

# PR3: EARS Impact Research

*A comprehensive research study on the response of  
European teachers to the school dropout phenomenon*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right and a key driver of socio-economic development. However, one of the challenges that education systems face worldwide is school dropout, which can have serious consequences for individuals, communities, and society at large. In Europe, school dropout is a complex phenomenon that affects a significant proportion of young people and has been the subject of ongoing research and policy initiatives.

In this final report, we present the results of a comprehensive research study that aimed to investigate the response of teachers to the school dropout phenomenon in European countries, as a part of the intellectual outputs of the Erasmus+ KA2 project EARS-Educational Agreement as a Response to School dropout.

The research aimed to identify the different reasons for school dropout, as well as the diverse definitions, measures, and strategies used by teachers to prevent it. Additionally, the study aimed to explore the needs of teachers in terms of support and training to effectively address this issue.

The report draws on a wide range of data sources, including academic literature, policy documents, and surveys conducted among teachers in several European countries. It presents a comprehensive overview of the school dropout phenomenon in Europe and highlights the key factors contributing to it. It also provides a detailed analysis of the different approaches used by teachers to prevent dropout and support at-risk students.

Overall, the report provides valuable insights into the complex issue of school dropout and the important role that teachers play in addressing it. It highlights the need for more targeted support and training for teachers to effectively tackle this issue, and calls for greater collaboration and coordination among policymakers, education authorities, and other stakeholders to ensure that all young people have access to quality education and the opportunities it provides.



## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Definition of the phenomena of school dropout and early school leaving according to European Policies

School dropout or Early School Leaving are phenomena that in the last years are becoming more and more noticeable and complex as they are generated by many kinds of individual, institutional, social, and economic factors. As sociological terms both of them are part of a fluid frame of reference as they are depending directly on the way that a specific society perceives and regulates issues related to its educational system at a specific chronological time. According to international studies the attempt to defining the exact meaning of school dropout and early school leaving faces many obstacles as it is a concept with big diversity of opinions as well as vague consumptions.

#### 2.1.1 Definition of school dropout

In recent bibliography, the definition of school dropout includes two perceptive categories, the formal and the functional. The formal definition refers to education as something “compulsory” thus, children are being forced to attend school for a certain number of years and eventually choosing to give up the school education without obtaining a diploma. On the other hand, the functional definition focuses more on the competences, skills, and knowledge that students may have obtained or not, during their educational experience, therefore obtaining the minimum competences to function in a working environment which varies for every country (Ungureanu, 2017).

A generally accepted definition of school dropout in the modern educational reality is the one that refers to those young people who do not complete their education, which is defined by the norm as the minimum necessary educational prerequisite in the society in which they belong (Montmarquett, Mahseredjian, Houle, 2001).

According to the American studies, the concept of dropout is strongly related with the circumstances that young people leave the school without obtaining a high school diploma (Schargel, 2001; Orfield, 2006) which is considered as the peak of a detachment



process from school (Finn, 1989, Newmann, Wehlage and Lambord, 1992; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko and Fernandez, 1989).

This approach is also consistent with Cristina Neamțu's (2003) view, that defines dropout as the behavior of school evasion, meaning the young individual will stop attending school before ending the level of studies that he/she began thus reflecting the lack of interest or of trust in the educational process.

According to Fossey (1996), the phenomenon of students dropping out of compulsory schooling is attributed to both the terms "dropout" and "school dropout". According to the Eurostat definition (European Commission, 2011a), school dropouts are those who:

- a) are in the age group of 18-24 years and have an education up to the lower secondary school with a certificate corresponding to the ISCED2 level.
- b) do not participate in any education and training activity.

Based on this definition, the indicator "Early school leaving" is being generated which shows the percentage of the group of young people aged 18-24 who have decided to terminate their education earlier (Greek Ministry of Education, 2007).

### 2.1.2 Definition of Early School Leaving

At the European level, the terms Early Leaving School (ESL / Early School Leaving), or Early Leaving Education and Training (ELET / Early Leaving from Education and Training), refer to young people aged 18-24, who have completed the country's lower compulsory education, but have left further education or training prematurely. Also, the term "Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET/Not in Education, Employment or Training)" refers to young people aged 16-29, who do not belong to education, training or employment structures.

Early school leaving implies giving up any form of education and refers to those youngsters who gave up school either before finishing the compulsory studies or finished the compulsory school but did not obtain any qualification after the upper secondary level



or attended professional training courses without reaching an equivalent of the qualification at upper secondary level (Zidărescu, 2009; Marcu, 2010).

Although British literature uses the term early school leaving with a narrower meaning as it refers to the secondary and vocational education (Bennett, 2003; Johnes& McNabb, 2004; Blanden& Gregg, 2004; Dearden et al., 2011), American literature (Schargel, 2001) gives a more general view of the definition as it identifies three types of students that leave school and labels them as below:

**-drop-outs:** the ones who left school and are usually included in prevention or remedial programs (Lleras-Muney, 2005; Albouy and Lequien, 2009; Powdthavee, 2010; Lundborg, 2013).

**-tune-outs:** the ones who are not motivated to learn, who finish the school years with good grades sometimes, who disturb the classes, who get bored during the lessons, who have educational needs that are not fulfilled, who are tolerated or ignored (Wenger, 2002; Anderson 2014).

**-force-outs:** the ones who get suspended, who repeat the year, who are expelled because they refuse to follow the school rules (Attwood& Croll, 2006; Henry, 2007).

**-push-outs:** the ones who are fostered by the school decision to dropout, a fact which becomes the expression of failure in implementing the school insertion policies as an institutional issue and as a problem of the society that lacks efficient prevention and intervention strategies.

The above distinction conforms with the existence of the next social theories that examine the specific phenomenon:

**-the pull-out theories**, that associate the student's decision to leave school with factors such as: early marriage, having a baby, financial issues, the need to get employed in order to support their family. The pull-out theories assume the fact that students underlie the decision to stay in school or not, on a cost –benefit analysis. These theories consider the individual in a contextual way, in which school is an important part of his life, along with his family, colleagues, church and other organizations. A job or the family





responsibilities, for instance, are able to pull the student out of school (McNeal, 1997; Mihalic& Elliott, 1997, Plank et al., 2005).

*-the push-out theories* consider that school is responsible for the dropout because it discourages students to continue their studies. The pushout theoreticians claim that the students leave school not due to their individual attributes but because of the school structure or internal institutional factors, such as the behavioral politics or the conflicts between students and/or teachers (Fine, 1991).

### 2.1.3 Implications of the two definitions

School Dropout and Early School Leaving are often being coincided. In the attempt to separate them, school/student dropout concerns only people who leave school before obtaining a degree, while the Early School Leaving also includes people with degrees up to compulsory education.

Firstly, as it is commonly agreed between European countries, the ESL indicator promises international comparability and is well suited for benchmarking efforts. This is no mean achievement, considering the complexity of different definitions of school dropout and durations of compulsory education within the EU.

Secondly, ESL goes beyond measuring the permanence in the education-training system until a certain age, focusing instead on the conclusion of the level of schooling defined. In this sense, the ESL indicator can be seen more as a mean to promote educational success-through the attainment of a certain level of qualification and not so much as a measure of the school system's capacity to guarantee access to education.

Finally, ESL mainly focuses on the pupil than the school concerning the causes of school dropout. It seems to be an alteration, as measured by ESL, that school dropout is more of an indicator of the education and training-system performance towards achieving its fundamental duty: to qualify the population and not just the circumstance of those young people who do not obtain the compulsory or "legal" education.



Other studies separate the two terms characterizing dropout as a decision to leave the educational system and early school leaving the decision that eliminates someone from obtaining a degree or diploma or continuing to higher education.

Researchers in various studies define school dropout by using similar terms such as: school misfit, absenteeism, repeat, early school leaving and by emphasizing the predictors, by analyzing the determinants and by outlining the profile of the student at risk of dropping out.

School misfit refers to a disparity between the student's needs and the requirements of the school or between the student's potential and the learning tasks and is fostered by many factors as school failure, incapacity of responding to the requirements of the school community and school immaturity (Cristea, 2000). The authors (Popescu, 1991; Jordan et al. 1996; Schargel, 2001; Neamțu, 2003; Sălăvăstru, 2004; Zidărescu, 2009; Marcu, 2010) differentiate between the pedagogical misfit that refers to the incapacity of achieving the school tasks and the behavioral misfit that associates to discipline and interaction issues regarding students inside the school environment.

Absenteeism refers to the frequent and repeated absences of students from the curricular activities, due to weak motivation, inadequate conditions of study, but also other factors such as health problems, children forced to work, or other pressures of the school (Neamțu, 2003).

Repeat is the situation in which a student, who attended the necessary classes for ending an academic year, is required to take the same classes again during the next year. Retaking the classes is based on different criteria however to avoid misconception as punishment and to transform it into a strategy of school reintegration it is not enough to offer the student the chance of attending the same activities that previously generated the failure, but to implement an individual educational plan in accordance with the specific needs of the student who repeats the year with a special emphasis on covering the knowledge gaps, developing achievement motivation and avoiding isolation. A common point of the approaches of this phenomenon consists the idea of leaving school, no matter the level, before obtaining a qualification of a complete professional training that aims to



ensure social and economic autonomy of the person, or before closing a cycle of studies (Zidărescu, 2009; Marcu, 2010).

### 3. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF THE PHENOMENA

#### 3.1 Reasons of school dropout and early-school leaving

The school dropout phenomenon arises through a series of causes, the investigation of which is necessary both for a better understanding of it and for the definitive treatment of its effects. All bibliographic references agree that there are usually a number of different factors that lead to early school leaving, usually as a chain reaction process. For practical reasons they are divided into four categories (De Witte et al., 2013): socio-economic, family, personal and educational factors.

##### *Socio-economic factors*

Students coming from conservative, marginalized societies find it difficult to continue the educational process, which follows the norms of the dominant society. Social inequality implies educational inequality, resulting in school dropout.

Berlin Against Violence (2004) lists the following risk factors, which are probably common to all countries:

- the variety of values leading to disorientation
- the low chances of finding an (attractive) job
- the growing problem of social integration of the individual
- "life in a relaxed society, where no one toils"
- the importance of education is not apparent to citizens
- the distortion of reality by the mass media

Other common points are (Alimisis & Gavriliadi, 2007):

- poverty, ripple effects on emotional health (peer hostility and stigma)
- the low socio-economic status/history of the young person's area of residence
- the "poor" social behavior outside school, which sometimes leads to criminal actions



- the long working hours outside of school, leaving little time for school work and attendance

In countries such as Greece and Italy, where secondary schools are divided into general and technical/vocational, the influence of socio-economic factors is more evident, as these schools show much higher dropout rates and are mainly attended by students who come from lower economic strata.

In populations with a low socio-economic background, early school leaving is also mediated by other factors, such as school failure and the existence of specific attitudes towards education. In order to also fully understand the socio-economic background, it is necessary to examine other parameters such as the family situation and the level of education of the father and mother. In many cases it has even been observed that the higher educational level of the parents, the higher expectations and the existence of encouragement reduce the possibility of dropout despite the existence of other socio-economic factors.

### *Family factors*

It is well known that parents with a low educational level are likely to be unable to support and help their children at home in learning processes. Especially, in the event that the parents are illiterate, they are completely unable to monitor the educational needs of the children and empower them so that they return properly prepared to the classroom. This situation can gradually contribute to a student dropping out of school.

However, the parents' weakness does not imply an unwillingness to help their children. On the contrary, it is usually the case that parents who have experienced poverty and social exclusion consider education and training as a vehicle for advancement and improvement of living conditions for their children.

Family factors, in addition to deprivation, also include instances of severe family dysfunction, such as domestic violence, parental mental illness, and substance use. A child living under such adverse conditions develops feelings of shame, low self-esteem and great uncertainty, feelings that do not allow him to socialize. Instead of the student role, children are pushed to take on adult roles and responsibilities.



In conclusion, the low socio-economic status of the family, the disparaging attitude and the reduced expectations of the parents towards the school, the lack of support of the student from their parents and their indifference, family problems, ruptures, losses of relatives, illnesses, unemployment, not living with both parents, large number of children in the family, poor school performance of siblings, potential school dropout from an older sibling and in general family history of early school leaving, single-parentfamily, family mobility and instability of the family environment, difficulty finding work, distance from school, different race and ethnic origin are among of the family factors that influence the child's stay in school (Kalpazidou, 2021).

### ***Personal factors***

The factors related to individual characteristics refer to intrapersonal deficits, which affect the development of individual abilities and learning rates of each student (problems in speaking, listening, reading, writing, reasoning).

Individual differences and disadvantages related to family and socio-economic background are magnified in educational environments with a high degree of selective processes and increased study demands (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). For example, if a bilingual child does not know the mother tongue well, he has a weakness that can lead to school failure and this, in turn, to student dropout. When a child cannot understand the meaning of the lesson, it is reasonable for him to have no interest in it and to give up. Lack of interest is a common feature in the history of children who leave school early.

It is necessary to note that the issue of school failure is a burden that mostly rests only on the student (Iatropoulou, 2018). However, the phenomenon also has social and political dimensions. School failure can be treated as a child's personal failure. Then, if there is no timely support from adults, many children show a withdrawal attitude, leaking silently.

In summary, the personal factors that can hinder a child's school path include the following (Alimisis & Gavriadi, 2007):

- the living conditions that make it difficult for the individual to organize



- low levels of success often as lagging behind peers
- peer influence
- the lack of a sense of belonging
- the difficulty of meeting the demands of the courses which are often demanding
- low self-esteem
- stress, anxiety, worries
- physical or mental health problems
- lack of interest and motivation or laziness leading to reduced effort
- the lack of standards
- insufficient attendance at classes
- bad behavior and lack of moral values in the form of aggression, uncontrolled impulsive reactions, participation in dangerous groups/gangs, use of illegal substances

Truancy and misbehavior are usually the most important indicators of possible dropout, although they almost always follow and are caused by other factors.

### *Educational factors*

Despite the common view that the school is a miniature of society, the truth contained in this phrase does not cease to be timeless. The school environment usually works in a monolingual and monocultural direction, as does society, despite its multicultural form. Although many schools proclaim the message "all different all equal", one needs to ask whether this is true and applied in the school setting.

Continuing, Cummins (2003) focuses on the human relationship between teacher and student. He characterizes it as vital but also as the "space" and the channel where learning and the transmission of knowledge takes place. A poor teacher-student relationship is often at the root of school failure.

A school that does not take advantage of the cultural and linguistic wealth that each child brings with it and does not turn the "disadvantage" into an advantage, then inevitably creates a wall of exclusion and an unbridgeable gap between the child and the school.



This attitude, combined with the non-existent or often problematic relationship between the school and the parents, leads to an image of indifference on the part of the school and then to the child's rejection and early abandonment. Even if a school supports inclusion in theory, if it is not willing in practice to include the cultural richness of students in the educational process, its good intentions will likely fall on deaf ears.

In addition to the above, educational factors that may lead to school dropout include the following (Alimisis & Gavriadi, 2007):

- Low quality / unstimulating teaching such as lack of differentiation of teaching to meet different learning styles (the better the quality of the education provided, the higher the student attendance)
- The treatment by the teacher, the criticism, the desire of the students to be treated as adults
- Inadequate guidance in quality work, leading to incorrect choices of study direction
- Lack of necessary basic skills, unsuccessful progression from lower levels
- The lag in grade progress and the inability or unwillingness to catch up (often exacerbated by a lack of support from the school)
- The feeling of loneliness - isolation, lack of integration in the school classroom and/or abandonment by teachers

The above risk factors are common to all countries but require different ways of dealing with them depending on the structure of the school system.



### 3.2 Consequences of school dropout and early-school leaving

The problem of student dropout, as a social or atomic phenomenon or as a manifestation of weaknesses in the educational system, is characterized by complexity and is influenced by a range of many different individual, social, and educational factors which imply to a multi-level examination of the causes and consequences of the phenomenon (Institute of Educational Policy / Observatory on the issues of recording and dealing with leakage, 2017).

According to the educational literature review, the consequences of school dropout can be divided into three levels:

**Personal level:** repeated school failures create a negative impact on young people's self-conscious concept. These young people often experience anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and poor self-image. They feel failed and have no motivation for personal growth and self-improvement. Under these conditions, the possibility of these people entering the labor market is limited, as a result of which these people are trapped in the vicious circle of failure. They, also, feel disadvantaged towards their peers and their wider social environment and it has been shown that they do not believe in themselves and their own strengths. (Bosniadou & Papatheofilou, 1998).

According to research (Na, 2017; Adelman & ....., Szekely, 2016; Sum et al., 2019; Lamp et al., 2010) adults without qualifications have the following common characteristics:

- They are vulnerable and sensitive
- They have guilt
- They have poor self-image and low self-esteem
- They have low self-confidence
- They are not activated
- They behave with aggression or resignation
- They are more easily victimized

Also, teenagers with low self-esteem and a low sense of personal efficacy is usually dependent on other people, appears without imagination and a tendency to seek, lacks





social skills and above all the skill of assertiveness and is constantly in a state of defense. In addition, he uses alienated mechanisms for the above defense, avoids self-criticism, is less creative and flexible, conforms extremely to the values of his social environment and is more authoritarian (Adelman & Szekely, 2016).

**Social level:** As for their social life:

- They experience feelings of disadvantage
- They face difficulties in social recognition
- They lack social skills
- They seek social contacts based on the embarrassment and disadvantage they feel
- They are more likely to manifest various forms of delinquency, social discredit, and social exclusion (Lamb et al. 2010)

Dropouts are a cause of rising unemployment. This is confirmed by the data of the European Commission (2016) according to which, in the population groups with low level of qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) the employment rate rose to 48.5% in 2015, close to the EU-28 average. In the groups with medium-qualified population groups (ISCED levels 3-4) the employment rate rose to 56.4% in 2015 and was much lower than the EU average. Also, in low-skilled populations the risk of adopting antisocial behaviors is increased.

**Professional level and financial level:**

School leavers:

- Have reduced educational qualifications, therefore fewer career opportunities
- Do not have the minimum formal qualifications to find a job with quality and prospects
- Have uncertain prospects regarding their future
- Forced to work in jobs unrelated to their potential, capabilities, and interests



- They are usually employed in auxiliary, manual, or seasonal jobs as unskilled personnel
- They often have stereotyped or distorted and unrealistic perceptions of the profession and the world of employment, which leads them to “drop out”.

Dropouts are often limited to low-paid jobs or underemployment, resulting in lower incomes compared to graduates or skilled workers. Also, in case of unemployment, the need arises for the society to incur additional expenses such as unemployment benefits, question allowances, school review allowances (Farrington et al., 2017).

Many researches which intended to analyze the school dropout phenomenon, emphasize in many negative effects in a wide range of factors and claim prevention and intervention strategies (Kaplan & Peck, 1995; Kirazoglu, 2009; Barclay, 1966; Lessard et al., 2010; Crowder & South, 2003; Franklin & Streeter, 1995; Frotin et al. 2010; Figueira-McDonough, 1992)

The negative consequences of not graduating school are extreme, affecting the individuals, the families and the entire society. The subjects at risk of dropping out tend to be depressive, unsatisfied with their lives, alienated. Students who abandon school have a poor mental and physical health and a high probability of committing crimes or of becoming addicted to the governmental support programs (Grossman & Kaestner, 1997; Rumberger, 1987; Witte, 1997). These individuals have a great potential of entering gangs, consuming alcohol and drugs, adopting violent or even criminal behaviors (Blakemore & Low, 1984).

### 3.3 General European measures

School dropout or early school leaving as gradual processes of disengagement may begin in a very early stage of schooling and be affected by several simultaneous and inter-related factors individual/social, related to the school itself at a micro level or to the structure of the educational system at a macro level.

Most of the international educational research carried out on the above phenomena set out examples of measures that have been carried out or suggest useful policy



implementation guidelines. Several government papers as well as European Union reports very usefully list policies that have been implemented (see for instance European Commission, 2009), however no distinction is made between the different programmes that have been implemented and their direct consequence on the completion rates.

According to relative literature, 68 tested policy measures were found in the United States and OECD countries as Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK that had many similarities in the content of causes that drive to school dropout and can be compared in order to come up with similar measures that can be adapted cross different educational system of different countries (OECD, 2019).

The above measures were classified to be related with the factors that can be overcome (Hammond et al., 2007). Most of them targeted not only to individual or social risk factors, but also to several targeted systemic risk factors either at micro (related to school) or at macro level (related to the structure of the educational system). A clear difference was found according to which group of risk factors the measures targeted. Measures that targeted systemic risk factors were easily classified on a one-to-one risk-measure relationship. However, the sorting the measures aiming at the prevention of individual or social risk factors proved less obvious as several of the measures were intended at defeating not one but several factors simultaneously.

A different classification was also approached to the level environment that they were implemented: within a particular school (both curricular and other activities set in the environment of the regular school day), outside of school (extra-curricular activities carried out on schools' grounds or elsewhere as well as activities external to the educational system), and purely systemic changes at a macro level.

The educational research has shown that the most successful measures combined components from all three categories, within school, outside school and at a system macro level. An example of such a measure is the US School Transitional Environment Program (STEP) which targets children who are transitioning from primary to large lower secondary schools. As was seen above mobility may lead to dropout. Changing schools



creates a set of adaptational demands in coping with the flux and complexity of a new school setting and the failure to cope with these changes can lead to the development of problem behavior and academic struggles (Felner et al., 1994). This measure therefore seeks to make the transition less painful for the students by creating subgroups of learning environments (65-100 students) within the larger school and locating the STEP classrooms in proximity to each other. Students also remain together for a set of core classes such as Mathematics and English, thus avoiding the need to constantly adapt to a new set of peers. In addition, emotional counselling and academic guidance is provided and the students' homeroom teacher serves as the primary link between the school and home and vice-versa to increase the students' sense of connectedness and belonging to school (Felner and Adan, 1989). As a result of the implementation of the measure, the dropout rate was halved compared to the control group. In addition, the programme was associated with high levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of burn-out for the participating teachers (Felner et al., 1994).

The second largest group of successful measures were the ones that were implemented completely outside the education system. These were also all successful but many of them only in an indirect way, i.e., they had an impact on removing some of the causes of early school leaving. Only a few of the successful measures involved implementation only in schools and even fewer still were purely systemic at a macro level.

The measures that were unsuccessful involved either purely systemic change at macro level or implementation only in schools. This serves to underscore the finding presented above: to overcome early school leaving, policies must involve action both outside and inside school simultaneously. Considering how the causes of dropout stem from issues both within and outside of the educational system and the extent to which the causes feed into each other, it appears necessary to address the dropout challenge from both angles at the same time. Indeed, most of the measures were seen to address many risk factors concurrently (Kalpazidou, 2021).



Finally supporting children belonging to disadvantaged groups must be extended and multiplied. Counseling and orientation, extracurricular activities, local partnerships, parents' higher involvement in the educational process, the importance given to wellbeing in school – for the ones who learn and for the ones who teach equally – would be a start (Ungureanu, 2017).

According to the Commission's report, the interventions within the European Union can be summarized as below (European Commission, 2019):

- EU countries are committed to reducing the average rate of early school leaving to less than 10% by 2020. Annual education and training monitoring provides data and analysis of early school leaving trends in the EU and beyond the member states.
- EU Education Ministers adopted a Council Recommendation on general policies to reduce early school leaving, which set out a framework for coherent, integrated, and documented policies. Agreed to work together to exchange best practices and knowledge on effective ways to deal with early school leaving
- A pre-school workgroup viewed examples of good practices in Europe and shared experiences of reducing early school leaving. The final report outlines 12 key messages for policy makers and translates them into practical tools through a list of comprehensive policies and an appendix with examples of good practices from several EU countries.
- The Commission organized a conference on policies to reduce early school leaving. One year later, policy developments in eight EU countries were examined.
- The School Policy Working Group has developed a series of policy messages outlining the basic preconditions for implementing a whole school-based approach to early school leaving, as well as an online European School Toolkit.
- The Council also implemented assumptions on reducing early school leaving and promoting school success.



Based on the Commission report, the guidelines for preventing the phenomenon can be summarized as follows (European Commission, 2019):

- Access to good quality pre-school education and care (ECEC): Evidence shows that access to quality education at an early age facilitates the development of core competencies. Evidence also shows that good quality ECEC increases educational achievement and reduces risk at a later stage. Access to good quality ECEC is especially important for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and makes it easier to enter the education system.
- Relevant and appealing curriculum: a curriculum that is relevant and coherent can motivate students to fully develop their strengths and talents. Curricula should be designed to reflect the student's different relationships, consider different starting points, and adapt to the Ambitions.
- Flexible educational pathways: the strict design of educational pathways can create serious obstacles in the completion of upper secondary education. Situations in which students and their parents are forced to make early compulsory choices between different educational subjects at an early age make education systems extremely selective and can lead to the demotion of those with the wrong orientation. Research also shows that repeating the grade, risks undermining students' confidence. Many countries have begun to replace grade repetition with investments in personalized learning and targeted learning support. Compulsory entrance exams may restrict access to upper secondary education. In the absence of these exams, students have limited options to continue their education and training. Educational pathways must be flexible. Training pathways designed as fewer demanding options with limited future career opportunities should be avoided.
- Smooth transition between different levels of education: measures to facilitate the adjustment process should start with the transition from home to the area of education. The transition from primary to lower secondary education and from lower to upper secondary education should be facilitated. Closer cooperation



between schools, induction programs and targeted support for children who have difficulty adapting to the new school environment can avoid alienation because of difficult transition experiences. Stronger educational pathways are also needed, offering specific altering options for young people who realize they may prefer a different course of study.

- High quality, appealing and exciting vocational education and training (VET): high quality VET, of equal value to academic education, provides opportunities for all young people to explore and learn more about the world of work and facilitate the transition to labor market. It is important that high quality VET allows higher education to evolve in the same way that general upper secondary education does. VET can contribute to reducing ESL by providing quality, structured, job-based learning opportunities.
- Involvement of students and parents in decision-making in school: young people's opinions should be highly valued. Students' active participation in the school community increases their commitment and motivation and facilitates school effectiveness. There should be room for students to create their influence in schools and take ownership of their educational path. They should have the opportunity to express their views and participate in decisions that affect the school and its operation. Schools could facilitate their participation through school boards or student consultations, for example. Parents should also be represented in the school decision-making process. Ensuring the active participation of parents in school is essential to ensure advantageous and supportive learning environments in general and the prevention of leakage and its timely treatment.
- Strong and well-developed mentoring system: the high quality, up-to-date guidance available at an early stage is essential as it provides to young people the information, they need to make informed educational and career choices. Assisting young people in understanding their strengths, talents, different study options and employment prospects is essential. It is important that the directions go beyond the mere provision of information and focus on the individual in



relation to their personal needs and circumstances. Guidance could be provided through interactive methods (mentoring, guidance, one-on-one instructions, job placements) and through services. Ensuring young people have access to all relevant information, advice and guidance within a single-entry point should be encouraged.





## 4. EUROPEAN PARTNERS COUNTRIES' REPORTS

### 4.1 European partners countries' reports-related to school dropout phenomenon

#### 4.1.1 An overview of the national educational systems of partners' countries

##### *Greece*

The Greek Educational System is characterized as centralized. The right of the education is a constitutional principle of the Greek State. The aim of primary and secondary education is based on the legislative reform of 1985 and the specific Law 1566/85 for “Structure and operation of Primary and Secondary Education and other provisions”, which is generally applied until now, and it focuses to the contribution of the comprehensive, harmonious and balanced development of mental and psychosomatic powers of the students, so that, regardless of gender and origin, all children have the potential to grow up into complete personalities and live creatively.

([https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2018/EPAL\\_N\\_1566\\_1985.pdf](https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2018/EPAL_N_1566_1985.pdf)).

After a number of presidential decrees and new legislation on different kind of educational issues that concern the Greek Ministry of Education in the following years (<https://edu.klimaka.gr/nomothesia/fek?start=250>), the recent Law 4692/2020 for “Upgrading the School and other provisions” regulates a wide range of issues of primary, secondary education and lifelong learning, and issues of higher education. According to the Ministry of Education and Religion, the law aims to upgrade the school and its regulations move in 3 main axes: (a) the reformation of school curricula, (b) targeted interventions to strengthen of the educational work provided in the school and (c) organizational and improvement arrangements in higher education.

Regarding the executive organization of the Greek education system, the central administrative body in charge for the entire education system across all fields, agencies and levels is the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, which takes the key decisions related to long-term objectives and regulates issues as the curricula content,



staff recruitment and funding. Under the Supervision of the Minister of Education operates the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), which was founded in 2011. It is a private law entity, which ensures free access to education for all children and acts as scientific and research coordinating body. It provides constant scientific and technical support in the planning and implementation of educational policies to the Ministry of Education and its supervised bodies, for the next areas:

- Primary and secondary education.
- Education after the end of upper secondary school.
- The transition from secondary to higher education.
- Training of teachers.
- Tackling student inequalities, school drop-out and early school-leaving.
- Assessment of educational work and evaluation of school units and teachers.

Beyond the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (central level) act, also administratively, the 13 Regional Directorates of Primary and Secondary education (at regional level) and the Primary Directorates of Education and the Secondary Directorates of Education (prefecture level) and the School Units (Eurydice, 2022).

Regarding the levels into which the Greek education system is divided, we can observe the existence of three different levels: primary, secondary and tertiary, with an additional post-secondary level providing vocational training. Primary education is divided into kindergarten lasting one or two years, and primary school spanning six years (ages 6 to 12). Secondary education comprises two stages: Gymnasio (variously translated as Middle or Junior High School), a three-year school, after which students can attend Lykeion (an academically oriented high school) or Vocational training. Higher Tertiary education is provided by Universities and Polytechnics, Technological Educational Institutes and Academies which primarily cater for the military and the clergy. Undergraduate courses typically last 4 years (5 in polytechnics and some technical/art schools, and 6 in medical schools), postgraduate (MSc level) courses last from 1 to 2 years and doctorates (PhD level) from 3 to 6 years.



All levels are overseen by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious affairs. The Ministry exercises centralized control over state schools, by prescribing the curriculum, appointing staff and controlling funding. Private schools also fall under the mandate of the Ministry, which exercises supervisory control over them. All levels of education are catered for by both private and public schools.

State-run schools and universities do not charge tuition fees and textbooks are provided free to all students. There are also a number of private tutorial schools, colleges and universities operating alongside the state education and providing supplementary tuition. These parallel schools provide foreign language tuition, supplementary lessons for weak students as well as exam preparation courses for the competitive exams in national level. Most of the students typically attend such classes (and examinations) at the tutor's schools in the afternoon and evening in addition to their normal schooling.

### *Italy*

The Italian school system is organized on the basis of the principles of subsidiarity and the autonomy of the educational institutions. The State Government has exclusive legislative competence for the “general rules on education” and for the determination of the essential levels of benefits to be guaranteed throughout the national territory.

The State Government also defines the fundamental principles to be respected by the Regions in the scope of their specific competences. The Regions have shared legislative powers in the field of education and exclusive powers in the field of vocational education and training. State educational institutions have didactic, organizational and research, experimentation and development autonomy.

The educational system is organized as follows:

- (A) Integrated system age zero-six years, not mandatory, of a total duration of 6 years, articulated in:
- education services for children aged from three to thirty-six months, managed directly by local authorities, or by other public bodies or by private individuals through the conclusion of agreements.



- kindergarten schools for children aged from three to six, which can be managed directly by the State Government and by local authorities, or by other public bodies or by private individuals through the conclusion of conventions.

(B) First cycle of education, compulsory, with a total duration of 8 years, articulated in:

- five-year primary school, for pupils from 6 to 11 years;
- lower secondary school, lasting three years, for pupils from 11 to 14 years.

(C) Second cycle of education divided into two types of paths:

- upper secondary school, lasting five years, for students aged 14 to 19 who have successfully completed the first cycle of education. The schools offer several paths: technical institutes, professional institutes, arts high schools, classical high schools, secondary schools focusing on humanities, Foreign Language High Schools, scientific high schools;
- three-year and four-year vocational education and training courses (IeFP) of regional competence, for students aged 14 to 19 who have successfully completed the first cycle of education.

In Emilia-Romagna, students in possession of the final qualification of the first cycle of education oriented towards the continuation of studies in the vocational education and training system (IeFP) must enroll in the first year of a vocational institute which, in their autonomy, forms part of the regional system of vocational education and training. At the Professional Institutes it is therefore possible to attend a first unitary year, strongly oriented to and focused on the preparation for the professionalizing path to be continued:

- at the same institute up to the qualification (3rd year) or until the five-year diploma of vocational education,
- in a vocational training body accredited to the IeFP system. In this case, once the qualification has been obtained, the student can return to school, after evaluation and recognition of the three-year course followed, to continue until the five-year diploma with the State Examination or continue to train by choosing among the opportunities of the regional training system (four-year professional diploma and access to the Polytechnic Network) or access to the world of work.



- (D) CPIA (Provincial Centers for Adult Education): they are public schools aimed at adults and young adults who are at least 16 years old and who have obtained the final qualification of the first cycle of education.
- (E) Higher education offered by Universities, Higher Education in Art, Music and Dance (AFAM) and Higher Technical Institutes (ITS) with different types of courses:
- tertiary education courses offered by universities
  - tertiary education courses offered by the institutions of AFAM (Higher Education in Art, Music and Dance)
  - professional tertiary training courses offered by ITS (Higher Technical Institutes).

Compulsory education lasts 10 years, from 6 to 16 years of age, and includes the eight years of the first cycle of education and the first two years of the second cycle (Law 296 of 2006), which can be attended in an upper secondary school — state — or in a regional vocational education and training center.

In addition, for all young people the right/duty of education and training applies for at least 12 years or, in any case, until the attainment of a three-year professional qualification by the 18th year of age according to the Law No 53/2003. The professional qualification must be obtained at a State professional institute.

Compulsory education can be carried out in state schools and private accredited schools (Law 62 of 2000), which constitute the public education system, but can also be completed in non-accredited private schools (Law 27 of 2006) or through family education. In the latter two cases, however, the fulfilment of the education obligation must be subject to several conditions, such as the carrying out of qualifying examination.

Parents of pupils, or those who have the parental responsibility, are responsible for the fulfilment of the obligation to educate children, while the supervision of the fulfilment of the obligation is provided by the municipalities where pupils live and school leaders of the schools in which the pupils are enrolled.



At the end of the compulsory education period, usually expected at the end of the second year of the upper secondary school, in case the student does not continue his studies, a certification of the acquired skills is issued (Ministerial Decree 139, 2007).

### *Netherlands*

The Dutch Educational System can be characterized on the one hand highly centralized and on the other hand as highly de-centralized. The overall responsibility for the education system lies with the State, and specifically the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and the State Secretary (junior minister) for Education, Culture and Science.

The guiding principle in educational governance is described in the article 23 of the Constitution and it states the following:

- Education shall be the constant concern of the Government.
- All persons shall be free to provide education, without prejudice to the authorities' right of supervision.
- People have the right to found schools and to provide teaching based on religious, ideological or educational beliefs. As a result, there are both publicly run and privately-run schools in the Netherlands.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science lays down statutory requirements for early childhood education, primary and secondary education and secondary vocational education, and has overall control of adult general secondary education (VAVO). It sets, also, the framework (in law and other rules) in which individual schools should perform.

The government lays down the framework within which higher education institutions (higher professional education and universities) have to operate, but it is the responsibility of the competent authority of each institution to expand on the government framework in the teaching and examination regulations. Therefore, there is no national curriculum, but there are attainment targets in general education.



The provincial authorities' role in education is limited to supervisory and legal tasks. The administration and management of schools in primary and secondary education and schools for secondary vocational education is locally organised. The schoolboard is responsible for the school and for the quality of education, including meeting the attainment targets.

The Inspectorate of Education oversees a) the quality of education, b) the adherence to educational laws and c) the proper spending of funds (legitimacy and functionality). Also, the Inspectorate uses a system of risk-analysis to decide which schools should be inspected and which schools may be trusted to deliver good quality education. In addition, the Inspectorate monitors the (financial) health of boards in the holes and monitors the (accreditation) system of higher education.

Regarding the different educational stages the Dutch Educational System can be divided into the next:

- Childcare/ early childhood education (ISCED 0)
- Primary education (ISCED 1)
- Secondary education (ISCED 2 and 3)
- Special education and Practical Training (ISCED 2)
- Vocational education (ISCED 2 and 3)
- Adult Education
- Higher education (ISCED 6/7/8)

The Key features of the Dutch Education System are the next:

- 8 years of primary education (age 4 – 12)
- compulsory education: starts age 5, ends age 18
- selection at age 12
- highly diversified lower secondary education
- two out of six streams lead to higher education
- four out of six streams lead to upper vocational education
- several routes through system



In conclusion, young Dutch people between 5 and 18 years have to follow education. Until they have a basic qualification or turn 18 years old. For pupils between 5 and 16 years the Compulsory Education Act applies. In the Netherlands, pupils must attend school from 5 to 16 years old. However, in fact, nearly all children attend primary school from the age of four.

### *Poland*

The Polish education system combines elements of centralization and decentralization in the administration of educational institutions. The Polish educational system is based on a law, included in the Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland, which was prepared by the Polish Government (Ministry of National Education) in 2017. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, every person who resides on Polish territory has the right to education. All matters of education in Poland are managed by the Ministry of Vocational Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

According to Polish law there are two concepts of the obligation to be educated: compulsory schooling and compulsory education. Compulsory schooling begins at grade 0 and ends with the completion of 8 years of elementary school<sup>1</sup>. From the other hand compulsory education ends when a student reaches the age of 18.

The different stages of education in Poland can be described as follows:

- Elementary school - Children aged 6/7 until age 14.
- Secondary school
- Tertiary schools

Based on the students' obtained results after completing elementary school, and according to their interests, students can choose a general high school (4 years), a technical high school (5 years) or a three-year trade school (vocational school). High schools are designed to prepare students for further education at universities, while technical and trade schools are aimed at acquiring professional qualifications. Finally, the

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<sup>1</sup> Until the end of the 2016/2017 school year, elementary school consisted of 6 years, but this system was changed and students must now complete 8 primary grades.





tertiary schools are not part of the education structure in Poland, and the educational program is carried out by academic and vocational schools. In higher education there is also the domination of private education, and the position of a teacher is regulated by the Teacher's Charter. At each stage of education, examinations are held to test the acquired knowledge and skills of students.

### ***Romania***

The pre-university education system in Romania is open. Pre-university education is an integral part of the national education constituted as a system, bringing together state, private and confessional, authorized or accredited educational units. It is organized by levels, forms of education, streams and profiles, ensuring the necessary conditions for the acquisition of key competences and for progressive professionalization. Students in pre-university education can transfer from one school unit to another, from one class to another, from one profile to another and from one stream to another, under the conditions established by the methodology developed by the Ministry of Education. The educational ideal of the Romanian school consists in the free, integral and harmonious development of human individuality, in the formation of autonomous and creative personality.

The national education system includes the following levels:

- Early education (0—6 years). This stage is divided to two sub-stages the “before preschool level (0—3 years) and the preschool education (3—6 years), Early childhood education-before school level can take place in nurseries, kindergartens and daycare centers, whether state-owned or private, according to the same educational content and the same national standards. Preschool education takes place in kindergartens or schools (state or private), which have pre-school groups as a section, following the same curriculum and respecting the same national standards. Early education is free in public institutions.
- Primary education (ISCED 1), which includes the preparatory grade and the grades 1-4.



- Secondary education. The secondary education is divided to: a) Secondary lower education or gymnasium (ISCED 2), which includes grades 5—8. The access to the higher level is achieved by a national evaluation examination and distribution in upper secondary education units, b) to The secondary superior education (ISCED 3) which can be: a) high school education, which includes the high school grades 9-12/13, with the following pathways: theoretical, aptitude-based (vocational) and technological, b) a minimum 3-year professional education. The graduates of the professional education promoting the certification examination of the professional qualification may attend the high school education courses.
- Tertiary non-university education (ISCED 4) includes the post-secondary education.
- The professional and technical education, which is composed of a) professional education, b) technical education and c) post-secondary education.
- The higher education (ISCED 5-8), which is organized in universities, study academies, institutes, higher studies schools, referred to as higher education institutions or universities, temporarily authorized or certified. The high school graduates with high school diploma can enrol in the higher education. The admission conditions are different from one institution to another. The structure of the higher education reflects the principles of the Bologna process and includes Bachelor studies, Master studies and PhD studies.
- Adult education includes training programs at all qualification levels, organized in the public or private sector. At public level, the Institute of Education Sciences provides training courses by which it promotes education reforms. The Teaching-Staff Resource Center offers professional development courses regarding the system of professional and transversal skills necessary to the teacher and to the national and European policies and strategies in the education field.”

The compulsory general education for Romania includes the attendance of primary education, lower education and 2 years of upper secondary education.



The supportive Structures within the National Ministry of Education, which share the relative responsibilities are the next:

- General Directorate of Early Education, Primary and Secondary Education
- General Directorate of Higher Secondary Education and Permanent Education
- Minorities Directorate (Source: [www.edu.ro/descriere](http://www.edu.ro/descriere) ).

Educational pluralism is one of the attributes of pre-university education. In Romania, there are public or private schools operating in an alternative educational system (Step by Step, Waldorf, Freinet, Montessori, etc.) that complement the classical education system, opening new perspectives for didactic and pedagogical approaches to learning.

Schooling of pre-university students takes place mainly in the official language of the state - Romanian, but also in the mother tongue of students belonging to national minorities, in the case of large ethnic communities, or in languages of international circulation (usually, in the case of private schools of the type international). During their schooling in pre-university education, except for post-secondary education, children are beneficiaries of the state allowance for children, according to the law. The state also ensures, through national Milk and Corn programs, the allocation of basic foods to all children in primary and secondary education.

Education for excellence, whose beneficiaries are students and young people capable of high performance, is also an important attribute of Romanian pre-university education. The state supports this type of education through specific courses, through scientific events and through a competitive complex of national and international scope. “Stages of the Education System Source: Eurydice 2021/22

### *Spain*

The educational system in Catalonia is regulated by state laws, the Organic Law of Education (LOE) of 2006 and the Organic Law of Modification of the LOE (LOMLOE) of 2020 which introduces some changes compared to the previous one and developed by the Education Law of Catalonia (LEC) of 2009.



The Education Law of Catalonia (LEC) establishes the foundations of the Catalan education system. With the application of the law, Catalonia exercises its powers of self-government in matters of education and places in the hands of citizens a law of general scope that has the vocation to allow successive concretions adapted to the changing needs of the educational system, in accordance with the will of the country expressed periodically in the rules that govern our democratic political system.

The educational system in Catalonia establishes compulsory schooling for all students up to the age of 16 and is organized by educational stages, courses and levels to ensure the transition between them and within each one. They are structured as follows:

- Childhood education (0-3 and 3-6 y.o.)
- Primary Education (6-12 y.o.)
- Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) (12-16 y.o.).
- High school. Vocational Training (VET).
- University education. Special regime education.

The priority objectives of the Catalan education system are school success and educational excellence, with the development of the abilities of all students as a fundamental principle of equity and guarantee, at the same time, of social cohesion. Generalitat de Catalunya (2022); Educaweb (2022).



#### 4.1.2 Definitions and Statistics of Drop-out and early school leaving in partner's countries

Despite the wide acceptance of the importance of Early School Leaving or school or student dropout, there is no consensus in the way it is conceptualized and defined by the institutions, scientists and researchers dealing with the issue at a global level. In the international literature one can find alternative terms to describe related phenomena of "Early School Leaving".

Greece uses the standard Eurostat definition, alongside the national definition, which covers among other things what it considers basic/compulsory education (e.g. the end of lower secondary education in Greece) and includes young people who have not completed, at most, the lower cycle of secondary education, are aged 18-24 and are not in an education or training structure.

In Italy, "school drop-out" is defined as the definitive exit of a student from his/her educational path before fulfilling the obligation of education. It is distinguished from "school dispersion", which is instead a series of processes that lead to slowing down, discomfort or interruptions during a school process and that can cause definitive drop-out.

In Netherlands a school dropout is a young person who is between 12 and 23 years old, does not come from practical education or secondary special education, does not have a basic qualification (a diploma at a minimum of VET 2, HAVO or VWO level (secondary education)) and he is not enrolled in a school.

In official documents in Poland, early school dropouts are those who do not continue their education and/or training after completing lower secondary school, i.e., those who left school without completing compulsory education.

In Romania, the Ministry of Education uses two definitions of school dropout. The Regulation on the Organization and Operation of Pre-University Education Units (ROFUIP) presented by the Ministry of Education states that "the student who does not attend the day courses of a class in compulsory education, exceeding by more than two



years the age of the respective class, are in the situation of school dropout." The second definition used by the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Statistics is the school dropout rate calculated as the difference between the number of students enrolled at the beginning of the school year and the number recorded at the end of the same school year and expressed as a percentage of the number of students enrolled at the beginning of the school year.

In addition to the above terms at the European level, the term Neets (Young people not in education, employment or training) is used. The term refers to young people aged 15-24 (according to the OECD 15-29) who are absent from education, training and employment, i.e., absent from any major institutional care of the Social State (Dakraki et al., 2013).

According to the most recent research data in the above countries, the general picture of school leakage and early school leaving can be described as follows:

In Italy early school leavers from education and training (ELET) are quantified with an index of early school leaving. This indicator provides information about young people between the ages of 18 and 24 who have completed the compulsory school, obtaining the lower secondary school diploma, but who are not included in any higher-level training course. It has also become one of the benchmarks of the Europe 2020 Strategy, with a target set at 10 %, then reduced to 9 % to be reached by 2030 (Autorità garante per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza, 2022). The potential indicators and/or risk factors for early school leaving that occur daily in schools are:

- low school attendance in the period of primary and secondary school
- inadequate behavior, poor responsibility and respect for the main rules of civil coexistence
- unsatisfactory school results
- repetition of the school year
- poor motivation to study
- economic and social unease



- inadequate choice of school after the lower secondary school diploma emotional fragility

“Other causes, not to be underestimated, are to be attributed to individual motivations that can push towards early leaving of studies and, among these, a considerable burden is attributed to anxiety disorders. These students are not uninterested in culture and education that, on the contrary, try to complete as self-taught or by enrolling in the CPIA (Provincial Centers for Adult Education), but they simply do not manage to endure the high levels of stress related to the school environment.” (Autorità garante per l’infanzia e l’adolescenza 2022, p.8).

Early school leavers (ESL) directly affect NEETs (Not in education, employment or training), a phenomenon that in our country has among the highest percentages in the European Union.

In Italy there is also the so-called “implicit dispersion”: students who attend school, but learn too little, incompletely and irregularly. They are young people who do not converge in the numbers of the main statistics on explicit early school leaving, but even when they manage to obtain a degree of study, they are faced with adult life without having acquired the minimum necessary skills. These pupils are not even classified as ESL and it is therefore difficult to implement specific support actions for them.

Since 2019, INVALSI (the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Educational and Training System) has provided data concerning students who finish school without having acquired the basic skills. It is estimated that the total dropout, therefore both implicit and explicit, exceeds 20 % at national level and that 14.4 % of pupils are out of the third grade with inadequate levels of competence in mathematics, Italian and English. (Ricci, 2019)

In Italy ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics) and INVALSI (the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System) are the main research institutes on the subject. As shown by INVALSI (in <https://www.invalsiopen.it/cause-dispersione-scolastica/del-03/04/20>) "among the different causes, the studies highlight three classes of factors:



- members — socio-economic and cultural capital of the family of origin, gender and migration background
- context — type and characteristics of the school, teacher preparation and teacher-student relationship, influence of the peer group
- individual — predisposition to study, attitudes”.

ISTAT publishes data on dispersion each year. The data on annual school drop-out by institute are published in the Self-Assessment Report (RAV) by each school institution, inserted in the dedicated space within the portal of the Ministry of Education Scuola in Chiaro on [cercalatuascuola.istruzione.it](http://cercalatuascuola.istruzione.it). The ISTAT report of 8 October 2021 highlights that "In Italy, in 2020 the share of young people who left school early was 13.1 %, for a total of about 543 thousand young people, a slight decrease compared to the previous year. Although Italy has made significant progress on early school leaving, ELET share remains among the highest in the EU." (ISTAT, 2021, p.6)

In Italy, early school leaving from education and training (ELET) in 2018 was 14.5 % (Europe 10.6 %). In Emilia Romagna the same figure is 9.3 %, while in the Province of Ferrara it is 11.1 %. The Inner Area of Basso Ferrarese has a value of 17.7 %. However, the long COVID 19 pandemic seems to have worsened the phenomenon of school drop-out. In Italy in 2020, 2 million and 116 thousand young people do not work and do not study, in fact they are NEET, so much so that the ISTAT (Italian Institute of Statistics), in 2019 finds that 23.4 % of Italian boys aged 15 to 29 are a NEET, twice the European average. There is no up-to-date data on NEETs in the Inner Area of Basso Ferrarese.

In Netherlands, young people leave school too early for various reasons. Often it is a combination of causes that contribute to the school dropout, such as: a wrong choice of study; would rather make money than go to school; personal and mental problems; not the same expectations about the education between school and the pupil or student. Young people who start working without a basic qualification have a greater chance of losing their job than an employee with a diploma. And they more often have flexible jobs, which means that they also have little income as adults. In the 2020/2021 school year, there were 24,385 early school leavers.





In Poland, the available recent analyses show that at the local level, school dropouts are more likely to be boys than girls, as well as students with special educational needs. These are usually students who have had a complicated educational path and also problems with social interactions.

In Romania the education system faces numerous difficulties related to quality and equity. They limit Romania's ability to build a modern, knowledge-based economy, as well as its ability to facilitate social mobility. Romania did not reach the targets assumed within the Europe 2020 strategy for early school leaving (15.6% in 2020 vs. 11.3% assumed target). While the early dropout rate a schooling in large cities is below the European Union average and within the national target for 2020 of 11.3%, the early school leaving rate in rural and small urban areas is considerably higher - 26%, registering an upward trend.

The causes of school dropout are diverse and countless, their origin can be economic or social. We are specifically talking about the student's maladaptation to the learning activity carried out in the school environment, but also by the school's lack of adaptation to internal factors: biological, psychological and external: economic, cultural.

In Catalonia, Spain school dropout has a high level, the 14.8% approximately, as show the information of the Educational Department of the Regional Government (Generalitat).



European Union indicators → Demography · Society → Education

### Early leavers from education and training. By sex

2021 ▾

Time series [Download](#)

Early leavers from education and training. By sex  
 2021

	Catalonia	Spain	European Union-27
Men	19.4 <sup>(b)</sup>	16.7 <sup>(b)</sup>	11.4
Women	9.9 <sup>(b)</sup>	9.7 <sup>(b)</sup>	7.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.8 <sup>(b)</sup></b>	<b>13.3 <sup>(b)</sup></b>	<b>9.7</b>

Units: Percentage.

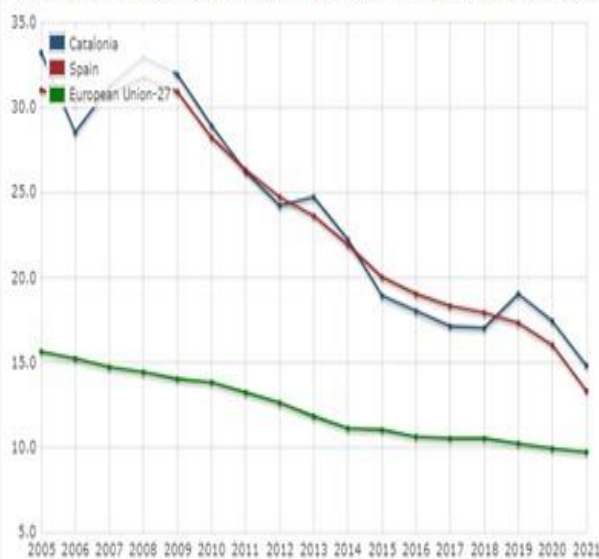
Source Catalonia: IDESCAT, based on the INE's Active Population Survey. Source Spain and European Union: Eurostat.

(b) Break in time series.

Indicator 04.10 from the [EU Sustainable Development Goals](#)

1/2

Early leavers from education and training. Catalonia, Spain and European Union-27. 2005-2021



Source Catalonia: IDESCAT, based on the INE's Active Population Survey. Source Spain and European Union: Eurostat.

Last update: February 18, 2022. Revised series on June 15, 2022.

Statistics EPA

Methodological note

Availability: rahlas: T+1

Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya. IDESCAT (2022)



Early school leaving (18-24 years), Percentage of the population aged between 18 and 24 who have completed at least the first stage of secondary education in relation to the total population of the same age group.

## Total

Early leavers from education and training: Age group (18-24)

Any	Espanya		Unió Europea*
	Catalunya	Espanya	
2021	14,8	13,3	9,7
2020	17,4	16,0	9,9
2019	19,0	17,3	10,3
2018	17,0	17,9	10,5
2017	17,0	18,3	10,6
2016	18,0	19,0	10,7
2015	18,9	20,0	11,0
2014	22,2	(b) 21,9	(b) 11,2
2013	24,7	23,6	11,9
2012	24,2	24,7	12,7
2011	26,2	26,3	13,4
2010	28,9	28,2	13,9
2009	31,9	30,9	14,2
2008	32,9	31,7	14,7
2007	31,2	30,8	14,9
2006	28,5	(b) 30,3	(b) 15,3
2005	(b) 33,2	(b) 31,0	15,7
2004	34,1	32,2	16,0
2003	34,3	(b) 31,7	(b) 16,4
2002	31,3	30,9	17,0
2001	30,3	29,7	-

\* A partir del 2020 les dades de la UE corresponen a 27 estats membres.  
 (b) Ruptura de sèrie; (p) Provisional; (-) Dada no disponible;  
 Dades en percentatge  
 Nota: Objectiu UE-28: 10%; objectiu Espanya: 15%.

Abandonament prematur dels estudis. Total

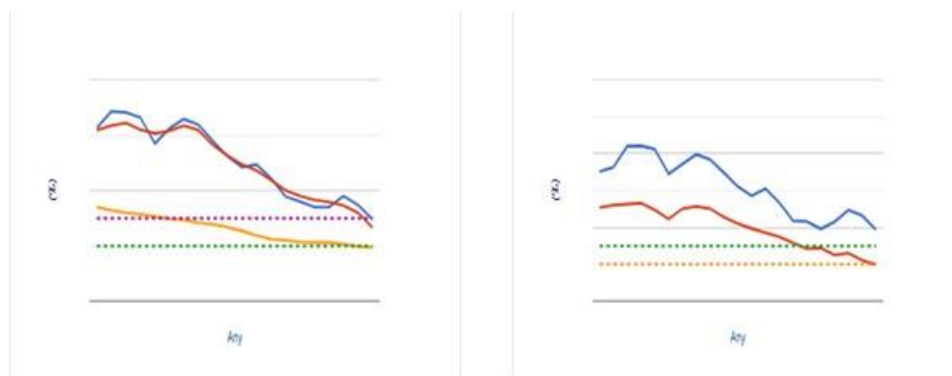
## Per sexe

Early leavers from education and training by sex: Age group (18-24)

Any	Catalunya		Espanya		Unió Europea*	
	Homes	Dones	Homes	Dones	Homes	Dones
2021	19,4	9,9	16,7	9,7	11,4	7,9
2020	23,2	11,1	20,2	11,6	11,8	8,0
2019	24,7	13,0	21,4	13,0	-	-
2018	21,5	12,5	21,7	14,0	12,2	8,9
2017	19,6	14,4	21,8	14,5	12,1	8,9
2016	21,6	14,2	22,7	15,1	12,2	9,2
2015	21,8	15,8	24,0	15,8	12,4	9,5
2014	(b) 26,7	(b) 17,5	(b) 25,6	18,1	(b) 12,8	(b) 9,6
2013	30,5	18,6	27,2	19,8	13,6	10,2
2012	28,5	19,7	28,9	20,5	14,5	10,9
2011	31,1	21,1	31,0	21,5	15,3	11,5
2010	34,8	22,8	33,6	22,6	15,8	11,9
2009	38,4	25,1	37,4	24,1	16,1	12,3
2008	39,8	25,7	38,0	25,1	16,6	12,7
2007	37,2	25,1	36,6	24,7	16,9	12,8
2006	(b) 34,5	(b) 22,3	(b) 36,7	23,6	(b) 17,4	(b) 13,2
2005	(b) 41,2	(b) 24,7	(b) 37,0	24,7	17,7	13,7
2004	41,1	26,6	39,0	25,0	18,3	13,8
2003	(b) 42,0	(b) 26,3	(b) 38,4	(b) 24,8	(b) 18,5	(b) 14,3
2002	36,3	26,0	37,2	24,3	19,0	14,9
2001	35,1	25,4	36,0	23,1	-	-

\* A partir del 2020 les dades de la UE corresponen a 27 estats membres.  
 (b) Ruptura de sèrie; (p) Provisional; (-) Dada no disponible;  
 Dades en percentatge  
 Nota: Objectiu UE-28: 10%; objectiu Espanya: 15%.

Abandonament prematur dels estudis per sexe. Catalunya



The statistical indicator is calculated as the ratio between the number of young people who have left school prematurely and the total population of the same age group from the Labor Force Survey. The Surveys are carried out quarterly, the indicator is obtained from the annual averages of the quarterly data. For Catalonia, the simple moving average of the last four quarters is calculated. The highest level of education or training they have achieved corresponds to codes 0, 1 or 2 (less than primary, primary and first stage of secondary education) of the CINE-2011 classification (ISCED). They have declared that they have not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the interview (Generalitat de Catalunya. Abandonament prematur , 2022).



## 4.2 National/regional framework of supportive measures for prevention and response to school dropout

To address the causes of school dropout, the need for the adoption of an integrated strategy has been highlighted by the Council of the Ministers of Education of the European Union, since 2011. According to relative recommendation, *"comprehensive strategies to tackle early school leaving include a mix of policies, cooperation between different policy sectors and the integration of measures that contribute to the reduction of early school leaving in all relevant areas affecting children and young adults. In addition to educational policies that promote high-quality school systems, these measures include mainly social and political support services, policies related to employment, youth, family, and integration. Horizontal cooperation between different levels of government is equally important. Strategies should include elements of prevention, intervention, and compensation. Member States should choose the details of their strategies to match their own the particular conditions and general contexts"*.

The Council Recommendation therefore suggests that the comprehensive measures to tackle early school leaving should include three types of policies:

- Prevention policies, which aim to address the difficulties that can ultimately lead to early school leaving.
- Intervention Policies, which aim to combat any difficulties faced by students, by improving the quality of education and training and providing personalized support.
- Compensatory policies, which aim to create new qualification opportunities for those who have left education and training early (European Commission/EACEA/Eyrydice/Cedefop, 2014).



According to international bibliography, the supportive measures for the prevention and response to school dropout phenomenon focus mainly in the organizational, administrative and educational support and guidance, which can be, applied in the general framework of the educational system of the different partners' countries but also in school unity or personal level.

### *Greece*

In prevention measures nationally in Greece, as in most European countries, the importance of school and family cooperation plays an important role in order to deal with early school leaving.

- One of the school's obligations is to properly inform parents about their children's progress, as well as the events and programs it organizes. This notification can be made by telephone or even through written communication.
- Also, the active participation of parents in school activities is supported, especially in primary education. Parents can volunteer at school events or programs.
- Active involvement of parents in children's homework. Parents are informed about how to help their children with school studies.
- Involvement of parents in decision-making. Parents are given the opportunity through their representation to take part in school councils and to have an opinion on key educational issues.
- Collaboration with local community agencies.

Regarding the intervention measures, at the national level, it is recommended to maintain a positive school climate, to create a good relationship between teacher and student, to upgrade the educational process with new ways and methods of teaching, the participation of the local self-government bodies in school life, the implementation of professional orientation and the connection of the school with local businesses.



Towards the above direction, measures are taken at national and regional level, such as: a) the support of primary and secondary schools by the coordinators or school counselors, the mentors and the class coordinators, b) the strengthening of the professional development of the teachers through trainings organized by the IEP on new methods and ways of teaching, such as training in new technologies, differentiated teaching and skills workshops, c) strengthening Vocational Schools with an additional year of study, the so-called Apprenticeship, where students are connected with local businesses and the labor market and d) the establishment and strengthening of the implementation of National and European Research Programs in Primary and Secondary Education schools.

As for the compensation measures, we can refer to the next:

In Greece, according to the current regulation (Government Gazette 1861/2014) there are Second Chance Schools (S.D.E.), which are Adult Education schools, which aim at the overall development of the students and the full participation of the latter in the economic, social and cultural development, as well as in their more effective participation in the workplace. The contribution of S.D.E in dealing with early school leaving is decisive.

Given that Greece is a main European country of refugee transition or settlement, refugee reception, care and education structures have been established - organized - with a special concern for refugee children. Structures staffed by teachers, established, and operated to support the education of refugee children are the following:

- Reception Classes (T.Y.) and Tutorial Departments (F.T.) (Y.A. F10/20/C1/7-9-99)
- Educational Priority Zones (Z.E.P.) (Law 3879 /2010, Article 26, par. 1a and 1b)
- the Refugee Education Reception Centres (D.Y.E.P.) (Article 38 of Law 4415/2016, A' 159)
- the Interdisciplinary Educational Evaluation and Support Committees (E.D.E.A.Y.) (Article 39 par. 4 of Law 4115 /2013)



- the School Educational Support Networks (S.D.E.Y.) (Law 3699/2008FEK199t.A').

-in the same context of supporting the education and the school and social integration of refugee children, the institution of SEPs was created (Article 77 - Law 4547/2018).

There are also Regional various programs and scientific projects that are implemented, such as the Archimedes project in S.D.E. Thessaloniki, which aim, through the search for alternative ways of teaching approach, to reconnect the trainees with the education systems.

### *Italy*

In Italy, at national level, there are different actors and roles to combat early school leaving: parents or guardians, school leaders, municipalities of residence of young people, provinces, teachers.

The School Headmasters are those who have the role of overseeing the compulsory education of pupils, sending lists of pupils to the municipalities and checking their attendance during the school year. In case of persistence of absences (20 consecutive days), the same School Headmasters shall inform the municipal authorities for the activation of the warning procedures. School leaders are also invited to promote the reduction of early school leaving, undertaking every useful initiative also with the local institutions.

The municipal authorities responsible for supervision, once they have found that the obligation to school has not been fulfilled, shall advise those responsible, inviting them to comply with the law. The social assistance centers may be informed of this warning in order to identify any initiatives to provide appropriate measures to facilitate or implement the favorable conditions for the attendance of compulsory schooling. In Italy, except for specific reasons, absences for more than 25 % of the total annual lesson hours invalidate the school year and is therefore a first sign of early school leaving.

At regional level, in order to combat early school leaving, the Emilia-Romagna Region, with Article 68 of Law No 144/1999 and subsequent implementing regulations,





had activated the Regional Register of Students (A.R.S.). It was a database able to collect the most significant data on students in the age groups of the fulfilment of the right/duty to education and training and which also made it possible to identify and monitor pupils at risk of early school leaving and training and offer specific orientation activities and training opportunities. Since 12 March 2018, the functions of the Regional Register of Students have been acquired by SIDI (Sistema Informativo Dell'Istruzione), a national system that collects data to monitor the educational and training path of students.

Furthermore, “Inner Areas” have been identified, i.e. areas that, although rich in environmental and cultural resources, are disadvantaged because they are particularly distant from the centers of supply of essential services (health, mobility and education). The “National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI)” is a policy for the development of territorial cohesion activated by the Italian Government in 2013, which aims to combat the depopulation of areas on the borders through the improvement of the livability conditions of these territories. It stands out from past policies of this nature because it focuses its action on citizenship rights, with the aim of closing the civil gaps and strengthening the aggregate opportunities of people living in marginalized territories (Garrosio, 2019).

In 2017 the protocol between the Emilia-Romagna Region and the Inner Area of Basso Ferrarese (AIBF) was approved. The municipalities belonging to the Inner Area are divided between those of the first and the second level. First level municipalities: Goro, Mesola, Codigoro, Tresignana, Riva del Po, Jolanda di Savoia, Copparo. Second level municipalities: Fiscaglia, Lagosanto, Ro, Comacchio. The projects — in the fields of health, education and mobility, as well as territorial development — submitted to the Region and the Technical Committee Internal Areas received resources equal to EUR 3.7 million from the national level and a funding of about 8 million euros from the Emilia-Romagna Region, conveyed through calls financed by European funds. The end of the work process led to the definition of the National Strategy for Inner Areas, Emilia-Romagna Region, Basso Ferrarese Area, “Fare Ponti”, December 2018.



Through the National Strategy for Internal Areas (SNAI), the Emilia-Romagna Region finances interventions aimed at:

- strengthening the school and extracurricular network;
- establish an Educational Community Pact;
- promote sustainable and quality employment with training courses aimed at acquiring a professional qualification;
- train people to undertake business activities;
- reorganize local public transport;
- improve the standards of the offer and enjoyment of cultural heritage;
- promote precision agriculture;
- educate digital devices;
- fight depopulation.

### *Netherlands*

The national government of Netherlands wants to achieve three goals through the approach for the reduction of school dropout and early school leaving. The first goal refers to the reduction of the amount of early school leavers to the number of 20,000 by 2024, which means 4,000 fewer than school leavers in the 2020-2021 school year. The second goal refers to guiding early school leavers back to school or to work and the third goal to helping young people in a vulnerable position make the transition to further education or find a job. This approach is applied through the next measures

#### (A). Preventing early school leaving in secondary school and senior secondary vocational education

The national government encourages secondary schools with performance tools to prevent early school leaving. For example, a secondary school receives extra money if it has fewer than a certain number of school leavers. The national government has set standards for this. Secondary schools receive approximately €17 million annually. MBO institutions themselves take measures to improve the quality of education and appropriate



supervision of students. These are in the quality agendas. MBO schools and the national government have agreed that attention will be paid to young people in a vulnerable position and equal opportunities. MBO institutions decide for themselves how they spend the money. An independent committee assesses the plan of each MBO school.

#### (B.) Regional reporting and coordination function of municipalities

Municipalities have a statutory duty to combat dropout: the Regional Reporting and Coordination Function (RMC function). The people who perform this task are called RMC consultants (advisors). The RMC consultants guide school-leavers back to school. They seek contact by, for example, visiting, calling or sending a letter. And encourage the young people to get the diploma anyway. If this is not feasible, the RMC consultants guide the young people to work or another daily activity. Such as treatment in a care program or volunteer work. The counselors also seek contact with young people who often skip school. Because truancy is sometimes a sign of dropping out of school. In addition to schools, they often work together with municipalities and care organisations. The task of the care organizations is to guide young people with personal and mental problems. In this way they help to prevent ESL. Municipalities receive almost €37 million annually to perform the RMC function.

#### (C3). Regional cooperation schools and municipalities

The regional plan states which measure schools and municipalities will jointly implement to combat early school leaving. The most common measures are the extra guidance at schools for young people who need more support. For example, by teachers, social workers or youth workers, who enter into discussions with the young people to give advice.

- Switching coaches offer help to young people who find it difficult to make a good choice of study.



- Helping young people after school dropout. For example, with research into a new education or work. Or with personal problems. Regions provide training to young people in the field of self-knowledge, behavior and social experience.
- Dealing with school absenteeism. If a young person often calls in absent or sick, there may be more going on.
- Schools, municipalities, social workers and youth doctors work together to allow young people to go back to school as much as possible.

The national government makes €49.6 million available annually for the regional ESL programme. Municipalities will receive € 19.2 million from this and MBO schools € 30.4 million. Municipalities and schools draw up a joint plan for how this money is spent. The plans currently run from 2021 to 2024. Secondary schools and MBO schools prevent early school leaving themselves as much as possible. Municipalities approach young people if they do leave school too early or if they are truant a lot. Schools and municipalities also work together in a regional plan with measures.

### *Poland*

Policies against early school dropout in Poland are carried out differently at different levels, i.e. national, provincial, county and municipal levels. The main differences at these levels are due to the tasks that are assigned to entities at different organizational levels, as well as local conditions.

The Polish educational system considers changes in professional examinations, as well as the introduction of rapid forms of courses for adults to supplement their education and acquire new qualifications, which will contribute to the return to education of students who, for various reasons, could not obtain them in the normal way.

All measures are aimed at making the educational system more attractive and flexible, as well as better adapted to the requirements of the labor market. The result of these activities is expected to be a reduction in the dropout rate of young people who have



not obtained professional qualifications. Schools, in cooperation with institutions, carry out several preventive and compensatory activities to counter dropouts. Examples of preventive activities:

- Educational and vocational counseling- educational and vocational counseling classes are conducted in schools. Each student after such classes has an individual educational path plan created. In most schools, after completing elementary school, students are helped to choose a secondary school that matches their educational or vocational abilities. These classes are also aimed at a more informed choice of further educational degree.
- Teacher training- teachers receive appropriate training that prepares them to develop an educational and vocational guidance system, as well as to implement it.
- Visits by students to District Employment Offices, as well as visits by representatives of high schools and presentation of educational offerings to present the educational path that high schools can offer students.
- Equalization of educational opportunities - diagnosing the needs of students, establishing an action plan, early recognition of the student's situation and problems, providing psychological and pedagogical care to students, monitoring the situation of students. Schools in different regions conduct extracurricular activities that develop the interests of gifted students, and compensatory activities, for students who have difficulties in mastering knowledge and skills.
- Parent surveys - parents of newly enrolled students fill out questionnaires and provide information on their child's problems and difficulties. Surveys are conducted on the student's home situation and expectations of the school. As a result, schools are prepared to provide specialized classes and are ready to quickly implement measures to support students.
- Student attendance - analyzing student attendance, as well as responding to situations where students fail to meet their educational obligations. In Poland, there is an electronic school diary system, which greatly facilitates contact between teachers and parents. Any



absences are monitored on an ongoing basis, and the teacher contacts parents to ask for explanations. This measure is aimed at developing the habit of regular attendance and increasing regularity among students.

- Innovative teaching methods - by innovative teaching methods, students learn various techniques and how to plan their own work, which increases their motivation. Classes are also conducted using modern technologies (interactive whiteboards, multimedia boards, online tools, etc.).
- Educational projects - the implementation of educational projects gives students the opportunity to do work experience in different European countries, which significantly increases the attractiveness of the educational path.
- Adapted-to-work divisions - for young people who are not likely to graduate from school and continue their education. These wards provide opportunities for students to become independent through employment opportunities and break away from family problems.
- Cooperation with parents - to find optimal forms of assistance for disadvantaged students.
- Voluntary Labor Corps - these are state units that are financed from the state budget. They carry out state tasks in the field of employment and counteracting marginalization and social exclusion of youth. These units report to the Minister of Labor and Social Policy. This is an opportunity for people who want to supplement their education (primary, secondary, vocational) and also acquire professional qualifications needed in the labor market.
- Psychological and pedagogical assistance - Individual talks on strengthening self-esteem
- Expanding educational offers - qualifying vocational courses.



## ***Romania***

The National Program for the Reduction of School Dropouts (PNRAS) is part of the National Reform Project "Educated Romania" and was approved by the European Commission for funding through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan with a value of 543 million euros. The Early Warning Mechanism in Education (MATE), which is the basis of the implementation of the program, is a tool developed and piloted by the Ministry of Education with the support of the World Bank and financed by the Technical Assistance Instrument DG REFORM of the European Commission.

The Early Warning Mechanism in Education (MATE), which is the basis of the implementation of the program, is a tool developed and piloted by the Ministry of Education with the support of the World Bank and financed by the Technical Assistance Instrument DG REFORM of the European Commission. Under the PNRAS, all educational units with a high and medium risk of dropping out are eligible. The indicators capture key educational aspects and leverage a database of 4,627 lower secondary schools that have legal entity status in the current school network.

PNRAS represents the response of the Ministry of Education to the problem of early school leaving and school dropout, it is addressed to students at risk of dropping out, especially students belonging to vulnerable groups, students belonging to the Roma minority, students from rural and small urban areas, students with disabilities or requirements special educational institutions (CES), students from economically disadvantaged communities, children at risk of social exclusion due to poverty, lack of housing, single-parent families, disorganized families, students exposed to other social risks. The program is one to support the reform of the educational system, and its objectives are based on the reality and educational needs of each individual student and of all students in a school, and social components will also be found in its implementation.

According to international practices, PNRAS uses three levers to be sustainable:



- the autonomy of the school in the use of resources - the grants will be implemented directly by the educational units, in collaboration with the local community;
- responsibility for results - the targets to be achieved at the school level are set: a higher enrollment rate, a lower absenteeism rate, a higher participation rate in national exams, a higher percentage of students who manage to pass the end-of-cycle exam with at least grade 6;
- evaluation - monitoring of students detected at risk of dropping out to be supported through individual learning plans.

Thus, PNRAS is the largest program to support participation in education in the recent history of Romania and the first coherent program at the national level that aims to scale up proven effective measures at the local, individual level, in order to achieve an important country objective: increasing the degree of equity of the education system.” (Source [https://www.edu.ro/comunicat\\_presa\\_26\\_2022\\_finalizare\\_selectie\\_runda\\_1\\_PNRAS](https://www.edu.ro/comunicat_presa_26_2022_finalizare_selectie_runda_1_PNRAS)).

### *Spain*

The educational project of each educational center has to anticipate some measures to avoid the school dispersion. These measures, following the advice of the Educational Department are:

- develop educational projects for all students.
- encourage individualized tutoring.
- promote the initial assessment in order to gather information regarding the starting point of students.
- develop adjusted responses considering the educational support needs of the students.
- develop, where necessary, an individualized support plan.
- coordination between primary and secondary compulsory education.
- organize the curricular contents of the different areas around multidisciplinary





projects and close to student's reality.

- develop multilevel classroom schedules. Encourage service learning (APS).
- Improving teacher expectations regarding student chances of success.

Some measures to reduce school absenteeism, according to the Department of Education of the Generalitat, would be:

- Intercultural curriculum. The low visibility of existing cultures in the classroom on the curriculum can cause that students do not feel it as their own with the consequent detachment from the process learning.

- Methodologies. Lack of flexibility regarding the application of different methodologies in the classroom can generate repetitive dynamics that cause the student boredom, demotivation and disinterest that takes him away from the learning processes.

- Classroom management. Inefficient classroom management, which does not include homework planning, proposed, can cause students some confusion, disorientation or demotivation in the teaching-learning processes.

- Feeling of belonging. The sense of belonging to the center is a key element in linking students with the school and consequently with everything related to the educational fact and the activities that take place there develop. The opposite situation can affect both in the social relations within the group as in the learning process and can lead to absenteeism.

- Attendance tracking. The absence of a systematic procedure for the detection, monitoring and communication of lack of attendance often prevents immediate and systematic action from being taken in the face of absenteeism, and at the same time makes it difficult for teachers to act in a certain way coordinated, which can lead to a lack of coherence and predictability that leads to students to repeat absenteeism behaviors.

- Information and Communication. Lack of information to students and families about the importance of class attendance, ignorance of the measures established in the cases of absenteeism, and on the other hand, communication difficulties, both with students as with families, it can make it difficult to access information about the own



learning process (tasks, procedures, assessment, etc.) and generate some laxity in the student behavior and the monitoring of the educational process of families towards their children. Generalitat de Catalunya (2019)

In the same line of analysis, we find it interesting to highlight the considerations collected by Ferrer (2020) from the Department of Education: "in the centers we have done a good job, we must move towards personalized attention, not so rigid or academic, because otherwise there are students who drop out because there is no connection with their vital interests. Therefore, there are new forms of work, more based on skills, less academic and with a more open perspective on the curriculum. That they focus more on what they do well than on what they lack, because, if not, we sink them and they have no incentives to progress. Perhaps the young person does not have an academic vision but more manual or artistic skills, and that is why we must personalize. We need to improve in tutoring".



### 4.3 Recent data from sociological and economic analyses that address the issue of school dropout in partners' countries

#### *Greece*

The phenomenon of school dropout stems from low school performance, very frequent changes in the school environment, the hostile climate experienced and created by conflicts with classmates and teaching staff and the failure to advance to the next grade.

The term "school failure refer to the partial fulfilment by the student of the teaching or learning objectives of a particular grade level". The factors that contribute to school success or failure are as follows:

- Intrinsic and inherited cognitive abilities combined with social background.
- The absence of stimuli from a child's family environment either cultural-spiritual or social.
- Poverty, child labor, place of residence, poor nutrition, poor living conditions, poor housing and overcrowding.
- The absence of interaction within the school environment, as the teacher evaluates the student by motivating him/her through this interaction to participate in learning.

In the Greek literature it is estimated that a very low percentage of Roma attend the first grades of primary school, while a large percentage of Roma do not complete compulsory education, as they are forced to drop out of school for various reasons. In addition, Roma students have high rates of school dropout, as they lack support from their families both on a learning and social level, which is due to the low educational level of parents and the prejudices of Roma society that school provides useless knowledge to students.

According to the EU MIDIS III survey (FRA, 2016), the educational level of the Roma population in Greece is low, recording the highest percentage of Roma without formal education in all three age groups among the nine (9) EU Member States of the



survey, i.e. 42% in the 16-24 age group, 56% in the 24-44 age group and 82% in the 45+ age group. The percentage of Roma children of compulsory school age attending a school of the same educational level is 69 % (72 % of Roma boys and 66 % of Roma girls). [Abantzi Martha, 2022]

Nevertheless, the educational underachievement of Roma children compared to the general population is significant, while the percentage of young people aged 18-24 years old who have left school early is the highest among the 9 EU Member States participating in the survey, reaching 92%. Also, only 9% of Greek Roma children attend Lyceum (upper secondary education).

Regarding school dropout in Greece, a very small number of students never present themselves at primary school to enroll, who belong to vulnerable social groups, among which are groups of students of Gypsy origin. In particular, Roma quite often expresses the fear of being forced to abandon their mother tongue and culture at school, as confirmed by the literature, and that the "main purpose of the assimilation policy is to force students to acquire the basic linguistic and cultural characteristics of the members of the dominant group".

The main objective is to compensate for the cultural deficit of 'foreign' students so that they acquire the skills and competencies necessary for their equal and functional participation. Consequently, such a policy distances Roma pupils from attending school.

The factors linked to the young person's family and identified as social/family: low socio-economic status of the family, different race and ethnic origin, poor school performance of siblings, family mobility, lack of support for the young person from parents, lower educational expectations of parents, negative attitudes or indifference of parents, instability of the family environment, single parent family, finding a job, personal or social problems. "The factors related to the school and the young person's experience and identified as school-related: poor school performance, high absenteeism, discipline problems, conflicts with peers/teachers, previous poor school performance, frequent school changes, lack of interest, class repetition".

Regarding the education and literacy of Roma children, the educational disadvantage among them is evident in all countries. A 2008 study in Greece showed that 54.7% of Roma did not go to school at all, 33.4% completed only some primary school classes, 7% finished primary school, 3.4% attended some secondary school classes, 0.5% graduated from secondary school and about 1% attended some secondary school classes. 54% of parents reported that their children have never been to school, which demonstrates the social exclusion they experience in education.

The Institute for Education Policy (2015) points out that school drop-out is associated with low educational attainment, individual level, higher unemployment rates, lower wages/lower salaries, more difficult career progression and to a certain extent with higher chances of delinquency, social marginalization and hence looser social cohesion. The immediate need, therefore, is to remain in school structures for a sufficient period (or, equivalently, to avoid leaving them), in whatever way this can be defined in relation to the specificities of each society and educational system. Early drop-out or inadequate retention is linked, in the context of school life, to functional illiteracy, school failure, low achievement, etc. At a later stage, it is associated with, at least, 'functional' social exclusion and all the negative phenomena mentioned above, which concern the professional and personal level (Institute of Educational Policy, 2015).

In the case of Roma, as the European Commission states on its official website, people often find themselves in very difficult circumstances. They are marginalized in many ways. They are very often victims of racism, discrimination and social exclusion and live in extreme poverty, lacking adequate access to healthcare, education and training, housing, and employment. Illiteracy rates are high and educational attainment is extremely low, either because there are no local schools or because Roma children are not accepted in schools. In addition, Roma young people very often drop out of school early for various and complex reasons. With few or no skills and qualifications and faced with deeply entrenched prejudices, it is not surprising that Roma find it extremely difficult to find work and enjoy the social and economic benefits of employment.

The barriers to Roma students' education that lead them to drop out of school are:



- The Roma way of life as their expectations are in conflict with school. Education does not take into account the working conditions of Roma, so that parents of the children choose to educate their children themselves and the school acts as a complement to this education. Due to their nomadic nature, the Roma rely on seasonal occupations, so it is particularly important to teach their children to practice them. In addition, the school aims to integrate the Roma into the community, which they oppose since they themselves are trying to preserve their culture and avoid assimilating into the culture of most of the region. There are also many cases where teachers have a prejudicial attitude towards Roma pupils, where these differentiations make the educational process more difficult.
- The high illiteracy rates of Roma parents, especially women, make it difficult for their children to navigate the path of education.
- The conditions in which they live, since they are used to living and staying in shacks and permanent or mobile ghettos where poor living conditions prevail (shacks made of nylon or cardboard).
- The child labor observed among Roma children is a phenomenon that is a stigma for Greek culture. Following in the footsteps of their parents, Roma children are forced to work as laborer or farmers, often in miserable conditions. Some of the examples encountered on the street are cleaning windows and selling flowers at traffic lights, often exposed to bad weather and unhealthy working conditions, which have serious mental and physical consequences for the children. In addition, many parents lead their children to begging to supplement their income and thus children are forced to work to earn the family's livelihood.
- The distance of the school from the Roma camp makes the educational process difficult as many students must cross a long distance to reach the nearest school unit, where they have to pass through neighborhoods where they are subjected to critical behaviors.
- The nomadic Roma lifestyle is a major reason why children drop out of school. The main reason they move is to find work on farms and trade goods at fairs. Usually, most Roma begin their movements in February, return in April, close to the Easter period, and leave again in May, when the school year ends.

The causes of school dropout include the generally low socio-economic level of the family and the sometimes-negative perceptions of parents regarding the necessity of school, perceptions which are adopted by their children and crystallize a dismissive perception of school. The risk of dropping out of school appears to be increased in minority groups, e.g. migrants and Roma, as the former often find it difficult to invest cognitively and emotionally in learning in a new environment due to the uncertainty of staying in it, while the latter often leave school for reasons of early employment or in order to enter into a Roma marriage.

On the other hand, minorities (Roma, returnees, immigrants) due to xenophobic or derogatory stereotypes that they may espouse, parents and teachers, create additional problems for children, who due to their young age do not perceive this hostility, or perceive it in a very bad way, acquiring a negative image of the whole education system.

In Greece, during the economic crisis 2008-2012, there was a huge cut (20%) in state spending on education and a consequent cut (about 40%) in teachers' salaries (E.T.U.C.E., 2013), who had to adapt to a new school map following the merger of 1,933 and the abolition of 1,053 schools, and often had to move to farther distances and face a volatile and adversarial landscape (Daniilidou, A., 2018).

According to the EU-MIDIS II (2018) report of the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), a survey of European states with a significant number of Roma residents, including Greece, showed that around 80% of the Roma surveyed by the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency live below the poverty line in their country, one in three Roma live in a household without running water, one in three Roma children live in a household where someone has gone to bed hungry at least once in the previous month, and one in two Roma aged 6 to 24 do not go to school. This report highlights a worrying reality. In Greece, almost one in two Roma (47%) live in a household in which one member had to go to bed hungry at least once in the last month. This is particularly worrying because Greece records the highest proportion of Roma in paid employment, which does not even seem to be sufficient to cover basic needs such as food.

The poor economic situation of the Roma and the low socio-economic level also contribute to the phenomenon, often leading Roma children to child labor to meet their living needs, resulting in school being sidelined. Phenomena such as educational inequalities, early school dropout, the devaluation of school, the lack of high interest in studies, are some of the most obvious negative signs of the economic crisis, a fact that in our country is confirmed on a daily basis. Poverty increases the social exclusion of Roma. The situation for socially vulnerable groups (Roma, returnees, refugees) is even worse when they face the spectrum of poverty. Poverty is the worst form of violence and unfortunately when this situation is extended to children, many problems arise. The large migration of young people and the dominant social group in Greece with young children, who have been forced to seek work abroad in order to cope with the economic crisis and to offer their children a better future, is indicative of this. The economic situation of Greek households in 2017 presented this revealing correspondence, where many families barely manage to survive [Mavropoulou, 2019].

#### *School engagement and School environment*

Other factors associated with an increased risk of dropping out of school include school engagement and academic performance. Such factors include failing classes, low test scores, staying in the same class, poor attendance, penalties and suspensions, not completing schoolwork, and overall attitudes towards academics, such as lack of importance of school, lack of commitment, low expectations and lack of ambition (McDermott et al., 2019). For this reason, social support from teachers is critical to maintaining engagement with school which may relate to students' persistence in school, while teachers and administrators may push students out of school, by discouraging them to continue their education or through disciplinary actions (e.g., expulsion).

*Behaviors problems both in and out of school are associated with a higher likelihood of leaving school before graduation.*



These can include individual and peer involvement in gangs, drug use, and delinquent (e.g., theft, use of a weapon, vandalism), aggressive (e.g., bullying), or disruptive behaviors in school, all of which are associated with a greater risk for dropout (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000).

### *Family context*

Family factors related to dropping out of school concern both parents' involvement in their children's school life and parents' expectations around school. They also concern the events that occur within the family. Thus, parental expectations about child progress, good school performance, and graduation as well as parental involvement in children's schooling—including talking with children about school-related issues—are associated with better academic performance of the children, while less parental involvement in children's education is associated with dropping out of school (Zaff et al., 2017).

In addition, parent-child relationships and parents' awareness of their child's friends and associations influence children's engagement and participation in school. Events that occur within the family may be associated with dropping out of school, such as parental incarceration, abuse, death of a parent, moving house, and homelessness. Moving home can be associated with dropping out of school, such as moving that may involve changing schools, which has been associated with negative educational outcomes and increased risk of dropping out.

The Roma, a cultural group internationally recognized as a "Nation without a homeland" face social exclusion, poverty, racism, social marginalization, lack of basic goods and services, illiteracy, abandonment by the state, among others. The Greek Roma, as many people describe them, are Greek Orthodox, they have assimilated Greek culture, they speak the Greek language and although they maintain cultural particularities and festivals, this is not an element of separation [GOUNARIS, 2020].

Some children "inherit" the educational level of their family and become partakers and perpetrators of the family educational deficit, which usually accompanies economic deprivation, while there are cases where, although there was a low educational level in



the family, many children were not affected but instead reached the higher educational levels. Greece is an example, as the percentage of children who complete high school is very high, while an equally high percentage complete higher and higher education without being affected by the family's educational level. The conclusion that could be drawn from this is that the impact on Roma children is not only related to the educational level of the family, but by a set of factors mentioned above that are directly correlated to prevent Roma children from at least completing compulsory education (Institute of Educational Policy, 2017).

The main reasons for school dropout are "constant moving, parents' work, lack of interest from the family in the child's education, early marriages, and discrimination from peers and teachers". At the same time, other reasons, according to the same scholars, are "poor school performance, lack of motivation, lack of patience and perseverance, high number of absenteeism, lack of self-control of students, ignorance of the consequences of dropping out of school on their personality and life course, and behavioral and conduct problems".

### *Italy*

ISTAT surveys show that early school leaving in Italy is strictly dependent on the socio-economic characteristics of the family of origin. Very high rates of early school leaving are found where the educational and/or professional level of parents is low. *“Leaving school before graduation concerns 22.7 % of young people whose parents have the low secondary school degree only, 5.9 % of those with parents with upper secondary qualifications and 2.3 % of young people with graduated parents. Similarly, if parents practice an unqualified profession or do not work, school dropouts are more frequent (around 22 %) and are reduced if the profession of the father or mother is highly qualified or a office job (3 % and 9 % respectively)”* (REPORT ISTAT, 2021, p. 7)

In Italian families whose parents have a high level of education, the number of young people who have left school early is ten times lower than that of young people from families with low levels of education.

According to research carried out by the Catholic University (2017), there are social and personal factors that increase the chances of a person joining the NEET group:

- Young people with some types of disability are 40 % more likely to become NEETs than others;
- Young women are 60 % more likely to be NEETs due to a more difficult return to work after pregnancy;
- Young people with an immigration background are 70 % more likely to become NEETs than natives;
- Young people with low education are three times more likely to become NEETs than those with tertiary education;
- Living in remote areas increases the likelihood of becoming NEETs up to 1.5 times.

Educational inequalities and lack of educational opportunities reduce the likelihood that children, as adults, will be able to escape a condition of economic hardship, as low education leads to greater difficulty in entering the labor market and employment in low-skilled and low-paid jobs. *“Comparing the employment status of young ELETs with peers who have completed education and training after reaching the upper secondary level, more than half of the latter (53.6 %) are already occupied a few years after leaving school, compared with just one third of ELETs (35.4 %), stressing the undoubted advantage of having a upper secondary school diploma. Moreover, the low employment rate of ELETs does not seem to result from a low interest in entering the world of work, but from the real difficulty in finding employment; the non-participation rate, i.e. the share of unemployed among those willing to work, is significantly higher among ELETs (56.2 %) compared to graduates (38.9 %)”* (ISTAT, 2021, p. 8).

According to research carried out by the Catholic University (2017), there are economic factors that increase the chances of a person joining the NEET group:

- young people with low family income are more likely to become NEETs than those with a middle household income;

- having parents who have been unemployed increases the likelihood of becoming NEET by 17 %;
- having parents with a low level of education doubles the likelihood of becoming NEETs;
- young people whose parents have divorced are 30 % more likely to become NEETs.

### *Netherlands*

In Netherlands environmental factors that play a role in early school leaving can be family characteristics, peers' interaction, and school characteristics. Students from low socioeconomic status families are more likely to leave education without a diploma (Alexander, Entwisle & Kabbani, 2001; Traag & Van der Fields, 2008). Dutch research shows that children from families with a lower social economic status based on the job of the parents, are about 50 percent more likely to drop out of school early than children from higher socio-economic family's status. It is striking that children of parents who own their own business run the least risk of early school leaving. A possible explanation for this is that these young people may want to take over from their parents and therefore have a clear future perspective.

According to American research, the risks for young people from low-social families are greater economic status. Of these young people, 60 percent drop out prematurely, while this is the case for students from families with a high socio-economic status only accounts for 15 percent (Alexander, Entwisle & Kabbani, 2001). Research by Battin-Pearson et al. (2000) shows that poverty in the family increases the risk of to increase school leaving, even when the young person in question can keep up with school. The level of education and support of the parents also play an important role in the risk on early school leaving. With each additional year of parental education, the risk for the younger by 7 percent. Students who do not receive encouragement and support from their parents are 50 percent more likely to drop out of school than young people who do (Traag & Van der Velden, 2008). Family composition also appears to have an influence: children



from single-parent families (Alexander, Entwisle & Kabbani, 2001; Traag & Van der Velden, 2008) and children from families with four or more children are more at risk of early school leaving.

Also, children without brothers or sisters are more at risk of dropping out of school without a diploma. This difference disappears when looked at the group that does obtain a VMBO diploma and then stops, but formally does is a school-leaver (Traag & Van der Velden, 2008). As possible explanations for the fact that children from single-parent families more often leave school early gives Herweijer (2008) the tensions preceding divorce and financial difficulties in the family. Alexander, Entwisle & Kabbani (2001) have a group of children from the first grade, aged six or seven years old, followed up to five years after the expected high school graduation at about age 23. The youth are from Baltimore. This city has a very high school dropout rate: 42 percent of the students leave school without a diploma. This study shows that of the children with a teenage mother 54 percent drop out, while 38 percent of the children who do not teenage mother have the case. Also, children who experience many stressful situations within the family experiences such as divorce or moving are more at risk of early school leaving. All these separate risks often go hand in hand in the lives of the children concerned. From the kids families with a low socio-economic status, 55 percent drop out if they come from a two-parent family come and 65 percent if they come from a single-parent family. If the stress level in the If two-parent families are not too bad, 50 percent of these children will drop out of school. If there is relatively much stress within single-parent families, the percentage rises prematurely school leavers to no less than 69 percent.

In secondary education, peers are becoming increasingly important for students (Schaffer, 1996). Ellebogen and Chamberland (1997) researched the network of friends of young people with and without an increased risk of school leaving. For this, 191 students between the 14 and 16 years old completed a questionnaire twice: once at the beginning and once at the end of the school year. The research shows that young people with an increased risk are more likely to have a have school-leavers as a good friend and that they attract more school-leavers during the school year their wider network of friends.

These young people also more often have friends who work full-time working: one third compared to 7 percent in the group with no increased risk. Young people without at increased risk have more friends they know from school and are less likely to be associated with them peers rejected compared to young people at increased risk. The association with antisocial peers appears to increase the risk of early school leaving, even when the young person in question can keep up with school (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000).

The characteristics of a school also play an important role in early school leaving. For example, it appears that the risk of early school leaving is greater in schools with a relatively large number of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, even when the individual effect is the same. When a school has 10 percent fewer pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, the risk of dropping out of school decreases by 13 percent. Pupils in schools in large cities are also one and a half times more likely to be at risk of dropping out of school.

Finally, the heterogeneity of the school was examined, i.e. whether the school only offers lower forms of education or, in addition to lower forms of education, also higher forms of education. It appears that young people who attend a school that also offers higher education, 25 percent have a lower risk of dropping out of school. This may be the result of a better academic climate at the school and of dealing with students in higher forms of education (Traag & Van der Velden, 2008). According to the Education Inspectorate (2007, in Herweijer, 2008), early school leaving is significantly higher in major cities than in the rest of the country. This can partly be traced back to the composition of the school population but features of life in a large city also play a role here: risk accumulation, alternative forms of leisure and greater opportunities to escape social control.

#### *Accumulation of risk factors*

Children from disadvantaged situations often have to deal with an accumulation of the above risk factors. Junger-Tas (2002) describes the possible negative developmental trajectory of these children as follows:

#### *Start of the school career*



-insufficient school preparation

*Early years*

-early learning difficulties

-starting problem behavior

-placement with other stragglers

*Later in the school career*

-sit down

-problem behavior worsens

-reference to special education or (individual forms of)

*Secondary Vocational Education*

-skip class

-early school leaving

-crime

-psychosocial problems

-unskilled labor unemployment

-problematic living conditions

In this scheme, the emphasis is on the role of the school, but it is the interplay of causes – also within the family, the wider environment, and the child itself - which determines the outcome. When the amount of time children spend is more, there are more possibilities for institutions to positively influence risk behavior (Sherman et al., 1998, in: Junger-Tas, 2002).

A study has been made which problems of young people and their legal parents are (most strongly) associated with early school leaving. They investigated this correlation using, among other things, logistic regression analyses. Separate analyzes were carried out for young people in secondary education (excluding general grades 1-2), Secondary vocational education (MBO) level 2-4 and MBO entrance training in the 2017/2018 school year (reference date 1 October 2017). The characteristics and problems were measured over the year 2017. It was then examined whether the young people had dropped out of school a year later (on 1 October 2018). The results on the relationship



between problems and early school leaving have been combined with insights into the presence of the problems among young people. In this way the study tried to gain insight into the relationship between problems and early school leaving in a broader sense.

Early school leaving is relatively rare in secondary education (0.6 percent of the population in 2017/18). The results for secondary education show that psychosocial problems among young people themselves are both relatively common and strongly correlated with the risk of Early School leaving (ESL). Crime problems are most strongly related to early school leaving but are relatively rare among secondary school students compared to psychosocial problems. Serious health problems are also relatively common among this group and are related to the risk of ESL. Psychosocial problems in the mother are related to a limited extent with the young person's risk of dropping out of school, but are relatively common among secondary school students. The other problems are rare and/or have no connection with the risk of ESL.

Students at secondary vocational education (MBO) level 2-4 are more likely to drop out early (5.6 percent). The results show comparable results for psychosocial problems of the young person and of the mother as in secondary education. In addition to crime problems, the young person's problematic debts and frequent moving or being homeless are closely linked to early school leaving. These problems have a relatively large effect on the risk of MBO, but they do not occur very often.

The group of students with an entrance vocational education program is relatively small in comparison with the other groups studied. The estimate of the regression analyzes are therefore less precise and have wider confidence intervals. The estimates should therefore be interpreted with some caution. Early school leaving is common in this group (23.3 percent). In the case of entry-level vocational education, it also applies that psychosocial problems of the young person themselves often occur among students and are relatively strongly related to early school leaving. Crime and problematic debt problems are even more closely related to Early School Leaving (ESL) than psychosocial problems but are relatively less common. Problematic debts with the parents are also



related to the risk of ESL and are relatively common. The other problems are not statistically significantly related to the chance of ESL.

An important conclusion is that mainly psychosocial problems among young people are both (strongly) related to early school leaving and that they often occur among early schoolers. This is reflected in every subpopulation. Psychosocial problems in the mother also play an important role in secondary and vocational education levels 2-4. This problem has been measured on the basis of a number of indicators. Psychosocial problems in both the adolescents and the mother can mainly be traced back to the use of medication for psychological problems and mental health care. In addition to psychosocial problems, we find in all populations that crime problems in the young person themselves are strongly related to the chance of ESL.

Concerning other problems, it is observed that there are differences between populations. For example, health problems play a greater role in secondary education. At MBO level 2-4, problematic debts of the young person and often moving or being homeless are problems that are strongly related to the chance of ESL. Problematic debts, both with the young person themselves and with their legal parents, are more common and have a strong connection with early school leaving for students with an entry-level vocational education course.

Finally, we conclude that problems of the young people themselves are more strongly related to early school leaving than the problems of their legal parents. This applies to both secondary education and secondary vocational education. Problems of the young person themselves are not always more common than problems of legal parents.

### *Poland*

Early school leaving is closely linked to the socio-economic context, so this issue is handled in the activities that are carried out by the institutions of education, social policy, economy, as well as health.

The Economic barriers can be the material situation and financial problems that affect the purchase of schoolbooks. Students also often have problems getting help from their



parents with homework, since parents often do not have much time because they work. Economic barriers can also include a lack of understanding on the part of the teacher and peers, which causes difficulties in establishing contact with peers. In addition, students often don't have their own place to study at home, or proper clothing, and can't participate in school trips for financial reasons, which causes them to withdraw from various activities that would be opportunities to broaden their horizons and enrich their stock of experiences.

Socio-cultural factors can include low professional aspirations, which are the cause of the most often low education of parents and their aspirations, as well as too early independence. Other social factors can include psychological barriers (e.g., lack of confidence and self-confidence and low self-esteem), health problems, disabilities, pathologies in the family, inability to commute to school for geographical reasons (e.g., too far from school).

### ***Romania***

The causes of early leaving are multiple and diverse: lack of accessibility in general and reasonable adaptation in education, lack of access technologies and assistive technologies and devices in the education process, insufficiency of support services offered, lack of adapted transport, poor family awareness of to the importance of developing the potential of the child/young person with disabilities, discriminatory or negative attitudes regarding the school inclusion of children and young people with disabilities and/or special educational requirements and others.

In Romania, early school leaving is especially prevalent among certain at-risk groups, especially young people from rural communities, young people from low-income families, Roma and other minorities, and students who have repeated at least one year or who they dropped out of school. Early school leaving is a serious problem, especially in rural areas. At the secondary education level, the dropout rate was 1.5 times higher in rural schools than in urban schools. Poor students lag the more affluent, and their access to upper secondary and post-secondary education is limited. This discrepancy also



contains an important spatial factor, since a large part of the poor families come from two of the poorest regions: the north-east and the south-west of Romania. Roma students are at risk due to poor living conditions and poverty; the situation is even worse for Roma girls, partly due to cultural traditions. However, the lack of reliable statistics about the Roma in general is an important obstacle for correctly estimating the magnitude of this problem. Students with special educational needs and students from other minorities are also at special risk of early school leaving. Repetition rates, one of the most important predictors of early school leaving, are high in Romania, especially among boys and rural students in lower secondary schools.

Students in Romania leave school early for various reasons, including personal, family, school and social factors. International data on VET indicates that there is typically more than one factor that causes young people to leave school early. It is generally the result of a progressive and cumulative process of declining engagement. From the demand point of view, early school leaving can be triggered by: personal, health or emotional problems, etc. faced by young people. At the same time, early school leaving can be associated with the students' backgrounds with socioeconomic or family problems. For some young people, the opportunity cost of staying in school is too high and, in this context, they start looking for a job or other specific opportunities outside of school. Supply factors also explain the early school leaving phenomenon. Limited access to quality education or preferred form of study can cause young people to drop out. Problems with the school environment or subjects of study, especially the relationship with teachers and other students are also important. In 2021, an average of 15.3 % of young people aged 18-24 in the Romania were early leavers from education and training.

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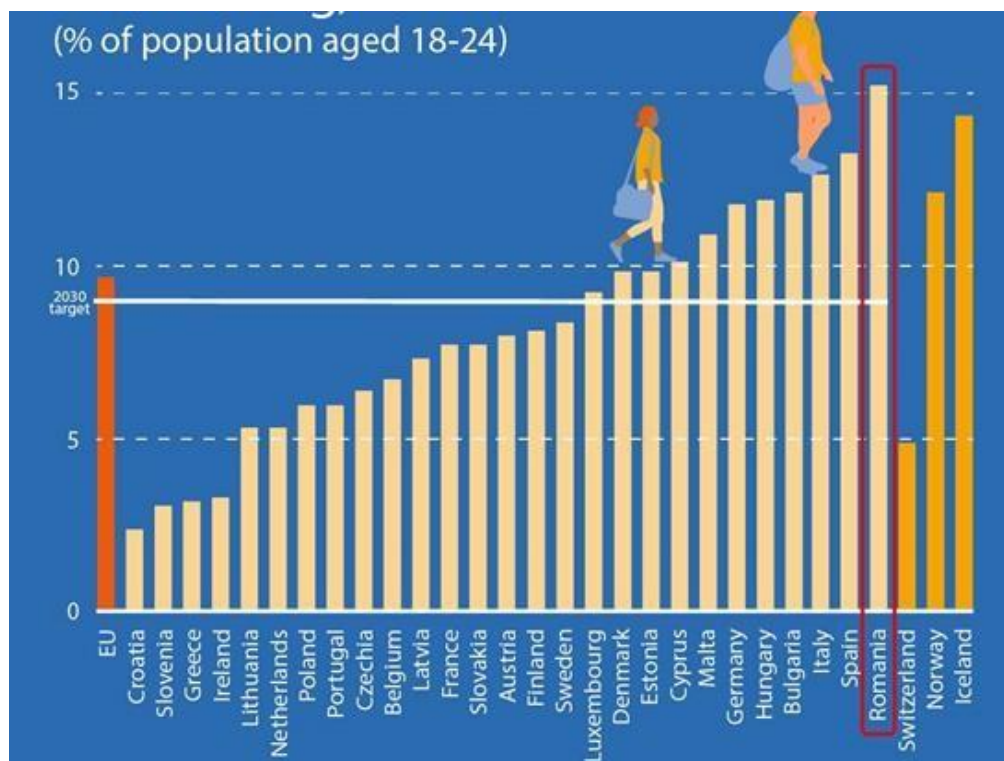
The dropout rate increased in 2020 was more than 15 percent of Romanian students dropped out of school in the first year of the pandemic, when classes were mostly online, and Romania, especially in rural areas, was not ready for this. In rural areas, the school dropout rate was 26 percent in 2020.

The reasons why young people leave education and training early are extremely individual. However, it is possible to identify certain recurring features. Early school leaving is closely related to a disadvantaged socio-economic environment and a low level of education. Children of parents with a low level of education and coming from a socially disadvantaged environment have a higher predisposition than other young people to leave education and training before graduating from secondary education. Some groups in society are particularly affected by early school leaving, especially people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and vulnerable groups, such as young people from social

assistance centers and people with disabilities or mental impairments or who have other special educational needs.

This rate is even higher for the Roma population, who tend to be among the members of society most exposed to social exclusion. These groups tend to face weaker family support, to be subject to discrimination in the educational system and to have more limited access to informal and non-formal learning opportunities outside of compulsory schooling. Leaving school early is influenced by educational factors, individual situations and socio-economic conditions. 15.6% of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 in Romania had only completed at most 8 classes, according to Eurostat data for 2021. Last year even marked a slight improvement in the indicator compared to 2020 (15.3% compared to of 15.6%). At the level of the European Union, Romania remains the state with the biggest problem in this field among all the member countries.

Source: Eurostat





## *Spain*

From a global perspective, it seems interesting to consider the analysis of the structural factors that affect school dropout described by Colomé (2018), in the third Congress of Economics and Business of Catalonia. The author identifies seven factors of a structural nature that affect early school leaving.

- The opportunity cost: the insufficiency of scholarships causes students to drop out of school when they finish their compulsory education in order to compensate for deficits in family income. In Spain, there is a low investment in scholarships and, at the same time, a poor territorial distribution of these funds: Catalonia is particularly disadvantaged.
- The structural defect of the completion of Compulsory Secondary Education: the impossibility of continuing studies in the regulated system, if the graduate in secondary education is not obtained, causes the abandonment of all those students who do not have the degree. In the educational systems of reference, it is customary to give options within the same system to students who have not graduated. This structure causes a real increase in abandonment and at the same time bad statistics when calculating the indicator.
- The high rates of unemployment among the young population constitute a disincentive factor for students to continue training. (This same factor can be read in the opposite direction, since currently the dropout rate has dropped precisely because of the lack of premature exit to the labor market).
- The economic cycle and the return. The data show that in times of economic prosperity academic qualifications are less decisive in employment than in times of crisis. Therefore, in the students' personal calculations it is considered that studying does not come into account. In times of crisis there is a return of students to studies and an assessment of training as a condition for employment.
- Guidance systems at the end of ESO can clearly be improved. The attractiveness of the medium-level Vocational Training offer is low. On the other hand, FP is decisive in combating dropout. The more FP offer, the less dropout.



To analyze the impact of economic variables on early school leaving, we will base on the work carried out by Ferrer (2020) in which he collects the information provided by different educational managers and trade unions in this regard. If a correlation is made between the economic situation of the country and the premature abandonment of studies, when the economy grows, the number of girls and boys who leave their education and go to the labor market also grows.

Regarding the relationship between the economic improvement and early school leaving, the Department of Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya indicates, according to Ferrer, that "the era of the economic boom brought very disturbing elements, in some areas and in moments of economic euphoria young people were made an unworthy offer that dazzled them with a small salary and they stopped doing post-compulsory studies because they saw the salary, the motorcycle, the short term and did not see that behind this there was nothing". Although "every time society is more aware that jobs are more qualified, more demanding, they need constant training, and this is provided by post compulsory studies".

For his part, Ricard Bellera, Secretary of Labor and Economy of CCOO de Catalunya, states, according to Ferrer, that "premature school leaving affects more people of foreign origin and those whose mothers (42.1%) or parents (39.5%) with a low level of education. It is, in fact, one of the main mechanisms of reproduction of socio-economic status, since assuming a probability of premature school leaving is ten times higher in the poorest fifth of the population (quintile), compared to the richest quintile".

Also, as numerous recent studies have shown (Puig and Vilalta 2015), dropping out of school not only hinders the socio-labor integration of those who suffer from it, but in turn decreases the level of national productivity and competitiveness, reduces levels of equity and puts the levels of social cohesion at risk. In this line of work, Colomé (2018) establishes some correlations between early school leaving and social behavior: The most visible effects of abandonment are manifested in employment data. People with post-compulsory training have much more chances of being employed than people without this training. Associated with this effect we can also mention underemployment,



employment in insecure or part-time jobs. Uneducated workers earn less and face a greater risk of poverty and social exclusion. Young people who have left the system prematurely participate less in permanent training offers. These young people will therefore be more dependent on social services throughout their lives. Personal behaviors such as: drug use is also associated with dropping out of school; violent behaviors; or unwanted pregnancies. These behaviors have a close relationship with abandonment, even though the reverse relationship could also be established, that is to say, that these behaviors are the cause of abandonment.





#### **4.4 Recent data from demographic analyses that address the issue of school dropout in partners' countries**

##### *Greece*

Demographic characteristics as well as in-school and out-of-school experiences are associated with dropping out of school. Determinants in this context are low family income, young people belonging to racial and ethnic minorities and gender (boys/girls) (McFarland et al, 2016). Students attending high-poverty urban schools are more likely to be referred for delinquent behavior, incriminated or expelled.

In addition, schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty are more likely to have teachers who are poorly trained (in classroom management issues in crisis) and unable to manage students equitably and empathetically. Individuals' demographic characteristics (e.g., race, class, gender) place individuals in underserved schools with inadequately trained teachers who are more likely to engage students in disciplinary actions that may precede or directly cause them to drop out of school. In this way, the demographic characteristics of individuals interact with the structural characteristics of the ecologies in which they live to create disparities in dropout rates (McDermott et al., 2019).

##### *Italy*

The MIUR data indicated in detail the categories of young people who leave school too early and who are of most concern: pupils during the first cycle of compulsory education, in the low secondary school. It turns out that these pupils are:

- in greater numbers in the South of Italy;
- especially in Sicily and Campania;
- mainly males;
- often of foreign origin (3.3 % versus 0.6 % of pupils of Italian citizenship), especially born abroad.

The MIUR data also confirm evidence to schools and field operators: in all levels of education and also in vocational training, drop-out mainly affects pupils repeating the year, confirming that school failure is the antechamber of school drop-out. (MIUR, 2018)

The 2021 ISTAT REPORT (p. 6) says: “Early school leaving affects boys (15.6 %) more than girls (10.4 %) and for the latter there is also a decrease in the last year (-1.1 points). The territorial gaps are very wide and persistent. In 2020, the early leaving of education before completion of the upper secondary system or vocational training concerns 16.3 % of young people in the South of Italy, 11.0 % in the North and 11.5 % in the Centre. The territorial gap between Northern and Southern Italy reduced to 5.3 points in 2020, thanks to the decline recorded in the South, after the substantial stability that had characterised the previous five-year period (7.7 points in 2019).

Among young people with non-Italian citizenship, the rate of early school leaving is more than three times higher than that of Italians: 35.4 % vs 11.0 %. Between 2008 and 2014, even among foreign students a significant decrease in early school leaving was registered, but in the last six years the reduction involves only Italian citizens. The incidence of early school leaving among foreign students varies greatly depending on the age of arrival in Italy. Among those who arrived within the age of 9, the share is 19.7 %, rises to 33.4 % among those who arrives between the age of 10 and 15 and reaches 57.3 % for those who entered Italy between the age of 16 and 24.”

In Italy, there are no significant differences in the incidence of ELET depending on the degree of urbanization of the territory (large cities/small cities and suburbs/rural areas), except in the South, where there is a significantly higher ELET incidence in large cities.<sup>3</sup> The strong differences between the Centre and the South are therefore exacerbated in the comparison between the main urban realities, with one in five young people (2018 data) who left school early in the South (21.1 %) compared to one in ten in the Centre and the North (9.5 % and 12.5 %). In towns and rural areas, differences do not exceed 5 and 6 points. The maximum incidence of early school leaving in the big cities of the Mezzogiorno can therefore derive from more disadvantaged social contexts and from the level of education of the family of origin, which still strongly affects that of the children. Moreover, the large cities of the Mezzogiorno differ from those of the Centre-North in the significantly lower levels of education of the population." (ISTAT, 2021, P.7)



### *Netherlands*

Demographic variables consist of

-Gender

-Age

-Ethnicity

-SES (Socioeconomic status) Dropouts often come from families with unemployment and low parental educational attainment, which can lead to social exclusion. The socio-economic background and social status of young people still largely determine educational performance. Students who do not speak Dutch at home also run a high risk of performing poorly

- Family composition

- Living environment

### *Romania*

The decrease in the preschool and school age population of 0-23 years causes the reduction of the preschool and school population. The general tendency to reduce the population of children and young people 0-23 years is reflected differently at the level of age groups within each county due to the degree of inclusion in the corresponding age groups, recorded in each county. Romania is a country where many young people leave school early to find a job.

European Commission reports show that these young people come from low-income families where they are encouraged to work early to ensure the family's survival. More than 1 student in 10 of a cohort entering the 5th grade drop out by the end of the 8th grade (mainly in the 7th and 8th grades), and by the end of the 10th grade the value is of approximately 2 students out of 10. Between the school years 2010-2011 and 2015-2016, the percentage of children out of school at the primary level (aged 6-10) increased steadily and almost doubled.

Among the school age population corresponding to the secondary level (between 11-14 years old) the percentage of children out of school increased even more. Low participation in education accentuates the inequality of opportunities between students.



Romania registers a high share of people who left school early (15.3% in 2019) and young people who are not professionally employed and do not follow any educational or training program (14.7%, a slight increase compared to 2018). While the early school leaving rate in large cities is below the EU average and falls within the national target for 2020 of 11.3%, the early school leaving rate in rural areas is considerably higher - 26%, showing an increasing trend.

All these indicators reflect several generalized social problems. Among other things, Romania has a high rate of poverty among children (35.8%<sup>5</sup>) and a particularly high number of births among teenage mothers (around 20,000 per year). This last indicator is also reflected in the higher early leaving rate among girls, only one other EU country is in this situation.

### *Poland*

Studies show that people who have left education early are not "active citizens," and it is noted that these people are less likely to participate in elections and other democratic processes.

### *Spain*

In the compared data it can be observed that in recent years the highest growth of students both in Spain and at European level is that which occurs in Catalonia. This leads to a high level of complexity that is increased by the fact of migration considering, above all, what has happened in Catalonia, particularly because of its speed.

Regarding the relationship between early school leaving and demographic variables, the analysis made by Colomé (2018) of the evolution of the study pyramid in Catalonia and its comparison with Spain and Europe is relevant. The data are from the education of adults between 25 and 64 years old:

Percentage of population without education or with only primary education or with compulsory secondary education

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Espanya	46	45,3	44,5	43,4	42,6
Catalunya	45,1	44,9	43,9	42,6	41,2
Europa (19)	30,4	29,6	28,5	27,4	26,8

:

Percentage of population with upper secondary (baccalaureate) or non-tertiary post-secondary education:

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Espanya	22,1	22,0	21,7	21,9	22,4
Catalunya	22,7	22,3	21,2	20,4	21,2
Europa (19)	43,1	43,0	43,4	43,9	43,9

Percentage of population with tertiary education

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Espanya	31,9	32,6	33,7	34,7	35,1
Catalunya	32,2	32,8	34,8	37,0	37,5
Europa (19)	26,4	27,1	28,0	28,5	29,2

(Source Eurostart, quoted by Colomé, 2018)

In the data collected by Colomé, it can be seen how the distribution of training by level in Catalonia and Spain presents a significantly different figure compared to the rest of Europe: a high number of people with no more than basic training; a very low number of people with secondary education; and again, a high number of people with higher education. We have a high percentage of adult citizens without education or with only elementary education, on the other hand very little population has post-compulsory non-tertiary studies, in short: Vocational Training studies, while we can see that our percentage of university graduates is much higher than the European average. This distribution could tell us that there is a strong social break in terms of education and, if we analyze the data by age, we will see that there is also a very important generational difference, with more age less education.



#### 4.5 Definition of relevant target groups related to drop-out issues

The basic theoretical approach that prevails internationally in the scientific community, as it concerns the interventions and the treatment of the SD issue, has as its core the interaction of the actors involved and their cooperation stakeholders on such a multidimensional issue. Around this concept, therefore, the recent proposal of the European Commission regarding the "holistic" school approach to tackling early school leaving (ESL). In recent scientific research on the treatment of SD, four main categories of factors that act and interact between them are recognized:

- the young people themselves, i.e. the students,
- parents and families,
- the professionals who work around the school and, finally,
- social policy professionals/bodies, services, organizations or associations operating in a variety of sectors

Such surveys inform us about the perspectives and opinions of experts, those closely associated with and monitoring dropout students, who contribute to the analysis of the conditions prevailing in context of the school community regarding the students, for whom it is commonly said that they "ignore prohibitions" and "don't like school".

Additionally, regarding the relationships that develop between the management of schools and the families of the students, who are "leaking" and display characteristics such as "restlessness" or "absenteeism", these pervade continuous contacts intended to inform, to direct, to control or punish, creating a typology of relations either formal-institutional or more personal and personalized.

Equally important is the role of the teachers themselves, who form a network of relationships of trust and support with the students who are at increased risk of leaking, helping them develop the ability to protect themselves from various negative behaviors or experiences, but also to cultivate their self-confidence, setting goals, managing stress or building internal motivation behavior and values.

From the point of view of the professionals who intervene, the role has also been studied either of education agents, such as school counselors, or of professionals, such as social



workers or psychologists, as well as of their opinions about the causes of SD, which should be the priorities of educational policy 47. In addition, actions applied to narrow the SD, have been particularly studied, which may be closely related to the local community level, where the importance of individual strategies often emerges and of the initiatives undertaken by the members of a community, in the context of collective mechanisms or a campaign against truancy.

Other actions against SD are related to extracurricular educational programs, as well as with educational activities or programs from its premises sports or culture. Issues also of central interest to many researchers consistently constitute the different ethno-cultural characteristics of the student population. Many educational programs, which contribute to the reduction of SD, in the context of the community but also with a larger scope, have been applied for several decades, internationally but also in Greece 51. The goals are multiple and cover a range of needs of each target population. Indicatively, mention to

- the strengthening of access, stay and systematic attendance in pre-school education and the smooth transition to Primary School, High School and in uppersecondary general and vocational education
- interventions for the school integration and the support of the students' regular attendance
- support for students who have left school prematurely
- the application intervention programs of primary and secondary prevention, training and awareness of education executives and teachers and
- Related supporting actions.

All the above, however, depending on the way they are put each time, they develop around the triple axis: prevention, intervention, compensation.



## 5. THE PROBLEMATIC OF THE RESEARCH

### 5.1 Justification and significance of the research

According to the international pedagogical research the requirement for the creation of effective educational systems is linked to school quality upgrade, with a particular emphasis on dealing with the phenomenon of school dropout, a debate issue developed at the end of last century but still continuing with undiminished scientific interest to this day.

The EU set an EU-level target stipulating that the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9% by 2030. In 2021, an average of 9.7 % early leavers from education and training was identified within the EU. Nevertheless, relevant research that has been conducted at European level leads to the identification of the phenomenon in several European countries such as in Romania, Spain, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany, Malta, Cyprus, Estonia and Denmark, with the school dropout rates remaining high, over 10% (Eurostat, 2022).

Specialized studies by experts conclude that early leaving or incomplete school attendance is associated, in the context of school life, with school failure, functional illiteracy, low performance, etc., while in the social context it is at least associated with "functional social exclusion", unemployment, lower earnings, more difficult professional development, lower social cohesion, etc. Responding and dealing with the phenomenon in the three areas of intervention, educational system- school Unit- individual in combination with all auxiliary and secondary areas actions, such as school bodies, local authorities, social partners etc. presupposes the use of different guidelines.

The guiding principles for taking action at the organizational level of the school unit and at the individual level that this research is focused, mention, among others, measures such as the following:

- expanding the responsibility of school units for early school leaving
- consistent implementation of initiatives to upgrade the quality of education and organizational development measures of the school unit.
- Strengthening the professionalism of the human resources employed in the school unit (Human Resources Development) by view of diagnostic and teaching skills.





- Strengthening the cooperation between teachers and counseling providers (within school and outside school) in order to coordinate and deal with specific incidents.

Also, at the individual level, the guidelines for the implementation of the measures are related to the following:

- management of specific incidents based on the available resources, the skills of those involved and the necessary flexibility and adaptability,
- personalized intervention, adapted to each specific case,
- voluntary utilization of counseling as a principle of incident management,
- active participation of guardians as partners in the educational process and in decision-making and implementation.

The above findings lead to the conclusion that the issue of recording and treating school leakage is an immediate priority, as the European Commission places this phenomenon as a matter of first importance.

## 5.2 Research conditions

The main characteristic of a research method is that the solution-answer to the research problem is based exclusively on empirical data. After selecting and formulating the research question, the main concern of the researcher is to determine the research strategy to be followed to collect the required empirical data. At this stage, the researcher is asked to resolve important and critical methodological issues, which will determine whether his research is feasible, the reliability and validity of his data and conclusions, the possibility of generalizing his findings, etc. (Paraskevopoulos, 1993: 42-46).

Therefore, the specific issues that each researcher should resolve and that will constitute the conditions of the research are the following: a) the choice of the research strategy, b) the choice of a representative sample, c) the choice of the means of collecting the empirical data material, d) the choice of the appropriate statistical methods and techniques for the presentation and analysis of the data and e) the possibility of carrying out the research.

To ensure the success of this research, we examined the above conditions in detail. Shortly at this point we can mention the following: a) for the success of the research it was considered necessary to ensure a satisfactory sample b) to collect the



data of the specific research the questionnaire and interview methods were chosen, which were considered appropriate techniques, since they can provide objective information to a wide range of population and give us in-depth information. Finally, methods of descriptive and inductive statistics were used for the coding and statistical analysis of the data.

### 5.3 Purpose of the research

In this context, the purpose of the proposed research is to comparatively analyze the situation of school dropout in Partners' European Countries and examine the tackling of this phenomenon in a holistic approach. More specifically, this research will examine issues related to the causes of school dropout, the identification of student groups that tend to drop out in a greater percentage, the investigation of measures to prevent and deal with school dropout at an organizational and individual level, and the identification of educational needs of teachers and staff involved in supporting dropout students.

### 5.4 Research Hypothesis-Research Questions

The separate research hypotheses that would serve to finding the answers to the above questions are the following:

**1st Research Hypothesis:** Despite the development of strategies and the adoption of various good practices to prevent school dropout there is still a lack of measures to prevent the phenomenon at the organizational level of the school unit

**2nd Research Hypothesis:** There is a lack of adoption of good practices or programs that effectively deal with the phenomenon of school dropout.

**3rd Research Hypothesis:** The training of teachers on issues of school dropout remains at low or moderate levels.

**4th Research Hypothesis:** There is an increased need for training of teachers and student support staff who drop out regarding the following topics:

- Organization and management of school dropout issues
- Communication with students
- Knowledge deepening on the subject
- Cooperation with the family
- Cooperation with the community
- Technical-Digital skills

- Services provided to students

The research questions that arise from the above research hypothesis and from the more general analysis of the research question are the following:

- which are the indicated reasons for School Dropout in the partners' countries
- which kind of student's groups are more likely to dropout
- what are the effective practices of tackling the phenomenon of school dropout
- by which innovative supporting methods we can support school dropout
- what are the most common measures that schools use for the prevention of the phenomenon of school dropout and in which rate
- how much satisfying is the teachers basic training in the topic of school dropout
- what are the most common practices that are used at school level for the prevention of school dropout phenomenon
- what are the most common teachers' or relative school staff's needs for the anticipation of the phenomenon and in which rate can be ranked

## 6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology followed in this research in order to comparatively analyze the situation of school dropout in Partners' European Countries and examine the tackling of this phenomenon in a holistic approach. More specifically, this research examines issues related to the causes of school truancy, the identification of groups of students who tend to drop out in a greater percentage, the investigation of measures to prevent and deal with school dropout at an organizational and individual level, and the identification of training needs of teachers and staff involved in supporting dropout students.

In first place, we will describe the characteristics and the sample selection method, then we will analyze the data collection tools and the evaluation process and finally we will describe the statistical techniques for the data analyzes.

The specific research was carried out chronologically during the period October 2022-January 2023. The target population of the research was teachers at secondary schools from each partners' country local areas. To distribute the tools to the target



population, the pilot phase of administering the questionnaire and carrying out pilot interviews was carried out in Greece for validating the capability of the proper completion of the questionnaire and answering the interview questions. This test phase took place in November 2023.

## 6.2 Planning and conducting the research

The overall organization, design and conduct of the present research refer to a research approach, which in social science research methodology is known as "empirical research" (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The specific research was a quantitative and qualitative research with a sample of teachers of the public secondary education units of local areas from each partners country.

The survey was conducted in six prefectures corresponding to the six different countries of origin of the program partners. For this specific research, the choice of administering a questionnaire and conducting structured interviews was considered more effective for recording opinions and attitudes.

The questionnaires of the present research were structured with mostly closed type questions and a limited number of "open" questions, concerning cases where we expected the personal intervention-suggestion of the teachers. The closed questions of the questionnaires served the following objectives (Vamvoukas, 1998; Javeau, 1996, Makrakis, 1997):

- clearer statistical analysis and detection
- coverage of a wider range of opinions
- brevity and clarity of answers to facilitate coding
- function of questions as "filter questions", i.e. as a means of distinguishing-categorizing respondents among subsequent answers.

However, the disadvantage of limiting the choices between given answers, which reduces the percentage of gathering information useful for the research, was dealt with by choosing questions that were used in other similar researches as well as in research conclusions.



## 6.3 Means of data collection

### 6.3.1 Procedure for drafting the questionnaire and interview questions

The composition of the questionnaire was based partly on the school dropout questionnaires of Oregon Department of Education, Salam Noor (2016), Deputy Superintendent and “Attitudes, Knowledge, and Experience with Dropout Prevention: Survey, Lucky, H. K. (2011).

The additional sections were based on the findings of the international educational literature and were designed for the needs of this research. The final formulation and composition of the questionnaire went through the following stages:

- Examination of the relevant literature, examination of theories regarding the concepts of schools’ dropout phenomenon.
- Study of relevant empirical research, which aimed to formulate and define a frame of reference for questions related to the issue.
- Exploratory discussions with primary school principals and teachers.
- Pilot application of the initial questionnaire (reliability check) to a sample of teachers (20 questionnaires) and the structured interviews to a sample of 2 teachers in Greece.

Following the above preliminary research, we refined the wording of the vague questions, summarized the overlapping ones, and designed a range of organized thematic questions.

### 6.3.2 Procedure for sending the questionnaire and interview questions and providing information

The distribution of the questionnaires to teachers followed a specific procedure. Initially it involved contacting all the school units that were included in the sample to briefly inform them about the objectives of the research and the procedure of the completion of the questionnaire. In a second phase, the questionnaires were delivered per school unit by e- mails, and their completion was carried out without the presence and support of the researcher. The completed questionnaires were collected in an online google form. In the last phase the interviews were implemented with the sample participants who expressed their interest to contribute to the research.

The data collection was carried out using the anonymous questionnaire technique, which was designed exclusively for this purpose and served the needs of the specific



research. The confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents ensured the maximum possible and honest response. Particular difficulties such as: reluctance to complete the questionnaire due to lack of time, excessive workload, mistrust and prejudice towards the researcher were not found to a high degree, which is also proven by the high level of response.

### 6.3.3 Defining the sample population of the research

A number of difficulty factors operate during a survey, such as loss of time, money and reduced access to the entire reference population, with the result that the measurements taken by the various researchers concern a smaller group or subset of the reference population, so that the knowledge they obtain to be representative of the total studied population (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

The followed sample selection procedure was the multistage cluster sampling, where someone can randomly select individual units within the cluster to use as the sample and then collect data from each of these individual units. In the first level, we randomly selected prefectures of the local communities from each partner country. Then we randomly selected a representative sample of school units of the above local communities, after calculating the total of the school units of each local community separately and in an approximation that corresponded to at least one tenth of the total, based on the spatial representation in terms of the area and therefore the categorization of local communities into urban, semi-urban and rural areas.

At the next level, an equal sample of schools was randomly selected from each region, where we were provided with the sample of teachers, which amounted to 5% of the total. A total of 158 questionnaires were collected with teachers' complete answers, a number that constituted the final sample of the research. The response was considered satisfactory accordingly to the process of distribution, completion and collection of the questionnaires (self-report questionnaires without researcher intervention).

## 6.4 Description of Research tools

To collect the material, *a self-report questionnaire* was used for the target group, which consisted of closed questions, structured in eight sub-sections:

A. Demographics

B. Prevention of Dropout Phenomenon in school unit level



- C. Knowledge of teachers for the prevention methods
- D. Reasons of School Dropout
- E. Groups of Students who are more likely to drop out
- F. Best practices for prevention of School Dropout in school unit level
- G. Teacher needs on Prevention Methods and Strategies for School Dropout

More specifically for each subunit, we examined the:

#### *A. DEMOGRAPHICS*

Regarding the demographic data (see Appendix 1) were examined:

- Gender
- Age
- Years in education service
- Highest Academic Qualification
- Position in service
- School Area
- School Sector
- School Type

#### *B. PREVENTION OF DROPOUT PHENOMENON IN SCHOOL UNIT LEVEL*

For the prevention methods of school dropout phenomenon in the school unit level we examined the next statements:

- My school district has a dropout prevention plan
- My school employs a variety of strategies that keep students involved and connected
- My school has programs in place to assist potential school dropouts
- My school has programs in place to address the problems of absenteeism and truancy
- My school provides after school support programs to assist students with academic needs
- My school's leadership is committed to reducing the dropout rate
- My school maintains high expectations for all students



- My school has a climate that supports students' efforts to complete their secondary education
- My school district's effort to reduce the dropout rate have yielded positive results
- The teachers in my school are committed to reducing the dropout rate
- My school has a parent involvement coordinator
- The community environment around my school encourages students to complete secondary education
- The community around my school does not support the efforts to reduce the dropout rate
- Early intervention is vital in a dropout prevention plan
- Credit recovery is a useful tool in reducing the dropout rate
- Parental involvement is an important element in a dropout prevention plan
- Communicating with students' parents and/or guardians is vital in reducing the dropout rate

#### *C. KNOWLEDGE OF TEACHERS FOR THE PREVENTION METHODS*

- I have taught students that have dropped out of school
- I have had training on recognizing the risk factors that may lead students to drop out of school
- I have had training on my school's dropout prevention plan
- Teachers play a major role in preventing students from dropping out

#### *D. REASONS OF SCHOOL DROPOUT*

- Absenteeism
- Academic Disengagement
- Family issues or responsibilities
- Behavioral or discipline incidents
- Lack of social engagement
- Other (please indicate)

#### *E. GROUPS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE MORE LIKELY TO DROP OUT*

- Students living in poverty are more likely to drop out





- Students of different races, ethnicities or national origin are more likely to drop out
- Students with social difficulties are more likely to drop out
- Students with disabilities are more likely to drop out
- Roma students are more likely to drop out
- Students with family issues are more likely to dropout (i.e. divorced parents, single-parent family, uneducated parents etc.)
- The reasons that students drop out of school vary by student group

#### *F. BEST PRACTICES FOR PREVENTION OF SCHOOL DROPOUT IN SCHOOL UNIT LEVEL*

- Do you have specific activities or programs for different student groups?
- What are your districts' 'best practices' to reduce the number of students who drop out of school?
- My school educates students on the benefits of graduating from high school, even if they don't intend to go to University
- Activities that staff undertake, to inform students of job opportunities and career paths

#### *G. TEACHERS NEEDS ON PREVENTION METHODS AND STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL DROPOUT*

- In which of the following “strategies” do you think you need more support when it comes to preventing students from dropping out?

Family Engagement/Community Outreach

Attendance/Tuancy Officer

Work Experience/Career and Technical Education Options

Personalized Learning

Information on Evidence-Based Practices

More Alternative Education Options

Added Instruction Time

Tutoring/Mentoring for Students

Counseling/Interventions



Parent Training/Parent Club

Conferences/Parent Nights

E-mail/Texts/Website

Home visits

Phone/Newsletter/Letters

- How do you engage with parents to educate them on the importance of good attendance?

Conferences/Parent Nights

Phone

Newsletter

Letters

Counseling

E-mail/Texts

Website

Home visits

Parent Training/Parent Club

Other

- Do you have a program to contact students (or their families) who appear to have left school permanently? If yes, please select the program and the rate of occurrence

Phone call/letter to parents

Other re-engagement strategies

Visit home

Counseling

Intervention to Family Issues

Lack of alternative programs

- Other than teachers, do you have staff at the school level whose job explicitly includes dropout reduction?

Yes-specific staff members

Yes-embedded in jobs of counselors and others

No



- In what ways and rate, the above staff interact with students outside the classroom (for example, greeting them in the halls, mingling in the lunchroom, holding office hours, etc)?

Hallways

Before and After School

Lunchroom

Extra-curricular

Office Hours

Community/Home visits

- How do you engage with the broader community on the issues related to students dropping out?

Partnerships with groups/Businesses

Attend Community/Government meetings

District School Board meetings

Newsletter/Website

Invite community members into schools

Form community advisory committees

Make presentations to local groups

- Do you agree with the following Methods of Dropout Prevention Used by Teachers and Administrators/Headmasters/Managers?

Speak to the student

Speak to the parent

Provide additional help to student

Encourage regular attendance

Assist the teacher

Make school subjects more interesting and relevant

Monitor student attendance

Create a safe environment

Enlist community involvement

Monitor student performance



- Describe the services you provide to students (rate) who are temporarily not attending school

Schoolwork provided to student

Tutoring

Online courses

Alternative Placement

Extra time upon return

Counseling

A second research tool was the next *structured interview*, which was consisted of the following questions:

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Brief presentation of EARS project and quick personal introduction (who I am, type of service I work in, target)
- Opening Question  
“Thinking about your daily practices at the educational service where you work, could you please identify the key points of your job related to the knowledge and the competences that you have on the prevention of School Dropout Phenomenon”? (e.g. with reference to the educational practices that you use in daily basis)

#### *FOCUS on IDENTIFIED REASONS FOR SCHOOL DROPOUT*

- “According to your educational experience and the conditions of your school community”:

Question 1:

- What are the causes of student’s dropout?

Question 2:

- What reasons do children say would cause or have caused them to drop out of school?



Question3:

- What reasons do parents say would cause or have caused them to drop out of school?

*FOCUS on MEASURES*

- “According to your experience in your current school district”:

Question 1:

- How does the school view dropout and in what ways address it?

Question 2:

- Can you refer to any measures that are taken to bring the dropout children back to schools? (in reference to School Management Committee, Parent – Teacher Association, School Community, District Education Office / Officer, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)/International NGO/Community-Based Organization).

Question 3:

- Which of the co-curricular activities and in what way influence inclination towards dropout?

Question 4:

- How do school rules and regulations influence inclination towards dropout?

Question 5:

- What should be the role of teacher to bring the dropout children back to schools?

Question 6:

- Can you mention any difficulties you face in applying the above measures?



## *FOCUS on TEACHERS NEEDS*

### Question 1

- “Are you required to take part in lifelong learning and training programs for your continuing education and professional development that are related to the address of special educational issues, as the prevention of the school dropout phenomenon”?
- “Are they mandatory”?
- “Who are usually the responsible providers of these programs”?
- “Can you give us examples”?

### Closing question

- “At the end of this interview and referring to knowledge and competences that you have mention at the beginning, could you please try to figure out (to sum up) a sort of list of knowledge and competences that you “use” in your daily effort to respond to the dropout phenomenon?

## **6.5 Reliability of the survey and the questionnaire**

The validity and reliability of any empirical research is largely based on the sample that has been researched. One of the most serious concerns of any researcher, during the sampling process, is determining the size of the sample and its homogeneity, so that it can be considered representative of the reference population. In addition, each researcher should ensure that the representative sample has the same critical characteristics of the research subject as the research population.

In the vast majority of research, the appropriate sample size depends on the objective of the study and the nature of the population under investigation. In the present research, the reference population was the population of teachers of Secondary Education schools in the local communities of the countries participating in the program (Greece-Larissa, Italy-Copparo Ferrara, Poland-Rzeszów, Romania-Gorj, Netherlands’ Hetrongenbosh). The determination of the sample size followed the principles of research methodology, regarding the systematic procedure of "stratified" random sampling.

The survey was conducted in a total of six local prefectures that corresponded to the countries of origin of the program partners. Our initial goal of obtaining a



representative sample of 5% for each sample subset was achieved, as the response rate for completing the questionnaires averaged 6.2% for the sample of schools per county. Therefore, we can consider the results representative and reliable.

Questionnaire validity also refers in large part to the extent to which a questionnaire measures what it is designed to measure. Aspects of the validity of a questionnaire that are usually considered are:

- **Face validity:** In face validity assessment, experienced researchers are asked to assess the ease of completing the questionnaire and the ability to understand the questions by the target population. For the present questionnaire, this was carried out by the supervising professor.
- **Content validity:** Content validity refers to the adequacy of the elements of the questionnaire so that it is conceptually supported. Based on feedback from the pilot testing of the questionnaire on a sample of 20 teachers, the content validity of the questionnaire is documented.

Regarding the reliability of the questionnaire used, we can observe the following: The reliability analysis allows to study the properties of the measurement scales and the elements that make them up, which are used in order to calculate some characteristic of the research. It essentially concerns and is applied to a number of categorical variables and assesses the consistency of these variables in the measurement of the same characteristic (Cohen et al., 1994).

In our research questionnaire, reliability in the sense of internal consistency was checked based on Cronbach's  $\alpha$  index values. Cronbach's coefficient  $\alpha$  (Spector, 1992) was categorized as follows:

- 0.00-0.25 = little to no reliability,
- 0.26-0.49 = low,
- 0.50-0.69 = moderate,
- 0.70-0.89 = high, and
- 0,90-1.00 = excellent reliability. (Cohen et al., 1994).

In order to establish the reliability of the tool but also to investigate the possible grouping of questions by section and subsection, in order to be used in its next application, reliability analysis and factor analysis follow where it was possible to apply it. In each sub-section the variables were measured, which evaluated the corresponding



research question. A 5-point Likert scale was used to evaluate and prioritize the variables in terms of their quality. The Cronbach reliability index was found to be high ( $\alpha=0.868$ ) in all sub-sections, so it was possible to use all the variables. This was followed by the application of factor analysis to each subsection, which showed that the Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) value of sampling adequacy was high ( $KMO= 0.7 < 0.807$ , measure of sampling adequacy) which rejected the hypothesis of zero correlation coefficients (Barlett's test of sphericity  $p=0.000$ ).

The above indicates that the sub-sections of the questionnaire were reliably completed. For reliability testing in qualitative research, the researcher must be genuinely interested in all issues related to the reliability and accuracy of his methods and research practice, although he should do so in a different way. This means that it must produce and analyze its data thoroughly, carefully, honestly and accurately. Reliability in specific qualitative research refers to the strength of the methodological design, the quality of the data collected during it, and how this design and specific data lead to true and trustworthy findings, in the sense that they represent reality (Levin & O'Donnell, 1999; Lincoln, 2001)





## 7. STATISTIC RESULTS

In this subchapter we list the quantitative research carried out on the causes of school dropout, the identification of groups of students who tend to drop out in a greater percentage, the investigation of measures to prevent and deal with school dropout at organizational and individual level, and the identification of training needs of teachers and staff involved in supporting dropout students.

The presentation of the statistical results is carried out gradually, divided into six sections, which concern the six categories of questions based on the grouping of the tool. The statistical analysis that follows mainly includes tables of frequency distributions and percentages of the variables of the questionnaire.

For statistical inference, i.e. to check if there is a difference in the behavior of the population of the sample regarding the answers to the questions of Section A (demographic data) and Section G, a dependency test of the variables is carried out. For the above checks and given the nature of the variables, a normality check is applied and then a Annova Test is applied in the case of categorical demographic characteristics with more than two options.

Additionally, we conducted correlation tests (Bonferoni Post hoc Test and Fishers  $\rho$  test) are in order to examine, where the research hypotheses required it, the degree of statistically significant association of Section A variables with Section G variables.

The final presentation modules have the structure shown in the tables below.



<b>DESCRIPTIVE STATISTIC ANALYSIS</b>	
<b>Section A- DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	Distributions of percentages and frequencies per variable (region, gender, age, type of school served, role at school, major, graduate, total years of service) Percentage distribution bar graphs
<b>Section B- PREVENTION OF DROPOUT PHENOMENON IN SCHOOL UNIT LEVEL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributions of percentages and frequencies of the variables</li> <li>• Rate Distribution Bar Charts</li> </ul>
<b>Section C- KNOWLEDGE OF TEACHERS FOR THE PREVENTION METHODS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributions of percentages and frequencies of the variables</li> <li>• Rate Distribution Bar Charts</li> </ul>
<b>Section D- REASONS OF SCHOOL DROPOUT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributions of percentages and frequencies of the variables</li> <li>• Rate Distribution Bar Charts</li> </ul>
<b>Section E- GROUPS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE MORE LIKELY TO DROP OUT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributions of percentages and frequencies of the variables</li> <li>• Rate Distribution Bar Charts</li> </ul>
<b>Section F- BEST PRACTICES FOR PREVENTION OF SCHOOL DROPOUT IN SCHOOL UNIT LEVEL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributions of percentages and frequencies of the variables</li> <li>• Rate Distribution Bar Charts</li> </ul>
<b>Section G- TEACHERS NEEDS ON PREVENTION METHODS AND STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL DROPOUT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributions of percentages and frequencies of the variables</li> <li>• Rate Distribution Bar Charts</li> </ul>



<b>INDUCTIVE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section A- Demographic and general population data</li> <li>• Section G- TEACHERS NEEDS ON PREVENTION METHODS AND STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL DROPOUT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test of means, standard deviations, <math>\chi^2</math> independence test, df degree of freedom and p value &lt; 0.05</li> <li>• Kruskal-Wallis Test dependence test,</li> <li>• Calculation of Spearman correlation coefficient p</li> </ul>

## 7.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis and Presentation of Research Data

### *Section A- DEMOGRAPHICS*

In Section A, we carried out the check of the demographic data (questions 1-8) of the researched population of teachers that they were working in the partner countries' local schools at the specific time period of the conducted research.

The sample was formed by working teachers from 6 different countries who participated in the survey: 32 from Greece, 30 from Italy, 30 from Poland, 30 from Romania, 27 from Spain and 9 from the Netherlands. Of the individuals in the sample, 62 (39.2%) were men and 94 (59.5%) were women. The main age group was the "over 45 years old" as 46.2% of the people declared in this. The "41-45" group followed with 19% and the rest of the percentages were roughly evenly distributed among the other categories.

In terms of educational experience, 57% of the sample stated having more than 15 years of experience in education, 16.5% 5-10 years, 11.3% less than 5 years. The academic qualifications of the individuals in the sample were distributed as follows: Diploma 8.2%, Bachelor's Degree 25.9%, Masters Degree 51.9%, PhD 9.5 and Post Doc 4.4%. 74.1% of the sample were teachers, 13.3% school managers, 6.3 counselors and another 4% other professionals related to school dropout phenomenon. Finally, regarding the type of school, 51.3% are located in an urban area, 24.7% in a semi-urban area and 24.1% in a rural area. 935 schools are public while 7% are private. Schools are divided



into various types with main categories Junior High school (12-15 yo) 34.2%, Senior High School (16-18yo) 26.6% and the VET School 18.4%, as we can see in the following table. The relative distributions of frequencies and percentages of the demographics are also shown in detail in the following chart and graphic diagrams.

**Chart 7. 1 Distribution of frequencies and percentages of demographic characteristics**

Demographics	Categories	Number	Percentage %
<b>Country</b>	Greece	32	20,3
	Italy	30	19
	Poland	30	19
	Romania	30	19
	Spain	27	17,1
	Netherlands	9	5,7
<b>Gender</b>	Male	62	39,2
	Female	94	59,5
	Prefer not to say	2	1,3
<b>Age</b>	23-30	11	7
	31-35	16	10,1
	36-40	28	17,7
	41-45	30	19
	Above 45	73	46,2
<b>Years in Education</b>	<1	2	1,3
	1-2	3	1,9
	2-5	15	9,5
	5-10	22	13,9
	10-15	26	16,5
	>15	90	57
	Diploma	13	8,2



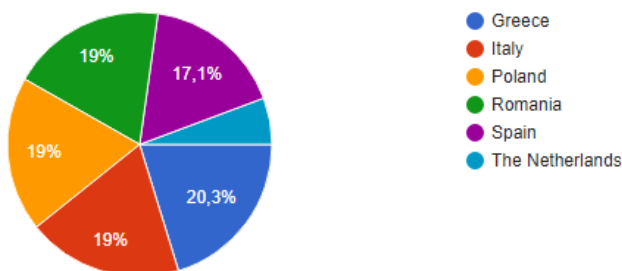
<b>Highest Academic Qualification</b>	Bachelor's Degree	41	25,9	
	Masters Degree	82	51,9	
	PhD	15	9,5	
	Post Doc	7	4,4	
<b>Position</b>	Teacher/Trainer	117	74,1	
	Manager/Headmaster	21	13,3	
	Counselor	10	6,3	
	Dropout Prevention Specialist	3	1,9	
	Office worker	1	0,6	
	University Student	1	0,6	
	REC	1	0,6	
	Orthopedagog	1	0,6	
	Stage and instrument coordinator	1	0,6	
	Adminstrator		0,6	
	Special Education Teacher	1	0,6	
	<b>My school is located in</b>	Semi-Urban area	39	24,7
		Urban area	81	51,3
Rural area		38	24,1	
<b>My school is</b>	Public	147	93	
	Private	11	7	
<b>My school type is</b>	Junior High school (12-15 yo)	55	34,2	



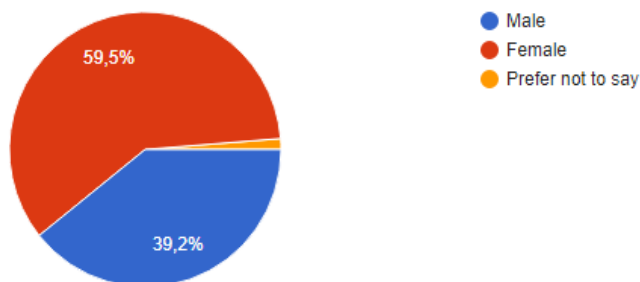
High School (16-18yo)	42	26,6
VET School	29	18,4
Instituto Comprehensivo (3 to 15 yo)	3	1,9
Instituto Comprehensivo (15 to 18 yo)	3	1,9
Primary School	2	1,3
<b>Secundaria I Batxillerat</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0,6</b>



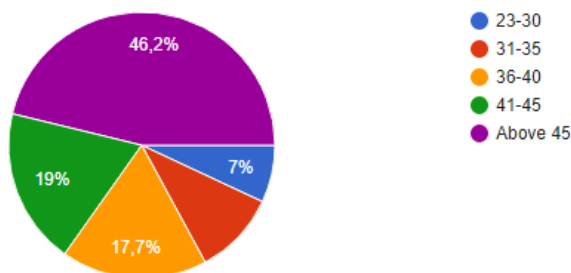
**Diagram 1: Country**



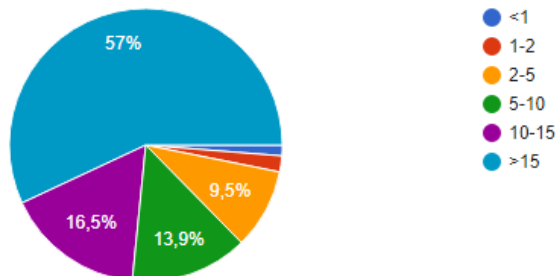
**Diagram 2: Gender**



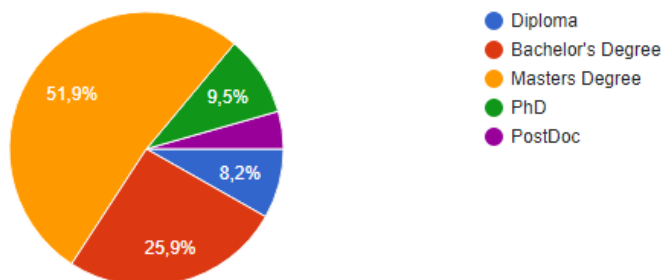
**Diagram 3: Age**



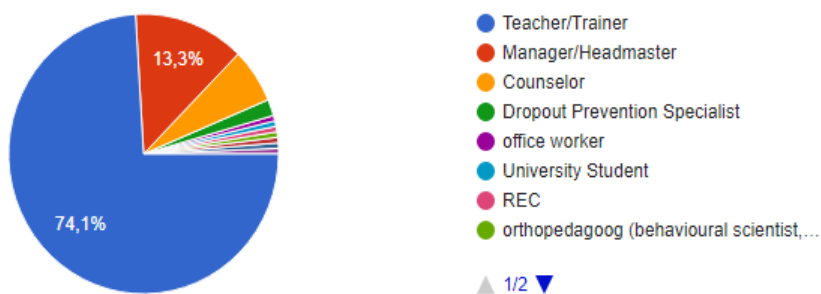
**Diagram 4: Years in Education**



**Diagram 5: Highest Academic Qualification**

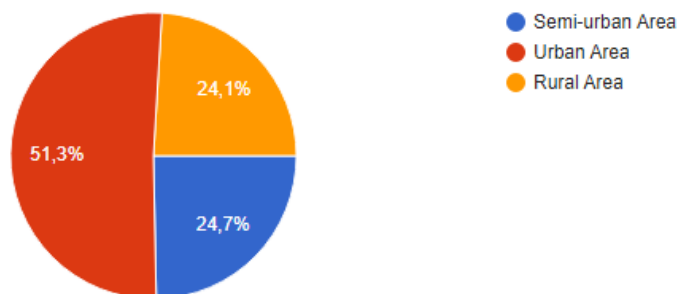


**Diagram 6: Position**

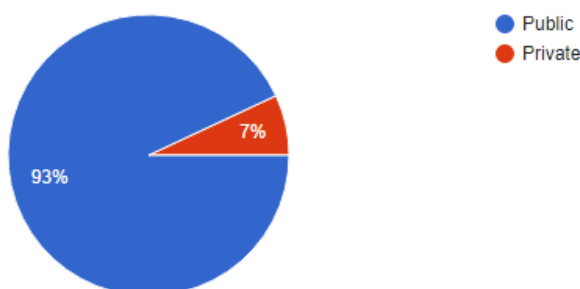




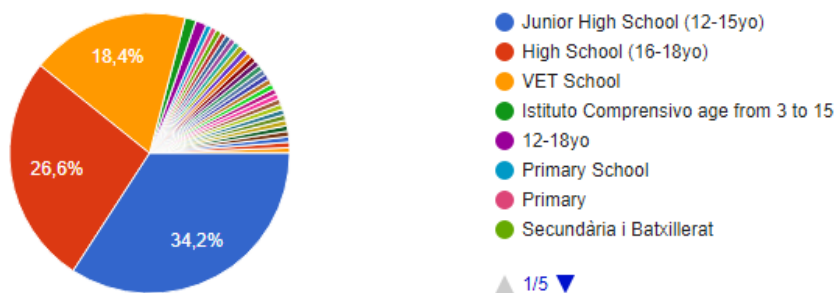
**Diagram 7: My school is located in a**



**Diagram 8: My school is**



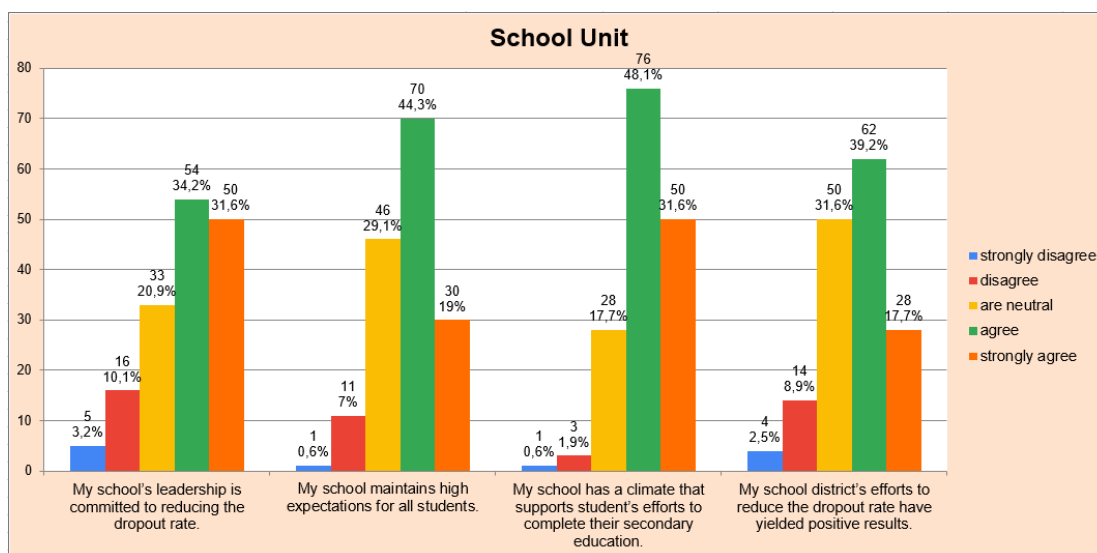
**Diagram 9: My school-type is**



**Section B- PREVENTION OF DROPOUT PHENOMENON IN SCHOOL UNIT LEVEL**

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> section of the questionnaire the participants were asked to declare the existence of meters for the prevention of school dropout in their school unit. According to their answers, they seem to strongly agree in a medium percentage rate (31,6%, 19%, 31,61% and 17,7%), to agree in a higher rate (34,2%, 44,3%, 48,1% , 39,2%) and be neutral in a lower rate (20,9%, 29,1%, 17,7%, 31,6%) in the following meters respectively: a) the commitment of the schools' leadership to reduce the dropout rate, b) the schools' high expectations for all the students, c) the school's supportive climate to students' efforts to complete their secondary education, d) the school's district efforts to reduce the dropout rate have yielded positive results.

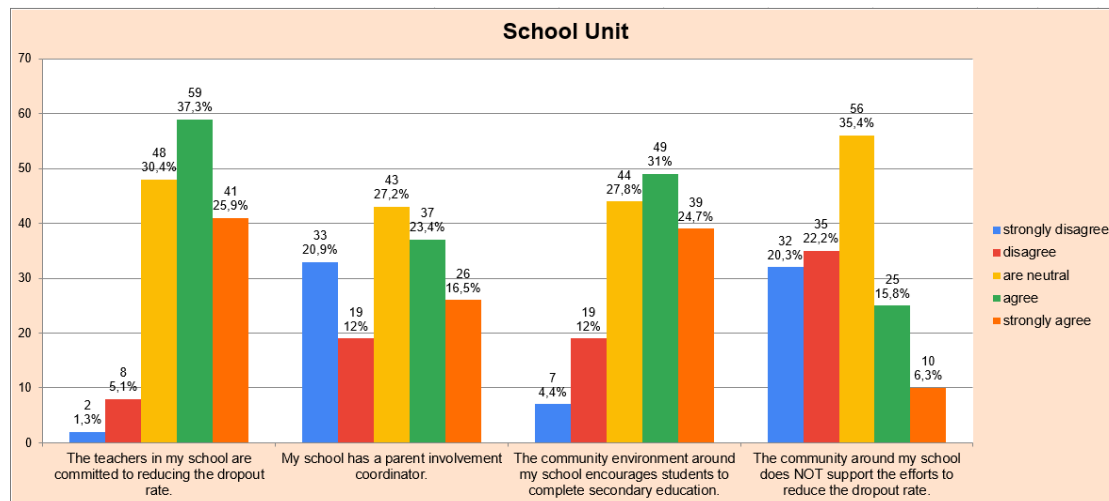
Chart 7.2. Existence of prevention meters of school dropout in the school unit



In the following group of questions, the participants were asked to declare in which rate do they agree with other four statements about the prevention meters of school dropout such as: a) the teachers in my school are committed to reducing the dropout rate, b) my school has a parent involvement coordinator, the community environment around my school encourages students to complete secondary education, c) the community around my school doesn't support the efforts to reduce the dropout rate. Relatively to the above statements the sample strongly agree in a rate below of 26% (25,9%, 16,5%, 24,7%, 6,3%), agree in highest rate (37,3%, 23,4%, 31%, 15,8%) declare neutral in a similar rate (30,4%, 27,2%, 27,8%,

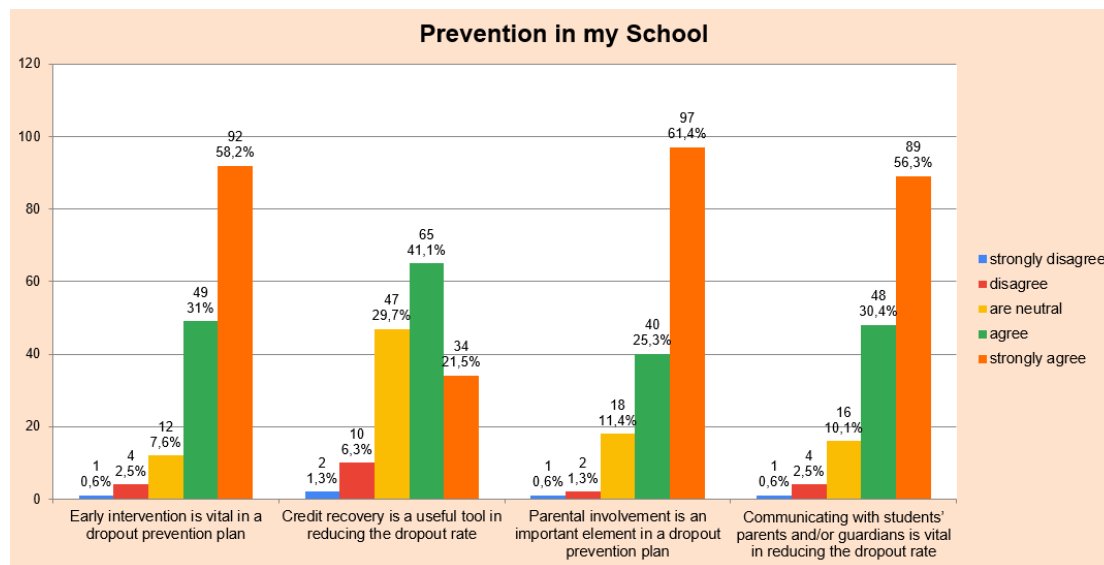
35,4%) and disagree or strongly disagree in a lower rate between (1,3-20%) with the biggest one in the last statement.

Chart 7.3 Agreement on prevention meters taken in school unit



In the last group of questions there were four more statements about prevention meters of school dropout: a) early intervention is vital in a dropout prevention plan, b) credit recovery is a usual tool in reducing the dropout rate, c) parental involvement is an important element in a dropout plan and d) communicating with students’ parents and/or guardians is vital in reducing the dropout rate. From the participants answers we see that a high percentage of participants answers that strongly agree with statements a, c and d (58,2%, 61,4% and 56,3%), agree in a medium percentage of 25-30%, are neutral in a lowest percentage between 7,6% -29,7% and disagree in a very low percentage of 0,6% - 6,3%.

Chart 7.4. Agreement on prevention meters taken in the level of school unit



## Section C- KNOWLEDGE OF TEACHERS FOR THE PREVENTION METHODS

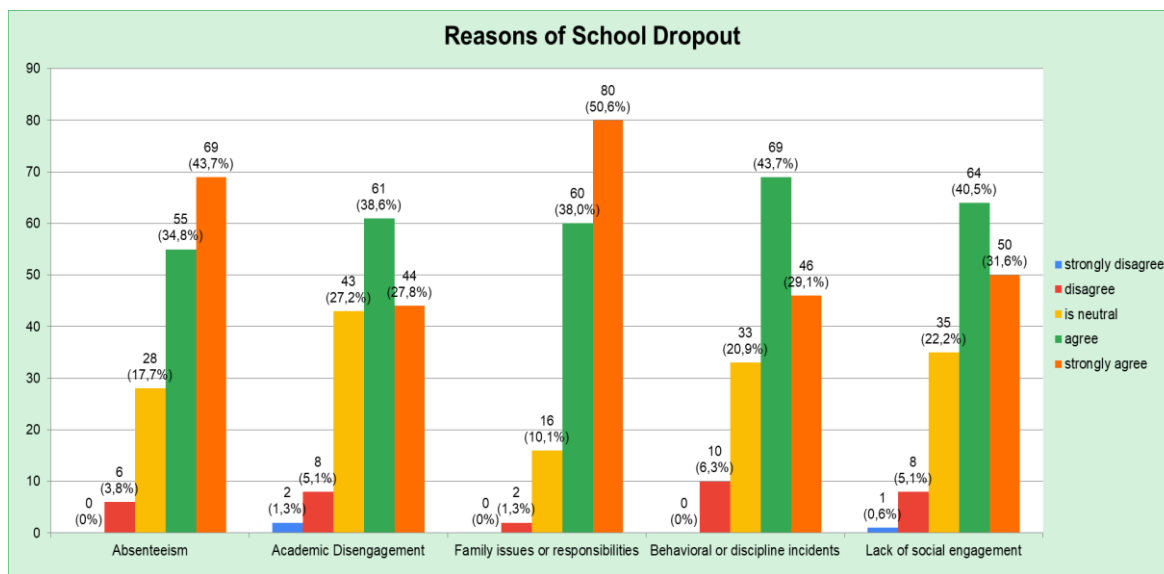
### Section D- REASONS OF SCHOOL DROPOUT

In the next section the sample participants were asked to give their opinion about the different reasons that affect the phenomenon of school dropout. As we can see in the graph below, a high percentage of the respondents agree or strongly agree that each of the reasons listed (Absenteeism, Academic Disengagement, Family issues or responsibilities, Behavioral or discipline incidents, Lack of social engagement) is a possible reason for school dropout. Almost half of the respondents strongly agree that family issues or responsibilities and absenteeism lead students to drop out of school with percentages of 50.6% and 43.7% respectively. Also, for each possible stated reason, a small ratio, almost 1/5 of the respondents (rates 10,1%-27,2%) think that the reason is neutral, meaning that it could lead to school dropout without certainty that this is the case.

The sample of the survey also mentioned many other reasons that lead students to drop out of school such as bullying, pregnancy for girls, work for boys, lack of social policies, the role models projected by social media that influence young people to seek easy money, economically viable work alternatives, learning or intellectual disabilities, social/economic situation, low cultural level of the social environment, lack of financial resources, low self-confidence, the absence of the students' parents abroad, the idea of the uselessness of school

as a tool for self-improvement, lack of future expectations, trauma (students' negative experiences in schools), need for employment, work-related issues (shift changes, working hours, transfers...), lack of motivation, lack of link between university studies and future jobs, ignorance of the value of studying in their future everyday life.

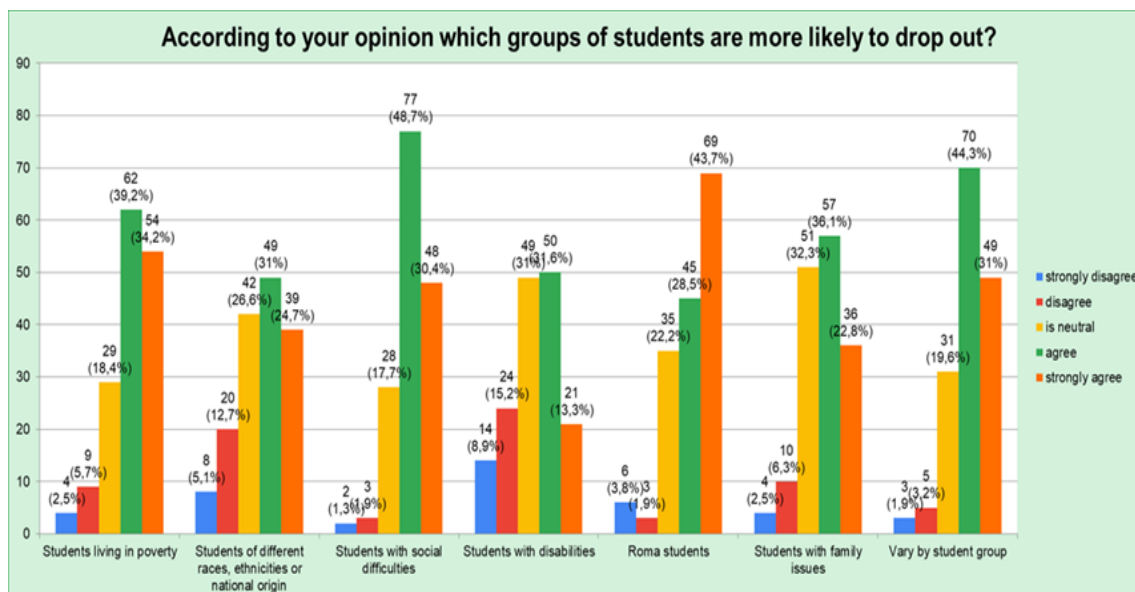
Chart 7.6 Reasons of School Dropout



### Section E- GROUPS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE MORE LIKELY TO DROP OUT

In the next survey question respondents were asked to declare which groups of students in their opinion are more likely to drop out of school. A high percentage of 43,7% (69 of 158 respondents) strongly agree that Roma students are more likely to drop out of school. Also, a high percentage of 48,7% (77 respondents) agree that students with social difficulties are likely to drop out of school. Very high is, also, the percentage of respondents that agree (39,2%) or strongly agree (34,2%) that students living in poverty are more likely to drop out of school. For the other three groups of students (students of different races, ethnicities or national origin, students with disabilities and students with family issues) as we can see responses are split between those who agree, disagree or are neutral on whether these groups of students are more likely to drop out of school. Finally, it is worth mentioning that a really high percentage of the respondents agree (44,3%) or strongly agree (31%) that students with a high chance of dropping out do not come from a particular group.

Chart 7.7 Groups of students who are more likely to drop out

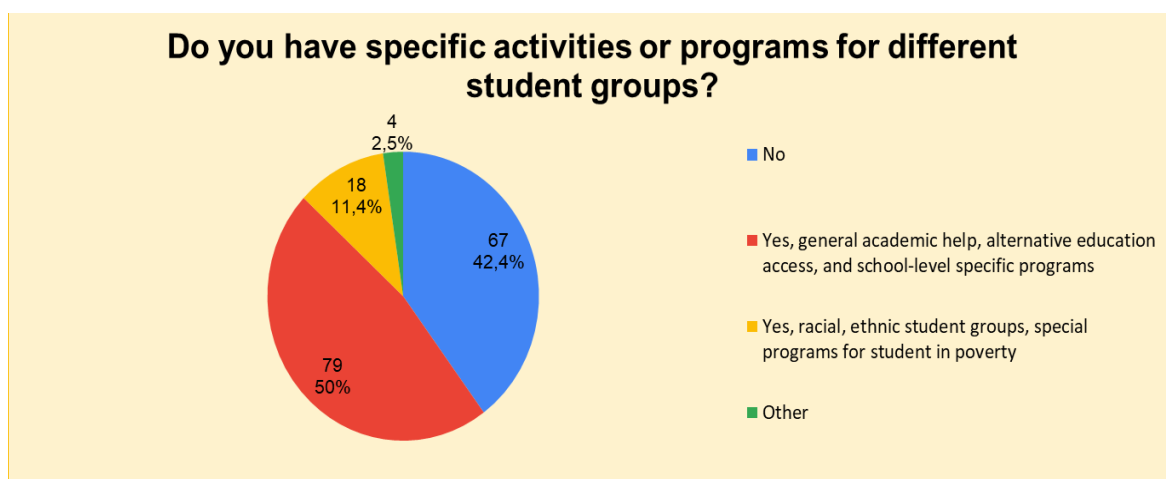


### ***Section F- BEST PRACTICES FOR PREVENTION OF SCHOOL DROPOUT IN SCHOOL UNIT LEVEL***

In this section participants were asked to reply if they follow specific best practices for the prevention of school dropout in their school district.

From the graph below, we notice the fact that almost half (42,4%) of the survey participants responded that their school does not offer any specific activity or program for different student groups. On the other hand, it is positive that a percentage of 50% (79 from 158 respondents) answered that their school offers general academic help, alternative education access and school-level specific programs. A percentage of 11,4% (18 respondents) stated that their school have activities or programs for racial, ethnic student groups or special programs for students in poverty.

Chart 7.8 Specific activities or programs for different students groups



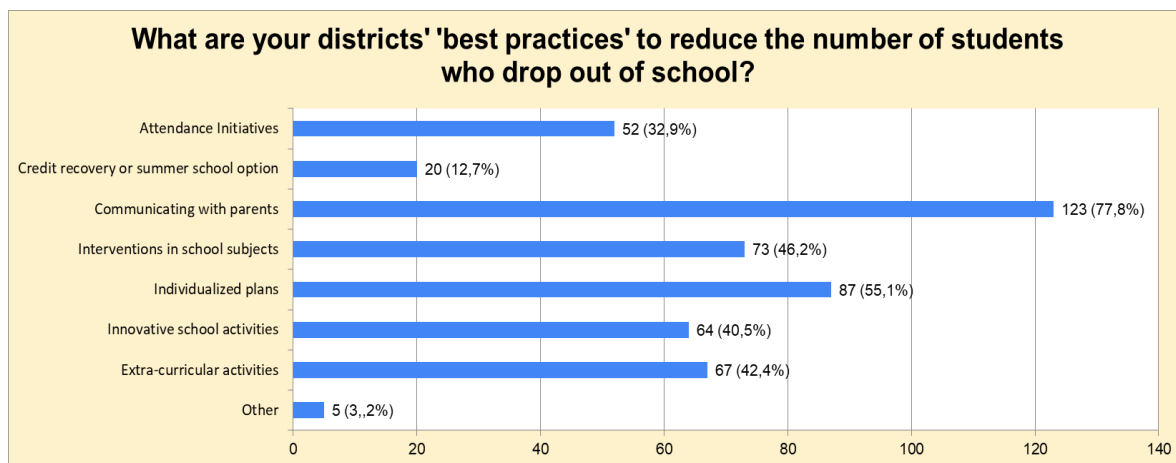
Also, it is worth mentioning that one respondent answered that their students can design their own program, based on their own needs and preferences. Each student has a coach, who helps him/her making the right decisions - so students are able to reach their own goals. It's all about creating motivation, discovering who you are as a person and creating lots of moments of smaller/bigger success.

Finally, a survey participant responded that in their school there is presence of youth workers in breaks and another one that starting from next year they are going to have special

classes of inclusion for students with learning disorders and they are also trying to involve those students in their Erasmus+ and eTwinning projects.

For the next statement about the districts' practices used to reduce the number of students who drop out of school, according to the next diagram we see that the statement which gathered the highest response rate (77,8%) is "Communicating with parents". The practices that follow immediately after are "Individualized plans" with a percentage of 55,1%, "Interventions in school subjects" (46,2%), "Extra-curricular activities" (42,4%) and "Innovative school activities" (40,5%). The statements "Attendance Initiatives" and "Credit recovery or summer school option" gathered lower percentages (32,9% and 12,7% respectively).

Chart 7.9 Best practices to reduce the number of students who drop out of school



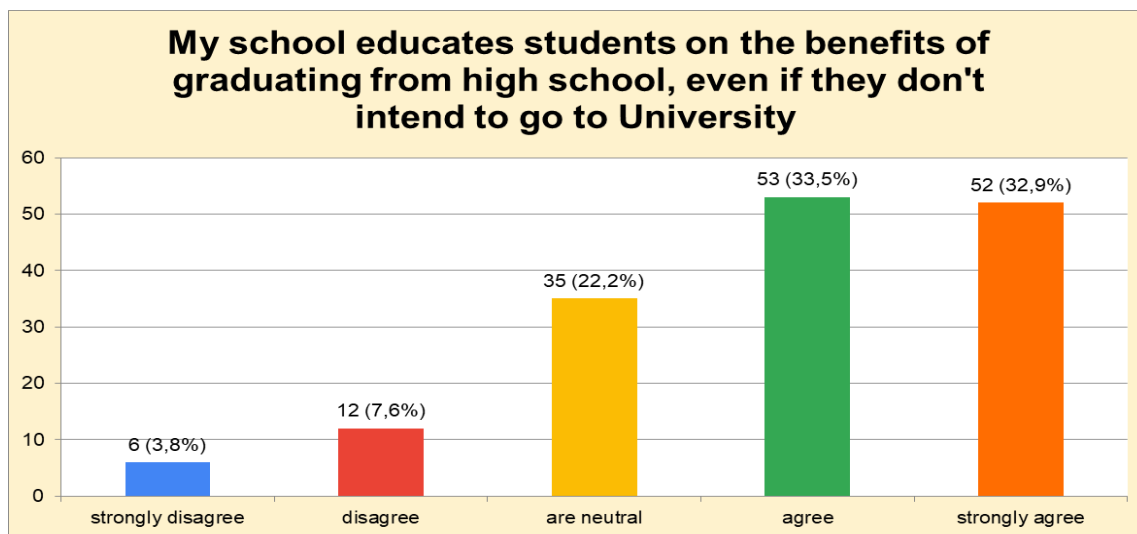
Another practice that was mentioned from one of the respondents was the Individual approach in which they try to discover the reasons why students don't go to school. In this particular practice they work with the student, his/her parents, welfare work. They also use internships: in this new environment a lot of students develop new skills, become successful and then they can re-design their school program (for example: combine school with internships). Other districts' practices mentioned are transition plan to work, studies which allow students to access professional studies, online blog with information of every given lesson, WhatsApp group with class delegates, personal contact via email. School for parents was also suggested as a nice practice against school dropout.

In the next question, as we see in the graph below, a good practice against school dropout is education of students on the benefits of graduating from high school, even if



students do not intend to go to University. It is very optimistic that the majority of the respondents agree (33,5%) or strongly agree (32,9%) that their school implements such a practice. A percentage of 22,2% (35 respondents) are neutral on this statement while 3,8% (6 respondents) and 7,6% (12 respondents) strongly disagree or disagree that this is a common practice of their school.

#### 7.10 My school educates students on the benefit of graduating from high school



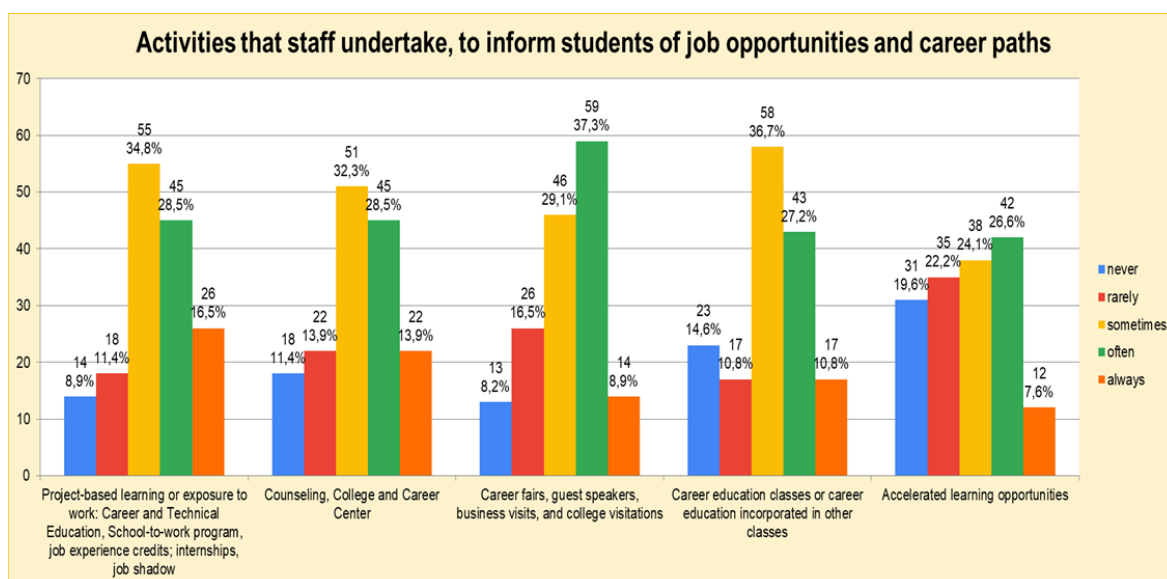
One of the most important issues that concern students is their future career path, that was examined in the next question. Therefore, school staff undertake many activities to inform students about job opportunities and facilitate them to follow a good professional career. These activities are part of the overall practice against school dropout.

For the activities listed below, as we can see in the Chart 7.11:

- Project-based learning or exposure to work: Career and Technical Education, School-to-work program, job experience credits; internships, job shadow
- Counseling, College and Career Center
- Career fairs, guest speakers, business visits, and college visitations
- Career education classes or career education incorporated in other classes

a great percentage of the respondents, 41,8%-46,2% state that often or always their school staff undertake them.

Of course, also a significant percentage of the respondents declare that the implementation of these activities is not done on a regular basis, but only sometimes, and a smaller percentage, almost ¼ of the respondents state that their school staff never or rarely undertake such activities. For the last listed activity “Accelerated learning opportunities” a high percentage of the respondents declare that their school staff never (19,6%) or rarely (22,2%) undertake such an activity. A percentage of 24,% (38 respondents) admit that school staff sometimes undertake such an activity. Therefore, cumulatively more than half of the respondents declare that the frequency of their school staff undertaking this activity is quite low. Only a percentage of 16,6% (42 respondents) declare that their school staff undertake Accelerated learning opportunities often and a smaller percentage of 7,6% (12 respondents) declare always.



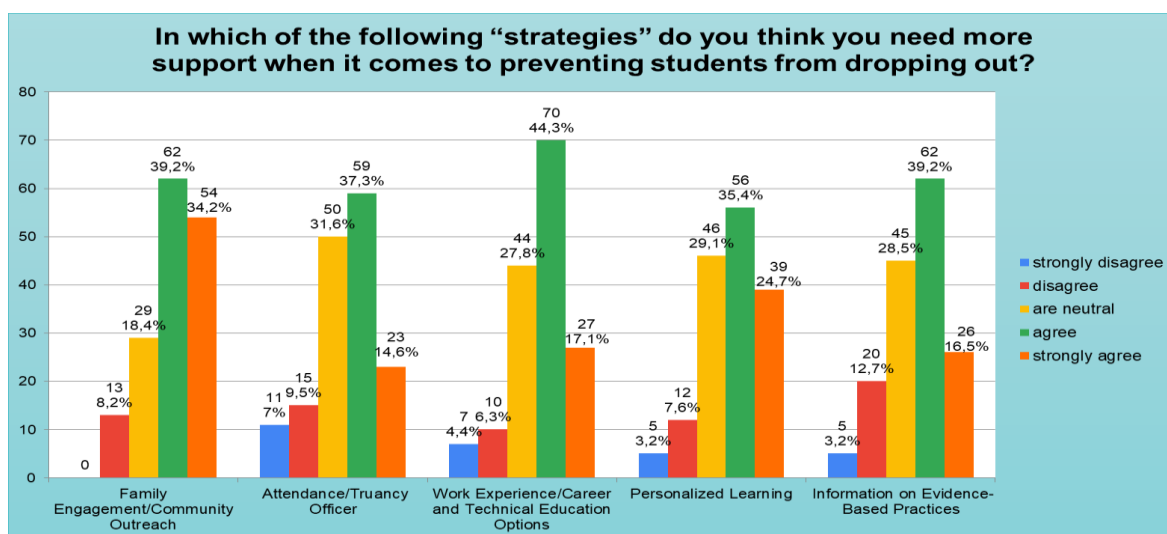
### ***Section G- TEACHERS NEEDS ON PREVENTION METHODS AND STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL DROPOUT***

In the last section of the questionnaire participants were asked about their needs on Prevention Strategies for School Dropout. A first conclusion that emerges from a quick observation on the graphs below is that a large percentage of respondents feel the need for support in all strategies against school dropout.

As we can see in the Chart 7.12, the strategy with the highest percentage (73,4% overall) of the respondents who agree or strongly agree that they need support is “Family

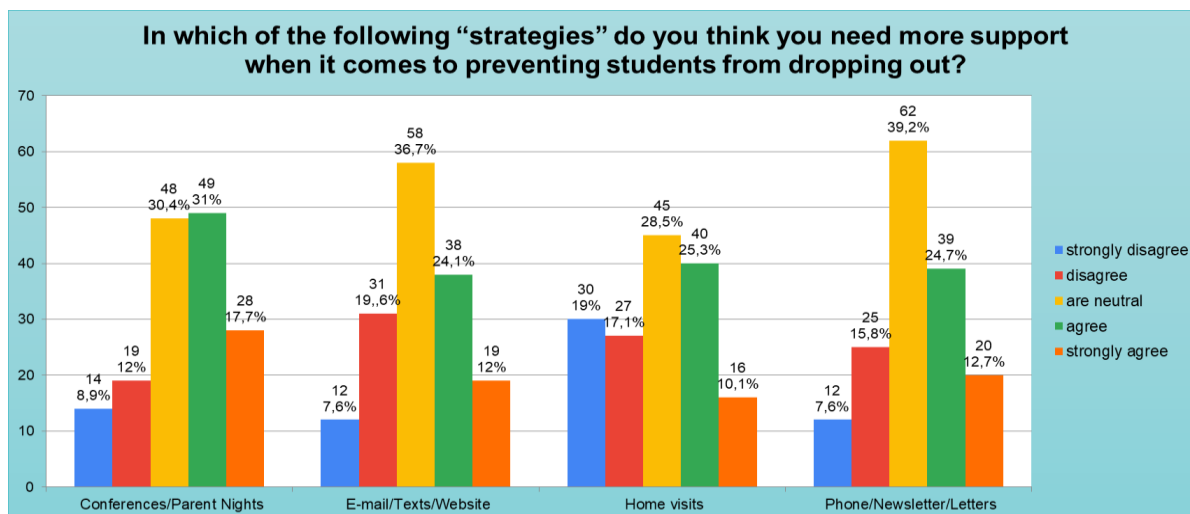
Engagement/Community Outreach”. Other strategies in which the majority of the respondents express their need for support are “Tutoring/Mentoring for Students” with the percentage of 63,9% in total of those who agree or strongly agree, immediately followed by the strategies “Counseling/Interventions” (63,3%), “More Alternative Education Options” (62,7%), “Work Experience/Career and Technical Education Options” (61,4%), “Personalized Learning” (60,1%) and “Parent Training/Parent Club” (60,1%).

Chart 7.12 Strategies that teachers need more support for preventing students dropping out



Strategies where the majority of the respondents feel more confident to implement and therefore they strongly disagree or disagree or they are neutral to the fact that they need support are “Home visits” (64,6% overall), “E-mail/Texts/Website” (63,9%) and “Phone/Newsletter/Letters” (62,7% %). For the remaining three strategies, “Information on Evidence-Based Practices”, “Added Instruction Time” and “Conferences/Parent Nights” the percentage of respondents who agree or disagree that they need support is almost equal to those who feel that they do not need support or are neutral.

Chart 7. 13 Strategies that teachers need more support for preventing students dropping out



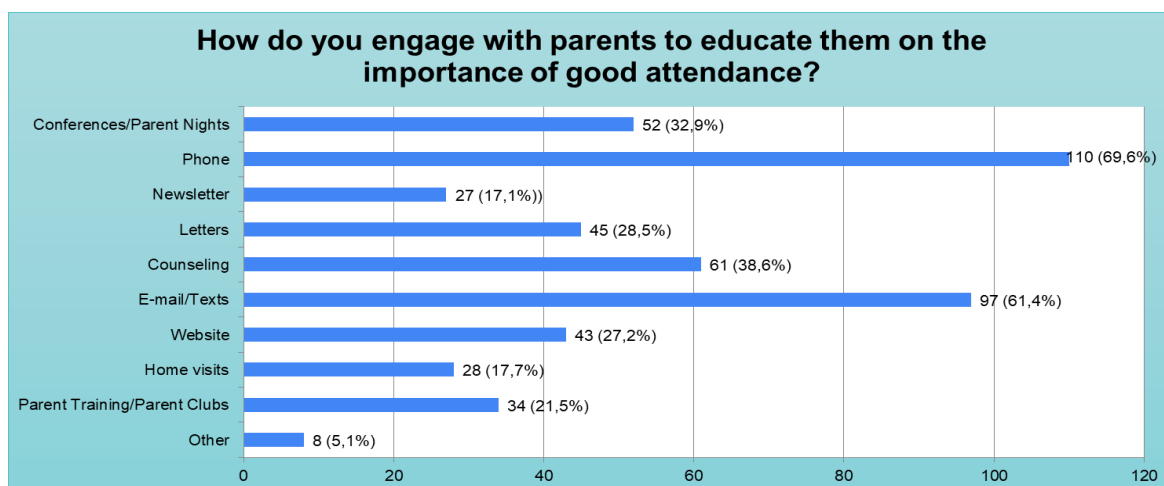
To conclude we should state that it is very optimistic that school staff feel and express the need for support in strategies against school dropout, because this means that they are interested in practices that will make them more qualified and confident and their improvement will ultimately have very positive results for students.

In the next question that examines the ways that teachers engage parents to the importance of school attendance we observe on the graph 7.14 below that the medium used mainly from the respondents with a percentage of 69,6% (110 respondents) is phone. This makes sense since phone is the most popular means of communication. Mobile phones in particular have made communication more readily available with the ability to send messages or make phone calls or even video calls. The second most used medium by respondents in their attempt to engage with parents is Email/Texts with a percentage of 61,4% (97 respondents). Indeed, emails are a good way of communication since they have many advantages, such as simultaneous sending to many recipients, sending files, images, etc.

The next in order means used by the respondents with their respective percentages are: Counseling (38,6%), Conferences/Parent Nights (32,9%), Letters (28,5%), Website (27,2%), Parent Training/Parent Clubs (21,5%), Home visits (17,7%), Newsletter (17,1%). Also, some of the respondents stated other ways that use to engage with parents such as interviews with parents at the beginning of the school year or even later throughout the school year, welfare/social work, absence officers, intakes and evaluations (each trimester

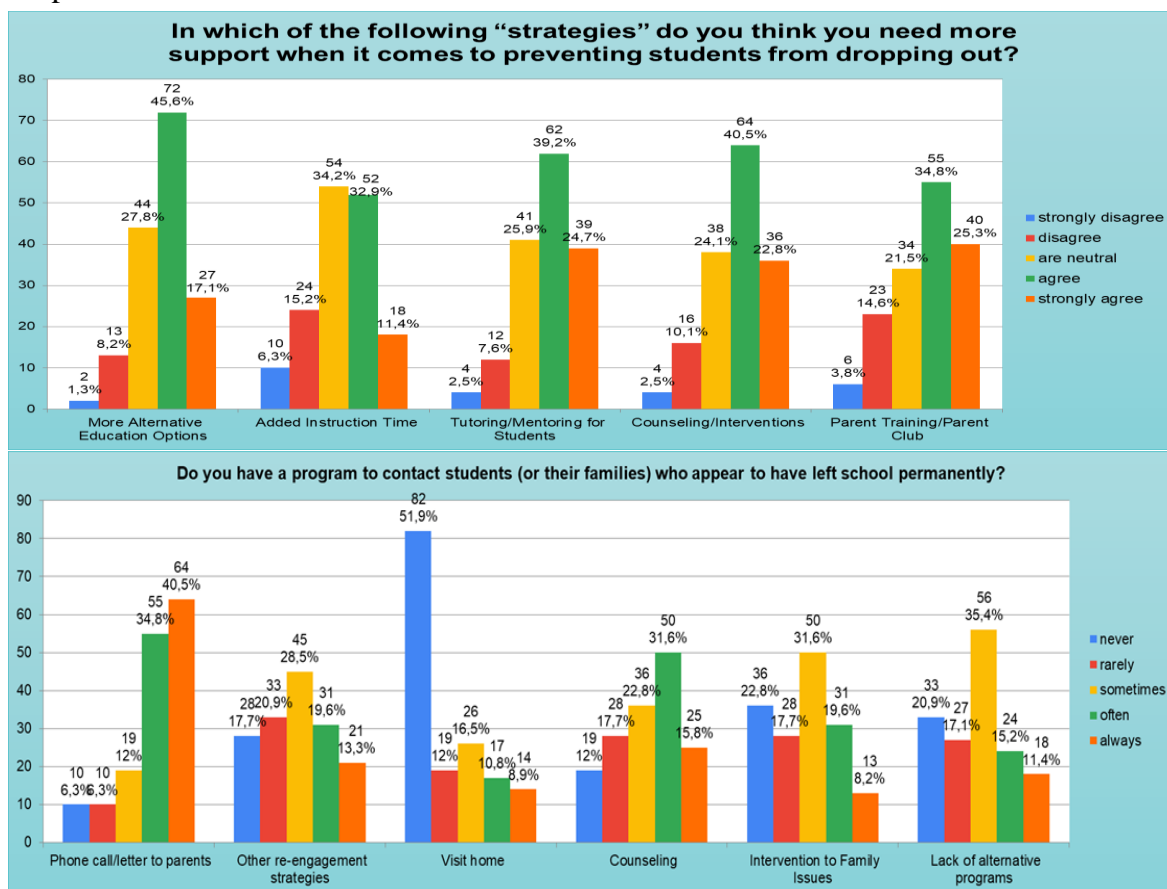
student/partner/school evaluation meetings are held. Additionally, when students start to drop out, school staff make appointments with everyone involved).

Chart 7.14 Ways to engage parents and educate them on the importance of attendance



For the next question regarding the strategies that teachers feels that they need more support for preventing students' dropout the first thing that we notice in the graphs below is there is a large percentage of respondents (51,9% - 82 respondents) who answered that they never visit the home of students and their families who appear to have left school permanently. The contact method most used by the respondents is “phone call/letter to parents” as it gathered a high percentage of those who stated that they use it often (34,8%) and an even higher percentage (40,5%) of those who always use it. Another contact program that is used by the respondents with a high frequency is “Counseling” as 31,6% (50 respondents) answered that they use it often and a percentage of 15,8% (25 respondents) answered that they always use it in order to contact students (or their families) who have dropped out of school.

Chart 7.14 a,b Strategies that teachers feel they need more support for preventing school dropout

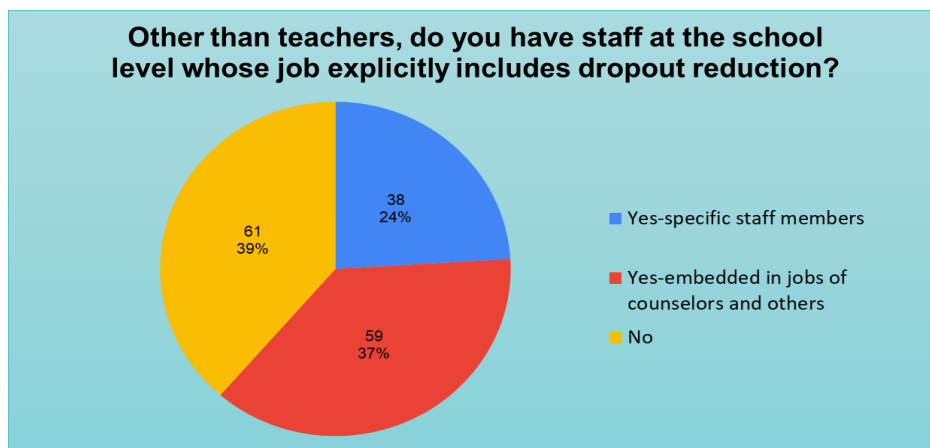


A contact program that the respondents avoid using or do not use often is "Intervention to Family Issues" as the percentage of those who answered that they never, rarely or sometimes use it reaches a total of 72,2%. Regarding "Other re-engagement strategies", the percentage of those who answered that they never or rarely use them (38,6% overall) does not differ significantly from the percentage of those who stated that they always or often use them (32,9%). Finally, the majority of the respondents state that they never (20,9%), rarely (17,1%) or sometimes have lack of alternative contact programs. On the other hand, the percentage of those who declare that they often or always have lack of such programs (26,6% in total) is certainly not negligible.

In the next question about the existence of specialized school staff for school dropout, as we see in the graph 7.15, the largest percentage (39%) is gathered by the respondents (69 in total) who do not have specialized staff in their school dedicated exclusively to reducing school dropout. A slightly smaller percentage of 37% (59 respondents) state that they have such staff as counselors dealing with dropout reduction. Almost ¼ of the respondents (24%

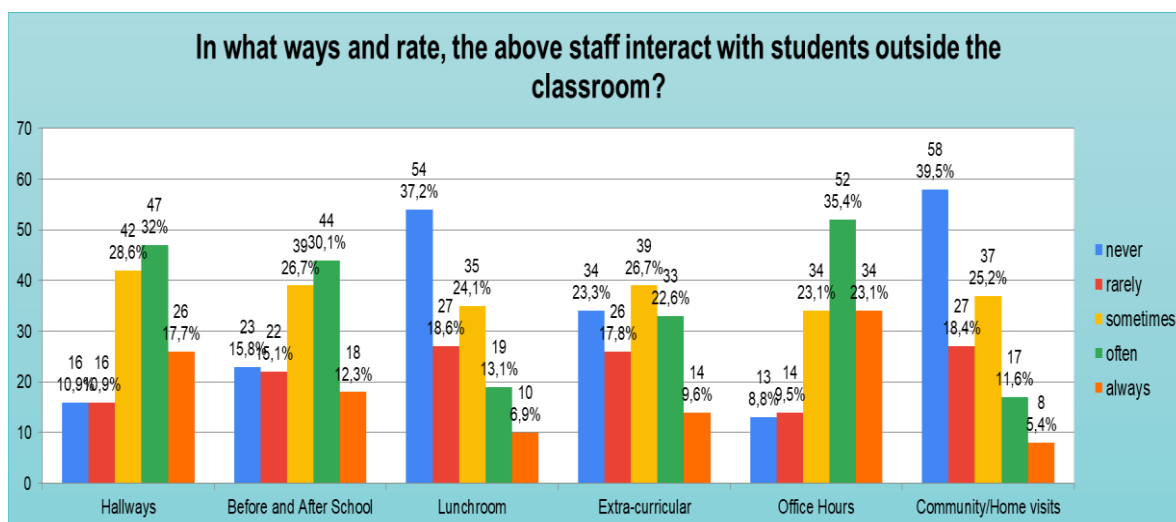
- 38 respondents) state that they have specific qualified staff in order to reduce the number of incidents of school dropout.

Chart 7.15 Existence of specialized school staff for school dropout



In the next question we examined the ways that school staff whose job explicitly includes dropout reduction interact with students in certain ways. As we can see in the following graph 7.16, the most preferred way of interaction is office hours, since the majority of the respondents uses this way to interact often (35,4% - 52 respondents) or always (23,1% - 34 respondents) with students. This means that school staff schedule time outside of class to meet with students in order to discuss their problems or other matters that concern them in an effort to prevent them from dropping out of school.

Chart 7.16 Ways and rate that school staff interact with students outside the classroom



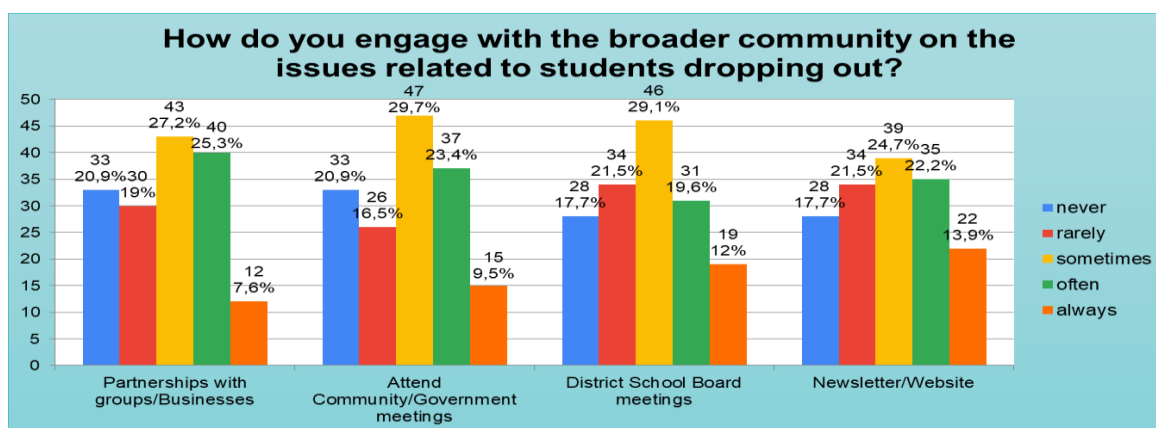
Two other ways of interaction that are used frequently by the qualified staff are “Hallways” and “Before and After School”. Hallways are indeed an accessible way of direct interaction with students as indicated by the high percentages of the respondents who use it often (32% - 47 respondents) or use it always (17,7% - 26 respondents). Before and after school is a good time when students have the opportunity to discuss with the specialized staff without any interferences or interruptions and therefore it gathered a high percentage of the respondents who use this interaction way often (30,1% - 44 respondents) or always (12,3 % - 18 respondents). Two interaction ways that are avoided by specialists are “Community/Home visits” and “Lunchroom” as they gathered high percentages of the respondents who never use them (39,5%-58 respondents and 37,2%-52 respondents respectively) or use them rarely (18,4%-27 respondents and 18,6%-27 respondents respectively). We can assume that specialists do not want to intrude on the students’ personal space or they do not want to disturb students at lunchroom as this is a place where students are able to relax or socialize. Regarding the extra-curricular interaction way, we notice that answers are divided between the respondents who never or rarely use it and those who use it often or always.

Building a connected school community enhances learning outcomes and support, collaboration and wellbeing for the entire school. Learning environments that are deeply united have an array of benefits for students, teachers, parents and the wider school. The important role of the community is recognized by school staff who wish to engage with community members as they seek additional support to their overall policy against school



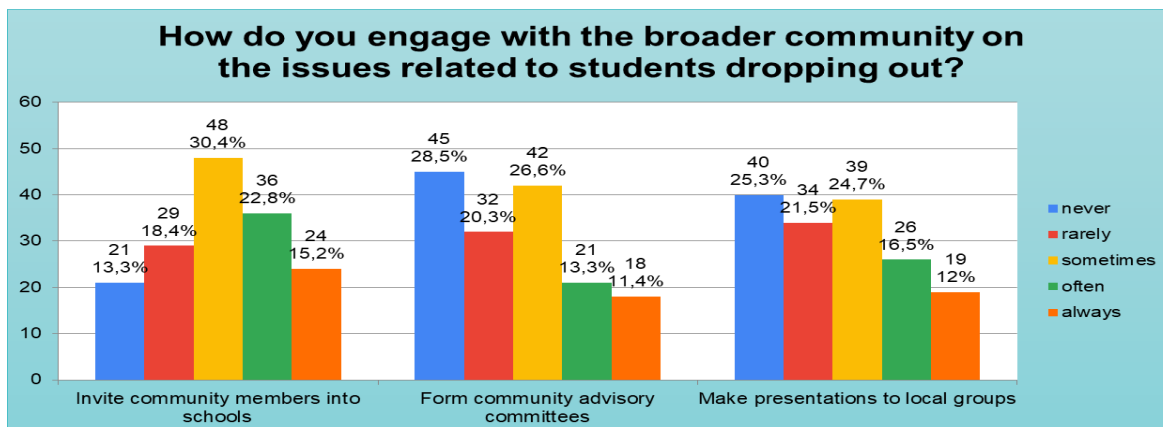
dropout. There are many ways of engagement but from the graph 7.17 and 7.18 the way that gathers the highest percentage of the respondents who use it often or always is “Invite community members into school” (38% in total – 60 respondents). For the other four engagement practices listed above, “Partnerships with groups/Businesses”, “Attend Community/Government meetings”, “District School Board meetings”, “Newsletter/Website”, the percentages of respondents who use them often or always are high (32,9%, 32,9%, 31,6% and 36,1% respectively) but even higher are the percentages of those who never or rarely implement such practices (39,9%, 37,3%, 39,2% and 39,2% respectively).

7.17 Engagement of broader community on the issues related to students’ dropout



Two engagement practices that show the least frequency of use among respondents are “Form community advisory committees” and “Make presentations to local groups” with high respective percentages of 48,7% and 46,8% overall of those who never or rarely use it.

### 7.18 Engagement of broader community on the issues related to students' dropout



In the next question we examined the existence of services that school staff provide to students who temporarily don't attend school. As we can see from the graphs 7.19 and 7.20 such services that are provided with the biggest frequency are "Tutoring" as the majority of respondents answered that they use it often or always (56,3% in total-89 respondents), "Counseling" with an overall percentage of those who use it often or always of 55,7% (88 respondents) and "Schoolwork provided to student" with a corresponding percentage of 53,8% (85 respondents). "Online courses" is a not preferred method as the biggest percentage of the respondents answered that they never provide it or that they provide it rarely (46,2% overall - 73 respondents).

Chart 7.19 Services provided to students who are temporarily not attending school

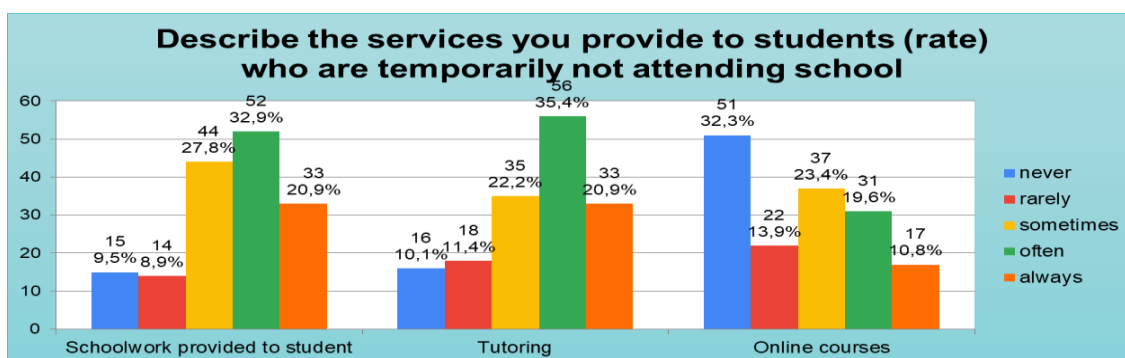
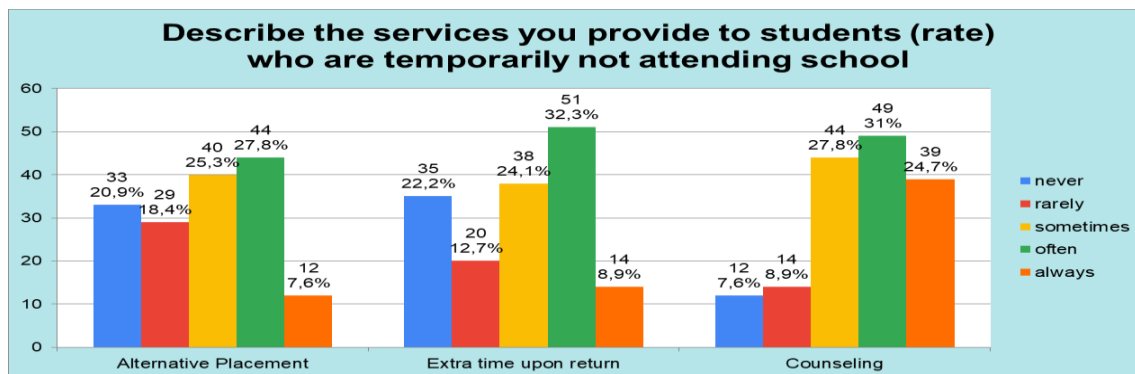


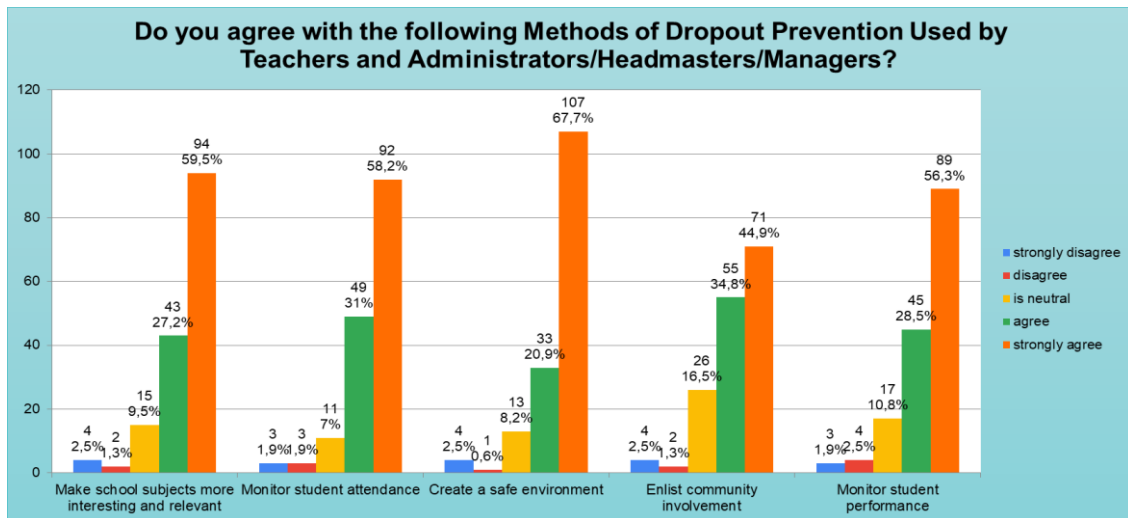
Chart 7.20 Services provided to students who are temporarily not attending school



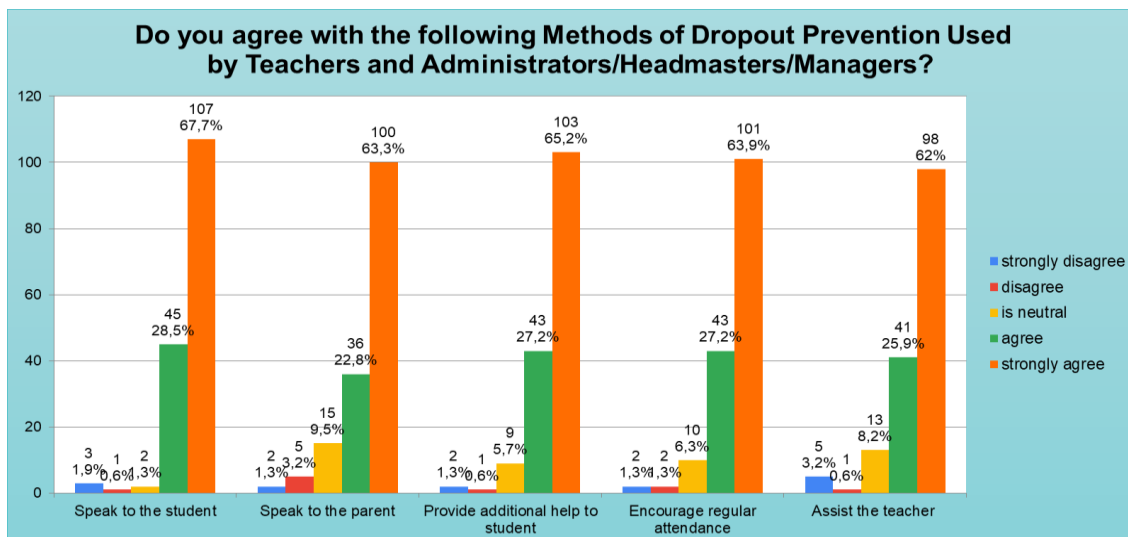
The other two methods “Extra time upon return” and “Alternative Placement” are provided by a significant percentage of the respondents often or always (41,1% and 35,4% respectively) but at the same time the percentage of those who answered that they never or rarely provide them is almost as large (34,8% and 39,2% respectively). The positive conclusion that emerges from the observation of the graphs 7.19 and 7.20 is that school staff provide services to students even if the latter are temporarily not attending school.

In the last question we examined the school staff agreement on the Dropout Prevention Methods. As we observe in the following two charts below 7.21. a, b the vast majority of respondents recognize their value in the prevention of the phenomenon of school dropout. It is noteworthy that in almost all methods the total percentage of the respondents who agree or strongly agree exceeds 85%. Only in the “Enlist community involvement” method the corresponding percentage is slightly smaller (79,7%) but so high that it does not diminish the great importance of this method.

Chart 7.21 a, b. Agreement on methods of Dropout Prevention



## 7.2 Inductive Statistic Results



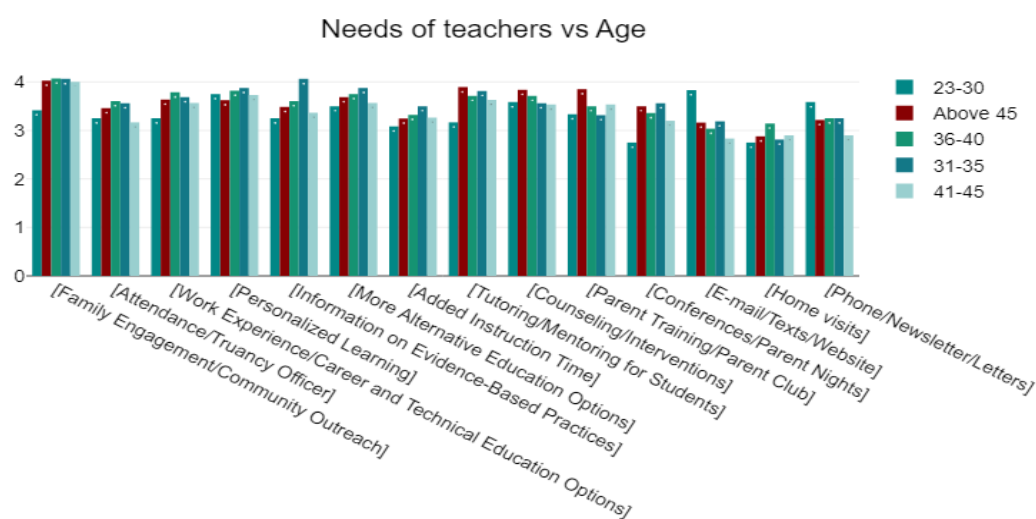
Inductive statistics is a method of statistical inference that involves making generalizations about a population based on a sample of data. It involves collecting data and using that data to form a hypothesis or theory about the population being studied. The hypothesis is then tested using statistical methods to determine the probability that the results are due to chance or to a real effect.

Hypothesis testing is an important aspect of inductive statistics. It involves setting up two hypotheses, a null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and an alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ). The null hypothesis is the default position, which assumes that there is no significant difference or relationship between variables, while the alternative hypothesis proposes that there is a significant difference or relationship between variables. The aim of hypothesis testing is to evaluate the evidence from the sample data to either reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis.



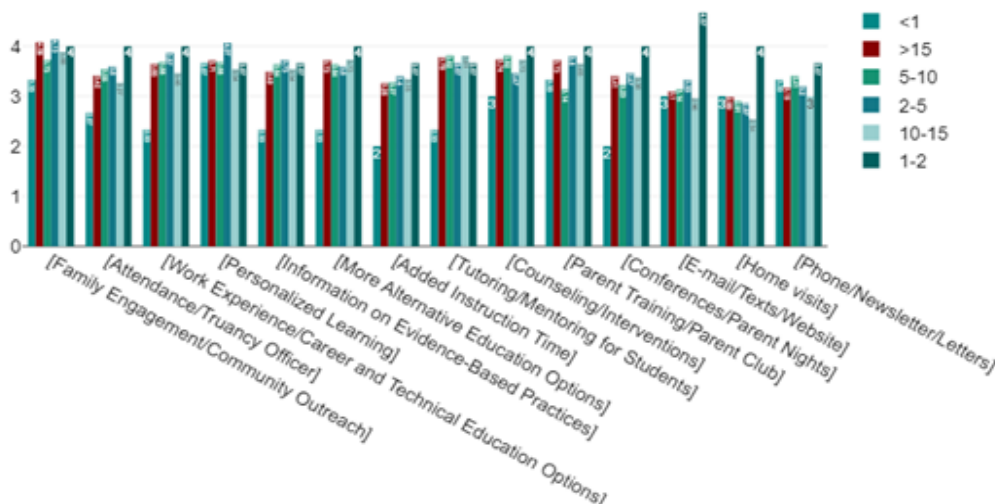
To test a hypothesis, statistical methods such as t-tests, ANOVA, or regression analysis were used to calculate the probability of obtaining the observed results if the null hypothesis is true. If the probability of obtaining the observed results under the null hypothesis is very low (less than 0.05), then we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. On the other hand, if the probability is not low enough, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is insufficient evidence to support the alternative hypothesis. To accomplish a well-implemented hypothesis testing that will provide valid results and at the same time will recognize the most important needs of teachers regarding their response to school dropout, a series of different tests (as described above) took place.

In our survey these tests were connected to the needs that teachers might have and their general support for facing school dropout are influenced by other factors such as demographic characteristics, school characteristics and acquisition of teachers. More specifically, all the metric variables of the section “Needs of Prevention Strategies for School Dropout” from the questionnaire were individually compared with the nominal variables as shown below:

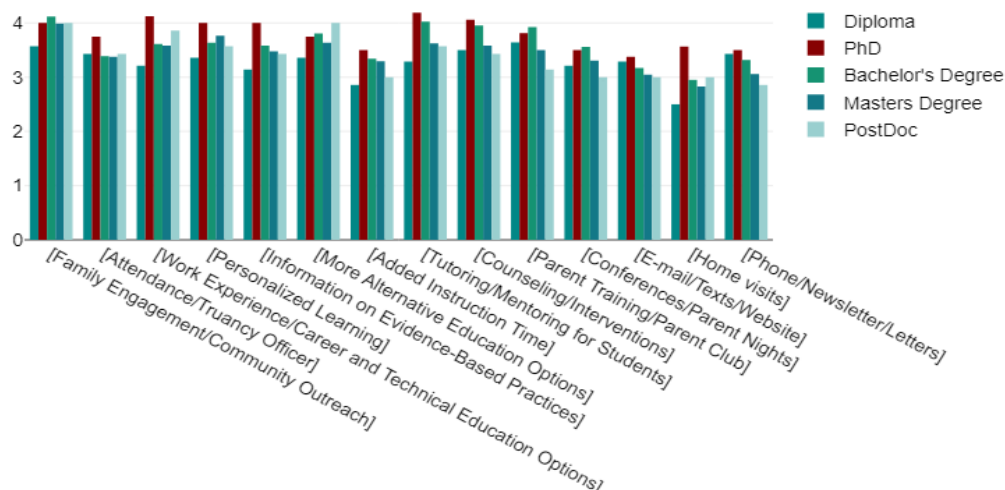




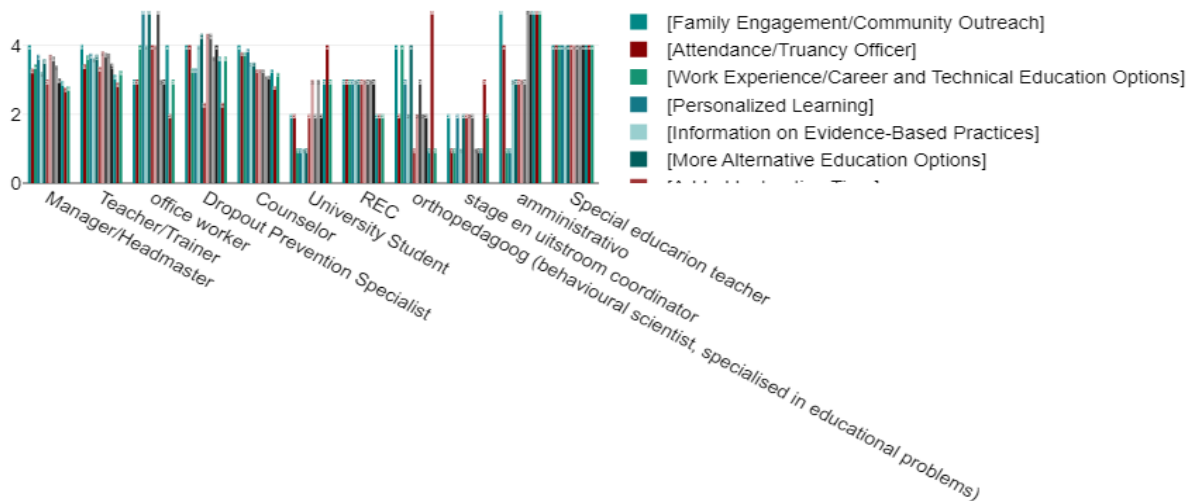
### Needs of teachers vs Years in Education



### Needs of teachers vs Highest academic qualification

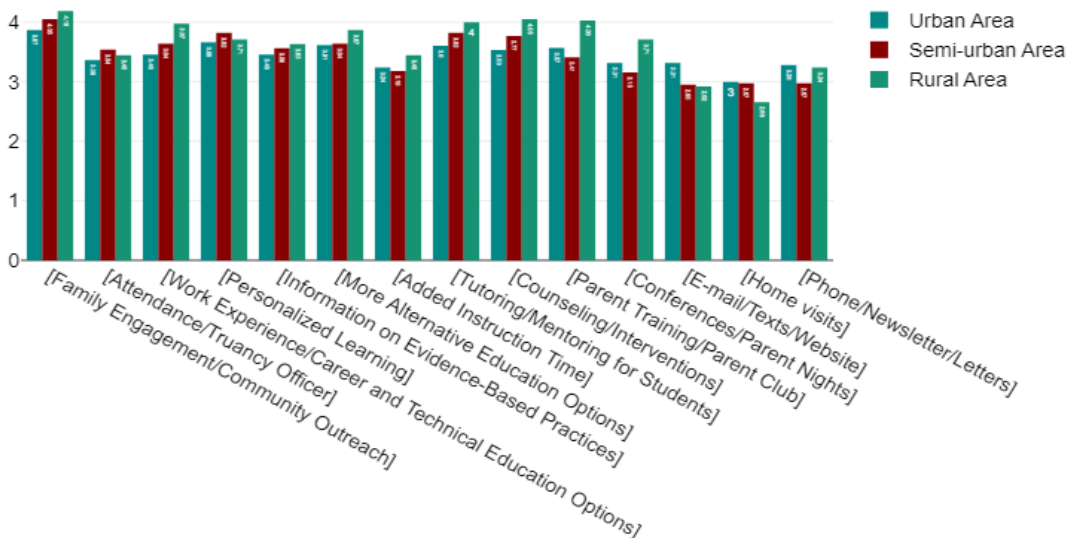


### Needs of teachers vs Position

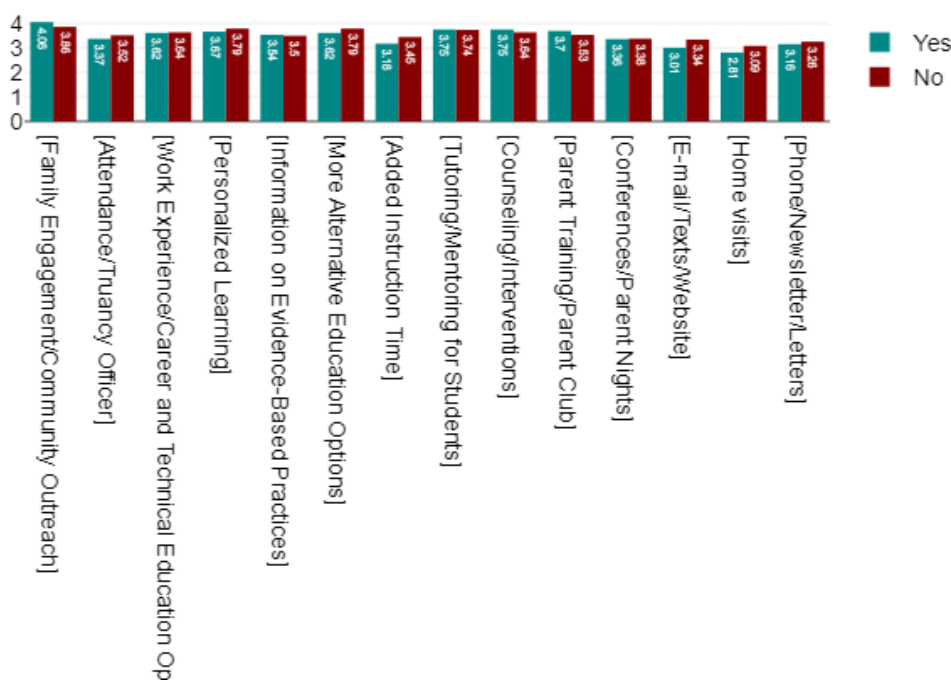




Needs of teachers vs School location

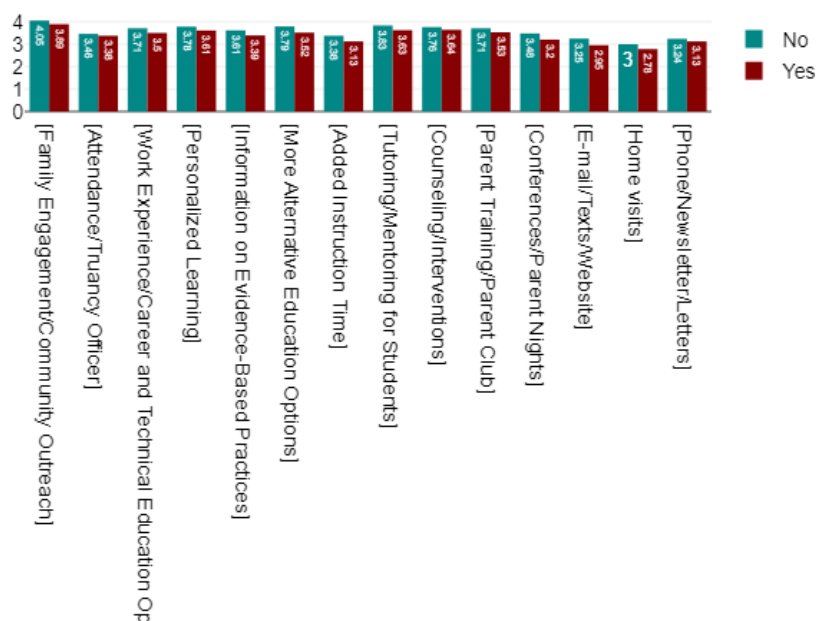


Needs of teachers vs "My school district has a dropout prevention plan"

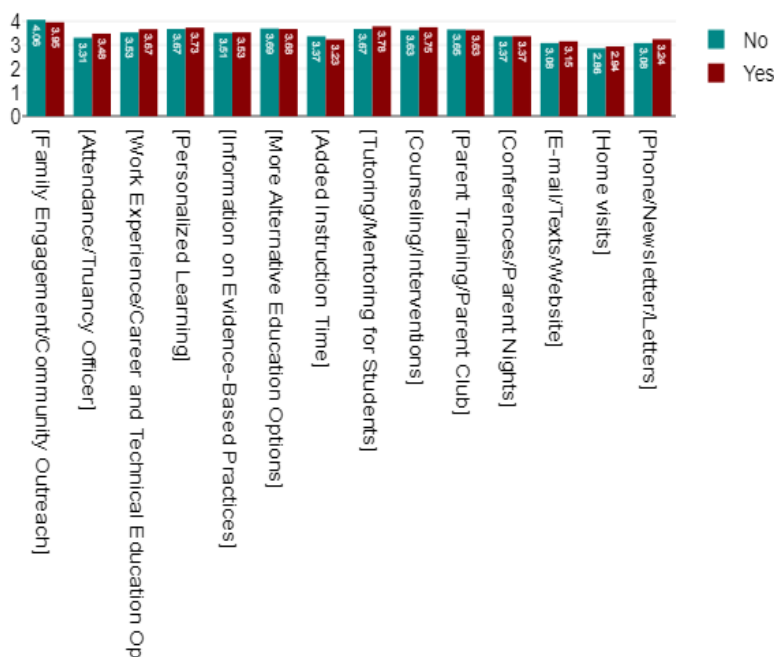




### Needs of teachers vs "I have had training on my school's dropout plan"



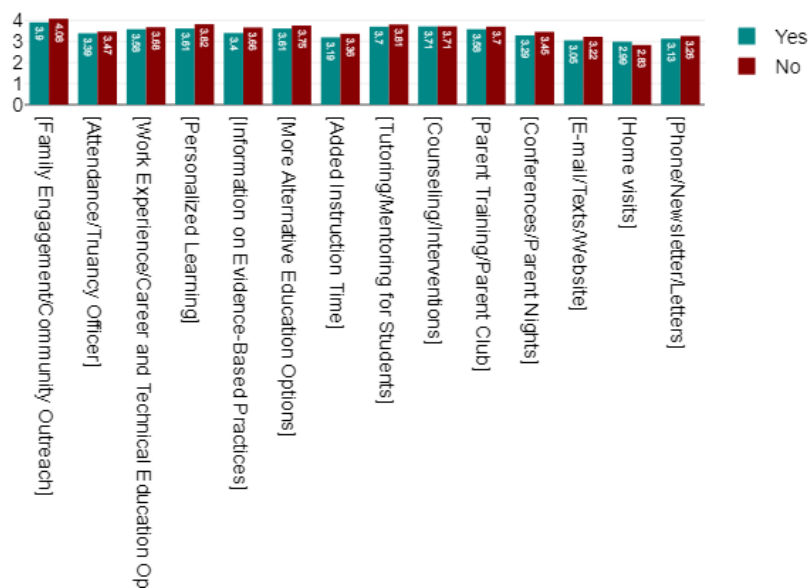
### Needs of teachers vs "I have taught students that have dropped out"







Needs of teachers vs "I have had training on dropout risk factors"





## Results

The hypothesis testing helped us conclude that only three out of the fourteen suggested strategies that teachers might need more support when it comes to preventing school dropout, is influenced by other factors as shown above. Analytically the results have shown that the “needs” [Work experience/Career and Technical Education Options], [Counseling/Interventions] and [Parent Training/Parent Club] present a significant difference with the variable “School location”.

### 7.2.1 Work experience/Career and Technical Education Options

Null hypothesis		Alternative hypothesis	
There is no difference between the 3 categories of the independent variable “My school is located in a” with respect to the dependent variable [Work Experience/Career and Technical Education Options].		There is a difference between the 3 categories of the independent variable “My school is located in a” with respect to the dependent variable [Work Experience/Career and Technical Education Options].	
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Urban Area	83	3.46	0.98
Semi-urban Area	39	3.64	1.09
Rural Area	38	3.97	0.82
Total	160	3.63	0.99

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p	Critical F-Value
Between Groups	6.95	2	3.47	3.67	.028	3.05
Within Groups	148.55	157	0.95			
Total	155.5	159				



Bonferroni Post-hoc-Tests

		Mean diff.	Std. Error	p	95% CI lower limit	95% CI upper limit
Urban Area	Semi-urban Area	-0.18	0.189	1	-0.65	0.28
Urban Area	Rural Area	-0.52	0.191	.023	-0.98	-0.05
Semi-urban Area	Rural Area	-0.33	0.222	.407	-0.88	0.21

Fisher's Least Significant difference

Variables	Average difference	t	p
Urban Area - Semi-urban Area	-0.18	-0.97	.333
Urban Area - Rural Area	-0.52	-2.71	.008
Semi-urban Area - Rural Area	-0.33	-1.5	.136

Analytically, as we can observe in the charts 7.2.1 a one-factor analysis of variance has shown that there is a significant difference between the categorical variable “My school is located in a” and the variable [Work Experience/Career and Technical Education Options]  $F = 3.67$ ,  $p = .028$ .

Thus, with the available data, the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the 3 categories of the independent variable “My school is located in a” with respect to the dependent variable [Work Experience/Career and Technical Education Options] is rejected. The ANOVA test showed that there was a significant difference. A Bonferroni Post hoc test was used to compare the groups in pairs to find out which was significantly different. The Bonferroni Post hoc test showed that the pairwise group comparison of Urban Area - Rural Area has a p-value of less than 0.05, and thus, based on the available data; it can be assumed that the two groups are significantly different. From the above we can conclude the school location plays a significant role in the implementation of the school dropout prevention



strategy that refers to the teacher’s work experience and Career and Technical Education Options.

### 7.2.2 Counseling/Interventions

Null hypothesis	Alternative hypothesis
There is no difference between the 3 categories of the independent variable “My school is located in a” with respect to the dependent variable [Counseling/Interventions].	There is a difference between the 3 categories of the independent variable “My school is located in a” with respect to the dependent variable [Counseling/Interventions].

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Urban Area	83	3.53	1.05
Semi-urban Area	39	3.77	1.01
Rural Area	38	4.05	0.8
Total	160	3.71	1.01

#### ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p	Critical F-Value
Between Groups	7.28	2	3.64	3.72	.026	3.05
Within Groups	153.49	157	0.98			
Total	160.77	159				

#### Bonferroni Post-hoc-Tests

		Mean diff.	Std. Error	p	95% CI lower limit	95% CI upper limit
Urban Area	Semi-urban Area	-0.24	0.192	.644	-0.71	0.23
Urban Area	Rural Area	-0.52	0.194	.023	-1	-0.05



		Mean diff.	Std. Error	p	95% CI lower limit	95% CI upper limit
Semi-urban Area	Rural Area	-0.28	0.225	.631	-0.84	0.27

Fisher's Least Significant difference

Variables	Average difference	t	p
Urban Area - Semi-urban Area	-0.24	-1.25	.215
Urban Area - Rural Area	-0.52	-2.7	.008
Semi-urban Area - Rural Area	-0.28	-1.26	.21

A one-factor analysis of variance has shown that there is a significant difference between the categorical variable “My school is located in a” and the variable [Counseling/Interventions]  $F = 3.72, p = .026$ .

Thus, with the available data, the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the 3 categories of the independent variable My school is located in a with respect to the dependent variable In which of the following “strategies” do you think you need more support when it comes to preventing students from dropping out? [Counseling/Interventions], is rejected.

The ANOVA showed that there was a significant difference. A Bonferroni Post hoc test was used to compare the groups in pairs to find out which was significantly different. The Bonferroni Post hoc test showed that the pairwise group comparison of Urban Area - Rural Area has an p-value of less than 0.05, and thus, based on the available data, it can be assumed that the two groups are significantly different.

From the above we can conclude the the school location plays a significant role in the implementation of the school dropout prevention strategy that refers to Counseling/Interventions.



### 7.2.3 Parent Training/Parent Club

Null hypothesis	Alternative hypothesis
There is no difference between the 3 categories of the independent variable “My school is located in a” with respect to the dependent variable [Parent Training/Parent Club].	There is a difference between the 3 categories of the independent variable “My school is located in a” with respect to the dependent [Parent Training/Parent Club].

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Urban Area	83	3.57	1.17
Semi-urban Area	39	3.41	1.09
Rural Area	38	4.03	0.94
Total	160	3.64	1.12

#### ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p	Critical F-Value
Between Groups	8.18	2	4.09	3.37	.037	3.05
Within Groups	190.8	157	1.22			
Total	198.98	159				

#### Bonferroni Post-hoc-Tests

		Mean diff.	Std. Error	p	95% CI lower limit	95% CI upper limit
Urban Area	Semi-urban	0.16	0.214	1	-0.37	0.68
Urban Area	Rural Area	-0.46	0.216	.104	-0.99	0.07
Semi-urban	Rural Area	-0.62	0.251	.046	-1.23	0



Fisher's Least Significant difference

Variables	Average difference	t	p
Urban Area - Semi-Urban Area	0.16	0.73	.467
Urban Area - Rural Area	-0.46	-2.13	.035
Semi-urban Area - Rural Area	-0.62	-2.45	.015

A one-factor analysis of variance has shown that there is a significant difference between the categorical variable My school is located in a and the variable [Parent Training/Parent Club]  $F = 3.37, p = .037$ .

Thus, with the available data, the null hypothesis that There is no difference between the 3 categories of the independent variable My school is located in a with respect to the dependent variable In which of the following “strategies” do you think you need more support when it comes to preventing students from dropping out? [Parent Training/Parent Club], is rejected.

The ANOVA showed that there was a significant difference. A Bonferroni Post hoc test was used to compare the groups in pairs to find out which was significantly different. The Bonferroni Post hoc test showed that the pairwise group comparison of Semi-urban Area - Rural Area has an p-value of less than 0.05, and thus, based on the available data, it can be assumed that the two groups are significantly different.

From the above we can conclude the the school location plays a significant role in the implementation of the school dropout prevention strategy that refers to Parent Training/Parent Club.



### 7.3 Qualitative analysis and Presentation of Research Data

For the examination of the basic research questions of our survey we conducted a qualitative research that took place after the completion of the quantitative research. More particular we interviewed school staff who are engaged with the procedures of prevention of school dropout phenomenon in each partners' country. We gathered a total amount of 13 interviews from 6 different schools of partner's countries local areas.

Our research tool was an interview that included a set of structured questions. From the analyzation of the given answers we summarized the common aspects and depicted the differences between the respondents.

*For the Opening Question we asked the interviews to describe their daily practices at the educational service where they work and to identify the key points of their job related to the knowledge and the competences that they have on the prevention of School Dropout Phenomenon.*

According to teachers' answers the necessary competences for responding to school dropout phenomenon are personal, social, emotional and digital competences. They support that empathy, collaboration and communication skills play an important role for anticipating the problem of school dropout.

Some of the characteristic answers from Spanish interviewees are referring to the next: *“As a teacher, from my point of view, it is very important to have empathy and active listening with the students, their identity and their situation. Also, it is important giving motivating classes and the adaptation of materials/exams to have into account the different levels of competence of the students.”*

Also, in Italy teachers support: *“As for our work, we check attendance and absences, the state of well-being or not of the pupils, trying to understand how to intervene, in case of problems, proceeding with the various reports, using the protocol that we adopted with the “Anti-dropout Board” of the South East District of Ferrara.” “In my job as a teacher, I often face early school leaving, seeing cases of dropout and I believe the first strategy to tackle the phenomenon is dialogue, to address the problem and talk about it. Obviously, it is also essential to report these situations to the school headmaster, in order to be able to evaluate the situation and intervene promptly.” “As a teacher, I use skills that are mainly related to a concrete operational didactic, involving the student who builds his/her own path,*





*since dropout phenomenon is a real scourge. It has consequences not yet in the short time, but above all, in the future, not only for the student but also for the whole community. As a Dropout Prevention Specialist, I collaborate with the teachers of the classrooms, suggesting them engaging educational strategies or in interviewing students and I cooperate with social services operators (in these years a network has been created on the territory made by the school and the various members of the community).”*

In Netherlands a characteristic answer of a teacher refers to the next: *“The starting point for any teacher/mentor/coach is knowledge of the legal framework and the protocol you have to act upon. But that is paper. It is also important to be flexible depending on the situation (for example, if a young person who regularly misses school finally shows up but wears a cap while this is forbidden, you should not punish him for this). Empathy and involvement on a personal level are also important. Finally, guidance is needed (being directive).”*

***The second set of questions focused on the identification of reasons for school dropout. More specifically the interviewees answered to next questions:***

- What are the causes of student’s dropout?
- What reasons do children say would cause or have caused them to drop out of school?
- What reasons do parents say would cause or have caused their children to drop out of school?

According to the answers given the most common identified reasons of school dropout are social problems, economic difficulties, unemployment problems, lack of family and school support, lack of educational policy and peers disengagement.

Characteristically an interviewee from Spain supports *“From my point of view, dropout is caused by different reasons: First of all, it depends a lot on how the family see the fact that the student attends to the school. If the family or their closers believe the school is a waste of time, the student probably will follow this direction. Second cause could be the motivation in two different ways: Teaching methods interesting and adapted to nowadays needs. Student competences. If the material is adapted to all levels or only to one common level which could proceed with big differences between students.”*



As a Greek interviewee explains *“I believe that, while it is a serious issue and has been for several years now in the educational community, it has not been tackled with the necessary seriousness by the Ministry of Education. I would say, lack of educational policy”*.

Also, an Italian interviewee says *“There are causes that I call “traditional” causes: the wrong school choice (perhaps induced by the choice of the friends) leads students to leave school at the age of 16. Then (providing our school both technical and vocational training), some students think that choosing the vocational option is easy (few rules, doing what you want, just lab hours), but it is not actually like that. Sometimes, the school choice depends on the advice given by middle school teachers, based on the evaluation and behavior of the student, without an accurate guidance founded on what the student would be or would do. In the last 3 years, the subject of the dropout reports were children who suffered the pandemic period attending the middle school or attending the first year of the high school.” “On the other hand, families are not competent and struggle to support their children. Moreover, families suffer increasing economic problems. For example, vocational school is very expensive, so much so that one has to provide many bonuses to help families and students. Therefore, the social environment in which these kids live is also very different from the one of 6 years ago. Finally, kids don't have a vision of their future, underestimating how much school can offer them for their future. Before the pandemic, during guidance activities, we met young people a little motivated; today the boys are less than enthusiastic, as if they felt indifference. Often the motivation is this: “I come to this school, because I'm closer to home, I don't have to take transport and the trip is shorter and in the morning I can wake up later.”*

From the Netherlands teachers support *“Corona had also an impact because of online-only teaching with few opportunities for Career Orientation and Guidance (LOB) to give pupils and students more insight into their qualities and abilities so they can choose a suitable further education or find a job (feel and taste in practice). Choices made only on paper end up disappointing. There is no general exponential increase in early school leavers though, except in the care sector pushing parents to choose that direction because of staff shortages within care. An analysis is currently taking place by departmental leaders and pivotal officials regarding dropouts, looking in particular at the story behind the numbers.*

A Polish teacher explains that *“Students actions are significantly influenced by peers and the media (especially social media). This influence is not always good. First contacts*



*with drugs, alcohol, legal highs, electronic cigarettes, drugs that allow them to focus on their studies for longer, steroids. Family problems (parents' divorce), hormonal storm - first tempestuous love, search for one's own identity, lack of acceptance of one's own body, mental disorders, gender identity disorders - rebellion against the rules in force, inability to communicate properly.”*

Also, from Romania a teacher indicates that *“The main causes of school dropout are given by: socio-economic conditions, increased disinterest on the part of students and equally on the part of parents, as well as the lack of involvement of the central authority with clear and flexible concrete measures.”*

***For the reasons that children say that they cause them to dropout they indicate the family problems, school inclusion, search for work, underestimation of school.***

As the interviewees support *“Spain- They don't see the line that joins the dots, but the isolated dots. They say that day I was sick, my mother didn't have gas in the car, she didn't have money... until a point comes where they already think: after so many days why do I have to go there? anyway I won't understand anything at class.”*

*“Greece- I believe that the children that drop out are the ones that are unable to meet up to the analytical program of their class.”*

*“Italy- The children of Goro tend to reach the compulsory school term to immediately switch to the VET and move quickly to work. In fact, once they have completed the Middle school— despite having no more official information — they tell us that they take up the Mandatory Training or Apprenticeship”, but we do not know anything more. It seems obvious that, as soon as they reach the working age, they leave their training paths to enter family businesses, even if we do not have official information (this is mainly hypotheses that we make within our committee. Mesola’s problem is due to recently transferred foreign families, especially of Slavic origin. Their children usually attend in a discontinuous way, because in their culture there is little consideration of the value of education and this usually has consequences on their school attendance. Their sentences are: “I am not able”, “I don't care”, “I don't need it”, “I don't want to be with others”, “I am 16 years old and I’m going to work.”*

*“Netherlands- One very obvious reason is that they say they have no goal (what am I learning for?) In addition, stress also plays an important role (too much on their minds) and then you have the category that has ended up in the criminal circuit. Young people who fail*



*or want to leave school are discussed at a so-called exit interview where they are asked why they want to leave school. Reasons given by students include: Training does not fit my person and expectations, Psychological strain, unstable family situation.”*

*“Poland- Most often a family problem - conflicts within the family (parents burden the child with their problems, e.g. they do not fulfil their maintenance obligations, the child does not feel accepted, violence occurs and there is a desire to escape from the environment in which the young person is currently living). Responsible child often takes on hard work to support themselves and their younger siblings. Sometimes the child believes that he/she will manage and earn for himself/herself and will be better off (he/she will no longer witness or be the subject of violence). Depression/mental illness is also a reason for dropping out of school (relationship anxiety). Lack of sense in learning something that is known to be outdated and unnecessary in life for a long time - a feeling of wasting time.”*

*“Romania -A disinterested or disintegrated family as well as the mirage of money from the West seem to be the main reasons cited by children. The main reasons listed by the students are the lack of motivation in teaching, the subject being too dense, sometimes the relationship between teacher and student”*

***On the other hand, the reasons that parents support would cause or have caused their children to drop out of school*** are referring to lack of conscience, the lack of educational support, children health problem and low self-esteem.

*As the interviews say “Italy- Usually parents report problems in class placement and low self-esteem of their children, who live in school with fear, sometimes manifesting physical symptoms (stomach ache, anxiety crisis, crying).” “Families are disarmed and they can't get the kids to school. Therefore, many times they can't get them up in the morning. Many mothers say: I don't know what to do. We have many single parent families. We also have children who have come out of a socio-educational community or who are within a socio-educational community or children who doesn't live in the local area but that the socio-educational communities send us for our inclusion programs.”*

*“Parents are not fully aware of the importance of school, of the importance to achieve those basic and critical thinking skills, that are not directly relevant to the job, but that are needed in order to solve problems more effectively, to analyze facts and form a judgment. And I would like to specify, however, that we are not just talking about a low target... we have had problems with families with a medium to high level of education (with a high school*



*diploma)...I do not know how to say... probably all these families are not aware that the school can provide useful tools to face life and, perhaps, do not see the “constructive” part useful to the future of their children.”*

*“Netherlands- Parents sometimes want them to continue studying but young people do not have enough capacity to do so ( too high expectations from parents) Often given as reasons are: family situation not stable, divorce, child is a slacker, lies on the couch all the time, gaming, etc. ...One has to bear in mind that young people in the 16-20 age group sometimes go through a difficult period . A period when you either make it in life or not.”*

*“Poland- Addictions to computer games, drugs, alcohol, mental illness, unwanted pregnancy, getting into bad company (negative peer influence), inability to reach the rebellious teenager (parents say the teenager does not listen to them - communication breakdown/disruption).”*

*“Romania-The main reasons mentioned by parents when they refer to the causes that children have for dropping out of school are given by the lack of motivation and interest of the student in question, as well as the socio-economic environment.” “The reasons listed by the parents would be the unfavorable atmosphere in society such as the environment, the children's disinterest in school, as a result of the ease with which they can continue their studies in vocational education, here it is no longer an entrance exam.”*

***In the next set of structured questions, we asked the interviewees to refer to measures that are taken into their school district for preventing the dropout phenomenon. In the first one interviewees expressed their opinion on how their school view dropout phenomenon and in which ways they address it.***

The interviewees pointed out several quantitative measure and qualitative measures, as keeping attendance lists for early detection, teachers’ intervening to students, finding resources, enhancing parents’ awareness, providing supporting courses to students, adapting school programs, providing support of specialists, enhancing students’ understanding of the school usefulness, improving the dialogue between parents, students and teachers, providing support of local community services.

More particularly interviewees support the next: *“Spain-On one hand there are quantitative measures. Attendance list is passed every class hour. As the teachers change each class, each teacher passes the list at his/her class time. On this way we collect objective*



*data. We also do a qualitative analysis of the impact of these absences. Impact on the academic achievement, on the social relationships, on the mood... After these quantitative and qualitative analysis, we assess the impact. If there is a risk we start with the interventions: to talk to the student and to the family to know the reasons, if there are health problems, lack of economic resources, social problems... and we try to help families looking for fees, or other resources and make them aware of the importance of the school and to obtain the certificate of compulsory education.”*

*“Greece- We try, as much as possible, to push them to follow the rules, but we have also asked that there be specialists and psychologists and educators so that they can form classes so the children can reach the basic level of junior high school”. “I believe that in the Greek school, and when we I say Greek school I mean the educational community,” we swift the blame to the parents instead of us. The educational community is unprepared and does not care or take any measures. They consider it a relief when the student doesn’t show up. We see this with the Roma, with the immigrants, the presence of these children is considered a burden to the educational community. I don’t think any measures are taken.”*

*“Italy- First of all, trying to make children understand that education is not competing with their future work, but can help them enlarge their possibilities. Then, of course, we try to be attentive to the problem of foreigners, talking as much as possible to parents to make them aware of the cultural preparation of their children. I would say that the first approach is to communicate with them. The dialogue is the mean to let children and their parents feel accepted. Then we must take into account, unfortunately, that our school has a high turn over teachers, being a school set in a rural area.”*

*“Italy-In my school there are several activities that aim at the contrast of school dropout. First of all, all teachers of the class board are required to monitor the situation of absences, in particular the coordinator, who is required to check critical situations from the first weeks of school: the coordinator has to contact the families of pupils who make many or prolonged absences and quickly report to the school secretariat situations at risk”. “For school, every abandonment is a failure. The class coordinators are the figures who have the control the situation of the class and know the timing of the anti-dropout protocol, to report to the Dropout Prevention Specialist the children who do not attend. The Dropout Prevention Specialist contacts the family to try to figure out what’s going on. If the boy no longer wants to attend, but is in compulsory school, the families are informed about the*



*functioning of the protocol and about the possible consequences. The reporting documents are filled into the School Office, the Mayor and the offices in charge. The School Office sends a communication to the Municipal Police. According to my personal experience, all the municipalities involved in dropout communications promptly responded and many children were recovered. If the goal is to make families understand the importance of attending school, the involvement of law enforcement is right. When the children return to school, the Class Coordinator with the Responsible of Dropout (in collaboration with the sociologist of the Municipality's Family Office and the Listening Desk "Point of View" that is the psychological support service to students, families and teachers) intervenes with a personalized approach, trying to understand what the problems are, restoring the Covenant of co-responsibility, leveraging socialization."*

*"Netherlands- Key actors are the care team, compulsory education, mentors, bureau HALT (which focuses on preventing and punishing juvenile delinquency. Based on the belief that young people deserve a second chance). the care advice team internally (consisting of a school social worker, a remedial pedagogue and a care coordinator) who initially liaise closely with the mentors, the external care advisory team involving school doctor and compulsory education, the multidisciplinary team which also involves all possible assistance a young person may be involved in. Transgressive behavior, such as destroying things, getting into fights or scolding the teacher, occurs in every school. In many cases, schools manage to deal with transgressive behavior internally, collaboration with stakeholders. "There are several approaches: The so-called Route X in which students are given the opportunity to reorient themselves to everything possible within the school for 6 to 12 weeks and then choose another course if necessary. Also, at MBO level 1 (one-year entry training intended for people without a diploma) and level 2 (two or three-year basic vocational training) with two choices: a vocational training programme (BOL = 4 days school and 1 day internship) or a vocational guidance programme (BBL 4= days working and 1 day at school)), The school has the following approach: A reception class for overburdened young people and a Coach class under the guidance of a coach."*

*"Poland- Firstly, analysing the causes of absenteeism and preventing it early is crucial. Understanding the student's family situation (talking to the student and parents about difficulties in this area) is extremely important. Once a month at my school, each teacher analyses the attendance of each pupil in his/her subject and sends the information*



*(if attendance is low) to the form tutor and teacher. This teacher, in discussion with the pupil, parents, determines the cause and possible ways to help the pupil to eliminate these situations (or knowledge gaps). In certain situations, pupils sign contracts that oblige them to go to school. We try to prevent situations where it is too late to react and the number of absences leads to the student being ungraded or removed from school.”*

*“Romania-From the point of view of the school, the fault belongs exclusively to the social context in which we find ourselves, the negative attitude of some students towards teaching and work is the lack of motivation, as approaches at the school level, we implement the made module that allows us to identify students in risk of dropping out of school according to academic results and the number of absences, we immediately inform the parents regarding the onset of absenteeism, followed by discussions held by the school psychologist with parents and students, notifying parents regarding the number of absences recorded but also organizing lectures with parents and the involvement of the school mediator in our unit are things we resort to as a school unit.”*

***In the next questioned we asked the interviewees to refer to any particular measures that are taken to bring the dropout children back to schools.***

According to their answers measures are focused to mentors and absenteeism technicians’ supporting work, gypsy promoters’ work, Roma associations’ help, anti-dropout commission work, municipality support by specialists, extracurricular support and improvement of relations between the school and the family.

Giving some examples of the interviewees’ answers we can write down the next aspects:

*“Spain-The municipality have a technician of absenteeism that collaborate with us. His mission is to adapt the absenteeism protocol (from the government) at a local level. He is a mentor of our students, comes to the school once a week and accompany the students, and also talks to the families. These mentoring is sometimes specific, but sometimes is continued over time. He works a part-time at the school, but he can work with ten children approx. and they are ten children that we are able to bring back. We also have the promotor of the gypsy population that works specifically with gypsy students. He also prevents the absenteeism.”*





*“Greece- We inform all the above with letters and phone calls, and the parents and the grandparents but also the Roma Association. Every year we try to talk about the problems and encourage them to bring their children to school. Also, one of the measures is differentiated teaching. But that demands additional training and cooperation with the family. It requires a systematic approach. And a systemic approach including the family and community frame”.*

*“Italy- For several years, our school has created the ‘Anti-Dropout’ Commission. As of this year, has become part of the group the deputy principal who is a primary school teacher. This because of the arrival of many immigrants that poses a whole range of new needs and problems. The question is as follows: can you do anything before middle school? Then, again through the “Anti-Dropout” Board, we began to work with social enterprises (cooperative societies), to create afternoon activities to support students to do their homework, but also to involve young people in recreational activities. Then as an “Anti-Dropout” Board we use a monitoring form that we fill in at the beginning of the year, mid-year and end of year, with the numbers of dropout/early school leavers considering the different types of students.”*

*“Netherlands- Once children have left school early and are still subject to compulsory education. The responsibility no longer lies with the school but with the Regional Reporting and Coordination Function (RMC) early school leaving. A compulsory education officer monitors whether children and young people who are subject to compulsory education or qualification requirements are registered at a school and attend that school regularly. Young people between the ages of 18 and 23 who leave education without a starting qualification are supervised by the. The Netherlands is divided into 40 Regional RMCs. Each RMC region has a contact municipality that coordinates the reporting and registration of early school leavers and takes care of possibilities of referral and re-entry into education. Pathway counsellors look at the possibilities with the young person. Even if the young person has problems, the pathway counsellor can help, for instance by referring them to social services. The ultimate goal of the RMC Act is that the young person goes to school or has a job.”*

*“Poland- In the case of my school, whose primary aim is to prepare pupils for the baccalaureate, it is the transfer of pupils to another type of school - with lower content requirements, a shorter cycle of education (e.g. a trade school, technical school, etc., i.e. where the pupil will be able to complete his/her education and quickly gain a profession).*



*We cooperate with universities (extending our offer) and non-governmental organizations - however, in light of the changing educational regulations, this is becoming increasingly difficult, as everything requires the approval of the school superintendent. For students, for example, we organise additional projects, e.g. as part of Erasmus + programmes. A wide range of interest circles, extracurricular support to develop passions (for which teachers do not receive additional remuneration) helps to find an area in which every student can feel 'outstanding'. Staff are constantly training to understand the changing needs of young people, parents, other stakeholder groups."*

*"Romania- The main measure would be given by the reintegration of the children by increasing or improving the relations between the school and the family through all those measures and through that legal framework that already exists. In addition to the methods listed in the previous question, the school tries to take actions to support children through lectures with parents on the topic of students missing classes, we avoid the formation of elites, the marginalization of students with poor academic results, we also have many partnerships with the police for the prevention of juvenile delinquency but also with numerous entrepreneurs, small entrepreneurs to arouse their curiosity about how they can start a business here the topic being about financial education."*

***In the next question interviewees were asked to refer to some co-curricular activities that in their opinion influence inclination towards dropout and explain the way that this happens.***

Summarizing the proposed activities, we show that there is references to sport activities, reinforcement classes, educational projects, multidisciplinary activities, music lessons, support teach activities, mobility projects, personal development workshops, case studies, visits, meetings, pedagogical circles.

To get a clearer view we can refer to the next interviewees aspects:

*"Spain- in our school exist reinforcement and sports classes in the afternoon that are free offered by the school that help them with their homework and study."*

*"Italy- We carry out a series of projects that aim to involve more students (e.g. Olympiad of Mathematics...), various sports projects and, in the last period we have worked a lot with STEM involving, in a particular way, boys who faces difficulties in oral presentations. "We have run the School of Music for 3 years now, a theatrical project for everyone*



*(the previous years was only for disabled students), then we have “address projects”: the educational bar, a real bar inside the school coordinated by a tutor teacher who works with the students of the class.”*

*“Netherlands- The school works closely with the district team “Power Up”. Their youth workers are present at the school during every break and have personal contact with the pupils through games, conversations, etc. Sports days are provided in cooperation with youth workers from Farent (social work) ....In addition, there are also international mobility projects (e.g. with Romania, Norway, Germany) aimed at allowing pupils to have experiences other than school experiences.”*

*“Poland- Counteracting school drop-outs personal development workshops, case studies, interest circles, (e.g. sports, theatre, subjects, educational and recreational trips within the framework of EU-funded programmes), visits to workplaces, meetings in prisons (with prisoners), meetings at universities, meetings with mediators, representatives of the legal profession, with career counsellors.”*

*“Romania- Co-curricular activities are an extension of the school curriculum, indeed very few students are receptive to these activities, in general I noticed a reluctance on their behalf when they are asked to participate in pedagogical circles of the teachers in the unit or to prepare certain skits, roles for national holidays.”*

***In the next question we asked the interviewees to explain the way that school rules and regulations influence inclination towards dropout.***

The interviewees pointed out the existence of accompaniment rules, as individualized plans, special education classrooms, methods of detection of absences or systems for reporting cases but on the other hand focused to the strict regulations of the school programs that create difficulties in the school attendance.

As they characteristically support:

*“Spain-Rules have changed a lot and we have gone from the normative to the accompaniment. There are a lot of preventive measures before apply the regulations however in some cases rules are needed in order not become chaos in school. For example, some years ago, in case of absenteeism, they were expelled and still lost another week thus the students were already looking to be kicked out and not have to study... Nowadays students have positive regularization as individualized plan (for dyslexia, for example, absences are not counted, autism, learning delay, newcomers...) or special education*



*classrooms”. “The school rules and regulations that are addressed to the entire educational community -educators, students, parents- are needed. Making rules is not enough. Those rules must be implemented and followed. When the rules exist and are followed I think it contributes to the prevention of school dropout.”*

*“Italy- I believe that the regulations are fundamental to civil life and I do not see any cause/effect correlation between school regulations and early school leaving. Of course, the methods of detection of absences or the systems for reporting cases can be improved, in this sense it is important to prepare dedicated sections within the institution regulations...Students have difficulty following the regulations because they think that our type of school has no rules. This perception is also found in the population and it is common to say: “Yes, go to that school, so there’s no problem”. Actually, when they have to deal with regulations, some students are unsatisfactory (and say: Rather than standing here to these rules, I prefer to go away, others understand (and apologize). But they are, generally, the older students.”*

*“Netherlands- Yes rules and regulations influence the tendency to drop out of school. Especially “having to” is a big barrier such as being at school on time, concentration and focusing on school activities (some students are morning people but others are afternoon people). However, the timetable is leading...Both school and students have to deal with a compulsory education and qualification framework with a packet of requirements and conditions you have to fulfil. It is of course up to the school how flexible you are in this.”*

*“Poland-Pupils are made very aware of the rules and regulations in force - these are available to them at all times (on the school website, in the library). The rules are repeated and we try to be consistent in enforcing them. Their role is one of prevention and to indicate milestones at which action needs to be taken/ or consequences accepted.”*

*“Romania- Rules and often regulations are inflexible which can generate a conflict with the student's already low interest, an interest that seems to be getting lower and lower from one generation to another. The legislation in force is too lenient this year, the notion of expulsion being removed from the category of disciplinary sanctions, the new structure of the school year with the removal of semester averages has led to a decrease in students' interest, they only become aware of their poor academic results at the end of the year.”*



*In the next question interviewees were asked to give their opinion on the role of teacher in bringing the dropout children back to schools.* The most of the interviewees puts the teacher's role in the center of the educational procedure. They support that teacher is the person who must be in charge to control the phenomenon of dropout, they characterize him as early detector, mediator, animator, key-person, pedagogue, motivator, mentor, and counselor.

According to their sayings: *“Spain-The teacher is the person in charge to control the absenteeism. Assesses if there is a bad impact and warn the coordinator. He/she is the early detector and who informs the other actors and asks for help to the absenteeism technician.”*

*“Greece- The educational approach of the professor should correspond to the needs of all students. When a student has gaps, the professor shouldn't just stick to the analytical program/ curriculum of the class but cover the needs of each one of the students.”*

*“Italy- A teacher should be able to involve them, to make them understand that what they are doing is important (for them), make them work and make them engage making them feel good. They must perceive a situation of well-being as follows: “I was busy, I tried to do my assigned task. But if I have not completed everything, it is not a defeat and I have not been humiliated”. So, the teacher must be a guide, able to stimulate the children, with sensitive “receptive antennas” to understand what their interests are.”*

*“Netherlands-Most important is relationship building. Looking further and knowing what is going on so that, as a teacher, you can better assess the reason for (possible) failure and respond more efficiently. Don't just look at the visible part of the iceberg (the behavior and attitude) but especially also at what is under the water (which factors are causal for the pupil's behavior and attitude).”*

*“Poland- The teacher should encourage students/pupils to continue their studies by showing them that this is a future-oriented issue, that in the future they can have a better salary, a better job if they graduate from this school. So here the key is to motivate students and show them better prospects in the future.”*

*“Romania- The teacher must be for his student a mentor and a role model for that student who, behold, only seems to be attracted to school, so by resorting to alternative methods the teacher has the power to attract the child back to school.”*

***The last question of this set was referring to the difficulties that the interviewees had when applying the above-mentioned measures.***

The interviewees referred in general to difficulties in accompanying the families and achieving commitments, lowering the ratio of school leavers, exams, lack of parents' support, creating networks, creating inclusive and multidisciplinary projects, engaging stakeholders, pressure and lack of time due to the timetables, creating a bond between the individual pupil and the school, lack of financial resources, overloaded curriculum and classes, lack of professionals' support, lack of a flexible and permissive legal framework.

According to their aspects:

*“Spain- Lowering the ratio is the biggest difficulty...we have no other indication apart from that of calling home and notifying Social Services. In the classroom taking 4 exams is the difficulty of the material, you can't attend to everyone with 27 students with 4 specialized lines. You cannot attend individually. The one who is like a piece of furniture in the classroom should be able to do things outside the classroom so that he can learn or motivate himself in a different way than usual (more manipulative).”*

*“Greece- There is no support from the parents. Many of them are abroad, many are on other towns and they never come to the school no matter how many times we call.”*

*“Italy- Of course, we had difficulties at the beginning trying to create a network and to share actions. Also, we had difficulties in creating inclusive, engaging, multidisciplinary projects often mean having to compile many documents, create meetings, ask permissions.”*

*“Netherlands- The pressure and lack of time due to the timetable of teachers negatively affects the attention they should pay individually to their pupils. Strive to create a bond between the individual pupil and the school. This can be done by dividing available hours differently between teachers who want to coach more and teachers who want to teach purely subject-related subjects.”*

*“Poland- The teacher in many cases is left on his own. He lacks financial resources (he himself is often very poorly paid - currently a teacher starting work at school below the minimum wage in the country.), he lacks support from parents (the professional prestige of a teacher in Poland is very low, there are numerous claims of parents who cannot cope with their children... The core curriculum is overloaded, outdated and unattractive to young people. They are not learning the things they need in the modern world. There is a lack of*



*paper in schools, let alone teaching aids for the 21st century. Methodology from pedagogical studies cannot be used in public schools because there are no funds to finance teaching aids. In classes with many pupils (totally overloaded in spite of the demographic decline), it is difficult to individualize the teaching process (many pupils have a wide range of illnesses, limitations, disabilities, but also outstanding abilities), but it is not possible to help them without giving the teachers the appropriate instruments, and this requires financial resources.”*

*“Romania- The main difficulty is given by the lack of a flexible and permissive legal framework. Until sanctions are applied, the teacher must go through a long and tedious procedure, the low level of parents' education and their reluctance to the benefits of education in society make it difficult to prevent school dropouts, the demands of the labor market, generally of unskilled workers, and the earning money without education contributes to the decrease of interest in the approaches made by the school to them.”*

***In the last set of questions interviews were asked about their lifelong learning and training programs for their continuing education and professional development that are related to the address of special educational issues, as the prevention of the school dropout phenomenon.***

According to the available information and the responses of the interviewees, teachers in Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands have participated in lifelong learning and training programs that focus on continuing education and professional development related to special educational issues, including the prevention of school dropout. Specific examples refer to different kinds of trainings on prevention of absenteeism, trainings that focus on the adaptation of the teaching process to different educational needs of the students, relative training courses, webinars, and conferences offered either by the school itself or as a personal and professional development of the teacher as a personal decision in a different educational institute.

On the other hand, there is limited information suggesting that teachers in Greece, Poland, and Romania have not engaged in similar programs to the same extent. It's worth noting that educational policies and practices can vary widely between countries and regions,



and there may be individual teachers or schools in these countries that have pursued similar professional development opportunities.

Specific examples of the respondents provide useful input about the extent of training that they have received and its direct relation to school dropout.

*“Spain- usually the technician of absenteeism and the social integration technician do some “training pills” about how to avoid and prevent absenteeism, some resources, etc. especially at the beginning of the academic year.”, “I have done some private training to be able to pay attention to diversity. At the high school where I am, at the beginning of the year the counselors/mentors explain how to adapt the exams, homework in order to attend all different lines that you have (but not at all high schools it is implemented).”*

*“Italy -I participated to training programs (not only me, also other colleagues). The Anti-Dropout Board itself promoted training activities. I personally took part in an orientation-teaching course. Then, in the Covid period, I participated to a lot of training courses online (webinars). It was a personal decision the school often shares training courses, webinars, conferences organized by other institutions for this purpose.” “At the beginning of each school year, there are figures within us who are involved in training new teachers, also dealing with the theme of dropout/early school leaving. Perhaps this annual initiative can also be considered “lifelong training” ... Personally, last year, I had about a 100-hour training, both on issues of abandonment and on pedagogical training.”*

*“Netherlands -“training is a mandatory part of teacher’s duties. In addition to the development of “team responsibility”, training plans are made at the beginning of the school year (team training). The intention is for the result of education to become more and more central. All indicators linked to education, diploma yield and ESL are linked. The higher the graduation efficiency percentage, the lower the ESL percentage.” “Within the departmental plans, efforts are also made to strengthen mentoring. Mentors are expected to recognize signals of imminent drop-out among students, to support students in developing a career perspective and in teaching them study skills.”*

*“Poland- This is what I have to do and want to...it is just a pity that I have to do it in my spare time and with my own money.”*

*“Romania- I am not obliged to attend such professional training programs, but I participate on voluntarily bases and consciously because I want a greater involvement in school life.”*





*The follow up question that refers to the obligation of the teachers to participate in such trainings (“Are they mandatory”) provided different answers that vary for each country and each individual.* For example, In Spain, the Netherlands, and Poland, the interviewees mentioned that it is mandatory for teachers to undergo formal training in order to be qualified; however, the topics of the trainings can vary and not be linked directly to school dropout. In contrast, in Greece, Romania, and Italy, there are no formal requirements for teacher training or certification in relative matters. While there may be optional training programs or continuing education opportunities available for teachers in these countries, there is no mandatory minimum level of training in these issues.

Some answers worth mentioning, refer to:

*“Spain-teachers have to do training but not about a topic specifically.” “...they take place in the cloister, during the meeting times that you already have in your schedule”*

*“Italy- As far as I remember they were mandatory, and each school had to guarantee a minimum number of participating teachers.”*

*The responsible providers of such educational programs can vary depending on the specific program in question and the country or region where it is being offered.* In general, some of the responsible providers of educational programs according to the responses of the interviewees include:

**Ministry of Education:** In many countries, the Ministry of Education is responsible for developing and overseeing educational programs at the national level.

**Educational Institutions:** Different educational institutions such as schools, organizations, departments and universities may also be responsible for providing educational programs. These institutions may offer programs in various fields additionally to the prevention of school dropout.

**Teachers/Experts/Counselors/Trainers:** They are an essential part of the education system, responsible for delivering educational programs and helping relative staff to learn and develop their skills through adequate training. They may work in schools or other educational institutions, and their expertise and teaching methods can have a significant impact on the quality of the educational programs offered.



Overall, responsible providers of educational programs may include governmental organizations, educational institutions, and individual educators, all working together to provide high-quality training.

Analytically for each country:

*“Spain- The social technicians are paid by the Educational Department of the Catalan Government. They are part of the educative attention team. The technician of absenteeism is paid by the Education Department and the Social Department of the Catalan Government but they work directly into the Municipality.” “Counselors who are working with the center, from the management team it is decided that these counselors will do these trainings.”*

*“Greece - The ministry of education, the institute of educational policy, universities that have been involved, people/ scientists that the school unit will call to organize such a program.”*

*“Italy -Different organizations, I remember PROMECO.” “Some courses are managed by teachers within the institute, or for other topics (e.g., difficult class management) external experts are contacted.”*

*“Netherlands- ...training initiated by the school itself in which teachers can also raise issues themselves, but also the use of external parties such as training institutes and study days organized at the district team to exchange information with each other and learn from each other.”*

*“Poland- External institutions specially equipped for this, universities, foundations, associations.”*

*“Romania- “Casa Corpului Didactic Gorj, the Ministry of Education, educational associations and various other suppliers of educational products.”*

***The final question of this “sector” gave room to the interviewees to state additional specific examples of similar training activities or educational programs that take place in their country or that they have participated in the past.*** The majority of the participants referred to different educational initiatives, training courses with a variety of topics as well as European programs and other specific training in tertiary level.

More specifically:

*“Spain- Mandatory digital competence training is provided by the department”*



*“Greece- “Universities, IEP, maybe a European program where colleagues can take part in and see what is implemented in other countries and what can be implemented here.”*

*“Italy-Orientation didactic courses, specific courses on the topic of early school leaving prevention.” “...the Territorial school district of the province of Ferrara and the Regional School Office of Emilia Romagna.”*

*“Netherlands- “Van Maerlant”, an academic training school for all education professionals. They provide a practical learning environment for teachers on their way to their degree. There is also a lot of attention to guiding beginning teachers and the continuous professionalization of more experienced colleagues. “The Zuiderbos Academy” intended for education professionals and teams from primary, secondary and special education.”*

*“Poland- Podkarpackie Centrum Kształcenia Nauczycieli, Danmar, Politechnika Rzeszowska, Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy.”*

*“Romania- The last course I attended was focused on such issues; it is called Curriculum- a Second Chance Approaches and Strategies.”*



## 8. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS – CONCLUSIONS

### 8.1. Introduction

The purpose of this research was to comparatively analyze the situation of school dropout in Partners' European Countries and examine the response of this phenomenon in a holistic approach. The approach to the general objective of the research was carried out by partially investigating issues related to the causes of school dropout, the identification of student groups that tend to drop out in a greater percentage, the investigation of measures to prevent and deal with school dropout at an organizational and individual level, and the identification of educational needs of teachers and staff involved in supporting dropout students.

In this chapter, there will be an attempt to interpret and discuss the results of this research in the light of modern research directions and based on the international research literature.

### 8.2 Current Situation of School Dropout in the partners' countries

In the present survey, we tried to examine comparatively the current situation of the School Dropout Phenomenon in the partner's countries. For this reason, we firstly approached the different meanings of the concept of school dropout for each country that participated in this survey and analyzed the structure of the different educational systems in order to formulate an understandable framework of how each country responds to the problem of school dropout (see subchapter 4.1.1, 4.1.2).

From the analyzation of the structure of the different types of partner's countries educational systems we saw that the educational system of Italy is based on the principles of subsidiarity and autonomy of the educational institutions, as the state educational institutions have didactic, organizational, research, experimental and development autonomy. The Polish and Netherlands educational systems combine elements of centralization and decentralization in the administration of educational institutions, whereas the Greek and Romanian educational system is characterized as totally centralized and Catalanian as totally decentralized, as it places in the hands of citizens a law of general scope that has the vocation to allow successive concretions adapted to the changing needs of the educational system.



After analyzing the different structures of each educational system of partners' countries in relevance with the anticipation of school dropout phenomenon we saw that in every country there are structures for Vet Education, adult and technical schools and higher education institutions that are nominally linked to the prevention of school dropout phenomenon and give the opportunity to young people to continue their studies and obtain professional qualifications.

Following more or less the standard Eurostat definition for school dropout, alongside the national definitions (see subchapter 4.1.2), which covers among other things what it considers basic/compulsory education and includes young people who have completed, at most, the lower cycle of secondary education, aged 18-24 and not in any education or training structure, we found out that each country despite the different approaches and different corresponding methods are facing the problem of school dropout. From the examination of the statistic rates we saw that Spain early school leavers stand up to 16%, Italy to 13,1%, Romania (15.6%), whereas Poland, Greece and Netherlands have already met the EU-level target for 2030 which is to reduce the rate of early school leavers to 9%.

From the empirical research, data of our survey we found out that teachers strongly agree in a high percentage that Roma students, students with social difficulties and students in poverty are more likely to drop out of school. According to a large part of the literature, there are factors that are not related to the school, but to pupils themselves and their families. And even though many studies at least hint at the importance of both “proximal” and “distal” factors – that is: aspects related to students, their families, schools and teachers, as well as the community (from neighborhoods to labor markets and society at large) – a considerable number of studies focus only on one or some of these types of aspects (see, e.g., Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986). Indeed, the majority of research on early school leaving still endeavors to pin-point personal and social characteristics of potential dropouts that may differentiate them from graduates, so as to create a kind of “photofit” of those most at risk, for whom targeted intervention measures can then be devised (Vizcain, 2005).



### 8.3 Indicated reasons of School Dropout in the partners' countries

This survey, also, focused on the identification of the reasons of school dropout phenomenon. The comparative study depicted that in every country the factors are related to the school and the young person's experience such as poor school performance, high absenteeism, discipline problems, conflicts with peers/teachers, previous poor school performance, frequent school changes, lack of interest and class repetition. Also, there are factors linked to the young person's family and identified as social/family, such as low socio-economic status of the family, different race and ethnic origin, family mobility, lack of support for the young person from parents, lower educational expectations of parents, negative attitudes or indifference of parents, instability of the family environment, single parent family, finding a job, personal or social problems.

In Netherlands environmental factors play also a role in early school leaving such as peers' interaction and in Poland other social factors can include psychological barriers (e.g., lack of confidence and self-confidence and low self-esteem), health problems, disabilities, pathologies in the family, inability to commute to school for geographical reasons (e.g., too far from school). Additionally in Romania the causes of early leaving are multiple and diverse, such as lack of accessibility in general and reasonable adaptation in education, lack of access technologies and assistive technologies and devices in the education process, insufficiency of support services offered, lack of adapted transport, poor family awareness of to the importance of developing the potential of the child/young person with disabilities, discriminatory or negative attitudes regarding the school inclusion of children and young people with disabilities and/or special educational requirements and others.

From the empirical examination of this question we found out that a high percentage of the sample participants believe that reasons such as absenteeism, academic disengagement, family issues or responsibilities, behavioral or discipline incidents, lack of social engagement can provoke children school dropout. The sample of the survey also mentioned many other reasons that lead students to drop out of school such as bullying, pregnancy for girls, work for boys, lack of social policies, the role models projected by social media that influence young people to seek easy money, economically viable work alternatives, learning or intellectual disabilities, social/economic situation, low cultural level of the social environment, lack of



financial resources, low self-confidence, the absence of the students' parents abroad, the idea of the uselessness of school as a tool for self-improvement, lack of future expectations, trauma (students' negative experiences in schools), need for employment, work-related issues (shift changes, working hours, transfers...), lack of motivation, lack of link between university studies and future jobs, ignorance of the value of studying in their future everyday life.

From the qualitative data, we found out that the most common identified reasons of school dropout are social problems, economic difficulties, unemployment problems, lack of family and school support, lack of educational policy and peers disengagement. More over there is difference in children's and parents' aspects as the first ones indicate the family problems, school inclusion, search for work, underestimation of school, whereas the second ones are referring to reasons as lack of conscience, lack of educational support, children health problem and low self-esteem.

The above findings of our survey agree with findings of other similar international researches. According to the bibliography, one of the student-related factors that have been associated with early school leaving is academic achievement. It is most commonly measured using cross-sectional data via standardized testing (particularly on mathematics and language), by local school tests and (exit) exams, but also by other indicators, e.g. school retention and enrolment in special education, remedial or college-preparatory tracks. To an increasing extent this is done longitudinally, in order to discern the effect of students' pathways in terms of achievement or skills (Cooper, Chavira, et al., 2005).

Among family-related factors, "social class" or "socioeconomic status" (SES) is the most contested one. Often it is measured by parents' (or guardians') occupational status, education and income, all of which are sometimes considered influential (e.g., Dalton et al., 2009). More frequently, only some of these factors are deemed predictive of early school leaving. Thus, for instance, parents' educational level, and the educational aspirations for their children, is mentioned by many scholars, among whom Duchesne et al. (2005), Ishitani and Snider (2006), Koball (2007).

Parental employment is also believed to be an adequate estimator of the students' likelihood of leaving education before graduating (see, e.g., Marks & Fleming, 1999; and Business Council of Australia). In addition, families' "cultural



index'', or the extent to which they have reading material available in the household, has been argued as a more solid predictor of early school leaving across all racial and both sex groups (Rumberger, 1983).

More unanimity is observed with regard to family structure; students from large families, that is with five or more siblings, prove to be disadvantaged in terms of graduation prospects (e.g. Dustmann & van Soeast, 2008; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 2003); children from single-parent households also seem to be more likely to dropout (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006); as do children with step parents (Olsen & Farkas, 1989; Plank et al., 2005). Parental support or involvement is also known as a predictor of school dropout, irrespectively of income and ethnicity (Cooper et al., 2005). In fact, it may be the single most significant family factor scholars have agreed upon (Ishitani & Snider, 2006).

Apart from the broader context in which they are embedded and by which they are inevitably influenced, neighbourhood characteristics – the geographical location of families' residence, eventual housing problems, lack of playgrounds and green areas (Rumberger, 1983; Rumberger, 2004a) – may have detrimental effects on students' school performance, either directly or indirectly. If youths live in poor and distressing environments they may be more susceptible to early school leaving (Blue & Cook, 2004). Just as "urbanicity" may to some correlate heavily to early school leaving, so could a whole region in which students live be associated with higher dropout rates. This used to be the case, for instance in the South of the US (Ekstrom et al., 1986), although the latter no longer seems to be the case (Kaufman et al., 2004).

#### **8.4 Supportive Measures for tackling the phenomenon of school dropout**

Another important question of our survey referred to the supportive measures that exist or should exist in order to anticipate the school dropout phenomenon. The inquiry of this issue started from the identification of the most common measures that partners' countries use for the prevention of the phenomenon of school dropout through the initial comparative study.

According to the data provided supportive measures may exist in national level or regional level. In national level education policies, laws and educational administration authorities put measures which aim, a) to address the difficulties that can ultimately lead to early school leaving, b) to combat any difficulties faced by





students, by improving the quality of education and training and providing personalized support, and c) to compensate situations, which aim to create new qualification opportunities for those who have left education and training early (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Cedefop, 2014).

In regionally level municipalities are following several plans trying to combat early school leaving, which includes the cooperation with schools, teachers, parents or guardians. According to each partner country report, we can refer to the next findings.

In Italy the regions Emilia-Romania has established a database for collecting data for students who are at risk of dropping out and offer specific orientation activities or training opportunities and propose interventions with schools or local communities such as guidance teaching, special teachers projects, support for families, research actions, psycho pedagogical support, digital competences workshops, linguistic and cultural mediation, social skills workshops, multidisciplinary interinstitutional networking, e.t.c.

In Netherlands there are secondary schools, granted with 17€ million, which use performance tools to prevent early school leaving, but also MBO institutions and municipalities which act in a similar supportive way. In regionally level the Regional Reporting and Coordination Function of Municipalities (RMC function) have a statutory duty to combat dropout by using advisors who work closely to young people who tend to dropout or develop common action plans and cooperate with schools, social workers or other professionals.

Other existing supportive measures at national, provincial or municipal level are mentioned from Poland and include education and vocational counseling, teacher training, visits by students to district employment offices, equalization of educational opportunities, educational projects, innovative teaching methods, parents surveys etc.

In Romania, the National Program for the Reduction of School Dropouts (PNRAS) is part of the National Reform Project “Educated Romania” approved by the European Commission for funding through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan with a value of 543 million euros. PNRAS represents the response of the Ministry of Education to the problem of early school leaving and school dropout. The program is one to support the reform of the educational system, and its objectives are based on the reality and educational needs of each individual student and of all students in a school, and social component will also be found in its implementation.



In Spain, according to the advice of the Educational department measures which can be followed from each educational center are referring to supportive educational projects, individualized tutoring, development of adjusted responses according to students' needs, coordination between primary and secondary compulsory education, organization of co-curricular activities or multidisciplinary projects and development of multilevel classroom schedules.

In Greece, regarding the intervention measures, at the national level, it is recommended to maintain a positive school climate, to create a good relationship between teacher and student, to upgrade the educational process with new ways and methods of teaching, the participation of the local self-government bodies in school life, the implementation of professional orientation and the connection of the school with local businesses. Other measures are referring to the next:

- The support of primary and secondary schools by the coordinators or school counselors, the mentors and the class coordinators.

- The strengthening of the professional development of the teachers through trainings organized by the IEP on new methods and ways of teaching, such as training in new technologies, differentiated teaching and skills workshops

- The strengthening of Vocational Schools with an additional year of study, the so-called Apprenticeship, where students are connected with local businesses and the labor market and

- The establishment and strengthening of the implementation of National and European Research Programs in Primary and Secondary Education schools, the function of Second Chance Schools (S.D.E.) and in inclusion or reception classes.

After the comparative study, in a second investigation level, this survey went further in the examination of this issue in an empirical way. For this reason, we developed the 1<sup>st</sup> Research Hypothesis- which supported that despite the development of strategies and the adoption of various good practices to prevent school dropout there is still a lack of measures to prevent the phenomenon at the organizational level of the school unit.

From the analyzation of the empirical data we found out that there is a high percentage of the sample participants who tends to agree or be neutral (approximately to 63%) and lower rated on strongly agree (24%) to measures like the commitment of the schools' leadership, schools' high expectations, school's supportive climate to



students' efforts, school's district efforts, teachers commitment, parent involvement coordinator, encouraging school environment and supporting community environment around.

On the other hand, in the last group of questions, where the sample participants expressed their aspects about prevention meters of school dropout, we found out that a high percentage of them (approximately to 90%) agree in usefulness of meters such as early intervention, credit recovery, parental involvement and communicating with students' parents and/or guardians.

Finally due to the qualitative data of this survey, interviews referred to several needed quantitative measure and qualitative measures, as keeping attendance lists for early detection, teachers' intervening to students, finding resources, enhancing parents' awareness, providing supporting courses to students, adapting school programs, providing support of specialists, enhancing students' understanding of the school usefulness, improving the dialogue between parents, students and teachers, providing support of local community services, mentors and absenteeism technicians' supporting work, gypsy promoters' work, Roma associations' help, anti-dropout commission work, municipality support by specialists, extracurricular support and improvement of relations between the school and the family.

The above findings agree with the bibliography, which supports the existence of measures that aims at students, families and schools. Since research indicates (most often by correlations) that grade retention is the worst culprit among all student-related risks factors with regard to early school leaving, it is of primary importance to restrict its use (Dorn, 1996; Entwisle et al., 2005; Vizcain, 2005). Similarly, Adams and Becker (1990) have recommended that teaching support be offered to first-year students but insisted on its availability for more experienced students as well. Promising strategies to enhance academic achievement, even among minority students from disadvantaged backgrounds, may be found in peer and adult counselling programmes. Teachers, coaches, peers, family members, and sometimes mentors from community programmes have proved capable of motivating students to achieve and even strive for academic honors by acting as supportive role models (Herbert & Reis, 1999). Measures aimed at facilitating social attachments among all those involved is essential, especially at key moments in pupils' school live, like the transition into high school (Blue & Cook, 2004).



In addition, it appears worthwhile to devise programmes addressing students' (culturally diverse) attitudes toward and perceptions of school responsible for underachievement (Ekstrom et al., 1986; Vizcain, 2005).

In order to be effective, policies should not involve students alone but will have to engage students' parents (or guardians) as well (Reich & Young, 1975). Since involvement of parents in the academic achievement of their children has proved to be extremely important, parent engagement strategies seem a necessary path to follow. If well-conceived, these may help parents supervise and regulate their sons' and daughters' activities, discuss with them eventual problems and promote in their children a certain degree of self-reliance (Bridgeland et al., 2006). There is some evidence that early childhood (preschool) intervention programmes have positive effects in this regard (cf. Ou & Reynolds, 2006).

Cooper et al. (2005) have stressed the importance of high and unambiguous expectations on the part of parents as well as other adults involved in students' school life, such as counsellors, teachers, school principals, etc. They have warned, however, against a paternalistic attitude, not least towards parents from low-income or minority groups. One way to ensure that parents feel understood is to foster their supportive activities through parent discussion groups. Herbert and Reis (1999) have recommended that such groups be set up by school counsellors but run by successful parents in their homes.

The literature focused on schools' environment, teacher and teaching characteristics, and schools' relation to both families and community. With regard to the former, Swadener (1995), te Riele (2006) have stressed that the focus needs to be on establishing school environments adapted to the needs of diverse students, rather than the other way around. In a similar vein, Balfanz and Legters (2005), Bridgeland et al. (2006) have called for student outreach, especially in case of difficulty, and underlined the value of a school climate that cherishes academics and maintains high standards. Yet the school atmosphere, Blue and Cook (2004) have stressed, should at the same time be authentic and caring and defer to pupils' cultural diverse identities and home languages, while seeing the latter as strengths rather than weaknesses. Pittman and Haughwout (1987) have advised schools to remain sufficiently small (that is: not to merge into mega-schools) and to foster a positive social climate



through a high degree of pupil participation, while containing problems as much as possible.

Also, in view of this social climate, teaching approaches have been proposed that involve discussion and conversation, while relating the school to students' lives (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Cooper et al., 2005). Other scholars have suggested increased personalization (Balfanz & Legters, 2005; Blue & Cook, 2004; Lee & Burkam, 2003) and technological orientation (Pittman, 1993) in teaching. With respect to content, some have recommended the development of literacy and language across various courses, as well as instruction of complex thinking (Cooper et al., 2005). In general, educational programmes should be intensive and courses challenging (i.e., more academic and less remedial) in order to close eventual gaps in terms of achievement (Lee & Burkam, 2003).

Finally, in terms of teacher and trainer quality, coherent and long-term professional development strategies, guidance, care and support for teachers are advocated (Balfanz & Legters, 2005; European Commission, 2006). Some scholars plead for teachers to be allowed to concentrate their instruction activities in one or two terms, as to increase their teaching quality (Adams & Becker, 1990).

From all the above we conclude that our 1<sup>st</sup> research hypothesis is conformed as despite the development of strategies and the adoption of various good practices to prevent school dropout there is still need of measures to prevent the phenomenon of school dropout.

## 8.5 Best Practices for prevention of school dropout tin school unit level

In the next section of our survey, we set the 2nd Research Hypothesis which stated that there is a lack of adoption of good practices or programs that effectively deal with the phenomenon of school dropout.

After asking the sample participants to give their aspects about their following best practices for the prevention of school dropout in their school district we found out the fact that a percentage of 50% answered that their school offers general academic help, alternative education access or school-level specific programs, only a percentage of 11,4% stated that their school have activities or programs for racial, ethnic student groups or special programs for students in poverty, whereas almost the



half of them (42,4%) responded that their school does not offer any specific activity or program for different student groups.

From the examination of different stated school practices, we saw that “communication with parents” concentrates a very high percentage (almost 80%). From this fact we can conclude that most districts admit the great role of parents in the educational progress of students. Other practices that plays a significant role in reducing the school dropout rates are “Individualized plans”, “Interventions in school subjects”, “Extra-curricular activities” and “Innovative school activities” (approximately 45%).

Furthermore, we found out that education of students on the benefits of graduating from high school, even if students do not intend to go to University remains a good practice against school dropout; as respondents give a high score rate almost 56%. One of the most important issues that concern students is their future career path that was examined in the next question. Therefore, school staff undertake many activities to inform students about job opportunities and facilitate them to follow a good professional career. The sample participants stated in a rate of 45% that in their schools they often follow practices such as “Project-based learning or exposure to work, “Career and Technical Education”, “School-to-work program, job experience credits” “internships”, “job shadow” , “Counseling”, “College and Career Center”, “Career fairs, guest speakers, business visits, and college visitations” or “Career education classes or career education incorporated in other classes”

Of course, also a significant percentage of the respondents declare that the implementation of these activities is not done on a regular basis, but only sometimes, and a smaller percentage, almost ¼ of the respondents state that their school staff never or rarely undertake such activities.

Finally summarizing the proposed activities, from the qualitative survey, we show that there are references to sport activities, reinforcement classes, educational projects, multidisciplinary activities, music lessons, support teach activities, mobility projects, personal development workshops, case studies, visits, meetings, pedagogical circles.

From the above finding, we see that proposed best practices are followed by the half rate of our sample participants and that why we can confirm the 3<sup>rd</sup> Research



Hypothesis that there is a lack of adoption of good practices or programs that effectively deal with the phenomenon of school dropout.

### **8.6 Teacher’s training needs for responding to school dropout phenomenon**

In the last section of our survey, we examined the teacher’s needs for responding to school dropout phenomenon. For the analyzation of the empirical data we developed the 3rd Research Hypothesis which stated that the training of teachers on issues of school dropout remains at low or moderate levels and the 4th Research Hypothesis which stated that there is an increased need for training of teachers and student support staff who drop out regarding the following topics:

- Organization and management of school dropout issues
- Communication with students
- Knowledge deepening on the subject
- Cooperation with the family
- Cooperation with the community
- Technical-Digital skills
- Services provided to students

From a general view of the rate scores we saw that a large percentage of respondents feel the need for support in all strategies against school dropout. The strategy with the highest percentage (73,4% overall) is “Family Engagement/Community Outreach”, while other strategies are following consequently as “Tutoring/Mentoring for Students” (63,9%) , “Counseling/Interventions” (63,3%), “More Alternative Education Options” (62,7%), “Work Experience/Career and Technical Education Options” (61,4%), “Personalized Learning” (60,1%) and “Parent Training/Parent Club” (60,1%).

Communications strategies where the majority of the respondents feel more confident to implement and therefore they strongly disagree or disagree or they are neutral to the fact that they need support are “Home visits” (64,6% overall), “E-mail/Texts/Website” (63,9%) and “Phone/Newsletter/Letters” (62,7% %).



To conclude we should state that it is very optimistic that school staff feel and express the need for support in strategies against school dropout, because this means that they are interested in practices that will make them more qualified and confident and their improvement will ultimately have very positive results for students. It is known from the literature that many parents are likely to be unable to attend to the educational needs of their children and empower them to return to the classroom properly prepared. School staff should maintain communication with students' parents. Trying to educate them on the importance of good attendance is an important practice that could prevent students from dropping out of school.

For examining the way that the above strategies can be implemented we proposed different statements about the methods that teachers use. From the finding of the quantitative research we found out that teachers engage parents to the importance of school attendance by communicating with them by phone (70%), by email-texts (61,5%) and less by other methods like Counseling (38,6%), Conferences/Parent Nights (32,9%), Letters (28,5%), Website (27,2%), Parent Training/Parent Clubs (21,5%), Home visits (17,7%), Newsletter (17,1%).

This makes sense since phone is the most popular means of communication. Mobile phones in particular have made communication more readily available with the ability to send messages or make phone calls or even video calls. Also, emails are a good way of communication since they have many advantages, such as simultaneous sending to many recipients, sending files, images, etc.

For the next question regarding the contact strategies that teachers feels that they need more support for preventing students' dropout a large percentage of respondents (52%) answered that need more support in visiting the home of students and their families who appear to have left school permanently, while for the next strategies they the rates are lower e.g. "Counseling" 31,6%. From the other hand a contact program that the respondents avoid using or do not use often is "Intervention to Family Issues" as the percentage of those who answered that they never, rarely or sometimes use it reaches a total of 72,2%.

In the next question, we examined the ways that school staff whose job explicitly includes dropout reduction interact with students in certain ways. From the findings, we saw that the most preferred way of interaction is office hours (58%). This means





that school staff schedule time outside of class to meet with students in order to discuss their problems or other matters that concern them in an effort to prevent them from dropping out of school.

Building a connected school community enhances learning outcomes and support, collaboration and wellbeing for the entire school. Learning environments that are deeply united have an array of benefits for students, teachers, parents and the wider school. The important role of the community is recognized by school staff who wish to engage with community members as they seek additional support to their overall policy against school dropout. From the proposed ways this that gathers the highest percentage of the respondents is “Invite community members into school” (38%) with the rest following in percentage rates “Partnerships with groups/Businesses”, “Attend Community/Government meetings”, “District School Board meetings”, “Newsletter/Website”, etc.

Moreover, we examined the existence of services that school staff provide to students who temporarily do not attend school and the relative teacher’s needs on training on them. As we found out the services provided with the biggest frequency are “Tutoring” and “Counseling” and then follow “Schoolwork provided to student”, “Online courses”, “Extra time upon return” and “Alternative Placement. The positive conclusion that emerges from this observation is that school staff provide services to students even if the latter are temporarily not attending school.

In the last question, we examined the school staff agreement on the Dropout Prevention Methods. As we observed the vast majority of respondents recognized their value in the prevention of the phenomenon of school dropout. It is noteworthy that in almost all methods the total percentage of the respondents who agree or strongly agree exceeds 85%. Only in the “Enlist community involvement” method, the corresponding percentage is slightly smaller (79.7%) but so high that it does not diminish the great importance of this method.

A further inductive statistical analysis helped us conclude that only three out of the above fourteen suggested strategies that teachers might need more support when it comes to preventing school dropout, are influenced by other factors. Analytically the results have shown that the “needs” “Work experience/Career and Technical Education Options”, “Counseling/Interventions” and “Parent Training/Parent Club’ are affected by the demographic variable “School location”.



According to the bibliography, with respect to school-related aspects, the type of school may correlate with students' educational outcomes, including eventual graduation. Grammar schools that are more selective tend to have fewer early school leavers than non-selective, secondary modern technical or vocational schools (Dustmann & van Soeast, 2008). In addition, Balfanz and Legters (2005) have asserted that if a school has more ‘‘promoting power’’ (that is: an overall higher percentage of pupils passing timely from one grade to the following) – perhaps evidently – dropout is less. Thus, schools that are attended by minority students tend to have low promoting power, especially majority minority schools. With regard to college leaving, it may also matter whether one has been at an independent or state (Local Education Authority) school – at least in the United Kingdom (Smith & Naylor, 2005). If students first attend a private independent school, their level of (university degree) performance tends to be lower, which could be explained by the fact that in college eventual ‘‘ability deficits’’ of these students are no longer compensated by higher resources available in their previous school. As Rumberger (2004a) has argued, such effects may in part be due to schools' student composition, an aggregate of students' individual characteristics on a social level. From the literature, it seems clear that a balanced student composition (contrary to the one in majority minority schools) is one to be aimed at.

Finally, according to the available information and the responses of the interviewees in the qualitative analysis we saw that teachers in Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands have participated in lifelong learning and training programs that focus on continuing education and professional development related to special educational issues, including the prevention of school dropout. Specific examples refer to different kinds of trainings on prevention of absenteeism, trainings that focus on the adaptation of the teaching process to different educational needs of the students, relative training courses, webinars, and conferences offered either by the school itself or as a personal and professional development of the teacher as a personal decision in a different educational institute.

On the other hand, there is limited information suggesting that teachers in Greece, Poland, and Romania have not engaged in similar programs to the same extent. It's worth noting that educational policies and practices can vary widely between countries



and regions, and there may be individual teachers or schools in these countries that have pursued similar professional development opportunities.

From the analyzation of the previous findings, we confirm the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Research Hypothesis of our survey and we conclude that training of teachers on issues of school dropout generally remains at moderate levels and that there is an increased need for training of teachers regarding topics as Communication with students, Cooperation with the family and the community, Technical-Digital skills and services provided to students.

The above findings show us that School dropout is an important issue for any country. For a country where school dropout rate is lasting, reducing the size of early school dropout can be achieved only through concerted action by central and local institutions and civil society. In defining important aspects of public policy to reduce school dropout one should take into account the economic, social and value system of a country, development region and county.



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Education is a fundamental human right, but the school dropout phenomenon remains a challenge for education systems worldwide. In Europe, school dropout affects a significant number of young people, and it has been a subject of ongoing research and policy initiatives.

Now, a comprehensive research study on the response of European teachers to the school dropout phenomenon is available as a final report. The report presents the results of an investigation into the different reasons for school dropout and the various measures and strategies used by teachers to prevent it. It also explores the needs of teachers in terms of support and training to effectively address this issue.

Drawing on a wide range of data sources, including academic literature, policy documents, and surveys conducted among teachers in several European countries, the report provides a comprehensive overview of the school dropout phenomenon in Europe. It highlights the key factors contributing to it and presents a detailed analysis of the different approaches used by teachers to prevent dropout and support at-risk students.

The report emphasizes the important role that teachers play in addressing the school dropout issue and calls for greater collaboration and coordination among policymakers, education authorities, and other stakeholders to ensure that all young people have access to quality education and the opportunities it provides. This report provides valuable insights into the complex issue of school dropout and will be a significant resource for educators, policymakers, and researchers in Europe and beyond.

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