Church of England secondary school originally for students between 11 and 18 years old. However, only Years 10 and 11 and a small Year 13 group have remained, because the school is in the process of being closed down in July 2016. The governing body includes community members, staff and parent governors.

Because of this, currently the school only has 325 students, 54.2% of which are boys. 40.7% of students are eligible for FSM, a much higher proportion than the national average of 16.2%. 7.7% of pupils have special educational needs. 68.3% of students have a first language other than English (national average 14.4%). The school is significantly more diverse ethnically than its neighbourhood: only 6.2% of pupils are White British, while 39.4% of the local ward and 45.5% of the local authority's population identified as White British in the latest Census from 2011.

Aggregative teacher support levels were towards the top range.

Depending on their individual needs, students can follow one of several curriculum pathways. These have been designed to give all students the opportunity to gain at least a minimum qualification. The Support Option provides a combination of academic support, English language support (if appropriate), functional skills in literacy and numeracy, tailored Vocational and Life Skills courses at an external partner organisation, usually local further education colleges.

According to the latest official figure from December 2013, overall absence in the school was 6.6%, higher than the England average of 5.8%. Persistent absence is 9.4% (national average is 6.5%). The Ofsted report from June 2013 highlighted several problems, including lower than average attendance rates, some low-level disruption during class and students being late for lessons. Attainment at the end of Y11 was also found to be below the national average. In some subjects, however, students do show good progress. Boys, lower ability and SEN students perform less well than their peers.

According to the Associate Head Teacher, usually about 50% of students get 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths; while around 70% get 5 A*s to C. Last academic year (2013-14) all students finished with some kind of qualification and none of them became NEETs. The number of exclusions has reduced significantly over the last few years, due to effective support.

School C has comprehensive policies and procedures to deal with ESL-related issues. All staff members are responsible for managing student behaviour, reporting misconduct and referring cases to other relevant staff when necessary. The Connection Team meets fortnightly to discuss cases where students need extra support, related to behavioural problems, attendance, attainment, or a combination of these. Students can be referred by a staff member or can self-refer. The team investigates the issue – speaking to the student, their parents, and teachers - as appropriate. During the meeting, they discuss as a group the student's support needs, and decide on a personalised support strategy on a case-by-case basis. Cases are followed up. Usually around 8 to 10 cases are discussed per session. Serious misconduct (e.g. violence toward other students or staff, threatening with violence, persistent defiance) has to be reported as soon as possible, and is dealt with by senior management.

Description of School intervention UK C1:

- Support Option (together with the RONI scheme)
- Designers: Support option – school management; RONI – local authority
- Implementers: school staff
- Recipients: students at risk of becoming NEETs who follow the Support option
- Level of the intervention measure: student focused
- Frequency: continuous
- Start date and end date: RONI pilot scheme – 4 years earlier; Support Option – longer term
- Partners: London Borough of Barnet, further education colleges, external service providers

The RONI (Risk of NEET Indicators) scheme was initiated by the Local Authority among several schools. School C was invited to take part in the piloting of the scheme four years earlier. The aim of the scheme was to develop a prognosis tool to identify student who are at risk of becoming NEETS early in their studies in order to provide them with adequate support for them to finish their education with some relevant qualification. Also, the local authority wanted to have a uniform approach in school. Several risk factors were identified: low attainment (students who, for various reasons, will not achieve the benchmark of 5+ A*-C GCSEs including Maths and English); internal and external exclusion from school; poor attendance; persistent absenteeism; difficult family background; substance abuse; being on free school meals; lack of parental support; mental health issues; children in care; children with special educational needs; arriving late in the academic year to the school, especially from another country; inadequate English language skills; etc.; a combination of these factors increasing the risk. Students identified as unlikely to achieve the benchmark GSCE results, especially if combined with any of the above risk factors, will be strongly advised to have the Support Option as part of their curriculum. This way, they can achieve some minimum qualifications that will allow them to enrol in a further education college, for example, where they can get their GCSEs later on. Depending on individual needs, the Support Option can include:

- English language support
- Functional skills in literacy and numeracy
- And/ or tailored vocational courses that the particular student is interested in - at a local further education college, one day a week

At present, about 10% of the students follow the Support Option, but only one or two students have external courses at a college (the number can change as students move in and out of courses). The Support Option is a student-focused initiative aimed at students at risk of becoming NEETs.

UK School D

School D is a Comprehensive Academy Converter secondary school for 11-18 year old students. The school governing body is comprised of community, staff and parent governors.

Currently, there are 1280 students in the school, of which 51.8% are boys. 27.3% of students are eligible for FSM (national average is 16.2%). 14.1% of pupils have a SEN statement or on School action Plus, which is well above the national average. The school is ethnically and linguistically very diverse: 60.9% of students have English as an additional language (national average 14.4%) and only 14.1 % of pupils are classified as White British.

Aggregative teacher support levels were towards the bottom range.

School D offers a wide variety of courses, including both academic (A level) and vocational (BTEC) courses in Sixth form. The vocational offer has been gradually extended, and BTEC options include Art and Design, Business, Dance, Health and Social Care, Music, Performing Arts, Travel and Tourism. The school has a hearing impaired unit, and provisions to support students with autism spectrum conditions.

According to the latest official figure from December 2013, overall absence in the school was 5.4%, below the England average of 5.8%. Persistent absence is 5.5%, well below the national average at 6.5%. According to staff members, the proportion of students who become NEETS after leaving the school is well below average.

In 2014, 65% of Y11 students achieved 5+ A*-C GCSEs, significantly more than the national average (53.4%), 25% of the GSCE grades being A* and A. Although students join in Year 7 with attainment significantly below the national average, students make outstanding progress. According to their GSCE and A level results, School D is one of the top performing schools in the borough with achievement levels above the national average. In 2012, School D was in the top 100 schools in the country for the progress made by their students.

School D provides comprehensive student support, with designated teams working on specific areas: Student Wellbeing Team, Mentoring Team, IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) team, etc. Programmes for potential NEETs are provided by external agencies such as Catch 22 and Reed.

The school monitors not only student attainment and attendance but also the pupils' aspirations. Based on this, the school can provide personalised advice on further studies and work experience. The school offers academic intervention classes, including small literacy groups, booster session after school and the weekends, revision classes in the weekends and holidays, paired reading schemes, online learning package to assist home learning and revision; and long library opening hours. Students with SEN and those with English as an additional language receive targeted support. In addition, a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and enrichment activities are available.

The school places high importance on engaging parents and promotes community links through volunteering schemes, enrichment awards, and Saturday School for teaching community languages to school members and the local community.

Description of School intervention UK D1:
- Investing in our Future event
- Designers: IAG team?
- Implementers: IAG team and volunteers from Year 12+ a few students from Year 11
- Recipients: Year 12 students + a number of students from Year 11
- Level of the intervention measure: student focused: Year 12 students
- Frequency: on a yearly basis
- Start date and end date: started in 2013
- Partners: employers, company and university representatives, parents

This is an evening event where students meet employers and university representatives, and have the opportunity to talk to them in order to get a realistic picture of the jobs and/or university

courses on offer. It works like a speed-dating event: the representatives sit around tables, while students move around and spend 20 minutes at a table they are interested in. Then the bell rings and all students move to another table. All students will visit two tables they have decided on before. Each table has a student captain trained to lead the conversation if necessary. Student-focused initiative: specifically for Year 12 students (although a few Year 10s and 11s are also invited, they will take leadership roles the following year). Started two years ago – so far two events (one per year). Model taken from another London school. Organised by students themselves with the help of the IAG team: organisers volunteer to this initiative, then form teams and allocate tasks. The students conduct a survey with their peers to find out what employers/ universities they would like to meet and also what their parents do and whether they can attend the event if there are students interested in that profession.

After receiving training in how to communicate effectively on the phone and through email with businesses, students start contacting companies, universities, etc. and invite them to take part. Parents and other family members with sought-after jobs are also invited. This seems very successful since parents are more likely to accept the invitation. In this way the school managed to, for example, secure contacts at hospitals, which proved difficult before. The invitation email is carefully written. It also contains a photo of the participating young people, all smiling – to add a personal touch.   Feedback from company representatives showed that including the photo, showing the real young people behind the numbers heavily influenced their decision to take part. They invite the local Member of Parliament (MP). He attended the first event and sent a representative second time. Students learn communication and organisation skills, event management, questionnaire design; presentation skills, budgeting, leadership skills, networking, etc. Each time, the guests were very impressed by the skills and enthusiasm of the students. Many of them offered students work experience, skills training, etc. Although the school only asks for participation, each time they actually received many work opportunities from employers. The school usually asks the employer they already know will offer something to encourage the rest of participants to follow suit. In 2014, around 74 students attended and there were 39 offers including work experiences, mentoring, skill training from the participating companies. The initiative proved so successful that the students and staff were invited to present it in the House of Commons to MPs and representatives of other schools. Several other schools have started similar initiatives.

Annex 3: Topic Guides for Interviews and FGD's

Interviews with case youngsters

➢ **Perspective on education and personal trajectory: past experiences and present situation**

- How would you describe yourself as a pupil?
- How do you feel about your time in school up until now?
- How would you describe your school career, in terms of success?
- What do you like/ dislike about your current school?
  - o How do you feel in school?
- What do you think about the importance of being successful in school?
- What do you think is your influence in your success in school?
  - o Have you faced any obstacles? What was your role in overcoming it?
  - o (How) could you yourself do things differently to be more successful in school?

➢ **Perspective on interactions and processes of exclusion and inclusion in school**

- How hard would you say you work in school?
  - o What motives/ prevents you to work hard in school?
- How would you say your attendance is in school?
- Do you get into trouble at school?
- How are your relations with school staff/ with other pupils?
- How do you feel treated by your teachers and other school staff?

➢ **Social and Cultural capital**

- To what extent is the **school** helping you to achieve your educational goals?
  - o To what extent do you feel supported by your teachers? Other school staff?
  - o Do you attend any extra-curricular activities organized by your school?
- To what extent is your **family** helping you to achieve your goals in school?
  - o To what extent can your family give you advice to support your school career?
  - o What does your family want you to achieve in education?
- Are you involved in **activities/ organisations outside of school**? (faith group, community or sport club, music)
  - o Does this involvement help you in school?
- To what extent can your **friends** support your school career?
  - o Do you discuss future plans with your friends?
  - o What are your friends planning/ hoping to do in the future?
- Are there people you look up to for what they have achieved? Who are your **role models**?
- Who can you turn to for advice or support about education, training, qualifications, job opportunities?

- **Perspective on intra-muros Evaluations (if involved):**

  - Are you **aware** of what programmes your school offers to support pupils?
  - Are you **attending** any specific support programmes in your school?
    - o Did you ask to be involved or did teachers **suggest it/ make you do it**?
  - Why do you think you are in this programme?
    - o What is the **goal** of this programme/ measure according to you?
  - To what extent you feel the measure tries to solve a real (/the right) **problem?**
  - To what extent you feel have the right **support** or do you need something different?
  - Can you give **your input** on this (to staff in the measure or to staff in general)?
    - o Do teachers (or school staff) ask you what kind of support you want?
  - To what extent do you think this measure is successful in **reaching its goal(s)?**
  - What have you personally gotten out of this? Is it **useful for you** personally?

- **Future plans and prospects on the labour market**

  - Are you planning to **finish secondary education?**
  - What do you hope to do **after you finish secondary school?**
  - What are your **ambitions for a professional career**?
    - o How do you plan to achieve that?
  - To what extent you feel that your **current studies/ school helps you** to achieve your future goals?
    - o Do you feel that attaining a diploma is important for reaching your goals?
  - Do you have **previous work experiences** (in apprenticeships, student jobs, …) that have influenced your educational goals and/or future plans on the labour market?
  - Do you feel that the current **economic crisis** influences your future (labour market) opportunities?
    - o Does this influence your decisions in terms of continuing education?

FGD school peers on intra-muros interventions

- **Awareness**

  - How many pupils in this school are leaving education without a qualification?
    - o To what extent would you say that this is a problem (in your school)?
  - What does you school do to tackle this?
    - o Does it provide specific programmes to tackle this?
  - To what extent you think the school (staff and policy) has an influence on this? (positive or negative)

- **Reasons for participation**

  - Why are you participating in this school programme?
    - o Did you decide yourself to participate, why?
    - o Did anyone advise or make you to participate?
      - ▪ What do you think was the reason to advice/ make you?
        - • Would you say it is a good reason to participate?

➢ **Scope and aim**

- What do you think this school programme/ policy tries to achieve?
- For whom is this programme/ policy designed according to you?

➢ **Problem orientation**

- What do you think is the problem the programme/ policy wants to tackle?
- To what extent you feel that this a real problem for youngsters in this school?
- What would you focus on if you were to design a school programme/ policy to support youngsters' school careers?

➢ **Participation and ownership**

- To what extent are pupils invited to discuss the school policy?
- How does your school involve pupils to decide on this programme/ school policy?

➢ **Feasibility**

- How successful do you think the programme/ policy can be in reaching its goals?
- Does the school invest enough in making the programme/ policy work?

➢ **Support**

- How do you feel about the support you get in this programme/ school policy?
  o Can you give feedback in school on the support you get?
- Who supports you in this school programme/ policy?

➢ **Outcome experience or assessment[37]**

- To what extent do you feel the school programme/ policy has achieved its goal?

➢ **Capacity to adapt to local realities**

- How is the school programme/ policy adapted to the context of the school and its environment?

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[37] For those youngsters at the end of their involvement in a school programme/ policy. For those in an earlier stage, the questions on feasibility are more appropriate.

➢ **Awareness**

- To what extent is pupils leaving education without a qualification a problem within this school?
- What measures does the school take to (directly or indirectly) tackle early school leaving?

➢ **Reasons for participation**

- How does participation of pupils in these programmes/policies come about?
- Is school staff involved on a voluntary basis?
    o Why are you/ aren't you involved in this programme/ policy?
- What motivates pupils' involvement? To what extent you feel these are the right reasons?
- What motivates the staff's involvement? To what extent you feel these are the right reasons?

➢ **Scope and aim**

- Which pupils are targeted by this programme/ policy?
- What is the aim of the measure in a school according to you?

➢ **Problem orientation**

- What is the underlying problem that the school programme/ policy wants to tackle?
- What are the most pressing issues a school programme/ policy focus should address to tackle ESL?
    o To what extent is the current school programme/ policy addressing these issues?

➢ **Feasibility**

- To what extent are the aims of the intervention(s) feasible?
- Does the school invest enough in this programme/ policy to make it work?
- Does the local/ national policy provide sufficient resources to schools to tackle these issues?

➢ **Participation and ownership**

- To what degree are you involved in the design and implementation of this programme/ policy?
    o If you could design this programme/ policy what would you do differently?
    o How do you feel you are involved in the design and implementation of this programme/ policy?

➤ **Support**

- To what extent do you feel supported in your role within this programme/policy?
  o By whom do you feel supported in this role?
- What support does the programme/ policy provide to the pupils involved?
  o What is your role in providing this support?

➤ **Outcome experience or assessment**

- To what extent has the programme/ policy achieved its intended goals?
- To what extent do you feel the programme/ policy has made a difference?
- Does an evaluation (in the school) of the programme/ policy exist?

➤ **Capacity to adapt to local realities**

- To what extent is the programme/ policy capable of adapting to (changes in) the local context?

➢ **Perspective on education and school, now and future aspirations**

- What role do you see for education in the life of your child?
- What are your aspirations for your child?
  - o In education, on labour market, in family life, …
- How do you think you can positively influence the educational trajectory of your child?
  - o What kind of actions do you undertake to support this?
- What kind of obstacles do you or your child face(s) in their educational trajectory?

➢ **Perspective on interactions and processes of exclusion and inclusion in school**

- To what extent is the school helping you and your child to achieve these educational goals?
- How are your relations with school staff/ with other parents?
- How do you feel treated by teachers and other school staff?
- How do you feel the school staff is involved with and supports your child?
- How do you feel the school staff is involved with and supports you as a parent?

➢ **Social and Cultural capital**

- Are you involved in activities organized by the school of your child(-ren)?
- Are you involved in activities/ organisations outside of school? (faith group, community or sport club, music)
  - o Does this involvement help you or your child in your relation with the school (if so, in what way)?
- Whom can you turn to for advice or support about education or labour market-related issues?

➢ **Perspective on intra-muros Evaluations (if child is involved):**

- Are you aware of what programmes the school offers to support pupils?
- Is your child attending any specific support programmes in your school?
  - o Did you want your child to be involved?
  - o Did teachers suggest/ oblige/ disapprove of it?
- Why do you think your child is in this programme?
  - o What is the goal of this programme/ measure according to you?
- To what extent you feel the measure tries to solve a real (/the right) problem?
- To what extent you as a parent feel that you receive the right support, or do you need something different to help your child?
- Can you give your input on this (to staff in the measure or to staff in general)?
  - o Do teachers (or school staff) ask you what kind of support you want or think is important?
- To what extent you think this measure is or can be successful in reaching its goal(s)?
- What have you personally gotten out of this? Is it useful for your child or for you personally?