

Project Paper 7

Cross-case Analysis of Measures in Alternative Learning Pathways

Responsible institution: **Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies
University of Antwerp**

Authors: **Lore Van Praag
Ward Nouwen
Rut Van Caudenberg
Noel Clycq
Christiane Timmerman**

Glossary

ASPV – General Social and Personal Skills Training

BE – Belgium

CAM – Curs específic per a l'Accés a cicles de grau Mitjà: specific course to access initial formal VET programmes

ES – Spain

ESL – Early School Leaving

EU – European Union

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

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

PAV – Project General Subjects

PFI - Programmes of training and labour insertion - Programmes de Formació I Inserció

PL – Poland

PT – Portugal

PTT- School-to work Transition Plan - Plan de Transición al Trabajo

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

UK – United Kingdom

VCL - Voluntary Labour Corps

VET – Vocational Education and Training

WBL - Work-based learning

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Executive Summary

Positioning and main research question of the Project Paper

This seventh Project Paper of the RESL.eu Research focuses on the measures that are designed and implemented to address the issues of early school leaving (ESL) in alternative learning arenas.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, Project Paper 5 on the preliminary analysis of the survey among youngsters in seven EU member states, and Project Paper 6 on Cross-case Analyses of School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures. Project Paper 6 in particular can be read alongside Project Paper 7, as we applied similar research questions, methodologies and analyses.

In the current Project Paper, we present the findings of the cross-case evaluation of measures designed and implemented in institutions providing alternative pathways for individuals that have left mainstream secondary education without an upper secondary education qualification by examining the perceptions and discourses of stakeholders (i.e. designers, implementers and target group). The case studies we will discuss in this paper are selected to provide an overview of a wide range of measures across countries. The main rationale that guides this paper is to detect measures that are promising in the reduction of early school leaving in Europe and to reveal good practices and strategies that may be found outside of mainstream education but that could help improve 'regular secondary schools'.

Methodology and fieldwork approach

As part of work package 4 of the RESL.eu project, a qualitative evaluation method of these measures was applied. Doing so, we made use of the theory-based stakeholder evaluation method, which we also applied in Project Paper 6 of the RESL.eu project, and which starts with an analysis of experiences and perspectives of the stakeholders with respect to the scope and aim, problem orientation, participation, ownership and outcome experience of the prevention and intervention measures they are involved in. Similar to Project Paper 6, the focus of this data collection was on three types of respondents: the designers, who were mostly school management or the head of the organisations; the implementers, who were often teachers, educational support staff and social workers; and the recipients or target individuals/groups, who were the youngsters.

As in Project Paper 6, to be able to make interesting cross-case analyses of measures implemented outside mainstream education in specific research areas in Belgium (Flanders), the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain (Catalonia), Sweden and UK (England), all seven partners that collected data for this project paper applied a similar methodology.

¹ RESL.eu has debated a general working definition of ESL and, as will be seen, has arrived at the notion of young people as 'leaving education un(der)qualified (unqualified or under qualified)'. All young people who left regular school without attaining a degree/certificate of upper secondary education are considered early school leavers.

Differently than for Project Paper 6, the institutions and measures could not be selected based on the RESL.eu Survey data.² The institutions providing alternative pathways were therefore selected based on the field description and policy analysis performed in each of the local research areas (i.e., as part of RESL.eu work package 2). The data was collected in two phases in each institution, programme or organisation. First, we collected and analysed the policy documents; these findings were then further elaborated upon in an interview with the designer(s) of the method to get a better understanding of the institutional context in which the measure was implemented and to grasp the variety of school policies and measures addressing ESL. Second, focus group discussions and interviews were carried out to examine the perspectives and experiences of the implementers and the target individuals/groups.

For each measure, similar fieldwork documents, strategies and protocols, topic lists and coding trees were used so as to make cross-case comparison possible. As qualitative cross-case comparison using a large number of cases and countries requires a systematic approach, the analyses were conducted in two consecutive stages. In a first stage, a case study analysis was performed by each partner and this case study was framed within the particular country-specific context. Second, these cross-case analyses were used as a starting point for this Project Paper.

Main findings

We will provide a summary of the cross-case analyses of measures designed and implemented in institutions providing alternative learning pathways for individuals that have left regular secondary education without an upper secondary level qualification. Despite the large variety that characterises these alternative learning pathways, we will discuss four distinct aspects or features of these measures separately: 1) work-based learning approaches, 2) innovative pedagogical approaches, 3) holistic student care approach, and 4) educational reintegration strategies.

Work-based learning approaches

Dual learning pathways (i.e., part-time school- and part-time work-based learning) have gained policy attention on the EU level and have been presented at the EU policy level as both a preventive as well as a compensatory tool for combatting early leaving from education and training. Although many EU member states have a large proportion of students in a dual learning track (e.g., Germany, Austria, Denmark), in the countries involved in our study, dual learning pathways – mostly through apprenticeships – are rather marginal in comparison to the mainstream education sector.

The actors involved in work-based learning approaches to a large extent acknowledged the dual scope and aims of these learning pathways. With regard to the scope, virtually all case studies involved both school- (or training centre-)based and work-based learning. The extent to which the work-based learning was actually performed in regular economy contexts differed across the case studies. Some students were (temporarily) trained in pre-apprenticeship courses or close-to-real simulations in workshops and social economy contexts. Next to the dual scope of the training pathways, most stakeholders agreed that the study path in which they were involved, had a dual aim, namely to provide opportunities for gaining (certified) professional skills, and to work towards an educational qualification. Especially the acquisition of professional skills seemed to be a more

² With the exception of the Belgian and Portuguese partners, no survey data was collected in alternative learning pathways outside of mainstream secondary education.

prominent and direct objective of the measures under study. This priority to focus more on professional skills was also acknowledged in students' discourses about their reasons for participation.

Often, extrinsic motivation of the future labour market outcomes, were mentioned by students as the most important reason to enrol. Attaining an upper secondary education degree was in some trainings formally not directly achievable (e.g., pre-apprenticeship programs, basic vocational trainings preparing youngsters for actual upper secondary VET), or was de facto perceived to be outside the reach of some youngsters. The idea that some youngsters will never be competent or able to achieve an ISCED 3 level qualification was addressed in both student and staff discourses and was ascribed to low achievement levels, behavioural issues, as well as social and financial problems that forced youngsters to prioritize finding employment over continuing education.

Due to the fact that many of the learning pathways involving work-based learning are perceived as alternative pathways outside of mainstream education, many of the stakeholders involved in these tracks also mentioned that these study pathways are often (but not always) seen as 'second best' or 'last resort' options, frequently chosen after negative experiences and a trajectory of academic disengagement in regular secondary education. Many of the actors, however, ascribed students' academic disengagement to the exclusionary character of mainstream education. This contrasts with mainstream education, which mainly suggests factors situated outside school are the cause of student disengagement. Students enrolled in work-based learning were often perceived to be unfit for more academically oriented school-based education.

Some stakeholders, however, indicated that the new work-based learning environment could compensate for the lack of practical learning and individualised support in mainstream education. For many students, work-based learning can thus provide an alternative learning route that is perceived to be more relevant because of the practical and often more mature learning context. Nonetheless, most of the youngsters were only reoriented towards work-based learning after a range of negative school experiences and a background of academic disengagement. A strong critique among both students and staff involved in these study tracks was that staff – even specialised career guidance staff – did not have good knowledge about the work-based learning options and, therefore, did not provide sufficient and correct information about the dual learning option throughout students' school careers. Furthermore, the stakeholders' discourses indicated that neither staff nor students in mainstream education – and public opinion – valued the work-based learning as much as the more school-based and academically oriented tracks.

Although most work-based learning pathways are frequently perceived to be a 'second best' option after regular secondary education in the countries involved in this study, many of them introduce some level of selection with regard to the inflow of participants in work-based learning. The level of selectiveness did, however, vary widely. Some case studies only had a few formal restrictions (e.g., age restrictions), while others were more selective, such as apprenticeship tracks that require students to have an apprenticeship contract before being able to enrol. Enrolment in pathways that require regular economy apprenticeships are therefore also dependent on the supply of labour market opportunities. Hence, apprenticeship opportunities may be subject to discrimination on the labour market.

Virtually all dual learning pathways apply a system of intake and screening at enrolment. During the intake and screening one of the major issues relates to students' maturity for entering work-based learning. This labour market maturity primarily entails work ethic and basic skill levels. Many types of work-based learning programmes provide perspectives for gradual labour market insertion through individualised study programs, pre-apprenticeship courses and high levels of socio-emotional support. Furthermore, some of the institutions providing work-based learning employed specific guidance counsellors that try to mediate between the training centres, employers and students to bridge differences in expectations between the different actors involved.

In sum, the cross-case analyses showed some contradiction between the finding that – partly due to the exclusionary character of mainstream education – often the most vulnerable students end up in work-based learning after a process of gradual academic disengagement and the finding that regular labour market apprenticeships also tend to be selective in nature.

Innovative pedagogical approaches

Many alternative learning pathways make use of innovative pedagogical approaches in order both to engage students that previously left mainstream education and to keep students at high risk of ESL enrolled in education or training. These initiatives frequently start from the idea that the pedagogical approach used in the regular secondary education cannot successfully be applied to their target group. Consequently, for many stakeholders, the use of an innovative pedagogical approach seems inevitable to be able to keep young people in education. These innovations are carried out with different aims at distinct organizational levels, and are designed for a particular target group. Staff in alternative learning arenas have also shown some creativity in coming up with ways to realize these objectives. For instance, in Portugal, the cooperative vocational training wants to co-create 'simulated cooperative' and 'real cooperatives' for all types of students (with/without access to higher education or the traditional job market), to introduce labour market dynamics from the beginning of students' educational careers. Other examples are a vocational training with the arts in Portugal, the modular learning system in Flanders, a vocational boarding school in Poland, employability modules and workplace immersion in the United Kingdom and Spain.

Despite this variation across countries, some striking similarities are found. Most of these measures attributed their success to their high organisational, curricular and personal flexibility as well as their strong investment in affective bonds. This enabled them to respond to students' individual needs, the changing student intake and the local realities, as well as protect students against other challenges that complicate their educational career. However, when analysing the interviews and focus group discussions with the stakeholders, most of them seem to agree that the added value of these measures does not merely limit itself to the pedagogical value of the measure. Rather, the measures under study are innovative in that they use alternative pedagogical approaches to introduce more flexibility in the learning pathways, focus explicitly on experiences of success and provide more practical learning methods and better access to transferable skills. We will discuss these assumed protective factors for early school leaving separately.

Flexibility is introduced in many measures to respond to the necessities of students at risk of early leaving school and as a reaction against the more rigid structure and practices of regular secondary education. Regular secondary schools often do not cater to those who are less successful in schools, who have failed at some point in their school career or who simply have difficulties in meeting the

criteria for educational success set by regular secondary education. For example, some students experience difficulties catching up with the speed and time-bound structures involved in regular secondary education. Overall, alternative, innovative pedagogical approaches frequently introduce some kind of flexibility in order to avoid some of these consequences that could ultimately lead to early school leaving. However, across countries, there are different ways in which this flexibility is introduced. While in some alternative learning arenas, flexibility is structurally anchored, for other measures, implementers receive more space to use an individualized and flexible approach towards each student.

When evaluating measures or pathways that use innovative pedagogical approaches, one should take into account that it always takes effort and motivation to apply an alternative approach that moves away from the more traditional habits of dealing with students in educational institutions. Participants sometimes indicated being happy with the increased attention for particular subjects, however, did not necessarily feel a major difference with traditional methodologies. This was for instance the case in the cooperative training in Portugal, where students valued the more interactive lessons, the proximity in the relationship with some tutors and the use of interactive methodologies, but did not identify the methodologies used as distinct from the traditional ones.

Crucial for many of these measures is the way they want to increase students' motivational levels through the participation in the measures. Many of the alternative learning arenas have focused on experiences of 'success' for people that have already had 'problematic' school careers. These measures aim to move away from failure and give rise to a 'cycle of success'. The rationale behind this is that successful experiences in education will serve as a motivation to engage in school and to continue their educational career. The large inflow of students that have lost their motivation to study in regular secondary education characterises alternative learning arenas. These students' natural curiosity to learn about the world and about themselves was somehow hindered in regular secondary education. Furthermore, failing experiences are avoided as they could start an entire cycle of other factors that could result in early school leaving. This is for instance the case in Flanders (Belgium) where students that fail even just one courses have to repeat the entire year; the resulting repetition of courses can (and allegedly does) lead to further disengagement from school. Hence, many alternative learning arenas respond to the particular needs of this target group by giving more room to their voices and including them as active 'partners' or 'participants' of their own learning experiences. By proposing these alternative pedagogical approaches, new realities are created that question the educational institutions constituting mainstream education and/or try to respond to some of its deficits.

In some cases, the incorporation of innovative pedagogical approaches leads to the introduction of more practical learning methods. While mainstream education's point of departure is the classroom, looking theoretically or abstractly at other spheres of life such as the labour market, the measures outside mainstream education are often the reverse: instead of starting from theoretical knowledge, they use practical skills and experiences as the point of departure. Additionally, most measures that try out new, innovative pedagogical approaches to reduce the risk of early school leaving or want to re-orient students with the goal of re-enrolment in education or training increasingly focus on the learning of transferable skills to their students. These transferrable skills are perceived as necessary to be able to continue education or 'survive' on the labour market. Some measures explicitly focused on the learning of such skills.

As many of these methodologies aim to stimulate students' self-awareness, motivation and self-esteem, these measures could have positive long-term consequences in their future occupational, educational and personal lives. While these innovative pedagogical approaches are often seen as increasing students' motivation and providing them experiences of success, they are, at the same time, frequently (but not always) associated with negative stereotypes and tend to be accorded a lower status than other educational programmes or institutions. It is important to take these negative appraisals into account in the evaluation of these innovative pedagogical approaches, as these factors may hinder student enrolment or later success on the labour market. In general, these measures/pathways were already quite successful in reaching a vulnerable group of students that are prone to opting out of education. Obtaining this success has not been easy, however, since these measures have to appeal to and include a very diverse audience, reaching out to all kinds of people from a broad spectrum of (often troubled) educational pathways, diverse national and ethnic origins, and different social class backgrounds.

Holistic student care approach

While some school-based prevention and intervention measures could profit from a more holistic student care approach (see contextual preconditions in Part I), in this section, we want to address the measures in alternative pathways that have taken into account the particular vulnerabilities of a large group of students that enrol in such alternative learning arenas by applying a holistic student care approach. These measures started from the assumption that in order to re-engage students in education and training, one should approach students – especially a particular group of vulnerable students – in a more holistic way and not only focus on their role as 'student'. Measures fall into this category when they explicitly focus on the specialized support (practical, emotional or psychological advice) needed by their participants, when support of these aspects are seen as a precondition to succeed in education. This could be interpreted in terms of special care arrangements, but could also apply to the supply of transferrable skills and the empowerment of participants enrolled in the measures under study.

Across countries, we found several ways in which programmes and institutions wanted to take up a more holistic approach, especially when compared to regular secondary education. This includes for instance measures such as the launching of a (voluntary) Care framework in second chance education in Flanders (Belgium), a caring Programme A in the Netherlands, the employability module in the United Kingdom, or a general programme with a human rights profile in Sweden. While most alternative learning arenas aiming to re-engage students in education and training apply a more holistic, individualized approach compared with measures in regular secondary education, in this section, we will focus on measures that are particularly designed to consider all aspects of students' lives and provide additional care to students.

In order to facilitate students' achievement of an educational qualification and facilitate the entry into the labour market, applying a holistic student care approach could reduce the risk of early school leaving as many young people at risk of ESL or actual early school leavers struggle with various kinds of socio-emotional issues and/or lack access to the kinds of cultural and social capital necessary to succeed at school. While these factors may have been one of the reasons they left mainstream education early, these issues are perceived to be a prerequisite before other training or schooling options are possible. Most measures that aim to approach students in a more caring, holistic way stress the importance of being flexible to be able to use a more individualised approach.

The highly individualised approach towards learning, the small class groups and the high number of staff are mentioned to be some of the protective factors that keep students from opting out of the measure. Such a holistic student care approach is desirable insofar as it seems to increase participants' self-esteem and motivation and can therefore be seen as a protective factor that prevents young people from early school leaving. This is more frequently the case when participants feel they have had the opportunity to influence the measure's design and implementation, that the staff members have listened to them and taken their opinions and ideas into account, and that they have been treated as citizens actively participating in society.

Compared to school-based measures, these holistic care approaches in alternative learning arenas were often more explicitly oriented towards vulnerable groups (see part I). Indeed, these measures were organised in such a way that they tackled any factors that could complicate students' continuation of their school career. Furthermore, they were often really flexible, trying to make it structurally possible for educational institutions or programmes to adapt to the young people's local realities and contexts. Nevertheless, the focus on vulnerable groups entails some risks as well. As participants rely more often on the approaches of the individual implementers of the program, the level of support, participation and ownership may not reach far enough for many participants. Consequently, many participants still drop out early from the programmes. Furthermore, measures focus on the vulnerable groups that tend to drop out of regular secondary education, but also note changes in the student compositions that may change the nature of their institution, possibly neglecting some other vulnerable groups. However diverse the target group of these alternative pathways are, their focus upon one particular target group may cause an imbalance and may require a renegotiation of the objectives of the programme when the student intake changes. Therefore, some flexibility in the design of these institutions or programmes allows the implementers and designers to adapt to changing student compositions over the years and factors that could complicate students' school careers.

There are also some downsides related to the use of holistic student care approaches in education. Due to its individualized approach, it is often more difficult to make potential participants clearly aware of the existence of a particular programme or institution. Measures might not be able to reach all young people needing this service. Additionally, the limited awareness of the measures for potential students hinders these measures from realising their full potential. Furthermore, the individualized approach and the provision of extensive care which characterise the nature of holistic student care approaches is often very costly and time-consuming. This is particularly problematic, as financial cuts impact the vulnerable young people who rely on these services the most. Finally, due to these measures' reliance on the personal approach and on trust relationships, turnover in staff may jeopardize the further existence and/or determine the success of the measure.

In sum, designers and implementers of many alternative learning arenas feel like they need to tackle specific, deep-rooted problems (see the contextual preconditions that were identified as crucial factors for school-based intervention and prevention measures), while at the same time take up a more holistic student care approach to their participants. In many cases, this results in some kind of caring framework in which young adults are assisted to deal with the challenges they face in their daily lives (e.g., housing problems, risk-taking behaviour, low self-esteem). Some measures even take this further and focus not only on the actual issues and difficulties many young people are facing, but also attempt to empower these young adults and provide them with the tools to take care

of themselves. While this holistic student care approach was seen as a motivating factor that served as an important protective factor, such an approach is very expensive time-consuming, and hence, very dependent on financial resources and individual efforts. Additionally, as most measures are designed to meet the particular needs of their students, changing student intakes are often not predictable and could jeopardize the initial objectives of the measure.

Educational reintegration strategies

While the previous approaches we discussed in part II focused upon the organizational and structural elements of different measures, in this final section, we will explicitly focus on strategies that aim to reintegrate young people into education, and by extension, into society. Again, these strategies are implemented in various ways across the cases in the different countries involved in the RESL.eu project. Relevant case studies are the Swedish folk high schools or the Project B in the Netherlands. The latter attracts early school leavers and employs them for four days in the port, in the form of a paid apprenticeship, and trains them for one day a week at a VET centre. We will discuss courses, guidance strategies/projects that both prepare young adults for educational reintegration and increase their chances of a successful educational reintegration.

In preparing young adults to participate in all aspects of the broader society, measures often apply a holistic student care approach, train students to become active citizens (e.g., Swedish folk schools) or provide young people with the ‘soft skills’ – communication, interpersonal, etc. Nevertheless, for many staff members it is not always so clear what exactly they have to do to prepare young people to reintegrate into regular education. Strategies could range from the provision of social and transferrable skills to more specialized knowledge.

Another strategy that helps participants to engage in society and develop themselves, found in some of the measures under study, is the introduction of labour market dynamics at school. When relating training more to the labour market, many young people were often better able to understand the importance of education. The focus on the labour market was thus often a way to motivate the youngsters to stay enrolled in education.

Frequently recurring risk factors of these educational reintegration measures are the **initial stigma** associated with many of these measures in general, the fact that these approaches are not offered in regular secondary education and the lack of financial resources or change of personnel in the measures under study (e.g., due to temporary contracts).

Three specific risk factors of educational reintegration strategies were noted as well. First, most measures that are specifically oriented towards the educational reintegration strategies are also confronted with **relatively high proportions of drop outs and/or high truancy rates**. Although in most cases, statistical analysis documenting this statement is missing, this is frequently remarked by many stakeholders that see a reduction of the number of participants over time, or by participants themselves that have frequently changed programmes and/or re-enrolled several times.

Second, as all early school leavers have dropped out of school at a range of **different educational levels or distinct stages**, it is difficult to determine precisely in which programme these youngsters are able to enrol – or even at which level. Furthermore, considering that the main focus in regular secondary education is to keep students enrolled as long as possible within their proper educational

institution, there seems to be a lack of collaboration and referrals to 'alternatives'; remarkably many young adults are not aware of the existence of alternative programmes.

Third, it is often difficult to **define appropriate selection criteria for enrolment**. As educational reintegration strategies often demand places available in internships, or utilise extensive support from implementers and resources, many of the measures or pathways developed selection criteria trying to ensure the success of their measure/pathway. It is remarkable that while recruiting participants that have previous negative experiences in education, generally lower performance levels etc., the main additional criterion that is used during the selection processes is the motivation of students. This could have important consequences, especially as the strength and the power of many measures lie mainly in their motivating role for youngsters living in demotivating contexts. These selection criteria are important to consider when evaluating the distinct measures and comparing them with each other. For instance, when looking at stakeholders' evaluation of these measures, the main outcome experience was mostly defined in terms of the actual learning profits and increases in students' study motivation over the course of the measure.

1. Introduction

Project Paper 7 focuses on the findings of the cross-case evaluation of measures designed and implemented in institutions outside regular secondary education. These institutions provide alternative pathways for youngsters who have left regular secondary education without attaining an upper secondary education level qualification (ISCED 3) and directly or indirectly allow them to attain this qualification. This paper builds further upon the in-depth case analyses of specific measures that were discussed and contextualised in the country reports provided by seven project partners: Belgium, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands and The UK.³

All partner countries selected two to four measures in alternative learning arenas that seemed to be relevant actions to undertake in order to re-attract early school leavers (ESL) to education and directly or indirectly provide them an opportunity to attain an upper secondary education degree (ISCED 3). Hence, project paper 7 complements project paper 6, which described school-based prevention and intervention measures. This project paper will allow us to compare the alternative pathways with those that are already offered at regular secondary schools (project paper 6) and reflect upon the ways in which regular secondary schools could learn from these alternative pathways in reducing ESL. This will be collated in the third Publication of the RESL.eu project. In order to allow comparability between both project papers, we apply a similar approach in the evaluation of the measures under study, which is also an adapted theory-driven stakeholder evaluation. This implies the study of measures making use of the policy documents (made) available to the researchers as well as the study of the understanding and interpretation of the measures by the stakeholders involved: the designers (mostly management), the implementers (mostly teachers and support staff) and the recipients (i.e., students). The evaluation involved the analysis of the focus group discussions and interviews of these groups of stakeholders that were examined making use of in-depth interviews and/or focus group discussions.

In Project Paper 7, we aim to examine interesting measures that may serve to tackle early school leaving and/or measures that reintroduce youngsters into education or training. Together with Project Paper 6, this paper will serve as a starting point for work package 5, which aims to build further on these findings to develop conceptual models of good practices in tackling ESL. Similar to Project Paper 6, we will build further upon the theoretical and methodological framework developed in Project Paper 2:

- 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 trainers, teachers, other school staff, peers and parents. The alternative learning arena as a contextual element as well as the family and the broader contexts are the focus of this approach.

³ The country reports on which the cross-case analyses are based can be provided on request.

Macro- and meso-levels factors are also important to take into consideration when discussing processes that could lead to early school leaving. As we already discussed them in Publication 1 and the country reports of Work Package 2, in which the systemic and policy level of education in the nine partner countries were discussed, we will elaborate further on this knowledge but not discuss this in more detail in this paper.

We made use of the methodological framework for the qualitative fieldwork and the analysis of the alternative pathways situated outside of mainstream education, developed and carefully written down in Project Paper 4. In this Project Paper we will discuss several measures, each of them in a specific research area and country. We selected these measures not because they are representative for a particular country but because they are interesting for our research topic of ESL, as they show the variety of possible measures outside schools, they allow interesting comparisons across countries and could serve as a basis to develop promising practices in work package 5. Therefore, it is important to note that in this cross-case analysis, broader emerging patterns and processes are discussed and studied without claiming to be representative.

Finally, we want to add that Project Paper 7 builds further on the EU Policy framework on the prevention, intervention and compensation of early school leavers in Europe (see also Project Paper 6; EU Commission 2013; Eurydice & Cedefop Report, 2014; ECORYS, 2013). The reduction of the ESL rate across the EU Member States is one of the EU 2020 headline targets and one of the core policy issues for the EU Commission. In order to do so, the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, consisting of policy makers, practitioners and academics and organised by the European Commission, worked on a comprehensive policy framework to tackle ESL. This framework calls for a comprehensive strategy to tackle ESL, in which identification and analysis, monitoring, policy coordination, prevention, interventions and compensation take a central place. Furthermore, the policy framework also offers policy makers and practitioners a checklist to analyse the comprehensiveness of their measures (EU Commission, 2013).⁴ Previous reports (GHK Consulting, 2011; ECORYS, 2013) already studied the ways in which alternative pathways, such as second chance education, can compensate for leaving (mainstream) education early and found that, for instance, second chance schemes can often innovate more easily and can focus more on the individual profiles and needs of their students. In previous publications of the RESL.eu project, we already discussed the general educational and policy context, as well as school-based intervention and prevention measures to tackle ESL. In this paper, we will focus on measures developed and implemented outside of mainstream education that (in)directly create new opportunities for those who left education and training prematurely. At the end, we will discuss how mainstream education can learn from alternative pathways (ECORYS, 2013).

Based on the preliminary cross-case analyses – including desk research – we decided to organise our case studies over four different but non-exclusive groups and performed the cross-case analysis per type of compensatory measure. Therefore the main section on the findings (section 3) is comprised of four subsections: 1) Work-based learning approaches; 2) Innovative pedagogical approaches; 3) Holistic student care approaches; and 4) Educational reintegration strategies. Although there is often overlap between these types of measures, we aim to discuss these specific approaches more in-depth in Project Paper 7.

⁴ For a more thorough discussion of EU policy on ESL, see Publication 1 Resl.eu (2014).

2. Methodology

Within the context of the RESL.eu Project Paper 4 – outlining the methodological approach to the qualitative fieldwork - the categorization of measures to reduce early school leaving (ESL) is made between measures, implemented within and outside regular secondary education. The school-based prevention and intervention measures within secondary schools were the focus of Project Paper 6. In Project Paper 7, we will focus on alternative pathways outside of mainstream education which we define as:

“Concrete measures implemented within institutions outside of regular secondary education, that provide alternative pathways for youngsters who have left regular secondary education without attaining an upper secondary education level qualification and that directly or indirectly allow them to attain an upper secondary qualification”.

Although we aimed to discuss more concrete measures that are directed at the reduction of early school leaving outside mainstream education, the concrete measure was not always so easy to distinguish from the specific education or training pathways young people follow. Hence, it will be clear in this paper that more concrete measures should be seen within its broader context, and cannot be seen separately from other measures and contextual conditions that characterize such alternative pathways. As a consequence, for some countries, it made more sense to discuss the measures within the broader pathway. As these measures and/or pathways are situated outside mainstream education, there appeared to be more variety with regard to institutional settings and educational pathways. To treat these measures properly, we discuss four distinct aspects of them. Considering that measures could consist of a range of distinct aspects, and to really grasp the nature of these alternative pathways outside of mainstream education, the measures are discussed in several chapters. In general, we will discuss these concrete measures in alternative learning arenas more in depth in four different sections, each focusing on one particular aspect or feature of this measure, namely 1) work-based learning approaches, 2) innovative pedagogical approaches, 3) holistic student care approach, and 4) educational reintegration strategies. Similar to project paper 6, we will focus on the direct and indirect attainment of an upper secondary level qualification. This way, by focusing on the more concrete measures, we can study how these measures and their specific features, resources and strategies effectively strengthen student attainment levels.

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. We will use a theory-driven stakeholder evaluation approach to structure the fieldwork across the countries involved and to evaluate the measures in a similar way.

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. This evaluation procedure does so by analysing the 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 alternative pathways outside of mainstream education studied in this project paper 7, the designers are often school boards and management of training centres (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 also 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.

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 or training centre. Instead, in each of their selected institutions, 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 aim to analyse the way specific measures are designed, implemented, perceived and appreciated by the stakeholders involved. The results of the cross-case analyses of alternative pathways outside of mainstream education presented in this RESL.eu Project Paper 7 are therefore in no way representative for all existing measures at the country, local, nor school/training centre levels.

2.2 Applied Methodology and Fieldwork Approach

With respect to the methodology used for the fieldwork on the evaluation of alternative pathways, this implies that these measures are evaluated based on two types of analyses: an analysis of the available documents (e.g., school/programme 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 alternative pathways in each of the selected programs, we started with a short analysis of the (school) policy documents before interviewing respondents. We will provide a more extensive description of each measure in Annex 2. In each interview with the principal and/or management, we discussed the broader perspective of the programme and the design of the measures (the principal and/or management); next, we compared these ideas to discourses emerging in a focus group discussion and individual interviews with members of the target group and a focus group and individual interviews with staff members implementing the measures.

In order to collect insightful information to evaluate the alternative pathways and to allow a comparative analysis, all stakeholders were interviewed and asked about the 1) awareness of the issues of ESL and ways to tackle ESL, 2) reasons for participating in the measure (as designer, implementer or target group), 3) stakeholders' ideas about the scopes and aims of the measure in which they were involved, 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 to meet the aims and intentions of the measure, 7) the perceived support, 8) their perceptions about the outcomes of the measure, and finally 9) their views on the extent the measure could relate and adapt to the local realities they are confronted with (see also Annex 3).

3. Findings from the Cross-case Analysis of Measures in Alternative Pathways

In this section, we give an overview of the findings of the cross-case analysis of the case studies presented in the seven Country Reports, which summarize the findings of all case studies for each country separately as already pointed out. The similarities and differences of these measures will be discussed in distinct sections: 1) work-based learning approaches; 2) innovative pedagogical approaches; 3) holistic student care approaches; 4) educational reintegration strategies. Each of these chapters are structured as follows: a) the official scope and aims of the measures under study; b) assessing the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group; and c) risk and protective factors. In Annex 1, we give an overview of all studied measures that are used as the basis for this project paper. In Annex 2, descriptions of the country-specific pathways, the institutions providing them and concrete measures are presented.

3.1. Work-based Learning Approaches

The EU Commission Thematic Working Group (TWG) on ESL identified the potential of vocational education and training (VET) in reducing ESL both as a preventive as well as a compensatory measure (EU Commission, 2013). A joint Eurydice and Cedefop report (2014) indicated that understanding and preventing ESL in VET as well as compensating for ESL in general education by attracting, retaining and reintegrating young people through vocational education and training should be part of the member states' strategies to reduce ESL. Vocational education and training – as defined by the EU Commission (2015a) – are *'education programmes that are designed for learners to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies specific to a particular occupation, trade, or class of occupations or trades. Such programmes may have work-based components (e.g. apprenticeships, dual system education programmes)'*. Successful completion of such VET programmes leads to labour market-relevant vocational qualifications that should be recognised by national authorities and/or the labour market. Work-based learning (WBL), is considered a key aspect of VET by the EU Commission. WBL can, however, be found in different forms across EU member states (e.g., school-based VET with on-the-job training or work-based learning in school including simulation).– Like the EU Commission's Education and Training 2020 TWG on VET, we will primarily focus on WBL in the form of apprenticeships or 'dual education systems' and will define apprenticeships as learning pathways that *'formally combine and alternate company-based training with school-based education, and lead to nationally recognised qualification upon successful completion. Most often, there is a contractual relationship between the employer and the apprentice, with the apprentice being paid for his/her work.'* (EU Commission, 2015b).

A Cedefop study (2012) showed that – generally – VET graduates tend to secure jobs faster and find more permanent jobs than general education students who did not continue in higher education. Moreover, overall, higher incomes appear to be associated with VET, which is more work-based. The labour market outcomes of VET graduates over graduates from general education are, however, stronger in some countries than in others. The results for labour market outcomes comparing VET and general education graduates tend to cluster: on one side of the spectrum, countries

characterised by well-established VET within their educational system (e.g., Germany, Denmark and Austria) and on the other end, countries with more comprehensively organised systems (e.g., Spain and Portugal). This is particularly the case in countries with a tradition of combined school- and work-based learning in VET. The study, however, also indicated the need for more comprehensive research because the definition of a VET degree varies widely among countries (EU Commission, 2015a). Additionally, Gangl (2003) compares labour market outcomes of school- and work-based vocational education in 12 EU countries. The study finds that outcomes are much better for pupils who finish work-based training than for students who finish school-based alternatives. Further comparative studies provide additional support to the view that apprenticeship training reduces the risk of unemployment (Wolbers 2007).

With regard to the EU Commission policy level, promoting VET is one of the Education and Training policy priorities for 2020. European member states and social partners have cooperated on promoting VET through the Copenhagen Process. In 2010, the Bruges Communiqué set out a vision and action plan for a modern and attractive VET, which ran until 2014 (EU Commission, 2010). The Bruges communiqué has inspired national VET reforms in more than two thirds of the EU countries, with the strongest influence on countries that previously knew a less developed VET system. For the period 2015-2020, the Commission has set out five key priorities to improve VET systems. One of the key priorities for the ET 2020 VET target is to promote work-based learning in all its forms but with a focus on apprenticeships -- namely by involving social partners, companies and VET providers (EU Commission, 2015c). A Cedefop study (2015) showed that increasing the level of WBL has been introduced as a top priority for many VET reforms in EU countries.

Next to positioning the promotion of VET and work-based learning as one of the key priorities for Education and Training 2020, the EU Commission also tries to invest in apprenticeships through the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) as part of the EU's strategy to tackle high youth unemployment (EU Commission, 2015c). The EAfA was launched in July 2013 with a Joint Declaration by the EU Commission, the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU and European social partners (EU Commission, 2015d). Apprenticeships are put high on the Commission's employment policy agenda and presented as policy actions to smooth the transition of young people from education to work. The European Commission provides financial support through Erasmus+, the European Social Fund (ESF), and other sources. Moreover, all EU Member States have included apprenticeships in their 'Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans' (EU Commission, 2015c).

Notwithstanding the widespread policy attention for apprenticeships, a recent EU Commission publication (2015) identified some challenges for the promotion of work-based VET through apprenticeships. One of the main challenges is getting companies on board, especially small and middle-size enterprises (SMEs). SMEs are considered the backbone of the European economy by providing around two-thirds of private sector employment in Europe. Yet, they are found to struggle with providing apprenticeship placements (EU Commission, 2015c). In response to the challenges many EU countries face in providing quality apprenticeship placements, the ET 2020 TWG on VET formulated 20 guiding principles regarding promoting national governance and social partners' involvement; supporting companies, in particular SMEs, in offering apprenticeships; improving the attractiveness of apprenticeships through improved career guidance and by assuring quality WBL. The 20 guiding principles should complement each other by addressing various challenges at the

national system level as well as the VET provider and company levels. One of the guidance principles – particularly relevant for our study – states that *‘VET including apprenticeships can play an important role regarding the social inclusion of disadvantaged young people who are often not in employment, education or training. However, this may imply extra costs for the companies providing such apprenticeship placements. Consequently, it may be important to support companies that provide apprenticeships for disadvantaged learners’* (EU Commission, 2015b).

In the present study, we will not consider the entire range of schools that offer work- and school-based learning. Rather, we will focus on those measures and pathways that are considered as alternative learning pathways after having left mainstream school-based education. Although work-based VET can be a more mainstream pathway in (upper) secondary education, apprenticeships are not a core pathway in VET in many EU countries. Countries where apprenticeships are considered a popular ‘first option’ are limited to a few (e.g. Austria, Germany and Denmark). Furthermore, in many apprenticeship systems, students must find an employer willing to take them on for a sustained period of time, which can entail entry barriers as employers are more likely to take on young people who demonstrate high potential, at the risk of excluding more vulnerable youth. This is particularly the case in systems where the number of apprenticeship places is insufficient compared to the demand (EU Parliament, 2014; Cedefop, 2014).

In most of the countries where we performed our case studies, VET with a significant proportion of WBL (i.e., at least 25%) is a peripheral phenomenon. Vocational upper secondary education is predominantly school-based, often combined with short periods of work-based internships. Based on recent data from Education and Training Monitor of the European Commission, in 2012 the proportion of work-based VET students in upper secondary VET amounted to only less than 5% in Belgium and Spain, just above 10% in Poland, nearly a quarter in the Netherlands and about 40% of the vocational students in the UK’s upper secondary education.⁵ This contrasts with the more than 85% of the upper secondary VET students in upper secondary VET in educational systems, such as Germany and Denmark, which give a prominent place to dual learning (EU Commission, 2015c). Due to the less prominent role of work-based learning pathways in the RESL.eu partner countries where we performed our case studies, we will consider work-based VET as an alternative learning pathway to more mainstream school-based secondary education.

Before moving on to our cross-case analyses of measures based in work-based learning pathways, we will first present some prominent theoretical frameworks from academic literature. Some scholars consider WBL a tool for business to gain competitive advantage in the current 21st century knowledge society through recruitment and retention of company-trained workers and by the development of innovative learning practices (Vaughan, 2008). In the 21st century, knowledge-centred economy learning in itself is perceived as the “new labour”. Since learning is no longer something that requires taking time out from being productive, learning is at the heart of productive activity (Zuboff, 1988).

WBL, however, can theoretically also take on many definitions. In this publication, we will follow what Cullen et al. (2002) referred to as ‘structured learning in the workplace’, which is managed and validated by external educational providers in partnership with employers, learning professionals and worker-learners. One of the main aims of this type of WBL is often to link classroom and work-based

⁵ The source did not report any data for Sweden and Portugal.

learning, usually based on the idea that learning and the motivation to learn are mediated through activities embedded in contexts that are perceived relevant by the learner.

Regarding the main target group of WBL, Ryan (2008) pointed out that work is – like school – a rich source of learning and the experience of learning from work should be an entitlement for all students. This confronts older constructions about vocational students and vocational knowledge. Depending on people's different positions within the labour market and education, there can be different views on the role of WBL. Some propose the development of greater vocational attributes, orientations and identity for general and vocational students alike. For others, the issue is about how accredited vocational subjects should be taught, especially in relation to work placement. For a third group, the issue of VET is about providing an alternative pathway to work for marginalised or at-risk students through special projects and partnerships with industry (Yates, 2006, p. 283). The existence of WBL challenges the traditional division between formal and informal learning because workplaces increasingly require employees to have knowledge that cannot be learned 'in practice' (Vaughn, 2008). Additionally, as shown in a comparative analyses of initial VET systems in Europe, Guile and Griffiths (2001) propose a connective model of WBL, which stresses the importance of 'connecting' formal and informal learning. The authors emphasize that one should strive for a more productive relationship between formal and informal learning by explicitly taking into account that learning occurs in different contexts of education and work. Hence, the Guile and Griffiths (2001) argue that the connective model for WBL allows learners to 'cross boundaries' by making reflexive connections between both specialist knowledge and skills acquired in formal education to more informal skills and understand why certain types of performance are required in different work contexts.

The scope and aims of the work-based learning pathways under study

Before discussing the discursive congruence between the different stakeholders on the awareness about the scope and aims, their (reasons for) participation and outcome experience, we will first present an overview of the official scope and aims of the pathways that were taken into consideration as (context for the) case studies for the cross-case analysis. We will discuss the measures under study with respect to 1) the level of work-based learning of the measures under study and 2) the officially recognised qualifications participants will receive when successfully finishing the programme in which they are enrolled. WBL pathways differ in the amount of time spent in a WBL environment and the type of sector (i.e., private or public) or organisation (i.e., simulation in schools or training centres). Additionally, apart from being taught in a workplace, measures vary with respect to the level and content of the accompanying courses as well. In these accompanying classes, the students can be taught general and vocational content, which can include both soft and hard skills.

The level of work-based learning

In this first part on the official scope and aims, we will provide an overview of the level to which students actually learn in a workplace environment, separately for each measure.

Both **Belgian/Flemish** WBL pathways combine school- and work-based learning with a majority of weekly learning time spent in non-class environments (i.e., 3/5 days or 4/5 days). Both learning pathways, however, differ in the way the work-based learning part is organised. **Centres for part-time vocational education** – contrary to the **apprenticeship pathway** – provide other alternative learning activities to its students than company-based apprenticeships. These students can learn

through workplace simulations in workshops in the social economy (i.e., bridging projects) or pre-apprenticeship and personal development programmes provided by youth care institutions. The apprenticeship pathway only allows private sector apprenticeships and is therefore more comparable with the (often more selective) dual learning system (see supra).

Both **Spanish/Catalan** (part-time) WBL pathways (i.e., Programa Joves per l'Ocupació (Youth for employment) and PTT – School to work transition Plan) considered for this cross-case analysis include a relatively small work-based learning part. The **Youth for Employment Programme** ('Programa Joves per l'Ocupacio') only applies limited real work experiences that is complementary to some of the vocational training schemes. The programme aims at the acquisition of the required professional skills needed to enter the labour market. To achieve this aim, besides to the vocational training, the programme promotes among local companies the possibility of subsidizing a labour contract for six months. As part of the **School to Work Transition Plan** ('Plan de Transicion al Trabajo'; PTT – School to work transition Plan) – a one year programme of about 1000 hours of training – a minimum of 180 hours of training should be in a real workplace, while the other training modules aiming for the acquisition of basic core skills are provided at the training centre.

In the **Dutch work-based compensatory learning pathway, Project B**, young early school leavers can work in a **Rotterdam Port** apprenticeship while following a training at a local senior vocational school. Participants of the projects ideally would get a salary for four days of work in the form of a paid apprenticeship. The project, however, did not manage to find sufficient apprenticeship placements for all of its students, which therefore also hindered the WBL opportunities for the participants (see outcome experience section).

Both **Polish** measures in **work-based alternative learning pathways are situated in the Polish Voluntary Labour Corps programme** ('Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy'). Both programmes include WBL and take a 36-month period of training. One programme combines school-based basic vocational education with work-based professional training while the other pathway is only situated at the workplace as part of an apprenticeship. Students who did not yet finish lower secondary education need to start in the basic vocational education programme that combines school- and work-based learning.

The **Portuguese** team studied two measures in WBL pathways in the Porto area. The first pathway is **an apprenticeship programme** that primarily targets 18-24 year olds that have not yet attained an upper secondary education qualification, but also enrolls underaged students if their admission is sufficiently motivated by being in need of an alternative to full-time school-based education. In this pathway classroom and workplace, learning is not combined each week but is organised cyclically. A period of two to five weeks of classroom learning is followed up by a similar period of WBL and vice versa. The school-based learning happens in a training centre that also provides a workshop in which the practical/technical courses are taught. The other WBL pathway **is also an apprenticeship programme consisting of three years of training**. In this apprenticeship program, the students start with school-based courses and after four months start combining school- and work-based learning. The apprenticeship programme is closely linked to the local woodworking and furniture manufacturing business, which de facto guarantees labour insertion after finishing.

In **Sweden**, two compensatory learning pathways will be discussed that at least contain some part of WBL. The first WBL pathway is **a vocational training course provided by a further education**

college for adults (Vocational training course). The vocational training courses take two to three semesters and combine a significant amount of WBL with class or distance learning provided in the form of individual and flexible schedules. The WBL is provided as a ten week period internship per semester, while in the apprenticeship track – provided by the same institution – the students work as an apprentice four days a week and attend school only one day a week for the whole of the programme. The second Swedish WBL pathway (Apprenticeship training course) was **an apprenticeship training course** run by a private education provider. The students attend school one day a week, while spending the remaining four days at a workplace where they are trained as an apprentice.

Three out of four of the **UK** case studies involved WBL elements in the alternative learning pathway. **The apprenticeship programme in Health and Social Care and Childcare** is provided as a full time study course, where participants complete worked-based training four days a week, and study theory at the college during one day a week. Another apprenticeship programme, **IT Professional and Digital Marketing Apprenticeships** provides complete workplace immersion for the apprentices involved. This provision was provided by a South London based IT and digital marketing recruitment company in partnership with two local further education colleges. Just like the apprentices in Health and Social Care/Childcare, apprentices at the IT Professional and Digital Marketing Apprenticeships are based at the company four days a week, but they have an extra day off instead of theoretical training on the fifth day. Their theoretical training is provided at the company too, and students only go to the college for additional math and/or English classes (but only if they have not reached the minimum required grades in the national exams). Another alternative learning pathway involving elements of WBL (Employability module) – provided by the same further education college as the IT Professional and Digital Marketing Apprenticeships – is **a pre-apprenticeship programme** designed for young people who lack the soft skills and minimum qualifications required for further studies and/ or employment. In this pre-apprenticeship pathway, the UK partner studied the employability module specifically tailored for 16- to 18-year-old students. The pre-apprenticeship programme only includes a limited amount of actual WBL at a company. The employability module contains team projects, units on communication, interview skills, application forms, CVs, etc.

Officially recognised qualifications

There seems to also be a large variation in the officially recognised qualifications of each WBL pathway (see Annex 1 and 2 for an overview and description of the measures). The **Belgian/Flemish** WBL pathways (i.e., part-time work-based VET and the Apprenticeship track) can provide students with both professional and educational qualifications. Both centres in this study teach a wide range of professional qualifications linked to different employment sectors. All these qualifications are officially certified and negotiated with relevant stakeholders in the employment sectors. The educational qualifications are similar to those of students in school-based vocational education, which can provide a full diploma for secondary education and therefore access to higher education. In both educational pathways, students need to have obtained at least one professional qualification before they can attain an educational qualification. This implies that some students need to attain multiple professional qualifications before being able to attain an upper secondary education degree.

The **Spanish/Catalan** WBL pathways also have a dual aim that incorporates providing students with professional competences to facilitate access to the labour market as well as re-engaging students in the educational system. The professional competences should increase the students' chances on

the labour market. The Youth for Employment programme and the School to Work Transition Plan do not directly provide full VET degrees at the upper secondary education level but rather prepare students to enter regular VET programmes. For those students who have not yet attained a lower secondary education level degree, this means providing them with an opportunity to do so. From 2015 onwards the pathway demanded 16-24 year old students to be registered for the Spanish EU Youth Guarantee Plan, which also implies that they have to enrol in educational provisions that can lead to an upper secondary education qualification.

The **Dutch** WBL Project B specifically targets early school leavers and aims at providing these youngsters with a dual learning track that should provide workplace learning experience through a paid apprenticeship and opportunity to attain an upper secondary level VET degree in cooperation with a local VET provider. After the successful completion of this one year programme, youngsters receive their basic qualification and relevant labour market experience.

The **Polish** measures in work-based alternative learning pathways situated in the Polish Voluntary Labour Corps programme (VLC, in Polish: 'Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy') aim to address the needs of young people over 15 years of age who are not in education or training and have no lower secondary education level qualification. Young people are enabled to complete practical, on-the-job training and gain educational and professional qualifications. In addition, the VLC units offer vocational training for youths in non-formal education contexts who have completed lower secondary education and did not continue education in upper secondary education, as well as apprenticeships complementing the education in basic vocational schools, leading to upper secondary education qualification. Young people under the age of 18 can choose education and theoretical vocational training in the school system (in basic vocational schools) or learning in non-formal education contexts (vocational training at an employer's organisation). Most students, however, choose to complete their theoretical education at the upper secondary education level in basic vocational schools.

The **Portuguese** case studies linked to WBL pathways (i.e., Apprenticeship and sponsoring programme and the Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee) both provide dual certification. Students that successfully finish the apprenticeship and training centre based courses attain a specific professional qualification and an upper secondary education level qualification. Both training centres provide these apprenticeship-based WBL pathways explicitly as compensatory pathways for those who have left mainstream education and to allow them to still attain qualifications.

The **Swedish** WBL pathways linked to the case study measures (i.e., Vocational training course and Apprenticeship training course) are vocational training courses at the upper secondary education level. Students completing these vocational courses attain credits that are needed to complete the upper secondary education level VET. These credits do not, however, suffice to attain a full qualification. Students are not obligated to study compulsory core subjects that are necessary for attaining an upper secondary education level qualification. After completing the training in the apprenticeship training course, students are awarded with certification that recognizes their skills, and they can also gain credits for the upper secondary education modules that they have passed.

Finally, the measures studied by the **UK** partner that are part of WBL pathways (i.e. Health and Social Care/Childcare Apprenticeship, Employability module and IT Professional and Digital Marketing Apprenticeships) provide students with different opportunities for attaining officially

recognised qualifications. The Health and Social Care/Childcare Apprenticeship and IT Professional and Digital Marketing Apprenticeships respectively provide officially recognised educational qualifications at the upper secondary or post-secondary education level. The Employability module is part of a pre-apprenticeship programme that aims at preparing students for further learning, training and/ or employment by providing the necessary skills, knowledge and entry level qualifications. The apprenticeship programmes provide professional qualifications in their respective fields: Health and Social Care, Childcare sector, and IT, digital marketing and recruitment. All apprentices and pre-apprenticeship students below 18 years of age are required to attend English and math classes until they attain the minimum required qualifications (i.e. A*-C grades at GCSEs), if they haven't yet achieved them. The pre-apprenticeship course does not have formal entry requirements, being targeted specifically at young people with no qualifications. The apprenticeship courses presented here are provided at different levels, and entry requirements (including English and math grades and previous professional qualifications) can vary depending on the specific course and level.

This overview shows that there is some variation in the actual level of work-based learning and the extent to which these pathways – directly or indirectly – lead to officially recognised educational and/or professional qualifications.

Assessing the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group

Awareness about the scope and aims

Our analyses revealed that the discourses of stakeholders involved in the work-based alternative learning pathways recognised the dual scope and aims of the measures/pathways under study. When discussing the awareness about the scope and aims, most staff and students involved mentioned the dual aims of promoting labour market insertion through learning professional skills as well as – directly or indirectly – working towards the attainment of officially recognised educational qualifications (e.g., an upper secondary education qualification). These dual learning alternative pathways are generally recognised by the actors involved as valuable alternatives for full-time school-based education that often primarily focus on the preparation of young people for higher education. Nevertheless, due to the possibility of attaining an upper secondary education degree in some of these pathways, access to higher education remains an option:

“Studying in regular school is good, we learn a lot, we conclude 12th grade, but if we have the misfortune of not enrolling in university, we have no training in work; we don’t have any know-how, whereas here, we learn a profession. If we want to conclude our course and go out working, we can do that. If we want to enrol in university, we can do that. We leave more paths open if we come to these courses.” (Student, Intensive general upper secondary education – daily programme, PT)

Although dual learning systems are not very prominent in the educational systems involved in this study, pathways that include some level of WBL are found in all of these countries. Some educational stakeholders in the learning centres explicitly made reference to the ‘dual learning’ concept and to other EU educational systems in which learning pathways are more mainstream. Due to the lack of

institutional embeddedness, the local implementation of the dual learning system was not always a success and positively evaluated, as shown by the supervisor of the Portuguese basic vocational school with apprenticeship as occupational training:

“These apprenticeships... are dual certifications. The model is inspired by the German dual system. The implementation in Portugal was a bit mistreated.” (Supervisor, Basic vocational school with apprenticeship as occupational training, PT)

Critical voices about the implementation of apprenticeship-based dual learning pathways mainly triggered concerns about the **potential selectiveness of such a system**. Respondents feared that this would leave out particular groups of students. This was for instance the case in Belgium, where the supervisor was concerned about a group of youngsters who are labelled as not being ready for labour market participation. He argued that this was problematic, as these youngsters are currently the main group of participants in his alternative work-based learning pathways:

“My biggest fear is that the current target audience of our type of education [part-time work-based VET] – with whom we worked for many years now – will be left out. There will be two groups: a first group fits in the new target audience and can be part of ‘the Dual Learning system’ [and thus find an apprenticeship], possibly with some additional measures. Those are the youngsters that are ‘ready for the labour market’. The other group – which is not ‘labour market ready’ – will have to be taken care of by the department of Welfare. However, there is no clear indication that the department of Welfare will receive more money or support to take care of these youngsters. Probably, this will be a group of students that will end up in the statistics of absenteeism, or that cause more problems at school, which will make their educational experience and outcomes even worse.” (Supervisor, BE Institution C providing part-time work-based VET)

This quote shows that supervisors and implementers of these measures often struggle with the definition of their target group. Another remarkable concern regarding the awareness about the dual aim (and scope) of the WBL pathways is the **trade-off** that is sometimes made **between the dual aims** of these pathways. Despite the fact that all stakeholders recognised the aim to promote labour market insertion, some of them primarily seemed to target the continuation or reintegration in a pathway that leads to an upper secondary (VET) qualification. Most stakeholders acknowledged the **increased importance of educational qualifications** on the labour market and some explicitly indicated that an upper secondary qualification is often considered a minimum requirement to exercise many professions:

“People who are going into the sector as childcare professionals, the government now is expecting them to be at a specific level for literacy and numeracy skills. So, this course is a way in for those who have not got those skills to get those skills while they’re also getting a recognised professional qualification to work in the workforce.” (Staff member, Health and Social Care/Childcare Apprenticeship, UK)

These accounts indicate that educational credentials are perceived to play an important role on the labour market and, regardless of the type of education one is enrolled in, remain important. Nonetheless, in many of the WBL pathways, the most prominent and ultimate scope and aim that we could find in the stakeholders’ discourses was the promotion of youngsters’ employability by

gaining professional skills and knowledge. The WBL pathways are perceived to be higher valued than school-based (vocational) education with regard to their students' labour market opportunities. This is because of the perceived value of WBL for employers:

"Very often employers prefer just to accept such students. First, they have the greatest benefit from them, as these students have already learnt something. The student is there five times a week for three years, and besides, they [employers] say, that such kid will learn much more. Because what could he learn when he is there only two days a week?" (Supervisor, Voluntary Labour Force, PL)

Some youngsters were also strongly convinced of the benefits of WBL for their position on the job market, which is considered particularly important given the high youth unemployment rates:

"When you're studying, in education, it's more theory than practical, so you don't actually get a feel for what it would be like in a work area. So going into an apprenticeship, you also get work experience which gives you that kind of knowledge of what it will be like in a workplace, but then you're also studying more. It gives you that knowledge of what it's going to be like in an actual work area, the practical side, not just the theory." (Student, IT Professional and Digital Marketing Apprenticeships, UK)

According to some youngsters, the official aim of upper secondary level VET to reintegrate young people in education was no longer acknowledged as a main objective by staff members. These youngsters mentioned having adapted their views on this, because they think that some students (and their parents) prioritized finding employment over continuing education:

"People who have financial problems at home and clearly prioritize finding work rather than being four months in training. [...] In most cases, the objective is to find a job. Yes, there are many young people in the field that you can pay the enrolment fee for and ESO [upper secondary education] is a need that they have been postponing, well ... they value it a lot, and here they are quickly hooked on this resource of the education system; but mostly its purpose is to find work and to earn a salary." (Supervisor, Programa Joves per l'Ocupació (Youth for employment), ES)

"So we follow the end terms [fixed curricula set by the Flemish government] in all groups except in one, which is called the 'ALT-group'. This is an alternative programme for the students we feel won't get a qualification here. That will not happen... For the largest part of that group, we see little evolution. Those are students who leave education as soon as they turn eighteen or those who are going to quit at the end of the school year. When teaching in the 'ALT-group', we actually want to teach them some practical things. Let's say 'Okay, you want a residence permit? How do you make that happen? What are bank documents?' and so on..." (Supervisor, the Implementation of Official Curricula for General Courses, BE).

The latter quote already suggests that the alternative learning arenas we discuss here are often considered to be the final stage before young people enter the labour market. As a consequence, staff members try to teach them as much as possible, and the most valuable things first, before they leave education and training. This brings us to another prominent finding. It is exactly because most of these pathways are considered alternative, 'second options' or even 'last resort' pathways in these

countries that they are often **negatively stereotyped** by the general public. Moreover, their student body is mostly characterised by a strong overrepresentation of socially disadvantaged youngsters and students with a history of educational failure, which often does not add to their status in society:

"We also receive school dropouts [...] those who come from a dropout or repetition path. The groups are composed of young adults who come to apprenticeship as the 'last resort' to be able to join the labour market with some qualification that may give them prospects of a professional future. [...] The young adults who have dropout background, with frequent failures, with a long history in terms of educational and training courses, are more likely to enrol in this centre." (Supervisor, Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee, PT)

"I think the vast majority of them are aware that you need to graduate from a school, that you need to learn. If they drop out of the district school system, if they fail for a third time and they know that there is [a place] where you can continue this education, they come and continue." (Supervisor, Voluntary Labour Force, PL)

Previous negative educational experiences and negative school attitudes of students in the WBL alternative learning pathways are often considered to play a continuing role in students' current attitudes and behaviour. This can be illustrated by the supervisor of the Portuguese Apprenticeship and Sponsoring programme, who attributed the high rate of dropout from their apprenticeships programme to the young adults' lack of motivation and discipline:

"In Apprenticeships, [there is] much dropout... demotivating factors. Here in the classroom is the same thing; they reflect what we call rudeness, lack of discipline, not by lack of ability but, sometimes, as a form of affirmation. Some of them fight among themselves to see who the most undisciplined one is. That happens quite often and we seek to create some motivating factors internally." (Supervisor, Apprenticeship and sponsoring, PT)

Many staff members involved in the alternative WBL pathways ascribed the lack of engagement of their students to the shortcomings of the (mainstream) education system:

"Yes. I have always said that all these programmes should be created, but they are consequences of the education system, not 100%, but most people think of them as existing only as a result of the shortcomings of the education system [...] all those academic deficits are not personal deficits, they are deficits of the system. School failure is not about the kids, it is about the system,... so I think that if we had more focus on primary, secondary education, ..." (Staff member, Programa Joves per l'Ocupació (Youth for employment), ES)

"School dropout is a problem because, mostly, regular education is not prepared to deal with the diversity of students in terms of social and cultural background, in expectations... Mainstream education is highly valued by students who want to pursue higher education. All those who do not have that goal are lost and disoriented. That is also why mainstream schools have to bet on vocational paths, vocational courses." (Staff member, Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee, PT)

Supervisors and staff members ascribed students' disengagement from education and training to the fact that mainstream secondary schools often exclude youngsters too easily and do not provide

sufficient individualised support. This support is perceived to be necessary in order to keep students dealing with social and/or educational problems on board (see also chapter 3.2.):

“Let’s be honest, those are the kids that dropped out of school. Often, to say it in an impolite way, schools get rid of them, because they decrease grade average, because they destroy the school’s reputation. I won’t say that we believe that suddenly a miracle will happen. Because we are aware that it needs many hours of work, many meetings, many talks. We have to be realistic.” (Staff member, Basic Vocational School with Apprenticeship as Occupational Training, PL)

“I think my colleagues in the secondary school sector, I believe, are more driven by target measures and meeting national target minimum grades, rather than aiming their teaching at engaging the students (...) and I think we lose those students along the way.” (Staff member, Health and Social Care/Childcare Apprenticeship, UK)

Many staff members and students also indicated that mainstream education failed to provide youngsters with sufficient, timely and correct information about the option of a dual learning pathway as a **positive option for their educational trajectory**. As for the public opinion, these dual learning pathways are considered not to be well-known among teachers nor career guidance counsellors in mainstream secondary education:

“I sometimes have the feeling that within the Centres for Student Counselling [CLB]... and now I’m talking about 25 phone calls per year... that they call me to ask what it is about, the apprenticeship study track. And then I ask myself if CLB’s – organisations that should find the most appropriate track for youngsters – have to call me to ask what it is... How can you give youngsters the right study advice?! That’s something that I find very hard to understand.” (Apprenticeship counsellor, BE_D)

Similar accounts were found by the participants of WBL pathways. Some students indicated that these pathways are often less appreciated than the traditional learning routes among school staff and fellow students in mainstream education. Therefore, young people are rarely encouraged by their schools to make the decision to change schools and take up this option:

“Schools aren’t really helpful. All they really told you, all they promoted at my school was to go to sixth form [academic track]. But sixth form is not for everyone [...] When I decided to come to this college they said: ‘Why do you want to go to college and not to university, you’re wasting your time, you need a degree’.” (Student in Health and Social Care/Childcare Apprenticeship, UK)

“When I told my friend I wasn’t going to university, she said ‘well you’re going to be jobless and you’re going to be unsuccessful’ [...] People look down on it, because they think that you’ve worked harder if you’ve gone to university.” (Student, IT Professional and Digital Marketing Apprenticeships, UK)

Despite the fact that both staff and students in alternative WBL pathways often reported a lack of knowledge and recognition about these measures by a broader audience, they indicated that WBL can provide valuable alternative learning routes, even if it is not students’ primary educational choice.

Participation and ownership

As we discussed in the policy background section, the sections on the (awareness about the) official scope and aims, virtually all of the work-based learning pathways we studied (officially) have the dual objective to provide young people both with professional skills and allow them to work, while at the same time working towards the attainment of an educational qualification. However, for some pathways and some target groups, a trade-off is made between both aims by the actors involved in work-based learning pathways. We will, therefore, start this section on participation and ownership with the (alleged) reasons for participation of the students according to the actors involved (i.e., supervisors, implementing staff and target youngsters).

Motives for enrolment

Our findings show some variation in the extent to which **extrinsic motivations of future benefits** seem to play a role for youngsters' enrolment in WBL pathways. These extrinsic motivations are often intertwined in the respondents' discourses and may consist of getting an educational qualification and the prospect of better labour market opportunities when succeeding the training. Regardless whether these qualifications are interpreted in educational or professional terms, they are predominantly considered **a means to an end**.

The measures across countries varied in the extent to which a distinction was made between **educational and professional qualifications**. In countries where educational and professional qualifications are formally seen as different outcomes of WBL pathways, actors seemed to distinguish the added value of an educational qualification from certificates for professional skills. Some stakeholders seemed to link an upper secondary degree primarily to being able to proceed in higher education. Nonetheless, overall, most actors acknowledged the growing importance of getting an upper secondary education diploma in society, as is shown by this quote of a focus group discussion with staff members that taught in the Apprenticeship track in Flanders (Belgium):

Staff member 1: We do, however, get the feeling that [the idea of] getting an educational degree is gaining in importance among the youngsters.

Staff member 2: I think that's right because you see students that finished their professional qualification and still stay in the course to attain their educational degree too.

Staff member 3: And there are also students, although only few, that continue education afterwards.

Staff member 2: that's true but they are a small minority of the students.

(Focus group discussion with teaching staff, Apprenticeship Counselling, BE)

The importance of these qualifications are, however, often understood primarily **in terms of future labour market prospects**. In these discourses, the (perceived) competition on the labour market is considered a factor that determines enrolment in a specific measure. A remarkable finding in this respect was the fact that getting an educational qualification on top of a professional certificate could – in sectors with a high level of early school leavers – even weaken instead of strengthen young people's short-term labour market prospects. Staff members indicated that some employers prefer

workers with low educational qualifications to keep wage costs down and to be able to keep on receiving employment subsidies for early school leavers:

“A lot of employers – and this might sound very blunt – would prefer just an uneducated labourer. [...] Especially in sectors like construction... because when they hire them, this makes a difference. When they get hired with a secondary diploma for let’s say, plumbing, they have a diploma and will ask for a higher wage. Most of our guys are schooled labourers because they got their professional qualification [and not their educational diploma]” (Apprenticeship counsellor, Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Counselling, BE)

Regardless whether the labour market competition in a particular sector on the labour market and local realities were taken into account, the importance of finishing some level of education and getting a degree was mentioned by all stakeholders in all countries. These stakeholders mentioned that the main motivation to enrol in the measures under study was to strengthen young people’s labour market position:

“Because I heard that there was like a lot of work in this profession, so I went for it and found this one. I wanted to like get an education that leads to a job, basically” (Student, Apprenticeship training course, BE)

“I chose to come to the courses to conclude 12th grade, see if I can get a job, because it’s needed at home. Now everybody [employers] asks for 12th grade. So, it’s better to have it than just to have 9th grade.” (Student, Apprenticeship with labour market insertion guarantee, PT)

“You either complete 12th grade, or you have very little chance of entering the labour market. They are aware that completing just 9th grade is no longer enough. In one of our courses, if we had a minimum of graduates annually, employability would be 100%. Companies can no longer ask us for the best trainees, they ask and we do not have them. For these young adults, especially for the majority who do not intend to pursue their education, it is very important.” (Staff member, Apprenticeship with labour market insertion guarantee, PT)

As getting a diploma mainly matters in order to get a better job on the labour market, some students – mostly in the UK fieldwork – explicitly preferred entering an apprenticeship-based study track rather than opting for an academically oriented pathway. These students are convinced that employers prefer youngsters with relevant work experience and a strong professional skillset. Furthermore, examples in their personal environment showed them that a university degree was no guarantee for finding a job. In addition, they perceived that university graduates end up with student debt, as shown in the following quotes:

“I think apprenticeships are the way forward., if you go to university, you just come out with big debt. That’s it. (...) My brother went to university, came out with a qualification, no job, he can’t get anything, so that’s why I did an apprenticeship instead.” (Student, IT Professional and Digital Marketing Apprenticeships, UK)

“I did my own research, came across apprenticeships, so I decided to do that, because for what I want to do, I need experience anyway, so instead of doing four years at university and then coming out and having to get experience anyway, there was no point, it was more

beneficial to just do this.” (Student, IT Professional and Digital Marketing Apprenticeships, UK)

Some staff and students reported that some students’ commitment to attaining a qualification was only triggered once these students were already older and when they experienced that their position on the labour market was rather vulnerable after having left education early. Some of the WBL pathways therefore provide compensatory pathways to conclude their education:

“Some have dropped out of school many years ago, they worked but failed to have a steady job and they returned to attain more qualifications... or walked around doing nothing and now the ‘penny has dropped’ and they decided it was time to do something for themselves and conclude secondary education. For most of them it is their last resort.” (Staff member, Apprenticeship and sponsoring, PT)

“I don’t know... a change of attitude. In school I didn’t study at all, I let everything go over my head, but at a particular moment in my life I changed my attitude: I changed my way of thinking, and I changed everything. I was very keen on studying, to get a good future for myself, to be a better person...” (Student, School to work transition Plan, ES)

In many occasions, both staff members and students reported that entering a WBL alternative pathway occurred **after a long period of academic disengagement in mainstream education**. This often went hand in hand with negative educational experiences, which in many cases prevented youngsters from continuing education elsewhere. As a consequence, work-based learning approaches were indicated to be especially appealing to (older) at-risk youngsters who no longer favoured full-time school-based education but still wanted to get at least a basic qualification.

The choice for WBL learning was also inspired by **financial and legal motivations**. As shown by this quote of a staff member in Portugal, for some students, the remuneration (although in some cases being limited) played a role for young people to choose apprenticeship-based training:

“The group from this course comes here looking for an alternative path, not only because it will guarantee employment, but because it is the last chance, because they have never fit in the regular system... The provision of funds is another reason for participation: Young adults have a pecuniary scholarship, around 80€. It is significant, lunch, transport and every quarter, around 60 euros to support the purchase of manuals and equipment” (Staff member, Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee, PT)

Other students preferred WBL over school-based learning as they were obliged to stay enrolled in compulsory education. This was also accompanied by their desire to receive (or not lose) social benefits:

“For instance, they have only three months left before turning 18, and it is hard to hide somewhere, so here they can come and pretend that they are doing something.” (Staff member, Apprenticeship on the job training with employers, PL)

“And then we have those as well who come from Arbetsförmedlingen [the Swedish Public Employment Service], they might be registered and have to apply for an educational course.

Many come here because they know that it is a way to get an income.” (Staff member, Apprenticeship training course, Sweden)

Although the prior educational experiences of many of the target students were rather negative, and motivations to enrol were reported to be often more extrinsic than intrinsic, stakeholders also report on **how extrinsic motivation can be transformed into more intrinsic motivations**. This was often explicitly linked to the specific type of practical learning or to the alternative WBL contexts. These WBL learning contexts are experienced as more realistic and in some cases more welcoming than previous educational settings:

“Not many young people choose to sign up for that kind of provision. Their motivation varies from young person to young person and it would be wrong of me to try and boil that down to a few examples. But what I would say is that their motivation is primarily extrinsic at the beginning of the course, but it does through the nature of the provision, it does then become intrinsic for them to complete.” (Vice Principal of further education college, Employability module, Pre-apprenticeship programme, UK)

These settings were often welcomed because of several (often combined) reasons. First, **the workplace as a setting for learning as such** was reported as a main motivation to choose WBL pathways. Some students and staff reported that a full-time school-based learning did not match with what they felt to be suitable learning environments. Academic disengagement was then primarily linked to having to sit in class too much. Additionally, when students did not feel engaged, they reported being more prone to showing disruptive behaviour. However, when being in a work setting, the same ‘disengaged’ youngsters were found to show higher levels of engagement:

“[They choose this track] because they are workers. They don’t have the school holidays. You got to give it to them... There are guys who.. like our stage technicians, they leave Thursdays to go abroad, they come back on Monday night and they almost haven’t slept at all, they have had to work very hard and they have to come to school the next day. You got to give it to them! At the age of sixteen, getting up early in the morning to get picked up for going to a construction site, I mean. So actually these are guys who – and also the girls for that matter – are youngsters who just want to work. But these are also the ones who in school, I have had them in my class [she used to be a teacher in school-based VET], who would really get in your hair...” (Supervisor, Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Counselling, BE)

Second, students indicated **the importance of practical learning and the benefits of being able to connect what they have learned in real work situations**. This was often also connected to a more mature way of learning:

“I think it’s a plus that you come to understand things faster than in a regular school because you can apply it right away. And I think you learn to deal with it better, in a more mature way as well.” (Student, Vocational Training & Apprenticeship Counselling, BE)

“In mainstream school you learn a bit of everything, when you’re in a course you probably learn mainly to like your course better than in mainstream school, in mainstream school you won’t learn how to connect things.” (Student, Apprenticeship and sponsoring, PT)

This **more practical and mature way of learning** are thus **major intrinsic motivations**, which students indicated as being important factors for enrolling and staying in WBL pathways.

A final remark that has to be made with regard to enrolment motives is that there is one precondition to be able to offer the combination of school- and work-based learning contexts, namely the availability of sufficient work-based learning settings. For this, both students and teaching staff are mostly dependent on employers. This prerequisite should not be neglected, as this requires measures to be selective with respect to their enrolment procedures. This has resulted in numerous different levels and methods of selection and adds specific challenges with regard to the distribution of tasks and responsibilities among the different stakeholders (i.e., training centre staff, students and employers). In the following section, we will discuss how these issues are met in the different case studies.

Levels and methods of selection

Although many WBL pathways are considered suboptimal educational pathways in many of the researched contexts, most of these pathways and measures have installed some level and method(s) of selection. These selection mechanisms are primarily related to the work-based learning part, mostly involving apprenticeship contracts with employers outside of the training centres.

The issue of **selective enrolment** and tensions associated with this can be illustrated by the two Belgian case studies where the issue of selection related to finding and keeping an apprenticeship contract was very prominent. While no selection criteria are set in the current⁶ part-time work-based VET, students that want to enrol in the apprenticeship track need to have an apprenticeship contract to start in that pathway. Most actors in the apprenticeship track were, however, convinced that their selection process was part of their success. By contrast, in the part-time work-based VET included in this study, students have the opportunity to follow pre-apprenticeship courses. Staff members considered their approach much more inclusive, which they felt is crucial for their target audience. Staff members were very much aware of the potential risks and benefits of each approach, especially as the planned restructuring of WBL in Flemish secondary education (i.e. 'Dual Learning') includes having an apprenticeship contract being a condition for enrolling. When discussing government plans, the staff of part-time work-based VET would exclude many of the youngsters that are currently enrolled in their part-time work-based VET courses:

Staff member 1: "There will always be a group of students that do not meet the criteria of 'Dual Learning'. Even if you do not meet the criteria to enter Dual Learning, you still have the obligation to enrol in school, so we would still have to find a place for these young persons."

Staff member 2: "If you map all students of our school, now more than 200 students, that could enter Dual Learning, you would only have a really small number of students that are able to enter. What are we going to do with the rest of the 200 students? It would only be a minority of students that could enter that programme, and that would not only be for our

⁶ Currently the Flemish Government is restructuring WBL learning pathways into a new policy framework for "Dual Learning" that is predominately based on the German and Austrian dual system. New pilot projects will start as of September 2016, which will inform the implementation of the new dual learning pathways.

school, but applies to all schools, especially in an urban context. There would be 1000ish students in Flanders that would not have any schooling.”

Selection processes in apprenticeship-based training are as a consequence dependent on employers, because enrolment requires an apprenticeship contract. Therefore, **discrimination of specific groups on the labour market** can also have effects on the opportunities for starting apprenticeships for youngsters from these socially vulnerable groups. In the following extract from an in-depth interview with an apprenticeship counsellor, it becomes clear that youngsters from stigmatised ethnic groups can encounter significant discrimination when applying for apprenticeships in specific professions, often when they are in direct contact with clients:

“I’ll start in the construction sector, for masons and the like, that is relatively easy to find places for youngsters called ‘Mohammed’ and ‘Ali’. For plumbers and for heating and for painters, electricity, it is more difficult and employers keep their distance because “we have to come in people’s houses” [pronounced in local dialect]. I’ll sometimes get a phone call saying: “[don’t you got anyone for me?” and then I’ll say: “yes, but I just sent him to you yesterday...” I really don’t make any distinction, I can’t do that, and I am definitely not allowed to do that.” (Apprenticeship counsellor, Vocational Training & Apprenticeship Counselling, BE)

Although the initial intake is mostly organised by the training centres, employers can still play a major role in the actual selection of potential candidates for apprenticeships. Additionally, in order for institutions to select students to enrol in an apprenticeship, criteria are defined, such as being ‘ready or mature to participate on the labour market’, which is often linked to attitudinal and behavioural aspects (i.e. soft skills) and is not targeting pre-existing professional skills and knowledge (i.e. hard skills). Similar practices are found to occur in pre-apprenticeship programs that primarily focus on providing youngsters with soft and basic workplace skills before starting an actual apprenticeship, such as the Employability module in the United Kingdom:

“The reason why there’s a need for this now is because prior to these pre-apprenticeships, (...) We found that people were going into apprenticeships and they did not have the required skills. This meant they were almost being set up to fail. [...] [These skills include] timekeeping, attendance, team working, communication, the ability to multi-task, the ability to complete a task, the motivation, the commitment. Literacy skills, numeracy skills.” (Staff member, Employability module, Pre-apprenticeship programme, UK)

Exactly because of the nature of this pre-apprenticeship programme, these employability courses have no formal entry requirements. However, young people need to attend an informal interview and complete a short assessment to make sure they are placed on the appropriate level:

“We don’t look at qualifications, we don’t look at previous history (...) but we do an extremely in-depth interview with each one of the young people. (...) We’re just trying to ‘fix them’ to get them back into mainstream. If they’re coming in externally then we do a real in-depth interview with them to make sure that this is actually what they want to do.” (Supervisor, Employability module, Pre-apprenticeship programme, UK)

This quote suggests that their intention is to gauge students' motivations, aspirations and ability levels during intake interviews to avoid a mismatch between students' expectations and abilities and the programme. The main aim of this measure is to increase employability by focussing on work ethics and basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Given most participants' previous negative experiences with training and education, such a mismatch might cause further disengagement, risking having them leave education altogether. Thus, enrolment procedures of pre-apprenticeship programmes were set up to not be very selective – though in virtually all cases, some kind of screening was built into the pathway. The methods of intake and screening practices range from short written questionnaires to in-depth intake interviews, to introduction internships:

“In this first interview, a first filter is applied, let's say. So here it's about what interests they have in terms of motivation... (To) people who have more doubts we push for a second interview, individually and longer, around twenty minutes. Then, here you can discover the person a little better and you end up making a decision.” (Supervisor, Programa Joves per l'Ocupació (Youth for employment), ES)

The conditions and other points of interest addressed during the intake and screening for such measures – other than having an apprenticeship contract with an employer – often include age restrictions, previous test results, previous educational qualifications, basic literacy and numeracy levels, pre-existing professional skills, motives for enrolment and commitment, emotional, resilience, stability of social relations and living arrangements. These issues addressed during the intake and screening not only relate to selection processes but also aim to inform the training centre about students' potential support needs:

“They are asked what education they have had, if they have worked, and if not, why they want to participate in the programme ... We ask them to express what training they might be more interested in and why [...] So the first action they take with us is a diagnostic interview with the guidance tutors, who pick up on difficulties, interests [...] So we have to try to agree on some interests and have a little picture of their situation: if they live alone, or with their parents, the economic situation.” (Supervisor, Programa Joves per l'Ocupació, ES)

For some WBL pathways, mostly in cases where there is high demand and limited funding, the government agency funding the educational institutions can prioritize youngsters considered to be most in need of the WBL pathway in order to improve their position on the labour market:

“They must meet certain requirements [...] some related to the EU Youth Guarantee Programme; they are youngsters that have to be registered with the Youth Guarantee, so the requirements for access to the Youth Guarantee also affect the program, they are young people who cannot be in educational or work activities, and may or may not have graduated from high school.” (Supervisor, Programa Joves per l'Ocupació, ES)

As shown in this citation, this may apply to those in society who need it the most. But, as indicated by another staff member of the School to work transition Plan (PTT) in Spain, this may also apply to contextual factors, such as earning an income that will determine the feasibility of a student to continue to stay enrolled in this particular measure:

“When it comes to selection, we really take into account the child’s motivation in the first place, so that he or she knows what they will be doing. Also concerning the issue of income, that is to say, if the public services do not give him or her the opportunity, it will be impossible for him or her to do anything.” (Staff member, PTT – School to work transition Plan, ES)

This quote also introduces the importance of **being inclusive** in most of the WBL pathways. Those pathways prioritizing those youngsters that are most vulnerable on the labour market might also require of implementers more support mechanisms and different professionalization levels than teaching skills during the intake and screening process:

“Sometimes you like wonder, is my job just this or is 50% of my job being social worker? (...) What the hell are the municipalities doing, are they just placing problems here? (...) I have even had students who are on such high levels of medicines that you wonder why this person is here -- these persons need proper care (...) before they come here.” (Staff member (Apprenticeship training course, SE)

The different selection procedures of the measures and pathways discussed in this section can affect the outcome experiences according to the different actors involved. In the next section, we will link the information regarding the motives for enrolling in WBL pathways and selection practices in these institutions to the stakeholder discourses about the outcome experiences and conditions for successful WBL pathways.

Outcome experience

When discussing the actors’ discourses on their outcome experiences of WBL pathways, we will first focus on the kind of indicators actors use to evaluate the success of measures that incorporate some level of work-based learning, and second, elaborate further on the conditions that they feel to determine the successful implementation of WBL approaches.

Outcome indicators

One of the main indicators used by the respondents in different WBL pathways is the extent to which the pathways actually **increase youngsters’ labour market opportunities** after finishing the education or training. Because – as indicated above – many stakeholders prioritise gaining professional skills over educational qualifications, labour market outcomes were primary indicators used in the actors’ discourses. The level of prioritisation of labour market insertion even jeopardises some students’ continuation of their education or training. Some youngsters were found to stop their studies to take on job offers, often even for short-term contracts. Hence, the labour market can be seen here as a pull factor contributing to ESL. For the staff members, this was, however, mostly perceived as a negative side-effect of their type of training.

“[In case a student decides to stop their training as a result of a job offer] we try to have a good chat with them, but yeah, if the employer is waving with a contract – we try to persuade them but there isn’t much we can do. Getting a degree is not necessarily a motivation for all.” (Supervisor, Vocational Training & Apprenticeship Counselling, BE)

“One of our enemies is temporary work. They [participants] sometimes drop out because they find those temporary jobs earning minimum wage for one month, two months, and stop coming to training. They think that it will be their future, and some months later they are unemployed and they have already left the pathway.” (Staff member, Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee, PT)

Many of the training centres try to keep track of the labour market outcomes of the graduates. Most of these data, however, are rather based on information collected by the centre:

“There is a monitoring of the young people who have participated in any year six months after the programme ends. For example, for the programme that ended last month, in April, we will present to the [local administration] a telephone follow-up, specifying what the youngsters are doing. (...) They are asked about two issues: training or labour insertion: if they keep working, if still studying, or if they have had some opportunity.” (Supervisor, Programa Joves per l'Ocupació (Youth for employment), ES)

This information is sometimes even based on partial information that measures gather on an informal basis:

“We try to somehow keep this relationship [of post-training follow-up] even for statistical interest, but there is not a very strong bond here – perhaps it could actually be – but in the end, this global degradation also weighs [on us] a bit and influences the fact that we are not doing all the monitoring we could. We seek to know what is going on, [and] many young adults do come to us, come tell us how they are.” (Staff member, Apprenticeship and sponsoring, PT)

The extent to which participants are able to enter particular jobs on the labour market after graduation is not only perceived as an internal indicator of efficiency but also influences the reputation of the institute and the learning pathway. The graduates can therefore be perceived as the ‘main ambassadors’ of the centre:

“We believe that they have a positive image of our work, so they are ambassadors par excellence of this offer... Before we got here the centre already existed, training for the furniture industry was residual. [...] Currently, in the region's industrial fabric, there are at least 300 former graduates from the centre with important responsibilities in terms of the industrial units... [...] The training centre has a very strong image, it is closely linked to companies and most of the trainees' family members work in the companies... They can see that trainees from this centre are skilled workers who quickly rise through the ranks. That makes our graduates highly valued in companies.” (Staff member (Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee, PT)

Not only concrete labour market skills and knowledge are part of the outcome indicators that stakeholders mentioned throughout the fieldwork. They related these to what they feel is demanded on the labour market. References to specific skills were, however, mostly made when the stakeholders were convinced that the professional training did not match the actual demands on the labour market. For instance, in the Apprenticeship training course in Sweden, there was a certain discrepancy between what employers expect from students who have participated in the measure,

and what kind of knowledge and skills that the school is actually able to equip the students with. Even though the measure is equivalent to upper secondary school level education, they felt that employers often require much more and have higher demands on the students because they are adults. Similar experience was noted by participants of the Youth for Employment programme in Spain:

Student 1: "The teaching was very basic. We were doing sums and subtractions all the time. Yes, it was that basic [they all laugh]. And I would say... do you think we are idiots? I felt very stupid doing that course."

Student 2: "What can I say? ... They gave me a sheet and told me 'Come on let's do all the sums you can.' I finished it in a sec. Once they told us to make a map... what am I supposed to learn by making a map?"

Educational qualifications were less prominent in the discourses on outcome indicators in most of the WBL pathways. Some staff indicated that internal and external evaluations measure the number of graduates and determine who can pass the semester/year. These graduation and dropouts figures can have effects on the training centre practices and funding. However, using these kinds of **output indicators** for evaluation and future funding can lead to bias in the data:

"If the results are lower, we're trying to improve our action to increase efficiency. [...] We try various tools to help the students. Sometimes it works, other times it doesn't. Another way to assess the outcomes is to check out the life paths of the graduates." (Supervisor, Apprenticeship (on the job training with employers, PL)

A similar experience was noted in an Apprenticeship and sponsoring programme in Portugal where the principal does not feel supported by the entity that oversees and finances the apprenticeships. The training companies' financial penalty for dropout numbers results (for some of them) in the use of illegal strategies to keep the funding, such as not recording when a trainee misses a class.

In general, when educational qualifications were mentioned, they were often also related to what the minimum standards are in (a specific sector of) the labour market. In some sectors (e.g., construction) the experience of an apprenticeship was a significant proof of being a schooled labourer, while in other sectors, the proof of sufficient generic skills were found to be more important. This was often related to opportunities for continuing professionalization and lifelong learning:

"In construction, from mason to painter, that is not as pronounced. The employers will tell them, to the apprentices "make sure you get the paper [diploma]" but what is actually looked into is what they can actually do. A good pair of hands, a set of brains and someone that knows how to work. That is what they look for. And in construction you have different levels. But for car mechanics, it used to be just working with a hammer and a chisel – so to speak – [although] now it has become something different. There have been some developments and then you'll feel that a degree, or at least some qualifications are more important. But in construction, for those guys who have done their apprenticeship somewhere, and satisfied the boss, even if they haven't gotten their paper, they will still get the job." (Staff member, Vocational Training & Apprenticeship Counselling, BE)

In the same programme, as illustrated in the following quote, students' engagement and skills shown in the training centre and in the workplace are found to not always correspond. Therefore, this makes stakeholders reflect upon the extent attaining educational qualifications – in many pathways decided on by the training centre – correspond with professional skill level and engagement shown in the workplace:

“The thing is that the certification and the right to move on to the next year is only based on the curriculum that is provided here [at the training centre], it has almost nothing to do with what happens on the workplace. They could be doing super at their employer but act like a pig here. Sometimes the employer says that someone is a one “hell of a guy, I don’t want to lose him, he will be getting a fixed contract”, while the same student might be doing nothing here, “sorry he cannot move forward.” I think that is a gap. I don’t advocate employers having to give them grades but when the student needs to be evaluated at the end of the year, it will be taken into account.” (Staff member, Vocational Training & Apprenticeship Counselling, BE)

The data collected among the different WBL pathways also shows that some alternative learning arenas use the students' and staff's feedback to evaluate the outcome of their educational provisions. For instance, in the Employability module of the Pre-apprenticeship programme in the UK, in addition to the statistical data collected about all learners, young people also have opportunities to give feedback about their experiences through the 'Learner Voice'. This is a college-wide student forum held each term with course representatives, *“where the learner can go along and talk about their experience at the college”* (Supervisor, Pre-apprenticeship programme, UK). Similarly, in the vocational training course in Sweden, the students and the teacher evaluate the module. There is a digital platform where students can suggest improvements that they would like to see. Once a year, a larger evaluation of the school is carried out, and once or twice per semester each class holds a class conference where they discuss how the school is living up to its goals concerning learning and knowledge, values and rules, influence and responsibilities, among other things.

Apart from the actual learnt skills and knowledge, the public image of the WBL pathways and their specific institution is seen as an important outcome by many stakeholders. As indicated in the awareness section, most of the WBL pathways in this study were rather perceived as a 'second option' or even a 'last resort'. These negative public images can therefore affect students' outcome experience. The following excerpts of students' discourses in the Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee in Portugal show how they try to cope with the negative image of their pathway:

Student 1: “She’s one of the intelligent ones [referring to a classmate’s niece in the general track], we’re the dumb ones.”

Student 2: “A person that goes to university is ‘the Doctor’”.

Student 3: Maybe you tell that guy to connect a plug or sand a table, they don’t know how.

Student 1: “Even so, you know that they will always be the intelligent ones and we will be the dumb ones. That’s just stupid, why is a person who has higher education degree more intelligent than me?”

These quotes demonstrate processes of self-stigmatization. The staff members involved in some of the WBL pathways indicated that the government did not fully acknowledge the importance of their work and also **treated them as the ‘second best’ educational option**. This was for instance clearly felt in the UK. When the government had to do some cuts in their funding, their programmes were the ones that were targeted first:

“Vocational qualifications are the easiest to bend at will, basically. [...] I think it is the government’s perception; they see us as ‘the poor relative’. Secondary schools have higher kudos than the further education sector does, I personally believe. Hence why the government, when they’re cutting education, we are the first people to be targeted. [As a consequence of the funding cuts] there’s more work for teachers; (...) the work- load has increased drastically, so much so that the admin time that we would normally traditionally have to plan our lessons is no more. [...] So what happens is a lot of colleagues are leaving.”
(Supervisor, Health and Social Care/Childcare Apprenticeship, UK)

Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that as the apprenticeship model is being promoted by the government, new funding avenues are being introduced. To conclude, the outcome experience of the stakeholders is based on a broad set of indicators like labour market outcomes, educational qualifications, the drop-out rate from the program, as well as their reputation. In the following section, we will discuss what the stakeholders indicated to be important conditions for enabling positive outcomes for WBL pathways.

Conditions for successful implementation of WBL approaches

First and foremost – due to the central role of WBL approaches in these case studies – an important condition articulated throughout the stakeholders discourses is **the availability of sufficient quality placements that provide opportunities for WBL**. Many of the institutions seem to struggle with finding apprenticeship placements for students in the regular economy. The cooperation with and engagement of employers does also seem to **vary strongly across employment sectors**:

“This always proves to be difficult. We spoke with three large companies before the project started and once we were about to start the project, they informed us that they were no longer interested.” (Supervisor, Project A, NL)

“The Port, they just told us: our companies are not interested in students from part-time VET. Other sectors or industries do help us, like the logistics sector but the sector and sector groupings in the Port do not.” (Staff member, Institution providing part-time work based VET, - BE)

Some WBL pathways also provide pre-apprenticeship courses and what can be called **‘close-to-real simulations’** in workshops at the training centre or in cooperation with actors in the social economy:

“There are pre-apprenticeship courses working on attitudes, there are pre-apprenticeship courses on language skills, there are bridging projects, four different kind of bridging projects [close-to-real simulations, mostly in a social economy context]. And you got personal

development courses, part-time and full-time, and there is the option of regular employment.”
(Supervisor, Institution providing part-time work based VET, BE)

Often training centres providing WBL approaches have the task to develop a network of employers for strengthening the supply of apprenticeships in the local economy. In some case studies, there was specific staff appointed to act as mediators between the training centre, the student and the employer. Their level of professional knowledge about the different employment sector(s) they are involved in was, however, questioned:

“We also have an apprenticeship counsellor, who is responsible for the professional courses of gardeners, for car mechanics, for the care sector and I don’t know what else. That can never work. If he goes and visits that workplace and needs to know how to let’s say give someone a perm [at the hairdresser] and then also how to change an engine, that just can’t work.” (Supervisor, Vocational Training & Apprenticeship Counselling, BE)

Furthermore, the training centres can also be in charge of doing **quality controls** to ensure the quality of the learning opportunities and working conditions at the workplace. Nevertheless, these quality checks do not always seem to guarantee the quality of the WBL environments. An important issue is the level to which employers actually provide opportunities to learn a profession and **not take advantage** of students by only letting them do low skilled repetitive tasks, as was the case for some students in the Vocational Training & Apprenticeship Counselling in Belgium:

Student 1: “It’s not great everywhere, of course. People often take advantage of an apprenticeship. At my previous job I was only allowed to clean. He [the employer] explained something. And the second time – I know that I still need a lot of explanation – and the second time he already got mad because I didn’t get it.”

Student 2: “They do not really invest in us.”

Student 3: “After two months on the job you know everything and from there on out... Then it really is turning into making a profit of our work. But we knew that beforehand so we can’t complain.”

Student 4: “Yeah, we knew that we had to work but I now have a crack in my lower back bone from taking on more weight than my own weight. They said yeah, start unloading the trucks. And because my body is still growing, we should not lift more than our own weight for eight hours long.”

A staff member acting as one of mediators in the same training centre mentioned above however explicitly addressed **the quality of the learning environment** and stressed the fact that the students are there to learn. Also, the mediators can be expected to be matchmakers between a specific student and an employer based on the local network and the initial screening of the apprentice. The following example shows a training centre intervening in the apprenticeship agreement because of bad working conditions and an employer failing to pay the apprentice’s remuneration:

“He was in a car repair shop. He was not happy, because the boss... after just a few days, he made him do things that he shouldn’t have had to do (...) he was using him. And then,

when it came to paying the wages, my son didn't get them. And we had to intervene through the VLC.” (Parent, Apprenticeship (on the job training with employers), PL)

Effective cooperation between the training centre and the employer was indicated to be one of the main conditions for providing sufficient and quality WBL opportunities in regular economy. A strong connection between the different stakeholders was not only addressed for being essential for the students' learning experience, but was also seen as beneficial for employers. Through close contacts between the theoretical and vocational training at the training centre, the curricula can be matched better with the demands on the labour market. The issue of **matching the learning process in the VET training centre and the workplace** was indicated as being one of the main success factors for a positive outcome of the WBL approach. This, however, does not always seem to be the case. In the following excerpt in the Vocational Training & Apprenticeship Counselling in Belgium, a problem in the official VET curriculum was at least partly ascribed to the presumed cultural differences between the worlds of education and work:

Interviewer: “To what extent does the content of professional courses correspond with the needs of employers?”

Teacher 1: “For my course, totally not! The course on plumbing I teach now is... [...] Who designed that curriculum for plumbing? I don't know...”

Teacher 2: “When was this curriculum designed? [laughing] Before or after WWII? [laughing]”

Teacher 1: “I don't know, it might well be in the 1960s. We should start at the beginning. For instance, you should know the difference between steel and copper before you start teaching them to weld different pipes. In the first year, I'm teaching them how to weld and in the second year they learn the materials... So for upcoming inspections [of the Ministry of Education], I'm not sure how that's going to work out...”

Some case studies, such as the following one in Poland, even showed that the profession learned at the workplace does not match the vocational courses in the VET training centre, which again often relates to the supply and attractiveness of different apprenticeships:

“With this work it is a different case, because often they work... For instance they get training as a tinsmith, but in the meantime they do a course for forklift operators sponsored by EU money, and then it occurs to them that in this work they can earn more. So they leave it [tinsmith] and go to work somewhere else.” (Staff member, Apprenticeship (on the job training with employers), PL)

Next to success factors related to the workplace, the actors also indicated some specific conditions that can enhance positive learning outcomes that are more related to the education and training at the VET school or training centre. One aspect is **the alternative learning content (e.g. vocational knowledge) and methods (e.g. practical learning) provided in the VET training centres**, that is, compared to mainstream education. In the following excerpt of the apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee in Portugal, staff members are discussing the main educational differences with mainstream education:

Teacher 1: “The syllabus is different.”

Teacher 2: "The way of teaching."

Teacher 1: "The disciplines, the teachers... In general, courses seem easier; they don't squeeze as much in... the practical part and the technical part. Those regular disciplines that you have are removed, such as science, history, and the practical part is inserted."

Besides linking the theoretical learning content more to practical learning processes, many of the learning centres explicitly indicated that they provide **additional learning support** through extra language classes, additional tutoring and support for students with special educational needs. Furthermore, many of the stakeholders' discourses made reference to a more individualised and flexible learning approach that is – according to both staff and students – more adapted to their specific needs to enable positive educational outcomes.

"I think that we are more personalised in our teaching approaches, because that's what we are taught as FE (Further Education) teachers, to take individual needs into account." (Teacher, Health and Social Care/Childcare Apprenticeship; UK)

The additional learning support referred to in the interviews however did not only relate to a more individualised provision of the learning content, much of what the stakeholders felt made a difference is more linked to providing more socio-emotional support and guidance. Providing the students with **a nurturing environment** was often a starting point for motivating and re-engaging students that often had negative prior experiences in (mainstream) education:

"Initially it's all about more nurturing, meeting and engaging the learners and keeping them here, rather than disengaging them from the learning environment; whereas in secondary schools, I believe, if a student shows a bit of challenging behaviour in terms of disengagement, they're very quick to push them aside." (Staff member, Health and Social Care/Childcare Apprenticeship, UK)

"The goal of the programme is to allow them to take a year for personal reflection so that they can re-orientate their lives. We believe that if they are out [of education], it is mostly because they have already lost that bond, with their own internal capacity to reflect upon their lives." (Staff member, School to work transition Plan, ES)

Students themselves do make the comparison with their experiences in mainstream secondary education and they largely confirm that the **additional socio-emotional support and better teacher-student relationships** can make a difference:

"I like it a lot. It's a different school. It has nothing to do with the other schools. It's much better than in secondary school. To start with, classes here are smaller, so, teachers pay more attention to each student in particular. Then, we have a relationship that's not so much student-teacher, but friends." (Student, Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee, PT)

"Yeah, I do feel supported (...) I've just come out of secondary school, so it's a bit like going into work and can be a bit overwhelming, but I feel as if I wasn't just thrown on the pavement. I was I supported straightaway and then day by day." (Student, Health and Social Care/Childcare Apprenticeship, UK)

Some students however also indicate that the additional learning and socio-emotional support, can also go hand in hand with **higher or lower teacher educational expectations**. Some students in the Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee in Portugal made reference of the fact that the course levels and teacher expectations might be too low:

“Students learn more in mainstream education and they [teachers] have a lot of help in the course, which can impair them. They give the example of tests with consultation, which do not encourage them to study, and they believe that, hence, they do not ‘learn as much’.”
(Student, Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee, PT)

Nonetheless, the following excerpt shows that high levels of support can be provided with high teacher expectations, which does also motivate the student to perform well. An important aspect according to the students is the fact that – in their learning pathway – students are mostly **adults** that have past the compulsory school age and therefore **enrolled more consciously**:

“People who come here to study when they are adults have like more, have a greater ambition to actually study and to do well, as opposed to the way you might have like been in upper secondary school [...] you appreciate the knowledge you get at school a bit more than you did before. [...] I think that it’s a more adult level, the conversations between teachers and students as well. That teachers can convey more personal experiences, which you can’t do in the same way at upper secondary school.” (Student, Apprenticeship training course, SE)

Also, the participants in the focus group discussion at the IT Professional and Digital Marketing Apprenticeships in the United Kingdom agreed that the apprenticeship provides a **more mature learning environment** than the mainstream educational setting.

Student 1: “They’re more grown up, so like you can ask people questions if you need support, whereas in school you aren’t, you’re not going to really do that. You just kind of sit there.”

Student 2: “It’s because everyone has that same mind-set. Like we applied for this, we chose to come here and do work. We knew it was going to be work based, but with college, everyone’s kind of there to have fun. Not just fun, obviously, but education as well, but it’s a different atmosphere.”

In sum, both staff and students indicated that there are some important conditions that need to be met for them to experience WBL approaches as successful alternative pathways after leaving mainstream education: some of which are specifically linked to the work-based learning and some more related to the learning that happens in a school or VET training centre context. The former was presented in more detail in this chapter while the latter will be continued in the next chapters on innovative pedagogical approaches, holistic student care approaches and educational reintegration strategies.

Risk and protective factors for work-based learning approaches

Dual learning pathways (i.e., part-time school- and part-time work-based learning) have gained policy attention at the EU level and have been presented as both a preventive as well as compensatory tool for combatting early leaving from education and training at the EU policy level. Although many EU member states have a large proportion of students in a dual learning track (e.g., Germany, Austria, Denmark), in the countries involved in our study, dual learning pathways are rather marginal in comparison to the mainstream education sector.

The actors involved in work-based learning (WBL) approaches acknowledged to a large extent the dual scope and aims of these learning pathways. With regard to the scope, virtually all case studies involved both school-based/college/training centre-based and work-based learning. The extent to which the work-based learning was actually performed in regular economy contexts differed across the case studies. Some students were (temporarily) trained in pre-apprenticeship courses or close-to-real simulations in workshops and social economy contexts. Most stakeholders also agreed that besides the dual scope of the training pathways, the study path in which they were involved also had a dual aim, i.e., providing opportunities for gaining (certified) professional skills, as well as working towards an educational qualification. Especially the acquisition of professional skills seemed to be a more prominent and direct objective of the measures under study. This priority to focus more on professional skills was also acknowledged in students' discourses about their reasons for participation. Often, extrinsic motivation of the future labour market outcomes, were mentioned by students as the most important motive to enrol. Attaining a upper secondary education degree was in some cases formally not directly achievable, or was de facto perceived to be outside the reach of some youngsters. The latter opinion, that some youngsters will never attain an ISCED 3 level qualification, surfaced in both students and staff's discourses and the most common causes were ascribed to low achievement levels, behavioural issues, as well as social and financial problems that forced youngsters to prioritize finding employment over continuing education.

Due to the fact that many of the learning pathways involving WBL are perceived as alternative pathways outside of mainstream education, many of the stakeholders involved – as staff or as student – also mentioned that these study pathways are seen as 'second best' or 'last resort' options. These tracks are often chosen after negative experiences and a trajectory of academic disengagement in mainstream education. Many of the actors, however, ascribed students' academic disengagement to the exclusionary character of mainstream education. Students enrolled in WBL pathways were often perceived to be unfit for more academically oriented school-based education. Some of the students also indicated that the new WBL environment could compensate for the lack of practical learning and individualised support in mainstream education. For many of those students, WBL pathways can thus provide an alternative learning route that is perceived to be more relevant because of the practical and often more mature learning context. Nonetheless, many of the youngsters were only reoriented towards the WBL track after a range of negative school experiences and a background of academic disengagement. A strong critique among both students and staff involved in these study tracks was that staff in mainstream education – even specialised career guidance staff – did not have good knowledge about the WBL options and, therefore, did not provide sufficient and correct information about the dual learning option throughout students' school career. Furthermore, the stakeholders discourses indicated that both staff and students in mainstream education – and the general public for that matter – did not value the WBL pathways as much as the more school-based and academically oriented tracks.

Although WBL pathways are mostly perceived to be a 'second best' option after mainstream education in the countries involved in this study, most of these learning pathways introduce some level of selection with regard to the inflow of participants in WBL. The level of selectiveness did, however, vary widely. Some case studies only had a few formal restrictions (e.g., age restrictions), while others were more selective, such as apprenticeship tracks that require students to have an apprenticeship contract before being able to enrol. Enrolment in pathways that require regular economy apprenticeships is therefore also dependent on the supply of labour market opportunities. Hence, apprenticeship opportunities may be subject to discrimination on the labour market. Virtually all of the dual learning pathways apply a system of intake and screening at enrolment. During the intake and screening, one of the major issues relates to students' maturity for entering work-based learning. This labour market maturity primarily entails work ethic and basic skill levels. Some of the training centres, however, also provide pre-apprenticeship courses that should prepare students for regular apprenticeships. Nonetheless, the cross-case analyses showed some contradiction between the fact that often the most vulnerable students end up in WBL after a process of gradual academic disengagement – partly due to the exclusionary character of mainstream education – and the fact that regular labour market apprenticeships can also be selective in nature. Many of the WBL pathways, however, provide perspectives for gradual labour market insertion through individualised study programmes, pre-apprenticeship courses and high levels of socio-emotional support. Furthermore, some of the institutions providing WBL pathways employed specific guidance counsellors that try to mediate between the training centres, employers and students to bridge differences in the expectations between all the different actors involved. These contextual features are therefore essential preconditions for effective and inclusive work-based learning approaches.

3.2. Innovative pedagogical approach

The scope and aims of the measures under study

In the following chapter, we will discuss the extent in which a particular measure uses new pedagogical methodologies to appeal to their students, thereby moving away from the more traditional pedagogical approaches commonly used in regular secondary education in the specific country. Across countries, a wide variety of ways exists in which educational institutions have tried to attract youngsters at risk of leaving school early or who have left school without educational qualifications. As a consequence, policy makers and practitioners were inventive and reacted in very diverse ways to respond to the phenomena of ESL. For instance, in **Portugal, the cooperative vocational training** wants to co-create 'simulated cooperative' and 'real cooperatives' for all types of students (with and without access to higher education or the traditional job market), to introduce the dynamics of the labour market from the beginning of students' educational careers. Another Portuguese programme, in which a vocational training with the arts is organized, aims to move young adults away from their school pathway of failure and help them deal with the difficult situations they have in their lives. Arts are used as means of self-expression and empowerment but also as a tool to promote discussion on pertinent matters and problems.

Another example is **the modular learning system in (Flanders) Belgium**, which characterizes second chance education, wants to attract students by providing them a partial certificate at the end of each successfully finished course, in order for students to organize their courses better in line with their family and/or work life, to avoid the repetition of courses and to generate feelings of success in students who often have had a rather troubled school career. A second measure is the implementation of official curricula for general courses in the system of work-based learning (part-time work-based VET), in order to provide students enrolled in this system with educational qualifications, which previously was not the case. These courses are similar to the integrated course that offers general courses to learn content and skills in useful and familiar contexts, called 'Project General Subjects' (abbreviation in Dutch 'PAV'), in full-time school-based VET.

In **Poland, a vocational boarding school** is organized for young people with special educational needs to accomplish a three-year programme within two years of vocational training. The main benefit of this boarding school is that it provides accommodation for most students, which [in itself] is aimed to decrease the risk of ESL.

Although all four alternative learning pathways presented from the **UK** employed innovative approaches to some extent, we will focus on those innovative aspects that do not directly relate to work-based learning approaches. Tutors on the **Employability module at the Pre-Apprenticeship programme**, for instance, offer a personalised approach to teaching: they can adapt the teaching material to fit their students' needs, and there are also optional units that students can pick and mix. The course has multiple intake points, so young people can join even after a programme has already started. Finally, on the Bridging course (designed specifically to provide minimum qualifications) participants study a range of qualifications that provide them with a portfolio of certificates, gaining a broad base of skills. Each class has a personal tutor who has regular one-on-one meetings with all students, and also offers casual informal support.

Finally, in **Spain**, during one academic year, **the School-to-Work transition Plan** wants to provide participants with essential learning to access the labour market and to engage students more deeply in professional studies via regular VET studies.

To conclude, in the next chapters, the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and the target group with respect to the distinct innovative pedagogical approaches of existing programmes and schools in several European countries are compared and discussed.

Assessing the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group

Awareness about the scope and aims

When looking at the aims of measures that apply an innovative pedagogical approach to (re-)attract young people to some kind of training or education, and to ensure they are able to get an educational qualification, there seems to be agreement upon the aims and objectives of such approaches across the distinct stakeholders. This similarity in aims and objectives was found across the different measures across countries, despite the fact that they are often very distinct in nature. The intentions to expand the educational training on offer and to design these measures specially for a specific target group (e.g., students at risk of ESL) were central to these approaches. This was for instance also mentioned by the lecturer of the Health and Social Care programme that provided in-depth theoretical training in the UK. The lack of taking all students into consideration was a critique directed at the mainstream education system:

“I think the education system is failing those who need it most, and it’s really sad when you have someone who is 16 or 17 and has spent the last ten years in education and they can barely construct a sentence. Maybe it is a picture I’m seeing because that’s the nature of our students and that may not be representative for the entire educational system. (...) I think it’s a massive issue in this society.” (Lecturer, Health and Social Care programme, UK)

According to him, there are many potential underlying problems: *‘many children are from socially economically deprived areas where there are far too many students in schools, everybody is overworked and naturally, some teachers would concentrate on the academically more gifted than the others... There is something, somewhere that is significantly going wrong.’* As a consequence, the particular living conditions of young adults that have left school early or that are at risk of leaving without educational qualifications are used as the starting point for the designers of these measures, as the principal of the cooperative vocational training in Portugal put it:

“[That is] to avoid dropout, often because families need 18-, 19-, 20-year-old young adults to have income or domestic economies that compensate...” (Principal, cooperative vocational training, PT)

A similar idea was present in the account of the principal of the vocational boarding school in Poland. He argues that the main reason why students leave school is their need to become independent and start earning their own money:

"I think the problem is serious. Our youth have been taught this and they learnt this, they have habits, they would like to earn a lot of money straight after lower secondary school and not to do anything (...) Because then they think that they are adults, they can conquer the world, because they graduated from lower secondary school." (Principal, vocational boarding school, PL)

The obstacles and threats students face, and which make them leave school early, are important factors that designers of alternative pathways have to consider, especially as they continue to play a role during their enrolment of the measure:

"I have a student whom I asked once: 'Why weren't you at school on Monday?' - 'But sir, my mother left home in the morning', and he has a younger sister, she's 3 years old. 'She left me with Julka'. And what? 'And she came back at 17.00 totally drunk'. So did I have to push this kid? Wring his head off because he was not at school on Monday?" (Principal, vocational boarding school, PL)

In general, designers/supervisors and implementers often explicitly focused on a particular group of participants that already had negative school experiences and that occupy a more vulnerable position in society.

When looking at the interviews and focus group discussions with all stakeholders, they seem to agree that the added value of these measures does not merely limit itself to the pedagogical value of the measure. Rather, the measures under study are innovative insofar as they use alternative pedagogical approaches to 1) introduce **more flexibility** in the pathways to learning and studying, 2) focus explicitly **on experiences of success** and 3) provide more practical learning methods (with a direct focus on the labour market) and **better access to transferable skills** (see also chapter 3.1.). These alternative pedagogical approaches are designed in such way that they respond to the specific needs of people that, due to a variety of (combined) reasons, do not fit into the set structure of the mainstream school system. Moreover, they respond to the particular needs of this target group by giving them more voice and including them as active 'partners' or 'participants' in their learning experiences. By proposing these alternative pedagogical approaches, new realities are created that question the mainstream, established educational institutions and/or try to respond to some of its deficits. In the following sections, we will discuss in more detail the three distinct factors that are frequently mentioned as the main objectives and aims of the measures under study.

First of all, **flexibility** is in many measures introduced to respond to the necessities of students at risk of early leaving school and as a reaction against the more rigid structure of mainstream education and practices herein. Regular secondary schools are often not designed for those who are less successful in schools, that have failed at some point in their school career or that have difficulties in meeting the set criteria by regular secondary education. For example, some students that have to provide an income for their family, and thus have to work after school, will encounter more problems studying at home and doing their homework. Other students experience some difficulties catching up with the speed and timely structures that are part of regular secondary education. Such difficulties often result in failing experiences at school. In their turn, failing experiences could start an entire cycle of other factors that do not contribute to students' school career. For instance, in Flanders (Belgium), students that fail one or more courses, have to repeat the entire year and, thus, all courses. This kind of organisation of courses in regular secondary

education facilitates the organisation of courses on a yearly basis for educational policy makers and schools. However, the main disadvantage of this yearly-based system is that less successful students have to repeat all these courses all over again when failing only one or some of them. Alternative pedagogical approaches introduce some kind of flexibility in order to avoid some of these consequences, which in the end, could again lead to ESL.

Across countries, there are different ways in which this flexibility is introduced. In some measures, it is structurally anchored while for other measures, implementers receive more space to use an individualized and flexible approach towards each student. This can be illustrated by the modular or credit-based learning system that characterises second chance education in Belgium. In this system, flexibility is introduced in a structural way as students can decide which modules they want to follow within the same semester. This allows students to work towards their diploma at their own pace. Also students who work at a slow speed and only take on a small package of modules are stimulated by this system because they still get the feeling *“that they can do something”* when completing a module, which motivates them to continue. The introduction of a more flexible organization of education also has the ability to (more easily) ‘correct’ previously made educational choices that were not in line with the interests, abilities and aspirations of the student.

Another example to illustrate how flexibility is incorporated in institutional structures is the example of a vocational training with the arts in Portugal. This school has a different system through which students decide when to complete the work and are heard on how the class should be conducted:

“We do a variety of things. We don’t have only that course or those classes; we do other activities such as Music, Arts, and Dance. And other works, portfolios. We have classes scheduled specifically for that, twice a week. I’d never thought about Arts before coming here. But since I’ve been here, I got interested in Music.” (Student, vocational training with the arts, PT)

While the previous examples show how flexibility is structurally embedded into educational institutions, other measures, such as the vocational boarding school in Poland, want to give implementers more freedom to ‘experiment’ with less conventional pedagogical approaches. A similar personalized approach was used in the general folk high school programmes (Allmän kurs) in Sweden and the employability course on the Pre-apprenticeship programme and the Health and Social Care / Childcare apprenticeship in the UK.

Overall, we have to note that this focus on flexibility stems from the fact that many of these measures have to deal with a group of young adults, characterized by a large heterogeneity in terms of reasons of (being at risk of) ESL, background characteristics, previously followed educational trajectories, and more. The heterogeneous inflow of persons that participate in the measures under study contrasts with the substantially more homogeneous group of students in regular secondary education. Therefore, distinct innovative pedagogical approaches and flexibility seem to go hand in hand.

Second, many of the measures discussed have focused on **experiences of ‘success’** for people that have already had ‘problematic’ school careers. These measures aim to move away from failure and give rise to a cycle of success. The underlying idea is that people in the measures under study

are credited for their effort and achievements, based on what they can do, instead of what they cannot do:

“The great potential of this model is that it allows the coexistence of young adults who have never failed, others who have failed sometimes, and those who have failed many times... This model enables them to take up a success cycle. In this model of vocational education, we can create an environment that allows integrating young adults who dropped out and preventing some who have not dropped out from going into the dropout pathway”. (Principal, cooperative vocational training, PT)

Another important example of the ways in which measures allow their students to focus on success is provided by the modular learning system in Flanders. This modular system works with ‘partial certificates’ after successful completion of a module, and thereby allows the students to focus on success:

“That has everything to do with the organization of modular education so that you can give a success experience after one module. You have a card with stamps per module, and once you get a stamp you don’t have to do it again, right, so that is the big difference for really a lot of those young people with that linear system, where if they fail three courses, (they have) to retake all the courses (of that year).” (Principal, modular learning system, BE)

Similar ideas were implemented in folk high school programmes in Sweden. The focus on ‘success’ became even more apparent in the Polish vocational boarding school, where students had to follow an intensified programme (i.e., more hours of classes weekly) to reduce the time between graduating from lower secondary school and the entrance into the labour market. The principal mentions that this kind of programme helps to prevent ESL exactly because it helps students to focus on the fact that they will reap the rewards of graduating in a shorter amount of time:

“Oh well, let them learn. Let them sit at school, pardon the term, from 8 am to 5 pm, but there is this prospect in front of them that it’s not three years, only two. So when they can see that gratification in the not-too-distant future, they will achieve it within two years.” (Principal, vocational boarding school, PL)

To conclude, the rationale behind the focus on success is that successful experiences in education will serve as a motivation to engage in school and to continue the educational career. It is acknowledged by all actors that the large influx of students that have lost their motivation to study in regular secondary education characterises the measures under study. Students’ natural curiosity to learn about the world and about themselves was ‘killed’ in mainstream education, as mentioned before. Students lost their drive for life, their social bonds and the opportunity to develop as human beings. The way these measures increase students’ motivational levels through participation is crucial. To illustrate this, we will give an example of a quote of the Vice Principal of the further education college which offers the pre-apprenticeship programme in the UK. He states that most young people enrol because they have no other choices left, not necessarily because of intrinsic motivation:

“Not many young people choose to sign up for that kind of provision. Their motivation varies from young person to young person and it would be wrong of me to try and boil that down to a few examples. But what I would say is that their motivation is primarily extrinsic at the

beginning of the course, but it does through the nature of the provision, it does then become intrinsic for them to complete.” (Vice Principal of FE college, Employability module, Pre-apprenticeship programme, UK)

As shown in this example, students’ motivation is enhanced through the nature of the measure. Furthermore, the focus on motivation often coincides with the attention given to students’ self-esteem and the stimulation of personal reflections in the youths involved, beyond offering basic knowledge in particular trades – an experience that can pull them to a space of reflection in relation to their own lives and helps them start a vital re-orientation.

Finally, in order to incorporate the previous features in educational training and education, many measures discussed here felt this could only be realized by considering an innovative pedagogical approach. Hence, this sometimes led to the introduction of more informal and practical learning methods. While mainstream education starts from the classroom to learn possibly about other living spheres, such as the labour market, the measures outside mainstream education often turn this relationship upside down. Instead of starting from the theory, they use practical skills and experiences as a point of departure to build up the training. This is for instance the case for the in-depth theoretical training that is offered for apprentices in Health and Social Care and Childcare in the UK. This programme uses the practical experiences of the participants, and adds a theoretical training. Furthermore, most measures that try out new, innovative pedagogical approaches to reduce the risk of ESL or want to re-orient students to re-enrol in education or training increasingly **focus on the teaching of transferable skills** to their students. These transferrable skills are perceived as necessary to be able to continue education or ‘survive’ on the labour market. Some measures explicitly focused on the teaching of transferrable skills. For instance, in the UK, an employability module that results in a ‘City and Guilds Level One Employability Extended Certificate’, aims to prepare young people for work and/ or further studies by teaching transferable skills through work placements, team projects, study units on communication, interview skills, etc.

In sum, measures outside mainstream education that aim to prevent and intervene in early school leaving are characterised by and stand out because of their use of an innovative pedagogical approach. According to the stakeholders involved in these measures, these pedagogical approaches are special and innovative, compared with regular secondary education, in mainly three ways. First, these pedagogical approaches allow more diversity and individuality in order to deal with a target group that demands flexibility. Second, the innovative pedagogical approaches want to provide an experience of success to young people who already have a history of failure in school. This is (sometimes implicitly) seen as a requisite for students’ future educational career. Third, moving away from mainstream regular education often results in giving more attention to practical and informal learning methods (with a direct focus on the labour market) and better access to transferable skills (see section 3.1.).

Participation and ownership

With respect to participation and ownership, the measures under study seem to differ considerably from mainstream education. This is mainly due to the fact that young people are not automatically inclined to enrol in such measures, as is the case for regular secondary education. Hence, issues

concerning participation and ownership may relate to 1) **enrolment in the measure** and 2) **during the measure itself**. We will discuss them separately.

First, there is a wide variety with respect to the extent stakeholders participate and have the feeling they are involved in the decision-making process of **enrolment in the specific measure**. Measures that use innovative pedagogical approaches are plagued by the overall low status they receive in mainstream society. The appreciation of these measures by regular secondary education (over the years) is reflected in the extent to which stakeholders feel they are actively involved in the process of enrolment of the students. In many cases, the rigidity of regular secondary systems is often put to the test by youngsters, especially those at risk of ESL. When the regular system does not provide space or flexibility to deal with these youngsters, mainstream education seems to be more prone to re-directing these youngsters to measures implemented outside mainstream education. This is, for instance, increasingly the case for second chance education in Belgium, which is characterised by a modular learning system. The school management of this institution had the impression that second chance education in general is becoming more known in regular secondary education and that more and more schools are referring students to their institution. In that sense, many of their young students are not always seen to participate in second chance education based on their own initiative. Even though, according to the school management, this referral does originate from the idea that the different system of second chance education can indeed offer an alternative for these youngsters, at the same time they feel like sometimes it is an ‘easy solution’ for regular schools who want ‘to get rid of the annoying youngsters’:

Principal: “Well, we are better known in high schools. We read in the reports from the youngsters who get in here literally: ‘go to second chance education’. And most of the time they mean it positively, but also that they want to get rid of the annoying youngsters [laughs]”

Pedagogic director: “It’s an easy solution for these high schools”

Principal: “Well, I believe too that a lot of people are very happy that we can offer an alternative, that it is positive advice they’re giving. But it’s often based on problems with learning, developmental disorders, aggressive behaviour, you name it. So much truancy. So the number of problems in here is really big.” (School management, modular learning system, BE)

The school management believes that youngsters are coming to second chance education because it offers them a ‘fresh start’. They can leave problems they might have had in secondary education behind them. Once again, it is exactly this ‘break’ with regular secondary education that is deemed to be important for the young students.

Second, once enrolled in the specific programme, school or training, the participation and ownership of the stakeholders **during the implementation** of such measures often builds further on the main objectives of the measures. As seen earlier, one of the main objectives of many of these measures is to provide experiences of success for students with ‘troubled’ school careers. Active participation of all stakeholders in decision-making processes and the making of collective decisions is often seen as a way to give students experiences of success and to increase their motivation to study. This is also associated with the ways flexibility is structurally embedded in many of these measures. If

students have the opportunity to shape and design the measure, in equal terms, and have a voice in decision making processes, they indicate that they feel more valued, as shown in the following quote:

“We promote participation not just with what we have but also how and to whom we are offering this subject. There are some classes where I use theatre to develop their awareness about their emotions, to deal situations that are happening in school, to discuss the motivation and strategies to change, talk about the connection between our behaviour and the consequences, and the choice they have.” (Implementer, vocational training in the arts, PT)

As this implementer states, participation is perceived to relate to motivation and agency. Participation and ownership are exactly the features that distinguish the measures under study from mainstream education. Measures that use an innovative pedagogical approach often even try to incorporate ‘participation and ownership’ as a central idea to their pedagogical approach. For instance, in Belgium, the structure of the modular learning system itself adds to the ownership of the students, as each curricula is perfectly designed for each student individually. Students can compose their own curricula, supported by implementers. The intervention increases the ownership of students as it allows them to pass each module they have successfully finished, regardless their test results on other courses. Similarly, the innovative approach of the cooperative vocational training in Portugal mainly consists of the participation of trainees in their learning process, the type of degree they want to attain, the organization of the course modules and final assessment. One of the main ways to do so was to stimulate the proximity and individualized awareness of each trainee to increase participation and ownership:

“We try to understand what motivations brought them here, what makes it easier for them to conclude the course with success, and we work with each student [to] understand what he prefers – all in order to motivate him. It is often the practical part, the contact with the reality of the labour world.” (Implementer, cooperative vocational training, PT)

Although participation/ownership was one of the main objectives and the core business of the cooperative vocational training, the difficulty here was to put this into practice and stimulate ownership for all stakeholders for all aspects of the measure. Rather, the participation and ownership of the target group was limited in scope. To be more specific, participation and ownership is only embedded in particular aspects, designed for it, of the measures under study, but allows less room for further adaptations and participation:

“They just want to have students here in school. They do not care about what students eat, where they live. They just want to see the student attending classes. To me that is really bad.” (Student, cooperative vocational training, PT)

This quote shows that the participation and ownership is structured and organized by the system, but does not leave actual room for participation and ownership in all aspects of the measure.

Finally, we mainly discussed the participation and ownership of young persons in measures that are focused on giving them more voice or to allow them to introduce some flexibility in their educational career. However, some measures, like the Polish vocational boarding school, prioritizes the flexibility

of the implementers in how they approach their students, but does not really provide room for the students' active participation. Nevertheless, this contrasts with the organization of other measures.

In sum, with respect to the **enrolment** of students, the participation and ownership depends greatly on the main ideas and practices that live in mainstream education regarding this measure. As a consequence, this often results in the feeling of a lack of ownership for the stakeholders involved for many implementers and members of the target group. This contrasts with the feelings of participation and ownership **during the implementation** of the measure. The innovative nature of many of the measures discussed often lies exactly in the encouragement of participation and ownership of the actors involved in a structural way. However, the target group often indicated that this participation and ownership did not apply to the design and adjustment of the structural features of the measures itself, and hence, was mainly restricted to what was initially foreseen by the designers and implementers of the measure.

Outcome experience

In many cases, supervisors and implementers do not have the adequate evaluation tools at hand to be able to fully estimate the effects of their measure. Nevertheless, the overall feeling with respect to the success rate of their learning outcomes of their measures is positive. As the result of aiming for more personalized approaches within these measures, the outcome experience of measures often highly depends on each individual participant. This shows the vulnerability of some of these measures, as it entirely relies upon the individual participants. It is important to note here that there are some exceptions of measures that have incorporated built-in ways to compensate for persons that do not manage to succeed in their programme or system. For example, the principal of a Polish vocational boarding school emphasises that they focus on each student individually and try to create pedagogical actions that are most suitable for one's education and social needs.

"If you know that something does not bring results and does not work, then there are educational teams. The class and group tutors meet. Each child is analysed individually. What went wrong, what doesn't work, how to improve it. I have never in my life limited... the principal should not impose anything. They [teachers] themselves are full of suggestions and we put them into effect." (Principal, vocational boarding school, PL)

Similar successful outcomes were mentioned by other stakeholders:

"It has everything because it teaches you how to communicate with people and ...[develop] the body language, communication skills and everything like that" (Student, Employability course, UK).

Despite the successful experiences many stakeholders mention with respect to the actual learning objectives of the measure and the explicit focus on 'experiences of success', these positive outcome experiences have to be nuanced. It should be noted that the **overall status** of alternative pathways that allow students to achieve an educational qualification do not necessarily reflect these positive experiences of success. This was for example mentioned by students that followed a Programme of Training and Labour Insertion in Spain who say that these training programmes are usually associated with lazy, unmotivated students who are not concerned about their education:

“People think this is the worst, and I thought so too. I have friends who are in intermediate vocational training and they tell me that the PFI is useless.” (Student, Programme of Training and Labour Insertion, ES)

Similarly, in a vocational training with the arts in Portugal, students mention feeling stigmatised for being in vocational courses. People think that only “fools”, the “scum” attend this school:

Student 1: “Some people think that only the fools, the renegades come here, the scum. People sometimes are not aware of certain things.”

Student 2: “They’re not able to think otherwise.”

Student 3: “So, people are 21 years old and are in 9th grade?! It bothers me a bit.”

A student who was enrolled in Health and Social Care/ Childcare Apprenticeships indicated that secondary schools are more interested in improving their ratings through high academic results and progression to A-levels and universities, than making sure that young people choose an educational option most suited to their needs.

“Once I made a decision and said I’m going to college, it was like ‘okay, well, you sort it out yourself’. So my mum took me to all the colleges, my mum helped me with all the interviews. As soon as I said I wasn’t doing sixth form it was like ‘okay, right, that’s fine, we’ll move on to whoever wants to do sixth form’.” (student, Health and Social Care/ Childcare Apprenticeships, UK).

To conclude, innovative pedagogical approaches are frequently touted as adding to the motivation of students and providing them experiences of success but, at the same time, these approaches are part of programmes or educational institutions that are stigmatized and frequently associated with negative stereotypes. As a consequence, in order to increase one’s motivation, students first have to overcome negative barriers that are related to the rather low societal status associated with this measures. Even more paradoxical is the fact that in some cases, the negative stereotypes derive from the mere presence of stigmatized persons, namely early school leavers or students at risk of ESL, who enrol in these programmes or institutions. This makes it difficult to combat the negative evaluations of these measures.

Risk and protective factors

Most measures discussed in this paragraph are analysed with respect to the pedagogical approach they use to compensate for early leaving of mainstream education and the strategies they deploy to prevent students at risk of early school leaving from dropping out of education and training all together. Several risk and protective factors were noted with respect to the 1) student inflow, 2) the innovative, alternative nature of the measures, and 3) the limited scope and financial limitations. We will discuss them separately.

First, the **student inflow** of the measures under study has to be considered when evaluating these measures. Although many of these approaches may yield beneficial results and provide interesting

alternatives to regular secondary education, in this paper, one cannot fully evaluate the pedagogical approach itself. Rather, one can only reflect upon the ways these innovative, pedagogical approaches are able to appeal to a vulnerable group of students that are prone to opting out of (mainstream) education. These measures are meant to be very inclusive, which means that people with different educational pathways, diverse ethnic backgrounds, and coming from different social classes enrol in these measures. Furthermore, one should consider the fact that many of the persons enrolled in these measures have already had negative experiences in school and/or a lower level of school engagement and motivation, compared to the majority of students enrolled in regular secondary education. As a consequence, this given is also reflected in the risk factors mentioned by many stakeholders:

Student 1: "The whole school is a total chaos with those early vocational... All courses were now forced to have the early vocational."

Student 2: "The school did not do well this year in trying to open early vocational courses, because they only came to cause disruption."

Student 3: "But the school is required to have them by law."

Student 4: "In terms of environment I don't like it so much because of some of the students who give the school a bad reputation – they wreak havoc and can't be quiet. They like to keep annoying others. Do stupid things." (Focus group discussion students, cooperative vocational training, PT)

In these quotes, students point out the conflict and disrespect of their peers as major factors of disruption in the school dynamics. Due to this inclusive approach to students, implementers indicate that all partners should collaborate and work together. The balance between the different partners is very delicate. This means that the low performance of one partner can have a detrimental effect on the whole programme, as was mentioned by staff on the Health and Social Care/ Childcare Apprenticeship programme in the UK.

Second, while designers and implementers strive to use a distinct innovative pedagogical approach in order to reduce the risk and number of ESL, it takes effort and motivation to apply an alternative approach that moves away from the more traditional routines and practices of dealing with students in educational institutions. Participants sometimes indicated being happy with the increased attention towards particular subjects, even though they did not necessarily feel a major difference from traditional methodologies. This was for instance the case in the cooperative training in Portugal, where students valued the more interactive lessons, the close relationship with some tutors and the use of interactive methodologies, but did not identify the methodologies used as distinct from those of the traditional work group. Overall, most of these measures discussed mentioned to benefit especially from the high organisational, curricular and personal flexibility and the strong investment in affective bonds. This enables them to respond to students' individual needs, changing student intake and local realities, as well as protect students against other realities, challenges and threats that complicate their school career considerably. Furthermore, as many of these methodologies aim to stimulate students' self-awareness, motivation and self-esteem, these measures could have positive long-term consequences in their future occupational, educational and personal lives. One important caveat that has to be noted here is that, as mentioned in the section on participation and

ownership, one cannot forget the rather low status these measures and students enrolled herein receive in society. This lack of appreciation conflicts with the increased motivation and engagement students receive throughout the measure.

Third, a general remark that does not necessarily characterise this set of measures, but was frequently referred to as a risk factor, involves the decreasing or low subsidies, financial cuts, lack of resources, places available and scope of the measures under study. Institutions and programmes often depend on external officials for the actual design of the programme and the resources they receive, which sets them in a very vulnerable position.

Fourth, one of the limitations of this theory-driven stakeholder approach is that we were limited to the stakeholders' perceptions in understanding the importance of post-care measures. As most of them focused on their personal experiences, it was hard to make any generalisation on this. Nonetheless, it is very important that when youth reengage in education, they experience some kind of guidance. The transition phase after completing such a measure is crucial for long-term reengagement, which we could not explore more in-depth in this project paper.

3.3. Holistic Student Care approach

The scope and aims of the measures under study

In Project Paper 6 on ‘School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures’, we set out a series of contextual preconditions that included 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. In this section, we want to address the measures in alternative pathways that have taken into account the particular vulnerabilities of a large group of students that enrol in such alternative learning arenas. These measures started from the assumption that in order to re-engage students in education and training, one should approach students in a holistic way (see also Fielding, 2006; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016). Measures fall into this category when they explicitly focus on the specialized support (practical, emotional or psychological, advice) of their participants, which is seen as a precondition to success in education. While most alternative pathways to re-engage students in education and training apply a more holistic, individualized approach, compared with measures in mainstream education, the measures we will discuss in this section are particularly designed to consider all aspects of students’ lives and provide additional care to students. This could be interpreted in terms of **special care arrangements**, but could also apply to the **supply of transferrable skills** and the **empowerment of participants** enrolled in the measures under study.

Across countries, we found several ways in which programmes and institutions wanted to take up a more holistic approach, especially when compared to regular secondary education (see Annex 1). Similar to the previous chapter, this already suggests that several ways exist across countries in which programmes and institutions want to take up a more holistic approach, especially when compared to regular secondary education.

In second chance education in **Belgium**, a **(voluntary) Care framework** was developed that was implemented by non-teaching professionals, such as psychologists and care teachers. The psychologists provide thematic, mainly individual training for students on performance anxiety, fear of public speaking, self-confidence, procrastination, perfectionism, motivation problems, and also give psychosocial guidance. The care teacher helps the students to improve their study behaviour.

Another example in the **UK** relates to **the employability module**, providing a ‘City and Guilds Level One Employability Extended Certificate’, ‘to get them in the right mind-set, with the right values, behaviours, soft skills’ (Employability tutor, UK), such as timekeeping, attendance, team working, communication, the ability to multitask, motivation, commitment. According to this employability tutor, the curriculum is tailored to the specific needs of the cohort in question. It contains team projects; work placements; a unit on managing personal finance; units on communication, interview skills, application forms, CVs; etc.

In **Poland**, the **Continuing Education Centre** (CEC, in Polish: *Centrum Kształcenia Ustawicznego*, CKU) offers an intensive general upper secondary education to people who have completed lower secondary education and achieved a lower secondary education qualification, and are over 18 years of age. In order to enhance students to succeed more easily in school, the centre also offers psychological and pedagogical support and career counselling. Each member of the Support Team

works with students individually, as well as in groups. First of all, they help students to develop their CVs by encouraging them to participate in voluntary services. They also cooperate with Youth Work Office, where students can find some job offers. Another example of a measure that applies an holistic approach in Poland is the vocational boarding school (see earlier chapter) that offers a basic vocational school programme to students with special educational needs. The supervision of the school and dormitory staff is expected to increase students' chances of completing school, compared to if students were to live in an open environment. Boarding school students receive additional educational support (homework support, overcoming educational backlog, emotional support) and can participate in extracurricular activities (e.g., trips, cinema etc.). Close relationships with teachers and within the peer group are seen as a significant educational value. Finally, this boarding school aims to keep young people away from risk-taking behaviour.

The **Youth for Employment Programme** ('Programa Joves per l'Ocupacio') in **Spain** only applies limited real work experiences that are complementary to some of the vocational training schemes. The **programme** aims at the **acquisition of the required professional skills needed to enter the labour market**. To achieve this aim, next to the vocational training, the programme promotes among local companies the possibility of subsidizing a labour contract for six months. As part of the **School to Work Transition Plan** ('Plan de Transicion al Trabajo'; PTT – School to work transition Plan) – a **one year programme** of about 1000 hours of training – a minimum of 180 hours of training should be in a real workplace, while the other training modules aiming for the acquisition of basic core skills are provided at the training centre.

In the **Netherlands**, **Project A** entails a **regular educational programme plus individual coaching** arrangements with a minimum of two hours per week. This programme is designed by a mix of senior vocational educational institutions, local governmental organisations, regional Housing Corporation and businesses and aims to educate youngsters and give them opportunities to get a diploma and their own house.

In **Sweden**, there are several programs in **Swedish folk high schools** that apply a holistic approach. Folk high schools are alternative learning arenas that have their roots in adult education and in which people have made efforts to educate and empower themselves. This folk school is largely based upon democratic and inclusive values and principles and the mission to make people democratically involved citizens. A first example is a general programme (Allmän kurs) at a Swedish folk high school with a clear ideological profile focusing on human rights, a perspective and approach that permeate all of the activity at the school. Group dynamics are considered to be very important within this programme. A second example is the general folk high school programme (Allmän kurs), which offers education for adults.

Assessing the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group

Awareness about the scope and aims

Most of the measures under study are in the first place **oriented to facilitate students' route to achieve an educational qualification and facilitate the entry into the labour market**. In order ensure that students reach a qualification, the measures under study take this holistic student care

approach more seriously as many of the students at risk of ESL or actual early school leavers struggle with various kinds of psychological issues and/or lack access to the kinds of cultural and social capital necessary to succeed in education. While the latter might have been one of the reasons they left mainstream education early, these issues have to be dealt with first, before other training or schooling options are possible. These ideas are widely shared by the designers and the supervisors of these measures. They perceived the holistic student care approach as crucial for the success of the programmes they offer. Participants in these measures are said to be in need of a different approach than in regular secondary education, one which often includes specific support to help them get to the 'finish line' and obtain an educational qualification:

*"So we have a group of people who luckily find their way to us, because there are a lot of them who don't. But they do need a different approach or different care. A lot of support."
(Management, Care framework in second chance education, BE)*

This finding was often the starting point of the measures under study. For instance, in Belgium, the management was fully aware of these problematic issues and saw it as a necessity to provide specific tailor-made care for their students. They therefore developed a 'Care Framework' within the existing institutional framework of their second chance education institution. They did so to help students get to the finish line within their own capacities. In another example, namely Project A in the Netherlands, all partners agreed that the main goal of the project is to explore participants' potential to the fullest not only by educating them, but also by providing them with the opportunities to get a diploma and housing. The holistic approach behind the programme was clearly recognised as the key to success, as stated by the designer:

"The founding pillars of the project are the labour market, education, housing, and coaching. Just coaching and additional care would not be enough, but an additional focus on the labour market is a key to success." (designer, Project A, NL)

Similarly, in the vocational boarding school in Poland, the implementers emphasized the importance of their measure for the prevention of substance abuse, violence and other risky behaviours. This school, as mentioned by the supervisors, could also serve as a good example and empower the boys enrolled to lead a 'normal and decent' life after leaving this school. In doing so, pedagogical, socio-therapeutic and sports activities played an important role in this measure. Analogous to this, Swedish folk high schools also clearly emphasized the focus on the individual as a whole, and not merely the student role he or she plays in school. The measure ultimately aimed to empower students to participate. This democratic mission and the folk high school's focus on the individual person and her/his personal abilities and needs imply that the school functions as a kind of counterforce in a highly competitive and exclusionary society. This is reflected in the following quote:

*"It feels like our most important task in a way is to reduce the exclusion, even just a little."
(Implementer, folk high school, SE)*

In another folk high school that was focused on human rights in Sweden, the designers and implementers intended to create a kind of free zone for the students, a place where they feel welcome and at home and where they feel they are actively participating. In the folk high school, participants are not only seen as 'students' but also treated as citizens taking part in and contributing to the development of a democratic society.

Finally, in the School to Work Transition Plan (PTT) in Spain, students that enrol usually have low self-esteem, low motivation to return to the formal education system, and are quite disoriented in general with regard to their future life. Most of them come to this PTT programme with a clear motivation for work, but this is not the goal established by the coordinators of the training unit. By contrast, they support the idea that the time in the training programmes has to stimulate personal reflections in the youths involved, beyond offering basic knowledge in particular trades – an experience that can pull them to a state of reflection in relation to their own lives, to help them start a vital re-orientation. In their view, that is the most important aspect of their own role and functions:

“And this happens every year, a moment when you realise it’s happened, you’ve been able to achieve this. Now they see what it is about. Well, they do learn, that’s not a problem; they learn working habits, attitudes, even though they may be no more than assistants. What is important is that they learn skills for life.” (Implementer, School-to-Work transition, ES)

Overall we can state that, although all designers, supervisors and implementers seemed to agree with the aims and scopes of the measures, some slight variations across countries were found in the extent the holistic approach is perceived as the central aim of the measure.

A remark that has to be made with regard to measures with an individualised, holistic student care approach is that stakeholders often stress potential advantages of the use of a more individual approach, but fail to recognise the importance of the inclusion within the proper **institutional context**. These measures differ from regular secondary education, not only because of the particular strategies implementers apply to include students as a whole in a particular programme, but also because they can be combined with other facilitating conditions, such as high teacher ratio, hiring assisting teachers and the creation of small class groups. The Swedish folk high school even goes beyond the normal standards they have to meet and develop their curricula themselves. The staff members involved in the measure are not obliged to adjust the teaching and activity to state-regulated curricula:

“We have to make sure that when we make students eligible, that they are comparable [to graduates of regular schools], but we don’t have state-regulated curricula” (Designer, folk high school, SE)

In this school, less emphasis is placed upon educational performance and tests, implementers receive additional support when needed and participants can choose which learning methods they want to use. To conclude, these favourable conditions, enhancing individuality and flexibility, can be seen as prerequisites for using a holistic approach.

A distinction in the awareness of the aims and scope of the target group was noted. Many programmes that were specifically designed to provide an individualised approach to their students were less known by the target group. Although many of the implementers really put an effort into making students more aware of these measures, these efforts did not entirely reach their goal. For instance, in the Employability course in the UK, there were multiple ways for young people to find out about this course. The supervisor highlighted the work they do with secondary schools from the area:

“Our careers team actually goes into the local schools not just in this borough but the neighbouring boroughs to tell them about all the programmes that are available here at the college.” (Supervisor, Employability course, UK)

However, as she explained, many of their students did not choose to attend this programme but are referred after being excluded from other programmes. This suggests that participation in these measures is often the result of a negative choice. Similar to other measures, in this measure, participants mentioned being enrolled through **key individuals**, such as social workers at school, friends or family members, and these programmes were often hard to reach without any particular support of participants’ personal networks. For example, one Swedish student in the folk high school heard her friends talk about the measure and said: *“it really sounded good”*. Nevertheless, once enrolled, participants became easily aware of the aims and the scopes of the programmes. One exception was the Care framework, offered in second chance education in Belgium, where students may have found difficulties to enrol in the institution itself; all students appeared to be aware of the possibilities offered by the Care team. Furthermore, as participants have to enrol in a programme/institution/centre outside regular secondary education, they are often more aware of the reasons of their presence within that particular measure. Participants understand that their individual and particular reasons for enrolment (e.g., problematic situation at home, previous educational failure, special educational needs and disorders, etc.) almost automatically meant that they require a distinct approach. This finding clearly illustrates the importance of social relationships for the success and functioning of the measures under study.

In sum, measures that aim to approach students in a more caring, holistic way stress the importance of being flexible in order for this individualised approach to participants to be successful. These measures use as a point of departure the particular characteristics of their target group: they assume that their students have been exposed to many factors that have hindered their school career and that they need more care to be able to succeed the courses in which they are enrolled. While initially many of the measures claim to have developed a ‘caring’ framework, this coincides with ‘empowerment and emancipation’, which will be laid out more in-depth in the next paragraph.

Participation and ownership

There seem to be two ways of using a holistic student care approach to ensure that students stay enrolled in a programme that helps them to achieve an educational qualification, and each of them has distinct consequences for the levels of participation and ownership of the participants themselves.

One group of measures tries **to tackle all possible risk factors that hinder students’ educational career**. This is for instance the case in Project A in the Netherlands, where looking for affordable housing is the central topic of concern and where the level of participation and ownership is limited to a short evaluation of the programme. A similar, limited level of participation and ownership is found in the vocational boarding school in Poland. In this vocational boarding school, students emphasize that they have little influence on decisions and activities in the boarding school. They are expected to comply with the rules and taking initiative is not rewarded. The students believe that teachers stick together and do not stand on their side. In case of conflict situations or when students and staff disagree, they think that no one will believe them:

Student 1: "Me, I don't like it when I can't speak freely, when I can't tell anything about when I've done something (...), like sentenced to something."

Student 2: "To death."

Student 1: "And they don't believe you, even if you tell the truth, they don't believe you." [...]

Student 3: "The teachers stick together." (Students, vocational boarding school, PL)

The Polish case is quite an exception with regard to the lack of ownership, as mentioned by the participants. The principal of this boarding school is fully aware of the lack of ownership and states that he actually prefers the participants to be busy the entire time, so they do not have any time left for risk-taking behaviours. Participants in other measures did not necessarily wish to have more to say or state that this should be changed.

The second group of measures more explicitly aims **to teach participants certain strategies and help them to empower and emancipate themselves**. This way, participants will be more likely to achieve a specific qualification and, at the same time, have more tools at their disposal to achieve success in their future lives. While in the first group of measures, active participation and ownership is not very much a goal, it takes up a central place in the design and execution of the second group of measures. For example, the folk high schools in Sweden start from the idea that, as stated by the designer: 'we are all citizens who should take care of this society together' or as a staff member points out "you should feel involved". The measure aims at making the participants part of society. One of the basic ideas of the school is that nobody should be left alone, but be part of a collective, and this inclusive and democratic mission is clearly integrated in the measure. For example, there is a lot of teamwork during the lessons, and the importance of the group is constantly being emphasized. This emphasis on community and cooperation is an aspect that distinguishes the folk high schools from mainstream education.

Finally, it should be noted that in this second group of measures, first, some kind of caring should be done, before one can actually focus on the emancipation and empowerment of participants, and the development of other personal features, such as self-esteem, social skills, etc. For example, in Poland, an intensive general education programme is offered that enables young people to gain an upper secondary education level qualification. Doing so, they try to make students more involved in internal and external voluntary activities to let them experience that they are useful and they are also able to help someone else:

School pedagogical counsellor: "In different schools it looks different. Here, the students have this comfort that not only can they present themselves in some artistic way, show off, but here we create a place where they can make some exhibitions, some contests, that kind of thing."

Career counsellor: "Yes, we encourage them. There are different forms, various preventive activities. We explain to the students that here we put emphasis on giving them a chance, so they can build their own bases, be active in something. If I'm not a musician I could show my artwork, if you want we can organise an exhibition, or present one's works at some bigger events. If you are willing and you become a volunteer, or take part in a charity event [like] 'High school students read to kindergarten pupils', where we go to a kindergarten, there

are people who attend and we go. We go out and participate in [or initiate] many activities. For instance, musicians get something together in the school and then go do a concert in a social care centre.” (Staff members, intensive general upper-secondary education programme, PL)

Another example is the caring framework in Belgium that was set up in adult education. The Care Team was designed to support students when encountering difficulties in life. The school management also sees it as their task as a second chance education institution to emancipate their students, to teach them to stand up for themselves – as adults – and, for example, to talk to the teacher about their learning difficulties, so the teacher can take this into account. While the Care Team considers it their task to support students who need extra care during their educational trajectory, they also have larger ambitions. The implementers stated that they hope to help students grow in their self-reliance and self-confidence. Additionally, they wish students will gain some ‘life wisdom’ and useful ‘insights’ that will help them in their future endeavours.

Staff member 1: “The task here is to help and guide people in their learning trajectory, but I secretly also hope that they grow in their self-reliance, self-confidence. But when you get your diploma, you grow. And that they also take these things with them, that they also get some ‘life wisdom’, some insights from the guidance that they can use when they go to work etc.”

Staff member 2: “We try to have them take responsibility in their trajectory here.”

Staff member 1: “Because outside of school there’s no Care Team... The world is hard; to strengthen them to deal with this so that afterwards they don’t suddenly fall into an empty hole.”(Staff members, Care framework, BE)

As shown in this quote, this adult education wants to prepare their students with strategies to ‘survive in the hard world’, outside school.

The extent to which the target group can **actually participate** in the development of the measures – which is often seen as a tool to empower young adults – **depends on the level of participation and ownership the designers, supervisors and implementers enjoy**. Participants in measures that focus entirely on the co-construction of a particular measure and rely on students’ participation, indicate they enjoy more freedom themselves in the design of the measures. Other measures that are more focused upon the structural ways in which they can help the students, or take care of their students, the designers, supervisors and implementers encounter more difficulties in the extent to which the students are allowed to make changes in the programmes. This certainly depends on the availability of financial resources as well. For example, in Belgium, the care framework is not a well-established framework organized in all adult education centres. Instead, the institution itself had to search for means to organize this and hire the staff with the capacity to construct a caring framework. Hence, the success of the measure relied heavily on the implementers and their success in finding additional financial resources.

Outcome experience

Despite a lack of statistical data to evaluate most of the measures, most stakeholders seem to evaluate the measures under study positively or – in the case of the students in the Polish vocational

boarding school – as ‘a lesser evil’. Supervisors, designers and implementers of the measures under study seem to take into account the specific, vulnerable target group they are working with. This results in **two types of evaluations**. First, the measure is **evaluated in terms of the capability to keep students enrolled in the particular measure**. Second, the success of the measure is assessed with regard to the **initially set objectives of the measure**, which is often the achievement of educational qualifications. Despite the fact that they are often working with a vulnerable group – students at risk of ESL who already carry an entire problematic with them before enrolment – many organisers and implementers believe that because of their holistic student care approach and the tailor-made care they provide, they do manage to lead a lot of their students towards an educational qualification. Nevertheless, the vulnerable position of the target group is taken into account by the stakeholders in their evaluations of the measures.

The participants of the measures under study compare their enrolment frequently with regular secondary education, which was less able to approach young adults in a holistic way. Resulting from our focus group discussions, the individual needs of participants are better taken care of (in most cases). Students **appreciate the individualised, adult approach and school climate**. They mention valuing teachers’ willingness to talk and listen to the students, and support in difficult or complex situations, as shown by a Polish student that was enrolled in the intensive general upper-secondary education programme:

“It seems to me that the teachers’ approach here is totally different and there’s a different atmosphere than in a normal high school. There everybody was tense, kids were running down the hall and screaming. Here is a nice atmosphere. One can talk to the teachers.”
(Student, intensive general upper-secondary education programme, PL)

Thus, participants stressed the importance of the personal approach in these measures that are implemented outside regular education and, especially emphasized the lack of such an approach in mainstream education.

Outcome experiences are largely shaped by the **practical organization** of the measure. For instance, in Project A in the Netherlands, participants encounter difficulties to establish trustful relationships with the implementers of the measure, as there is a large amount of circulation of staff members. In the care framework in adult education in Belgium, the development of an extensive tailor-made care framework and focusing on helping students with high needs, is a decision of the school management. However, as no specific government funding exists for this, the principal is obligated to fund their care team with the government funding they get for teaching hours. Since the number of students that enrol influences the number of teaching hours they get – and thus funding, this results in a contradictory reality. They have to enrol a sufficient number of students to be able to keep funding the care team, but at the same time this institution tries to limit class sizes to be able to continue providing tailor-made care for all the students that need it. In general, many staff members of the measures under study seem to believe that the programmes they offer are often in a disadvantaged position compared to regular secondary education, especially because they cater to a relatively vulnerable public and thus should be entitled to special funding to deal with this. Finally, some measures, such as Project A in the Netherlands, rely on external factors, such as the supply of jobs on the labour market, in order to succeed. The programme itself may then be positively evaluated, as this does not mean that their programme exists in a vacuum and automatically meets the objectives of the measure.

Risk and protective factors

Risk factors that characterized this group of measures were often related to a **lack of financial resources** that may hamper the continuation of certain measures. Or as stated by the Vice Principal of a college that provides the Employability course in the UK: 'it's a provision that is at risk should funding cuts continue'. This lack of funding is especially challenging for implementing a qualitative care framework, all the more so considering the fact that staff members feel that the problems and learning disabilities students are dealing with are becoming increasingly complex. This is a difficult topic, as the provision of extensive care and 'holistically looking' at individuals is very costly and time-consuming. Furthermore, it makes it more difficult to market themselves, and to make potential participants more aware of the particular programme or institution. Measures might not be able to reach all young people needing this service. The limited awareness of the alternative learning measures for students complicates the overall success of the measure. This is particularly problematic, as financial cuts impact the vulnerable young people who rely on these services the most:

"In the period of austerity that the country is currently going through, the vulnerable and those that need an alternative path are those who are probably most at risk, because the alternative paths are quick to (go), you can close them off easily when you're looking to save money, and the vulnerable don't really have a voice that is particularly strong fighting their corner."
(Vice Principal, Further Education college, Employability course, UK)

While the very time- and money-consuming care facilities may threaten the existences of many measures under discussion, it is exactly **the highly individualised approach towards learning, the small class groups and the high number of staff** that is mentioned to be the protective factors that keep students from opting out of the measure. Additionally, due to the personal approach of many of these measures, **changes in staff members** may be crucial for the further existence and the success of the measure. For example, in Project A in the Netherlands, most participants encountered some difficulties with the semi-annual turnover of the coaches, as one of them said 'It is very annoying to tell everything again to a new coach'.

In contrast with measures discussed in Project Paper 6, most alternative pathways applying an individualised approach were often more explicitly **oriented towards vulnerable groups**. These measures were therefore set up to tackle any factors hindering students' continuation of their school career. Additionally, due to this holistic approach, many structural features of the measures under study were **really flexible** and thus **more capable of adapting to the local realities of the context** in which they find themselves. This is for instance the case in a Swedish folk high school that strived in different ways to adapt to changes in the local context. According to the designer/supervisor, the school has very high capacity to do this: 'what characterises the folk high school is a great ability to readjust quickly', as she puts it. Nevertheless, the focus on vulnerable groups, often by using an individualised approach and because of the particular features of the target group (i.e., people with previous negative school experiences), **entails some risks** as well. As participants rely more often on the approaches of the **individual implementers of the programme**, the level of support, participation and ownership may reach not far enough for many participants. This could explain why many participants still drop out early from the programmes. Furthermore, measures not only focus on the vulnerable groups in society but also **note changes in the composition of the student populations** over the years; this may put them in the position of recognizing whether some

vulnerable groups are being neglected. For instance, in Belgium there is an increasing number of young students below age 18 that seem to ‘transfer’ directly from mainstream schools into second chance education. Although these young people are entitled to enrol in this institution, the teaching staff are struggling with the growing group of young students who are not always considered ‘ready’ for second chance education. The reality in which second chance education seems to become more and more an extension of regular secondary education is not necessarily in line with how they perceive themselves as providers of second chance education, and they believe that it remains the primary responsibility of regular secondary schools to keep youngsters on board. Thus, as the alternative pathways under study are – more than others – focused upon one particular target group, this may cause an imbalance or require a renegotiation of the objectives of the programme when the student intake changes. Therefore, some flexibility should be built into the design of these institutions or programmes, so they are able to adapt to the changing student compositions over the years.

Similarly to the previous chapter, many of the measures had to deal with **negative stereotypes, stigma or taboos**. This was clearly shown in the Care Framework, offered in second chance education in Belgium, where one of the teachers said that sometimes the students just need ‘a little push’ and that a little encouragement from the teacher to go see someone from the care team is enough. However, at the same time, students explicitly refused to go to the Care Team because of the stigma or taboo associated with ‘care’: ‘I need care, so I’m not normal’. Other teachers, however, find that in this institution they are very open about it and that there is much less of a taboo around seeking help, particularly because of the emphasis the institution puts on care provision.

A highly protective factor related to the measures under study is that the use of an individualised approach seems to positively affect participants’ **self-esteem and motivation**. Highly involved and motivated participants will be more likely to finish the programme they are enrolled in. If participants feel they have the opportunity to influence the measure’s design and implementation, that the staff members listen to them and take their opinions and ideas into account, and that they are treated as citizens actively participating in society, this might be an important source of encouragement and support for the youngsters and thus function protectively.

To conclude, many measures take up a more holistic approach to their participants in the interest of tackling risk factors that cause young people to leave school without qualification. In many cases, however, this results in some kind of caring framework in which young adults are assisted to deal with the challenges they face in life (e.g., housing problems, risk-taking behaviour, low self-esteem). Some measures even take this further and focus not only on the actual issues and difficulties many young people are facing, but also empower these young adults and provide them the [inner] tools to take care of themselves (see Fielding, 2006; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2016). Many of the alternative pathways under study in this section provided individualized care. While this holistic student care approach was seen as a motivating factor that served as an important protective factor, it is very costly and time-consuming, and hence, very dependent on financial resources and individual efforts. Additionally, as most measures are designed to meet the particular needs of their students, changing student intakes are often not foreseen and could jeopardize the initial objectives of the measure. Finally, although using a ‘caring’ approach may facilitate the success of young people participating in particular measures or pathways, this may not be enough to actually re-engage young people to get an educational qualification (Kim & Taylor, 2008).

3.4. Educational reintegration strategies

The scope and aims of the measures under study

In this section, we will discuss all differences and similarities among the measures that are mainly directed at the reintegration into education, and by extension, into society in general, across the different countries involved in the RESL.eu project. These courses, guidance or projects discussed in this chapter offer people the opportunity to return to education and get some kind of qualification. While many of the measures that are discussed in the other chapters of this project paper, the main focus here will be the strategies used to prepare young adults for educational reintegration and increase their chances of a successful educational reintegration.

In short, we will discuss the following measures (see Annex 1). In **Belgium**, **official curricula for general courses were implemented in the system of work-based learning** (part-time work-based VET), in order to provide students enrolled in this system officially recognised qualifications. These courses are similar to the integrated course that offers general courses to learn content and skills in useful and familiar contexts, called 'Project General Subjects' (abbreviation in Dutch 'PAV'), in full-time school-based VET.

For **Sweden**, we focus on a general programme (Allmän kurs) at a **Swedish folk high school** with a clear ideological profile focusing on human rights and a general folk high school programme (Allmän kurs) that offers education for adults. While both courses apply a holistic approach, they are mainly directed to give students the opportunity to attain a complete upper secondary qualification and, in the long run, be able to proceed to higher studies or find a job.

In the **UK**, we describe **the Bridging Course**, a one-year-long, full-time course that provides a range of qualifications (including Numeracy and Literacy lessons) leading to upper secondary level, which increase the opportunities of participants for further studies and employment.

Furthermore, we will discuss a pilot project in **the Netherlands**, **Project B**, which attracts ESLers and employs them for four days/week in the port in the form of a paid apprenticeship, and gives them training for one day a week at upper secondary vocational education level. This allows them to receive – after the successful completion of this one year programme – their basic qualification.

In **Poland**, **the vocational boarding school** provides a basic vocational school programme to students with special educational needs and aims to increase students' chances of completing school, compared to if students were to live on their own.

In **Portugal**, **a vocational training with the arts** aims to move young adults away from their school pathway of failure and help them deal with the difficult situations they come up against in their lives. They do so by means of a holistic view of education in which the Arts and the opportunity to own their educational pathway are important pillars. The Arts are used as means of self-expression and empowerment but also as a tool to promote discussion on pertinent matters and problems. A second example of an educational reintegration strategy in Portugal is the cooperative training aims, which co-create 'simulated cooperatives' and 'real cooperatives' for all types of students by introducing the dynamics of the labour market from the beginning of students' educational careers.

Finally, there are several programmes in **Spain** that aim **to reintegrate young adults into education**. A first one is the specific course to access initial formal VET programmes (*Curs específic per l'Accés a Cicles de Grau Mitjà – CAM*). This course is organised both in Adult Education Centres

(CFA) and in authorised formal secondary education schools. In CAM, during one academic year, participants can enrol in this course instead of taking entrance exams in order to get access at CFGM (VET studies at upper secondary education level – ISECD 3). A second one, called **Programmes of Training and Labour Insertion** (Programes de Formació i Inserció – PFI), is actually a set of programmes that includes three different schemes called **School to Work Transition Plan** (in Catalan: Pla de Transició al Treball – PTT); **Initial Vocational Plan** (Pla d’Iniciació Professional – PIP) and **Professional Training and Learning** (Formació i Aprenentatge Professional – FIAP). All these are voluntary programmes primarily aimed to promote educational reintegration specially in order to continue with formal VET studies. The only difference between them is based on the type of institution where they are carried on. Finally, **Youth for Employment Programme** (Programa Joves per l’OCupació – JPO) is also a voluntary programme that is aimed to achieve both educational reintegration and labour market insertion via VET studies.

Assessing the discursive congruence between designers, implementers and target group

Awareness about the scope and aims

For most of the measures discussed, the aim is first of all, **to provide participants with a qualification of upper secondary education**. This will allow the participants to get **a better job** in the future but also, in some cases, give them the knowledge needed to **proceed to higher studies**. This can be shown by a quote from the Curriculum Manager in the Bridging course in the UK who perceives the main goal of the Bridging course as to prepare young people for the next step in education or employment:

“The ultimate goal for us, how we know we’ve done our job is that when it comes to May-June in the academic year, the personal tutor is then heavily involved with assisting our students to apply for higher level courses. (...) So it’s our job to basically meet their needs and get them through onto that higher level course or into the apprenticeship or the traineeship or what they want to do.” (Curriculum manager, Bridging course, UK)

Similar accounts could be retrieved in the other measures in other countries. While the aims and scope of the measures are seemingly clear to most actors involved, namely to stimulate educational reintegration, there seems to be many mid-term goals that were mentioned by the implementers and designers of the measures, which are seen as necessary prerequisites in order to achieve the main goal of the measure. These goals are 1) **to compensate for students’ previously negative school experiences** and 2) **to prepare young adults to participate and to take part in all aspects of the broader society**.

The measures were directed at students with **previous negative school experiences**. This was often due to the fact that many students encountered **individual difficulties and had learning disorders that hindered a ‘traditional’ school career**. For instance, many students in the Swedish folk high schools had not received the support they needed in regular schools, because they suffered from neuropsychiatric diagnoses such as ADHD, dyslexia and Asperger’s, or encountered other psychological problems.

When preparing **young adults to participate** and to take part in all aspects of **the broader society**, measures often apply a holistic student care approach (see chapter 3.3.), and train students to become active citizens (e.g., Swedish folk schools) or provide young people with the ‘soft skills’ – communication, interpersonal, etc. skills they will need for successful life outcomes:

“The focus is very much on employability: academic qualifications are really geared towards turning these youngsters into employable young citizens. A lot of them will probably lack some of the skills, the qualities, the attributes that an employer will necessarily be looking for. So it is not just about qualifications, although that is very important. There is a social side to it. It will often be communication skills, socialisation, confidence building, motivation, all these kind of things that employers need to see.” (Curriculum manager, Bridging course, Numeracy and Literacy lessons, UK)

Another example in which similar goals were found in the scope and aims of the measure is the Project B in the Netherlands, which aims to motivate early school leavers to go directly back to school, as it is difficult for the students to return after a period without school. This project tries to help the students to **become independent** and to **obtain educational, social and work-related competences**, which could be the reason for companies to offer them a contract. Also the CAM course in Spain wanted to promote access to advanced educational levels for those students whose fundamental training is insufficient, by providing a basic course:

"Of course... the problem is that, well, it's a bit tedious to go through basic training, we'd say [laughs]. Well, if you've been doing ESO, which you could not complete ..., and you reengage a bit, and... there are no miracles here, that is, basic training is what it is. [...] ... basic training is being able to read, write and being able to develop yourself a bit in mathematics. And being able to apply what you know a bit. This is what basic training is. [...] Reading, writing and ... and a bit about maths and some general training." (Supervisor, CAM course, ES)

Remarkably, these two intermediate goals – compensating for students’ previously negative school experiences and preparing them to take part in all aspects of the broader society – sometimes **contradict** each other. This is for instance the case in the implementation of the official curricula in the general courses of the part-time work-based VET in Belgium. There appears to be a tendency to redirect students to education by means of offering educational qualifications for students that finish the general course. While previously, this general course provided participants a general social and personal skills training, the new course shifts away from the learning of these broadly applicable social skills and offers specific curricula that have to be followed. Although this shift caused teachers to move away from the teaching of such transferrable skills, it remained an important objective, as argued by the supervisor:

“I think that part-time VET initially focussed very much on compensating by providing them with a few basic things like resiliency, things regarding their self-image. There used to be a lot of this in the general course, which used to be called ‘general social and personal skills training’ [ASPV] in part-time VET. I mean, what happened with the reform was much more than just a change of title. This top-down reform did shift a lot of the focal points. [...] ASPV did not have an official curriculum, so you could really put your full focus on the needs of the youngsters. The social skills component used to be very big. It did not lead to a qualification, but still, it was some gear [as in life skills] that we could provide to the youngsters. [...] At a

certain moment it was decided, ok, with the Decree on Learning and Working, they can attain their diploma. I think that is a very good thing [...] but what went wrong here is that they evolved from one extreme to the other. So the general social and personal skills are suddenly being approached way too theoretically. They have literally approached 'Project General Subjects' (PAV) as a knowledge course. And to a large extent – what we see now – from this year we have put some ASPV back into the PAV by combining social competences with basic math and language competences. By making sure that the youngsters have seen the curriculum but also by working enough on the social aspects.” (Principal, part-time work-based VET, BE)

The same contradictions were also felt by the implementers, who struggled with the ways in which they had to combine the initial practices that focused more on providing social and personal skills and what was described in the particular curricula. A final strategy that helps participants to engage in society and develop all aspects of their personality, found in some of the measures under study, is to **introduce labour market dynamics** at school (see 3.1).

Most participants were often not fully aware of this set of mid-term goals – at least not at the moment of their enrolment. Later, participants acknowledged the positive effects of the project, as illustrated by a participant of the Project B in the Netherlands who mentions: “[The project] helps me to motivate myself”. In this project, the youngsters’ loss of study motivation was seen by the supervisors as one of the main problems that caused them to leave school early. However, by contrast, the participating youngsters were more likely to name problems such as a lack of orientation to job market problems. One youngster, for example, stated that even though he had sent out various job applications, he was never invited to an interview. Also in the school-to-work transition plan, students were initially not focused on their educational reintegration, but enrolled because of their increased chances on the labour market. However, after some months, all students were convinced that they needed to return to the education system in order to **access the labour market**:

Interviewer: “... And once I’ve finished (PTT course), I want to go to medium VET, something related to secretarial or administrative... and then I want to do a higher VET course.”

Student: “So now you’re keen on doing an intermediate course in Further Ed and then continuing and so on. Why the change?”

Interviewer: “I don’t know.... a change of attitude. In school I didn’t study at all, I let everything go over my head, but at a particular moment in my life I changed my attitude: I changed my way of thinking, and I changed everything. I was very keen on studying, to create a good future for myself, to be a better person” (student, school-to-work transition plan, ES)

Additionally, as mentioned in the previous chapters, the measures are often **not very well-known** by the target group. They often accidentally came across these measures, or were only told about the project when they were applying for social benefits by the municipality.

Participation and ownership

To ensure the success of a particular educational reintegration strategy, and knowing that many early school leavers lack motivation to study, many of the measures in our study have developed

specific **selection criteria** for applicants to their programmes. Implementers want to guarantee the success of the measure and not be hindered by some participants that could possibly negatively affect the overall optimistic attitudes/behaviours of their peers who *do* want ‘a second chance’ in education. **This selection process can take different forms**, but mostly manifests in the criteria to participate in a particular measure. In the Swedish folk high schools, teachers only select motivated students. In the part-time VET education in Flanders, not all students are enrolled in the course that offers the official curricula and leads to officially recognised educational qualifications. In this case, class councils decide which students are advised to follow an alternative course, which does not lead to receiving an officially recognised educational qualification:

“So the other classes they do get their 2nd or 3rd grade... the other classes have books and we don’t, we only have folders. [...] I will be clear, I’m not the biggest saint of this school. I laugh a lot and stuff. But they put me here in this class without me knowing it. So I didn’t know that this was an ALT-group. Until I heard, after half a year that I cannot attain anything here [...] I said “ah, so you had some meetings, special talks, without me knowing anything about it” (Student that could not enrol in the general course and was enrolled in the alternative course (ALT-group) that did not lead to an officially recognised educational qualification, BE)

Also in Spain, the specific course to access initial formal VET programmes (CAM) is not free of charge. Although CAM targets a particular sector of the society that is affected by the particular economic and social context, its price (fee) becomes a factor of selection and exclusion. It is clear that a young person who cannot invest that money in his/her training, and is also unable to stay two years in an adult education centre at the moment, will not obtain any qualification. Therefore the CAM is a highly selective measure within a disadvantaged socioeconomic context. Similarly, in Spain, in the PFI programme, the Catalan government has set up distinct criteria that guide implementers during the selection processes of their students. There is a scale of quantitative indicators that are applied after the training unit has proceeded through intensive and extensive promotion of the programmes, motivational interviews, assessment of previous education and training trajectories of eventual candidates, etc. There are two compulsory requirements according to the official regulations of these programmes: first, not having obtained the high school graduation certificate (GESO), and second, to be older than 16 and younger than 21 in the year the programme starts. The selection of candidates is, on the other hand, based on demand – youths participate voluntarily in these programmes. Besides these official criteria, institutions such as the one under study have developed **additional criteria** to select participants for their programmes. As such, the ultimate criterion is the **motivation** shown by the youth with regard to their participation in the programme, as stated by the supervisor/implementer of the programme:

“We promote the programmes in every high school, association, youth club or group, third sector organisation working with youth and in the schools. When it comes to selection, we really take into account the kid’s motivation in the first place, so that he or she knows what they will be doing; but also the issue of income, that is to say, that if the public services do not give him or her the opportunity, it will be impossible for him or her to do anything.” (Supervisor and implementer, training and labour market insertion programme (PFI), ES)

Thus, in many measures, while recruiting participants that have previous negative experiences in education, generally lower performance levels etc., the main additional criterion used during the selection processes is the **motivation of students**.

All these measures seem to struggle with the **disadvantaged context** in which they often operate, and the **need for selection in order to guarantee the success of their measure (in a context with limited funding)**, which is clearly visible in the sometimes difficult balance educational institutions or programmes oriented at the educational reintegration encounter when developing selection strategies. This often yields **positive results** for measures that merely select young adults that are since the start of the measure willing and/or able to engage and enrol, but also end up **excluding** those who need it the most. This may be an important limiting factor of many measures. As seen earlier, the strength and the power of many measures lie mainly in the motivating role they have to encourage students to engage in school. However, selecting students based on their initial motivational level can disregard the emancipating effect many measures seem to have on their participants. These selection criteria are important to consider when evaluating the distinct measures and comparing them with each other.

Many implementers and designers or supervisors of the measures discussed seem to feel some participation and ownership with regard to **the trades** they offer, while the participants do **not** have any **decision-making power** in these choices. For instance, in the School-to-Work transition plan (PTT) in Spain, institutions work closely together with the local council departments, local high schools, trades organisations, third sector organisations, etc. of the town.

“We work with various trade associations: metal, automobiles... but we only work with these two because there were possibilities of labour access or continuity in training, and all the rest we do with young people is more oriented to the hotel business, sales and commerce, all these areas...” (Supervisor, School-to-Work transition plan (PTT), ES)

Some of the educational reintegration programmes discussed here were strictly organised by the government, and did therefore leave less room for negotiation for the implementers and even the supervisors of the measures. This was for instance the case for the CAM measure in Spain. Additionally, in the Bridging course in the UK, the funding for the course was related to meeting certain guidelines, which limited the freedom of college staff to adapt the programme to the students' perceived needs:

“You’ve got freedom to innovate within the parameters of what you’re allowed to do (...) I can’t offer any course I want, I can’t do that. It has to fit within the Foundation Learning Funding Formula, which is very specific and quite prescriptive, so I have to give this study programme to students whether they want to do it or not.”(Supervisor, Bridging course, UK)

The school personnel were encouraged to take part in designing the Bridging course, but the government still had the final word regarding its final shape.

Other measures used as strategies to reintegrate students in education **applied specific innovative pedagogical approaches or a holistic student care approach** (e.g., intensive general upper-secondary education programme or vocational boarding school in Poland, Swedish folk high schools, cooperative vocational training and vocational training with the arts in Portugal, etc) and due to the nature of these strategies, there was more space for participation and ownership compared to other educational reintegration strategies. The strengths and the weaknesses of these measures with regard to participation and ownership related more to these new pedagogical and holistic student care approaches and have been discussed earlier (see chapters 3.2. and 3.3.).

Outcome experience

Although in all measures, a proportion of participants drop out of the measure, re-enrol several times or finish the measure later than expected, the **main outcome experience** was mostly defined in terms of the **actual learning profits and increases in students' study motivation** over the course of the measure. This is considered important, considering that leaving education unqualified is perceived as a personal failure by a lot of students, as stated by the principal of the part-time VET school in Belgium offering a general course that leads to an officially recognised educational qualification:

"But I definitely think that ... for the youngsters themselves... in the end it also reflects strongly on your self-image when you are unqualified. Yeah, so, it is some kind of a personal defeat you suffer [if you don't finish the course]" (School principal, Part-time VET, BE)

In order to fully be able to evaluate the final outcomes of the educational reintegration strategies, the supervisors of the measure need to track their participants for a longer time than is often the case. Nevertheless, many supervisors and implementers searched for ways to be able to evaluate their measure – for instance, in Portugal, by asking other colleagues in other departments for feedback:

"Every year we finish the year with our reports. We organise a lot of events. We invite people from outside, and we ask their feedback [to find] solutions, to be our mirror and to see our work. Every year we have at least three, four activities. We open space and time for people to point us to future possibilities, possibilities to develop. We are discovering that we are doing something that doesn't [yet] exist and we are learning by doing it and evaluating." (Implementers, vocational training with the arts, PT)

This extract shows that alternative pathways that aim to reintegrate young adults into mainstream education also search for **alternative ways of evaluation**, in part because they have fewer opportunities to rely on statistics. In Spain, the supervisor of the training and labour market insertion mentions that no systematic data can be collected, as the monitoring this would involve is too complex, especially given their student intake. However, they seem to compensate for this to some extent by evaluating their measures based on the experiences of the cases they deal with:

"We monitor them. There are too many kids to be able to closely monitor all of them thoroughly, but it's true that we often talk about them. These kids come from PFI, how long will they last here? For example, some kids that had come to this high school for a VET (CFGM) in electricity from another high school in town where they had taken a PQPI in electricity and electronics would only stay here for two months. Well, we monitor them informally: we have no data, only data on overall performance – there are no data or studies, percentages." (Supervisor, training and labour market insertion programme, ES)

Overall, **qualitative evaluation procedures** were used, as qualitative changes in the participants were often valued more highly than to quantitative successes – especially since the main idea is to help participants overcome the route of failure. When changes in attitudes were noted or individual progress was made, the supervisors and implementers seemed to evaluate the measure positively. Moreover, the **final outcome experience** – i.e. progression to post-secondary education and/or the labour market outcome – appeared to be **valued more than the direct certification linked to the training course**. This applied, for instance, to the professional and basic skills training and the

acquisition of a wide range of competences, attitudes and positive expectations, of which only some are officially recognised and certified. Or as mentioned by the Curriculum Manager of the Bridging course in the UK, the biggest reward for staff members is the knowledge of changing young people's life for the better:

“There is no buzz and there is no more rewarding thing than getting some snarling, rude, demotivated little so-and-so, [and] knocking them into shape (...) you find out two years later down the line, they got their level 3 diploma and are about to join to train for social work or even as a teacher.” (Curriculum Manager, Bridging course, UK)

Young people in this Bridging course had access to **various feedback mechanisms**, such as tutor group representatives providing feedback to staff, strategic surveys at the beginning, middle and end of the year; parent consultation evenings, and one-on-one conversations. A final remark that has to be made is that these educational reintegration strategies are often not fully evaluated in terms of their potential or with regard to all particular aspects but the measures are often seen as positive, as they give participants a 'final' chance to enter education again and often in a more welcoming, tolerant, open environment.

Risk and protective factors

The downside of these 'alternative pathways', as mentioned earlier, remains the **initial stigma** associated with the measures in general, the fact that these approaches are not offered in regular secondary education and the lack of financial resources or frequent turnover in personnel in the measures under study (e.g., due to temporary funding). However, three specific risk factors of educational reintegration strategies were noted as well: 1) the relatively high proportion of dropouts, 2) the difficulties in finding the appropriate track, educational level, or programme in which young adults can enrol and 3) (defining) the selection criteria for enrolment.

First, most measures that are specifically oriented to the educational reintegration strategies – that compensate for students that dropped out of school and help them to find a way back again – are also confronted with **relatively high proportions of drop outs and/or high truancy rates**. Although in most cases, real statistics are missing to document this statement, this is frequently remarked by many stakeholders that see a reduction in the number of participants over time, or by participants themselves that have frequently changed programmes, re-enrolled several times and/or noted a change in the student numbers in the measure in which they are enrolled.

Second, as many early school leavers have dropped out of school at entirely different educational stages, **it is difficult to determine precisely in which programme these youngsters should enrol, or at which level**. Furthermore, as the main focus in regular secondary education is to keep students enrolled as long as possible within their proper educational institution, there seems to be a lack of collaboration and referrals to other 'alternatives', and that many young adults are not aware of the possibilities they have and of all the programmes that exist.

Third, the **selection procedures** of many of the measures that are explicitly aimed at the educational reintegration of young adults, – often vulnerable groups in society – determine the success of a measure to some extent. Measures often carefully select participants before enrolment, especially in an economic context of limited government funding and measures that rely on a holistic approach

or make use of pedagogies that are rather costly for each participant. This may help to increase the success rates of the measure and break the series of failures that often characterise students' previous school careers or at least lead to better compositions of student groups, which could in turn help to reduce risk factors of dropping out. While many of these measures do include participants at risk of dropping out of the measure, the participants do have to show some engagement and motivation. While the reasoning behind these selection procedures can be understandable, when making risk-benefit analyses, it remains unclear what has to be done with the most vulnerable and problematic group of youngsters.

The innovative pedagogical methods, holistic student care approaches and the introduction of work-place learning are often seen as protective factors that help students to stay engaged in school and remain motivated. As these approaches and methods frequently focus on students' self-esteem, motivation and personal development, the actual acquisition of these skills and changes in attitudes are often interpreted as an important outcome measure, but are also mentioned as a protective factor to staying enrolled in the particular measure. These approaches are often combined with treating them like adults or exhibiting a more tolerant attitude towards the participants in general, which often lacks in regular secondary education.

4. Discussion

In this project paper, we provided a summary of the cross-case analyses of measures in alternative learning pathways in seven EU countries that are involved in the RESL.eu project. In doing so, we tried to emphasize the four main distinct features that characterise such measures and pathways: 1) work-based learning approaches, 2) innovative pedagogical approaches, 3) holistic student care approaches, and 4) educational reintegration strategies. While there seemed to be considerable overlap between these approaches (see Annex 1) and several aspects of measures are discussed in distinct sections, this allowed us to focus and elaborate further on particular features of these measures in alternative learning pathways, discuss their strengths, weaknesses, contradictions, risk and protective factors. We applied a theory-driven Stakeholder Evaluation Approach and discussed the discursive congruence among the designers, implementers and target group for each approach separately.

Based on this project paper, we gained insights into the working of such measures, which gave us more information to answer the following two questions. A first question that needs further consideration is: **‘How can we improve measures implemented in alternative learning pathways?’** This question relates to the risk and protective factors of each approach and measure. A second question would be: **‘How can mainstream secondary educational institutions learn from alternative learning pathways?’** Information derived from the cross-case analyses would help us to understand the needs of students that leave regular secondary education and opt for other pathways to get an educational qualification. We will discuss separately in the next sections how the findings presented in this project paper relate these questions.

How to improve measures implemented outside mainstream education?

Our analyses indicated that measures implemented outside mainstream education often had to face some constraints that hindered the functioning of these measures, caused some side-effects, and jeopardized the success of these measures. To start from the beginning, these measures outside mainstream education often have to deal with a very particular **student intake**. This does not necessarily mean that this group of students is not eligible to obtain specific educational qualifications, but these students are more frequently plagued by several factors that set them apart from students enrolled in mainstream education. First, many of them live in more **complex living circumstances**, characterised by instable family arrangements, for instance, or in which they have to provide a living for their family. Second, there is a higher proportion of students with **learning difficulties** (e.g., dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or **background variables that make learning more complex** (e.g., distinct mother tongue and/or recent arrival in immigrant country). This makes it not only more challenging for the students themselves to learn, but also for the implementers of the programme who have to teach groups of students that need additional attention. Moreover, these learning settings make it sometimes more complex for implementers to actually meet their set objectives, compared to in mainstream education. Third, and building further on this, measures implemented in alternative learning pathways attract a large group of young people that already had **negative experiences in secondary education**. This has led to a level of distrust against educational systems and staff, and needs to be addressed first, before any other level of engagement can be expected.

Adapting to the local realities with which supervisors and implementers are confronted, there seems to be a tendency **to consider the particular student group composition in the design or organisation of the measures**, by applying a holistic student care approach and by using work-based learning and other innovative pedagogical approaches to motivate students (again) to engage in schooling and get an educational qualification and even continue studying. First, supervisors, implementers and designers seem to do this mainly by introducing **more flexibility** and applying a **more individualised approach** to each participant of the measure. They can do so in a more structural way (e.g., smaller classrooms, more care teachers, etc), by setting up particular programmes that compensate for the more complex conditions students find themselves in, by giving the implementers more freedom to deal with the specific difficulties each participant brings with them, or using a combination of these strategies. It is important to note here that these strategies are often very costly and time-consuming, which makes their further existence or their success very dependent on financial resources and political goodwill. Second, **work-based learning approaches** are introduced to demonstrate the importance of schooling, in order to get a job or the required skills for a job, to reengage students, and to compensate for the constant pressure of pull-factors that draw students away from education. Furthermore, the provision of WBL approaches also responds to students who show high levels of academic disengagement in a school-based learning environment but could be re-engaged through more practically oriented workplace learning.

The particular student group composition of the measures implemented outside mainstream education should be seen as the **context** in which particular measures are organised and designed. The existence of such a group of students could be seen as a failure of the existing mainstream educational systems in addressing the complex social, political and economic conditions and constraints their students are confronted with. Nevertheless, based on the accounts of implementers and supervisors, these measures in alternative pathways could also be seen as a valid and real alternative for mainstream education, and therefore, should not always be evaluated in comparison to mainstream education. This relates to the central **features** of the measures in alternative learning pathways that can often be seen as risk and protective factors for the successful functioning of these measures (Pennacchia et al., 2016).

First, if one wants to perceive and evaluate these measures as such, one needs first to address the **stigmatisation** of students in alternative pathways. This is not only necessary for students' academic self-image and study motivation but also for the evaluation of the qualifications received in these institutions on the labour market. The fact that one is enrolled in 'an alternative' learning pathway itself should be taken into consideration as it can cause negative feelings towards the pathway or measure one is enrolled in. The existence of such 'alternative' pathways suggests the need to reform mainstream education (e.g., Graham, Van Bergen & Sweller, 2016). Furthermore, a frequently mentioned problem was the lack of information about these alternative pathways provided in mainstream education and by student counsellors. If these measures would were truly seen as valid alternatives, it is striking that many staff find it difficult to redirect students to these measures. It is crucial that students find a more suitable learning approach that would facilitate their educational trajectory towards an educational qualification and prevent early school leaving and all the negative experiences associated with this 'drop-out'. It should be mentioned, however, that not all participants felt stigmatized. For instance, in the United Kingdom, all apprentices taking part in this study felt that apprenticeships are more valuable and more appreciated by employers than regular secondary education (sixth form or college). As a matter of fact, statistics support this as the employment

outcomes of apprentices are only surpassed by degree holders. While apprenticeships are still not recognised as valuable by the general public and even career advisors – as reported by the participants – in England, there is a growing campaign to increase the awareness about and the value of this pathway. This could be a positive example for a previously stigmatised option gaining recognition and overcoming stigma. Nonetheless, at the same time, this would entail another risk factor: with the increased prestige/improvement of the outcome measure (qualifications and labour market outcomes) of alternative provisions, it is plausible that ESLs will be squeezed out if they have to compete with others who have better educational track records. Many apprentices in the United Kingdom had already achieved some qualifications or were accepted to other courses, too. They, however, opted for the apprenticeship because they saw it as a more effective route into employment, and in some ways, a superior option to mainstream education.

Associated with this, alternative pathways are often plagued by the **lack of provision of real(-istic) educational and labour market perspectives**. It is for employers and participants themselves often not clear what the exact level is of a particular work-based learning measure and what the officially recognised qualifications are that the participants will receive when successfully finishing the programme. This differs across the amount of time spent in a WBL environment and the type of sector (i.e., private or public) or organisation (i.e., simulation in schools or training centre), and depends on the level and content (e.g., vocational vs academic; soft vs hard skills) of the accompanying courses taught. Moreover, students in apprenticeship-based dual learning systems are very dependent on the goodwill of regular economy employers for the provision of quality workplace learning opportunities. Due to the stigma of studying in a second-best or even last resort educational pathway, the work-based learning pathways are often chosen more based on a process of elimination rather than positive choice. Many of the students have experienced academic disengagement and exclusion in mainstream education before entering the WBL pathway. This rather adverse public image can also have negative effects on these students' opportunities in finding quality apprenticeships. More positive and early orientation to work-based learning pathways can help to prevent academic disengagement in mainstream education and provide more positively – and more intrinsically-motivated enrolments before negative experiences in mainstream education have occurred.

Third, although alternative learning pathways often try to **promote student voice and ownership**, they often do not succeed in doing so. In most measures, considerable attention is given to their personal needs and concerns, but they often cannot really participate in the design of the measure itself. Finding and enrolling in these measures is often already seen as an important accomplishment, let alone participating in the active design of the measure. A minor number of students were also not heard with regard to their personal issues. Furthermore, despite many of these alternative pathways being directed at the promotion of student voice and ownership, this may be a gradual process that expands the learning time in the alternative pathway. As a consequence, considerable attention should be given to post-care measures as well as the follow-up of these young people after their participation in alternative learning arenas.

Fourth, the **provision of sufficient and sustainable funding** is one of the most frequently mentioned risk factors for the successful implementation of these measures. This is especially important for the success of these measures implemented in alternative pathways. They often require more resources compared to mainstream education, especially as they intend to consider

their participants from a more holistic perspective. As a consequence of the fact that these measures are often very intensive to organize and require a great deal of investment on the part of the funders, designers, supervisors and implementers and students, some measures are not as easily accessible or available for all students. **Selection criteria** are installed in some measures, precisely to guarantee the success of the measure and the positive experience of the stakeholders involved. Although this might be seen as a crucial condition for measures to present successful outcomes, this may yield some risks as well. If these selection criteria are based upon previous achievement results or an initial level of motivation, these measures may end up ruling out – instead of including – the most vulnerable groups of participants. The idea of these measures is to work on and improve students' achievement as well as motivation to study. Hence, precisely by setting these selection criteria, one could artificially increase the success rate of the measure but at the same time go beyond the initially set objectives. Related to this, we should note that measures apply distinct **evaluation criteria** to determine their success. The first considers the particular target group and the reason to design a particular measure and strives to evaluate it **in terms of the capability to keep students enrolled within this measure**. The second interprets success more in terms of the broader society and its validity on the labour market and focuses on **the extent in which students manage to achieve educational qualifications and entry into the labour market**.

Fifth, regular secondary education could benefit from a **greater cooperation between the different stakeholders**, e.g., staff from alternative education and mainstream education; employers; local councils; social workers etc, to raise awareness about alternative provisions and to help overcome the stigma attached to them.

Finally, mainstream education could discuss the possibility of **providing (some/more) financial support/remuneration** for apprentices and other learners in alternative pathways. Our findings in alternative learning arenas demonstrated the importance of financial support or salary for the participants. Many opted specifically for an apprenticeship in order to earn an income while studying. However, for many young people the very low pay provided in apprenticeships can jeopardise their completion of the course. Similar lines of thought could be introduced into regular secondary education, to reduce the risk of ESL.

In sum, we can state that these measures are organised and designed for a very specific target group, a very challenging group, with respect to attaining educational qualifications. Hence, just keeping these young people enrolled in school and teaching them some kind of skills is already considered to be a success given their negative experience with formal schooling. In a second section of the conclusion of this project paper, we will go deeper into the ways in which mainstream education could learn from these measures and could work to prevent early school leaving earlier in the educational trajectory of these youngsters. Although more suggestions could be made with respect to ways to change mainstream education in order to prevent early school leaving, in this paper, we will confine ourselves to suggestions that relate to the things we learnt from the theory-driven stakeholder evaluation of prevention and intervention measures implemented outside mainstream education.

What can mainstream education learn?

Corresponding to the cross-case analyses, there are several interesting approaches used in measures implemented outside mainstream education that could inspire mainstream education. These measures try to tackle early school leaving by 1) coping with all possible risk factors that hinder students' educational career and 2) by empowering and emancipating students.

First, **in order to deal with possible hindrances of students' educational career and prevent students from leaving school early**, mainstream education could also try to reinvent itself, making more use of innovative pedagogical approaches and considering a more holistic (student care) and inclusive approach. In general, the most salient features of such approaches relate to the introduction of more flexibility, both on the level of the system as well as on the individual level. While mainstream education is often too reluctant to move away from its rigid structures or ways of socialising their students precisely with the goals to 'prepare them for their future lives' and train them to achieve the highest they possibly could, there is no reason to assume that they would not succeed when being treated more as adults or in a more holistic way. Although this often requires some financial resources, the high number of early school leavers is also often not without long-term financial repercussions. An important caveat that has to be made here is that there are a lot of ways to introduce flexibility in an educational system. In some cases more flexibility could even lead to even more early school leavers or students that do not achieve an educational qualification. We want to point to the kind of flexibility that should be interpreted in terms of not having to repeat courses that one has already passed and in terms of reorganizing classroom practices and structural elements to be more considerate of diversity in terms of students' abilities, background and living circumstances. Some students need more assistance during their educational school career, but many regular secondary schools do not have or are not willing to spend the required time and money on this assistance. The combination of the introduction of more flexible educational pathways or paths to reintegrate into education and the higher support and assistance of students during their trajectories is crucial. If only one of these two factors are present, the student, as well as the school personnel will often feel hindered by the system to actually achieve an educational qualification, or will encounter difficulties to find their way to success within the system.

Second, some students need more guidance and tools in mainstream education **to empower and emancipate themselves**. Students that already receive some support from home and their friends will be more likely to find their ways within mainstream secondary schools. Due to all kinds of reasons, a lack of this support seems to jeopardize students' chances of achieving educational qualification. Hence, many alternative pathways are directed at this particular target group, although this is also a task that could be fulfilled by mainstream education (see also Fielding, 2006; Kim & Taylor, 2008). Furthermore, alternative learning methods, such as part-time, work-based learning pathways, can provide positive alternatives to full-time school-based education – that is, when career guidance in mainstream education actively and correctly informs students about this alternative learning route. Our fieldwork clearly showed that many of the alternative pathways are in most cases only seen as *alternative* pathways. Only after processes of academic disengagement in mainstream education do students enrol in alternative pathways. Many implementers remarked that some of these students just required some assistance, but school personnel in more academically oriented education often perceived that kind of assistance to not be part of their job.

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Annex 1: Overview and Grid of the Studied Measures in Alternative Learning Pathways

Measure	Work-based learning approach	Innovative pedagogical approach	Holistic student care approach	Educational reintegration strategies
BELGIUM (BE)				
BE_A1: Modular System		XXX		
BE_A2: Care Framework		XXX	XXX	
BE_B1: Modular System		XXX		
BE_B2: Career guidance	XXX			
BE_C1: Implementing Official Curricula for General		XXX	XX	XXX
BE_D1: Vocational Training & Apprenticeship Counselling	XXX			
SPAIN (ES)				
ES_A: Programa Joves per l'Ocupació (Youth for employment)	XXX	XX	XXX	X
ES_B: PTT – School to work transition Plan	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
ES_C: Plan d'iniciació Professional (PIP) – (Initial vocational plan)	XXX	XX	XX	XXX
ES_D: CAM - specific course to access initial formal VET	X	X	X	XXX
NETHERLANDS (NL)				
NL_A: School as Workplace				XXX
NL_B: Talent for Care			XXX	
POLAND (PL)				
PL_A: 2-year intensive programme of basic vocational boarding school	X	XXX	XXX	XXX
PL_B: Basic vocational school with apprenticeship as occupational training	XXX		X	X
PL_C: Apprenticeship (on the job training with employers)	XXX		X	
PL_D: Intensive general upper secondary education – daily programme	XXX		XXX	
PORTUGAL (PT)				
PT_A: Cooperative Vocational Training	XX	XXX		XXX
PT_B: Apprenticeship and sponsoring	XXX			
PT_C: Vocational training with the Arts		XXX		XXX
PT_D: Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee	XXX			
SWEDEN (SE)				
SE_A: Vocational training course	XXX	XX	X	X
SE_B: Apprenticeship training course	XXX	X	X	
SE_C: General programme	XX	XX	XXX	XXX
SE_D: General programme with a human rights-profile	XXX	XX	XXX	XXX
United Kingdom (UK)				
UK_A: Numeracy and Literacy lessons, Bridging course	X	XX		XXX
UK_B: In-depth theoretical training, Health and Social Care / Childcare Apprenticeship	XXX	XXX	X	X
UK_C: Employability module, Pre-apprenticeship programme	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
UK_D: Workplace immersion and Apprenticeships	XXX	XXX		X

XXX

Discussed in this chapter

XX

Discussed in this chapter - only when applicable

X

To a small extent applicable

Not discussed in this chapter

Annex 2: Descriptions of Alternative Learning Pathways, Focus Institutions and Measures in Alternative Pathways

Belgium (Flanders) (BE)

Alternative Pathway A

Second chance education is an alternative pathway towards attaining an ISCED III qualification, in the sense that it allows adults – from the age of 18 and older (no maximum age) – who left secondary school without a secondary education diploma to still obtain their ISCED III qualification. Second chance education in Flanders has its origin in the women's movement of the 70s and the 80s, a time when educational projects for and by women grew considerably and women came to consider their low valued social position and isolated role as housewives as a result of their (limited) school career. This lack of education and the fact that they did not have any educational qualifications, was seen as one of the main hindrances for the emancipation of women (Glorieux et al, 2009). Inspired by what was happening in the Netherlands, where adult women (especially mothers) were given the opportunity to go back to school and obtain their diploma, similar initiatives started to emerge in Flanders (Glorieux et al, 2009; De Win, 2001). Until 1999, second chance education initiatives mainly consisted of preparing these adults without an ISCED III qualification to take part in the exams of the Examination Board⁷ of the Flemish Community, since these initiatives lacked the authority to award diplomas themselves. It wasn't until the *Flemish Decree on adult education* was adopted in March 1999 that the centres that provided second chance education were granted the authority to award secondary education diplomas to their students (De Win, 2001).

Today, second chance education is regulated by the *Flemish Decree on adult education of 2007*. It is offered by Centres for Adult Education⁸ and consists of training and education equal to the level of second and third stage of secondary education. Adults who want to join second chance education but whose educational level is below ISCED II can be referred to basic education offered by Centres for Basic Education. Two different ways exist to attain a secondary education diploma via second chance education: i) via the academic education track (ASO), or ii) via a combination of a specific technical or vocational training and a general education component. In both cases, successful completion leads to a secondary education diploma equivalent to those awarded by regular secondary schools. If a student does not wish to attain a secondary education diploma, he or she can also opt to leave out the general education component and work towards a professional certificate, which will be awarded upon successful completion of the technical or vocational training.

An important feature of second chance education is that it uses a modular system instead of a linear system. While the linear system – which is traditionally used in regular secondary education in

⁷ The Examination Board still exists today and allows individuals without an ISCED III qualification to obtain their diploma by participating in centrally organised exams. There is no minimum age to participate in these exams. Contrary to second chance education, the Examination Board does not provide any courses and those who participate in the exam are expected to study independently and come prepared to the exam. Today it is possible for students to combine second chance education with the Examination Board.

⁸ In Flanders adult education consists of four pillars: i) *basic education*, ii) *secondary adult education* – or *second chance education* -, iii) *higher vocational education*, and iv) *specific teacher training* (Flemish Decree on Adult Education, 2007). Basic education is offered by Centres for Basic Education. Second chance education, higher vocational education and the specific teacher training are offered by Centres for Adult Education.

Flanders - is organised around sequential school years that offer a specific curriculum, the modular system steps away from the school year approach and instead offers the curriculum in separate modules. Successful completion of one module leads to a 'partial certificate', and after completion of all the necessary modules, the student will obtain his or her secondary education diploma. This modular system is explicitly stipulated in the Decree on adult education and is meant to create more flexibility in the learning trajectories of the students since it allows them to choose – at least to a certain extent - the order in which they take the modules and the number of modules they take simultaneously. Furthermore, the streamlined structure of second chance education allows students who obtained a partial certificate in one specific Centre for Adult Education to continue their education in another centre without having to repeat any modules they already completed successfully, or to follow different modules at more than one centre at the same time. The Centres for Adult Education can opt to offer the modules either in day and/or evening classes at their centre, and/or via distance education. Contrary to regular secondary education, which is free of charge, students who enrol in second chance education in principle have to pay an enrolment fee, the amount of which is calculated based on the hours of class per module, with a maximum of 300 euro per semester per course⁹. However, to stimulate students to attain their secondary education diploma, the general education track and the general training component are free of charge. Furthermore, if the student has received an ISCED III qualification, he or she can request a reimbursement of enrolment fees for the specific technical or vocational training from the Flemish government (Decree on adult education, 2007).

While in its early years, second chance education mainly attracted women in their forties and older, nowadays the participants are much younger - with the majority being in their twenties – and about 40% of them are men (Glorieux et al, 2011). The fact that the participants in second chance education have become considerably younger, and that recently especially the youngest group of students of under 25 years old has expanded significantly is also confirmed by the number of registrations in general education courses, which for this age group increased from 2602 registrations in 2008-2009 to almost 4500 in 2013-2014 (Flemish Parliament, 15.01.2015). This means that a growing number of early school leavers are entering second chance education immediately or relatively shortly after dropping out of regular secondary education. During our fieldwork and in our analysis we focused on this group of youngsters (18-24 years old).

Institution A

Institution A is one of four centres for adult education in a Flemish urban area that offer second chance education. It is a privately operated but publicly funded institute. Unlike most centres for adult education Institution A focuses solely on second chance education. It offers the following courses/tracks/curricula, which can be taken in separate modules: Human sciences and Sciences-Mathematics (academic tracks) or a preparatory track for the academic track; general education training which needs to be complemented with specific technical or vocational training to attain an

⁹ In certain cases students can be fully or partially exempt from paying enrolment fees, e.g. asylum seekers, students who are financially dependent on a living allowance of the public social welfare system, and incarcerated students.

ISCED III qualification; and specific technical training in commerce. For the vocational courses the Institute A works in cooperation with other centres for adult education.

Based on the results of the survey we conducted among students of second chance education in Antwerp and Ghent in the second half of 2014, we see an equal balance between male (51%) and female students (49%) in Institution A. This institution has a large number of students with a non-Belgian ethnic origin (32%), compared to the other centres in our sample. The educational attainment of the mothers of the students enrolled in institution A is rather low as 13% of the students has a mother without any educational attainment, ISCED 1 qualification (11%), ISCED 2 qualification (15%), ISCED 3 qualification (24%) or higher qualifications (25%) (8% unknown). In our sample of institution A, most students still live with their parents (67%), other students live alone without children (10%), with children (5%), together with their partner without children (8%) and with children (6%) (other living arrangements: 4%).

While only 30% of the respondents of Institution A did not experience any grade retention, 18% had to repeat a year, and 52% of the students even had to repeat more than one year in school. This may exemplify the previous educational failure of the students enrolled in second chance education. One cautionary remark has to be made with respect to the 30% of the students that did not have to repeat a year. While this group of students may seem to have followed a rather successful previous educational trajectory, the numbers with respect to grade retention did not the B-certificates given at the end of the school year. A B-certificate is given to a student who did not successfully pass the educational track in which s/he was enrolled. However, the student does not have to repeat the year if s/he changes track or field of study. Consequently, this type of educational failure is not grasped in the proportions of students that experienced grade retention; but it can indicate a negative educational experience, as they also did not succeed and were redirected to less esteemed tracks. This is characteristic for the Flemish educational system, commonly referred to as 'the cascade system'. The extent to which students have changed track/field of study can be grasped when looking at the previous tracks students have followed. Many students could be enrolled in distinct tracks over the course of their school career. In institution A, 34% of the students were enrolled in an academic track, 38% in a technical track, 7% in an artistic track, 33% in full-time vocational educational training, 4% in special education and 2% in a reception class. As institution A also provides an academic track; being enrolled in an academic track earlier does not automatically mean that students necessarily had to change track earlier. Out of all students, 30% had 'mild' learning difficulties, while 7% of the students encountered severe learning difficulties.

Most students registered in Institution A one year (29%) or more than two years (32%) after they have left regular secondary education. In this time between regular secondary education and second chance education, some students have done nothing (37%), followed another training (16%), worked as an employee (31%), were self-employed (2%), looked for work (12%), took care of their family (4%), were ill or disabled (5%) or institutionalised (3%).

Participants in institution A mainly were attracted to second chance education because of its modular system (49%) and because they perceived it to be the only option to get a diploma (39%). Other advantages they perceived were the teaching style (37%) and academic support (26%). Many of the students left regular secondary education because they felt academically disengaged and experienced academic difficulties. Additionally, compared to other institutions, students had a low academic self-concept and felt they did not belong in school, indicated having a lack of study and

attention in class. Most students in institution A indicated to receive more social support from their peers, school and teachers, compared to other institutions in our sample.

Description of Measure BE_A1

Name: Modular System

Designers: Flemish government, school management

Supervisors: school management

Implementers: teachers, career guidance counsellor

Recipients/ target group: all students of Institution A

Partners: other Centres of Adult Education in the case of specific vocational training

Start date and end date: permanent

Frequency: permanent

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: As stipulated in the description of the alternative pathway (see above), the modular system is a fundamental feature of second chance education. The modular system offers the curriculum in separate modules, each of which can result in the obtaining of a particular 'partial certificate'. When all 'partial certificates' of a specific track within second chance education are obtained, a secondary education diploma is awarded. The purpose behind this modular learning system is that it opens the possibility for students to approach their curricula in a flexible way and organise their school trajectories – to a certain extent – themselves. This flexibility involves the options to be enrolled in modules that are given during the daytime and/or in the evening or via distance learning, to enrol in multiple modules at the same time, and to follow different modules in different Centres for Adult Education. This flexibility requires that all Centres for Adult Education that provide second chance education work with a more or less similar structure and organisation, and with the same partial certificates. The modular system is stipulated in the Decree on adult education (2007) and thus applies to all centres that provide second chance education. Therefore, the official scope and aims of this measure is similar for both Institution A and B.

Description of Measure BE_A2

Name: 'Care Framework'

Designers/ supervision: school management

Implementers: care team - in cooperation with the career guidance counsellors and the teachers

Recipients/ target group: primarily, all students who enrol at the Institution; secondarily, students who need 'extra care' – in particular students with learning disabilities, performance anxiety, procrastination behaviour, etc.

Start date and end date: permanent

Frequency: permanent

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The Care Framework is developed by Institution A and is part of a broader approach of student counselling within the Institution, with the aim to improve the students' chances of success in obtaining an educational qualification. The Care Framework is implemented by non-teaching professionals employed by Institution A, notably 2 psychologists and 1 care teacher at the time the fieldwork was conducted. The psychologists provide thematic, mainly individual training for students on performance anxiety, fear of public speaking, self-confidence, procrastination, perfectionism, motivation problems, and

also give psychosocial guidance. The care teacher helps the students to improve their study behaviour. Participation in the training sessions, psychosocial guidance or study behaviour training is always voluntary.

As part of the Care Framework, Institution A takes two standardised tests from all students who enrol at their centre in order to assess their profiles: the VaSEV-LLL-test¹⁰ and the Lemo-test¹¹. The VaSEV-LLL test is a diagnostic instrument that measures factors that could impede/facilitate successful completion of the study trajectory. The test allows the screening of the students on performance anxiety, procrastination, self-confidence, self-image, personal and contextual problems. The Lemo-test which Institution A uses measures 13 aspects of involvement regarding learning competencies and study motivation. All the students get an individual report of their results when they have completed the test and they all have the option to discuss their results with a member of the care team. Students with a specific profile - e.g. a high score on performance anxiety or procrastination in the case of the VaSEV test and/or with a bad score on one of the competencies of the Lemo-test are explicitly invited by the care team – though not obliged to accept this invitation - to discuss their results, to give advice on possible training or other types of guidance provided within the Care Framework.

Alternative Pathway B

Institution B is, like institution A, an institution that offers second chance education. To avoid repetition, we will not repeat the description of second chance education here.

Institution B

Many vocational courses have a very gender-specific intake and, across all second chance educational institutions in Flanders, a higher proportion of female students can be found. However, in institution B (similar to institution A), there is a balanced gender composition of the institution (49% male students, 51% female students). The ethnic and socio-economic composition of institution B resembles the overall compositions of other institutions that offer second chance education in our sample. However, this means that there is quite a large overrepresentation of particular vulnerable groups in Flemish society. Only 32% of the students has a Belgian descent, and only 45% of the students have a mother that attained an ISCED 3 qualification or higher.

The previous educational trajectories of the majority of the students in institution A is quite characteristic for the Flemish secondary educational system and literally means that the enrolment in institution B is seen as a 'second chance'. Most of the students that end up in second chance education have repeated at least one year (67%), suggesting that they did not follow a flawless educational trajectory. Furthermore, as the Flemish educational system is generally referred to as a 'cascade system', students that finally enrol in institution B come from all kinds of tracks, and thus encounter difficulties making their track choices over the course of secondary education. Given the

¹⁰ VaSEV-LLL stands for '*Vragenlijst Studie- en ExamenVaardigheden – LevensLang Leren*' [Questionnaire Study- and Examination Competencies – Lifelong Learning] and is developed by Depreeuw, Eelen and Stroobants (1996) in cooperation with the Federation for second chance education

¹¹ Lemo stands for '*Leercompetenties en Motivatiekenmerken van cursisten*' [Learning competencies and motivation characteristics of students]

specific technical courses offered in institution B, a larger proportion of the students (47%) come from a technical track.

As is often the case in second chance education, and also the case for institution A, many students have not entered second chance education immediately after secondary education (79%). Most students indicated that they have worked as an employee (47%), did not do anything (31%), followed another training (23%), were self-employed (6,5%), looked for work (22%), looked after their family (8%), were ill/ disabled (5%), or institutionalised (2%). Hence, most students indicate to have previously worked (88%).

In institution B, the following courses/tracks/curricula are offered, which can be taken separately in modules: additional general training, multimedia operator (graphic design), pipe welding (mechanics - electricity), accountancy (commerce), multilingual polyvalent clerk, assistant secretary (trade), electric welding and tungsten inert gas (TIG) welding (mechanics - electricity), electric welding and metal inert gas (MIG) welding or metal active gas (MAG) welding (mechanics - electricity), plate welding (mechanics - electricity), maritime training deck (mechanics - electricity), maritime training motors (Car), polyvalent seller (trade).

In general, when looking at the reasons why students enrolled in second chance education, most students liked the modular system (51%) and perceived second chance education as the only option for getting a diploma (42%). Other motivations to enrol in second chance education were the particular teaching style (26%) and the academic support they hoped to receive (25%). The reason second chance education appeals to this particular group of students that left secondary education is that, during their school career, they were highly attracted to the prospect of work, or simply needed to start working. Being able to combine working and going to school is then seen as an advantage. The pull effect of working was not the only reason to leave school early. Participants also mentioned various school-related factors, such as wrong study choice and school climate, as being factors that made them decide to leave school early. While economic reasons were important, many participants also indicated the need for more social contacts as a reason to re-enter education. After re-entrance, students mainly felt supported by their parents and the school in general, and less by their peers and teachers.

Description of Measure BE_B1

Name: Modular learning system

Designers/ supervision: School management

Implementers: All school staff: teachers teach modules, student counsellors guide students for making the correct educational choices and when composing their curricula.

Recipients/ Target group: All students enrolled. This type of learning system is particularly directed at students that have already repeated a year, as it offers students the possibility to only repeat the courses one had failed earlier. Furthermore, it is designed in such way that students can more easily combine education/training with their family/work life.

Partners: this institution works together with the general employment agency and secondary education.

Start date and end date: since the decree of 15/07/2007, students can enter adult education to achieve a degree of secondary education. Courses are taught in short modules, for which each student receives a certificate when succeeding. When students have followed the general and

professional courses necessary for a particular degree, they will receive their diploma. This does not have to follow the agenda of a typical school year, but can be spread over several years and follow the pace of the student.

Frequency: Students can enrol in modules at different moments during the school year, although courses usually have specific starting dates.

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The modular system offers the curriculum in separate modules, each of which can result in the obtaining of a particular certificate. This modular learning system would enhance the possibility for students to approach their curricula in a flexible way and – to a certain extent – organise their own school trajectories themselves. This flexibility involves being enrolled in courses during the daytime or in the evening, the number of courses enrolled and the institutions in which students are inscribed. This flexibility requires that all institutions of adult education have similar structures, organisation, certificates, starting dates and duration of modules. Because of this, the official scope and aims of the measure is similar for institution A and B.

Description of Measure BE_B2

Name: Career guidance

Supervision: school management

Implementers: Student counsellors

Recipients/ Target group: all students

Partners: student counsellors and teachers often work closely together

Start date and end date: starts at the first intake moment and could last the entire school year

Frequency: one intake moment is obligatory. The frequency differs for each student, depending on the students' needs and demand for guidance.

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The career guidance of institution B is focused on the provision of additional information when students make their educational decisions. Additionally, the counsellors organise an intake meeting (which is obligatory) about the training when students enrol in institution B, so that students are better informed about their educational choice. This helps students to decide whether this career suits them, fits their knowledge or skills level, and also helps dissolve their worries about the training's level of difficulty. The counsellors help students to stipulate a personal trajectory to facilitate the combination of following a training with working and the care for family.

Alternative Pathway C

Part-time vocational education and training (VET) – while having been formally acknowledged as an official educational track in Flemish secondary education in 1983 – is de facto an alternative learning pathway to regular full-time school-based education. Similar to other students in systems that combine learning and working, students in this track typically are provided with school-based education (for part-time VET two days/week; i.e. general and vocational courses) and ideally engage in workplace learning for the remainder of the week (for part-time VET three days per week) to gain professional competencies and work experience at the workplace. Nonetheless, many students are not in regular employment and can be provided with alternative trajectories (see *infra*). Besides being perceived as an alternative for full-time school-based education, it is also a rather marginal study track in Flanders, as only about 4% of all students enrolls in the study track.

Since the 'Decree on the system learning and working' (2008) was implemented, students in part-time VET can only attain an educational degree (at an ISCED 2 or 3C level), that is, after having attained at least one professional qualification and having been enrolled in upper secondary education for respectively at least two or four years. A full diploma of secondary education (ISCED 3B) can be attained after an additional specialisation year, as is the case for full-time school-based VET in Flanders. Some youngsters in part-time VET aren't following general and/ or vocational courses that can lead to educational qualifications because they are screened and evaluated as (temporarily) not meeting basic skill and attitude levels that allow them to follow regular courses. These students are – in some institutions – provided with an alternative basic skills programme. ESL rates in this study track are much higher than in other study tracks. Just over 50% of the students leave part-time VET without an ISCED 3 educational qualification. A higher proportion of the students do, however, attain a professional qualification.

The 'Decree on the system learning and working' (2008) also stated that all students in this track should take on full-time participation, meaning a combination of school-based and work-based learning or within an alternative programme (see *infra*). Nonetheless, for 2012-2014 at the time period in which these students show the highest full-time participation levels (i.e. towards the end of the school year), just more than 70% are participating in a full-time programme, for which our urban research area shows the lowest full-time participation levels. In the same period of the school year about 33% are classified as being in 'regular employment' and an additional 13% are guided towards employment (i.e. evaluated as being ready for regular employment but can't find employment). These figures are again more problematic in our research area, i.e. about 20% of those enrolled in part-time VET are in regular employment, with an additional 20% who are guided towards part-time employment.

This lack of part-time labour market participation can – besides the workplace learning part of the training - also be problematic for educational attainment because an educational degree can only be attained when at least one professional qualification is already obtained, ideally through a combination of school-based and work-based vocational training. Nonetheless, within part-time VET, alternative trajectories are provided for students who are not deemed ready for part-time labour market participation. These students are (temporarily) provided with alternative training, such as personal development and preparatory trajectories (i.e. basic personal and social skills training provided by youth care services; called 'centra voor deeltijdse vorming'). Another alternative for regular economy employment is employment in so-called bridging projects that provide preparatory labour market participation, primarily provided through actors in the social economy (which can be paid employment or unpaid volunteering). It is important to note, however, that these alternatives for regular employment as part of the work-based learning can only be provided until the age of 18.

Students in the part-time VET track can enrol from the age of 15 when they have at least finished the first two years of secondary education, or from the age of 16 without this restriction. Students can stay enrolled until the age of 25. Most students are still below compulsory school age (59%) but the proportion of older students in part-time VET is growing, and most clearly in our research area. Furthermore, based on administrative data from the Flemish government, students in part-time VET in 2012-2013 were more often male than female (68% vs. 32%) and have an average school delay of 1,2 years. In our survey data for the cities of Antwerp and Ghent, almost 40% of students enrolled in part-time VET have experienced more than one year of grade retention. This survey data also

showed that, in contrast to full-time school-based VET, the majority of students do not have a non-EU migration background. The socio-economic background of students in part-time VET is, however, very similar to that of students in full-time school-based VET. A large proportion of students in part-time VET have typically experienced a series of negative school transitions (grade retention, 'downward' track reorientation, (forced) school changes) and often end up in this track based on a process of elimination rather than based on positive choice (De Boeck, et al., 2015; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014). With regard to average school engagement and support levels, our survey data show that overall for both systems of learning and working (part-time VET and apprenticeship training; see BE Institution D), cities Antwerp and Ghent are lowest for all engagement and support measurements, except for teacher support (much higher than in any other track) and emotional engagement measured through school belonging (as high as in the general track, significantly higher than in full-time VET).

The rather negative perception of part-time VET (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014) has led the Flemish Government to propose plans to reform the system of learning and working (both part-time VET and apprenticeship training, see *infra*) towards a German/ Austrian/ Danish system of dual learning in which workplace learning through apprenticeships (in the regular economy) is a condition for enrolling in the system. Both the Flemish Minister of Education & Training and the Minister of Work have written a joint concept note on this planned reform and are now negotiating the details with different stakeholders. Although many stakeholders believe that this reform can help to lift the reputation of the study track and believe that it promotes workplace learning in the Flemish VET system, a main critique of the reform is that it would no longer provide alternative trajectories for those who can't find or are deemed not ready to engage in apprenticeships in the regular economy, even though this group of vulnerable students is ostensibly the main target group of the system in its current form. For further discussion on the reform plans, see the description of the alternative pathway provided by BE Institution D and the Flemish Country Report of WP2.

Institution C

The institution we selected for studying specific policies/ measures within the part-time work-based vocational education alternative pathway is a centre providing part-time education in a Flemish urban area. The centre is located close to one of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of the city and as such – as indicated by the school principal – has historically attracted many of the neighbourhood's disadvantaged youth, of whom many had already passed through the neighbourhood's mainstream schools but had a number of negative school experiences. According to the school principal, the school population has, however, diversified during recent years, because the neighbourhood changed from a predominantly Turkish and Moroccan community to a 'super-diverse' neighbourhood with many newcomers. Furthermore, the school has also attracted more (native) students from the northern suburbs of the city.

Based on our survey among students enrolled in the institution during the spring of 2014, we found that the gender composition of the institution reflects the composition in other centres providing part-time work-based VET and apprenticeship training. As in most of these centres, one finds an overrepresentation of male students. The ethnic composition shows an underrepresentation of native students in comparison to the full sample of students in these study tracks. Moreover, based on the professional category of both the father and the mother, the school is among the most disadvantaged in the sample. For instance, 35% of the students could not report a (former)

profession for their father and for those who could report their father's job, their fathers were mostly labourers (schooled and unschooled).

Most students (59%) in the institution are enrolled at the ISCED 2 level for their general courses, which is almost double the proportion in the full sample (33%). The proportion that reaches the diploma year – that allows access to higher education – was about 11%, which is also about half of the proportion of the general sample of students in systems of learning and working (21%). The school provides vocational courses to obtain a wide range of professional qualifications such as bike mechanic, carpenter, stockroom clerk, mover, busboy, assistant cook, hairdresser, cashier, store clerk. With regard to the starting age in the track, the population strongly resembles the population with about 19% of students aged over 18 and 26% starting their studies in part-time VET from the first moment it is possible to make the switch (i.e. the age of 15). The students in BE Institution C for the most part had previously studied in full-time school-based VET and had more history of special education and reception classes for newcomers than students in other centres. Furthermore, almost half of the students in the institution (45%) have experienced more than one year of grade retention, compared to 38% in similar centres. Only 20% had not experienced any grade retention.

Fewer students in this institution reported that workplace learning was a motivation for choosing the specific part-time VET track (29% vs. 42%), but they reported more than students in other institutions to have been advised to take this study track (20% vs. 11%) and that they chose this track because they wanted to earn an income while studying (54% vs. 47%). Academic disengagement was reported as another main motivation, as is the case for most students in systems that combine learning and working (39% vs. 40%).

During the first month after enrolling in the track, only 25% of the students start in part-time regular employment, which is the lowest proportion of all centres studied. Our data also show a higher proportion of students that started to work in a so-called bridging projects. This work-based learning provided by organisations and enterprises in the social economy should prepare students for regular employment. While most of these apprenticeships pay a pittance per hour (about €3/ hour), some of the work-based learning can also be classified as unpaid voluntary work. Other apprentices in this system of part-time work-based VET that work in the regular economy, work under a wide range of part-time labour contracts that typically pay minimum wages.¹² Nonetheless, many of these labour arrangements are covered by specific subsidized types of employment.

When we take a look at the more subjective measurements in the student survey, our data show that students in this centre report among the lowest levels of parental support and the highest levels of peer social support and positive peer pressure, as well as the second highest level of teacher support. With regard to school-related attitudes, the students in the centre report the second lowest academic self-esteem of all centres providing systems of learning and working, and the third lowest level of attention in class and compliance to school regulation. Nonetheless, these low rankings are not found for study planning, self-regulated learning, nor emotional school engagement indicators like school belonging and valuing school education. When focussing on the school's mean figures

¹² This is different for the apprenticeship system, where students are paid a monthly fixed wage according to their age. These fixed wages are lower than regular minimum wages. Many of the interviewees also claimed that this makes these apprentices more attractive to employers.

regarding work-related attitudes, we find a mid-table ranking for their professional self-esteem, the fourth lowest work engagement and the second lowest sense of belonging to the workplace.

Based on these data, we can conclude that the support levels among peers and especially teachers are reflected in relatively high levels of emotional school engagement, but not in behavioural engagement, nor in positive attitudes to work-based learning. We have to keep in mind the particular instream of the institution and the fact that the student population is relatively more socially vulnerable than in most of these centres and has – even more than in other centres for work-based alternative pathways – experienced negative school careers before entering the school. This case study of specific policies and measures in this institution - based on interviews and focus group discussions – will try to unravel more about the risk and protective factors of part-time work-based VET as provided in this particular institution.

Based on a brief study of publicly available documents on the school and a first interview with the school management on the alternative trajectory as provided in BE Institution C, we selected a number of specific measures relevant for our study of alternative pathways for reducing early leaving of education and training in the institution¹³. We selected the following measure for the in-depth analyses within BE Institution C: implementing official curricula for general courses (to enable students to attain educational qualifications). In the following section the case study measure will be described and the analyses based on the interviews with the stakeholders will be discussed.

Description of Measure BE_C

Name: Implementing Official Curricula for General Courses

Supervision: The general courses coordinator and the school management

Implementers: Teachers of the project-based general courses ('PAV')

Recipients/ target group: All students; except those in the ALT-class¹⁴

Partners: The targets for the general courses are set by the Flemish government and the school staff is supported by the pedagogical support service of the municipal educational board of the city.

Start date and end date: The provision of the project-based general courses in the system of work-based learning from the 2008 legislation on work-based learning – implemented from school year 2009-2010 – that allows students in these tracks to attain educational degrees. The optimisation process is ongoing, kick-started by an overall very negative evaluation report of the Flemish Inspection for Education in 2012.

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: All curricula objectives within recognised educational tracks leading to ISCED scaled educational qualifications are set and need to be approved by the Flemish government in order for an institution to be (and remain) recognised and subsidized as a school. The Ministry of Education and Training – and more in particular the Educational Inspection Services – visits the schools and assesses whether the curriculum is consistent with the final and developmental curriculum objectives. As part-time work-based VET was in 2008 officially recognised as a study track leading to ISCED 2, ISCED 3C and ISCED 3B educational qualifications, the curricula needed to be adjusted to new, specific curriculum objectives.

¹³ In this institution, a basic qualification can be an ISCED 2 or ISCED 3 level educational qualification as well as a professional qualification for a specific profession.

¹⁴ The 'ALT' or alternative class is a group of students deemed (temporarily) unfit for following general courses due to cognitive or behavioural issues. Without following general courses, these students cannot attain an educational qualification. Instead these students are provided with basic (social) skills training.

Besides following vocational courses and workplace learning leading to professional qualifications, the students also follow general courses provided by the schools for part-time work-based VET. In these general courses the students need to follow official learning plans and meet course objectives set by the government in order to be awarded educational qualifications.

As for full-time school-based VET, general courses are provided as an integrated course called Project General Subjects (abbreviation in Dutch 'PAV'). These courses were introduced in the early eighties as a curriculum option for schools providing vocational secondary education. The course represents an integrated approach to learning content and skills in useful and familiar contexts. This integrated course replaced the former division into specific courses with specific learning content, such as: Dutch; Mathematics; Geography; Biology; History. To enable a better connection to the abilities and interests of students, PAV does not work with a preconceived closed curricula, which means that the learning content can be selected more freely. Instead, PAV has subject-related curriculum objectives that are grouped into the following functional areas: functional numeracy; language skills; information acquisition and processing; organisation competences; time and space awareness; social and ethical awareness, resilience and responsibility. To achieve these goals, the schools can cultivate participative learning methods and usually teach the curriculum thematically. The students then work several hours a week around one particular theme. Besides specific curriculum objectives, schools also need to include cross-curricular themes such social skills, citizenship, environmental and health education, as well as expressive and creative education and technological education.

Because of the 2008 legislation regarding the reform of learning systems that combine learning and working – enabling students to attain educational qualifications – these new PAV curricula needed to be implemented and thereby replace the former 'general social and personal skills training' ('ASPV') in these study tracks. ASPV did not have as strict, formal curriculum objectives as PAV, and did not formally include as much (functional) math and language skills. The implementation of these new PAV curriculum objectives in BE Institution C was evaluated quite negatively by the Educational Inspection in schoolyear 2012 – 2013. The Inspection report stated that, in order to keep being recognised and subsidized as a school, the centre needed to make the PAV and modern languages courses meet the course objectives set by the government. The municipal school board then gave the former school management one year to meet these criteria and organised an internal audit to check the progress. The internal audit, however, revealed that the actions taken by the management did not suffice and this has led to the resignation of the school principal. A young principal took over and has been working on this issue together with the PAV course coordinator and teachers. During the final interviews within the school (after the interview with the new school management and focus groups with students and staff), we learned that the school just got the news that – based on a new visit of the inspection during the timeframe of our fieldwork – the school received a positive report confirming that they now meet the curriculum objectives and learning plans for the PAV course.

Within this evolution from providing general social and personal training (ASPV) to general courses (PAV), the school decided that not all students are able to follow these general courses and attain an educational qualification because of cognitive or behavioural limitations. For these students the school provides alternative classes (ALT-groups). Students can temporarily or permanently be redirected towards the ALT-groups where the teaching is more focussed on general social and

personal training rather than PAV and students cannot attain educational qualifications. The decision for moving to the ALT-classes is made by the class council that contains the school management, the relevant teachers and student counselling. The students and their parents are informed on this decision but cannot formally object to the decision. During the fieldwork we did however learn that some students in the ALT-group actually choose for this kind of training themselves. We will discuss the awareness about the scope and aims of, reasons for participation in and outcome of the ALT-group more in detail along the analytical part of BE_A1.

Alternative Pathway D

The apprenticeship study track ('Leertijd', also known as 'Leercontract') is an educational system that combines learning and working. The apprenticeship training are a recognized study track in Flemish secondary education (SE). In this study track students between the age of 15 (or 16 when they have not yet finished the first stage of SE) and 25, can combine one day a week of school-based learning (i.e. general and vocational courses, similar to school-based VET) and four days of workplace learning. A student – depending on the specific training centre – can choose from over 200 professions for which they can attain professional qualifications. The study track is provided by local training centres that are independent non-profit organisations. These centres provide the one day school-based education and are supported by the umbrella organisation that provides the students with an apprenticeship counsellor that work as an intermediate for the training centre and the employer. SYNTRA or the Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training has evolved from the former Flemish Institute for Entrepreneurs and is financed by the Flemish Department for Work.

In 2012-2013 about 2750 students were enrolled in the Flemish study track, compared to more than 8000 students in part-time work-based VET. Important to emphasize is the fact that only about 4% of all students in Flemish secondary education are enrolled in an educational system that combines school-based and work-based education. Furthermore, where enrolment in part-time VET has seen a small increase, enrolments in for the apprenticeship track have been decreasing during the last few years. For the school year 2012-2013, the student population of the apprenticeship track on a Flemish level shows the same overrepresentation of male students than in part-time VET (68% male) and but shows a higher overrepresentation of minor students (69% vs. 59%). Furthermore, students in the apprenticeship track are much less likely to speak another language than Dutch at home than in part-time VET (7% vs. 21%), which is the main indicator of having a migrant background in Flemish educational statistics

As for part-time VET, students can since the 'decree on the system learning and working' (2008) attain an educational degree (at an ISCED 2 or 3C level), that is after having attained at least one professional qualification and respectively have been enrolled in upper secondary education for respectively at least two or four years. As for full-time school-based VET in Flanders, a full diploma of secondary education (ISCED 3B) can be attained after an additional specialisation year,. To enable training centres to provide educational qualifications, they have to follow curricula and objectives set by the Flemish Department of Education and Training. These conditions are checked by the Flemish Inspection for Education and Training and the centres receive per pupil funding to provide general and vocational courses. An important difference with regular education providers is that the financing does not give them to opportunity to give tenure to teachers and does not provide the same funding for providing the same support framework as in mainstream SE (e.g. student

counselling). The training centres do however have partnerships with the official Centres for Student Counselling ('CLB') to provide some specialised support.

The apprenticeship track's main difference with part-time work-based VET (provided in BE Institution C) is that students need to have an apprenticeship contract with an employer before starting their education at a training centre. Because of the condition that students in the apprenticeship track need to have an apprenticeship contract to enrol (and to stay enrolled), students cannot be provided with the same preparatory and alternative programmes as in work-based VET. Moreover, data do not show problems with full-time participation as for part-time work-based VET because students need to be participating on the labour market. This however does not say anything about truancy levels for the one day of school-based education. Students that have lost their apprenticeship can get support for additional training that can help finding a new apprenticeship for a period of 30 working days starting from the end of the contract. This support can be provided by the independent apprenticeship training centre or the apprenticeship counsellor that represents the umbrella organisation within the local apprenticeship centre. Like students in part-time work-based VET, students are also screened for a period of two weeks. Nonetheless, the main condition to start an apprenticeship track remains having found an employer.

As for part-time VET, a large proportion of students in the apprenticeship track were found to have experienced a series of negative school transitions (grade retention, 'downward' track reorientation, (forced) school changes) and are often ending up in this track based on exclusion rather than based on positive choice (De Boeck, et al., 2015; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014). With regard to mean school engagement and support levels in our survey data show that overall, the systems of work-based education in the cities Antwerp and Ghent are lowest for all engagement and support measurements, except for teacher support and emotional engagement measured through school belonging (overall as high as in the general track, significantly higher than in full-time VET). When comparing part-time VET and the apprenticeship track, our data however show that teacher support, school belonging and valuing school education is significantly lower in the apprenticeships than in part-time VET. Students in the apprenticeships track on the other hand report significantly higher levels of work engagement.

The rather negative perception about the systems that combine learning and working (both part-time VET and the apprenticeship track) (Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014) has led the Flemish Government to proposing reform plans that want to reform the system of learning and working (both part-time VET and apprenticeships, see *supra*) towards a German/ Austrian/ Danish systems inspired system of dual learning in which workplace learning through apprenticeships (in the regular economy) is a condition for enrolling in the system (which is thus already the case for apprenticeships). Both the Flemish Minister of Education & Training and the Minister of Work have written a joint concept note on this planned reform and are now negotiating the details with different stakeholders. Although many stakeholders believe that this reform can help to lift the reputation of the study track and believe that it promotes workplace learning in Flemish VET system, a main critique on the reform is however that it would no longer provide alternative trajectories for those who can't find or are deemed not ready to engage in apprenticeships in the regular economy, while this group of vulnerable students are often perceived to be the main target group of the system in its current form. For further discussion on the reform plans, see the description of the alternative pathway provided by BE Institution C (i.e., part-time VET) and the Flemish Country Report of WP2.

Institution D

BE Institution D is one of the 40 local apprenticeship training centres in Flanders. The centre is located in the inner city of a Flemish urban area. According to the apprenticeship coordinator the training centre attracts a large proportion of students from outside of the city and does not attract a high proportion of students with any migrant background (which is not typical for this centre but rather common for the apprenticeships track; see supra). The interview with the apprenticeship coordinator taught us that the number of enrolments in the apprenticeship track has seen a sharp decline during the last couple of years. Although a decline seem to be common in the apprenticeship track across Flanders, the decline in this centre seems to be more drastic. Alongside the apprenticeship track, the training centre also provides a range of other professional courses in adult education. This provision of professional courses historically stems from its background of being an organisation for entrepreneurial training ('VIZO'; see supra).

Based on our survey among students enrolled in the institution during the spring of 2014, we found that the gender composition of the institution reflects the composition in other centres providing education that combines learning and working. As in most of these centres, one finds an overrepresentation of male students. The ethnic composition shows a strong underrepresentation of students with a non-EU migrant background. About 11% of the students in the apprenticeship centre have non-EU background compared to 35% in the total sample of students in systems of learning and working. This was also acknowledged by the coordinator of the apprenticeship track, who did not have a conclusive explanation for this. She did, however, point out that SMEs with minority management also did not seem to find their way to their training centre, nor to the umbrella organisation. One of the apprenticeship counsellors did state that he once presented the study course in a local neighbourhood with a lot of Turkish shopkeepers, who were enthusiastic during the presentation but who also never found their way to the centre afterwards. The apprenticeship counsellor expressed that he experienced minority students as having more difficulties with finding an apprenticeship in some sectors, especially where the apprentices come in direct contact with customers (see implementer section on participation and ownership for more info).

With regard to the SES composition of the training centre – contrary to BE Institution C – the centre has the second most socially advantaged student population based on both parents' occupational categories. A significantly lower proportion of fathers were economically inactive (22% vs. 32%) and the students' parents have slightly more prestigious jobs.

The students of the training centre in our sample were also significantly more likely to be enrolled in later stages for their general courses of secondary education than in other centres that provide courses in the system for learning and working. The student population of the centre was overall also considerably older when enrolling in the alternative track than in other centres, which can explain the fact that a larger proportion did finish the ISCED 2 level stage in full-time school-based education before enrolling in the apprenticeship track.

Students in the apprenticeship centre had more of a background in technical education than students in other centres. None of the students, however, have ever been enrolled in a reception class for newcomers, compared to 7% for the total sample of students in systems for learning and working. Nonetheless, the centre teaches a representative student population with regard to students with general [work] experience (8%) and a background in the full-time school-based vocational track

(60%). Only 19% of the students had never experienced grade retention and 33% had experienced more than one year of grade retention. The largest proportion, however, experienced just one year of grade retention (48%). The self-reported level of truancy is in general lower than for the total sample of students systems combining learning and working. Those who did report truancy had only been truant for less than one day during the last month. One should, however, emphasize that these students only have school-based education one day a week (which is double in part-time VET). Furthermore, during the interviews, students and staff reported that absenteeism was not always disciplined, which could have led to a lower awareness about unlawful absenteeism.

When asked about their motivation, most students¹⁵ reported choosing the apprenticeship track because of academic disengagement. The second most important motivation is the opportunity to gain an income (54% vs. 35%), closely followed by workplace learning opportunities (51% vs. 42%). Compared to BE Institution C, a much lower proportion was advised to choose this study track (10% vs. 20%; overall sample: 11%). Due to it being a condition to be enrolled, all students had an apprenticeship contract in the regular economy within the first month, compared to only 25% in BE Institution C.

In terms of average support levels at the institutional level, students in BE Institution D report among the highest support levels for parental social and school support, but amongst the lowest parental participation and control levels. For peer support, the students report mid table support levels. Teacher support in the training centre is the third lowest of all 12 centres that provide study tracks combining learning and working. The levels of support at the workplace are situated in the middle of the table. Furthermore, students in the centre report the third lowest academic self-concept, fourth lowest attention in class but among the highest compliance to school regulation. For the emotional dimensions of school engagement – i.e. school belonging and valuing school education – the students report respectively the third and second lowest mean scores. Regarding work-related attitudes, the students report all mid table level scores.

Based on a brief study of public school policy documents and a first interview with the apprenticeship track coordinator of the centre on the alternative trajectory as provided in BE Institution D, we selected a specific measure in the institution that is presented as being central to reducing early leaving of education and training¹⁶. We selected the following broad measure for the in-depth analyses within BE Institution D: providing vocational training and apprenticeship counselling support. In the following section the measure that makes up our case study will be described and the analyses based on the interviews with the stakeholders will be discussed.

Description of Measure BE_D1

Name: Vocational Training & Apprenticeship Counselling

Design/Supervision: Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training/ the local training centre's apprenticeship coordinator

Implementers: Apprenticeship counsellors; vocational courses teachers

Recipients/ target group: All students

¹⁵ 58%, compared to 40% of the overall sample

¹⁶ In this institution a basic qualification can be an ISCED 2 or ISCED 3 level educational qualification as well as a professional qualification for a specific profession.

Partners: employers (in regular economy) and the Flemish Employment Agency (VDAB)

Start date and end date: throughout the school year

Frequency: Intake/ screening and on-demand of target group, employers and teachers of vocational courses

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: This particular type of vocational education and training track in Flanders primarily contains work-based vocational training, which is combined with one day of school-based learning per week. A half day is reserved for general courses (that allow students to attain a diploma for upper secondary education) and the other half day consists of school-based vocational education. As a case study, we primarily selected the work-based VET aspect but then in relation to the apprenticeship counselling – organised by the umbrella organisation (Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training) but provided in the local centres – as well as its connection to the vocational classes provided in the school.

In order to make out if a youngster is suited to start as an apprentice, the youngster should first make an appointment with an apprenticeship counsellor for an intake interview and screening. The intake by the apprenticeship counsellor includes a standardised test about work-related attitudes developed by the Flemish Employment Agency (VDAB). Based on these self-reported test results, the apprenticeship counsellor has an interview with the student. Nonetheless, besides needing to be within the 15-25 years old age group, the main selection criterion to get enrolled is to have found an apprenticeship. Together with intake and screening, finding a suitable apprenticeship is also the task of the apprenticeship counsellor in supporting the student. The apprenticeship counsellor provides youngsters with a list of relevant potential employers. The youngsters then need to solicit for a job themselves at the employer. Recently, the training centre also started to provide introduction internships of four days to get to know a profession (called 'Snuffelstages'). Here the umbrella organisation provides the legal circumstances for an employer to take a youngster on the job for four days to check if it could be a match. This short, unpaid internship is open for youngsters between the ages of 15 and 22 years old. The umbrella organisation makes sure all insurances are covered. If there is a match between a suitable employer and an apprentice, with or without help from the training centre, a standardised apprenticeship contract is drafted by the apprenticeship counsellor. Afterwards, the apprenticeship counsellor remains to act as an intermediate for the student, the employer and the training centre throughout the learning process.

Spain (ES)

Alternative Pathway A

- Goals and objectives

The Youth for Employment programme is a programme that follows a double aim:

- 1) To provide the target group with professional competencies which can facilitate their access to the labour market with minimal guarantees of stability.
- 2) To engage participants in the educational system again, either by promoting and encouraging (1) access to regular medium level VET programmes (CFGM, equivalent to ISCED 3) for all those participants who left the educational system after having obtained the GESO certificate; or (2) for those participants who left the educational system without having obtaining the ESO certificate (GESO – ISCED 2) a way to obtain it, either by attending specific courses in Adult Education Centres or via the Catalan open high-school system (Institut Obert de Catalunya, IOC), an online web-based, publicly subsidized course to obtain qualifications.

- Target group

Unemployed ESL youngsters (16 - 25 years old or under 30 years in the case of people with a degree of disability equal to or greater than 33%) with low educational qualifications and / or training deficits that had previously been registered in the Youth Guarantee Programme.

- Curriculum/ approach

Officially, this programme is specifically aimed at reducing ESL and unemployment rates among youngsters by combining guidance, specific training and real job experiences in companies and at the same time giving participants the chance to start studies again. Among other training activities, as an alternative pathway to reducing ESL, this programme includes training with the aim of obtaining the Compulsory Secondary Education Certificates (GESO – ISCED 2) and / or preparation for to access medium VET programmes (ISCED 3 equivalent) via a specific exam: This training is compulsory for all of the participants that have not previously achieved the certificate of Compulsory Secondary Education (GESO) and who, at the start of the programme, are not enrolled in any of the other existing alternative pathways for obtaining the GESO certificate or are not in any measure aimed at providing access to initial formal VET studies such as the specific course (CAM) described in measure D.

Institution A

Institution A is the headquarters of the economic and trade promotion organisation of the city council of City 1, one of the biggest cities in Barcelona's metropolitan region. Both Institutions A and B presented in this report belong to the same local council area but develop different kinds of actions and programmes and present different aims and scopes. While Institution B is a training centre, Institution A is not, but develops a series of work-search oriented schemes and programmes with the broad scope of promoting employment within its users. This scope is determined, in general

terms, by all the existing public economic and social development policies in Catalonia, especially active labour market policies (ALMP).

- Student composition / Services user profile

Because of the programmes and schemes that Institution A offers, its user profile is composed almost exclusively of unemployed working people (16-65 years old). In accordance with the ALMP intervention programmes implemented in Institution A, users belong, in a broader sense, to social groups at risk of social exclusion and / or with social vulnerabilities, in particular economic, educational and / or related with unemployment and the labour market (long-term unemployed people; ESL Youngsters; the immigrant population with undefined professional profile...). Each action or programme determines specifically what type of user profile or what socioeconomic background the target groups must have in order to participate in each measure. Data published by the institution state that about 40% are non-native users.

With respect to the Joves per l'Ocupació (JPO) programme, all students are unemployed ESL Youngsters 16-25 years old who are not enrolled in any other educational or training programme. From the year 2015, all ESL youngsters who want to join the JPO programme have to be compulsorily registered in the Spanish EU Youth Guarantee Plan. They can have obtained GESO certificate (ISCED 2), but is compulsory to enrol in ESO schemes (both in Adult Education Centres or IOC) for all of the participants who left the education system without having obtained ISCED 2.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

Institution A does not provide any educational or training track by itself. All training tracks included in the occupational programmes that Institution A implements are conducted in Institution B, but not all the training tracks provided by institution B belong to occupational programmes managed by Institution A. Some of the occupational programmes managed by Institution A which include training schemes are:

- 1) FEM Ocupació (Let's create Jobs for Youth): A programme for the promotion of employment aimed at young people below 30 years old who finished ISCED3 or a higher educational level (either general or vocational) who want to join the labour market. This programme includes specific training subsequent to the incorporation into the labour market in the professional field in which they are engaged.
- 2) Joves per l'ocupació (JPO): The programme chosen as Measure A1.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

There is no quantitative data on dropout rates related to JPO programme. Interviewed staff refer to the existence of some dropping out in all programmes, especially during their first weeks of implementation, but places are then taken by new users who are on the waiting list.

- Policy overview

Institution A does not develop any specific preventive measures in relation to ESL beyond the compulsory requirements of the programmes they implement. Although the official aim of JPO (among others), as we have already seen above, is to promote among the participants their return

to the education system -either to ISCED 2 or ISCED 3 schemes, depending on the specific education profile of the individuals, in fact, JPO it is not seen specifically as a measure to tackle ESL by the supervisor and implementers of the measure in Institution A, who clearly prioritize the labour market insertion aim of the programme.

Description of Measure ES_A

Name: Programa Joves per l'ocupació (Youth for employment)

Designer: Servei d' ocupació de Catalunya (Soc-catalan Employment Service) – Department d'empresa i ocupació

Institutions of Implementation: Local councils & authorized private institutions

Supervision staff: Technical staff from local council & SOC (Catalan Employment Service)

Implementers: Staff members from the institution and employed teachers

Recipients/ target group: Unemployed ESL Youngsters 16-25 years old registered in the Spanish EU Youth Guarantee Plan.

Partners: Local enterprises.

Start date and end date: From December to December. Each programme last 12 months, officially starting before end of December (by 31/12) and ending by end of December of following year (30/12). Some editions have lasted 15 months.

Frequency: Annually

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: According to its supervisor, Joves per l'Ocupació (JPO) consists of basic vocational training, guidance and support actions for the participants throughout the duration of the programme (12 months/15 months) and an internship with partner companies. In addition, it is mandatory to enrol in a course to obtain the ESO certificate, if they do not already have this level of education (ISCED 2). It is a programme that is funded by the European Social Fund, the SOC (Catalan Employment Service) the Ministry of Labour and is run in the framework of the EU Youth Guarantee Plan (PGJ). It is important to highlight and remember that, although it is mandatory to enrol in schemes to obtain the ISCED 2 equivalent certificate for all the participants who have not obtained this education level, JPO is also a framework that aims to promote the return to the education system, especially through VET regular studies of all those ESL youngsters who have previously obtained ISCED 2 but left the education system without finishing ISCED 3 equivalent studies.

According to official documents, JPO develops a set of actions in order to achieve its official scopes and aims. These actions include:

- Tutoring and support for labour market insertion: it consists of a set of actions to give support and guidance individually, to youngsters in their process of entering the labour market. It takes place throughout the programme and combines diagnostic mechanisms, information and advice and motivation strategies. It is a cross-integrated continuous action.
- Vocational training: aims to improve employability, facilitate opportunities for labour market integration and to promote the return to education for the targeted young people. Training is mandatory for all participants and will have to adapt to the needs of local productive sectors. The duration of the training must be a minimum of 150 and a maximum of 350 hours.

- Real work environment internships with no contract: depending on the training scheme, the characteristics of the project or the expectations of employment, the programme may include work practices in real working environments as a complementary activity to training.
- Promotion of the participation of local companies: The aim of this action is to encourage participating local companies and non-profit organisations in the programme to contract the young people, thereby increasing opportunities of employment for youngsters, and satisfying the requirements of companies and organisations that participate in the programme in relation to their employment needs.
- Work Experience in companies: this action aims at the acquisition of the required professional skills needed to enter the labour market. To achieve this aim, the measure promotes among local companies the possibility of subsidizing a labour contract for six months. The company will be responsible for guiding the youngsters in the development of their effective work.

Alternative Pathway B

Institution B develops a series of training programmes that can be included in any of the three categories of Alternative Pathway defined in the framework of analysis of alternative pathways. Most of the training programmes of Institution B belong to the different types of basic vocational training related directly or indirectly to occupational programmes within the Active Labour Market Policies carried out in Catalonia nowadays. Although most of these training programmes are designed and managed by the Catalan Occupation Service (Servei d'Ocupació de Catalunya, SOC), the specific measure analysed in this institution (PTT) belongs to a set of alternative training measures out of educational formal tracks (Programes de Formació i Inserció – PFI) that exclusively depend of the Department of Education of the Catalan Government.

- Goals and objectives

These programmes are voluntary programmes with the main purpose of giving the target group the opportunity to return to the educational system, especially in order to continue vocational education. They provide participants with essential skills to access the labour market with better chances of obtaining a skilled job but are especially aimed at engaging participants in further vocational studies via official VET studies.

- Target group

Unemployed ESL youngsters between 16 - 21 years old who have left/finished compulsory secondary education (ESO) without obtaining the certificate of GESO (ISCED 2) and who are not enrolled in any other educational or training programme. From the year 2015, all ESL youngsters who want to join these programmes must be registered in the national Youth Guarantee Plan prior to application.

- Curriculum/ approach

These programmes take one single academic year and entail about 1000 hours of training.

There are three different categories according to their organisation and management and the type of institution where they are implemented:

- 1) School to Work transition plans (Programme de Transició al Treball: PTT) organised in collaboration between the Department of Education and the local authorities.
- 2) Initial Vocational Plans (Plans d'Iniciació Professional: PIP), which are conducted either in state schools (presented and analysed in Institution C) or in private schools and authorized training centres and units.
- 3) Training programmes and professional learning (Formació i Aprenentatge Professional: FIAP), offered and developed only in state secondary schools (Department of Education).

All the existing programmes are composed of 1) general training modules for the acquisition of basic core skills, 2) professional training modules for the achievement of professional competencies, which include a minimum 180 hours-module of training in a real workplace, and 3) professional follow-up and guidance actions for students. Until academic year 2014-2015 these programmes (formerly known as PQPI in Catalonia) granted the possibility of direct access to VET regular studies (CFGM, ISCED 3) for all those students who passed the programme. Since academic year 2014-2015, direct access to equivalent ISCED 3 regular studies is no longer possible and passing a further specific exam is required to access ISCED 3 equivalent studies.

These programmes also enable students to obtain the Secondary Education Certificate (GESO). Those who complete the PFI compulsory training modules and decide to take an extra core education module may obtain the Secondary Education Certificate by attending Adult Education Centres. However, while these programmes give access to VET ISCED 3 equivalent programmes by some ways just after completing compulsory training modules, the GESO certificate is not obtained without taking this extra voluntary module specifically designed to obtain it.

So, according to the Department of Education, successful completion of any of these programmes entails the following accreditations:

- 1) Final certification of acquired skills
- 2) Completing these programmes favours retention and continuity towards CFGM (ISCED 3) by specific access tests, through graduation certificate of compulsory secondary education (GESO - ISCED 2) and further enrolment in CFGM, or through adult education centres, without the need to fulfil the requirement of being over 18.
- 3) The various training modules passed can be accumulated to obtain a basic vocational qualification
- 4) Obtaining the certificate of every single module ("skills' unit") of a vocational certificate leads to the award of the vocational certificate (ISCED 2/3).

Institution B

Like Institution A, Institution B belongs to the local council area of economic and commercial development of City 1. Institution B serves as the training unit of this council area where all the vocational and professional training programmes coordinated by the local council are offered. Institution B is a training unit that does not specifically nor exclusively offer regular or official education stages. It is rather defined by social and labour training schemes closely linked to lines of intervention depending on the active labour market public policies currently in place in Spain and Catalonia. As in Institution A, Institution B initiatives are often developed in collaboration and in agreement with other local council departments and stakeholders in the surrounding areas:

education organisations, associations from the productive sector, third sector organisations and, as the implementer explained, they specifically work with professional trade associations linked to productive sectors that are relevant in the area. The facilities of Institution B occupy an old textile factory building south of town, on one of the most important routes into town. It is not intended to serve any specific territorial area but, due to its location, it has become a landmark that is more important for the inhabitants of the closer southern areas of the town than for those living in more distant districts.

- Student composition

Institution B runs more than 10 different types of training programmes that include more than 90 courses or training modules in different specialized trades, all of them vocational and specifically linked to employment promotion and to the improvement of the professional qualifications of its students. According to the 2015 council statistics, more than 1300 people participated in the various training activities that were offered by Institution B during the year 2014.

The students' profile is mostly dependent on the active labour market policies' definition of targets and beneficiaries of the training types. Students' profiles can be, therefore, either non-specific or specific. But as explained earlier in relation to Institution A, there is a general profile of students as being unemployed of working ages (16-65), with a certain gender bias (especially in SEFED, where clear feminisation is observed). It has not been possible to access data by national status, immigrant background, first language or place of residence, although fieldwork has made it possible to identify the relative weight some of these variables.

In this sense, the implementer and the educator in the PFI and PTT programmes said that the profile of students enrolled in PTT, beyond the particular requirements concerning age and education level established by the Department of Education, clearly corresponds to working class, Spanish-speaking youth living in the working class neighbourhoods surrounding the town, including a high proportion of youth with an (international) immigrant background. There is a clear distinction between middle class youth from the city centre and working class youth from the outskirts and working class neighbourhoods. They also argue that differences in PFI enrolment reflect this different social composition depending on whether the programmes are privately or publicly funded and organised (PTT).

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

Apart from PFI-PTT measures, Institution B also offers the following training programmes or courses:

- 1) FEM Ocupació per Joves (Let's create Jobs for Youth): Programmes to promote labour market access for youth below 30 with ISCED3 (general or vocational) that are looking for jobs. The programme includes specific training after they have obtained a job.
- 2) Formació Ocupacional (Occupational Training): This general type of training is publicly subsidized and coordinated, and specifically targets the active population with official unemployment status (registered in the state employment services). This is a professional/vocational training with an annual public offering determined by the dynamics of the labour market. Both the types offered and the minimum education requirements vary according to these dynamics and every specific year. These programmes are organised into

modules that can add up to obtain a vocational certificate that can be equivalent to ISCED 2 or 3 levels.

- 3) Joves per l'ocupació (JPO) Already presented and analysed as Measure ES_A.
 - 4) Simulació d'empreses amb finalitats educatives (SEFED): SEFED (Simulation of firms for educational purposes) is a programme of occupational training that aims at training people in the management and administration of firms. More specifically, the programme trains versatile clerical workers for SME (Small and Medium Enterprises). In SEFED programmes, real work situations are reproduced by simulating the functioning of an enterprise as the teaching/learning methodology. With SEFED a level 2 professional/vocational certificate can be obtained (equivalent to ISCED 2).
- Dropping out and associated behaviour

Although in interviews with the measure technical staff we were informed that there is always some dropping out, and the interviews with students also confirmed it, the staff in charge interviewed during fieldwork claimed that a specific preventive measure is carried out to reduce this risk.

- Policy overview

During the interview, both interviewees mention time and again the key importance of working to repair the kids' self-esteem, insisting on the need for them to reflect and become aware of the transition they are going through, their future options, etc., with constant challenges and encouragement in their frequent individual monitoring meetings. The kids are encouraged to analyse their situation with realism, to acknowledge their responsibilities and their potential, and to raise their awareness of the need to make a shift in attitude and start acting as adults.

Description of Measure ES_B

Name: Plan de transición al trabajo (PTT) – school to work transition plan, Programmes de formació i inserció (Programmes of training and labour market insertion)

Designers: Department of Education

Institutions of Implementation: Local council

Supervision Staff: Educational measures coordination staff from the institution

Implementers: Technical Staff members from the institution and employed teachers

Target group: Unemployed ESL youngsters between 16 - 21 years old who left Secondary Education (ESO) without obtaining the certificate (GESO – ISCED2) and who are not working and not enrolled in any other educational or training programme.

Partners: Trades' associations and other social agents and stakeholders, depending on the training track. Public secondary schools.

Start date and end date: One academic year. September to June.

Frequency: Annual.

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: These programmes are voluntary programmes with the purpose of giving the target group the opportunity to re-enter the educational system in order to continue vocational training. They provide participants with essential learning to access the labour market with better chances of obtaining a skilled job but are especially aimed at engaging participants more deeply in professional studies via regular VET studies. Until academic year 2014-2015 these programmes (formerly known as PQPI in Catalonia) granted the

possibility of direct access to VET regular studies (CFGM, ISCED 3 equivalent) for all those students who passed the programme. Since academic year 2014-2015, direct access to equivalent ISCED 3 regular studies is no longer possible and passing a further specific exam is needed in order to access ISCED 3 equivalent studies. This test can be substituted by a final grade of 8/10 or above.

Alternative Pathway C

As we have explained in Measure B1, both PTT and PIP are measures that belong to a wider programme scheme called Programes de Formació i Inserció (PFI) already described in the previous measure. Important differences between PTT and PIP can be found regarding the types of institutions where they are carried out, the technical staff involved and the training specialities offered. While PTT can only be offered in Institutions run by local authorities, PIP can be run in secondary high schools (both public (state) schools owned by the Department of Education and private schools) or in authorized training centres.

- Goals and objectives

PIP-PFI are voluntary programmes with the main purpose of giving the target group the opportunity to return to the educational system, especially in order to continue within formal VET studies. They provide participants with essential learning to access the labour market with better chances of obtaining a skilled job but are especially aimed at engaging participants more deeply in professional studies via formal VET studies.

- Target group

Unemployed ESL youngsters between 16 and 21 years old who have left/finished compulsory secondary education (ESO) without obtaining the certificate of GESO (ISCED 2) and who are not enrolled in any other educational or training programme. From year 2015, all ESL youngsters who want to join these programmes have to be compulsorily registered in the Spanish EU Youth Guarantee Plan.

- Curriculum/ approach

All PFI have a duration of one single academic year and entail about 1000 hours of training. There are three different programmes (called Plans) according to their organisation and management and the type of institution where they are implemented:

- 1) School to Work transition Plan (PTT) organised in collaboration between the Department of Education and the local authorities (presented and analysed in Institution B). They only can be run by local authorities.
- 2) Initial Vocational Plan (PIP), which is conducted either in public (state) schools owned by the Department of Education or in private schools and authorized training centres.
- 3) Training programmes and professional learning (FIAP), offered and conducted only in public secondary schools owned by the Department of Education.

All these programmes are composed of: 1) general training modules for the acquisition of basic core skills, 2) professional training modules for the achievement of professional competencies, which

include a minimum 180 hour module of training in a real workplace, 3) professional follow-up and guidance actions for the student.

Until academic year 2014-2015 all PFI programmes (formerly known as PQPI in Catalonia) granted the possibility of direct access to initial formal VET studies (CFGM, ISCED 3) for all those students who passed the programme. Since academic year 2014-2015, direct access to equivalent ISCED 3 regular studies is no longer possible and passing a further specific exam is needed in order to access ISCED 3 equivalent studies. These programmes also enable students to obtain the Secondary Education Certificate (GESO – ISCED 2). Those students who, after completing the PFI's compulsory training modules, decide by themselves to continue with an extra general education module, may obtain the Secondary Education Certificate by attending Adult Education Centres or via IOC (on-line platform). Note that while these programmes allow access to regular VET ISCED 3 equivalent studies by some ways, the GESO certificate is not obtained without taking this extra voluntary module specifically run to obtain it.

According to the Department of Education, successful completion of any of these PFI programmes entails the following accreditations/possibilities: 1) certification of acquired skills, 2) continuity to initial formal VET studies (CFGM - ISCED 3) after passing entrance exams, or to obtain Secondary Education Certificate (GESO - ISCED 2) through Adult Education Centres without having fulfilled the requirement of being over 18, 3) professional modules can be accumulated to obtain a basic vocational qualification (CP). Accreditation of all units of competence for a Certificate of Professionality (CP) allows this to be obtained (ISCED 2/3).

Institution C

Institution C is a public secondary school located in a working class neighbourhood in the northern periphery of City 1. There are about 120 teachers and an average intake of 1000 students every school year, mostly speakers of Spanish as their mother language. The neighbourhood has been severely affected by the economic crisis and unemployment in recent years and has an increasing immigrant population, mostly from North African and Latin-American countries.

The Education Department has classified Institution C as a high complexity school due to the composition of the student profile. According to the School Educational Project (PEC), the perception of students is that they do not spend the minimum necessary time on their academic work. This document also projects a negative and overly generalized image of the families, describing them as having very few expectations about the academic future of their children.

- Student composition

The student composition includes native and immigrant students or students from immigrant families and a significant ratio of Spanish Roma students. Most of the Roma Students come from a different neighbourhood. In Institution C, ESO students are grouped by academic performance (the supervisor uses the expression “different learning pace”) and there are class-groups of students with adapted curricula. The reason for this division into different groups is explained in terms of students' diverse profiles.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

PIP-PFI in Institution C offers two speciality tracks of PIP: Electricity and Basic Office Support. Each track has only one group with an initial size of 17 students. As we have already stated before, PIP is organised around three modules.

As a compulsory and post-compulsory secondary school, Institution C also provides the following educational tracks:

- 1) ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education – ISCED 2). Two grades organised into four years (2+2)
 - 2) CFGM (Post-compulsory Initial VET studies – ISCED 3). Five specialities: Basic Office Support; Electricity; Sales (2 types, 1 dual); Graphic Arts; Lifeguard
 - 3) CFGS (Post-Compulsory Higher VET Studies – ISCED 5). Same five specialities as CFGM.
 - 4) Baccalaureate (Post-compulsory academic track – ISCED 3). Two types: Humanities / Social Science or Science / Technology.
 - 5) CAS (Direct Access to CFGS). Alternative course which allows direct access to CFGS (ISCED 5).
- Dropping out and associated behaviour

As we also remark in the analytical part, according to the educators of the institution, the main problem regarding educational issues in Institution C is truancy and it is also the case in the PIP-PFI programme. As we stated above, the Department of Education has catalogued Institution C as a school of *high complexity*, and according to the staff the high levels of truancy and drop-out are some of the reasons why.

- Policy overview

Institution C develops no specific measures regarding Alternative pathways but have some school-wide measures regarding ESL that also apply to students in PIP-PFI measures: Pla d'Acció Tutorial and Pla d'Atenció a la Diversitat (described in the Project Paper 6).

Description of Measure ES_C

Name: Pla d'Iniciació (PIP) – Initial vocational plan, Programmes de formació i inserció (Programmes of training and labour market insertion)

Designers: Department of Education

Institutions of implementation: Public schools owned by the Department of Education or in private schools and authorized training centres.

Supervision Staff: School's director.

Implementing staff: The school's teachers.

Target group: According to the Spanish EU Youth Guarantee Plan, the target group are unemployed ESL youngsters between 16 - 21 years old who left Secondary Education (ESO) without obtaining the certificate (GESO – ISCED2) and who are not working and not enrolled in any other educational or training program.

Start date and end date: One academic year, approximately October to June, depending on authorization by the Education Department.

Frequency: Annual.

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: As already stated, PFI are voluntary programmes which provide participants with essential learning to access the labour market with better chances of obtaining a skilled job, but are especially aimed at engaging participants more deeply in professional studies via regular VET studies. The official scopes and aims of the PIP-PFI are exactly the same as stated in Measure B1, as both programmes belong to the same wider programme.

Alternative Pathway D

All the training schemes offered by the Adult Education Centres (CFA, popularly known as Adult Schools) are included in the typologies of Alternative Pathways defined by RESL.eu as Second Chance Education and / or Educational Integration Strategies. In general terms, the adult training courses aim at providing basic and academic training for adults aged 18 and over who, for various reasons, have not acquired basic level training during their schooling and who will obtain basic academic qualifications (maximum ISCED 2) that may enable them to pursue more advanced studies. Some of the training options for adults (GES, CAM, and entrance exams, indirectly) allow them to continue formal studies (of a general or vocational type) at different levels (ISCED 3 or higher). The CFA are managed by the Department of Education of the Catalan Government and are publicly owned, although some of the training specialties for adults may also be offered by private training centres, and even by public, private, or publicly subsidized regular schools.

- Goals and objectives

These studies allow direct access to initial formal VET programmes (equivalent to ISCED 3). Those who pass this training can access and continue academic programmes such as official VET in a high school, medium level VET programmes or programmes to gain access to high level VET programmes or even be prepared for access to university if they are older than 25. Passing this programme does not provide students with the GESO certificate (ISCED 2) but those who pass this training can directly access medium level VET programmes.

- Target group

ESL students older than 17 who have obtained the Certificate of Graduate in Secondary Education

- Curriculum/ approach

This programme is structured in three areas: the communication field, the social studies field and the natural science and technological studies field. They all have a minimum duration of 600 hours.

Institution D

- Student composition

Being a CFA, all students at the school are adults aged 18 or older. The average age of students in Institution D is above 25 years, but it is the type of study and its orientation that determines the characteristics of students. There is a significant presence of foreign students, especially in language courses.

With respect to the CAM, the average age is usually above 25 years. However, in the current school year (2015-2016) only 3 of the 25 students are above 25 (2 foreigners and 1 Spanish national). The rest are under- or are around 25 years of age. Usually, students tend to be unemployed young people/adults who choose to take advantage of the condition of being unemployed to undertake a course.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

In the CFAs, the training offered and the curriculum varies depending on the students' needs. In CFAs initial, basic and/or specialised training are offered, as well as preparatory courses for entrance exams to vocational training and / or access to university studies for adults over 25 years of age. Generally, basic and core Catalan and Spanish language training is also offered to foreigners.

Institution D describes what it offers educationally as follows:

- 1) Initial and Basic Studies: Within this set, basic and initial studies include fields such as IT and Initial Core Skills (that include subjects for the acquirement of basic reading, writing, numeracy skills). Also, elementary/beginners' level courses in Catalan, Spanish and English language are included in this scheme. Usually Institution D schedules two levels of elementary course (Levels I and II) for each of these subjects.
- 2) Elementary Training: Within this scheme the aim is to obtain the Certificate in Secondary Education for Adults (GES - ISCED 2). The GES is divided into two levels (GES I + GES II). Both levels are required to be fulfilled in order to obtain a certificate.
- 3) Preparatory Courses for Entrance Examinations: These courses are aimed at preparing students for the entrance exams of both Higher Formal Vocational Degree (CFGS, ISCED 5) and to university for people over 25 years of age. For the access course to CFGS, Institution D schedules 5 groups for common subjects and 2 groups for specific subjects. This institution does not make available preparatory courses for entrance exams of Initial formal VET programmes (CFGM), which are covered by the CAM.
- 4) Specific Course to Access CFGM (CAM): This is the measure analysed in this report. It is a specific course with a duration of 600 teaching hours (17 hours teaching per week, alternating 3 or 4 hours per day). It provides access to ISCED 3-type studies. The course material is structured around three areas: communication (COM) social studies (SOC) and natural science-technology fields (CTE). Institution D schedules only one CAM group. The 2015-2016 academic year is the third in which CAM studies are offered in the institution.

During the course 2015-2016, Institution D has organised altogether 27 training groups in the different training specialties offered. It is the Department of Education who decides on the training offered by the CFA. Still, Adult Education Centres may propose specialties and adapt the training on offer to local circumstances and to the characteristics of the demand. Institution D does not offer all existing training opportunities for adults in Catalonia.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

The supervisor says that even though this is not a free-of-charge course (students pay a tuition fee of 200 euros), dropouts occur during the course. Many CAM students give priority to labour market access over education. While some combine both, students tend to leave studies if they find a job.

Also, in previous years, direct access to CFGM was permitted from PQPI and PFI courses, which led many students to abandon the CAM for PFI. There are also dropouts due to the low initial educational level of some students. This circumstance makes it hard for them to follow classes without difficulties.

- Policy overview

Beyond CAM, Institution D develops no specific remedial and preventive measures with respect to ESL. As a matter of fact, Institution D does not consider CAM a specific measure designed to combat ESL, offering the opportunity of accessing regulated ISCED 3 studies. The school policy in this regard is to advise early school leaver students (detached from the regulated education system without obtaining the certificate in ESO: which are ultimately the students attending CAM and GES) that they give priority to GES over CAM. Both programmes allow them direct access to ISCED 3. The only difference is that CAM is a measure that makes no sense to attend if one does not wish to access (CFGM) Initial formal VET (ISCED 3), while GES (ISCED 2) is a measure that grants an official certification to those who complete it. However, the official certification granted by GES (ISCED 2 with the option to access ISCED 3) does not count as an ESL prevention measure if one does not continue studies in CFGM or Baccalaureate. Simply offering students a second chance measure to return to formal education system does not necessarily mean it will work; most students in these circumstances need more than simple permission.

Description of Measure ES_D

Name: CAM – Curs específic per a l'Accés a cicles de grau Mitjà: specific Course to access initial formal VET programmes

Designers: Department of Education

Institutions of implementation: Adult Education Centres + Authorised Formal secondary education schools

Supervision staff: Management Team of Adult Education Centres.

Implementers: Teachers of the Adult Education Centres.

Recipients / target group: ESL older than 17, who have not obtained the Certificate of Graduation in Secondary Education (GESO)

Start date and end date: One academic year. From September to June.

Frequency: Annual

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The CAM is a training that leads to direct access to Initial formal VET studies (CFGM - ISCED 3). It has a duration of one academic year (600 hours) and it represents an alternative to entrance exams to CFGM. The CAM belongs to the group of training schemes for adults (over 18 years of age) and it is usually taught in Adult Education Centres. One can also follow it in the IOC, and in some schools of compulsory secondary education authorized by the Department of Education.

The Netherlands (NL)

Alternative Pathway A

- Goals and objectives

Rotterdam has the highest dropout rate in the Netherlands. Institution A is situated in Rotterdam to tackle dropping out among youngsters. Institution A argues that the often challenging home situations of young people are one of the main risk factors for dropping out of school. Therefore, Institution A aims to invest in the prevention of early school leaving and youth unemployment by assisting young people with housing, education, employment and coaching. The final goal of Institution A is to have more youngsters to graduate with the minimum of a basic qualification, and that they enter the labour market as qualified and independent staff.

- Target group

The target group of Institution A consists of youth between 18 and 24 years old. This group is divided in two groups – the first being youngsters who dropped out of school, education, training or work and therefore have a large distance from the labour market; the second being young people at risk of dropping out of school, education, training or work. Institution A has several projects, all targeting students at the Dutch Senior Vocation Education (SVE) in the sectors Health Care (Project A), Construction & Engineering, Harbours, Sports, Retail and Green (nature, animals, environment, etc.).

- Curriculum/ approach

Institution A works together with employers, educational institutions, housing corporations and coaches in order to prevent youngsters dropping out of school, education, training or work. They offer youngsters learning trajectories, including an internship for getting their basic qualification, and they assist them with housing and furniture.

Institution A

- Student composition

The recruitment for Project A takes place at the Senior Vocational Education (SVE) sector Health Care, level 2 to 4, and at the youth service counter of the municipality where youngsters request assistance with finding a job, an educational programme or an (youth) allowance. Overall, around thirty so-called at-risk youngsters apply yearly for Project A. The project then selects about two-thirds of the applicants to become participants and rejects around one-third of the youngsters. The selection of the participants are conducted by the educational and coaching partners. The selection criteria to participate in this project is youngsters who come from disrupted home environments combined with debt or psychosocial problems, but still have the motivation to continue with school. On average, youngsters participate in this project between 18-24 months.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

Institution A offers the participating youngsters a combined programme of school-based or work-

based education, in addition a residence and two hours of individual coaching per week. The aim is to give youngsters all the assistance they need for them to at least obtain a basic qualification.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

The dropout rate for this project is less than 10%, which means that around 90% finish the project and receive a basic qualification. In addition, around 70% of the participants who have obtained a basic qualification continue to higher levels, for example from level 2 to level 4. This was unexpected.

Description Measure NL_A

Name: Project A

Designers/ supervision: the designer

Implementers and partners: The partners and implementers are a mix of senior vocational educational institutions, local governmental organisations, regional Housing Corporation and businesses.

Recipients/ target group: The target group of Project A consists of youth between 18 and 24 years old. This group is divided into two groups – the first group being youngsters who have dropped out of school, education, training or work and therefore have a large distance from the labour market, and the second group being young people at risk of dropping out of school, education, training or work. The recruitment for Project A takes place at the Senior Vocational Education (SVE) within the study programme Health Care, level 2 to 4, and at the youth counter of the municipality where youngsters request assistance with finding a job, an educational programme or an (youth) allowance.

Start date and end date: Institution A started with a pilot in 2013, project A, which is still up and running today. It has advanced plans to extend the project to 2021 to different sectors.

Frequency: The frequency of the project is based on the regular educational programme plus the individual coaching arrangements with a minimum of two hours per week.

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The official scope and aims of the project A are: preventing school dropout and youth unemployment, reducing the number of people who ended their education and/or who follow an adapted programme, achieve a basic qualification and/or certification by following an adapted programme and lead them to a job by means of internship- and learning trajectories.

Alternative Pathway B

Project B was initiated by a young man who was giving a tour through the Port of Rotterdam and saw that there was a lot of work available. At the same time he saw a lot of early school leavers hanging around in his neighbourhood. He came up with the idea that these early school leavers could work in the Port, but he did not have any project work experience and therefore contacted his friend, an ESL coordinator. The ESL coordinator wrote a project proposal and contacted potential partners. The Port of Rotterdam was enthusiastic, but wanted the project to be organised professionally by a recognized organisation.

The framework of the project is that the participants would get a salary for four days of work in the form of a paid apprenticeship and they would go to school (SVE level 2) for one day. This work-based learning approach is especially appealing to older at-risk youngsters who are not in favour of

sitting in class all day. After the successful completion of this one year programme, youngsters will receive their basic qualification.

They work with well-connected people in neighbourhoods to direct early school leavers to this project. It was guaranteed to the participants that they all would have a paid apprenticeship at the start of the project. However, finding a paid apprenticeship appeared to be challenging, especially for those who have not been enrolled for more than six months and who are older and thus more expensive than the average SVE students of 16-18 years. Project B is currently running as a pilot during the school year 2015-2016. After this year the project will be evaluated.

Institution B

- Student composition

There were 95 early school leavers, of which 15 were selected based on their motivation and interest in the Port and in logistics.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

This project offers a senior vocational education (in Dutch: MBO) level 2 degree, which is comparable to a basic qualification.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

Out of fifteen youngsters who were selected for Project B, eight youngsters have already dropped out. Most of these dropouts lost their motivation when they heard no places were available for them at companies at the start of the project. One of them started, but dropped out because of bad habits. Out of those seven selected youngsters, six students have gotten a paid apprenticeship to start their work/learn educational track. Unfortunately, one student could not continue with his apprenticeship because the manager at the apprenticeship was not satisfied with the student.

Description of Measure NL_B

Name: Project B

Designers/ supervision: The designer

Implementers: Secondary vocational education school (in Dutch: MBO)

Recipients/ target group: Early school leavers with an interest in ports and logistics.

Partners: Secondary vocational education school (in Dutch: MBO)

Start date and end date: a pilot project for one school year 2015-2016

Frequency: one day of SVE level 2 education and four days apprenticeship

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The goal of Project B is to motivate early school leavers to go back to school and help them obtain a basic qualification. After a period without school, it is difficult for the students to return. This project tries to help the students become independent and to obtain educational, social and work-related qualities which could be the reason for companies to offer them a contract.

Poland (PL)

Alternative Pathway A

'Alternative vocational education programme' is a programme of lower secondary school and upper secondary basic vocational school offered for boys placed in Youth Socio-therapy Centre (YSC) which is an educational institution for boys with special educational needs due to the (risk of) social maladjustment. It is alternative to a mainstream education in a few ways:

- apart from general and vocational education, according to the curriculum it offers various therapeutic activities;
- there are extra specialists employed and school staff qualifications required are different than for teachers and tutors working in regular schools;
- Individual Educational-Therapeutic Programme (IETP) is created for each student;
- the class groups are small (10-16 persons) and the number of teachers per students is higher;
- the centre offers accommodation (dormitory) where students are under 24-hour supervision;
- the programme of upper secondary basic vocational school is accelerated.

The teaching programme is reduced to the minimum required by law. In the YSC students have general, non-vocational classes, such as Polish or mathematics, and the vocational training takes place outside the YSC, in a Practical Training Centre (PTC, in Polish: *Centrum Kształcenia Praktycznego*). The programme is also adapted to cater to each student's individual educational needs. The alternative pathway has been designed specifically for students who present various behaviours labelled as "antisocial" and have difficulties fulfilling the requirements of regular school both in terms of learning and attitude towards school and education as a whole – their motivation to attend school and to learn is very low. In reality the main problems of the YSC's students are cover a wide spectrum from criminal records, aggression, substance abuse through educational disabilities such as dyslexia, to family issues.

The programme of vocational upper secondary school is intensified (students have more hours of classes weekly) to reduce the time between graduating from lower secondary school and entering the labour market. On the other hand, the vocational track offers the students concrete qualifications instead of general knowledge which can attract pupils for practical and economic reasons.

- Goals and objectives

Apart from the possibility of completing school and acquiring a profession in two years, the programme has other goals such as addiction prevention; prevention of other risk behaviours such as absenteeism or involvement in criminal actions; introducing positive attitudes towards work and life. One of the tutors describes it as 'rectification of one's moral backbone'. He says that it is important to show the students alternative, positive ways of life so they can make conscious decisions about their own future. Each student who finishes school gets a diploma – completion of upper secondary school gets a diploma equivalent to ISCED 3, but to have professional qualifications confirmed, one has to pass the external practical exam.

- Target group

Officially, the target group includes boys with special educational needs due to (the risk of) social maladjustment. They usually experience various difficulties in learning, have special educational needs, disorders (like ADHD), a long history of presenting various “antisocial” behaviours (aggression, vandalism), or even have a criminal record.

- Curriculum/ approach

The upper secondary vocational school offers a cook’s training while the lower secondary offers the programme of general education¹⁷. The teaching programme is reduced to a required by law minimum. In the YSC, students have general, non-vocational classes, such as Polish or mathematics, and the vocational training takes place outside the YSC, in a Practical Training Centre (PTC, in Polish: *Centrum Kształcenia Praktycznego*). The programme is also adapted to the students’ individual educational needs.

The professional training is assessed by teachers and students as a very basic one and qualifications as not very high. The approach towards teaching is highly individualised. Based on a diagnosis from a psychological-pedagogical centre, distinctive Individual Educational-Therapeutic Programme (IETP) is prepared for each student by a class tutor, dormitory tutors and teachers. This programme consists of educational, psychological, socio-therapeutic and pedagogical actions that have to be implemented as a response to specific problems. Each IETP is monitored on a regular basis by tutors and teachers.

To be more efficient and focused on individual issues, each tutor supervises only a few students. Tutors and teachers claim to have great freedom in the context of working with students. Since the YSC emphasises an individualised approach towards each student, tutors and teachers are allowed to use unconventional forms of work.

Institution A

The Youth Sociotherapy Centre under analysis is one of 70 institutions of that kind existing in Poland and one of fifteen situated in Mazovia voivodship (region). It is located in Warsaw in the middle of a densely populated residential area with good infrastructure. The YSC is not subject to the local, district council like other schools, but answers directly to the city hall and the Bureau of Education, which also offers different financing/allocation of funds than for mainstream schools. Its curriculum consists of lower secondary school and basic vocational upper secondary school programmes for students at risk of social maladjustment, students with emotional disorders, and those who cannot cope with the requirements in mainstream education. This particular YSC accepts boys only but most YSCs are coeducational. All students aiming to enrol need a formal statement issued by a pedagogical and psychological centre regarding their special education needs.

The tasks of youth socio-therapy centres include eliminating the causes and symptoms of behavioural disorders and preparing young people for life in accordance with social norms and regulations. The most common reasons for children being placed in such centres are behavioural disorders and non-fulfilment of compulsory education (Kędzierski and Kulesza 2008).

¹⁷ In Poland all lower secondary schools offer only general education programme as regulated by law.

In YSC, in addition to specially adapted forms and methods of teaching, young people may receive comprehensive psychological and educational support.

On the website the centre describes itself as a place providing boys adequate conditions for learning and development as well as for shaping their own potential interests. As described there:

“We show the pupils that, despite their previous difficulties, domestic problems, continuous setbacks, rejection on the part of many individuals and institutions, they can have a normal life, a family, find a job. Rather than send them to the nearest Social Welfare Centre and the registration point for the unemployed, we give them the capital of knowledge, skills and experience, which will make easier for them to start a new way of life”.

The motto of the YSC is the principle of “fair play” and the centre is proud of its sporting successes and the use of sport as one of the basic tools of work and resocialization of the pupils.

- Student composition

There are 114 male students in YSC, of which 84 live in the dormitory. Their age ranges from 13 to 24 years (maximum 21 years for lower secondary and 24 years for upper secondary school). They have various socioeconomic backgrounds, with distinct kinds of family compositions. The tutors mention that there is a lack of financial and non-financial support from families because many of these families come from a lower social class and have their own financial problems.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

The YSC offers two main programmes: lower secondary school and basic vocational upper secondary school, where students may get a vocational qualification in the profession of cook. The basic vocational programme leads to obtaining ISCED III qualifications. Programmes of both schools are in line with the core curriculum established by the Ministry of National Education (on the country level).

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

According to the principal, in the 2014/2015 school year around 2% of students (two students who were not staying in the dormitory) dropped out. The non-attendance happens almost exclusively among non-resident students, those not living in a YSC dormitory. The problem also occurs when pupils who had been living in the dormitory move back in with their family again. When they feel that there is no supervision over them, they start to skip the school more and more, which as a result causes more problems that in turn discourage them from staying in school.

Description of Measure PL_A

Name: two-year intensive programme of basic vocational boarding school

Designers/ supervision: The core curriculum of upper secondary basic vocational school is established by the Ministry of National Education but the decision to create a two-year intensive

basic vocational school programme was taken by the teacher's council. The Mazovian Education Superintendent is responsible for the supervision of the centre and its school.

Implementers: YSC's staff – including teachers, class and dormitory tutors, pedagogues, psychologist and teachers from a Practical Training Centre (PTC, in Polish: *Centrum Kształcenia Praktycznego*) – are responsible for professional training.

Recipients/ target group: boys with a lower secondary education degree and with a statement of special educational needs due to (the risk of) social maladjustment.

Partners: PTC situated nearby with regard to vocational training

Start date and end date: 09.2014 until there is a demand for it

Frequency: regular classes of general subjects and theoretical vocational subjects at YSC from Monday to Thursday and practical training in PTC – 5 hours three times a week

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: According to the YSC's statute, the main task of the basic vocational school programme is the practical and theoretical preparation of students with special educational needs to perform the duties of skilled workers in the profession of a cook. Basic principles of vocational training are the practical preparation of students for professional work; maximum improvement and development of disturbed psycho-physical functioning; the development of respect and love for work; the development of a sense of duty and a work ethic. Vocational training is tailored to the needs and requirements of the labour market, as well as the psycho-physical capabilities of students to a degree that enables them to work independently.

Alternative Pathway B

The Voluntary Labour Corps (VLC, in Polish: *Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy*) is a state organisation (supervised by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy), whose actions are addressed to three groups of young people aged 15–25 years:

- 1) young people who are neglected and whose life opportunities are remarkably reduced (mostly from vulnerable environments)
- 2) those who have successfully graduated from secondary schools and possess some vocational qualifications and skills, but are affected by unemployment;
- 3) those secondary school students and graduates who are willing to work in their spare time and who want to do it through the VLC, gain vocational experience, and at the same time, improve their financial standing. The VLC have a long tradition of activating young people at risk of social exclusion; its origins date back to 1936.

The primary objective of the VLC is to counteract the marginalization and social exclusion of young people and create adequate conditions for their proper social and vocational development. The support involves building a system of aid dedicated to the most disfavoured and vulnerable groups, organising and supporting forms of going out of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. The VLC supports the education system through the social, occupational, and economic activation of young people, carries out actions oriented at improving the vocational qualifications of young people, backs initiatives intended to counteract unemployment and organises international co-operation between young people around the world.

The VLC consists of over 700 organisational units operating throughout Poland, among them there are over 200 care and educational units, including 36 Centres of Education and Training, 162 Labour Corps and 14 Community Labour Corps – providing general and vocational education and training for over 34 thousand young people; over 500 units implementing labour market initiatives, including Youth Education and Labour Centres, Mobile Vocational Information Centres, Youth Job Recruitment Offices, Youth Career Centres, Vocational Training Centres, Job Agencies, and Job Clubs.

Voluntary Labour Corps operate under two main acts: The Act on employment promotion and labour market institutions of 20 April 2004 (Dz.U. 2004 Nr 99 poz. 1001, with further amendments); and The Education System Act of 7 September 1991 (Dz. U. 1991 nr 95 poz. 425, with further amendments) and many other relevant regulations.

- Goals and objectives

One of the main goals of the VLC is to address the needs of young people over 15 years of age who are not in any study environment and have no lower-secondary school education, to enable young people to complete practical, on-the-job training and gain education and vocational qualifications. In addition, the VLC units offer vocational training in formal education contexts leading to qualification as a skilled worker (ISCED 3) for youths who completed lower secondary schools (and have obtained ISCED 2) and want to continue education in basic vocational schools but have difficulty finding apprenticeships complementing the education in basic vocational schools. Young people under the age of 18 can choose education and theoretical vocational training in the school system (in basic vocational schools) Most students who decide to enrol at the VLC choose to complete their theoretical education in basic vocational schools and seek VLC's assistance with finding the employers to complete the practical training.

- Target group

The target group is split up in three groups:

- 1) young people (aged 15 to 17 years) from troubled, dysfunctional, vulnerable, unemployed, and poverty-stricken families who fail to continue compulsory schooling and are not in education, struggle to complete school, and need to acquire vocational qualifications;
- 2) individuals aged 18-25, including jobseekers or those who wish to be retrained or are unemployed;
- 3) secondary school students and graduates who are willing to work in their spare time and who want to gain vocational experience, and at the same time improve their financial standing.

In addition, all VLC participants with limited material resources and a difficult life situation may receive free accommodation, boarding, and 24-hour pastoral care.

- The curriculum/ approach

VLC participants have a chance to complete education in school or non-school forms, since they still are obliged to complete compulsory schooling (up to 16 years of age) and compulsory education (up

to 18 years of age). Moreover, they obtain vocational on-the-job training with the employers (which lasts 36 months). Apart from that, young people enrolled in the VLC have a chance to participate in a variety of additional activities, also international projects.

Institution B

This particular VLC unit is located in Warsaw, in the city area affected by the high level of youth unemployment as well as lower academic outcomes of students, as measured by final exam results in comparison with other Warsaw's districts.

- Student composition

At the end of January 2016 there were 103 participants, 77 of whom are still in lower secondary school with vocational preparation. Eighteen young people are in basic vocational school with apprenticeship as occupational training, while eight persons are in apprenticeship (on the job training at employers).

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

There are three educational paths offered at this particular VLC unit: 1) lower secondary school with vocational preparation, 2) basic vocational school with apprenticeship as occupational training, 3) apprenticeship (on the job training at employers).

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

Since the beginning of the 2015/2016 school year, namely September 2015, six students have dropped out, most of them lower secondary school students. Two youngsters who dropped out were in apprenticeship training, one of them quitting just before the end of the last year of the training.

- Policy overview

In accordance with the provisions regarding the measures directed at early school leavers aged 15-17, the VLC focuses on providing support to the youth for taking up studying or training, acquiring vocational qualifications through attending professional courses, and gaining elementary social competence. The activities planned include in the first place a diagnosis of knowledge, skills and potential of the participant, and subsequently entail choosing appropriate forms of support. Among the activities offered there are counselling, psychological-pedagogical support, training (alternative workshops in school subjects, entrepreneurship courses, language courses, computer courses), professional qualification courses, and job search courses (MPiPS & MIR, 2014).

Description of Measure PL_B

Name: Basic vocational school with apprenticeship as occupational training

Designers/ supervision: Mazovian VLC headquarters, Central VLC headquarters, Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy

Implementers: Voluntary Labour Corps unit staff, school staff

Recipients/ target group: all students with lower secondary education degree who want to complete basic vocational school and need to find an employer.

Partners: Basic vocational school staff, employers, police, courts, court officers, social care, schools, NGOs

Start date and end date: All the time -- young people can join at any time, preferably at the beginning of each school semester

Frequency: 36 months

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The primary objective of the VLC is to counteract the marginalisation and social exclusion of young people and to create adequate conditions for their proper social and vocational development. Disfavoured young people are supported by VLC through the organisation of various ways to exit poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion. Regarding the measures directed at early school leavers aged 15–18, the VLC focuses on providing support to the youth for taking up studying or training, acquiring vocational qualifications through attending professional qualification courses, and gaining elementary social competence. The activities planned include in the first place a diagnosis of knowledge, skills and potential of the participant, and subsequently entail choosing appropriate forms of support. Among the activities offered there are counselling, psychological-pedagogical support, training (alternative workshops in school subjects, entrepreneurship courses, language courses, computer courses), professional qualification courses, and job search courses. The form of training available for those who completed lower secondary school and have obtained ISCED 2 is basic vocational school with apprenticeship as occupational training.

Alternative Pathway C

- Goals and objectives

One of the main goals of this alternative pathway offered by the VLC is to address the needs of young people over 15 years of age who are not in any study situations and have completed no lower-secondary school education and who, according to the law, need to stay in education until the age of 18. The VLC units offer vocational training, enabling young people to complete practical, on-the-job training and gain education and vocational qualifications. This is aimed at youth in non-formal education contexts who completed lower secondary schools (and have obtained ISCED 2) and are not continuing their education in upper secondary schools (in addition to apprenticeships complementing the education in basic vocational schools for youths who have already completed lower secondary education, leading to qualification as a skilled worker (ISCED 3) – which is described in the previous section (PL Pathway B)).

In Poland, young people under the age of 18 can choose education and theoretical vocational training in the school system (in basic vocational schools) or learning in non-formal education contexts (practical and theoretical vocational training at the employer's organisation). Most students choose to complete their theoretical education in basic vocational schools, but on-the-job training with employers is also an option. It is an alternative to those students who for some reason cannot or do not want to continue their education in a formal school setting.

- Target group

The target group consists of

- 1) young people (aged 16 to 18 years) from troubled, dysfunctional, vulnerable, unemployed, and poverty-stricken families who fail to stay in compulsory schooling and are not in education, struggle to complete school, and need to acquire vocational qualifications;
- 2) individuals aged 18-25, including jobseekers or those who wish to be retrained or are unemployed
- 3) those secondary school students and graduates who are willing to work in their spare time and who want to gain vocational experience, and at the same time improve their financial standing.

In addition, all VLC participants with limited material resources and a difficult life situation may receive free accommodation, boarding, and 24-hour pastoral care.

- Curriculum/ approach

Since in Poland attending school is obligatory until the age of 16, VLC participants who are younger than 16 and have not obtained ISCED 2 have a chance to complete education in school and gain vocational preparation during practical training at an employer. Those who have already completed lower secondary school and are younger than 18 and for some reason cannot or do not want to go to school (in Poland education is compulsory up to 18 years of age), can stay in education in non-school forms, i.e. practical and theoretical vocational on-the-job training at an employer, which lasts 36 months. Moreover, young people enrolled in the VLC have a chance to participate in a variety of additional activities, also international projects.

Institution C

The same institution as Institution B. This particular VLC unit is located in Warsaw, in the city area affected by the high level of youth unemployment as well as lower academic outcomes of students, as measured by final exam results in comparison with other Warsaw's districts.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

There are three educational paths offered at this particular VLC unit:

- 1) Lower secondary school with vocational preparation
- 2) Basic vocational school with apprenticeship as occupational training,
- 3) Apprenticeship (on the job training at employers).

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

Since September 2015, six students have dropped out, most of them lower secondary school students. Two youngsters who dropped out were in apprenticeship training, and one of them quit just before the end of the last year of the training.

- Policy overview

In accordance with the provisions regarding the measures directed at early school leavers aged 15-17, the VLC focuses on providing support to the youth for taking up studying or training, acquiring vocational qualifications through attending professional qualification courses, and gaining

elementary social competence. The activities planned include in the first place a diagnosis of knowledge, skills and potential of the participant, and subsequently, entail choosing appropriate forms of support. Among the activities offered there are counselling, psychological-pedagogical support, training (alternative workshops in school subjects, entrepreneurship courses, language courses, computer courses), professional qualification courses, and job search courses (MPiPS & MIR, 2014).

Within the scope of the labour market, individual organisational units of the Youth Centres of Education and Job (such as Youth Job Agencies, Youth Career Centres, Job Clubs and Mobile Centres of Vocational Information) undertake a number of actions aimed at enriching the knowledge and abilities of unemployed youth, young people looking for a job, pupils and graduates of average schools in planning their future professional career and proactively looking for a job. They run group meetings and give individual advice, give essential information on the possible educational pathways and prepare young people for planning of professional career. They also teach entrepreneurship and self-employment. The above organisational units also cooperate with various institutions and organisations in the local environment, thus enlarging and intensifying their offer directed to young people.

- Student composition

At the end of January 2016 there were 103 participants. Since September 2015, six students have dropped out, most of them lower secondary school students. Two youngsters who dropped out were in apprenticeship training, and one of them quit just before the end of the last year of the training.

Description of Measure PL_C

Name: Apprenticeship (on the job training with employers)

Designers/ supervision: Mazovian VLC headquarters, Central VLC headquarters, Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy

Implementers: Voluntary Labour Corps unit staff, employers

Recipients/ target group: all students with lower secondary education degrees who do not want to complete basic vocational school but instead want to obtain vocational qualifications

Partners: employers conducting the vocational preparation of young people, police, courts, court officers, social care, schools, NGOs

Frequency: 36 months

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The primary objective of the VLC is to counteract the marginalisation and social exclusion of young people and to create adequate conditions for their proper social and vocational development. Disfavoured young people are supported by VLC through the organisation of various pathways to exit poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion. Regarding the measures directed at early school leavers aged 15–18, the VLC focuses on providing support to the youth for taking up studying or training, acquiring vocational qualifications through attending professional qualification courses, and gaining elementary social competence. The planned activities include in the first place a diagnosis of knowledge, skills and potential of the participant, and subsequently entail choosing appropriate forms of support. The proposed activities include counselling, psychological-pedagogical support, training (alternative workshops in school subjects, entrepreneurship courses, language courses, computer courses), professional qualification courses, and job search courses. The on-the-job training at employers

leads to qualification as an apprentice or a skilled worker. This comprises practical vocational training at the employer's organisation as well as theoretical training. Training lasts 36 months and ends with the vocational exam organised by the chamber of crafts (Cedefop, 2011).

Alternative Pathway D

This pathway offers education for adults who have obtained ISCED level 2 qualifications and provides general upper secondary education, leading to obtaining ISCED 3 and passing the Matura exam, which enables young people to undertake higher education studies.

- Goals and objectives

Qualifications equivalent to ISCED 3 – general upper secondary school completion diploma and the Matura exam, which enables the individuals to undertake higher education studies.

- Target group

Persons who have completed lower secondary education and achieved an ISCED 2 qualification and are over 18 years of age, young people aged 16-18 pursuing a career in sports or arts, persons who completed only primary school (in times before lower secondary schools were introduced) and persons who have completed basic vocational schools and are willing to obtain a general secondary education diploma (and pass the Matura to go to college afterwards).

- Curriculum/ approach

General upper secondary education in the form of three paths: daily, evening or extra-mural (weekend) classes enabling the participants to gain ISCED level 3 qualifications and later undertake higher education studies; individual counselling and support for each student. It is possible to start education at the centre twice a year: in September and in January. The education in the centre lasts six semesters, but students do not have to start from the first semester – instead they have the opportunity to continue education if they left school at some point (e.g. after the third semester or fourth). The pathway differs from the one in regular schools. First of all, the school programme is more intensive and divided into three separate paths, each taking three years. There is a daily programme (3 days a week); evening programme (2 days a week, 3 pm – 8 pm), and a weekend programme (2 weekends in the month). Each path can be entered twice during the year – in January and in September. At the end of each semester students have to pass exams in each subject they attend. If they do not manage to pass, they can repeat a semester, and not an entire year.

Institution D

The Continuing Education Centre under analysis is an educational institution financed by the budget of the city of Warsaw, established to enable young people and adults gain ISCED level 3. The centre has a long tradition of providing educational opportunities for adults. It was set up in the 1950s, first as a long-distance general secondary school, and then in 1977 the Continuing Education Centre was established.

The centre is designed for people who have completed lower secondary education and achieved and ISCED 2 qualification and are over 18 years or age. In special cases, young people aged 16-18 can participate if they are pursuing a career in sports or arts. Persons who completed only primary school (in times before lower secondary schools were introduced) and persons who have completed basic vocational schools and are willing to obtain a general secondary education diploma (and pass the Matura to go to college afterwards) can also enrol. It is possible to start the trajectory twice during the year: in September and in January. The education in the centre lasts six semesters, but students do not have to start from the first semester – instead, they have the opportunity to continue their education at the point where they left school (e.g., after the third semester).

In the education process, the centre uses problem-solving methods and on-line education. Students are taught to work independently, use different sources of information and information technology. There are three computer labs in the school, and an Internet Multimedia Information Centre (in the school library) is also available to students. The school is implementing a project funded by the European Union: “E-learning as a method of supporting education” and the “Reading Companion” programme for learning English available for students, teachers and school staff. The Matura examination passing rate is quite high and stands at 85% (in comparison with 76% for the whole population of students taking the Matura in 2015).

- Student composition

There are about 700 students in three different paths (daily, evening and weekend path).

In the daily path there are 16 classes (about 28-30 persons each) – 3 classes (semester 1), 1 class (sem.2), 4 classes (sem. 3), 2 classes (sem. 4), 4 classes (sem. 5), 2 classes (sem. 6)

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

The school offers intensive general upper secondary education for adults.

- 1) Daily path (three days a week – Tuesday to Thursday – 8am – 3pm)
- 2) Evening path (two or three times a month – Tuesdays and Thursdays – 3:10pm – 8:40 pm)
- 3) Weekend path (two or three weekends a month – Saturday and Sunday – 8am – 4:25pm)

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

According to the school’s pedagogical counsellor, the dropout rate is minimal: 2-3 persons per group leave their classes (in some cases it is 5 people), but most of them continue education at the centre and repeat the semester. Every semester new people join the existing classes.

- Policy overview

The main task of the centre is to organise the process of continuing education, training, retraining and further education for adults and young people. The aim of the measure is to enable the students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain a certificate of completion of upper secondary school, to pass the matriculation examination (*Matura*) and obtain a diploma enabling them to continue their education in college or other educational institution.

According to the statute of the centre, the main aims of the institution include providing students with safety, protection from violence, substance abuse, demoralization, and other forms of social maladjustment; creating the conditions for the development of students' individual interests and for presenting achievements; co-operation with other institutions of continuing education in the country, in particular the exchange of experiences, joint development of materials, training of staff, and as far as possible also with similar institutions abroad; and the cooperation with labour offices and employers, professional development of adults in the scope resulting from the needs of the labour market.

Description of Measure PL_D

Name: Intensive general upper secondary education – daily programme

Designers/ supervision: Department of Education and Sport for the Śródmieście District of the City of Warsaw

Implementers: Teachers and support staff employed at the centre

Recipients/ target group: Persons who have completed lower secondary education and achieved and ISCED 2 qualification and are over 18 years of age, young people aged 16-18 pursuing a career in sports or arts, persons who completed only primary school (in times before lower secondary schools were introduced) and persons who have completed basic vocational schools and are willing to obtain a general secondary education diploma (and pass the Matura to go to college afterwards).

Partners: education offices, foundations, NGOs, Sciences, the University of Warsaw – Faculties of Geography, Biology, job agencies (e.g. Eures, Eurodesk), cultural institutions (e.g., theatres). The centre cooperates with many institutions supporting teachers and students in their tasks and in problem-solving. The school cooperates with the local community.

Start date and end date: The education in the centre lasts 6 semesters, but students do not have to start from the first semester – instead, they have the opportunity to continue their education where they left off (e.g. after the third semester).

Frequency: The students of the daily path have classes three days a week – Tuesday to Thursday – 8am – 3pm.

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The Continuing Education Centre is designed for people who have completed lower secondary education and achieved and ISCED 2 qualification and are over 18 years of age. In special cases, young people aged 16-18 can participate if they are pursuing a career in sports or arts. Persons who completed only primary school (in times before lower secondary schools were introduced) and persons who have completed basic vocational schools and are willing to obtain a general secondary education diploma (and pass the Matura to go to college afterwards) can also enrol. The CEC is a general upper secondary school for adults, established to enable young people and adults gain ISCED level 3. It provides an intensive programme of general upper secondary education and leads to obtaining ISCED 3 and passing the Matura exam, which enables interested persons to undertake higher education studies. It is possible to start at the centre twice during each year: in September and in January. The centre also offers psychological and pedagogical support and career counselling. Each member of the Support Team works with students individually, as well as in groups. First of all, they help students to develop their CVs by encouraging them to participate in voluntary services. They also cooperate with Youth Work Office, where students can find some job offers.

Portugal (PT)

Alternative Pathway A

- Goals and objectives

Working as a parallel system to mainstream secondary education, it allows dual certification: the conclusion of upper secondary education and the attainment of certified professional skills. Institution A is aimed at providing a broadband of training to facilitate integration, avoid dropout and not block young adults' perspectives. It focuses on the promotion of transferable skills, to allow the integration into the European labour market. It aims at assuring young adults who conclude the courses *cooperative, non-subordinate, non-dependent work*, associated with a cooperative they are members of and whose profitability they will be responsible for.

- Target group

The organisation provides for lower middle and 'working class' people who live in Porto city and its neighbouring cities, as well as a small number that live more than 50 kilometres away from the city. It brings together a small number of former ESLers and other young adults who chose more practical pathways. These trainees are up to 20 years old. About 50% are from Portuguese-speaking countries: Africa, Timor and Brazil. The remaining ones are mostly from the metropolitan area of Porto, the northern region, and a small number from Madeira, the Azores and the Algarve.

- Curriculum/ approach

The courses are organised in sequential and autonomous modules and have about 3100 hours, of which 400 to 600 hours over the three years correspond to training in the workplace (apprenticeship). The course concludes with a Profession Aptitude Test (PAT). It builds on the idea to move from the transmission towards the construction of knowledge. The final grade of the course includes assessments of the modules, the PAT and the grades given by the providers of the apprenticeship.

Institution A

Institution A is a cooperative vocational school of social economy that is managed by a wider cooperative as part of the investment in cooperative education/training. The organisation is part of a federation of cooperatives that aims at introducing the cooperative process in public and private schools. It results from cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour. This organisation is mainly sponsored by European funds whose allocation is mediated by the national government per relation to the number of trainees inscribed. It is located in central Porto.

- Student composition

The institution has a total of 300 students of which half (the target group) attend vocational courses equivalent to year 12 (ISCED III) qualification. The group in lower secondary education consists of trainees older than 13 years old with a pathway of school failure and grade retention. Some are sent to the organisation by the Local Social Action Committees or the Committee of Child and Youth Protection (CCYP).

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/or approaches

With a tradition of providing vocational training (ISCED III), in the school year of 2015-2016 the organisation is also receiving early vocational training (ISCED II); a situation that has introduced some new difficulties to the organisation of learning and of the structure. With regards to the equivalent to grade 12 (upper secondary level), the organisation provides Secretarial Courses for Social Economy, Accounting for Social Economy, and Water Rescue; so-called specialists did not approve the courses of Construction Building, Recovery of Assets and 3D Digital Design that the organisation used to provide.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

The organisation follows the principles of the European Social Fund, according to which the trainees receive travel, food and accommodation support depending on the actual frequency of their courses. Therefore, trainees very rarely present problems of absenteeism. A small number has left the school, mainly due to financial problems.

- Policy overview

According to recommendations by staff and taking into account some of the documents provided for each student, a set of measures is put into action that tries to compensate for diverse gaps in their personal and educational lives. Together, they validate the experience of the trainees gained outside of the school through their part time work, by supporting their families, or any other situations that are likely to have developed their competencies. The provision of subsidies for food, transport and accommodation allow students to come to lessons. Another measure that helps keep students in school is the composition of the classes, by means of matching up of young adults with diverse educational paths (the ones with no failure, the ones with relative failure and the ones who failed a lot); this diversity of backgrounds helps insofar as they gain from each other's experience. In terms of student participation in the curriculum and the construction of a sense of belonging, students are given the possibility to manage and negotiate the way in which they fulfil the curriculum and complete their modules. They are also free to choose the social economy organisation where they carry out their training. In their final aptitude test, they can involve other colleagues and engage in processes of peer- and self-evaluation. Moreover, they are invited to participate in the organisation of school activities and in the functioning of the classes. Another group of measures concerns the relationship with the community: the measure tries to ensure students' educational continuation outside the school by means of partnerships with cooperatives that support their work and with the entities where the apprenticeships take place, including regular monitoring by a tutor and the integration office; this creates a link to the labour market and supports young adults in the design of their vocational integration projects.

Description of Measure PT_A

Name: Cooperative vocational training

Designers/ supervision: The school principal and cooperative tutors

Implementers: Tutors and volunteer tutors supported by the director

Recipients/ target group: Trainees and volunteer trainees who are enrolled in the vocational cooperative training and willing to experiment the methodologies

Partners: The 'mother' cooperative and a specialized trust of cooperatives

Start date and end date: Throughout the school year

Frequency: at least once a week and when requested by the trainees

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: As part of the vocational cooperative training, the methodologies of cooperative quality are aimed at assuring young adults who conclude the course cooperative, non-subordinate, non-dependent work with a cooperative they are members of and whose profitability they will be responsible for. This is a form of curricular innovation aimed at adapting to new social needs. The measure is enacted by means of the creation of 'simulated cooperatives' throughout the training and may also include creating 'real cooperatives' by them if they show interest and are willing to do it in their 'free' time. The 'simulated cooperatives' prepare those trainees that do not have access to higher education or to the traditional job market to organise themselves cooperatively and create their own job. This work is supported by tutors who are aware of how they operate. It can be inserted in one of the disciplines and assessed or developed in an extracurricular autonomous way by interested young adults. Providing services to the cooperative to which the school belongs serves as an experience of the operation of the cooperative established by young adults.

The measure seeks not only to adjust to the social reality, but also to create a new sustained reality in conjunction and in cooperation with experienced realities. The use of cooperative methodologies is an open strategy of voluntary participation. As a quality measure, it presupposes adherence, co-construction and non-normativity and is responding to the need to adapt to new funding programmes.

Together with the international experiences and the partnerships with other cooperative entities, the 'simulated cooperatives' and 'real cooperatives' can help to address consumption issues among the young adults, and engage them in other ways of managing situations and/or their own lives. Factors that contribute to this positive outcome are namely the relationships in the class, the organisation of parties or of the modules, or their input regarding the scale of a discipline or vis-à-vis class planning. While implying a greater investment in the training of the tutors, these 'cooperatives' can be seen as part of the trend of start-ups, normally linked to private enterprises. At a time when young adults' integration in the labour market is very precarious, this methodology enables them to position themselves as actors in their own learning process and in the securing of their future job – in a modality of the social economy. Training for the social economy is distinct from training for work in private companies.

Alternative Pathway B

- Goals and objectives

Institution B is a training and consultancy firm. It provides apprenticeship courses with dual certification of the 12th grade (ISCED 3) and professional qualification.

- Target group

Previously these courses were aimed at young adults aged 14 to 24 years, but currently they aim at youngsters aged 18 and up. Underaged young adults can make a special request to the institute that manages the courses to make an exception for them, under the allegation that they dropped out of school several times and that they need an alternative.

- Curriculum/approach

This educational pathway alternates classroom training with training in the workplace. The work-linked training that characterises these courses is managed by this training company by splitting the time between classroom training for several consecutive weeks (two to five) and training in the workplace (two to four consecutive weeks).

Institution B

PT institution B is a training company located in the centre of Porto city. The administrative services and theoretical classrooms are situated in an office building shared with other enterprises including a competitor training centre. The classrooms are scattered throughout the building. The training centre has one other room in a nearby building where it has installed a small workshop to the practical/technological component of the apprenticeship course of Gas technicians. This workshop is very well equipped to provide practical learning to the apprentices.

- Student composition

Unmotivated young adults from poor and socially disadvantaged, and sometimes 'disorganised' families, with a background of educational problems. They dropped out of school and were out for many years, were unable to stabilise in the labour market and returned to these courses for further qualifications. These young adults are mainly residents of social housing estates and some are orphans.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

The educational offer is of apprenticeship courses – conceived by the Ministry of Education - that provide dual certification of 12th grade and professional qualification. The model is inspired by the German dual system. This educational offer alternates classroom training and workplace training. The institution had three apprenticeship courses functioning in December 2015: "Family and Community Support", "Gas Technicians" and "Logisticians".

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

There is a high dropout rate. Young adults are described by the tutor as unmotivated, rude, undisciplined, irresponsible, with many vices, very absent and not punctual. No data was provided.

- Policy overview

As referred by the principal, staff and some of the documents provided, a set of measures is put into action at diverse levels of the school experience. This includes a relationship of proximity with parents who are called to meetings and receive written notification in case of student absenteeism; the definition of the pedagogical strategy and goals with students at the beginning of lessons and the combination of theoretical class learning and practical learning by means of internships; and chasing after and readmission of young adults after dropout. The provision of scholarships is one of the main policies identified.

Description Measure PT_B

Name: Apprenticeship and sponsoring

Supervision: Principal

Implementers: Tutors

Recipients/ target group: Young adults

Partners: The companies where trainees take their internships

Start date and end date: Every year, September – August

Frequency: It is run every week day with sponsoring provided once a month

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: Apprenticeship courses provide dual certification (ISCED III and professional) on a total of 3400 to 3500 hours divided between classroom and internship. The practical and technical part comes to substitute curricular disciplines such as science and history. The attendance of apprenticeship courses implies sponsoring the trainees' transport, food and school material so as to keep young adults in education.

Alternative Pathway C

- Goals and objectives

It seeks to address early school leavers and socially excluded young adults by actively collaborating with local partners on a common effort to support these young adults. It aims at creating conditions for their holistic development by improving several relevant areas of these youngsters' lives – family integration, health, economic support, housing, drug abuse, justice, and employment. The main goal is to re-socialize young adults – to help them go back to mainstream education or to find a job.

- Target group

Full-time, very early school leavers older than 18 and up until ages 25 or 26, with very low qualifications (less than the 6th grade) or low qualifications (less than the 9th grade) and who are not allowed to stay in school even if they wanted to.

- Curriculum/ approach

The organisation offers different workshops throughout the day, on a similar schedule as a working place. The intervention is developed in four core areas: vocational training (Cooking, Computers, Sewing, Electricity and Carpentry); art training (Theatre, Music, Dance, Visual Arts); personal and social development, and 6th (ISCED I) and 9th grade (ISCED II) school certification. A contingent of teachers comes from a public school to teach the 'educational' areas. There is another contingent that comes from the IEPF (Institute for Employment and Professional Training), which provides vocational training, one per workshop. A group of technicians and professionals is paid by the school budget, such as a youth mediator, but also psychosocial technicians. The project needs psychologists, social educators, and also trainers in Arts, provided via applications to projects. Traditionally the courses lasted for one year but nowadays it has changed to two years due to official agreements with the agencies who sponsor the courses.

Institution C

Institution C is a Second Chance School that is mainly financed by international projects and networks through the Ministry of Education with small contribution from local stakeholders. It is a small organisation that was built using the facilities of an old primary school – where lessons take place - to which a prefabricated pavilion was added – where the organisational, managerial and day to day school meals and snacks take place. It is still the only Portuguese school of the European Network of second Chance Schools – E2C Europe.

- Student composition

The organisation accommodates a total of 60 young adults who dropped out of school without completing grade 6 or grade 9. These are young adults from vulnerable contexts, young school leavers, low-skilled, unemployed and at risk of social exclusion.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

It provides a fully integrated model eventually leading to an ISCED III upon completion of the former levels. It builds on creative processes of organizing and delivering training. All young adults attending are integrated in pathways of academic and vocational certification. Each young person designs and develops his/her own training programme. The training is organised in flexible modules and workshops. The frequency and duration of the training modules differ from young person to young person. A part of the training is in a working context. The programme includes informal and non-formal learning, which in turn involves the development of common activities between tutors and students such as ICT and Art Education, implying one year of attendance. About 20 part-time professionals constitute the school team, including kitchen assistants, the security guard, the administrative employee, and tutors.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

There is high level of absenteeism and lateness for lessons (no precise data on this was provided).

- Policy overview

According to the principal, the staff and the documents provided, there is a set of mutually reinforcing policies to keep students in this organisation and bring them back to education. This relates to the school's inclusive culture, which refers to its open-door policy of welcoming everyone, and also relates to the support offered to students in various dimensions of family life, for example, through the work of two youth mediators, who chase students at home, help them deal with their family and personal problems so that they can come [back] to school. The open, experimental nature of the curriculum is another asset in the school policy against ESL. It includes the central role of the arts, the involvement of young adults in the design and development of their training programmes; more flexible and informal educational offers centred on the potential of young adults; and the combination of basic skills and practical training in a working environment. There is also provision of vocational guidance to help young adults discover their interests and build their life projects. The school policy also includes the search for shared social responsibility by means of cooperation with local authorities, public and civic organisations and businesses.

Description of Measure PT_C

Name: Vocational training with the arts

Designers/ supervision: The pedagogic coordinator of the school

Implementers: Tutors including the pedagogical coordinator

Recipients/ target group: Young adults

Partners: Sponsors that supply for working materials

Start date and end date: September 2015 – July 2016 and every year

Frequency: Each year, in modules, depending on the project constructed with the young adults

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The measure is aimed at moving young adults away from their school pathway of failure and helping them deal with the difficult situations they have in their lives, by means of an holistic view of education in which the Arts and the opportunity to own their educational pathway are important pillars. Inclusion, resocialization, re-motivation and decision making are essential concepts in this process. The arts are used as means of self-expression and empowerment but also as a tool to promote discussion on pertinent matters and problems.

Alternative Pathway D

The training centre is integrated in the industrial tradition and needs of the region, characterised by economic problems, poor management of resources by families, low levels of education and lack of cultural consumption. The centre results from a partnership between the Institute of Employment and Professional Training and business and/or union associations. Learning plans are dictated by the National Qualifications Catalogue, but the centre is responsible for defining the technological and practical component, being the only centre in the area of wood and furniture. The socio-cultural component is negotiated between the Employment Centres and the Ministry of Education. The strong reduction in the training workload is a problem, as it decreased the quality of the training, which remains at the experimentation level, falling short of the higher education level to which it could compare.

- Goals and objectives

The centre provides dual academic (12th grade) and professional certification in the sector of wood and furniture, as the 'last resort' for qualification attainment and labour market integration. It wishes to have a positive impact on the industrial fabric of the region through the training of citizens, not only in the technical and technological field.

- Target group

Young dropouts come from families with financial and economic difficulties, exclusion, poverty, severe backgrounds of alcoholism, drug addiction, and/or domestic violence. These young adults have troubled paths of school failure, repetition and dropout, mainly associated with the lack of resources of previous schools, which leads them to have low expectations regarding their educational path.

- Curriculum/approach

Among other courses directed to employed and unemployed adults, the offer for young adults is of a three-year technology-based apprenticeship programme.

Institution D

- Student composition

Young adults that have concluded the third cycle (9th grade) and students who have dropped out and seek dual certification, of secondary and vocational (ISCED 3) level. The age limit is 21 years. Young adults arrive at the centre with either 15, 16 or 18, 19 years of age, the latter with paths characterised by school repetitions and dropout. Middle-class young adults with families who work and support them do not fit in the group of 'problematic' young adults.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

The training centre provides apprenticeship courses from the 1st year. After four months in the centre, young adults start weekly internships in the company. Course actions are started annually. In 2015/16 there are three actions: wood and furniture finishing technician, drawing technician and commercial technician. The commercial area is more popular among the female public, whereas the course in wood and furniture finishing is the one that receives most young dropouts, mainly young men. The centre also provides shorter courses for adults. The learning plans are drawn from the National Qualifications Catalogue. The socio-cultural component is negotiated between the Employment Centres and the Ministry of Education.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

The difficulty of some young adults to adapt to the new reality in the centre, which includes increased demand, monitoring and behavioural control, leads a few to drop out, at the beginning of the course. Most young adults move away from practices such as drug abuse and dealing but not all the older ones.

- Policy overview

In order to improve the quality of the educational service provided and keep students in education, according to the manager, the pedagogical team and the documents provided, this organisation invests particularly in the pedagogy by means of the development of an internal project of pedagogical change and innovation centred on the diversification of the trainees' experiences; the use of differentiated individual monitoring plans and the development of close relationships with the families that support school in monitoring students. Despite resistance from some, this includes tutors' training and the introduction of an assessment plan of the training quality, which is complemented by the re-establishment of a mid-level leadership, through the introduction of the function of training quality coordinator. In terms of the external relations to reinforce the school pedagogy and keep students within, the organisation invests in the participation in international networks and projects that allow being hand-in-hand with the European targets and strategies; and in a mobility or cultural enrichment strategy through the hosting of young adults from other countries whose presence adds value to the school experience. Last but not least, the centre invests in the

reinforcement of the relationships with the local industry as the labour insertion guarantee has become a factor of attractiveness for young adults.

Description of Measure PT_D

Name: Apprenticeship with labour insertion guarantee

Designer: Principal

Implementers: Principal and tutors

Recipients/ target group: Young adults

Partners: Wood and furniture companies in the region

Start date and end date: each year, starts in March to anticipate the following year; finishes with the labour insertion of the young person upon the conclusion of the course

Frequency: in March, two or three meetings to discuss the needs of the companies; from January onwards, while the companies receive the trainees for internships

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The aim of the measure is to provide dual ISCED III and professional certification and to guarantee a job for the young graduates by means of close collaboration with the wood and furniture companies in the region. Each year the school diagnoses the labour needs of these companies. Courses for young adults are introduced in the training centre to respond to these needs. Trainees are sent to these companies to do their internships. Being the most qualified workers, many of them stay in the company, as most of the other workers only have low secondary qualification or below.

Sweden (SE)

Alternative Pathway A

- Goals and objectives

Alternative Pathway A is a vocational training course at upper secondary school level and the modules are very similar to the ones offered in regular upper secondary schools. After completing Alternative Pathway A, the students are awarded with a diploma. They also get grades and study credits for the modules that they have passed, and these credits can be counted towards an ISCED level 3 qualification.

- Target group

Alternative Pathway A is not exclusively designed for youngsters who have left upper secondary school without an ISCED level 3 qualification, but rather it is open to all adults over the age of 20. Under certain circumstances, younger students can also be admitted. The school is not actively involved in selecting the students for the measure, as this is done exclusively by the municipalities, who also finance the measure. Still, according to the designer/supervisor of Alternative Pathway A, the municipalities tend to prioritize people with the lowest level of education, which means that early school leavers and others who lack an upper secondary school qualification (e.g. immigrants whose qualifications are not recognized in Sweden), are usually prioritized in the application process.

- Curriculum/ approach

Alternative Pathway A is a vocational training course at a college for further education for adults. The school offers two different vocational training courses where one is for childcare attendants and youth recreational instructors, and the other for professions in healthcare and wellbeing. The courses are between two and three semesters long and consist of a number of different modules. Students can choose whether to study in class, via distance learning or on an individual, flexible schedule, depending on what suits them best. The school has arranged for students to be able to choose between these different types of study paths because they are aware of the fact that many of their students are adults who might have families or jobs and need that kind of flexibility to be able to complete their studies.

The students are not obliged to study the compulsory core subjects that are necessary to attain an upper secondary education qualification, and the measure therefore does not lead directly to that qualification. If the students pass all modules, Alternative Pathway A provides students with around 1200 study credits, while an upper secondary level qualification requires students to pass at least 2250 credits. The modules are, however, on upper secondary school level and the credits can therefore be counted towards an ISCED level 3 qualification.

The pathway provides the following proportions of types of education: 30% vocational programmes, 52% higher education preparatory (theoretical) programmes, 18% introductory programmes. During the last five years, however, the number of pupils who apply for the vocational learning pathways has decreased during the last five years. The reason according to the Swedish National Agency for Education is that after the 2011 reforms (which reduced the theoretical subjects in these programmes

and consequently restricted the possibility of pupils graduating from these programmes to apply for tertiary education), young people choose “Higher education preparatory pathways” to a greater extent than before.

Institution A

- Student composition

A large number of the students on Pathway A are people who lack an upper secondary qualification, are new in the country or who have been unemployed for a longer period of time. Generally students attending further education colleges for adults have to be at least 20 years old, but if the municipalities see it fit, younger students can also be accepted. There is no upper age limit. Because the municipalities rather than the school are in charge of the application and acceptance process, the school has no exact data on the educational, social or economic background of its students.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

The school is a further education college for adults and offers vocational training courses, apprenticeship training courses and courses in Swedish for non-native speakers. The school offers two different educational tracks where one is for childcare attendants and youth recreational instructors, and the other one is focused on healthcare and wellbeing and trains nursing assistants. The apprenticeship and vocational training courses both involve significant time in workplace-based practical training, and both can be combined with modules in the Swedish language for those who need to improve their language skills. While the vocational training course involves blocks of ten weeks of workplace-based training each semester, the apprenticeship training course is structured so that students work as an apprentice four days a week and attend school only one day a week for the whole of the programme.

The institution is a private educational provider, offered through the municipal scheme for the further education for adults. In Sweden, the municipalities are responsible for and finance further education for adults, but they do not necessarily run the schools. All courses that are offered as part of the framework for adults’ continuing education are bought by the municipalities through public procurement, and therefore, courses can be offered at both municipal and private schools. As the municipalities finance the courses, they are the ones admitting the students, not the educational providers themselves.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

Alternative Pathway A has a very low percentage of students who drop out. According to the designer/supervisor of the measure, out of the students who register for the course, only around three per cent drop out. Truancy and other dropout-associated behaviour does occur, as many of the students have problems with concentration and with keeping to schedules, but most students are motivated and have made a proactive decision to attend the measure. The teachers try to motivate the students to attend all the classes and they work hard to prevent students from dropping out, for example by adapting the course to the students’ individual abilities, establishing good relationships with them and listening to their needs.

- Policy overview

The school follows the national regulations set by Skolverket (the Swedish National Agency for Education) and the curriculum is designed according to their recommendations. Apart from this, the school also has its own policy documents where a number of different issues are discussed, relating to for example equality, management, development of activities and individual support. The school's common values can be found in the yearly report regarding the school's objectives and activities – *Årsrapport för avtalsåret 2014-2015*.

“The organisation sees every person's equal worth, regardless of gender, gender identity or expression of gender, ethnic belonging, religion or other form of belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.” (SE_A, 2015, p. 18)

The same report also states that it is the aim of the school to actively counteract any form of discrimination and to promote individual development in an environment that favours everyone's wellbeing. Dialogue, participation and flexibility are key words that are highlighted throughout both the guidelines from Skolverket and the school's own annual report. Each person has a responsibility towards each other, and while students are expected to take responsibility for their studies, the teachers are responsible for providing the support the students need.

Because the measure is not exclusively designed for early school leavers, there are no specific policy actions targeting these youngsters. There are, however, a number of different support mechanisms that have been put in place so as to offer students as much individual support as possible in order to prevent them from dropping out of the alternative pathway. These support mechanisms include:

- Changes in the individual study plan and the pace at which the student carries out his/her studies
- Oral exams instead of written ones
- Technical aids
- Audio books
- Extra supporting material on the school's internal online platform
- Ear protectors to block out noise and promote concentration
- Smartphones to record lectures or own speech
- Dictionaries

Description Measure SE_A

Name: Vocational training course

Implementers: Teachers, study counsellor (R1, R2)

Recipients/target group: Adults over the age of 20 in need of support to improve their chances of employment, or who want to change careers. In some cases younger students can also be admitted. (P1, P2)

Partners: The local municipalities who have bought the services of the school.

Start/end date: Continuous admission in fall and spring

Frequency: Flexible. Students can choose to study fulltime, part time, via distance or on a flexible, individually-agreed schedule.

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: To provide adults over the age of 20 with a vocational education and further their employment opportunities

Alternative Pathway B

- Goals and objectives

Alternative Pathway B aims to give its participants a practical working knowledge in professions in the restaurant, catering and hospitality industry. After completing the course, students are awarded with a diploma that recognizes their skills, and they also get grades for the ISCED level 3 modules that they have passed. The course accounts for a total of around 1200 study credits, which can be counted towards attaining an upper secondary school (ISCED level 3) qualification. To receive this qualification, students have to pass the compulsory core modules and have at least 2250 study credits.

- Target group

The school that provides Alternative Pathway B is not involved in the selection of students; rather, it is the municipalities who decide who is allowed to attend the course. Generally students at further education colleges have to be at least 20 years old, but in some cases the municipalities make exceptions to this rule and admit younger students. The measure is open to everyone interested in working in the restaurant industry and who wishes to further their knowledge in the field, but according to the designer of Alternative Pathway B, the municipalities tend to prioritise people who lack an upper secondary school qualification (including early school leavers and immigrants) and people who have been unemployed for a longer period of time.

- Curriculum/ approach

Alternative Pathway B is an apprenticeship-training course [Läringsutbildning] run by a private educational provider with schools all over Sweden. This particular school in Municipality A focuses on education in the restaurant industry, such as training chefs, bakers, pastry chefs, bartenders and waiters. The measure consists of a number of different modules at upper secondary school level formed as a course package, and while some modules are compulsory, there is still a certain flexibility in the curriculum that allows students to alter the course package according to their individual preferences. The students in Alternative Pathway B attend school only one day a week, while training as an apprentice the remaining four days at a workplace that suits their preferred vocational direction.

Institution B

- Student composition

Because Alternative Pathway B is in theory open to everyone regardless of age, education and experience, there are people from all walks of life on the course and the school has no data on the students' previous educational history. A student's background is something that the school has to find out along the way. Still, due to the fact that the municipalities prioritize people with the lowest educational level in the application process, a large number of people enrolled at the school lack an upper secondary school qualification recognized in Sweden either because they have left school early or because they have come from another country. Many students at the school come from socio-economically weak backgrounds -- they might lack support from home, may have encountered bullying in previous schools or may have psychological and neuropsychological diagnoses. Staff

member 2 stated that many of the students participating in the measure have experienced a range of different challenges in their lives that often come to affect their performance at school, resulting in the students needing extra help with their studies. Because the measure is sometimes also used as a labour market policy measure, there are also quite a large number of students who were unemployed prior to embarking on the course.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

Apart from apprenticeship training courses, this educational provider also offers regular vocational training courses for adults (yrkesutbildningar), and the school also collaborates with the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) in offering labour market training schemes. The curriculum for the apprenticeship and vocational training courses are set according to the guidelines from the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket). The courses at the school are offered as packages, but the students' can to a certain extent plan their own studies and exchange some modules for others. All courses are taught in class and there are no distance courses. On the apprenticeship courses the students work as an apprentice four days a week and spend one day a week at school, while students on the vocational training courses first do 20 weeks of theory courses and then do an internship for another 20 weeks. According to the director of studies the courses are quite similar and amount to the same number of study credits, but the layout is different and there are a few more theoretical classes in the vocational training courses.

The institution is a private educational provider, offered through the municipal scheme for further education for adults. In Sweden, the municipalities are responsible for and finance further education for adults, but they do not necessarily run the schools. All courses that are offered as part of the framework for further education for adults are bought by the municipalities through public procurement, and therefore, courses can be offered at both municipal and private schools. As the municipalities finance the courses, they are the ones admitting the students, not the schools.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

Today the school has an overall low dropout rate according to the director of studies, and most students are motivated to attend the course. Dropout rates were high when the school first started Alternative Pathway B, but by recognizing the problem and allocating resources to tackle it, the school has managed to turn this around. Still, according to an implementer at the school, many students have problems concentrating and keeping schedules, which forces the teachers to put a lot of time and effort into trying to get students to attend classes and motivate them to continue their studies and not drop out. Furthermore, another implementer stated that large number of students at the school suffer from ill health, mostly relating to psychological and neuropsychological issues, and that helping these students in particular can be quite challenging for the staff. Additionally, she mentioned that many more students than before carry with them quite negative experiences from their previous educational trajectory, and this might well detract from their ability to profit from the course that they are currently attending.

- Policy overview

In Sweden, law regulates further education for adults, which means all schools that offer further educational courses for adults are to abide by the same regulations. Content, educational goals and evaluation criteria are all set by Skolverket (the Swedish National Agency for Education) and the courses are run in collaboration with the municipalities. The school providing Alternative Pathway B states on the website where their curriculum can be found:

"[Institution B] runs apprenticeship training courses in collaboration with a number of municipalities, and the courses are carried out according to the school law and the regulations regarding further education for adults, which are the laws governing education for adults in Sweden."

In the curriculum for further education for adults, set by Skolverket, it is stated that the purpose of further education for adults is to supply knowledge and support students so that they can work and form an active part of society. It is also highlighted that those who study at colleges offering further education for adults form a very heterogeneous group where everyone has different prerequisites to study, which also means that the students' goals for attending further education for adults may vary. Support is to be offered to all students based on their needs, and in the latest edition of the curriculum one can find the following:

"Further education for adults must always meet every student according to their own needs and prerequisites." (SKOLFS 2012:101, p. 5)

Furthermore, the curriculum also states that "special attention should be paid to those students who for different reasons have difficulties with reaching the educational goals". It can thus be clearly deduced that even though further education for adults is in principle open to anyone wishing to further their knowledge, special attention is given to those who might otherwise have difficulties with absorbing the knowledge and reaching the goals of the education. Those who lack an upper secondary school qualification or have a weak position on the labour market are prioritized.

The educational provider where Alternative Pathway B is offered highlights similar values and write on their website that the school accommodates individual learning styles and that their mission is to give everyone an opportunity to discover their own talents. The apprenticeship courses are directed towards those who are more practically inclined and want to discover their talents through workplace based learning, and the school also underlines its close collaboration with the labour market.

Description Measure SE_B

Name: Apprenticeship training course

Designers/ supervision: Director of Studies

Implementers: Teachers, study councillor

Recipients/ target group: Adults over the age of 20 years old in need of further training or education to improve their chances of employment, or who want to change careers. In some cases, younger students can also be admitted.

Partners: The local municipalities who have bought the services of the school.

Start date and end date: Continuous admission in fall and spring

Frequency: One day a week at school, four days a week working as an apprentice.

Short description of the *official* scope and aims of the measure: To provide adults over the age of 20 with an apprenticeship education and further their employment opportunities.

Alternative Pathway C

- Goals and objectives

Alternative Pathway C is a general programme (Allmän kurs) at a Swedish folk high school. It is a course at upper secondary school level arranged within the framework of the folk high school as an alternative-learning arena. The teaching's setup differs quite a lot from the setup at upper secondary schools: in the General programme, the teaching is more adjusted to the individual student's needs and demands, the study groups are smaller, the students have more time to finish their school tasks and there are almost no homework or tests. After completing Alternative pathway C, the students receive a complete upper secondary qualification that is equivalent to an ISCED level 3 qualification. The students do not get the same grades as in upper secondary school, but they receive grades that make them eligible for higher studies.

- Target group

Alternative Pathway C is designed for youngsters who have not been enrolled in upper secondary school at all or who have left upper secondary school without a complete upper secondary qualification – an ISCED level 3 qualification. There is a lower age limit, 18 years, but there is no upper age limit. The school, or more specifically the teachers, are actively involved in selecting the students for the measure. The admission criteria are that the applicant should either have sufficient previous knowledge or one year full time work experience, be motivated to study and not have huge problems that make it hard for her/him to manage to turn up at school at all: the applicant must have a realistic prospect for managing the studies.

- Curriculum/ approach

Alternative Pathway C is a general programme at a folk high school that offers education for adults. The school offers several different courses: the General programme, Leadership for the Recreational Activity Industry, Improved Swedish for Immigrants, Computer Course, Youth Recreation Leader and Spanish and International Development Cooperation. Some courses are at upper secondary level, while other courses are at post-upper secondary level. The general programme is at upper secondary level. It could be either one, two or three years long. The school gives the students the opportunity to choose between different types of studying and is characterized by high degrees of flexibility, adjusting as much as possible to individual students' needs and demands. In the general programme, students are obliged to study the upper secondary subjects that are necessary to attain a complete upper secondary qualification – an ISCED level 3 qualification – and thus the measure leads directly to that qualification. The students get a certain type of grade but these are not the same grades as in upper secondary school. However, the grades the students get in the measure are equivalent to the upper secondary school grades and give the same eligibility for university studies.

Institution C

- Student composition

The students in Alternative Pathway C lack a complete upper secondary qualification – an ISCED level 3 qualification. Some of the students have not attended upper secondary school while others started upper secondary school but dropped out or did not achieve grades in all the subjects. There is a lower age limit – 18 years – but no upper age limit.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

The school is a folk high school for adults. The folk high school is an alternative learning arena that has its roots in a tradition of adult education in which people have made efforts to educate and empower themselves. The folk high school as an alternative learning arena was and still is largely based upon democratic and inclusive values and principles and the mission to make people democratically involved citizens. Nowadays folk high schools like this one offer several different courses: the General programme, Leadership for the Recreational Activity Industry, Improved Swedish for Immigrants, Computer Course, Youth Recreation Leader and Spanish and International Development Cooperation. Some courses are at upper secondary level and others are at post-upper secondary level. The general programme is at upper secondary level. In the general programme, students study in class and have lessons every day. The teaching is clearly adjusted to the individual student's needs and demands. The study groups are small, the students have more time to finish their school tasks than in upper secondary school and students have hardly any homework or tests.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

Neither the supervisor nor the staff members are aware of the actual number of students who drop out of Alternative pathway C, however, the supervisor states that each semester a couple of students leave the measure before they have achieved a complete upper secondary qualification. According to him, the most common reasons for this are that students have difficulties receiving their study subsidies, have reached such a high number of absences that they will not be able to achieve a complete qualification or that they suffer from psychological illness. The supervisor also states that a quite large proportion of the students *do* achieve a complete upper secondary qualification. Every year approximately 15 students participate in the measure and he estimates that half of them attain this qualification. In order to prevent students from leaving the measure the teachers try to motivate them to turn up at school and do their school tasks, for example by building trustful relations with the students and adjusting the teaching to their individual preconditions, needs and demands.

- Policy overview

In the policy documents it says that one central goal of the folk high school is to give everybody the opportunity to increase their knowledge and improve their educational level together with others in order to develop as individuals and participate in society. One of the state's overarching and final aims for the folk high school is that it should equalize the educational disparities and increase the educational levels in society (Folkbildningsrådet, 2014, p. 3; 2014, p. 5). A lot of importance is laid upon the increase in diversity within the social framework of the folk high school. The folk high school is a venue for people from different backgrounds and qualifications. The general programme and other courses encourage young people to engage in their studies and get involved in cultural as well

as volunteer societal activities. All folk high schools are obliged to work actively to reach participants with a short educational background, participants born abroad, participants with disabilities and participants who have not previously participated in adult education and who are not already involved in association activities.

Many of the participants study and learn together with other people with whom they share interests, opinions and identity. The development of ideas and further training taking place within member organisations, cooperating organisations and chief organisations are important in the folk high school's efforts to develop the democracy, foster social, cultural and political engagement and give people the opportunity to influence and change their life situation. This makes it possible for people to influence and change their life situation, which, along with fostering engagement and participation in the development of society, and widening the interest for and increasing the participation in cultural life, –are some of the state's overarching aims for the folk high school. The folk high school functions as a link between the organisations of the civil society and people's efforts to engage socially, culturally or politically (Folkbildningsrådet, 2014).

The folk high school should also function as an arena where different perspectives are represented and where ideas are challenged. Divisions between people and groups should be transcended. Individual folk high schools have different profiles that reflect their ideological foundation, a foundation that is determined by the member organisations and chief organisations connected to the specific school. This ideological foundation can contribute to the creation and maintenance of civic engagement. The folk high school's ability to encourage people to influence their own life situation and engage in society is particularly important since quite a large proportion of the participants are socially and economically vulnerable: the folk high school can contribute to these people's decision-making capacity which can in turn compensate for their weaker socioeconomic preconditions (Folkbildningsrådet, 2014).

Description Measure SE_C

Name: General programme

Designers/supervision: The supervisor

Implementers: The teachers

Recipients/target group: Young people who lack a complete upper secondary qualification

Partners: Institution C

Start/end date: Continuous admission autumn and spring

Frequency: Everyday basis

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: To give young people who lack a complete upper secondary qualification the opportunity to attain this qualification

Alternative Pathway D

- Goals and objectives

Alternative pathway D is a general folk high school programme (Allmän kurs) at institution D. The course is arranged within the folk high school at upper secondary school level. The measure has a clear ideological profile focusing on human rights, a perspective and approach that permeates all of the activity at the school. There are quite a few differences between the design of the teaching and activity in the measure and the teaching at upper secondary school: in the general programme, there are smaller study groups, students hardly have any homework or tests and are given more time to complete their school work, and the teaching is more adapted to the demands and needs of the individual student. After completing Alternative pathway D, the participants receive a complete upper secondary qualification, that is, an ISCED level 3 qualification. The participants in the measure do not receive the same kind of grades as in upper secondary school, but the grades they do receive give them the same eligibility for university studies.

- Target group

Alternative Pathway D is designed for young people who lack a complete upper secondary qualification. Some of them have not attended upper secondary school at all while others began it but subsequently dropped out. There is a lower age limit – 18 years – but no upper age limit. The school, or to be more specific, the staff members are actively involved in the selection of participants for the measure. The admission criteria are that the applicants have sufficient knowledge skills in Swedish. The applicants' competencies are also taken into consideration. It is also considered important that the applicant is motivated to study and will be able to fulfil the school's attendance requirements. In addition to this, in the selection process, the staff members also strive to put together a well-functioning group of participants. The supervisor states that in this process it is important to avoid certain constellations. One such constellation would for example be a group with many former drug addicts, since this would not be constructive for these participants themselves. It is also important to make sure that all the participants accepted to the measure will be able to receive the support they need. Thus, on rare occasions applicants are not accepted because the school lacks sufficient resources to cover their needs.

- Curriculum/ approach

Alternative pathway D is a general programme at a folk high school offering education for adults. The school offers a number of courses: the General programme, Documentary Film, Leadership and Sustainability, Human Rights and Gender, Act without Discriminating and Fair Trade. Some of the courses are at upper secondary level while others are at post-upper secondary level. The general programme is at upper secondary level and could last for either one, two or three years. In this measure, students are given the opportunity to choose between different kinds of learning methods. The reason for this is that the school strives to adapt the teaching as much as possible to the demands and needs of the individual student. The school is thus characterized by high degrees of flexibility. The general programme leads directly to a complete upper secondary qualification, which is equivalent to an ISCED level 3 qualification, so students are obliged to take the upper secondary subjects that are prerequisites for attaining that qualification. The participants in the measure get graded differently than in upper secondary school, but the grades given to the participants in the measure give the same eligibility for higher education as the upper secondary school grades.

Institution D

- Student composition

The participants in Alternative Pathway D are young people who lack a complete upper secondary qualification – an ISCED level 3 qualification. Some of the students have not been enrolled in upper secondary school at all, while others have left upper secondary school early or lack grades in certain upper secondary subjects. There is a lower age limit – 18 years – but no upper age limit.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

The school is a folk high school for adults, an alternative learning arena rooted in an adult education tradition in which people have strived to educate and empower themselves. Consequently, the folk high school as an alternative learning arena was, and still is, characterized by inclusive and democratic principles and values. In addition to this, this specific folk high school also has an explicit ideological frame and profile with a human rights focus. This is an approach that features all of the activity at the school. Folk high schools today offer several different courses and so does this particular folk high school: the General programme, Documentary Film, Leadership and Sustainability, Human Rights and Gender, Act without Discriminating and Fair Trade. Of these courses, some are at upper secondary level and other courses are instead at post-upper secondary level. The general programme is at upper secondary level. The participants in the general programme study in class every day of the week. The student groups are small, the students get more time to do their school tasks than in upper secondary school, there are hardly any homework or tests and the teaching is very much adapted to the needs and demands of the individual student.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

Neither the supervisor nor the staff members are aware of the actual number of students who leave Alternative Pathway D, however, the supervisor states that in 2014 the number was high. One staff member notes that last year half of her students had left her course by the end of the school year. Another staff member says that this year two students have dropped out of her course so far. The supervisor notes that pregnancy is a common reason for female students to drop out. One staff member notes that usually the reason for students leaving the measure is that they have found a job. The supervisor states that the number of students that do achieve a complete upper secondary qualification varies each year. One of the staff members says that she thinks the majority of her students this year will attain a complete qualification. The staff members make several efforts to try to prevent students from dropping out of the measure. One method is to try to encourage the students in their studies and adapting the teaching to their individual abilities, demands and needs.

- Policy overview

In the policy documents it says that one central goal of the folk high school is to give everybody the opportunity to increase their knowledge and improve their educational level together with others in order to develop as individuals and participate in society (Folkbildningsrådet, 2014; UF0510, 2014, p. 3) One of the state's overarching and final aims for the folk high school is that it should equalize the educational disparities and increase the educational levels in society. A lot of importance is laid upon the increase in diversity within the social framework of the folk high school. The general programme and other courses encourage young people to engage in their studies and get involved

in cultural as well as volunteer societal activities (Folkbildningsrådet, 2014). All folk high schools are obliged to work actively to reach participants with a short educational background, participants born abroad, participants with disabilities and participants who have not previously participated in adult education and who are not already involved in association activities. Many of the participants study and learn together with other people with whom they share interests, opinions and identity. The development of ideas and further training taking place within member organisations, cooperating organisations and chief organisations are important in the folk high schools' efforts to develop the democracy, foster social, cultural and political engagement and give people the opportunity to influence and change their life situation (Folkbildningsrådet, 2014). To support activity that contributes to the strengthening and development of democracy, to make it possible for people to influence and change their life situation, to foster engagement and participation in the development of society, and to widen the interest for and increase the participation in the cultural life – these are the state's overarching aims for the folk high school. The folk high school functions as a link between the organisations of the civil society and people's efforts to engage socially, culturally or politically. The folk high school should also function as an arena where different perspectives are represented and where ideas are challenged. Divisions between people and groups should be transcended. The folk high school's ability to encourage people to influence their own life situation and engage in society is particularly important since a quite large proportion of the participants are socially and economically vulnerable: the folk high school can contribute to these people's decision-making capacity which can in turn compensate for their weaker socioeconomic preconditions (Folkbildningsrådet, 2014). The folk high school should also function as an arena where different perspectives are represented and where ideas are challenged. Divisions between people and groups should be transcended. Individual folk high schools have different profiles that reflect their ideological foundation, a foundation that is determined by the member organisations and chief organisations connected to the specific school. This ideological foundation can contribute to the creation and maintenance of civic engagement. The folk high school's ability to encourage people to influence their own life situation and engage in society is particularly important, since a quite large proportion of the participants are socially and economically vulnerable.

Description Measure SE_D

Name: General programme with a human rights-profile

Designers/supervision: Supervisor/Principal

Implementers: Teachers

Recipients/target group: Young people who lack a complete upper secondary qualification

Partners: SE Institution D

Start/end date: Continuous admission autumn and spring

Frequency: Everyday basis

Short description of the *official* scope and aims of the measure: To give young people who lack a complete upper secondary qualification the opportunity to attain this qualification

United Kingdom (UK)

Alternative Pathway A

- Goals and objectives

According to the course website, the aim of the Bridging course is ‘to get young people back to where they want to be’, with a full set of qualifications they need for further studies or successful employment. Providing worthwhile entry level qualification to these young people, most of whom arrive without any prior qualifications, is the main aim of the course. Therefore, all course attendees study English, maths and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) at Functional Skills¹⁸ or GCSE¹⁹ level (equivalent to ISCED 3), depending on their prior knowledge. At the end of the course, students are expected to have achieved a range of certificates and awards in a variety of subjects. These minimum qualifications are geared towards taking them to the next step of their educational/career development. There are six Bridging classes at Institution A, delivered at two different campuses.

- Target group

This course is for young people aged 16-18 years old, who have had their education disrupted in some way; for example, for young people who did not achieve 5 A*-C GCSEs; who have only recently arrived in the UK and have no qualifications; or who could not complete their school year because of illness or injury – basically all young people who, for whatever reason, did not achieve minimum qualifications needed for further studies or employment: *‘Any 16 to 18 year old who has been blocked from what they want to do and anyone primarily who does not have, who has few or no qualifications, especially maths and English. We don’t target particular demographic groups. We do not put any kind of parameters on it; it is any 16 to 18 year-old who doesn’t have the qualifications they need to do what they want to do.’* (Curriculum Manager)

- Curriculum/ approach

Participants study a range of qualifications that provide them with a portfolio of certificates in: Functional Skills or GCSE in English, maths and ICT - depending on the students’ pre-existing knowledge and qualifications; Certificate in Personal and Social Development; Business Administration Award; Award in Money and Finance Skills; Applied Science Award; Art and Design Award; Award in Employability Skills (including a two-week work experience placement). The aim is to provide students with a broad base of skills that can take them to a higher level course and/ or improve their employment opportunities.

¹⁸ Functional Skills are qualifications in English, maths and ICT that equip learners with the practical skills needed to live, learn and work successfully.

¹⁹ In England, the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) exams taken at the age of 16 are considered the minimum qualification. They can be taken in a variety of subjects. Benchmark of satisfactory achievement: 5+ GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and Mathematics.

Institution A

Institution A is a Further Education college with three main campuses located in North London, catering mainly to students over 16 years of age.

- Student composition

In 2015, there were 3,303 students aged between 16-18 years in the college. In addition, in academic year 2014-15, there were 180 apprentices aged between 16-18, and another 838 apprentices over 19 years old. 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 learning difficulty, disability or health problem. In addition to staff and community members, the board of governors includes a student governor, too.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/or approaches

Institution A delivers approximately 1,500 full and part time courses in over 20 subjects, 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 (literacy and numeracy classes); full time entry level courses for young people aged 16 to 18 preparing them for GCSEs 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, health 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 in traineeships - training programmes to equip them with skills needed to secure an apprenticeship or employment (CV writing, interview preparation, job searching, self-discipline, interpersonal skills). They also study English and maths and complete a work placement.

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 the main safeguarding and advisory staff members are available on leaflets, noticeboards, on the website, and even on the doors of toilet cubicles.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

According to the college's Annual Report and Financial Statement, last academic year (2014-15), Institution A's overall success rate was 86.6% (the percentage of students who stayed on their course and achieved appropriate progress), higher than the national average for further education colleges, which was 83.3%. The college also has good internal progression rates: overall, 70% of students progressed to the next (required) level of their studies. Regarding students having qualifications below ISCED 3 level, over 75% of learners on level 1 programmes moved onto level 2 (equivalent to ISCED 3), and 75% of level 2 students moved to level 3 programmes (still ISCED 3 equivalent).

- Policy overview

The college places emphasis on helping students to enrol in 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 placed on the right level. 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.

Institution A has a comprehensive range of policies outlined in a number of documents: Safeguarding Policy; Equality Policy; Compliments, Concerns, and Complaints Policy and Procedure; Student Code of Conduct; Student Disciplinary Procedures. The Disciplinary Procedures outline how to deal with cases of misconduct, including non-attendance and lateness. 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 has committed a crime.

Description of Measure UK_A1

Name: Numeracy and Literacy lessons leading to ISCED 3 level

Designers/ supervision: official framework developed by the government, adapted by the leadership team at Institution A

Implementers: team of lecturers teaching in the course; administrative and support personnel

Recipients/ target group: young people from the Bridging course, none of whom have achieved ISCED 3 level

Partners: local authorities, local secondary schools, social services, youth organisations

Start date and end date: coincides with the start and end of the academic year

Frequency: full time

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: provide young people with minimum qualifications in English and maths. Lacking these qualifications greatly reduces the opportunities for further studies and employment.

Alternative Pathway B

- Goals and objectives

The Apprenticeship programme in Health and Social Care and Childcare at Institution A is provided on both Level 2 (ISCED 3C equivalent) and Level 3 (equivalent to ISCED 3A). The two levels have different entry requirements, and there is a difference in the course content: Level 3 prepares apprentices for supervisory roles in health and social care settings, such as assistant manager or senior healthcare assistant; while Level 2 is only entry level, preparing basic frontline healthcare assistants. At Level 3, there is more emphasis on reflection and requires achievement of higher grades in maths and English.

- Target group

Young people between 16-24 who are interested in pursuing a career in Health and Social Care or Childcare. According to the staff members we interviewed, the majority of candidates in the Health and Social Care courses are from the older age group, 19 to 24, because of health and safety reasons, on the one hand, and also because of the maturity needed for this job: *‘16 year olds don’t have such an emotional resilience and not many employers would like to employ 16 year olds to look after people, so they need to live their life a little bit longer and experience the world’* – explained one of the tutors. Childcare apprentices tend to be slightly younger, between 16 and 19.

For the Level 3 course the entry requirements are stricter, as they would be expected to already hold a Level 2 certificate in the subject, as well as Level 1 qualifications in English and maths. For the Level 2 course, interest, motivation and determination are more important than qualifications alone. Candidates are chosen through a mutual agreement between the employers and the college. After they are accepted by the employer, they need to complete an initial assessment in English and maths at the college.

- Curriculum/ approach

These are full time courses, where participants complete worked-based training four days a week, and study theory at the college one day a week. They are employed as apprentices with all the rights of an ordinary employee. There is a close link between the college and the employers. Those young people who did not achieve A*-C grades at GCSE exams in English and maths are required to study these subjects alongside their theoretical subjects and retake the GCSEs. Level 2 apprentices are expected to achieve at least a D-G mark in these subject while, on Level 3, they are expected to get A*-C results. In addition to work based training, theoretical studies, and possibly English and maths, apprentices complete an Award in Employment Rights and Responsibilities - a module teaching them about their rights and responsibilities as an employee, payslips, complaints procedures, how to seek guidance in the workplace and other employability skills. Finally, they have a module in Personal Thinking and Learning Skills. The college also offers distance learning for Level 3 apprentices.

Institution A

Measure B also took place in Institution A. To avoid overlap, we will not repeat the description of this institution as this is already provided in the earlier section (alternative pathway A).

Description of Measure UK_B

Name: in-depth theoretical training

Designers/ supervision: apprenticeship staff members, following official guidelines

Implementers: apprenticeship staff members. As it can be seen, in this case, designers/ supervisors and implementers coincide, as staff members teaching on this course are involved in actively shaping the course content

Recipients/ target group: apprentices on this programme

Partners: employers

Start date and end date: the length of the programmes varies between 1 year to 1.5 year, depending on the level and subject orientation

Frequency: one day a week

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: to provide in-depth theoretical background and training in Health and Social Care/ Childcare, in addition to work based training.

Alternative Pathway C

- Goals and objectives

Pre-apprenticeship programmes are considered a stepping stone to other, usually vocational courses and apprenticeships. They have been specifically designed to cater to hard-to-reach young people and provide them the minimum necessary qualifications and soft skills needed in order to undertake further studies and training. One of the designers of this provision, the Head of Young People's Engagement and Schools' Partnerships at the college summarised the aims of the programme as follows: *'What we do here is all about employability; we don't do vocational programmes here. (...) We are working on the soft skills of the learners and try to get them ready to go back into the main body of the college. But also because of their ages, they are 16-18s, we are also trying to make sure they get their English and Maths qualifications if they don't already have them.'*

At Institution B, Pre-Apprenticeship courses start later than the other programmes, hence they can take in those young people who have started another course at the college but were excluded for behavioural reasons or deemed that they would benefit from attending a lower level course first. In addition, pre-apprenticeship courses have multiple intake times, so young people who arrive after the start date can also be assigned to a programme.

Since it is an entry-level course, the programme does not have formal entry requirements. However, young people need to attend an informal interview and complete a short assessment to make sure they are placed at the appropriate level: *'We don't look at qualifications, we don't look at previous history (...) but we do an extremely in-depth interview with each one of the young people. (...) We're just trying to fix them, in inverted commas, to get them back into mainstream. If they're coming in externally then we do a real in-depth interview with them to make sure that this is actually what they want to do.'* (Head of Young People's Engagement and Schools' Partnerships)

Institution B provides several pre-apprenticeship programmes, for different age groups, with different start dates and of varying lengths. The qualifications students receive at the end may vary depending on the length of the programme and/ or the time they began it. They can get a diploma, extended certificate, certificate or award. At the time of our fieldwork, there were five 16-18 pre-apprenticeship groups, each with a different start and end date.

The particular Pre-Apprenticeship programme at Institution B that we have chosen to present in this report is a full-time Level 1 course – equivalent to an ISCED 3C qualification. The course started on the 2nd of November and is 18 weeks long, finishing on the 25th of March. At the time of our fieldwork, 18 young people took part in it.

- Target group

The target population of this course is hard-to-reach young people between ages 16-18, who lack the soft skills (such as timekeeping, attendance, team working, communication, multitasking, motivation, commitment) and many times, the minimum qualifications required for further learning and training. *‘The target group is anybody that wants to go on to do a vocational programme or to work whilst doing an apprenticeship, to give them the skills they need to be successful and effective whilst they’re doing that apprenticeship’* (Employability tutor).

Young people are recruited through different channels. Many of them are referred from other courses at Institution B, after being excluded for various reasons: behavioural and attendance issues, not having the right skills for the initial course, etc. Some are sent by social workers, or come from youth offending teams. The majority of participants are from the local boroughs.

- Curriculum/ approach

This Pre-Apprenticeship programme has the Employability module at its core, which is aimed at developing personal and social skills through participant led workshops and activities. In addition, young people attend literacy and numeracy classes (English and math) at foundation or GCSE level, depending on pre-existing skills. Teaching and activities are provided over four days a week and participants have one day off for independent study. They have access to on-line resources, individual mentors, coaching support and work experience.

Institution B

Institution B is a Further Education College spread across three centres in South London. It is a careers- and employability-focused college providing vocational courses for young people over 16 and for adults.

- Student composition

According to official statistics, in 2015 the college had 1474 students between 16 to 18 years of age. However, only a minority of all learners are in this age group, the rest are adults. According to the staff members, the college has around 15,000 students.

Recent statistical data regarding the gender and ethnic composition of students is protected by data protection laws. The latest publicly available data is from the 2012/13 academic year. The ethnic composition in that year for all students was: 46% White (British and Other White); 34% Black; 6% Asian and 14% other. In the same year, 9% of all students have disclosed having a difficulty, disability or health problem (22.5% didn’t provide information).

Regarding the 16-18 age group, in 2012/13 the ethnic composition of this 2,160 strong learner cohort was: 21% African; 17% Caribbean; 18% English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British; 11% Other White.

- Provision of educational tracks, curricula and/ or approaches

As mentioned earlier, Institution B has a strong vocational focus. It provides courses in a variety of subject areas – both for young people and adults, including: Administration and Law; Art, Design and Fashion; Business, Enterprise and Management; Childcare; Computing, IT and Web Design; Construction; Creative Media; Dental Technology; Electrical and Electronics Engineering; Hair and Beauty; Health and Social Care; Hospitality and Catering; Leisure and Tourism; Motor Vehicle and Motorcycle Engineering; PC Maintenance, Systems Support and Networking; Performing Arts; Science; Social and Community Work; Sports and Leisure; Teaching and Early Years; Uniformed Public Services. The college offers courses for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; part time literacy and numeracy classes; English language classes for speakers of other languages (ESOL); foundational skills in English, Mathematics and ICT. In addition, the college runs a number of apprenticeships in a variety of sectors: accounting; business administration, childcare, computing; construction, journalism, care, hairdressing, hospitality, customer services and security services. Pre-apprenticeships are designed for young people who need to acquire additional learning skills before starting an apprenticeship or other vocational course. The college also delivers a number of vocationally oriented Higher Education programmes in partnership with universities and other professional bodies, providing foundation degrees and diplomas in Childcare, Counselling, Teaching and Early Years.

- Dropping out and associated behaviour

There is no official college-level statistical data available regarding dropout, early school leaving and attendance. The latest Ofsted report²⁰ from 2014 stated that *‘in 2013/14, too few adult learners completed their qualifications, and success rates were low for learners aged 16 to 18 on study programmes at all levels, as well as for apprentices.’* It needs to be mentioned, however, that (as described by the same report) many young people come to the college with a background of low achievement: more than two thirds of the 16-18 year olds start at the college without GCSE English and mathematics qualifications at grades A* to C.

The report also highlighted the high number of disruptions during lessons, and poor attendance and punctuality records across the college. While success rates had improved compared to previous records, the Ofsted inspection found that outcomes for learners were still inadequate. Success rates were found to be particularly low for learners aged 16 to 18 on study programmes at level 2 (equivalent to ISCED 3) and for adults on courses at levels 1 and 3.

Male learners were found to perform slightly worse than their female peers overall, but significantly so on courses at level 2. Black Caribbean young males continued to achieve less successfully than their peers; however, the difference in performance has dropped significantly compared to previous results.

On the other hand, the same report mentioned that in the year of inspection, 2014/15, very few learners left their course early and it seemed that success rates started to improve. It also praised the effective partnership with Jobcentre Plus and a range of different employers *‘that helped*

²⁰ The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills regularly inspects each school and college in England, and the resulting evaluations are publicly available.

significant numbers of formerly unemployed people back into work and enabled them to gain useful qualifications' (Ofsted report). The report pointed out that the college had a very large cohort of young learners receiving free school meals (FSM)²¹ that year whose retention rates were extremely successful. Overall, the report found a high proportion of learners with positive progression outcomes, including employment.

- Policy overview

According to their website, the college promotes 'an ethos of ambition, achievement and respect for others.' The college's rules and expectations are clearly stated on the website and links are provided to their policy documents regarding complaint procedures, data protection, e-safety, fee policy, freedom of speech and safeguarding. The college has two different procedures for dealing with student misconduct and other issues that give cause for concern. Problems with attendance, punctuality, unsatisfactory completion of course-work, plagiarism and cheating can lead to disciplinary actions on academic grounds. Students are usually given warning before the full procedure is activated. Disciplinary procedure on non-academic grounds is related to misconduct dealing with unacceptable behaviour. The procedure operates in a series of graduated steps reflecting the seriousness of the problem, but in certain cases, misconduct may result in immediate suspension pending a disciplinary hearing.

Description of Measure UK_C

Name: Employability module (full name: City and Guilds Level One Employability Extended Certificate)

Designers/ supervision: The pre-apprenticeship programme – which has employability at its core -- was introduced by the Head of Young People's Engagement and Schools' Partnerships, designed with the help of an external consultant. The employability tutors can tailor the provision and the units offered through the employability module to the needs of their specific group, in accordance with the Employability qualification framework. We also talked to the Vice Principal of Institution 2 (included as Supervisor for Pathway D) about the programme since he oversees this provision too.

Implementers: employability tutors; team leaders; support and administrative staff

Recipients/ target group: during our fieldwork, we focused on the employability module specifically tailored to 16 to 18 year old students from the Pre-apprenticeship programme, looking for a route into education that is less traditionally academic; however, Institution 2 provides employability courses for other age groups too, from age 15 to adults.

Partners: Prince's Trust and other third sector organisations; local authorities; local secondary schools and colleges; social workers; youth offending services, etc.

Start date and end date: 2 November 2015 – 25 March 2016 (specific module which was the focus of our fieldwork; there are other employability modules with different start and end dates)

Frequency: the pre-apprenticeship programme is a full-time course, four days a week in college and one study day. From the four days, one full day is Employability; the other three days will be a combination of Employability with English and Maths.

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: The aim of the employability module is to prepare young people for work and/ or further studies: '*to get them in the right mind-set, with the right values, behaviours, soft skills*' (Employability tutor), such as timekeeping,

²¹ Eligibility for FSM is used as a proxy for low family income and socio-economic status.

attendance, team working, communication, the ability to multitask, motivation, commitment. According to the employability tutor, the curriculum is tailored to the specific needs of the cohort in question. It contains team projects; work placements; a unit on managing personal finance; units on communication, interview skills, application forms, CVs; etc.

Alternative Pathway D

- Goals and objectives

This provision is delivered by a South London based IT and digital marketing recruitment company in partnership with Institution B and another local college. They provide two apprenticeship schemes: IT Professional and Digital Marketing Apprenticeships - specialising in technical aspects of IT on the one hand, and digital marketing on the other. The qualifications offered range from Level 2 (equivalent to ISCED 3C) to Level 4 (equivalent to ISCED 5). The scheme was set up in April 2014, so it is a fairly new provision. The company itself is comprised predominantly of apprentices who help run the business. In addition, apprentices at this company recruit apprentices for other IT and digital marketing companies, who are placed at those other companies, while completing their training at this one. According to the director of this company, their aim is *'to grow in terms of establishing an IT mega-company maybe'* where part of their service is education and training, by employing apprentices: *'training actually presents a great opportunity to upskill new staff and provides actually our core funding mechanism as we try to expand into different areas. So the heart is the education and training because that's where everything is really sort of moving from; and then we're utilising that resource (...) to grow some of the other business areas.'*

- Target group

The target group are young people over 16 interested in working in IT and digital marketing, ideally with some pre-existing skill set. Young people need to apply through the official apprenticeship website (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>). Potential candidates are then invited for an interview, and their qualifications are also checked. Ideally, they would be expected to have A*-C GCSEs or functional skills in English, math and ICT. However, decisions are based on the interview as well, so candidates with lower than ideal grades can be taken to the programme if they show potential and dedication: *'we'll give them a chance and then sometimes that's ... the opportunity they need to shine. (...) So it's a combination between their CV, interaction with them directly, that will determine whether we think they're suitable for a particular role.'*

Since the company recruits for other businesses too, sometimes they provide interview training for the candidates, before they go to their interviews with the other employers. This seemed successful, as many young people lacked the job-search and interviewing skills needed: *'they don't always come through that process very well and they're usually quite weak sometimes. (...) We find that given upskilling in terms of how to go through interviews; those that have got a particular talent will do well and get the job sometimes, if not the first time, the second time around.'*

- Curriculum/ approach

Level 2 apprenticeships are one year long. Higher levels take longer time. Apprentices are based at the company 4 days a week, having an extra day off in addition to the weekend. They complete their

training at the company too, only going to Institution B if they have to study English and math (if they haven't achieved grade A*-C at their GCSE exams). The qualification however is awarded by Institution B. The curriculum and specific skills the apprentices are expected to meet is defined by the City & Guilds exam board, a vocational qualifications organisation. Assignments are practical and work-based, specific to each apprentice's actual tasks: *'so everybody's model is slightly different depending where they work and is reflective of real life in that sense. (...) it's not the typical teaching model where they're all doing the same thing; they're all specialist in their own right in terms of what they're doing and that's how I find it works. Getting them to work as a team in that setting seems to work quite well'* (company director).

Institution B

Measure D also took place in Institution B. To avoid overlap, we will not repeat the description of this institution as this is already provided in the earlier section (alternative pathway B).

Description of Measure UK_D

Name: workplace immersion

Designers/ supervision: IT company in conjunction with two further education (FE) colleges including Institution B

Implementers: IT company in conjunction with the two further education colleges. In this case, designers and implementers are the same. While the apprenticeship scheme in general has been introduced by the government and they have to adhere to the official framework, the specific programmes are developed through a collaboration between employers and educational institutions.

Recipients/ target group: young people over 16 who are interested in completing an IT-related apprenticeship scheme

Partners: the apprenticeship is run in conjunction with 2 FE colleges and an IT company

Start date and end date: various

Frequency: full-time, 4 days a week

Short description of the official scope and aims of the measure: This apprenticeship scheme resembles employment more than a typical educational setting: young people work in an office and most of their learning is very practical, related to their actual tasks. Through workplace immersion, young people are better prepared for the world of employment than by attending further classes, especially that many of those who opt for apprenticeships, are more vocationally orientated. While learning and getting real life experience, apprentices also help building the company, as they complete real work tasks. This has so far proved to be a sustainable business model.

Annex 3: Topic Guides for Interviews and FGD's

Interviews with case youngsters

Perspective on the present alternative pathway

Prompts:

- How long have you been participating in [*the current education or training programme*]?
- How do you feel about [*the current education or training program*]?
 - o What do you like/ dislike about it?
- Why did you enrol in [*the current education or training program*]?
 - o How did you become aware of this type of education or training?
 - o Did someone or some organisation encourage you to enrol?
- Do you feel that this measure gives you more opportunities than secondary schools to achieve your future (educational) goals?
- In what way(s) do you feel supported by the staff (or employers) working here?
 - o How is your relationship with the staff working here?
 - o Can you compare the current support from staff with secondary schools?
- Do you feel you have an influence on the organisation of your current program?
- In what ways do you feel supported by other students here?
 - o How is your relationship with other students here?
 - o Do you feel accepted/ respected?
- What are in general the main differences with regular secondary school?
- Since leaving school, have you participated in any other education or training?
 - o What type of training?; Why/ how did it come to an end?; Was it useful?
- Since leaving regular secondary school, have you had any paid jobs?
 - o What type of job?; Why/ how did it come to an end?; Was it useful?
- Could you tell us about what have you been doing since you left secondary school?
 - o When did you leave school?; What kind of qualifications have you obtained?

Perspective on secondary education and personal past trajectory

Prompts:

- Could you describe your educational trajectory so far (schools you attended from the beginning of your education)?
 - o Reflecting on your past trajectory, would you have done things differently?
- What were your reasons for leaving secondary school?
- How did you feel about your time in regular secondary education?
 - o What did you like/ dislike about it?
- Has your behaviour in education changed when comparing with secondary education?
 - o How much do you study? Do you study as much as before, or less or more?
 - o Has your attendance changed? Why (not)?
 - o Has your behaviour in class/ school changed? Why (not)?
- How would you describe your educational career, in terms of success?
 - o What do you think about the importance of being successful in education?
- Have you faced any obstacles? (How) have you tried overcoming them?
 - What was the role of others in overcoming them?

On prevention and intervention measures taken by the previous secondary school(s)

- Were you aware of programmes your previous school(s) offered to support students?
- Did you participate in any specific support measures in your previous school(s)?
 - o How long did you participate in this measure?
 - o How did your participation come about – did you ask for it or did teachers?
- To what extent did you feel the measure tried to solve a real (/the right) problem?
- Did you feel you had an influence on the organisation of the support measures?

- To what extent did you feel you received the right support?
- Do you feel the programme had a positive outcome on you and/ or your educational career?

Future plans and perspective on the labour market

Prompts:

- Are you planning to attain a diploma for secondary education?
- What do you hope to do after leaving education?
- What kind of job would you like to have in the future?
 - o What are the most important things you are looking for in a job?
 - Why, what gave you that idea? What do you like about this job?
 - o How do you plan to achieve that?
- 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 Has/ does this influence(d) your decisions in terms of continuing education?

Social and Cultural capital

Prompts:

- To what extent is your family helping you to achieve your goals?
 - o To what extent can your family give you advice?
 - o What does your family want you to achieve in education?
- To what extent can your friends support your educational career?
 - o Do you discuss future plans with your friends?
 - o What are your friends planning/ hoping to do – in terms of college, university, apprenticeships, career?
- Are you involved in activities/ organisations outside of education? (faith group, community or sport club, music)
 - o Does this involvement help you in education and in your plans for your future?
- Are there people you look up to for what they have achieved? Who are your role models (famous people but also known people in family/ community)?
- To whom can you turn to for advice or support about education, training, qualifications, job opportunities?
- Was there someone or some organisation that supported you to get back to education or training? To find a job?

FGD peers in alternative pathways

General questions

- What do you think are the main challenges that young people face in (RESEARCH AREA) today?
 - Regarding work, education, housing, crime, etc.
- How is the education system helping/ preparing young people for jobs?
- What kinds of opportunities are available for young people in (RESEARCH AREA) nowadays?
- What support services are available for young people?
 - Are these sufficient?

Specific questions about alternative pathway

Awareness

- How did you find your way to this measure?
- How would you describe the general/societal awareness about this measure?
 - Amongst (non) early school leavers?
- What do you think others' opinion is of this measure?
 - How do you think others perceive your involvement in this measure?
- What does this measure offer in particular?
- How does this differ from a regular secondary school?

Scope and aim

- What do you think this measure tries to achieve?
 - Does it intentionally aim to compensate for ESL? How?
- For whom is this measure designed, according to you?

Problem orientation

- What do you feel are the problems early school leavers have to deal with in their educational trajectory? Are this personal issues, school-related issues, ...? *[Note to the interviewer: this could be on a micro-, meso- and macro-level]*
- How would you design an extra-muros measure to support youngsters who left education without an ISCED 3 qualification?
- What should secondary schools do differently to help youngsters like yourself?

Reasons for participation

- Why are you participating in this measure?
 - Did you decide yourself to participate, why?
 - Did you get advice from anyone? From whom?
 - Did anyone advice or oblige you to participate?
 - What do you think was the reason to advice/ oblige you?

Participation and ownership

- To what extent are you invited to discuss the design and implementation of the measure?
 - If you could redesign this specific measure today, what would you do differently?

Feasibility

- How successful do you think the measure can be in reaching its goals?
- Are participants followed-up on in some way?
- Are there sufficient resources (human capital, financial resources, willingness of the government or other institutions) to make this measure work, also on the long term?

Support

- What support does the measure provide to you?
- How do you feel about the support you get in this measure?
 - Can you give feedback to the designers of implementers of the measure on the support you get?

- Who supports you in this measure?

Outcome experience or assessment ²²

- To what extent do you feel the measure has (or will) achieve(d) its goal?
- How satisfied are you with this course/ measure?
 - What do you like/ dislike about it?
 - In your opinion what are the main strengths of this programme?
 - Is there any way it could be improved?
- Have you had any opportunity to give feedback (to teachers) about this course?
 - To what extent does the (alternative pathway) respond to your questions and requests/ feedback?
- Is there an evaluation of your experiences of the outcomes?
 - What kind? (internal, external; output indicators?)
- How does the measure differ with a regular secondary school environment?
 - Which differences do you experience?
 - Do you think these differences have a positive or negative effect on your educational/ job career?
 - (What) do you feel regular secondary schools can learn from the way this measure works?

²² For those youngsters at the end of their involvement in the extra-muros programme/ measure. For those more in an early stage the questions on feasibility are more appropriate.

FGD/interviews for the staff of alternative pathways

Awareness

- To what extent do you think ESL is a problem within the secondary schools?
- How do you feel early school leavers find their way to your institution/ measure?
- How would you describe the general/societal awareness amongst (non) early school leavers about the institution/ measure?
- How would you describe the socio-demographic background of the participants?
 - o Are the participants a rather heterogeneous group or a homogeneous group?
 - o Is there any discrepancy between the target group and the actual participants?
 - o Do you see an evolution over the past years in participants?

Scope and aim

- What is the aim of the measure according to you?
- Was this measure deliberately developed to compensate for early school leaving?
 - o If so, which early school leavers are targeted by this measure?
- To what qualifications is the measure leading?
 - o Is the measure leading directly to an ISCED 3 qualification?

Problem orientation

- Why is the measure created in this form or structure?
 - o What is the underlying problem the measure wants to tackle?
 - o To what extent do you feel your measure addresses the educational issues (or the issues related to early school leaving) differently than regular secondary schools do?
- What do you feel are the educational problems the early school leavers used to deal with during their educational trajectory? *[Note to the interviewer: this could be on a micro-, meso- and macro-level]*

Reasons for participation

- How does participation of early school leavers in this measure come about?
 - o Do they participate voluntarily?
- What do you think are the motivations of individuals to be involved in the measure?
 - o Do you feel these are the right reasons? Why (not)?
- Which staff is involved in the measure?
 - o Is staff involved on a voluntary base?
- Why are you involved in this measure?
 - o What do you consider the 'right' reasons for staff to be involved?
- How does the selection of participants for the measure come about?
 - o What are the criteria observed for this selection of participants?
 - o How is the selection process organized?
 - Phases?/ Instruments?/Selection techniques used?
 - o Who are involved in the selection of eligible young people?
 - Is there any administration involved in the process of selecting candidates?
 - Do the professionals involved in the implementation of the measure play any subjective role in relation to the selection process?
 - Do they have any autonomous control over who is / is not accepted to participate?

Participation and ownership

- What is your role in providing support to the participants? (designer, implementer, both?).
 - o Do you experience any role confusion?
- As an implementer of the measure, do you feel your management (the designers) share your perspective on early school leaving and on the measure?
- To what degree are you involved in the design of this measure?
 - o If you could redesign this measure today, what would you do differently?

- How do you feel other people (including the students/participants) are involved in the design and implementation of this measure?

Feasibility

- To what extent are the aims of the intervention(s) feasible?
- Are there sufficient resources (human capital, financial resources, willingness of the government or other institutions) to make this measure work, also in the long term?

Support

- What support does the measure provide exactly to the participants involved?
 - What support specifically targets early school leavers?
- To what extent do you feel supported in your role within this measure?
 - By whom do you feel supported in this role?
 - Do you feel there are sufficient professionalization/training opportunities for the designers and/ or implementers of the measure?
- To what extent do you feel the measure is supported by other stakeholders like policy makers or regular educational organisations?

Outcome experience or assessment

- To what extent do you feel the measure has made a difference (positive or negative)?
- What has the measure achieved?
 - Do you feel that was the intended goal of the measure?
 - Is there anything that could be done differently to achieve the intended goals?
- Does an evaluation of the outcome (experiences) of the measure exist?
 - What kind of evaluation is it? (Internal, external; output indicators?)
 - Do the evaluation results lead to the implementation of some changes?

Capacity to adapt to local realities

- To what extent is the measure capable of adapting to (changes in) the local context?
 - e.g. The educational landscape, the labour market or demographic characteristics of the neighbourhood, etc.