Baseline study
PREVENT network

Involving parents in the prevention of early school leaving

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SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

State of the art - PREVENT network

The Europe 2020 strategy includes, as one of its headline targets, to reduce early school leaving to less than 10% by 2020. High rates of early school leavers mean a tremendous waste of potential and, as a consequence, a major barrier to individual, social and economic development. One consequence of ESL, as highlighted in research, is a higher risk of ending up in unemployment. A recent report published this autumn (2012)[1] by the EU's own research agency, Eurofound, discoveres that Europeans aged 15 to 29 who are not in employment, education or training (known as Neets) have reached record levels and are costing the EU €3bn a week in state welfare and lost production.

On a yearly basis costs reach a level of €153bn a year or 1.2% of the EU's gross domestic product.

As a response to the ESL problems, EU member states (MS) have undertaken to establish national targets, taking into account the starting positions and national circumstances of each MS. In 2009, 14% (16% men, 12% women) / one out of seven young people / approximately 6 million young people were considered early school leavers (ESL:ers). Latest Eurostat data (2011 figures) set the level at 13,5%; a small improvement from an overall perspective, but nevertheless displaying some encouraging improvements at country specific levels.

1 - NEETs - Young people not in employment, education or training: characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe (2012)

The PREVENT network was set up to find ways to reduce Early school leaving - with a special and in many ways innovative, idea to better involve parents in the preventive measures. PREVENT is a network of ten EU cities; Nantes (lead partner), Antwerp, Sofia, Gijon, Stockholm, Munich, the Hague, Usti nad Labem, Catania and Tallinn. Within the PREVENT network, we have translated Early School Leaving, hereby ESL, to include all forms of leaving education and training before completing upper secondary education or equivalents in vocational education and training. The European Union defines early school leavers as people aged 18-24 who have only lower secondary education or less and are no longer in education or training. Thus, ESL can take several forms; it includes young people who have dropped out of school before the end of compulsory education, those who have completed compulsory schooling, but have not gained an upper secondary qualification, and those who have followed pre-vocational or vocational courses, which did not lead to a qualification equivalent to upper secondary level.

ESL is a worldwide phenomenon, meaning that the negative impact of ESL is well known and widely discussed at an international level, thus boosting in the last five years. The theme is closely connected to areas such as Early childhood education and care (ECEC), integration and labour market policies and family affairs and is also therefore often discussed within a more holistic framework to be able to address its real fundamentals. It is also interesting to spend some time thinking about whether the overall societal change, maybe especially concerning a shift in values, attitudes, needs and behaviours, has something to do with the ESL syndrome. Such questions - emerging from a more philosophic point of view - could be:

- Is school of today "the place to be" if you would like to boost yourself and your capabilities, and is school of today ready for structural change and innovation?

- Do we really know the all the aspects / cultural, religious, socio-economical, shift in values and trends / that could have an impact on ESL?

- Is ESL per definition the problem of some young individuals (young as problematic, youth at risk) – or are they to be considered marginalised youth? No doubt, a shift in focus would also change the nature of the problem, what caused it and which interventions that should be suggested and used

- Are the young – and their parents – considered resources, given responsibilities, gaining true participation?

- What happens in families when and if value base, relations and respect start to fall apart and when guiding and parenting schemes don't seem to work?

ESL is not a "blame the victim" game. It is created following a complex process, and there has to be an open mind – at all levels – to embrace new insight, to work hard to find innovative and smart solutions and first and foremost, to do everything possible to implement necessary change. The core focus for the PREVENT network is to reduce ESL by involving parents in the preventive work. As true as this aspect is considered a major success factor, it also has its challenges. Involving parents as a tool to reduce ESL is not a spectator sport – it will challenge existing structures both on an operational, daily level as well as on a more systemic/strategic, long term one. Thus, if successful, it will have an impact on the way schools connect to parents and
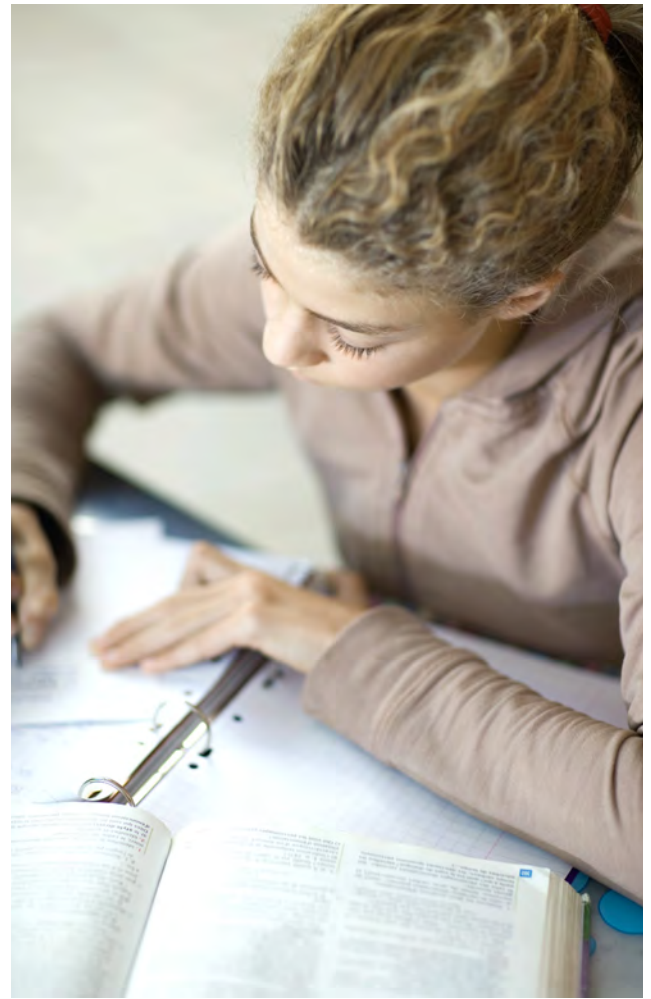
families, on the school climate, on the way support is being offered to both parents and teachers/ schools, on the way other actors could be involved – both actors within public services such as health care, social/welfare sector, youth polices etc, but also local organisations, clubs, service providers that interact in the life of families during free time, in leisure and sports activities and in supporting networks and structures.

Finally, there is also a need to influence the way cooperation and collaboration between actors, the "system", really works. The ESL matter is a multidimensional effort, involving co-operational aspects and incentives for multi level governance processes as well as crosscutting, innovative processes involving actors that not always are or have been formally introduced as co partners on the ESL arena. Higher level and sustainable coordination, real parental participation, i.e. co-creation, in decision, planning and continuous follow up and reflection could be part of a baseline for an integrated approach to preventing ESL.

In the STATE OF ART section below you will find a brief overview on causes, consequences and good practice as highlighted in some of the research

carried out during the last years concerning ESL. A special focus is parental involvement, as the PREVENT city network is stressing the work to find new and better ways to engage and involve parents in the prevention of early school leaving. The The report is divided into two sections; Introduction and Outlook, where the Outlook section consists of four subsections; Early school leaving - setting the perspectives; Policies and strategies - what visions are there; Prevention – ideas, good examples and attempts and Involvement of parents in preventing ESL – what ways are there? Ideas and focus areas applying to the PREVENT work in the Implementation phase is described in the Synthesis section of the Baseline study.

Early school leaving - setting the perspectives

"Just everything, just teachers and everything, they'd just annoy you a lot so they would. If a teacher had it in for you, that's it, she has it in for you the whole time.
I don't know really, I just didn't like the people that teach us out there. And then again it was me, I couldn't keep me mouth shut either, that was my problem in school…"

Mapping causes and consequences related to ESL – as well as finding good practice and developing innovative actions, preventive not the least – is considered a great concern. The growing number of conferences, reports and projects on the topic reveals ESL as being a major policy priority, not only in Europe but also across the developed world. From a general view, the reasons for highlighting the topic as such lies within whether cities, nations and Europe will be able to engage the young in future planning, supporting them in developing their talents and find acceptable ways to co produce - together with the young. It is true that today, knowledge, competencies and life skills could be found and trained in many places, contexts and situations – but even so, the negative effects of early school leaving are still far too serious not to be taken into consideration. Leaving school without the skills and qualifications that are considered necessary to

make a successful transition between school and work causes problems and restraints not only for the young, but also for societies as such. And even if definitions on ESL vary across the world, studies and research show that many experiences are in the same direction. As an example, this goes both for young people's reasons for leaving school early and for the kinds of negative effects and consequences that already are to be seen and/or that are assumed to take place in a more long term perspective.

From the perspective of URBACT, i. e. the cities' perspective, the ESL is recognized by Eurocities[2], the network of Europe's major cities. In a position paper, Eurocities claims that ESL is considered by member cities as a complex, but also very concrete phenomenon - and as cities often have a set of special problems, they also have resources, experiences and know how to further develop and to disseminate good practice. The network believes cities must be given a special attention as ESL indicators differ among countries, regions and municipalities. The Eurocities working groups will proceed with further collection of evidence and definitions focusing on interventions that are effective at local level, as well as stressing the integrated approach (across different sectors) as main focus areas.

SO, WHY BOTHER?

The answer seems both easy and accepted; ESL has implications and negative consequences at the **individual, social** and **economical** dimensions. From an individual point of view, ESLers are more likely to be unemployed or in low-paid jobs, often leading to a dependency over time on welfare and social benefits. They are less likely to become "active citizens" and they are less often involved in life long learning[3]. Moreover, early school leavers run a higher risk of becoming involved in crime and antisocial behaviour than those engaged in learning. ESLers in average also to a great extent earn less throughout their working life than those having a degree. Also the fact that mental and psychosocial issues are one reason for young people leaving school early must be considered a major implication on the individual perspective of ESL, whether being a primary or a secondary reason.

From the public cost perspective, ESL generates high costs. Consequences on the cost side includes:

• lower income and economic growth,

• reduced tax revenues,

• higher costs of public services such as healthcare, criminal justice and social benefit payments

In figures, it is calculated that staying in school for one extra year could improve your earnings with at least EUR 70 000. On the other hand, calculations in some countries (Finland, Netherlands, Ireland) show public costs for ESL within the span of EUR 1-2 million on a lifetime basis. As ESL is proportionally higher in urban areas, many cities, especially with regards to the emerging crisis, will experience higher costs to the welfare/social systems as unemployment rates are most likely to rise for the period to come. In several countries (Netherlands, Sweden, Norway) one highly ranked reason for leaving school is mental/psycho-social problems, reasons that most likely are generating high costs to health, psychology, welfare and social services. These conditions makes the reasons for cities to act towards a lower ESL rate both obvious and emerging. ESL is an issue not only important from a city development perspective; it is also about supporting individuals, young citizens and their families, to be able to do most of their talents, visions and dreams.

AND WHO ARE THEY?

As ESL is considered being a result of a process rather than a one-time event, causes on the individual level can be complex and not always easy to address with the right set of actions or "solutions". ESLers are not a homogenous group, and there is often more than one problem that leads to the ESL situation. Then, where do they come from and who are they? A review through research as well as input from the PREVENT city network gives a picture where ESLers are more likely to

• have socially disadvantaged backgrounds

• have (single) parents with low or even none educational background

• belong to vulnerable groups

• have had a school background with high level of disengagement and poor achievement in school

• come from minority or migrant backgrounds and

• have experienced a high level of residential as well as school mobility

• live in areas where the concentration of families with certain problems and patterns that create a form of class and ethnic "ghetto-ism" could increase the risk for ESL

• be boys…

There is a clear distinction between studies in whether they pay any attention to the role of the young. The reason for this discrepancy is not clear, however only looking at the young as objectives in some recent reports is defined as totally impossible. Involving the young in the issues concerning themselves would promote positive outcomes at many levels, not least motivational, participative and the more inclusive perspectives. And as pointed out in the NESSE study, it is vital to remember that problems concerning the young are real problems, making them experts on their own situation. In situations when young people still are considered a problem, the participative approach could challenge existing policies and ways to work.
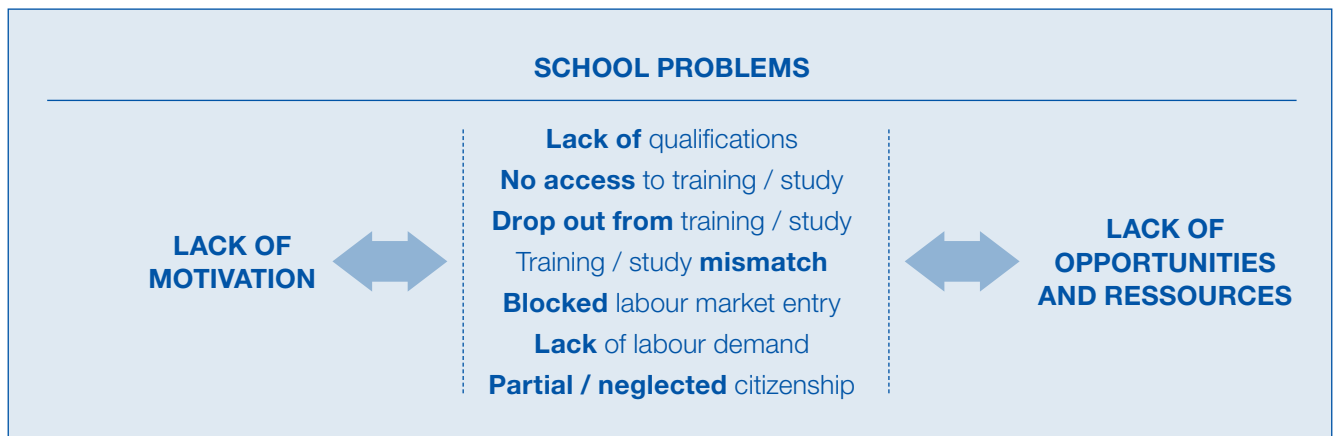
And when asking the "experts" - the young themselves - the following bullet points could be used as a source of verification in the mapping of reasons for ESL:

- Young people that leave school early are more likely to be unemployed as those that complete their education.

- They are more likely to be in blue collar jobs with less employment security and more part-time work.

- Pregnancy, crime, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide have been found to be significantly higher among early school leavers. Most of these issues are also found to be causes of early school leaving.

- Early school leavers are more likely than other citizens to draw on welfare and other social programs throughout their lives.

- Early school leavers have a shorter life expectancy.

- They are less likely to be "active citizens".

- ESL is associated with a much lower propensity to become involved in lifelong learning.[4]

A way to visualize the need, probably both for the young themselves and other relevant actors, for a wider understanding of the young individuals that become ESLers – and to adopt the idea that ESL is rather to be seen as the culmination of a series of processes rather than as a single event - was promoted by Walther and Pohl (Thwarted trajectories, 2005):

SCHOOL PROBLEMS

LACK OF MOTIVATION ⟷ **Lack of** qualifications
No access to training / study
Drop out from training / study
Training / study **mismatch**
Blocked labour market entry
Lack of labour demand
Partial / neglected citizenship ⟷ **LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES AND RESSOURCES**

The graph clearly illustrates how ESL both is shaped by and a consequence of personal experiences and societal conditions such as the existing conditions on the labour market. The NESSE team highlights in their report[5] that the graph proves ESL to be a real problem to the young people involved – and that this insight must always be taken into account, especially as in some cases the young still are considered being the problem.

Nevertheless, despite the complexity and the "problematic youth" issues described, there are suggestions, or to some extent maybe also needs, to group the ESLers in categories. The European Parliament provides this attempt[6],

The troubled ones: the trouble makers, anti-social behaviour

- The discouraged ones: negative school experiences

- The circumstantial ones: personal and/or social reasons

- The confused ones: lack of motivation or direction

- The positive ones: those with a specific goal

- The opportunistic ones: taking up a job or other opportunities

The grouping matrix, as well as the overview in the figure above, is important when thinking of solutions and preventive actions. Nevertheless, it is also important to stress that reasons for leaving school early don't always have to be that dramatic or even negative. According to the list of six categories of ESL (above), at least a couple of them should be considered rather positive and not as a threat to motivation for formal learning nor a closed door to continued educational activities later in life. But for the other four, and for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors of disengagement, British and Canadian researchers have provided a matrix[7] that could be used for further mapping.

4 - European Youth forum 2007, GHK
5 - NESSE 2010, EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING - Lessons from research for policy makers
6 - European Parliament's Committee on Education and Culture 2011
7 - Adapted from Ferguson et al, 2005, Kendall and Kinder, 2005 and ReStart, 2007

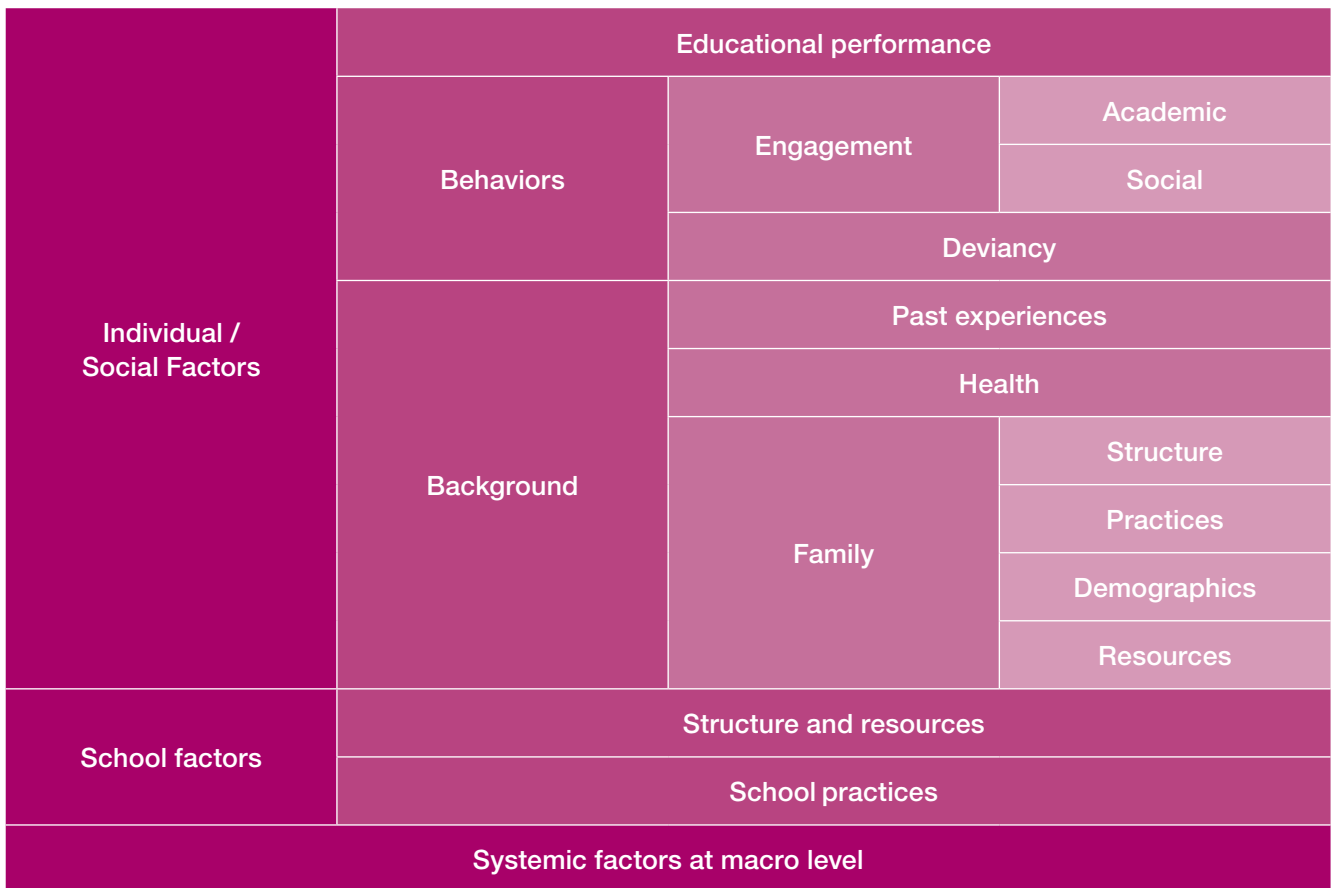| School factors	Curriculum factors	Family factors	Individual factors
Teachers lack skills to work with disengaged students	Perceived irrelevance of curriculum	Education not valued - limited support to remain in school	Issues with self-esteem, confidence, social skills, coping skills and resilience
Lack of training opportunities for teachers	Prescribed academic curriculum	Absence condoned by parents	Negative experience of school including discrimination, academic failure and transfers to lower level of education
Lack of educational resources and support staff	Lock in to inappropriate vocational / academic courses	Household problems, processes and dynamics	Rellationships with peers: - Outsiders / loner / bullying - Friends beyond school attracting out of school
School admission policies	Reduction in pastoral time as a result of curriculum pressure	Contradictory social, behavioural and cultural expectations	- Alpha female / male - high degree of autonomy, behaviour problems and actively influencing others' disengagement
Lack of supportive pastoral systems	Inapproppriate pedagogy - focus on curriculum content rather than learners	Expectations of assumption of adult roles and caring responsibilities	- Colluder / disputant - non-attendance influenced by truanting peers
Insufficient career advice and guidance	Incompatible learner and school norms		
Teacher / pupil relationships	Lack of alternative education provision with formalised accreditation		Lack of academic ability, special educational needs and difficulties in coping with traditional assessment procedures
Low status of vocational education			Boredorn, alienation, discouragement, health problems including mental, health problems leading to absence and substance misuse

TOWARDS A MORE HOLISTIC APPROACH

To better understand the ESL phenomenon, we have to look beyond individuals as well as beyond existing attempts to group students (ESLers) in "acceptable" sub themes. Just pinpointing the individual perspective underemphasises the key need for a system level focus – realising the need for a systems change to be able to fully accomplish the complexity of the ESL issues. The mentioned NESSE study has made use of a number of studies (with reference to Ferguson, et al, 2005; GHK, 2005; Kendall and Kinder, 2005; Walther and Pohl, 2005; ReStart, 2007; Raymond, 2008) to set up an All-factors framework which locates a large amount of factors, divided into five levels, which all are set out to increase the risk of ESL. The complexity of the whole ESL phenomenon, as well as the need to understand the interactions between different levels, is truly mirrored in the framework. With 43 factor categories, containing 190 sub categories, it would give both policymakers and all other stakeholders involved a good idea of how policies might mitigate the inherited burden of social disadvantage at individual, family, school and community levels.

In an OECD study[8] carried out by Lyche (2010) another example of an ESL/drop out typology framework is presented. The model was elaborated from a number of previous research reports to better understand the nature of ESL and drop out causes – and what could be done to prevent or re-integrate. The model, below, focuses on three main factors; individual/social, school and systemic, each of the three divided into paragraphs or predictors.

8 - Lyche, C. (2010), "Taking on the Completion Challenge: A Literature Review on Policies to Prevent Dropout and Early School Leaving", OECD Education Working Papers, N°.53, OECD Publishing

Individual / Social Factors	Educational performance		
	Behaviors	Engagement	Academic
			Social
		Deviancy	
	Background	Past experiences	
		Health	
		Family	Structure
			Practices
			Demographics
			Resources
School factors	Structure and resources		
	School practices		
Systemic factors at macro level			

And even if the OECD study is emphasizing ESL mainly at the upper secondary level, the threefold typology used offers a possibility to elaborate on a more holistic approach to the ESL, not only focussing on background and behaviour aspects of the young, but also in bits looking at school and systemic levels that could work quite the opposite way in preventing ESL. Among these examples, having to repeat a year was proven to be a strong factor for leaving school[9]. The report stresses the fact that causes for ESL are complex and interrelated, meaning that in order to really "solve the problem" we have to realise that we have to work with challenges both at the individual/social, school and systemic levels. Preventive measures must start early, not only addressing the factors being visible but also the underlying causes that, bit-by-bit, lead to a young persons decision to leave school early.

9 - Rumberger and Lim (2008)

Policies and strategies -
what visions and recommendations are there?

"Early school leaving is a complex phenomenon and reducing it requires strong political commitment."[10]

As already outlined there is a growing concern in the prerequisites of ESL and as a consequence, an increasing interest to include ESL as a topic in need of even greater attention at both policy and strategic level as well as on a more operational, concrete level. ESL is the kind of challenge that on one hand implies actions to reach higher knowledge and understanding on many levels that, on the other hand, will lead to proposals, recommendations, projects etc that all focus on change – in the way schools work, in the way relevant actors cooperate, in the way the involvement of, and intervention in parents and families could be promoted and, not the least, how we consider the young themselves. The most relevant example that ESL really is considered a massive restraint on cities', regions and nations' competitive edge is of course the fact that one of the main objectives in the EU 2020 Strategy[11], the Growth agenda, is to reduce the number of ESLers in EU member states to a maximum of 10%. According to this overarching ESL target, member states will have to apply national targets and actions that – from the individual starting level of every member state – will contribute to a reduction of the overall ESL rates in Europe. At national level, one interesting example of this actions is Sweden, where a great number of projects aiming at reducing school dropout rates are running in parallel with the PREVENT network. The projects, of which the largest include more than 50 municipalities, are co

funded by the European Social fund and are being jointly coordinated and monitored to be able to find good practice and to influence systemic change.

Given the fact that every member state have to develop their own national ESL targets as well as a strategy for the implementation of actions, there is a unique opportunity to map whether policies are transformed into actions, what kind of learning structures will be put in place, how and if mainstreaming processes will be delivered and if it will be possible to find "common ground" at the EU level concerning the do's and don'ts to the ESL phenomenon. Already, the policy implementation process on the EU level is promoted at conferences focussing the ESL subject, by expert and high-level groups and networks set up both by the Parliament, the Commission[12] and by other relevant EU organisations and stakeholder associations such as COFACE, the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union[13]. Already in 2010, COFACE, in their "Position on Early school leavers and the role of parents", gave an extensive, holistic and systemic focussed list of recommendations to better tackle ESL:

- **Insist on the dimension of Rights.** Education is a fundamental right, as it has been underlined in many national constitutions, in the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. As such, primary and secondary education must be free of charge for all. Individuals must also have the right to pause their education path and to resume education at a later stage in life regardless of the educational stream.

10 - "Tackling early school leaving: A key contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda", European Commission 2011
11 - www.europa.eu/eu2020 kolla
12 - www.europa.eu/OBS lägg till
13 - The Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union

- **Refinance the National educational systems.** Unsurprisingly, the quality of education is highly dependent on the level of financing. Europe's investment in education as a percentage of GDP is quite low compared to some other OECD countries. This needs to be addressed.

- **Measures helping most vulnerable families.** Studies have shown that most ESL come from families from a lower socio-economic status. Among the measures to help vulnerable families we find:
  - active inclusion projects,
  - wealth redistribution,
  - enhance social protection,
  - free life-long learning programmes,
  - accessible social services,
  - parenting support to develop a "school culture" at home.

- **Address the gender dimension of the problem.** While the likelihood of boys leaving school early is around 1.9 higher than for girls, the negative consequences of ESL such as the risk to be unemployed are greater for girls. More studies and research need to be done on this aspect in order to address it properly in policy making.

- **Holistic view on a child and young person in educational institutions.** All children are not responsive to the same teaching methods. More has to be done by the teaching staff to enable differentiated teaching by taking into account the needs of the child.

- **Integrate external actors within schools.** Actors such as sports clubs, leisure, social actors, mediation, the police and so forth need to be integrated within schools as this will make it easier for "form" teachers to know about the activities of their students and what each actor is doing in helping a specific case of ESL.

- **Fight against territorial inequalities.** Schools should be equally accessible throughout a country's territory without prejudice to the quality of education, the variety of activities proposed, the availability of support services and teachers, the diversity of educational streams and orientations and so forth.

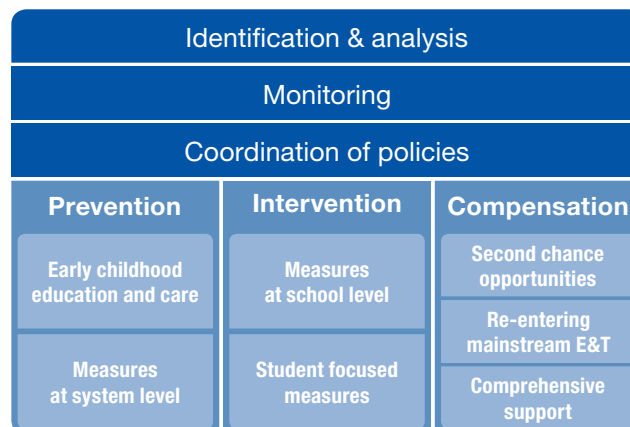- **Schools should be better equipped and propose a variety of extra-curricular activities.** A substantial investment is needed in equipping schools most appropriately with up to date technology and associated facilities. Furthermore, in order to enhance the motivation of students to attend school, activities and facilities in schools should include: sports, dancing, other extra-curricular activities (drawing, music, writing...), multimedia centres, libraries, playgrounds, Friday afternoon parties for teenagers.

- **The value of teaching professions needs to be reasserted.** In some countries, teachers, including pre-school pedagogues, are frequently underpaid, not trained well enough and schools and kindergartens are understaffed. Unless this issue is properly addressed, tackling ESL will prove to be impossible.

- **Each school should have an official "mediator".** Mediators are key players in many situations, particularly when a conflict arises between several actors within the school environment such as between parents and teachers, teachers and students and so forth. Despite the fact that some schools already have mediators, a lot of them do not have a formal status and an officially recognised role.

- **Encourage the successful social inclusion of students.** Friends can play an important part as regards a student's motivation to attend school. Thus, the successful social inclusion of all students is one of the factors in helping to tackle ESL.

- **Fight against absenteeism in schools from the start and prevent it becoming a habit.** It is necessary to fight against these absentee behaviours as soon as possible, in collaboration with the parents (by follow up, sanctions). This problem seems to concern all social classes.

- **Provide better guidance for the students.** It is necessary that youth have access to a genuine guidance and career orientation during their curriculum. To know oneself, reflect on your dreams, get involved in finding the right training programmes, be aware of the different professions and meet professionals, provide the appreciation of the long-lasting effort which any future profession will require. A regular and defined time should be devoted to orientation during the entire schooling and counselling should be given to each student by the teachers or educators.

- **Develop a better assessment and recognition of competences.** At present, students only receive a certificate once they finish their primary or secondary education, providing them nothing if they leave early. A Competence Certificate must be developed to provide students leaving early with an official document which acknowledges the competences they have acquired up to that point, enabling them to assert their acquired skills on the labour market but also to resume education more easily if they wish to do so in the future.

Another example on EU policy and strategic measures is the fact that one of the priorities of the ET 2020 Strategic Framework[14] is to reduce early school leaving. In May 2011 the Education Council adopted a Recommendation to support Member States in pursuing their ESL national targets under Europe 2020. The Recommendation clearly underlines that "*countries need to shift from implementing individual measures, which are often not well coordinated or not effectively targeted, to introducing comprehensive policies against ESL based on a solid analysis of the incidence of ESL and its drivers.*"

The figure below shows the areas of intervention as pointed out in the Recommendation.

Identification & analysis		
Monitoring		
Coordination of policies		
Prevention	**Intervention**	**Compensation**
Early childhood education and care	Measures at school level	Second chance opportunities
		Re-entering mainstream E&T
Measures at system level	Student focused measures	Comprehensive support

An additional aspect - thus both interesting and important - is the fact that some of the member cities of the PREVENT network, not the least the Lead partner of Nantes, also are involved in parallel networks dealing with educational issues and the development of schools, ESL etc. This will add extra and valuable knowledge, resources and input to the implementation phase of the PREVENT project.

14 - http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/framework_en.htm

Prevention -
ideas, good examples and attempts

Research has made it clear that ESL usually results from a cumulative and complex process[15]. Therefore it is not surprising that many research reports highlight high numbers of examples in preventive measures to reducing ESL. Following the idea that ESL is the culmination of a multi facetted, gradual process of disengagement gives as a natural consequence the insight that the ESL process could both start very early, actually already at or even before primary level[16] and, depending on the ESL definition, end very late. From a preventive point of view, this would expand the range of stages, and measures possible to implement, to start from the birth of a child - or even before - throughout the whole lifelong learning period of an adult. Preventive measures must not only be discovered from the perspectives of individual and social needs but also from the perspectives of school/education as well as from the systemic one. But according to Lyche (2010), international research on ESL so far mostly has been looking at the causes and the process of disengagement, thus promoting best practice interventions and policy recommendations that have been adopted by policy makers. Eventually this kind of process is to be considered very positive, as the absorption of results (methodology, tools, framework etc) and policies is what development

and change is about; but the report also raises a warning that the examples never or seldom are properly tested in the environment they are going to work in. There is also a lack of proper monitoring and assessment that could actually provide solid proof that programmes and measures that have been implemented actually have had a positive effect on ESL rates. And as preventive measures could be delivered at an early stage in a young persons life, one must realise that measurable effects will not be able to "cash in" until much later. Eventually, early inventions might need a decade to be able to assess and to show results.

In an attempt to draw a map of ESL prevention, the mentioned OECD study[17] mapped 68 policy measures gathered within the United States, OECD (and non-OCED) countries, notably Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. Using the indicator matrix presented at page 5, the different measures could be grouped in three areas or levels; measures inside of schools, measures outside of schools (extra curricular activities etc) and measures at a systemic level (changes at a macro level). From the conclusions, we get that the most successful measures were the ones carried out at all three levels simultaneously, combining components both in schools, outside schools and at the systemic macro level (see figure below). The more unsuccessful measures involved either purely systemic macro level change or work done only inside of schools. Deriving from these results, Lyche stresses the fact that in order to overcome early school leaving, policies must involve actions both outside and inside school simultaneously.

Within School

Systemic

Outside School
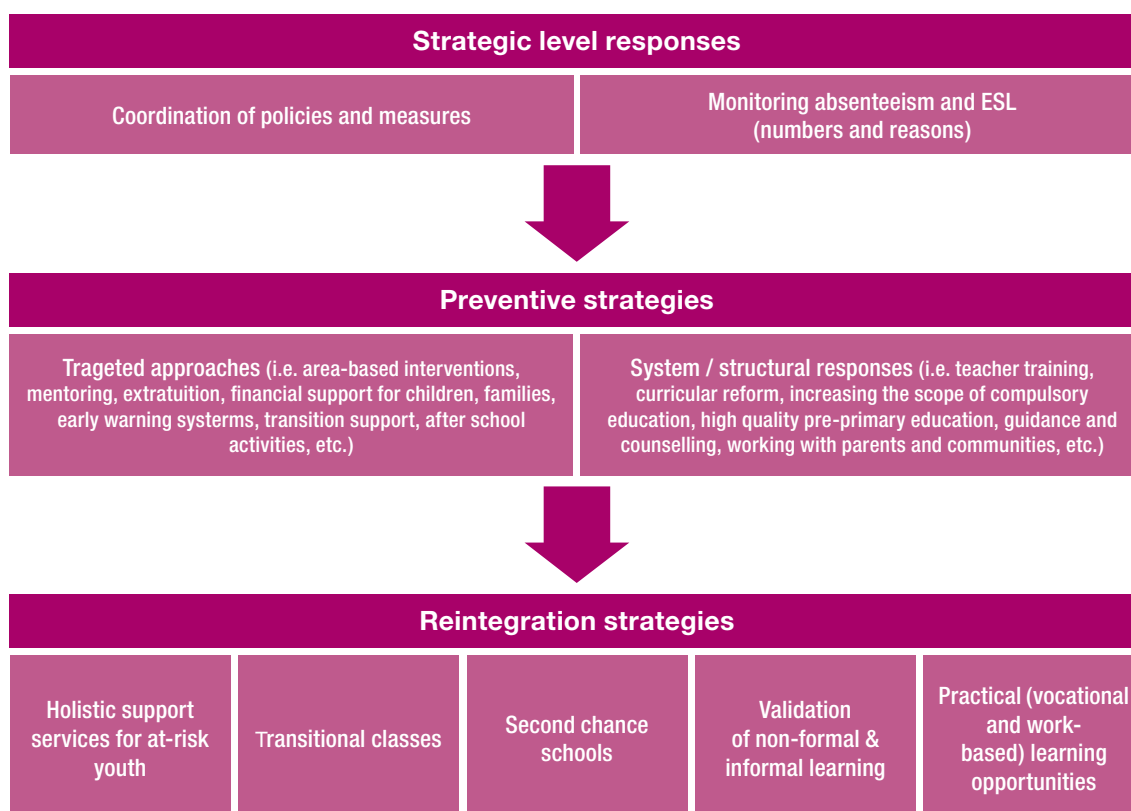
Successful preventive measure
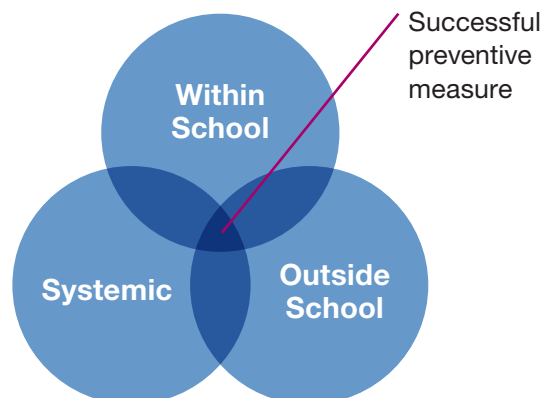
15 - See, for example: Cedefop, 2010; European Commission, 2010; Gracey and Kelly, 2010; Nesse, 2009; Byrne and Smyth, 2010
16 - Gracey, Sarah and Kelly, Scott (2010), Changing the NEET mindset: Achieving more effective transitions between education and work. London: Learning and Skills Network
17 - Lyche, C. (2010), "Taking on the Completion Challenge: A Literature Review on Policies to Prevent Dropout and Early School Leaving", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 53, OECD Publishing

What kind of policy responses (approaches) EU member states have to early school leaving was summarised in a typology matrix as presented in a study on behalf of the European Parliament (2012), "Reducing early school leaving in the EU". The study covered all 27 EU Member States but included a special in-depth analysis of nine countries: Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Finland and UK (England). The approaches could be grouped into three broad categories: a) strategic level responses, b) preventive strategies and c) reintegration strategies as illustrated in the figure below. The mapping done in this study on the **strategic level approaches** clearly relates to the earlier mentioned OECD study concerning the lack of monitoring and evaluation of interventions. Developing a collaborative, multi-actor approach to the ESL problem is considered a major challenge, thus necessary to respond to the ESL complexity. The complexity also demands better inter-agency cooperation to ensure a common vision on ESL, including genuine cooperation and the participation of relevant stakeholders. In cases where these indicators have been met, they have had a positive impact on ESL rates.

Reintegration measures offer young people who have dropped out of mainstream education a second chance to learn, to achieve a qualification, or an alternative learning opportunity. These measures must be built out of flexibility since the needs of the participants vary from long processes aiming at rebuilding trust and confidence while others just simply need a second chance to pick up on studies. But these measures also stress the need for a multi-disciplinary approach such as mixed-staff teams and the collaboration with external actors. The authors also reflect on the need for continuity of measures: "*Indeed, there needs to be continuity, consistency and cohesion between services and supports available for young people. Otherwise young people can get confused in the web of different services. The 'individual case manager' approach adopted has the potential to offer a more consistent means of supporting at-risk youth than some other approaches, where young people are expected to find different services without any specific support.*"

Finally, the Parliament report looks at **measures aiming at preventing ESL.** It s widely acknowledged that preventive actions, due to the understanding that some causes leading to ESL could have been prevented, are more cost-effective than actions and measures at the reintegration level. Though preventive measures could (should) mean early interventions, there is an increasing need to raise the awareness and recognition of such early measures. A good example of this is the growing acknowledgement of ECEC, early childhood education and care, and its role in ESL strategies. Long-term focus should be placed on early intervention, and to facilitate actions and interventions having a good timing, systems and activities for identification, monitoring and tracking (early warning systems) are important.

Strategic level responses

| Coordination of policies and measures | Monitoring absenteeism and ESL (numbers and reasons) |

Preventive strategies

| Trageted approaches (i.e. area-based interventions, mentoring, extratuition, financial support for children, families, early warning systerms, transition support, after school activities, etc.) | System / structural responses (i.e. teacher training, curricular reform, increasing the scope of compulsory education, high quality pre-primary education, guidance and counselling, working with parents and communities, etc.) |

Reintegration strategies

| Holistic support services for at-risk youth | Transitional classes | Second chance schools | Validation of non-formal & informal learning | Practical (vocational and work-based) learning opportunities |

Regarding the typology of preventive measures provided in the European Parliament/GHK study, the following table, adopted by the Member states, gives a good overview on the existing state of art in preventive measures.

TARGETED
• Positive discrimination / area-based approaches
• Early warning / monitoring / tracking systems
• Mentoring programmes
• Extra tuition / tutoring and teaching assistants
• Support for transition
• Financial support for students or families
• After-school activities
• Support for children from minority groups and disadvantaged backgrounds

STRUCTURAL / SYSTEM RELATED
• Teacher training
• Provision of high quality pre-primary learning opportunities
• Increasing the scope of compulsory education
• Curricular reforms / new types of study pathways and changes in teaching methods
• Raising the profile and quality of VET pathways
• Guidance and counselling
• Tackling bullying and improving well-being
• Changes to social security / benefit systems
• Working with parents of children at-risk of ESL

Source: GHK Consulting Ltd., 2011

According to the NESSE researcher team "*a valuable strategic response may lie in designing policies to interrupt the processes that could culminate in ESL*". In the NESSE report (2010), the typology of interventions is clearly defined following the educational timeline of a young person. The first stage, where responses are seen as "**pre-emptive**", points at what occurs before the student enters secondary school. This is followed by a **preventative stage**, with efforts to inhibit the pressures experienced by those already at risk of ESL in secondary school. The focus is on both (individual or group) students focussed and school wide approaches, looking booth inside and outside the school and classroom. The third stage is
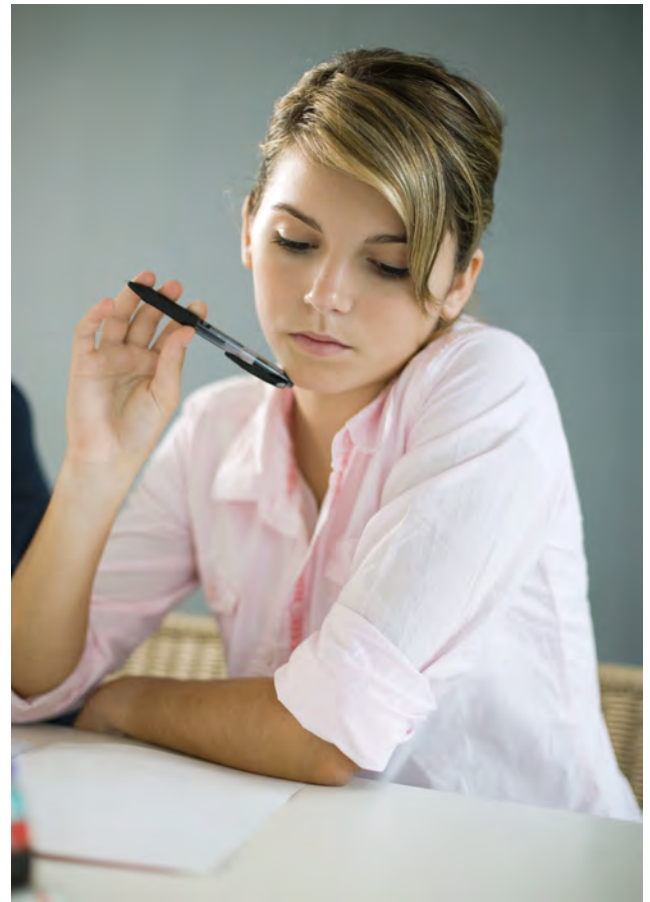
referred to as **"rescue" attempts**, aimed at bringing back those who have already left school early.

In the case of the pre-emptive stage, the best example according to the team is the Child-Parent Centre (CPC) Programmes delivered in USA. The programmes are thoroughly assessed and evaluated, offering a high grade of transferability and accountability. According to Reynolds et al (2004), "*findings are thus more likely to be generalisable to existing programs than many previous studies… Like Head Start and other state programs, the CPC program provides comprehensive services, emphasizes school readiness, encourages parental involvement, and is administered through existing educational and social organizations*". With reference to earlier discussions in this report, all the mentioned aspects could be seen as crucial elements of positive intervention logic. Pre-emptive measures must also be connected to ECEC strategies and policies, stressing the importance of inter-agency cooperation and thus, a willingness to adopt and implement changes at the systemic level.

But even if there are good examples, mainly the CPC programmes as mentioned, working very well at the early stages, this is not enough to solve or terminate ESL. As long as pre-emptive efforts are not in place, also interventions and actions in schools (especially on primary and secondary

levels) must take place, focussing on the prevention of ESL. According to Lamb and Rice (2008), interventions should have a dual focus; "student focused" interventions, targeted on particular at risk students or groups of students, and "school-wide" interventions, that affect all students, but also improve the engagement of potential ESLers.[18]

Lamb and Rice also put forward a set of conditions that can increase the effectiveness of any school-based intervention. These are:

- "Fostering connectedness", making at risk students, and also their families, feel less 'out of place' in school

- Increasing trust in students, as part of raising their expectations

- Providing tasks with immediate and tangible outcomes

The European Commission Communication paper "Education and Training for a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe - Analysis of the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) at the European and national levels" (2011) pinpoints ESL as one major target area for intervention. As the ET 2020 paper builds on national reports from its member countries (among all the 27 EU member states), the analysis is of great interest to the PREVENT network - as some kind of bench marking tool – and its Findings section gives a good overview on the status regarding the ESL situation in Europe as well as it, despite the somewhat pragmatic attitude towards the ESL issue, helps in summarising the State of the art section:

> Nearly all ET 2020 countries state that reducing early school leaving is a priority in education and training policies. Several countries are developing comprehensive approaches and report increased efforts, especially in preventing students from dropping out. Thus, the reports indicate that there is a serious lack of data and information on early school leaving, which hampers the development of effectively targeted policies. As a result, in most countries there is a need to improve the collection, monitoring and analysis of data and information on the incidence and drivers of early school leaving, as a basis for more effective policy measures.

> Current weaknesses in policy development concern limited cross-sector cooperation, low levels of involvement of stakeholders from other policy areas and inadequate cooperation with parents and local communities. Most of the measures to reduce ESL need to be implemented at local or school level. Reforms at system level
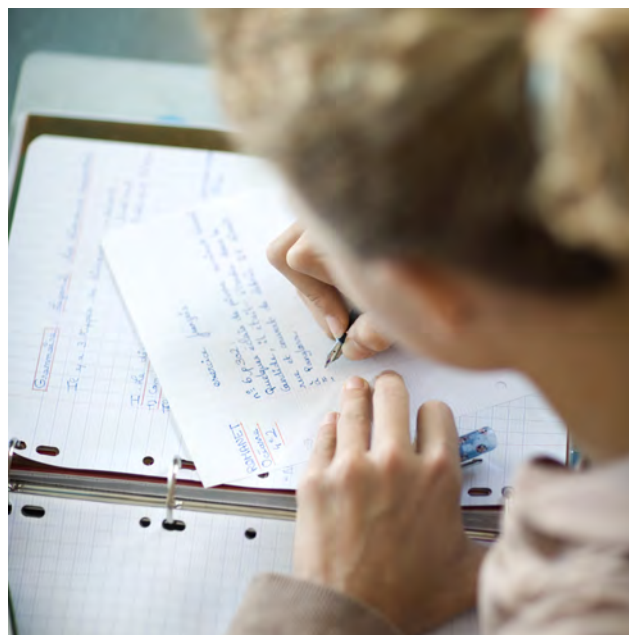
can often only lay the foundations for concrete measures in schools and municipalities. However, the mechanisms for cooperation are not always clear, and different forms of financing and administrative barriers often hamper cooperation. Many schools find it difficult to get parents involved in measures against truancy and early school leaving.

> Many countries show imbalances in the relative importance of prevention, intervention and compensation measures. Compensation measures are still overrepresented in relation to measures focusing on preventing dropout. Extending the offer and improving the quality of early childhood education and care are some of the most effective ways of reducing early school leaving. More individualised learning approaches and measures such as better-targeted support for pupils at risk of dropping out, early warning systems, and extra curricular activities to broaden opportunities for learning and personal development have all proved to be successful in reducing dropout.

> Teacher education plays a crucial role in preventing early school leaving. Teachers are the first contact points for pupils at risk of dropping out and can make a difference to the learning experience of young people.

> ESL should also be addressed in the area of initial vocational education and training (VET). While too many young people drop out of VET, high quality VET has great potential to reduce early school leaving. However, VET is often viewed as a remedial measure for those at risk of dropping out or who have already abandoned general education. ESL could be substantially reduced by better use of the potential of VET and the development of measures such as: more

permeability between VET and general education; apprenticeship systems; alternating VET and general education as early as lower secondary education; and giving young people a chance to acquire work skills while still in general education.

More intensive efforts at European level to identify and exchange good policies and practices and stimulate experimentation and innovation could help countries develop more effective policies. Specific issues include:

- how to monitor and analyse the incidence of early school leaving;
- the most effective forms of cross-sector cooperation;
- involvement of stakeholders;
- upstream measures to prevent drop-out, including the role of VET in the context of prevention and intervention measures;
- in addressing the problem of social disadvantage, it is important to introduce enrolment rules which guarantee a greater social mix of the school's student population.

Finally, and to complete the often rather pragmatic view of ESL criteria provided in many official reports, some recent research offers a quite different and interesting approach to preventive aspects of ESL. In a Research Paper for European Commission Network of Experts on the Social Aspects of Education and Training (NESET) (Downes 2011), the author "*seeks to examine evidence regarding the potential for multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teams to play a key role in prevention of early school leaving. It is recognised that this is an emerging area for the context of early school leaving prevention across Europe. As part of developing a strategy for such multi/interdisciplinary teams, an important focus is on necessary and supportive conditions for their effectiveness, rather than a deterministic assumption of their inevitable effectiveness. Contextual conditions internal to the teams and regarding systemic needs for early school leaving prevention will need to be given recognition.*"

Downes elaborates on the idea that a systems theory level focus within education could have an impact on the way the educational "world" manage change. Another idea is to highlight the interplay between ESL and mental health promotion; a rather newly emerging area in international research (Downes 2007). In the US context, Freudenberg & Ruglis (2007) strongly advocate the importance of interpreting early school leaving as a health related issue: Although evidence shows that education is an important determinant of health and that changes in school policy can improve educational

outcomes, public health professionals have seldom made improving school completion rates a health priority. With a few important exceptions, health providers have not developed lasting partnerships with schools, nor have researchers provided the evidence needed to improve or replicate health programmes that can reduce school dropout rates.

According to Freudenberg & Ruglis, simply reframing school dropout as a health issue has the potential to bring new players into the effort — parents, health institutions, young people, civil rights groups — and to encourage public officials to think of the dropout problem as central to community health and as a long-term solution beneficial to population health.

The basic idea in the paper is to test the idea of multi/interdisciplinary teams as a concept to prevent early school leaving. The roles of multi/interdisciplinary teams in the prevention of early school leaving needs to distinguish between three widely recognized prevention approaches in public health, namely, universal, selected and indicated prevention (Burkhart 2004; Reinke et al., 2009). Universal prevention applies to school, classroom and community-wide systems for all students. Selective prevention targets specialized group systems for students at risk of early school leaving. Indicated prevention engages in specialized, individualized systems for students with high risk of early school leaving.

Downes emplies, with reference to Field, Kuczera & Pont (2007) that a preventive focus with regard to multi/interdisciplinary teams needs to be cognisant of two aspects, in particular, of the OECD ten steps to equity in education. These are:

- Step 6: Strengthen the links between school and home to help disadvantaged parents help their children to learn
- Step 9: Direct resources to students and regions with the greatest needs

A selective and indicated prevention focus is important for early school leaving prevention, and a family support dimension to facilitate links between home and school implies an important outreach dimension on behalf of such multi/interdisciplinary teams and schools.

Involvement of parents in preventing ESL -
what ways are there?

Because of financial strains on education budgets, as well as the mounting evidence on the benefits of parental involvement for children's overall well-being, individual teachers, schools and education systems in some countries are asking parents to increase their levels of involvement in their children's education and to be more present in their children's lives. Parental involvement is included in policies and frameworks, thus recognising that parents are key actors in children's educational upbringing, and acknowledging that students benefit when parents are involved and form partnerships with schools and teachers.

Although many recommendations concerning measures that would have a positive impact on the ESL process include the involvement of parents, there are still rather few concrete examples on how this could be carried out in workable and

sustainable ways. It is true that in many countries there is not a tradition of involving parents, neither in school activities nor in the educational development aspects of the child. This is especially clear on higher school levels, when the disconnecting process also could be reinforced by traditions as well as by cultural perspectives on when the young becomes an adult.

In the OECD report "Parental Involvement in Selected PISA Countries and Economies"[19] the beneficial effects of parental involvement in children's educational lives is discussed. The paper evaluates the levels of parental involvement across countries and sub-groups within countries, as well as the relationship of involvement with both cognitive (reading performance) and non-cognitive outcomes (enjoyment of reading and awareness of effective summarising strategies). Findings

19 - Borgonovi, F. and G. Montt (2012), "Parental Involvement in Selected PISA Countries and Economies", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 73, OECD Publishing.

suggest that some forms of parental involvement are more strongly related to cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes than others. These include reading to children when they are young, engaging in discussions that promote critical thinking and setting a good example. Findings also show that levels of parental involvement vary across countries and economies. Inequalities in parental involvement exist in practically all countries and economies. Policy implications signal the possibility that promoting higher levels of parental involvement may increase students' both cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, and that high-quality parental involvement may help reduce performance differences across socio-economic groups. In general, those children who have parents who are more actively involved are more likely to have better scores at school, be more engaged with and be more motivated in school, have better mental health outcomes, and show more sociable behaviour.

Increased parental involvement produces beneficial outcomes by improving students' cognitive and non-cognitive skills and motivational development. Children of involved parents develop cognitive skills (receptive language and phonetic awareness), as well as metacognitive skills (planning, monitoring and regulating the learning process), by having more access to relevant information, by parents' greater awareness of their children's abilities, by having more opportunities to practice, and because teachers may pay more attention to those children who have more involved parents. Children of involved parents also show a higher likelihood of intrinsic motivation, a better sense of control over academic performance, and positive perceptions of academic competence. Greater motivational development arises because children of involved parents internalise their parents' positive attitudes towards school, can tap directly into their parents' strategies to deal with school and the challenges it entails, and are more familiar with school tasks because their parents share such information with them (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Pomerantz, Moorman et al., 2007).

Parental involvement has to be included in the educational project of the school as 'research shows that parents by being involved in the education and teaching of their children, at home and in school, can increase the school achievements with 30 % (Fan & Chen, 2001).

Parental involvement affects positively the psychosocial functioning of pupils: it concerns their behaviour, motivation, social competences, relationship with the teacher and the relationship between pupils (Smit, Driessen, Sluiter & Brus, 2007).

Research also shows that supportive schools for parents leads to a positive approach towards school, to a better educational climate at home and relieves the workload for the teachers (Smet et al., 2007).

Some research highlights the importance (success factors) of involvement of parents in the delivery of psychological support to students. According to Downes (2007), parents must be part of the support team when delivering support to students with developmental problems (in the Irish example first ad foremost related to speech and language development). The Glogowska & Campbell's (2000) review of the fears of parents in their initial meetings with speech therapists offers a guide for best practice in overcoming such fears but also the implication that **such fears are arguably even greater in the context of educationally disadvantaged parents**, thus highlighting the need for many parents to have support of their own to be able to better intervene in the developmental process of the child.

COFACE, the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union, have delivered specific recommendations on **families from a migrant background** in the paper "Strengthening support to migrant parents in their children's school education. The position paper emphasizes the importance of empowerment of migrant parents in relation to the schooling of their children, as well as the importance of dialogue between parents, teachers and schools. The paper also discusses the meaning of heritage language (mother tongue). The recommendations given are of great interest to the implementation phase of the PREVENT network as the ethnic/cultural aspects are of major concern to several cities.

Touching ground on the subject of improving parental involvement in reducing ESL then would mean, as a conclusion of this state of the art study, that we have to develop ways to encourage parents to, already at an early stage, play a bigger role in the educational lives of their children, to motivate and help parents and schools to learn more about each other as well as to better understand the point of view of each other. It should be natural that schools have to take the lead in such a reinforcement process, as they in many cities would be considered the partner in this relationship.

CITY STORIES - Partner profiles

City profiles from participating cities in the PREVENT network have been collected by questionnaires and city visits. Cities input from questionnaires is not fully comparable but do nevertheless provide important and interesting data on "conditions" regarding ESL. Complimentary to written input, all cities have been visited within the time frame of the Preparation phase. All together, the network consists – from an organisational point of view – of an exiting mix of cities; of which are matured, well structured and well financed, while others are facing difficulties in financing as well as in organisational structures. From a geographical as well as a cohesion aspect it is a well-balanced network with five partners each from competitive and convergence regions.

Addressing the ESL and specifically, the parental involvement issue, the network all together advocate great interest – although at some point from different perspectives – to learn from each other and, as the process of networking and sharing of good examples emerge, to further develop and capitalize methods and models to reduce ESL figures. As some of the cities also are very active within working groups and thematic actions set up and managed by the Eurocities network, there is already a number of ideas and results that will be used for learning and development throughout the implementation phase of PREVENT.

Antwerp, Belgium

Over 60 % of all children in primary schools in Antwerp are non–native (Dutch) speakers. At home they speak the language of the more than 170 nationalities that make up the population of Antwerp. The largest group of "immigrants" is of Dutch origin, but the largest ethnic community in Antwerp is Moroccan Berber families, followed by communities of Turkish, Kurdish, Polish, African and Chinese origin. Antwerp hosts a very large Jewish community. The average educational results in Antwerp are poor when compared to the Flemish average. The dropout rate and unqualified school leaving are almost double the Flemish average (2010: 9,6%). The aim of the city government is to bring this to the Flemish standard. The Antwerp department of general education policy believes that parental involvement is very important in this perspective. Schools are the strongest partner in this relationship. That 's why schools have to take the lead. In Belgium as in Antwerp, education is delivered by educational networks that operate very independent and with a large degree of freedom to choose pedagogical models etc. Antwerp at present has three different networks, organising education for children between 2,5 and 18 years.

Antwerp wants to learn about more about alternative approaches on parental involvement in order to improve its policy and initiatives. Another aim is to know more about concrete results of local initiatives: what is effective, what are evidence based facts?

Antwerp also has a Roma population and would like to learn how to work better with this group.

On a local level, city of Antwerp wants to expand the ULSG PREVENT to become more of an expert group on parental involvement. The Antwerp USLG represents most of the stakeholders in the city. One major aim will be to integrate lessons learn from PREVENT in the approach of parental involvement and the reduction of unqualified school leaving.

Antwerp has a god deal of examples in how to work with the prevention of ESL as such and also on how to involve parents. The city has a unique experience from multi cultural approaches and thus, cross-sectorial cooperation. Some of the actions presented at the city visit where:

- **De Schoolbrug** (Schoolbridge)
  This organization is the Antwerp educational welfare work. They build 'bridges' between schools, parents and children/students. The educational welfare workers support schoolteams to improve the cooperation with parents.

- **Kaap**
  This network gives low-educated parents more skills to get involved in the school of their children by organizing Dutch classes with content based on the school.

- **Samen School Maken** (Making school together)
  Ten meetings with parents of the same school supervised by a professional mentor. The school team gives input and the parents learn about different aspects of the school.

- **Opvoedingsondersteuning** (educational support for parents)
  The educational support office organizes an "educational shop" for parents, with information sessions, parent groups. They offer support to parents and grandparents who take care of children in the age of 0 – 21 year.

- **Studiewijzer** (study orientation point)
  The study orientation point is a front office and "learners" and their parents. They provide information about all aspects of going to school in Antwerp. The study orientation point is also a website. Beside this the staff works pro-active and gives information sessions about education for specific groups.

- **Organizing study-days for teachers**
  - oral and written communication with parents
  - intercultural communication
  - giving equal opportunities in education to every child (how to coop with poverty in schools)

- **Financial Fund** (for school bills)
  The purpose of the fund is to pay school bills for parents who can't pay. In this way the school doesn't make things difficult for those parents. Yearly the Fund pays out 150.000 euro.

- **Central registration for the elementary schools**
  In order to give every child in Antwerp an equal opportunity to be registered in a school the city together with the school organizes a central registration system.

Catania, Italy

The city of Catania has been working on the "Patto Educativo", a path in the framework of the Local Educational Contract (LEC). The opportunity to go beyond is to promote the opening of the school to the territory but also develop plans for "action research" in territories with high educational stakes. Catania supposes to elaborate an operational framework for the participation and mobilization of other internal departments of the city, where parents are recognized as partners, involved in the project dynamics, and not just beneficiaries.

European cities have experienced the impact of the economic crisis in different ways, but everywhere the effects of the crisis have spread quickly from the business sector to the labour market and in turn to social conditions, often dramatically altering the context in which cities are operating. The decline in tax receipts and the cuts in budget brought some cities to a point where they are not able to provide neither social protection nor guarantees on continuing the provision of social benefits on the long term. Still, cities are on the front line when it comes to deal with the real impacts of the crisis on people, business and places, in a context that has been dramatically altered. So the LAP will have also to deal with this reality in searching opportunities to continue, even so, public actions on the field of ESL, specially the ways to involve parents.

By taking part in this project, Catania wants to transfer an added value to its social policies, especially to the project "Citta Policentrica" as an integrated system (electronic and real) of social service, linking the world of care with the dimension of school. This relates well to some of the other cities in the PREVENT network that have a strong focus on systemic transparency, coordination and, eventually, systemic change.

From a city visit perspective, Catania provided interesting examples of a "creation of sustainable local teams" thinking to be able to fully implement the PREVENT partnership action. Another interesting approach is the close link to the University of Catania and the involvement of action research on ESL and parental involvement that could be considered added value to the network as a whole.

Gijon, Spain

In terms of action, from 2002 until present Gijon City Council has developed the project "Trabajo Socioeducativo en el Absentismo Escolar" (Socio Educational Work in the Truancy). This project is coordinated by the Municipal Foundation of Social Services and was born by the agreement between the Social Services and Education Counsellors. The main goal of this project is to promote a regular attendance to school of all the students in compulsory age, and especially of those who are at risk of leaving education. The Project has a clear educational and preventive orientation. It's not only based on control of the early school leavers in order to reduce the percentages of absence to school. This project acts in a specific site and on a specific population.

The territorial and community orientation of the project is based on the nature of the early school leaving and on the way of dealing with it. On the first hand, it is referred to its origin: family, school and society. On the second hand, a territorial and community framework is required to develop this project. It's the paramount importance the detection of social and family problems that are not visible but related to the early school leaving, and to promote actions in order to get a positive school culture. On the third hand, there are other strategies to be considered as the organization, the coordination and a global outlook of the territory.

The Public Safety Counsellor and the Regional Government are also involved in the implementation of the project. From 2004 the work has included the parents of the students.

In Gijon, the ESL problem is relevant both at primary and secondary levels. Therefore, the city hopes for the PREVENT network to share tools, programmes, policies and good practices, in order to improve knowledge in this area. Gijon is looking forward to the creation of a joint guide, and to know how to work in a transnational sense.

At a local level, the ULSG and LAP work would be about developing a database of resources related with the issue: to compile a document of good practices, policy recommendations and common procedure to build a strong network, to be able to discuss and to look for different approaches and alternatives in the area of involving parents in the prevention of ESL. The participation of Gijon in this network can contribute to improve the effectiveness of the fight against the truancy from the city experience based on in the implication not only the parents and resources affected by the issue, but also by the community organized. For that reason, it is necessary to establish a relationship among truancy, community and territory. On the other hand, the PREVENT network can contribute to Gijon through the creation of a framework of inter-territorial work.

The network can be a forum for reflection and collection of good practices and experiences among cities with similar characteristics. The network can also promote the European cooperation in truancy field. With regards to local good practice in Gijon, the city promoted the following actions during the study visit:

Prevention and educational programs in order to support parents and to train them in parental skills, set limits, to resolve conflicts, to deal with the behavior of children under control etc

- Project to promote a sure bond. Dedicated to families with children from 0 to 3 years old
- Project of parental guidance, emotional, educational and parental skills dedicated to familiars with children from 4 to 10 years old.
- Project of parental guidance for families with teenagers
- Special program for foster families.

Project of social and educational network of prevention of early school leaving
It´s a transversal project developed since 2002 amongst the educational, the welfare and police and security city council systems to deal with the scholars who are giving up on education about 25% of the school time

Support resources for families and children at social risk
In addition of the prevention programs several resources are disposed to support families in social disadvantages.

- The second chance school; resource of transition towards normalized programs in education or the labour market
- NGO "Siloé"; several daycentres and a home to support vulnerable families and children and to prevent the course failure and the process of disengagement
- NGO "Mañanas Educativas"; a specific resource for expulsed scholars to held them in the scholar system

Munich, Germany

The percentage of early school leavers in Munich is 10,7%, hence slightly better then the German average (11,9%) and the EU-average. Nevertheless, Munich hasn't yet reached the EU 2020 strategy goal and wants to improve this situation. The chance to get a good school certificate and to be able to start a vocational training or studies depends in Munich on the social background (income and education of the parents, migration background, often connected with special city quarters) of the pupils. In the Munich strategy for life-long learning (Leitlinie Bildung), a strategy which was developed in discussion with the citizens of Munich, relevant stakeholders and local partners and approved by the Munich Council, Munich set itself the target to increase equal opportunities in education e.g. to increase the participation in education of disadvantaged persons and in special city quarters. This strategy, with a focus on life-long learning, also emphasizes the importance of parents in the education of their children.

Munich would like to develop a common strategy concerning the involvement of parents in the prevention of early school leavers. In this special issue it is important to see education as a life-long learning process: especially with parents in disadvantaged areas, it is important that support processes starts already when the children are small. It is also important to find a good way to accompany children through different institutions throughout the transition from school to work. Concrete topics for Munich ULSG and LAP work will therefore be:

• Transitions

• Cooperation between parents and school

• Cooperation between different professions (e.g. kindergarten teachers and school teachers)

• Working with parents in other countries and comparison with Munich

• Working with parents with migration background

• Unaccompanied Minor Refugees/youths who have no parents to work with

• Inclusion: working with parents from children with handicaps

• Advanced training for teachers and other experts in the work with parents

Munich has already a lot of projects concerning the work with parents. The aim of the PREVENT Project for Munich will therefore be to achieve a connection between all the strategies and projects in different institutions and concerning different ages of pupils and to work out a common strategy focused on the prevention of early school leaving. As a member of this network, the city of Munich hopes to get a lot of ideas and stimulation as well as good feedback to local projects and strategies. The work in the network should be a two-way benefit of ideas, stimulation, feedback and interesting contacts. People from other countries often offer other perspectives, which can be fruitful for the projects and strategies in the own city. City of Munich have many good examples to show to other partners in the PREVENT network, both regarding the way they are working but also regarding reflections on the problems and challenges they have with special focus on the ESL and parental involvement issue.

The city visit clearly displayed, on the one hand, a rather complicated educational system where a "wrong study choice" seems an easy result. On the other hand, the city has a large number of actions and incentives both for supporting students and schools/teachers as well as functions trying to coordinate actions and resources. Except visits at "houses for children" where parental involvement seems logical and not so focussed on the "known" ESL background problems (but even so with thoughtful approaches that could be interesting when developing ESL strategies) the city visit also offered meetings with NGO's (AktiFplus) working mostly among in an immigrant environment as a bridge between schools, students and parents.

In Munich, many social workers are employed by organisations and then contracted by schools to be part of the support teams. In many cases, the social workers play a vital role in the work with children and families, both in the case of ESL and in other social issues. The city provides examples of a coordination unit for social workers that could be of interest to further disseminate.

Nantes (Lead Partner), France

The local situation in Nantes regarding the issue early school leavers and their families is that they do not benefit fully from the educational services proposed by the city and other stakeholders which could help in the prevention of ESL. The core idea is that prevention of ESL should be built on a more comprehensive approach of the child, taking into account his/hers family environment, neighbourhood, and life in and out of school.

The role of parents should be better recognized. Local stakeholders, including parents associations, need to share a common understanding of the problems and together build strategies and actions to prevent ESL. The coordination and synergies between actors should be reinforced.

The education policy is based on a partnership approach, which resulted in the development of a local educational program. More recently, the city of Nantes has developed a specific policy on successful education called "Educational success for all" which includes the prevention of ESL.

Main expectations from participating and managing the PREVENT network are:

- to strengthen the capacity of Nantes to play a constructive role towards European cities, cities networks and European institutions in the field of the prevention of ESL
- To contribute to the strengthening of the existing local coordination mechanism and to the identification of funding and development of a concrete action plan

At a local level, one idea is to expand the Urbact Local Support Group (ULSG) PREVENT to an "expert group" to reach the aim of the city of Nantes to create a service dedicated to educational success. The aim includes among its priorities "to position parents as partners"; a logic of partnership with families which is affirmed in co-production relations and cooperation that require changes in professional positions and an opening partnership that affirms the educational community in a project of educational success for all. All this requires to open schools to territories, and to expand partnerships to exceed the only useful knowledge for economical integration. By structured analysis as well as testing the transferability of PREVENT partners' good practices in a Nantes context, one hopes to reinforce its local policy on early school leaving and contribute to the design and implementation of an ambitious local action plan.

Nantes will be a major contributor to the network by bringing its policy development experience, its participatory approach and its good practices implemented in the field. Beside the policy aspect, the city hosts many interesting examples regarding parental involvement in the ESL process.

- The Parents information points where parents could go to get information and support in educational as well as other issues. The information points also invite parents to interact in activities, both as participants or, even in some cases, as responsible
- the Educative success programme that include tight collaboration with children and parents; focus is on literacy development
- schools in disadvantaged areas that work hard to establish contact with families and parents to reduce ESL

As the city already takes part in a number of established networks (Eurocities, Conference of Arc Atlantic Cities, International association of educating cities), disseminating projects results from PREVENT will be easy.

Sofia, Bulgaria

Sofia has a high percentage of dropouts (children) in the educational system. This is particularly true for schools in the Roma neighbourhoods. The percentage of children dropping out of school is also very high due to migration of parents within the country. A number of problems are directly or indirectly linked to parents of early school leavers and their economical, educational and ethno cultural family contexts.

In addition there is a lack of social services with early stage of intervention to assess the risk of falling into social exclusion at the different risk groups and to work in advance to change the attitudes and, as early as possible, to get involved in the educational system. An adequate response to these problems has to be given in a coordinated way, setting priorities and bringing together all stakeholders in order to develop concrete actions to support the parents in their role of being key actors in the education of their child, to develop a common strategy with all relevant stakeholders related to the involvement of parents in the prevention of ESL.

Thus, Sofia has developed some actions related to the prevention of ESL for parents and for teachers such as the involvement of parents through the establishment of effective Boards of School Trustees and parent advocacy. It has also developed interactive teaching methods, organized a child-centred school environment including individualization and mentoring methods, developed monitoring and evaluation methodology of child development. Other actions are related to the better integration of children with special educational needs and of children from a minority background.

By taking part in the PREVENT network, Sofia hopes that the participating cities can learn from each other, get inspiration and input in various fields. Both for the people working around and with children as well as the young will receive and participate in visits which eventually will have impact on the way things are done locally.

On the local level, the ULSG and Local Action Plan (LAP) work will focus on the following themes:

- The development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy to prevent dropouts and reintegration of Roma children who have already dropped out
- The strengthening of the work with parents to positively motivate them towards the education of their children

- The development of preliminary support for families and children at risk of social exclusion - children who dropped out from school
- The development of mobile services aimed at families with children at risk of dropping out from the educational process. In the process of elaboration of the programmes and measures there should be sought various forms of involvement of the parents and children
- Provision of family counselling on education and upbringing for poor families. Support for Roma families to establish a suitable environment where to raise their children and promote them to help children have their own life goals aimed at personal and professional growth
- Elaboration of database to monitor the actual number of children who must attend school, and children dropping out of school.

The city would like to exchange on good practices related to the involvement of parents in the prevention of ESL and assess how these practices could be transferred in Sofia, and will contribute to the PREVENT project by bringing its experience on the project theme to the network. It will also bring its experience of working with disadvantaged people including roma, where the city provided good examples also regarding parental involvement and extra curricular activities during the city visit;

- One centre managed by a local NGO offering leisure activities to children in a disadvantaged area; the methodology is to build on the interests of children mainly within the area of cultural and artistic activities
- Another centre, also located in a disadvantaged area, where focus is on "training" and involving citizens at all ages to better cope with life situations and life choices. The centre operates in a roma neighbourhood and has developed successful methods in bridging the gap between education/the society and the families

Stockholm, Sweden

Swedish schools have a long tradition in involving parents in the educational success of their children. However, the actions often seem to be more of a one-loop process than a genuine collaborative process. In fact, Stockholm has too many children who run the risk of encountering difficulties that could lead to early school leaving, mostly because of low overall achievements. The reasons for this situation vary; some schools present very poor results from an overall point of view, often due to sudden or regular influx of newcomers, but even more often because of an extremely high turnover rate.

Some children are at risk because of their socio-economic background, others because of psychological problems. In both cases, the city of Stockholm believes that the parents are the strongest partners in the network of stakeholders in order to keep the children and young in school, supporting their educational success. By taking part in a project with international partners, the cities can learn from each other, get inspiration and input in various fields. There are already a number of good initiatives around Stockholm, of many in the different city districts, but there is a lack of consistent learning processes between the city districts and thus, no common understanding or discussion of the problem and, as a consequence, no common ideas or solutions. The main reason for taking part in the PREVENT network is therefore to get to know how other cities tackle these problems by bringing professionals to the study visits and by taking part in the common discussions. By joining, Stockholm expects to be able to implement good examples on a larger scale, through the work of the ULSG and the LAP process. In order to achieve this, all relevant stakeholders will meet to define together strengths and weaknesses related to parental involvement as well as to decide what should be the way forward.

Stockholm has a number of actions and projects around parental involvement that work very well. Some experiences regarding basic policy and good examples as seen during the city visit:

- Innovative and positive school management is needed – involving parents (and children) is very much an issue of trust and respect

- There must be a "thinking outside the box" attitude to be able to change school culture; and relevant incentives to motivates teachers to try

- Follow-up is vital to be able to display success and learning
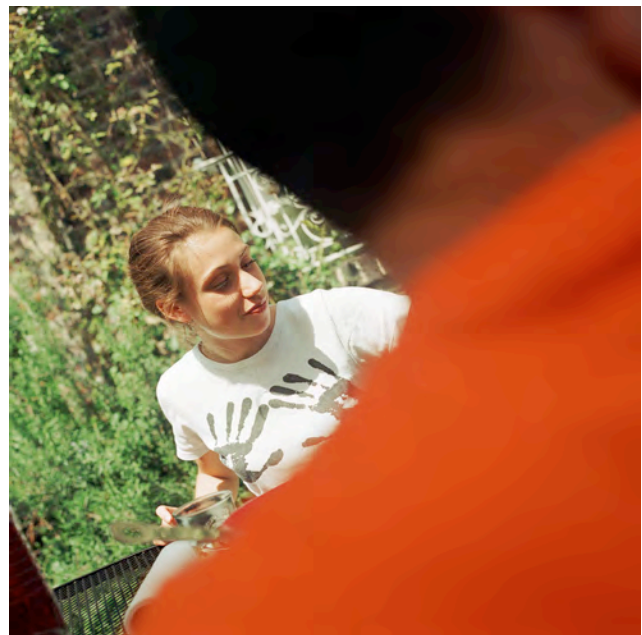
- The ABC project for parental involvement; study groups of parents (of many with foreign background) discuss issues related to the children and the relation between child and parent

- The Parental Guide; an easy accessible leaflet with general information and contact information to support services

- Model areas – a way to develop an integrated and holistic approach to prevention and to family support

Tallinn, Estonia

Though Tallinn does not suffer from a very high proportion of early school leavers, the city still want to improve its performance, not the least with regards to the involvement of parents' aspect. Prevention of early school leaving takes place on different levels in the City of Tallinn: on the 1st level the school staff (teachers, social worker) communicates with the students and parents; on the 2nd level the local government officials responsible for the child welfare counselling the students and their parents in cooperation with the schools, based on the information received from the schools; on the 3rd level the members of municipal city districts' commissions of juvenile (where belongs police officials, local government officials responsible for the child welfare, probation officials, educational officials) counselling the parents. If the problems arise with the implementation of the school obligation and the more serious the problems are, the more difficult is to include the parents to the cooperation network because of the inside problems of their family etc. The participation in the counselling process is voluntary for the parents, although it has an obligatory form.

At the local level, the work for the ULSG will include systemic issues; the non-implementation of school obligation has an origin of social issues (divorce of parents, different parents of the children, bad relationships between the children and parents, alcohol, bad socio-economics situation in the family, absence of job etc). It is difficult to find contacts with the parents; the parents may lack the strength/ belief that the problems can be solved. The Population Register of Estonia may not reflect the real living address of the person. At the local level, Tallinn will make proposals to change the respective legislation that the local governments and the schools in addition to notice the problems could have the means to intervene (i.e. the parents'educational programmes with the obligatory participation etc).

Tallinn hopes to benefit from the PREVENT network at two levels; first, to be able to participate in highlighting the issues and problems on the European level and solving the problems in different European cities (including the development of systems, institutional capacity an legislation). Secondly, to disseminate practical information and knowledge in the field of prevention work between partner cities – knowledge that can be used in the prevention work of the City of Tallinn and in the practice done so far.

From a more practical point of view, the city visit offered visits to a primary school located in a "popular" neighbourhood; here parental involvement is a natural thing, and parents are involved both in formal and informal ways. The teachers keep parents updated on the educational process of their child via a web based e-school application that, according to the teachers provide interaction and motivational incentives for parents to connect to schools.

Another visit introduced a gymnasium in a more disadvantaged neighbourhood, where parental involvement was considered vital but hard to accomplish. ESL problems occur first and foremost at the secondary and upper secondary levels; lack of motivation, social/family problems. Notable here was the attempts from school management, school support teams and supporting external stakeholders to set up collaborative networks to bridge the gap between school and families.

The Hague, Netherlands

In The Hague, 5.1% of the 32,000 Hague students aged 12-23 who attend secondary education, general secondary education for adults (vavo) or senior secondary vocational education (mbo) leave school before graduating. In concrete terms, this means that in the 2010-2011 academic year, 1,658 students in The Hague quit their education without a basic qualification. Over the past few years, The Hague has substantially cut back the number of dropouts in the city. Indeed, in the 2005-2006 academic year, the number of students who quit their education before graduation was still 2,207.

The Hague's Dropout Policy is based on the principle of avoiding premature departures as far as possible, making one important aim to guide those young people who drop out nevertheless back into education as soon as possible. However, parents bear the primary responsibility for their children's development. Schools handle the academic education of their child and contribute to the child's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Schools are free to determine how exactly they involve parents in the general and academic development of their children. It is important that schools effectively connect to children's level of development and to the specific needs and options of individual parents and parent groups. A good relationship between the parents and the school can help to improve a child's academic performance. Thus, the City Council concerned about the involvement of parents with a different cultural background. Their background may consist of a different perspective on the relationship between schools and parents than the perspective of Dutch schools on this relationship. They need to invest extra in these parents to realize a good guidance of the educational development of these children at their homes.

The City Council sees as its role to facilitate these schools with extra investments. The schools differ from each other, so there is no uniform project to realize this assistance. The City Council offers, within boundaries concerning target and rules of spending, funds to schools, for enhancing parental involvement. The schools may use these funds by employing more personnel, hiring external persons to perform courses, organizing information evenings or other interventions towards parents, or other activities which in the perception of the school contributes to the involvement of the parents with the education of their children. In The Hague 83 schools organize extra courses for parents, 72

schools use funds to develop a parental-policy plan, 120 pre-schools start next year with home-visits to parents, and 3000 parents visited a sensitization festival in the City Hall on parental involvement. This is paid from a yearly budget of 4.2 million euros, which is partly covered by the Ministry and partly by the City Council.

The Hague's policy is to facilitate secondary schools to invest in parents equally to primary schools. Unfortunately, only ten out of 91 locations for secondary school makes extra investments in communication with parents funded by the City Council. According to the experiences from The Hague, parental involvement is low on the agenda of secondary schools. But parents of students at secondary schools do request more information and a more intense relationship with secondary schools. They lose track of the educational development of their child as soon as the child leaves primary for secondary school. Amongst others, it leads to disappointed and disinterested parents, who started to be involved in primary school so enthusiastically, but who are disappointed by the non openness of secondary schools. Therefore, the motivation to join the PREVENT network is to learn how other City Councils stimulate secondary schools actively to involve parents in the educational process of their children, i.e. how secondary schools stimulate parents to be involved, which methods are used and which are successful. The Hague also expects exchange of knowledge, collecting of ideas in order to build and enforce a European network of experts and policy advisors in the fields of ESL and Parental involvement.

The ULSG work and LAP process will strive to further implement project results, innovation etc that could be used in the local situation in The Hague. In return, the city, the municipalities in the Region (greater The Hague) and the schools already have a long tradition in working together on the prevention and diminishing of ESL. They are prepared to share experiences and projects with other cities in Europe. The PREVENT project will be a useful instrument for this. Experiences from others can help The Hague to improve its approach.

Ústí Nad Labem, Czech Republic

The phenomenon of early school leaving has been a highly actual problem for the city of Ústí nad Labem. The most endangered children come from socially excluded groups, which provide lower chances to get engaged with further education. The city sees a high possibility of early school leaving in case of these children. In the Ústí nad Labem city, the Roma community represents a considerable part of disadvantaged families. This ethnic community is mostly concentrated in the city's districts of Pedlice and Mojží. Experts guess that there are between 10 000 and 19 000 Roma people living in Ústí nad Labem city. This number represents approximately one tenth of the city's population.

The city of Ústí nad Labem expects an improvement of the situation and decreasing the early school leaving rate in the city. Due to the fact that early school leaving, especially by children from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, is a problem in the whole Europe, the Statutory City of Ústí nad Labem is seriously interested in experience and know-how exchange with other European cities. It is not just about the exchange within one project but about forging long-term partnership of cities from the European Union dealing with the same problem. This includes sharing of knowledge, experiences, best practices and prevention of mistakes.

On the local level (ULSG/LAP work) The city of Ústí nad Labem would like to find out into which level the various organizations in the field can influence parents' participation to the prevention of early school leaving. Moreover, this experience would be shared with other partner cities all over European Union. Consequently, measures how to improve the situation will be formulated in the Local action plan. The important part of the project would be the exchange of know-how and best practice in the field of parents' involvement in concrete activities, which aim to decrease the risk of early school leaving. On the Usti local level, the aim will be to initiate a change of legislation in the way that the parents who care for education of their child would have a right to gain higher financial support for the child. On the other hand, the financial support would be decreased as a sanction for negative influence on the child. This policy should not apply only to the Roma children, but should become a general rule based in law.

Due to the fact that early school leaving, especially by children from disadvantaged neighbourhoods is a problem in the whole Europe, the Statutory City of

Ústí nad Labem is seriously interested in experience and know-how exchange with other European cities. Best practice exchange has always been an effective tool by development of Local Action Plans as well as by specific project activities. The city of Ústí nad Labem has been interested in the ESL problem for a long time, making it possible to offer good practice to other PREVENT partner cities.

As an example of a good practice that could be provided and disseminated, also included in the Usti city visit programme, is the organisation "People in Need". The organisation (NGO) manages a pilot project of so called retro-scholarships. The scholarships have been given to the basic school-leavers under specific conditions (study results average, number of missed hours/truancy rate etc.). The scholarships have been granted to students who are currently enrolled in the second or third year of secondary school/high school. "People in Need" has been in regular contact with the award recipients, namely, in the form of every-month meetings with the students or their parents. At least four times a year a social worker at People in Need contacts student's school to check whether the conditions for grant giving are complied. The organisation also provides tuition support in homes, workshops in social skills as well as "terrain social work" aiming at establishing trust and cooperation between schools and parents.

Still another example of parental involvement in Usti are the so called pre-classes aiming at preparing children (and parents) for a positive educational process; often the parents involved have negative personal experiences from schools.

City profiles matrix/overview –
"phase one" cities:

CITY	ESL PREVENTIVE MEASURES	INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS
NANTES (lead partner)	- Educational policy framework, "Educational succes" - Partnership/integrated approach examples - Co-responsibility and innovation drivers	- Parents Information Points - Projects and workshops to involve parents / families - "To position parents as partners"
SOFIA	- Interactive teaching methods - Child-centered school environment - Individualization, mentoring, monitoring	- Board of School Trustees - Parents Advocacy - Support Centers
GIJON	- Several public (city/regional) projects and programmes to fight ESL, inequality, exclusion - Process map for ESL prevention - Centers for preventing ESL	- Support to families/parents from low age (even pre birth) - Parental guidance projects - "Trabajo Socioeducativo en el Absentismo Escolar"
STOCKHOLM	- Education Act – forsees a strong relation between school – child – parent - Truancy support schemes	- Inviting parents to school - Courses for parents in school - Parent's guide - Support centers
ANTWERP	- Antwerp Education Council - Projects with social partners - AOBA department support - Parental shops	- Schoolbridge - KAAP - "Making School Together" - Educational parents support

City profiles matrix/overview –
"phase two" cities:

CITY	ESL PREVENTIVE MEASURES	INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS
TALLINN	- TED – coordinates good school env - TED – project specialists - Three level actions for ESL prev - Web based communication system - Support teams	- School events - School boards - Meetings in schools - 6-16 years schools - consistency
USTI NAD LABEM	- ESL one aspect of the Local strategy for Education - Programmes for roma people - Terrain social work	- "People in Need" projects - Projects to support parents - "Open days" for parents - School councils
MUNICH	- Strategy for Life long learning - Support services to schools - Coordinated actions for social work - Guidelines for parents	- "House for children" - "After school care center" - AktiFplus
DEN HAAG	- The Hague Education Agenda - Nat policy promoting parental involvement - also in schools - Funding for parental involvement - Haaglanden - Spirit4You	- Registration /care plan truancy - Good examples in primary and some secondary schools - Parental guides / info pack's - ESL case managers - Job fairs
CATANIA	- Local Educational Contract (LEC) Framework - Citta Policentrica project - Local Team work process	

SYNTHESIS - The road ahead

"While it 's never too early for parents to be involved, it is also true that it is never too late as children benefit from involvement at each and every stage of their lives..."

So what is the urban dimension to ESL? Why should URBACT cities pay attention to the subject, and what should be the level of response? From the work carried out within Eurocities' working groups there are several good reasons why cities should bother. Some points on the emergent perspective of cities related to ESL as stated by the Eurocities work is that:

- Cities have higher early school leaving rates than their regions or countries (Brussels, Vienna, Ireland, The Netherlands)

- Early school leaving tends to be concentrated in some urban neighbourhoods (Gothenburg, Stockholm, The Netherlands)

- There are growing disparities in educational attainment within cities (to be tested)

- Early school leavers typically come from low socio-economic backgrounds, are often of migrant or ethnic minority origin and are mostly male

- There are many reasons for leaving school: school failure, lack of psycho-social support at school, home or among peers

According to the working group, consequences are similar to other reports and findings:

- Difficulties in getting a job

- Higher risk of being dependent on social welfare

As when it comes to the kind of responses that cities could and should provide, city delegates propose the following measures:

- School measures: extra teaching hours, career guidance and counselling, mentoring, teacher education

- Identification of a problem: data collection, early warning schemes

- Management and (re)allocation of resources for those most in need

- Networking and collaboration between social welfare system and schools, as well as with a wider range of actors

- School-wide: curricular changes, for example introducing more vocational subjects and working together with businesses

The figure below shows the result from the ET2020 country network analysis (see page 16). As the "spidergram" clearly marks the gaps in national actions, it at the same time highlights the ideas of the PREVENT network – namely to develop preventive measures to ESL by improving the involvement of parents, developing extra-curricular activities and to further develop the networking with parents, families and relevant actors within the local society. So far so good – but the spidergram could at the same time be used to discover "missing links" in what in general is being presented by many actors, not least official bodies, as the "one causes framework" for understanding the ESL phenomena. By adding recent knowledge on systems theory and by comparing "what happens in the ESL area" with other areas in society that have adapted a systems theory approach, new ideas will emerge as we discover new ways to study and to reflect on the ESL issue.

CROSS COUNTRY ANALYSIS

National Reports submitted by ET2020 countries in April/May 2011
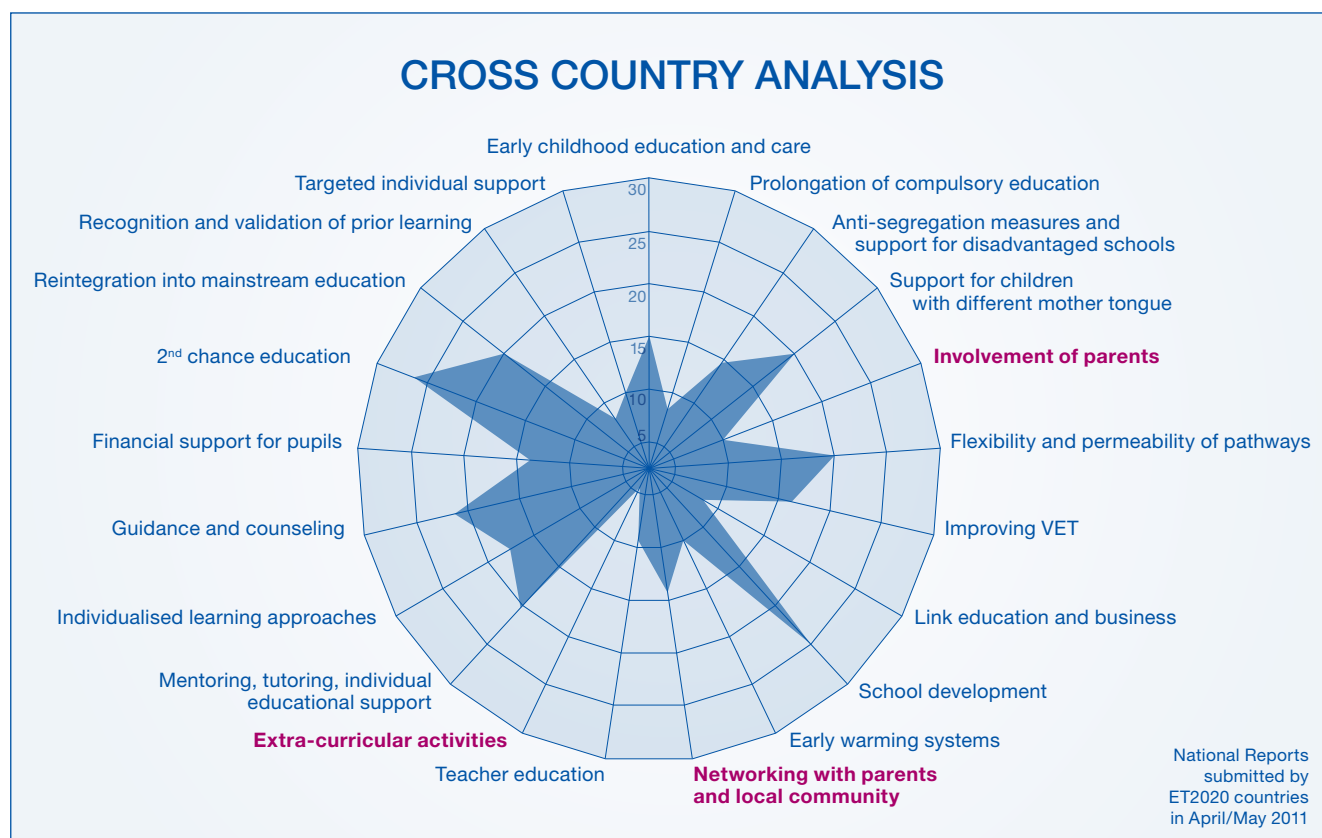
An attempt to summarise the ESL scanning process and city visits

An attempt to summarize "lessons learnt" from ESL work would give the following suggestions:

- There is no unique model for preventing drop-out and ESL
- Education systems need to allow freedom - for schools, teachers, parents and students to initiate and implement change
- School drop-out is a process and intervention has to start early; early education and childcare is one vital key
- Curriculas have to be relevant, flexible and student focussed
- School is only one part of the life of young people
- Social disadvantage does not necessarily lead to ESL; there is a correlation, but there should be "zero tolerance" for ESL in all parts of society, not contraproductive arguments set up to explain why things "are as they are"

Given the situation, it is vital - for many reasons - both for the young, their families and the society, to find new ways to reduce ESL. There is, as being highlighted in this study, a wide range of research trying to explore and explain ESL, and the focus on including measures aiming at supporting a more holistic understanding of the ESL issue is increasing. And even if there are differences in education systems and policies between countries, late research stresses an approach that on the one hand, has a clear focus on the situation of the individual young, while on the other hand and in parallel, on how we could work on a more flexible and collaborational way to improve schools and systemic issues to better meet the needs of today. But there is no quick or one fix to the ESL problem. Instead, we have to address the existing issues by learning from the ones we are talking about (the young), by adopting a multi stakeholder approach at many levels and by encouraging measures that could provide systemic change. We need to engage families, first and foremost parents, both in strengthening the bond to their children and in supporting their children in the educational process – to be active co creators in reducing ESL. And we need to be innovative, thus to some extent still a bit realistic, to find new and functional ways to build trust, respect, motivation and collaboration between schools, families, children and other relevant actors, both within municipal services and outside, with organisations, clubs, the business society. Picking up on input gained from the state-of-the-art exercise would, when matched with the needs and ideas coming from network cities, form a good starting point to the implementation phase of the PREVENT project.

Emerging from the experiences from the state of the art scan and the city visits and discussions, a reasonable synthesis for the Implementation phase would be around the following issues – all being highlighted as a part of a successful action map, a chain of performance, to fight Early school leaving in general and, specifically, to find ways, levels

and realistic measures to involve parents in the educational success of their children. The PREVENT network will be able to provide European cities valuable and hopefully innovative insight as well as concrete results regarding the prevention of ESL.

The PREVENT project aims at delivering input to URBACT cross cutting issues and to other, more specific areas of interest such as

- Social innovation (the modernising, optimizing and restructuring of public services)
- The ownership dialogue (governance issues, decision making, power structures, co creation/ co production incentives, power shift – and consequences of change)
- Dimensions of cultural and/or ethnic minority issues (the need to find better and more integrated ways to tackle certain issues related to migrant/ ethnic communities, as well as ways to better involve community members in the change processes)
- The promotion of stakeholder issues and the need for relevant capacity building (widening the perspective on stakeholders, target groups, roles and responsibilities; and, as a consequence, picking up on the need for capacity building to be able to fully participate)
- Outputs and results, methodology aspects and sustainability (to work hard to promote a view that results are to be seen as outputs that are the pre assessors to outcomes, i.e. long term changes in behaviours on different levels; to be able to try to think outside the box – both with regards to promote innovation and critical thinking as well as to make necessary changes to promote sustainability, i.e. the coordination and optimisation of resources, management, systems, structures, thus reinforcing the capacity of relevant stakeholders to be able to bring about change in their respective environment)

As already mentioned in the study, the PREVENT network will work jointly to find an integrated approach to reducing ESL and in line with that attempt, to involve parents in the process. To be able to support the parental involvement in reducing ESL in cities it is vital to understand at least some of the underlying criteria – though considering the "blame the victim" risk that would appear as many stakeholders still promote a viewpoint only focussing on the individual (the student/the young) and/or the family aspects as causes to the problem. It is therefore important to stress that the ESL issue also touches on the more systemic and structural issues and that a permanent change will have to involve networking and learning actions – both horizontally as well as vertically.

Further PREVENT actions

Finally, the PREVENT network will use the Baseline study input and the Final application to form a joint learning process around the following processes:

To be able to define and measure progress:

• Determine and implement a set of indicators, namely structural, process as well as outcome indicators for Parental involvement

To be able to promote comparison, learning and support of the implementation of good practice:

• Develop (implement if possible) a functional system for peer reviewing, to be used both as a tool for PREVENT transnational workshops as well as for bilateral visits and exchange

To be able to implement a cross-sectorial, integrated approach to preventing and reducing ESL:

• Elaborate on systems theories and ways to present and understand them; to discuss and develop a HOW matrix focussing on change management and organisational needs

• To better define the role of "transitions" in the educational pathways of the young AS WELL AS of parents, caretakers and families; what do they mean in terms of lost knowledge (formal/informal), needs, progress etc, and what could be done to reinforce a positive transformation process

To be able to support teachers and schools in the efforts and motivation to involve parents, students and the outside world (relevant stakeholders, both public, private and non governmental) in preventing and reducing ESL:

• Develop and exchange ways to promote a good and positive school climate, developing teachers conflict resolution and cultural diversity skills, developing networking, collaborative and partnership approaches, models and tools; to understand the mechanisms of the outreach issue, especially related to vulnerable and excluded parents and families

To empower parents to act as the most important co producers in the educational success of their children:

• Parent peer support coustructures such as in courses for their children's language development

• Emotionally supportive approaches to communication, problem solving and guidance with children

• Supporting ways to better and smoother interactions with schools and public services

• Opening up schools to extra curricular activities (ideally run by parents), to encourage events etc

To better find ways to engage with the young:

• Understanding the drivers that lead to lack of motivation and wrong study choice, searching for young people's explanations and aspirations; to develop alternative curriculas based on individual approaches and success; to make the young pilots of the educational process of themselves and to help understanding psychological and mental barriers to a positive engagement process, disregarding reasons (family, social or psychological).

Ulf Hägglund, Lead expert, the PREVENT network

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development. It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 181 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants. URBACT is co-financed by the ERDF Funds and the Member States.

www.urbact.eu/project
www.urbact.eu/prevent

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