Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving

Final report: July 2019

Request for Services EAC/21/2017

Education and Training

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
Directorate B — Youth, Education and Erasmus+
Unit B2 — Schools and Multilingualism

Contact: Monica Menapace

E-mail: Monica.MENAPACE@ec.europa.eu

European Commission
B-1049 Brussels

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving

Final report: July 2019

Request for Services EAC/21/2017

Vicki Donlevy, Laurie Day, Monica Andriescu, Paul Downes

Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
2019 Schools and Multilingualism EN

Disclaimer
This document has been prepared for the European Commission. However, it reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers to your questions about the European Union.

Freephone number (*)**:**
00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (http://europa.eu).

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019

PDF ISBN 978-92-76-08605-5 doi 10.2766/88044 catalogue NC-04-19-473-EN-N

© European Union, 2019
Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Printed in Luxembourg

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction 1
1.1 Study aims and scope 2
1.2 Key definitions and concepts 2
1.3 Research methodology and challenges 4
1.4 EU policy context for tackling ESL: the 2011 Recommendation and beyond 7

2.0 The ESL challenge in Europe: overview and monitoring 12
2.1 Overview of ESL in Europe 13
2.2 Monitoring and evaluation of ESL at national level 22

3.0 Overview of national ESL measures 28
3.1 Reminder of the policy measures in the 2011 Recommendation 29
3.2 Prevention measures 32
3.3 Intervention measures 48
3.4 Compensation measures 69

4.0 Role and influence of the 2011 ESL Recommendation and policy tools 81
4.1 Relevance and influence of the 2011 Recommendation and target 82
4.2 Effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of EU policy tools 92
4.3 Impact of the 2011 Recommendation on research 101
4.4 Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools 103

5.0 Future EU level support for tackling ESL: the stakeholders' view 106
5.1 Needs for future support in tackling ESL 106
5.2 Potential EU future policy instruments and actions 111

6.0 Conclusions and recommendations 115
6.1 Conclusions 115
6.2 Recommendations 122

Annex 1: Reducing ESL – intervention logic A2

Annex 2: Correspondence table – measures devised for the country mapping.....A3

Annex 3: Analytical review of the citation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Early School Leaving (ESL) and related key EU Commission and Council ESL documents A8

Annex 4: Bibliography.....A12

Annex 5: Country case studies A23

List of Tables

Table 4.1: Structural factors affecting the influence of the 2011 Recommendation 87
Table 4.2: Implementation factors affecting the influence of the 2011 Recommendation 89

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Progression of the ESL rate in EU Member States where ESL has decreased between 2011 and 2018* 14
Figure 2.2: Progression of the ESL rate in EU Member States where ESL has increased or stagnated between 2011 and 2018* 15
Figure 2.3: Progression of ESL rate in EFTA and Candidate countries, 2011-2018* 16
Figure 2.4 Distance between ESL rates and ESL national target in 2018* 17
Figure 2.5 ESL rates: differences between native and foreign-born in the EU28, 2018* 18
Figure 2.6 ESL rates: differences between native and foreign-born in EFTA and Candidate countries, 2018* 18
Figure 4.1: Factors affecting the effectiveness of ESL national strategy development and implementation 87
Figure 4.2 Which, if any, of the following actions did you undertake following your participation in the ET 2020 Working Group activities? Tick all that apply 99
Figure 4.3 Figure 4.3: Which, if any, of the following actions were taken within your country as a result of participating in the ET2020 Working Groups? Tick all that apply 99
Figure 6.1: Factors affecting the effectiveness of ESL national strategy development and implementation 118

Acknowledgements

This research was commissioned by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission and undertaken by Ecorys.

The research was led by Vicki Donlevy, Laurie Day and Monica Andriescu from Ecorys, with valuable support and inputs Andrea Broughton, Alma Agusti Strid and Milda Butkute.

We are indebted to our external Expert Advisor, Dr. Paul Downes, Director of the Educational Disadvantage Centre and Associate Professor of Education (Psychology) at the Institute of Education, Dublin City University, for his invaluable advice and contributions throughout the study. Many thanks also to Valerie McLoughlin of the Educational Disadvantage Centre.

In addition, we would like to thank a range of contributors at country level including: Dragana Avramov, Ana Cardoso, Giedre Beleckiene, Pepka Boyadjieva, András Derényi, Toms Feifs, Karsten Frøhlich Hougaard, Suzanne Gatt, Olivia Geymond, Hanna-Stella Haaristo, Eila Heikkilä, Claudiu Ivan, Elira Jorgoni, Leonidas Kyriakides, Shona Macleod, Agnieszka Makulec, Maria Melstveit, Sarah Murphy, Fatma Nil Ayhan, Eli Pijaca Plavšić, Anita Ramsak, Charlotte Ruitinga, Milada Stalker, Anh-Dao Katrin Tran, Floor van Oort, Juraj Vantuch and Patrick Werquin.

We also acknowledge the valuable support of the Steering Group at DG EAC throughout the study, including Petra Goran, Monica Menapace, Susanne Conze, Alexandra Tamasan, Marco Montanari, Monika Kepe Holmberg, Aristea Politi and Susanne von Below.

Finally, the team would like to thank the many consultees who gave their time for interviews, surveys and workshops.

Country abbreviations

EU country code	Country
AL	Albania
AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CH	Switzerland
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IS	Iceland
IT	Italy
LI	Liechtenstein
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
ME	Montenegro
MK	North Macedonia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
RS	Serbia
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
TR	Turkey
UK	United Kingdom
UK(EN)	UK-England

Other abbreviations used in the report

CPD	Continuous professional development (of teachers)
CSR	Country-specific recommendation
DG	Directorate-General
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ELET	Early leaving from education and training
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESL	Early school leaving
ET 2020	Education and Training 2020 strategy
EU	European Union
EU 2020	Europe 2020 strategy
HEI	Higher education institution
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ITE	Initial teacher education
MS	Member States
NEET	Young people neither in employment nor in education or training
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OMC	Open method of coordination
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PES	Public employment services
SES	Socio-economic status
SRSS	Structural Reform Support Programme
TWG	Thematic Working Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VET	Vocational education and training

1.0 Introduction

Ecorys is pleased to submit this Draft Final Report for the ***Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (ESL)***. This comparative study, that covers 37 EU and non-EU countries, has been conducted seven years after the publication of the 2011 Recommendation[1]. As the Europe 2020 strategy and ET 2020 cooperation framework come to an end, which both include a target on reducing ESL, the study will serve to both look back on achievements to date and inform strategic thinking for the post-ET 2020 cooperation framework in education[2].

The report presents our analysis of the findings from all the research tasks conducted for the study. Its structure was agreed with DG EAC prior to submission and reflects the requirements in the tender specifications (p.10) and comprises the following chapters:

- The current **Chapter 1** provides an introduction to the report, including: a brief reminder of the main aims and scope of the study, an introduction to key terms and concepts, a brief summary of the research methodology (further detail will be provided in the final technical report) and challenges encountered, and an overview of the policy and wider research context for the study at EU level;
- **Chapter 2** presents the ESL situation and trends at European and national level and an overview of the national arrangements for monitoring and evaluating ESL;
- **Chapter 3** provides an overview and examples of the ESL measures implemented at national level in the 37 countries covered by the study in terms of prevention, intervention and compensation measures, as well as presenting evidence of effectiveness;
- **Chapter 4** sets out our analysis of the role and influence of the 2011 Recommendation and associated EU policy tools in the EU28, EFTA and Candidate countries, and summarises the study findings in terms of their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability;
- **Chapter 5** presents the findings gathered in relation to the perceived need for future EU level support to tackle ESL, and the nature of the support envisaged;
- **Chapter 6** draws together the findings from the study to provide conclusions and recommendations.

The **Annexes** comprise:

- Annex 1: Intervention logic;
- Annex 2: Correspondence table between measures in the 2011 Recommendation and measures devised for the country mapping;
- Annex 3: Analytical review of citations of EU ESL policy documents and tools;
- Annex 4: Bibliography;
- Annex 5: 10 country case studies.

[1] Council of the European Union, Council recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, 2011/C 191/01, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:191:0001:0006:en:PDF

[2] See also the Issue Paper on Inclusion and Citizenship (2019) for the Forum on the Future of Learning. DG EAC, Brussels.

1.1 Study aims and scope

This study analyses the development of policies and practice on reducing ESL after 2011, seeking **to assess the contribution of the *2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving* (henceforth the 2011 Recommendation) and associated EU policy instruments to the development of policy, practice and research on ESL across Europe.** The study looks at the leverage of EU policy on tackling ESL over the actions taken by key stakeholders at EU level and explores the extent of any influence between MS on their respective approaches to reducing ESL. The study also seeks to assess the added value of EU policy to tackle ESL in the Member States, and investigates the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the EU policy and tools on reducing ESL.

The **specific requirements** of the study as set out in the tender specifications were (p.7):

a) To collect, analyse and synthesise available national and EU documents and reports related to early school leaving or including reduction of early school leaving, covering the EU28, EFTA and Candidate countries, and to undertake a preliminary assessment of the influence of the 2011 Recommendation.
b) To deepen this knowledge of ESL-related policies and initiatives through interviews with key stakeholders at the EU and national levels and country workshops with experts working on ESL-related issues, bringing together key stakeholders from government and independent organisations;
c) To provide detailed insight and evidence on the policy processes and impact in the Member States through case studies, which will be selected purposively to include a cross-section of countries with different challenges concerning ESL, different progress in ESL rates and different levels of engagement in EU-related actions; and
d) To draw conclusions and provide recommendations, specifically on the future directions for the ESL policy at the EU level, and more generally on the success factors for EU-level cooperation in the field of school education, with a reflection on their efficiency and sustainability.

In terms of geographical coverage, **the study covers 37 countries**: the 28 EU Member States, five EU Candidate countries (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey) and four EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Norway).

The study has been implemented by a team from Ecorys, led by Vicki Donlevy, Laurie Day and Monica Andriescu. The team has worked closely throughout the study with our external Expert Advisor, Dr. Paul Downes, Director of the Educational Disadvantage Centre and Associate Professor of Education (Psychology) at the Institute of Education, Dublin City University, and has drawn on the expertise of 37 country experts.

1.2 Key definitions and concepts

The study uses throughout the definition of **early school leaving (ESL)** provided in the 2011 Recommendation: *'early school leaving is used in connection with those who leave*

education and training with only lower secondary education or less, and who are no longer in education and training'.[3]

This phenomenon is also referred to as **early leaving from education and training (ELET)**, for instance by Eurostat[4]. ELET *'encompasses countries' own definitions of who in the national context is considered to be an early leaver. It includes, for example, countries who refer to young people who leave (or drop out of) school without completing what is considered in the national context as basic education (usually primary and secondary education), as well as those who define early leavers as young people who leave school without an upper secondary school leaving certificate'*[5]. For some, the concept of ELET is also important as it more clearly encompasses those who have dropped out of vocational training tracks.

As agreed at the inception stage with the European Commission, the study has treated ESL and ELET as **equivalent concepts**. In order to avoid any confusion and for consistency, the study refers only to ESL throughout.

In statistical terms, the **early school leaving rate** is defined by Eurostat as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training and who were not in further education or training during the last four weeks preceding the survey[6].

It should be noted that the term **school dropout** is defined slightly differently to early school leaving. The Thematic Working Group on ESL for example defined it as 'discontinuing an on-going course, e.g. dropping out in the middle of school term. Dropout can occur at any time and can be experienced by different age groups'[7]. Due to the negative connotations associated with this term, we use only the term early school leaver in this study.

In order to capture the broad range of outcomes and impacts of the Recommendation and related EU activities and tools, the study has taken an inclusive approach to **measures to tackle ESL**, which include policies, initiatives, institutional arrangements (e.g. monitoring), national/regional strategies or action plans, research and practices. While the majority of the measures analysed are implemented by national (or regional) education authorities, the study also covers - as relevant - measures implemented by other actors (e.g. academic researchers).

The 2011 Recommendation divides policy measures to tackle ESL into three broad categories (or pillars) – prevention, intervention and compensation, defined as follows.

[3] Council of Ministers (2011), Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving. Luxembourg: Official Journal of the European Union. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011H0701(01)&from=EN

[4] Eurostat gives the following definition of early leavers: 'early leaver from education and training, previously named early school leaver, refers to a person aged 18 to 24 who has completed at most lower secondary education and is not involved in further education or training'.

[5] Downes, P; Nairz-Wirth, E; Rusinaité, v. (2017), Structural Indicators for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools, NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Doi: 10.2766/200506

[6] Lower secondary education refers to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 level 0-2 for data from 2014 onwards and to ISCED 1997 level 0-3C short for data up to 2013

[7] European Commission (2013), Reducing Early School Leaving: Key Messages and Policy Support, Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, p. 8.

Further detail on the policies included under each pillar is provided in the opening section of Chapter 3:

- **Prevention policies** aim to 'reduce the risk of early school leaving before problems start. Such measures optimise the provision of education and training in order to support better learning outcomes and to remove obstacles to educational success';
- **Intervention policies** aim to 'avoid early school leaving by improving the quality of education and training at the level of the educational institutions, by reacting to early warning signs and by providing targeted support to pupils or groups of pupils at risk of early school leaving. They address all educational levels, starting from early childhood education and care to upper secondary education';
- **Compensation policies** aim to 'help those who left school prematurely to re-engage in education, offering routes to re-enter education and training and gain the qualifications they missed'.

Furthermore, the 2011 Recommendation stipulates that **comprehensive strategies** on early school leaving comprise 'a mix of policies, coordination across different policy sectors and the integration of measures supporting the reduction of early school leaving into all relevant policies aimed at children and young people. In addition to education policies that promote high-quality school systems, these are principally social policy and support services, employment, youth, family, and integration policies. Horizontal coordination between different actors and vertical coordination through different levels of government are equally important. Strategies on early school leaving should comprise prevention, intervention and compensation elements. Member States should select the detailed components of their strategies according to their own circumstances and contexts.' The 2011 Recommendation states that Member States should ensure that comprehensive strategies are in place by 2012.

1.3 Research methodology and challenges

1.3.1 Analytical approach to the study

The study is rooted in an understanding of the broader context of Europe's education sector and the challenges it faces, and the assumptions that underpinned the Recommendation and set the direction of travel for the period (post 2011). It is embedded in an **intervention logic** (Annex 1), which we developed at the beginning of the study, and implements a **contribution analysis** methodology for assessing the extent to which the 2011 Recommendation has achieved the desired effects (as embodied in the intervention logic) at EU and Member State levels, over and above what would have been achieved anyway.[8] Rather than setting out to isolate the effects of a single intervention, contribution analysis aims to build a credible 'performance story[9]', drawing upon the available sources of evidence to consider whether the intervention, alongside other factors, contributed towards the observed outcomes. This is ideal for the 2011 Recommendation, as it provides a mechanism for reflecting on the assumptions behind it, and testing with

[8] Mayne, J. (2001), Addressing attribution through contribution analysis: using performance measures sensibly. Canadian Journal of Programme Evaluation [16]; p.1-24

[9] Mayne, J. (1999), 'Addressing Attribution through Contribution Analysis: Using Performance Measures Sensibly', discussion paper, Office of the Auditor General of Canada

key stakeholders the extent to which these assumptions have held true throughout implementation.

The **key research questions** for the study, based on the specific objectives of the study set out in the tender specifications, were organised into four categories: 1) relevance; 2) effectiveness[10]; 3) efficiency and proportionality; and, 4) sustainability and added value of the 2011 Recommendation and related tools. It was recognised however at kick-off stage that the study was likely to generate only limited evidence in relation to the efficiency criterion, and that the main focus of the report would be on other criteria.

1.3.2 Overview of research methodology

The study methodology was designed to gather and analyse evidence in relation to the key research questions, as well as to closely follow the requirements in the tender specifications. Full details of the methodology will be provided in the accompanying technical progress report, however we provide below a brief overview of the key components of the methodology.

- **Inception phase (December 2017-January 2018):** Further to the kick-off meeting in December 2018, the study team reviewed and updated the methodology and developed draft versions of the research tools for the study, submitted with the inception report in January 2019.
- **Desk research (February–May 2018):** Desk research was carried out both at EU and national level in order to collect, analyse and synthesise available national and EU level documents and reports related to ESL, including literature published in national languages. Across the 37 countries covered by the desk research, the evidence gathered by country experts allowed the first phase of the completion of the analytical country templates, designed to collect evidence across all the key research areas for each country.
- **Interviews with experts and stakeholders (June–October 2018):** Interviews were conducted by the research team with key stakeholders at national and EU/international level, including EU institutions, social partners and stakeholder associations, and ministry and NGO representatives. In total, over 120 interviews were conducted including: 15 interviews at EU/international level, over 100 interviews across the 28 EU Member States (including 5 additional interviews in devolved countries[11]), and 6 interviews in two non-EU countries, Norway and Serbia[12]. The interviews provided further inputs to the analytical country templates. The interim report, submitted in October 2018, provided an initial analysis of the evidence collected in the country templates through the desk research and interviews.
- **Supplementary data collection for OMC activities (October-December 2018):** An online survey of participants in the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving and the ET 2020 Working Groups on Schools was carried out in order assess the contribution of the OMC in supporting efforts to tackle ESL at both EU and country

[10] The 'effectiveness' category includes the specific objective focusing on the 'impact of the Recommendation' (as specified in the tender specifications, p.5)
[11] Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain.
[12] The choice of non-EU countries in which to conduct interviews was agreed with the study steering group. The policies of the other non-EU countries were examined only through desk research.

levels, and provide an opportunity for participants to share their views on the 2011 Recommendation and its influence at the country level. In total, 38 responses to the survey were received.

- **Case studies via country workshops (November 2018-March 2019):** Further to the production of a longlist of 15 potential case study countries based on structural and policy implementation criteria[13], 10 case study countries were selected in close cooperation with the DG EAC study steering group and in line with the selection criteria: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain (Catalonia) and Sweden. Country workshops were carried out in each selected Member State[14], and the results set out in the case study fiches (see Annex 5). As well as validating and debating the information gathered in the initial country templates (on national challenges and policies to tackle ESL), the workshops allowed in-depth discussion on the influence and impacts of the 2011 Recommendation and other EU policy tools.
- **Final analysis and report writing (March-July 2019):** Further to the completion of all research activities, the evidence from all the research strands was drawn together and analysed to produce this draft final report. The final analysis has included the development of a series of 'heat maps' corresponding to the existence of policy measures under the 3 pillars of the Recommendation (prevention, intervention and compensation) across the countries covered by the study, drawing on and interpreting the evidence gathered at country level from desk research, interviews and (where relevant) case studies. Further to the draft final report meeting and feedback from the study steering group, the final report will be submitted in July 2019, together with the executive summary and abstract. A technical progress report will be submitted within 60 days of completion of all tasks.
- **Dissemination (July-October 2019):** The study will conclude with a series of tasks to disseminate the findings to a range of key stakeholders. This work will include both a formal presentation at an EU level, and the production of two films, to effectively communicate the learning from the study through the opinions of expert stakeholders. The Commission requested an extension to the contract duration in order that the videos can be shot at the Education Summit at the end of September 2019.

1.3.3 Research challenges

Rigorous project planning and management, as well as the selection of knowledgeable country experts, has enabled the timely delivery of extensive evidence about the national policies related to reducing ESL since 2011 in the 37 countries included in the study, as well as its systematic analysis. The study did nonetheless pose a number of challenges which we highlight below.

Firstly, **the scope of the study** was challenging since it covered a very large number of countries with a broad variety of education policies, governance systems, ESL challenges and responses. In addition, since the scope of policies covered by the 2011 Recommendation – reflecting the multifaceted approach needed to tackle ESL - is very

[13] Structural factors included geographical criteria, type of education system and national ESL trends; policy implementation criteria included the ESL policy framework, the degree of influence of the Recommendation and the country's engagement with the EU agenda.
[14] With the exception of France where interviews were instead carried out separately with a range of key stakeholders.

wide, the range of measures to examine was often very broad, involving sometimes more than one ministry (e.g. Ministry of labour for certain compensation measures, ministry of families for ECEC). This complexity was further multiplied in the case of countries with partial or totally decentralised education systems (see below).

Secondly, it was often challenging to **identify the degree of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policies**. In many cases, ESL policies at the country level had been implemented before 2011, but had since been adapted or reformed. Due to a range of reasons such as inevitable staff turnover over almost a decade, the well-known phenomenon of policy amnesia in complex systems, where it is difficult to retrace the range of complex conversations (formal and informal) as causal linkages within and between ministry systems, national policymakers were often unable to make direct – or even indirect - linkages between the Recommendation and national policy, even when implemented after 2011 and sometimes even when policies strongly resembled those in the policy framework in the Recommendation. In some cases, these policies are also implemented through projects (e.g. funded by the European Structural and Investment Funds), which are limited in time. The influence of the Recommendation and its associated tools is part of a process of diffusion that includes exchanges between countries, conditionality elements, policy discourse, as well as political will to take decisions that are aligned with the 2011 Recommendation.

A third challenge was presented by the **decentralised nature of education policies** in some countries (e.g. Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, UK). In such complex governance systems, policies and measures aimed at reducing ESL are often established and implemented at the regional and/or local levels, to address contextual challenges. Even where policy frameworks exist at the national level, they provide only broad policy guidelines.

Finally, our research has revealed that, while in some countries there are specific policies or strategies aimed at reducing ESL, in others **broader education policies instead include ESL-related measures**. Similarly, some measures are covered explicitly by policy or legislation, but others have not been developed in a top-down way (under for example the auspices of a particular directive or a national policy), or are project-based and limited in time or to a certain location. As such, due to the large number of measures and their diversity, the mapping exercise cannot provide an exhaustive overview of measures that exist in each country, but rather provides trends and relevant examples.

1.4 EU policy context for tackling ESL: the 2011 Recommendation and beyond

Education is vital for positive economic, personal and social development. More years of education are also associated with higher 'earnings advantage'[15]. In the context of countries with knowledge–based economies, education is the main lever to achieve a flourishing personal life and democratic, fair, inclusive and competitive society. However, a significant proportion of young people in EU countries drop out of the education system, without completing what is considered in the national context as the basic education

[15] OECD (2015), Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators, OECD, Paris

necessary to achieve their future social and employment potential. Research has shown that ESL and by consequence educational underachievement are among the principal barriers to achieving equitable societies. It has also shown that underachievement is determined by socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic status[16].

The **headline target** to reduce the number of early school leavers in Europe to under 10% by 2020 was announced in 2010 as part of the wider set of goals within the Europe 2020 Strategy[17]. After the adoption of the Strategy, the Commission adopted, on 31 January 2011, **a set of policy documents addressing early school leaving**. These comprised: a Commission Communication on 'Tackling early school leaving: A key contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda'[18], a Staff Working Paper on 'Reducing early school leaving'[19] and the proposal for the Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving[20], referred to in this report as the 2011 Recommendation.

Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving (2011/C 191/01)

The 2011 Recommendation aimed to provide the tools and policy impetus to encourage efforts at a national level across the EU in moving towards the 10% headline target.

It established for the first time a common reporting mechanism for efforts to tackle ESL via the Annual Growth Survey (AGS), and represents a call for countries to implement comprehensive strategies, to include groups at increased risk of dropping out in their measures, to address ESL both in general education and in VET, and to involve other policy sectors.

It includes recommendations to the Member States on implementing a policy framework to tackle ESL, and invites the Commission to support national policy efforts through a variety of actions at EU level including monitoring, facilitating the exchange of good practice, launching comparative studies and research, and integrating measures aimed at tackling ESL in all relevant Union policies addressing children and young people.

The Annex to the Recommendation sets out a framework for comprehensive policies to reduce early school leaving. The framework includes the need to identify the main factors and monitor ESL, as well as a framework comprising policies under three key pillars which should all be addressed in national ESL strategies: prevention, intervention and compensation.

The Recommendation was adopted on 28 June 2011.

[16] OECD (2011), Tackling inequalities in education, Paris, OECD Publishing.
[17] European Commission (2010). Communication from the Commission: Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf [accessed 24 April 2019]
[18] COM (2011)18, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0018:FIN:EN:PDF
[19] SEC(2011)96, https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1727c557-8ffa-4d80-8bc9-dc0feff6d836/language-en
[20] Council of the European Union (2011), Council recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, 2011/C 191/01, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:191:0001:0006:en:PDF

To support these efforts, the Commission also put in place a number of policy tools to encourage and support Member States and stakeholders to successfully address ESL, including:

- Support for networking collaboration, using the **Open Method of Cooperation** (OMC). The first **Thematic Working Group on ESL** was established following the launch of the Recommendation and ran from 2011-2013, culminating in the publication of its final report[21]. The focus on ESL was then integrated into the mandate of the **ET 2020 Working Group on Schools**[22]; in 2014-2015, the Working Group focused on 'whole school approaches to reduce early school leaving', publishing key messages[23]. Subsequent mandates of the Schools Working Group (2016-2018, 2018-2020) have not however placed a specific focus on ESL.
- A focus on ESL within EU programmes, in particular Erasmus+, including the introduction of ***ex ante* conditionalities** in the Regulations of the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) requiring countries to demonstrate the existence of comprehensive strategy and tracking mechanisms as a precondition for the use of ESF for activities to tackle ESL[24]; and
- Investment in research and development – centring on the EU Framework Programme 7 **RESL.eu project**[25] designed to provide new evidence for what constitutes effective prevention, intervention and compensation measures in an EU context.

In recent years, the European Commission and European Parliament have also played an important role in **researching the causes and effects of ESL**, as well as the approaches to tackle it. Key actions have included: the production of Council conclusions on early school leaving[26]; disseminating information[27]; supporting peer reviews of ESL policies in several EU countries including Germany, Bulgaria, Portugal and Malta; developing indicators on ESL[28]; producing key policy messages on ESL[29] and school-relevant policies[30]; preparing an online toolkit for Schools aimed at promoting educational success

[21] European Commission (2013), Final report of the Thematic Working Group on ESL, November 2013, https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/early-school-leaving-group2013-report_en.pdf
[22] https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-working-groups_en
[23] European Commission (2015), Schools policy: A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving – policy messages, Education and Training 2020
[24] European Commission (2016), The implementation of the provisions in relation to the *ex-ante* conditionalities during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/how/studies_integration/impl_exante_esif_report_en.pdf
[25] https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/resl-eu/
[26] Council of the European Union (2015), Council conclusions on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school (2015/C 417/05), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215(03)&from=EN
[27] European Commission (2012), Conference report: Reducing early school leaving: efficient and effective policies in Europe, 1 and 2 March 2012, https://ec.europa.eu/education/content/conference-report-reducing-early-school-leaving-efficient-and-effective-policies-europe_en
[28] European Commission (2016), Structural Indicators on Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe – 2016
[29] European Commission (2013), Final report of the Thematic Working Group on ESL, November 2013, https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/early-school-leaving-group2013-report_en.pdf
[30] European Commission (2015), Schools policy: A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving (produced by the ET 2020 Working Group Schools), https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/early-leaving-policy_en.pdf

and preventing ESL[31]; supporting studies on reducing ESL[32], on second chance education[33] and on the effective use of early childhood education and care in preventing ESL[34]; supporting EPALE's (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe) focus on early school leavers and second chance education[35]; funding projects under the Erasmus+ Programme[36] and its predecessors.

Recent policy developments have also reinforced the focus on measures to allow all citizens to acquire the competences necessary for active participation in society and in the labour market, addressing *inter alia* issues relating to the prevention of – and compensation for - early school leaving. **The European Pillar of Social Rights**[37], launched in November 2017, states as its first principle that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that allow full participation in society and successful transitions in the labour market.

In parallel, the vision of moving towards a **European Education area**[38] announced as a follow up to the Gothenburg Social Summit of November 2017 and the EU Council of December 2017 recognises the need 'to harness the full potential of education and culture as drivers for jobs, social fairness, active citizenship as well as means to experience European identity in all its diversity[39]. In order to achieve the aims of developing a European Education area, the Commission has launched two packages of measures, which include several policies relating to early school leaving.

The first package of measures, presented in January 2018 included:

- A **Council Recommendation on common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching**[40], adopted on 22 May 2018, which aims at strengthening inclusive education, to promote quality education for all pupils and the European dimension of teaching, so children also learn about Europe's common heritage and diversity and get an understanding of the functioning of the EU.

[31] http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools.htm [accessed 24 April 2019]
[32] e.g. European Parliament (2011), Reducing early school leaving in the EU, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2011/460048/IPOL-CULT_ET%282011%29460048%28SUM01%29_EN.pdf
[33] European Commission (2014), Preventing early school leaving in Europe – Lessons learnt from second chance education, https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/575dc3dc-a6fb-4701-94a2-b53d62704567
[34] European Commission (2014), Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in preventing early school leaving (ESL), http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/study-on-the-effective-use-of-early-childhood-education-and-care-ecec-in-preventing-early-school-leaving-esl--pbNC0414322/
[35] e.g. https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/themes/second-chance-schools
[36] https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en
[37] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en
[38] https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en
[39] European Commission (2017), Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture: The European Commission's contribution to the Leaders' meeting in Gothenburg, 17 November 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-strengthening-european-identity-education-culture_en.pdf
[40] Council of the European Union (2018), Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1528379535771&uri=CELEX:32018H0607(01)

- A **Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning**[41], which updates the 2006 Recommendation on Key Competences, adopted by the European Council on 22 May 2018. It aims to improve the development of key competences of people of all ages throughout their lives and to provide guidance to Member States (MS) on how to achieve this objective. The measures aim to help Member States to better prepare learners for changing labour markets and for active citizenship in more diverse, mobile, digital and global societies. In so doing, it provides a range of recommendations which should have a positive influence on tackling early school leaving, linked to measures promoted in the 2011 Recommendation.

The Commission then launched a second package of measures to develop this vision in May 2018, set out in the **Communication on 'Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies'**[42] in May 2018. The package included proposals for new Council Recommendations including on **High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems**[43] to lay the foundations for later success in life, which was adopted by Council on 22 May 2019.

The Commission also presented, on 23 May 2018, its proposals for the **2019 country specific recommendations**[44] (CSRs), setting out its economic policy guidance for Member States for the next 12-18 months. Education is more visible than ever before, with over 20 recommendations. There is an increase in focus on social issues, reflecting the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Member States have made progress in some areas, e.g. reducing ESL, but challenges remain on access, inequalities and the provision of basic skills, particularly for vulnerable and underrepresented groups.

The **Paris Declaration of 2015**[45] is also of direct relevance for ESL issues, given its recognition that much of the roots of radicalisation and alienation from society can be linked to issues of poverty and socio-economic exclusion. As such, ESL plays a key strategic role in promoting a cooperative society based on common interests. The Paris Declaration commits to '*Fostering the education of disadvantaged children and young people, by ensuring that our education and training systems address their needs… encouraging outreach and cooperation with civil society and social partners'* and emphasises the importance of '*Ensuring inclusive education for all children and young people which combats racism and discrimination on any ground, promotes citizenship… Combating geographical, social and educational inequalities, as well as other factors which can lead to despair and create a fertile ground for extremism*'.

[41] Council of the European Union (2018). Council recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&rid=7
[42] European Commission (2018), Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies, COM(2018) 268 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0268
[43] European Commission (2018), Proposal for a Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems COM/2018/271 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0271
[44] https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2019-european-semester-country-specific-recommendations-commission-recommendations_en
[45] European Council (2015), Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, Informal meeting of European Union Education Ministers, Paris, 17 March 2015

2.0 The ESL challenge in Europe: overview and monitoring

In order to contextualise the study and policy challenges faced, this chapter sets out the situation in relation to ESL across Europe. It begins with a presentation and discussion of the evolving situation and trends in ESL at European and country level, with a specific zoom on trends by gender and for students of migrant origin. We also provide a brief overview of some of the key factors contributing to ESL. Finally, drawing on the original research conducted for this study, we consider the arrangements in place across the different European countries for monitoring and analysing these ESL trends at national trends.

Key findings in Chapter 2

The ESL rate has steadily decreased overall in the European Union (EU) over past years, from 17.0% in 2002 to 10.6% in 2018. In the period since 2011, when the ESL rate was at 13.4%, the rate has dropped overall by 2.8 percentage points. Similar improvements can be observed in most of the EFTA and Candidate Countries. Although the trend represents a significant improvement overall and progress is being made towards the EU 2020 headline target of reducing ESL to 10%, progress has largely stagnated since 2016 and important differences exist across countries and for specific population groups.

20 out of 28 Member States have experienced a decrease in their ESL rate since 2011. The countries with the largest decrease since 2011 are Portugal, Spain, Greece, Ireland and Malta; however most of these countries (with the exceptions of Ireland and Greece) still have some of the highest ESL rates across Europe. The ESL rate has however increased in the period 2011-2018 in eight EU Member States; the largest increase since 2011 has occurred in Slovakia and Sweden.

In 2018, of the 35 countries covered by the study for which data is collected by Eurostat, 13 had ESL rates above 10% (BG, DE, EE, ES, HU, IS, IT, MT, NO, PT, RO, TR, UK)[46]. The countries with the highest ESL rates in 2018 were Turkey (31.3%), Iceland (21.5%), Spain (17.9%), Malta (17.5%), Romania (16.4%) and Italy (14.5%). The countries with the lowest ESL rates were Croatia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ireland, Poland, and Lithuania, ranging from 3.1% to 4.8%[47]. In 2018, 14 Member States had reached their specific national target[48], while 13 Member States had not, with some missing the target by more than 5 percentage points (Malta, Romania)[49].

ESL affects more strongly migrants and young men. The 2018 average ESL rate[50] for the non-EU born (20.7%) is considerably higher than that of the native born (9.5%). The ESL rates for foreign-born individuals in 2018 were particularly high in Spain (31.9%), Italy (30.1%), Germany (22.8%), and Austria (18.4%). The gender gap in

[46] Eurostat (2018), Early leavers from education and training [edat_lfse_14]). Available at http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_14&lang=en
[47] Op cit
[48] Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden.
[49] The UK did not set a national target
[50] Eurostat (2018), Early leavers from education and training by country of birth edat_lfse_02 http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_02&lang=en

Key findings in Chapter 2

ESL rates also remains a feature, with an EU average male ESL rate of 12.3% and a female rate of 8.9% in 2018, although with a slight narrowing of the gap since 2011, when the ESL rate for males was 15.3% and for females 11.5%. The gender gap is particularly marked in six MS where there is a difference of over 5 percentage points between male and female ESL rates: Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Portugal and Denmark. Outside of the EU, the gender gap is most stark in Iceland (14 percentage points). EU data also reveals that, in most cases, people in rural areas fare worse than those in urban areas[51].

2.1 Overview of ESL in Europe

In order to better understand the challenges related to tackling ESL, we set out below the situation in relation to ESL, including trends over time where relevant, both at macro level and in relation to specific population groups, with a particular focus on individuals of migrant origin and gender.

2.1.1 Macro level overview of ESL

The early school leaving rate is defined by Eurostat as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education[52] and who were not in further education or training during the last four weeks preceding the survey.

The ESL rate has steadily decreased overall in the European Union (EU) over past years, from 17.0% in 2002 to 13.4% in 2011, and then to 10.6% in 2018. This trend is consistent with the data collected in some EFTA and Candidate countries. Although the trend represents a considerable improvement and, on average, progress was made until 2016 towards the EU 2020 headline target of reducing ESL to 10%, significant differences prevail across countries and progress has stagnated since 2016.

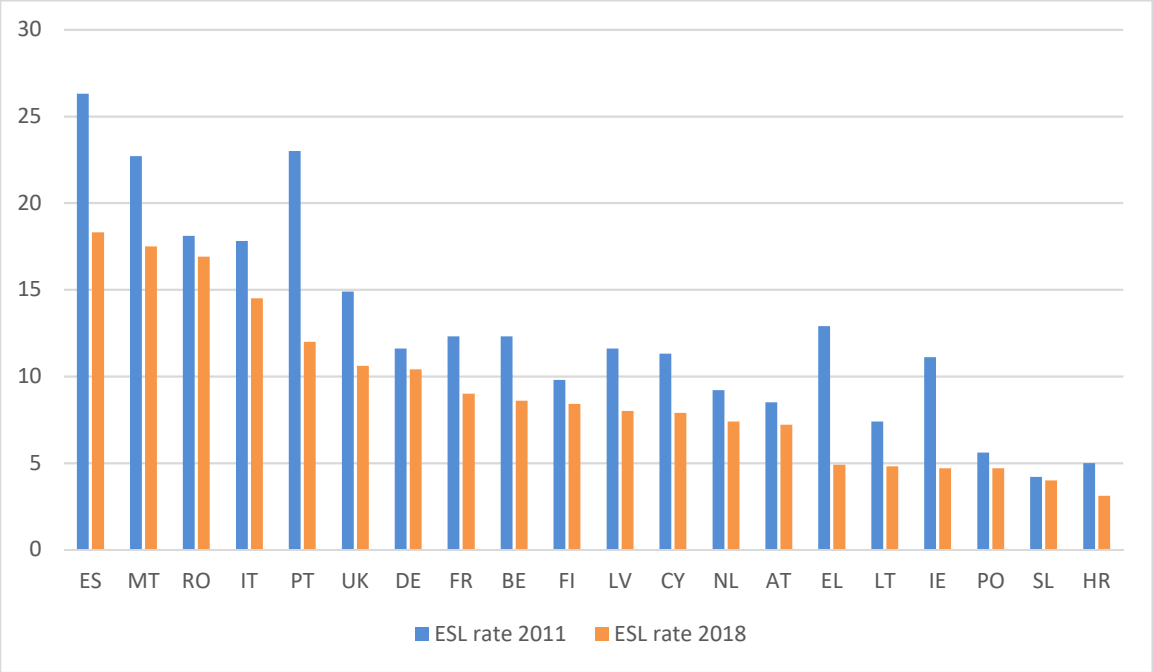
The Education and Training Monitor 2018 highlights that '*while in the EU on average women have reached the [ESL] benchmark, the situation is more difficult for men even if a considerable share of them are employed. It is also more challenging in southern and south-eastern countries and for people with a migrant background. In addition, in most cases, people in rural areas fare worse than those in urban areas*'[53].

According to Eurostat data, out of the 35 countries for which data is collected[54], **13 had ESL rates above 10% in 2018 (BG, DE, EE, ES, HU, IS, IT, MT, NO, PT, RO, TR, UK)**[55]. The countries with **the highest ESL rates in 2018** were Turkey (31.3%), Iceland (21.5%), Spain (17.9%), Malta (17.5%), Romania (16.4%) and Italy (14.5%). The

[51] European Commission (2018), Education and Training Monitor 2018, Chapter 2, page 27
[52] Lower secondary education refers to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 level 0-2 for data from 2014 onwards and to ISCED 1997 level 0-3C short for data up to 2013
[53] European Commission (2018), Education and Training Monitor 2018, Chapter 2, page 27
[54] Data is not available for Albania and Liechtenstein
[55] Eurostat (2018), Early leavers from education and training [edat_lfse_14]). Available at http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_14&lang=en

countries with the **lowest ESL rates** were Croatia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ireland, Poland, and Lithuania, ranging from 3.1% to 4.8%[56].

Figure 2.1: Progression of the ESL rate in EU Member States where ESL has decreased between 2011 and 2018*

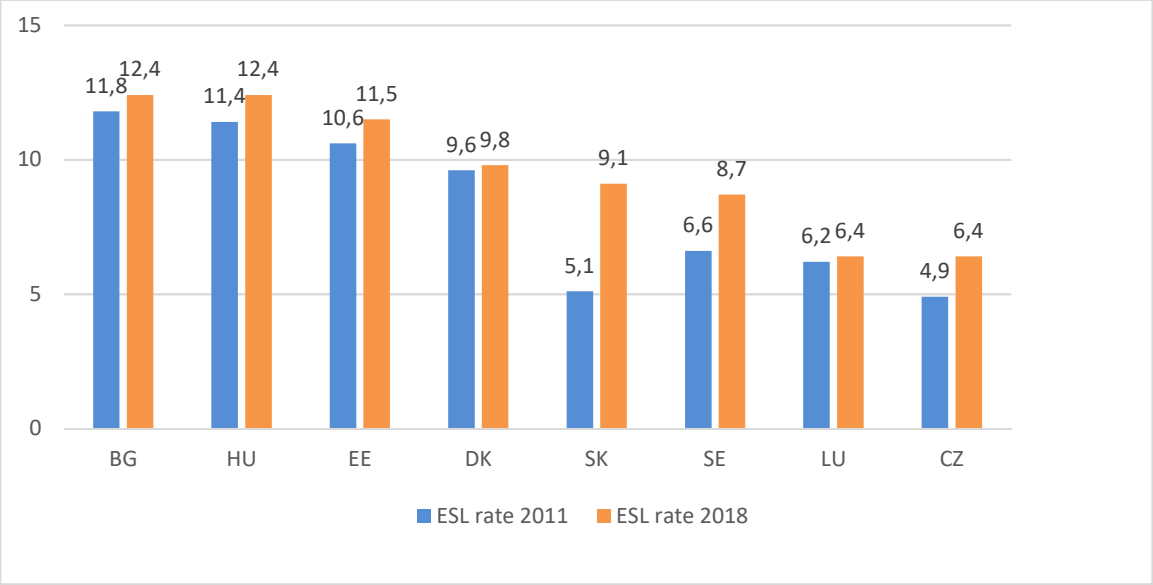


Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey), 2018[57] **2018 Provisional data*

As illustrated in Figure 2.1 above, **there has been a decrease in ESL rates in 20 EU Member States since 2011; the countries that have experienced the largest decrease in their ESL rates since 2011 are Portugal, Spain, Greece, Ireland and Malta** (over 5 percentage points). Portugal reduced its ESL rate by 11 percentage points between 2011 and 2018, while Malta reduced it by 5.2 percentage points. However, despite this significant decrease, Spain, Malta and Portugal still have some of the highest ESL rates in the EU, together with Romania and Italy.

[56] Early leavers from education and training edat_lfse_14. Available at: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_14&lang=en
[57] Eurostat (2011 and 2018). Early leavers from education and training edat_lfse_14. Available at: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_14&lang=en

Figure 2.2: Progression of the ESL rate in EU Member States where ESL has increased or stagnated between 2011 and 2018*



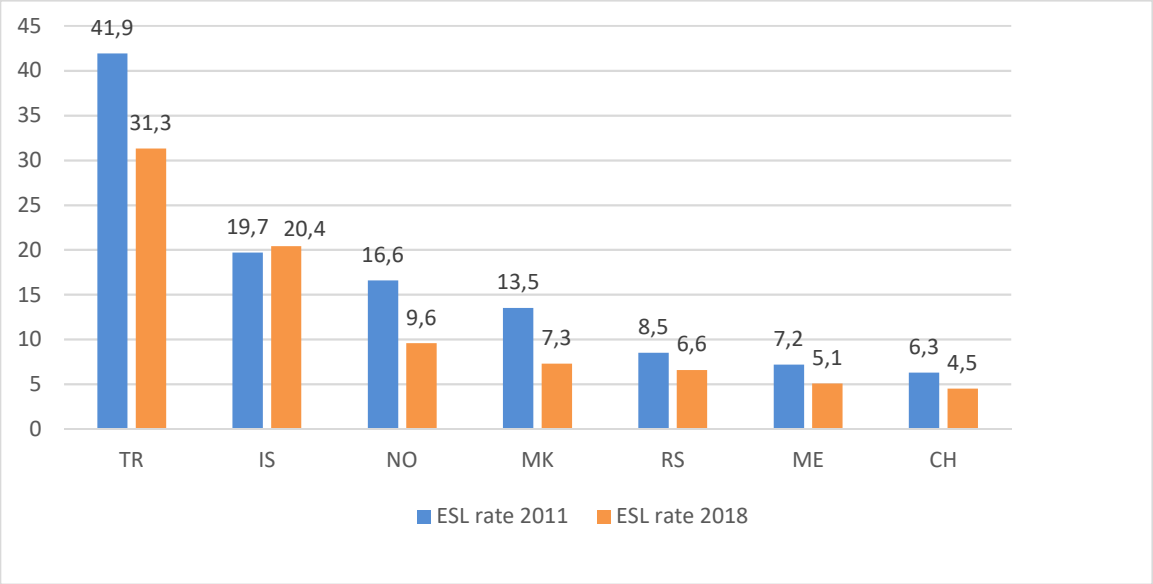
Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey), 2018[58] **2018 Provisional data*

As illustrated in Figure 2.2 above, **the ESL rate has however increased, or stagnated, to varying degrees in the period 2011-2018 in eight EU Member States**. In particular, the countries where the ESL rate has increased the most since 2011 are Slovakia and Sweden, with an increase in their ESL rates of over 2 percentage points. Other countries where the ESL rate has increased very moderately appear to have stagnated, with their ESL rates fluctuating by less than 1.5 percentage points between 2011 and 2018. This group of countries includes Bulgaria, Hungary and Estonia, all which have ESL rates above the ET 2020 benchmark. Moreover, this group of countries also includes Denmark, Luxembourg and the Czech Republic.

Finally, **as regards the EFTA and Candidate countries (see Figure 2.3 below), all countries except Iceland have experienced a decrease in their ESL rates between 2011 and 2018**. Turkey experienced the largest drop in their ESL rate from 41.9% to 31.3%, followed by Norway from 16.6% to 9.6%. Iceland experienced an increase in their ESL rate from 19.7% to 20.4%.

[58] Eurostat (2011 and 2018), Early leavers from education and training edat_lfse_14. Available at: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_14&lang=en

Figure 2.3: Progression of ESL rate in EFTA and Candidate countries, 2011-2018*



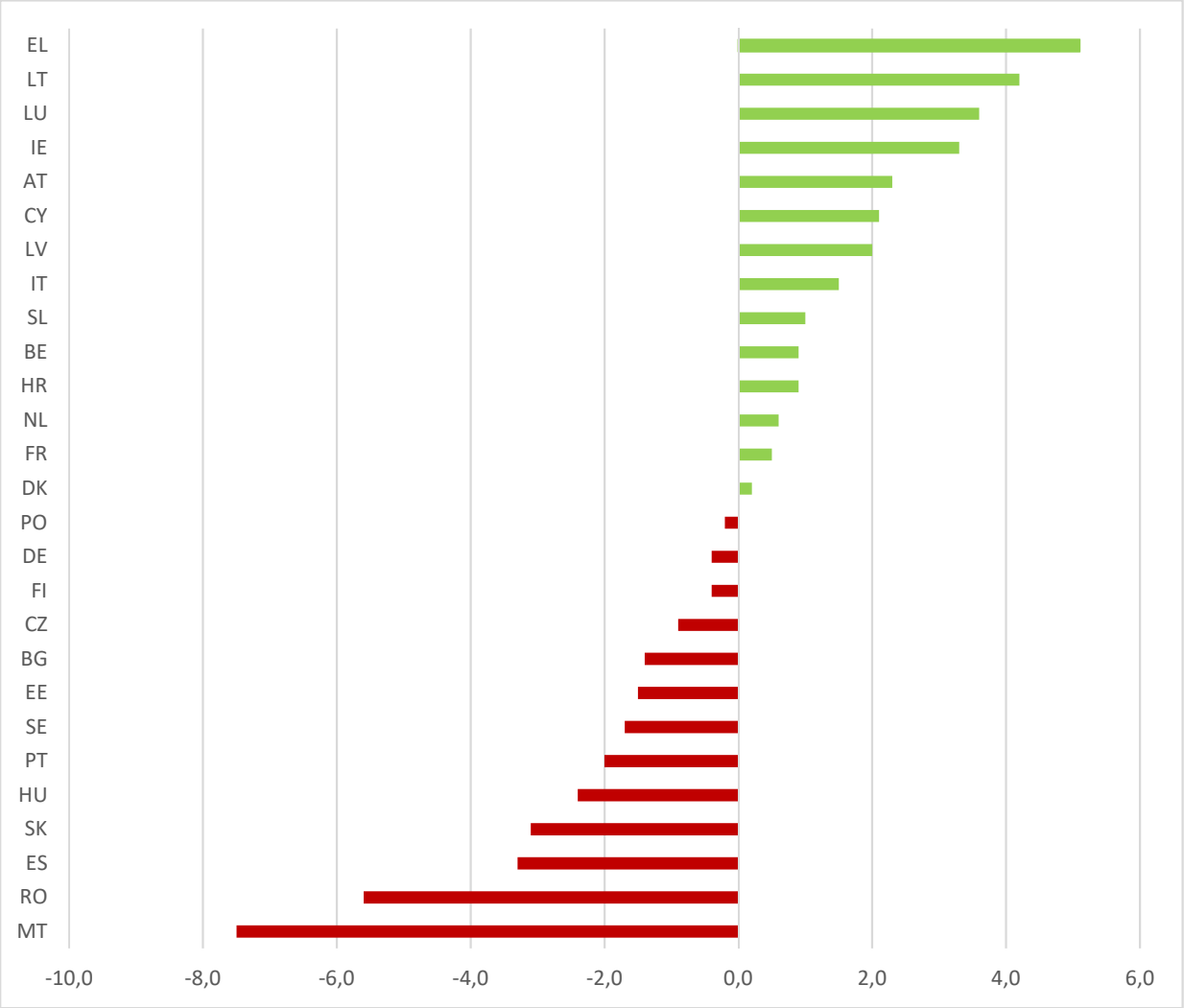
Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey), 2018[59] **2018 Provisional data*

2.1.2 National ESL targets

All EU Member States (MS), except the UK, have set their own differentiated targets for their national ESL rate. In 2018, 14 Member States had reached their national target[60], while 13 MS had not, sometimes missing the target by more than 5 percentage points (e.g. Malta, Romania)[61]. This list does not correspond exactly to the list of countries that achieve the 10% EU target, since some countries have higher national targets (e.g. Italy, at 14.5%, had achieved their national target of 16%, but not the EU target) and some lower than 10% (e.g. Slovakia, at 9.1%, did not achieve its 6% national target). Figure 2.4 below shows the distance between the actual ESL rate in 2016 and the national target, with positive numbers (in green) meaning that the actual ESL rate is below the national target, and negative numbers (in red) indicating that the MS has an ESL rate above the national target.

[59] Eurostat (2011 and 2018), Early leavers from education and training edat_lfse_14. Available at: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_14&lang=en
[60] Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden.
[61] The UK did not set a national target.

Figure 2.4 Distance between ESL rates and ESL national target in 2018*



Source: Ecorys analysis based on Eurostat (Labour Force Survey)[62] and national targets [excluding UK], 2018
**Provisional data for 2018*

2.1.3 ESL affects migrants the most

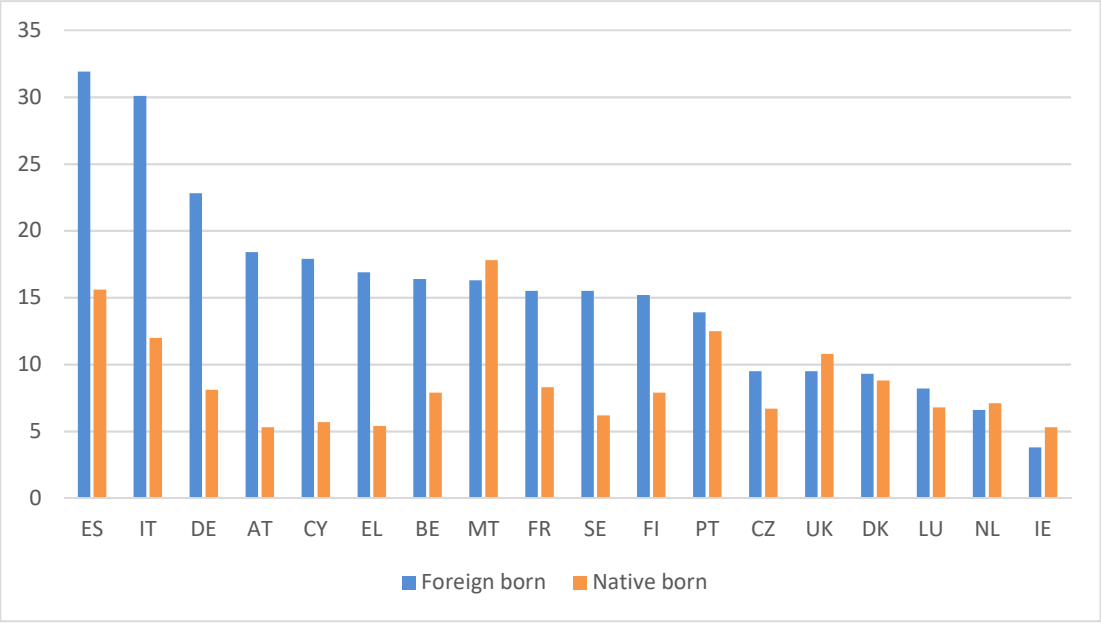
Overall in the EU, and within each Member State where data is available, there is a marked difference between ESL rates for native-born and foreign-born. According to Eurostat data, the 2018 average ESL rate for the non-EU born (20.7%) was considerably higher than that of the native born (9.5%) in the EU[63].

The ESL rates for foreign-born individuals in 2018 were particularly high in Spain (31.9%), Italy (30.1%), Germany (22.8%), and Austria (18.4%). The difference between the ESL rates of the two groups was higher than 15 percentage points in Turkey, Italy and Spain, and higher than 10 percentage points in Germany, Cyprus, Greece and Belgium. This trend can be explained by a number of factors, including the fact that migrants may have language and cultural barriers as well as more limited access to learning support. Figure

[62] European Commission (2017), Europe 2020 Targets. Available here: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/%204411192/4411431/Europe_2020_Targets.pdf
[63] Eurostat (2018), Early leavers from education and training by country of birth edat_lfse_02 http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_02&lang=en

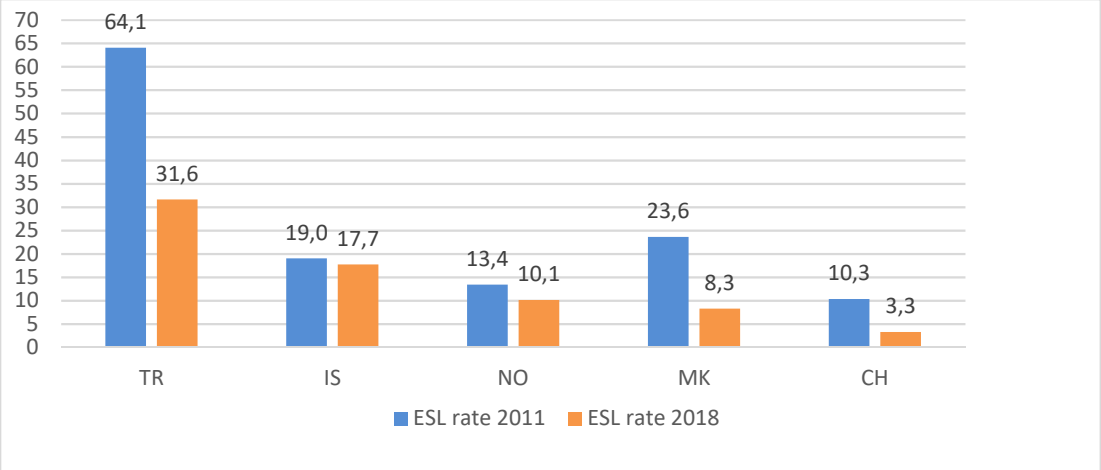
2.5 below provides an overview of the differences in ESL rates between native- and foreign-born individuals in a range of EU Member States where data disaggregated by origin was available. Figure 2.6 plots the differences between native and foreign-born ESL rates in several EFTA and Candidate countries, for which data was available.

Figure 2.5 ESL rates: differences between native and foreign-born in the EU28, 2018*



Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey, 2018) where available [64] **Provisional data for 2018*

Figure 2.6 ESL rates: differences between native and foreign-born in EFTA and Candidate countries, 2018*



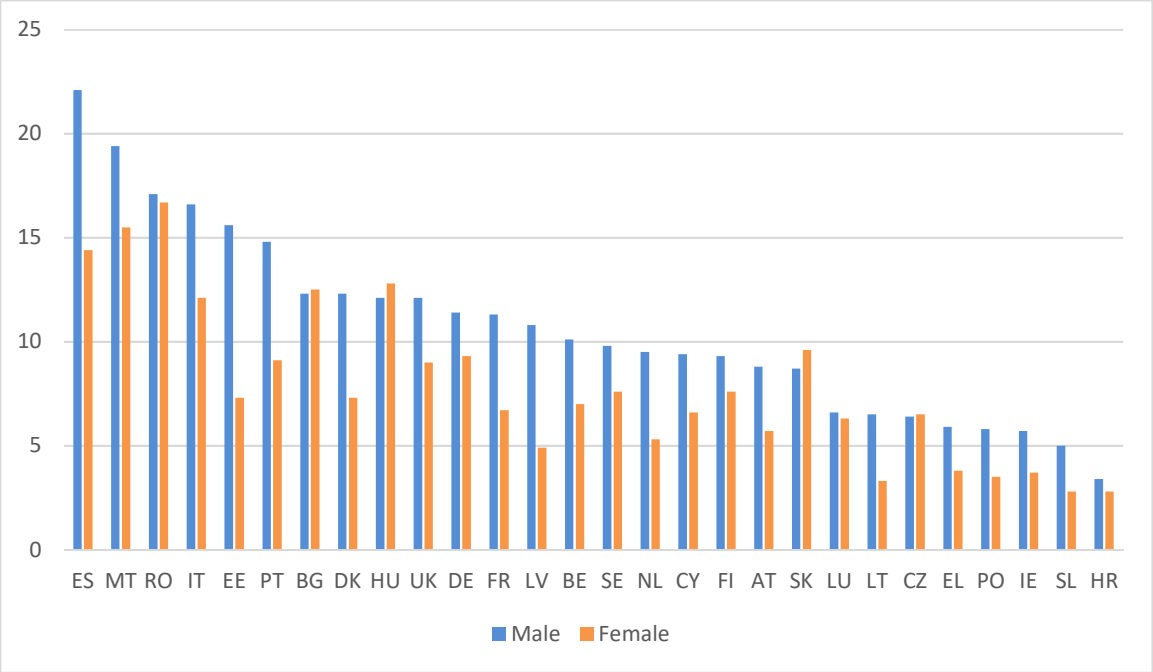
Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey) where available, 2018[65] [66] **Provisional data for 2018*

[64] Eurostat (2018), Early leavers from education and training by country of birth edat_lfse_02 http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_02&lang=en
[65] Eurostat (2018). Early leavers from education and training by country of birth edat_lfse_02 http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_02&lang=en
[66] Data missing for Liechtenstein, Albania, Montenegro and Serbia.

2.1.4 The gender dimension of ESL

As with most educational attainment indicators, the gender gap in early school leaving is unfavourable to young males. The gender gap in ESL rates remains substantial in the EU, with an average male ESL rate of 12.3% and a female rate of 8.9% in 2018. However, the trend since 2011 has been positive as the gap has reduced. In 2011, the ESL rate for males was 15.3% and for females 11.5%, showing that there has been a positive but slow improvement in terms of narrowing the gap. The gap can be observed at the EU28 level overall but also within each Member State, with the exception of Luxembourg and Bulgaria where there is no significant gap (less than 0.3 percentage points). The gender gap is particularly marked in six MS where there is a 5 percentage point difference or more between male and female ESL rates: Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Portugal and Denmark. Outside of the EU the gender gap is the most stark in Iceland (14 percentage points). The gender gap in ESL across the EU28 is set out in Figure 2.7 below, and in EFTA and Candidate countries in Figure 2.8.

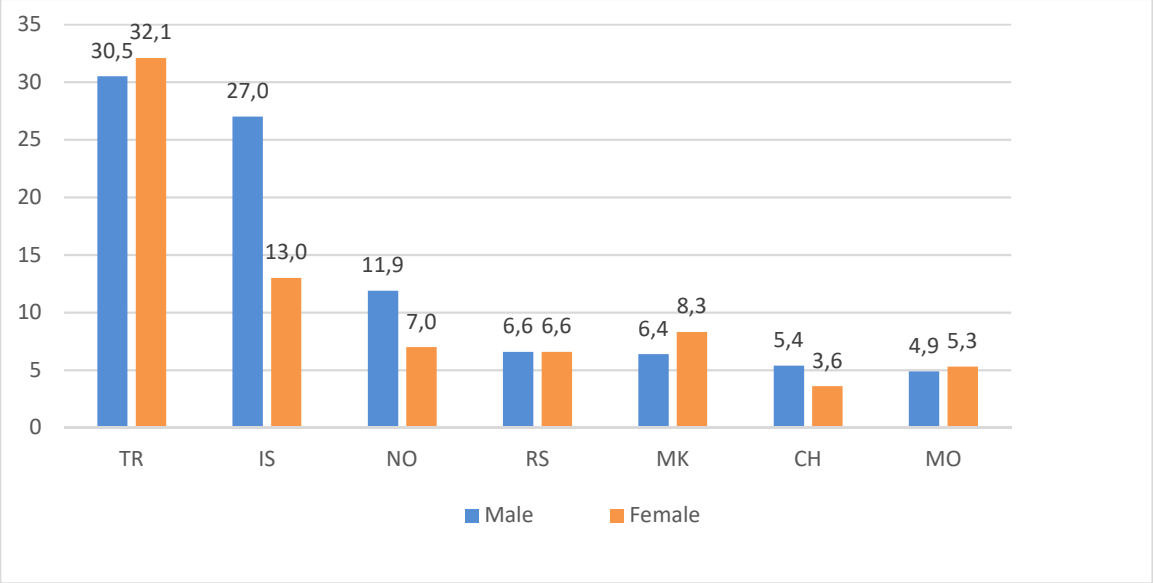
Figure 2.7 The early school leaving gender gap in the EU28, 2018*



Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey), 2016[67] **Provisional data for 2018*

[67] Eurostat (2018). Early leavers from education and training by sex and labour status edat_lfse_14 http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_14&lang=en

Figure 2.8 The early school leaving gender gap in EFTA countries and Candidate countries, 2018*



Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey) when available, 2016[68] **Provisional data for 2018*

2.1.5 Factors explaining ESL

There is not one 'ESL problem' or reason which can explain why a young person leaves school. Research shows that the **interplay of a number of complex factors** related to the individual situation of each student contributes to the likelihood of early school leaving. These factors include **individual needs** (e.g. disability, psychological issues, academic underachievement, mental health), **socio-economic background** (e.g. migrant background, poverty, workless households, rural/urban location), **school-based factors** (e.g. lack of resources, lack of guidance and support, inappropriate teaching methods)[69], and **national contextual factors** (e.g. economic situation, labour market situation, availability of education and training policies, value placed on education). People at risk ESL are often suffering from multiple disadvantages and are affected by a complex mix of the factors identified above.

While a full review of the literature on the factors affecting ESL at EU or national level is beyond the scope of the study, we highlight below some of the key contributory factors. A fuller consideration of the factors contributing to the risk of early school leaving can for example be found in the Staff Working Document[70] accompanying the proposal for the 2011 Recommendation.

[68] Eurostat (2018), Early leavers from education and training by sex and labour status edat_lfse_14 http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_14&lang=en
[69] NESSE (2009), Early school leaving, lessons from research for policymakers. Author: Roger Dale. Available at: http://archimedes.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/early-school-leaving-report.pdf; OECD (2010). Overcoming School Failure: Policies that Work. Paris. Available at: http://www.oecd.org/education/school/45171670.pdf
[70] European Commission (2011), Commission Staff Working Paper: Reducing Early School Leaving, Accompanying documents to the proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving, SEC(2011)96 final

Disadvantaged socio-economic background appears to be a strong factor which influences early school leaving. **Difficult family situations** - such as unemployment, low household income, people facing social exclusion and low levels of parental education - can have a direct and lasting effect on students' school trajectory, their attitudes towards learning, their educational achievement; and this can consequently contribute to their decision to leave education and training early. A survey by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) for example estimates that 67% of Roma children are early school leavers[71]. In Bulgaria for example, the European Commission regularly acknowledges the high regional variations and urban-rural ESL disparities in Bulgaria and explicitly highlights that "*it is particularly high among Roma*"[72]; in Slovakia, over half of all ethnic Roma were identified as early school leavers according to the 2013 Atlas of Roma Communities[73]. This outcome is consistent with the correlation between economic, social and cultural background and skills achievement at 15 years old observed in the OECD's PISA 2015 study[74]. Other key poverty-related issues affecting ESL include **homelessness and street children**[75], and **lack of service coordination for migrants**[76].

An additional societal factor identified in the literature is the **perception of education**. In countries where the national appreciation for education and formal qualifications is higher, the levels of early school leaving tend to be lower. The reverse also holds true; when society demonstrates distrust or displeasure with the education system in a country, there is a higher likelihood of higher ESL rates[77]. In Greece for example, it has been noted that that the negative attitude to education in some communities or regions contributes to ESL[78].

Mental health issues also increases the risk of early school leaving. These issues were for example examined in a literature review, looking in particular at students who externalised problems (and tended to be more disruptive in classrooms) or internalised them (turning the problems in on themselves, and often having poor social skills, but often better able to cope). This research indicates that those with externalised problems are

[71] FRA, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2016), *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey ,EU-MIDIS II: Roma – Selected findings*, available at: http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings
[72] European Commission (2016). Education and Training Monitor 2016 Bulgaria; page 3; https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2016-bg_en.pdf European Commission (2017). COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Country Report Bulgaria 2017 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, Brussels, 28.2.2017 SWD(2017) 68 final/3; page 34.
[73] Mušinka, A. (2017) Niekoľko poznámok k problematike vzdelanostnej úrovne Rómov na Slovensku na základe výsledkov Atlasu rómskych komunít na Slovensku 2013 (Some remarks on the issue of educational level of the Roma in Slovakia based on the results of Atlas of Roma communities in Slovakia in 2013), available at https://www.pulib.sk/web/kniznica/elpub/dokument/Lukac3/subor/Musinka.pdf
[74] OECD (2016), PISA 2015 Results: Excellence and Equity in Education (Volume I). Chapter 6 Figure 1.6.8. OECD. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264266490-en.pdf?expires=1561378267&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=8647E6002B21F01B7CC0BE38D48C92EC
[75] Bademci, H. Ö., Karadayı, E. F., & de Zulueta, F. (2015), Attachment intervention through peer-based interaction: Working with Istanbul's street boys in a university setting. Children and Youth Services Review, *49,* 20-31
[76] Downes, P. (2015), Early School Leaving Prevention and Engaging Parents from Ethnic Minority and Migrant Backgrounds: Key Issues and Guiding Principles Across 9 European City Municipalities. PREVENT project, European Union, European Regional Development Fund, Urbact Secretariat, Paris
[77] Van der Graaf, A., Vroonhof, P., Roullis, G., and Velli, F. (2019), Research for CULT Committee – How to tackle early school leaving in the EU, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels
[78] Nikolaou, S. M., Papa, M., & Gogou, L.,2018, Early School Leaving in Greece and Europe and Educational Inequality: Actions and Policies against Educational and Social Exclusion. European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research

more prone to ESL[79]. Mental health was also investigated in a study of early school leavers in Denmark[80].

Issues of transition, whether from primary to post-primary, or middle to upper secondary, or from preschool to primary are also related to ESL. The issue of school choice and the selecting out of academically high achieving migrants in transitions to secondary school has been highlighted in a Netherlands context[81]. Another factor mentioned recurrently by consultees throughout our research relates to the **quality of education**, including VET tracks. This is supported by other research, which highlights a priority to introduce greater flexibility within VET provision and the need for a stronger emphasis on social and emotional support and life skills within VET curricula in many countries[82].

The influence of **national contextual factors**, such as the economic situation and employment levels, can also have an important impact on the prevalence of ESL. Some studies for example underline the influence of the 2007 economic crisis on ESL in southern European States such as Spain[83] or Portugal[84] where the labour market situation acted as a pull factor for reducing ESL rates during the crisis.

2.2 Monitoring and evaluation of ESL at national level

In this section, we set out an overview of the approaches used across the countries covered by the study to monitor and evaluate ESL. The overview is not intended to be exhaustive, but to provide a snapshot of the types of monitoring and evaluation arrangements in place, as well as an idea of their prevalence; specific in-depth research would be required to investigate arrangements more comprehensively. We firstly consider the arrangements for collecting data on individual absenteeism (including early school leaving), followed by an overview of the measures in place to monitor and evaluate ESL trends and policies.

2.2.1 Data collection on individual absenteeism (including early school leavers)

Strategies for monitoring absenteeism, including early school leaving, differ notably in terms of the levels of analysis (school, local, regional or national) and in terms of collection methods (school-by-school or national surveys).

The most widely-used method relies on **school-by-school reporting**, where individual institutions provide records of attendance and school exclusions to ministries to form the basis of a national statistical database (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Iceland, Latvia,

[79] ESCH, P., BOCQUET, V., PULL, C., et al. (2014), The downward spiral of mental disorders and educational attainment: a systematic review on early school leaving. BMC Psychiatry, 14, 237, 1-13. Available: DOI: 10.1186/s12888-014-0237-4
[80] HARTE, E., HERRERA, F. & STEPANEK, M. (2016), Education of EU migrant children in EU Member States. Rand Corporation. Available: http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1715.html
[81] Crul. M. (2019), How key transitions influence school and labour market careers of descendants of Moroccan and Turkish migrants in the Netherlands. European Journal of Education, 53, 481–494
[82] Cedefop (2016), Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage. Volume II: evaluating policy impact. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 58. http://dx.doi.org/10.2801/967263
[83] Serrano Martinez, L. and Soler Guillen, A. (2015) La formación y el empleo de los jóvenes españoles. Trayectoria reciente y escenarios futuros. Fundación BBVA. Informe 2015. Economía y Sociedad. Available: https://www.fbbva.es/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/dat/DE_2015_formacion_y_empleo.pdf
[84] INE (2016). *Jovens no mercado de trabalho – Módulo ad hoc de 2016 do Inquérito ao Emprego*. Available at: https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_estudos&ESTUDOSest_boui=279678110&ESTUDOSmodo=2

Luxembourg, Poland Slovakia, Slovenia, and United Kingdom). Data is not always collected for ESL purposes (Cyprus) or may be used for specific purposes different to ESL where necessary instead of overall national policies (Luxembourg). However, such data often facilitates an understanding of trends in educational participation over time.

At the **national level**, statistical agencies play a significant role in collecting absence and ESL statistics. In Malta, data is collected at the national level only, due to the size of the country. In Austria, the national statistics agency offers data at all levels (national, regional and local). In Spain, the Ministry of Education collects data on absence at the national level in collaboration with the national statistics agency. However, some states do not have detailed statistics at the regional level. Switzerland does not record local or precise absence data: the Swiss Federal Office for Statistics only measures the overall ESL rate. In the Czech Republic, data is not available on a regular basis at the national level. In Ireland, data on absence is collected by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, which publishes it in a report.

Case Study : Creation of a student unique identifier in Catalonia (Spain), 2015

In 2015, Catalonia created a unique identifier to develop a register of students. The aim of the identifier is to allow schools and public administrations to track students once they have left compulsory education to help them re-enter education or enter employment. This measure is intended to provide longitudinal data following students from their entrance at the education system (at age 3) until they join the labour market[85].

Through this system, the Department for Education will be able to follow students participating in upper secondary education and several pathways within VET, as well as knowing when students drop out. Although the follow-up system does not include all educational pathways, it aims to broaden its scope over time.

Monitoring at the school level ranges from keeping up-to-date simple attendance records to linkages between these records and social services. In Estonia, schools register all absences in the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS). If a pupil is absent two days in a row, and the parents did not inform the school, the school has to notify the local government, which has the responsibility to enforce compulsory school attendance. In Albania, a dropout prevention system has been developed and school psychologists update records to prepare action plans for every child dropping out.

To aggregate local data, national ministries and statistical agencies work together and sometimes rely on online platforms. Statistic Sweden uses data collected at local and regional levels by competent authorities to create national datasets. In 2013, Bulgaria introduced a web database recording the movement of pupils to track attendance. The database is available for the Ministry of Education and Science and experts and education professionals at all levels. The Finnish Ministry of Education has a data system to gather this information, which is then used by Statistics Finland. Latvian schools register absences

[85] Departament d'educacio (not dated) Itineraris Educatious. Available at: http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/ca/departament/estadistiques/itineraris-educatius/

on the platform VIIS, Flemish schools register data in Discemus, and Belgian French school send data to TABOR. The two platforms provide data on absence of both students and teachers. In Croatia, the Ministry developed E-matica, an electronic database of all students in primary and secondary schools with all data relating to the success of each pupil in class but there is not yet a record of attendance in the system. A similar system exists in Norway, where a list of indicators is collected from schools by the national administrative system for intake in secondary education (VIGO), including ESL data. These platforms can sometimes be made public. Portugal's national platform (MISI) can be accessed online for all levels. This is in contrast with the previously observed lack of integration of local municipality school non-attendance data with national early school leaving statistics in the city of Munich [86].

Some methodological issues can also been raised from the diversity of systems in place, for example the **definition problem**. For example, in France, pupils are considered as absentees if they miss school for no reason more than four days per month for a complete academic year, while missing three days in a row in Latvia or only two days in a row without reason in Estonia are sufficient to be considered as an absence. On the other hand, Turkey does not have an official definition of school dropouts. In addition to these inconsistencies, some countries do not collect data or collect data which may be flawed, notably because of a collection method that is insufficiently robust (Serbia). In Albania, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth developed a National Strategy for Pre University Education, which tackles ESL (2014-2020), although no monitoring has been conducted yet. However, annual reporting meetings are organised at the request of the Prime Minister's office. UNESCO (2017) has noted that the data is not always accurately collected. In Denmark, teachers categorise data into three categories (sickness, sanction or non-justified). However, the validity of this is low as it is up to every teacher to classify the absence: a study also showed that some students were registered present in the records when they were in fact absent.

2.2.2 Monitoring and evaluation of ESL policies and trends

One of the most widely used arrangements identified across the countries covered by the study for monitoring or evaluating ESL policies and trends consists of **delegating monitoring and/or evaluation to an independent public authority**. In France, since 2014, the CNESCO (National Council for School Evaluation) is in charge of evaluating ESL policies; the Directorate for the Evaluation, Prospective and Performance (*DEPP, Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance*) of the Ministry of Education is however the main provider of official data on ESL in France. In Greece, monitoring of factors influencing ESL is operated by the Observatory for Monitoring and Tackling Early School Leaving under the Institute for Educational Policy, now part of the Institute's Office for Research and Evaluation. This organisation has published numerous studies on ESL in Greece and, in parallel, the Ministry of Education has conducted some studies at local level.

Another commonly used arrangement is to delegate to **national statistical agencies**, which then manage the main collection tools. In Spain, the National Institute of Statistics

[86] Downes, P. (2015), Early School Leaving Prevention and Engaging Parents from Ethnic Minority and Migrant Backgrounds: Key Issues and Guiding Principles across 9 European City Municipalities. European Union, European Regional Development Fund, Urbact Secretariat, Paris

(INE) aggregates regional monitoring data and various national study data in order to have an overview of the socio-economic factors causing ESL. Further, some countries ask private contractors to provide them with independent monitoring and evaluation. For instance, in Estonia, PRAXIS and CentAR carry out evaluation with the help of the national statistical agency.

Different countries also use a wide array of monitoring tools. In Finland, the Ministry of Education monitors the constitution of multi-stakeholder committees, working groups and steering groups of external experts. In Ireland, the Department for Education and Skills (DES) produces annual statistics on ESL, including background information on early school leavers; the School Completion Programme, external evaluators and school self-evaluation (SSE) allow for an additional collection of data. Denmark has monitoring arrangements in place at the local level, Portugal assesses ESL for the European Semester, and Slovenia publishes occasional reports and collaborates with international institutions to develop monitoring strategies. Spain, as a decentralised country, does not publish national reports on ESL. However, some autonomous communities, notably the Basque country, have advanced monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

The benefits of effective and comprehensive monitoring (and evaluation) can be shown by the example of the SIEI in France (see box below).

Case Study : The interministerial Exchange of Information System (*Système interministériel d'échange d'informations*, SIEI), France

The Interministerial Exchange of Information System (*Système interministériel d'échange d'informations*, SIEI) was created at the same time as the 2011 Recommendation, with the Ministerial Circular published on 9 February 2011. The SIEI is an interministerial information system aimed at identifying early school leavers. It functions by combining databases from the Ministry of Education and its partners (Ministry of Agriculture, Apprenticeship Training Centres, employment data) twice a year. The availability of this data led to the establishment of the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (*Plates-formes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs*, PSAD) in charge of contacting young people both identified by the Interministerial Exchange of Information System (SIEI) and those that spontaneously approach the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers. The scope of the SIEI was widened in 2014 in order to improve the relevance, comprehensiveness and reliability of the data, in particular by taking into account apprentices who have dropped out of the vocational education and training system, and promoting closer cooperation with all potential partners.

In terms of evaluation, the research conducted for this study highlighted that most countries do not systematically evaluate the effectiveness of ESL-related policies at national level. This is notably due to the national (lack of) tradition of monitoring and evaluation of education policy, an absence of specific ESL policies or the existence of decentralised models. For example, Spain does not have a strong evaluation tradition but some of the autonomous communities developed local evaluation strategies. Portugal does not routinely evaluate ESL policies outside of the European Semester

programme. Other countries have not conducted evaluations yet because the policy frameworks are too recent (e.g. Bulgaria, Finland). Iceland is planning an evaluation of its ESF Project for 2020. In Serbia, the Strategy for the Development (2020) is still ongoing but the Education Policy Centre (COP) studied the results of previous policies on the prevention of ESL.

The countries which have conducted evaluations generally included ESL as part of more general education policy evaluations. Austria evaluated its supra-company apprenticeship training concept, its Youth Coaching Initiative and the impact of the new school leaving age on ESL[87]. In Cyprus, the programme on Zones of Educational Priority and other school reforms have been evaluated[88]. However, the studies conducted did not assess the impact of these reforms on ESL.

Other countries, such as Denmark and the Netherlands, do not evaluate individual policies but prefer to analyse the overall impact of policies on ESL as they consider that it is too complicated to link one single policy to overall results. In France, CNESCO results show that ESL strategies have had good results. Turkish past reforms, especially the institutional restructuring of 2011, have had a positive impact on ESL rates. In Romania, the evaluation programme is aimed at better informing future decisions on ESL and is expected to result in the first report in 2018.

Case Study : The ESL Strategy Implementation Reports, Romania

In the ESL Recommendation of 2011, Member States are recommended to identify the main drivers generating ESL and to monitor these characteristics at national level, as well as to establish a national strategy on ESL by 2012 along with the implementation thereof. Romania established its ESL Strategy in 2015 as an ex-ante conditionality for accessing EU funds.

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process was designed around the concept of management based on results. The permanent progress monitoring of the main representative programmes is stipulated in the Strategy. The implementation of the strategy is evaluated on a yearly basis. The monitoring measures are based on annual planned activities. A progress report and planning of activities sets the targets for the following year.

There are several key stakeholders involved in the monitoring: the Ministry of Education with 6 other ministries or governmental agencies (the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Work and Social Justice, the Ministry of European Funds, the Management Authority and the National Institute of Statistics). Moreover, other stakeholders are to be involved with the M&E processes: schools, the counties' school inspectorates, parents' organisations, the business sector and relevant NGOs.

[87] Gitschthaler and Nairz-Wirth (2015) Education policies concerning early school leaving in Austria. Educação, Sociedade & Culturas, nº 45, 55-74

[88] European Commission (2011). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Tackling early school leaving: A key contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda. COM (2011) final 18, of 31.01.2011, p. 6. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0018:FIN:EN:PDF

Switzerland is evaluating the impact of its policies at regional level, notably for Motivation Semesters and Cap Formation. Norway also follows a regional framework for evaluation as national policies are general guidelines, which are developed differently throughout the different regions. For the same reason, Sweden developed municipal evaluation schemes at the local level on an *ad hoc* basis; it also evaluates the country's Plug-In Initiative at regional level with the aim of developing a new national strategy. In Belgium, the Study Centre for Research on Education Policy created in 2016 is evaluating in the Flemish region, while schools in Wallonia are expected to develop Action Plans on ESL. In Italy, evaluations are also conducted at the regional level, but focus predominately on quantitative data.

3.0 Overview of national ESL measures

The objective of this chapter is to map the range of prevention, intervention and compensation policies and practices adopted and implemented at the country level to reduce early school leaving and to highlight key trends across the EU28, EFTA and Candidate countries.

The mapping includes examples of policies that have been adopted and/or implemented at the national level. These examples are illustrative and are not intended to reflect a comprehensive overview or to indicate examples of 'best practice'. Instead, the examples, deliberately chosen to reflect examples from a range of different countries, seek to illustrate the correspondence between the policies included in the Recommendation and some of the measures that exist in the different countries included in the research. The examples represent both policies that have – or may have – been influenced by the 2011 Recommendation, but also polices that were implemented before 2011, but can be said to correspond to the types of policies in the Recommendation. In most cases, it is not however possible to say whether they were implemented as a direct result of the Recommendation. Our detailed analysis of the likely influence of the 2011 Recommendation on policies, practice and research can be found in Chapter 4 of this report.

The current chapter also includes a set of country 'heat maps'. The maps aim to provide a visual representation of ESL measures covered at a country level across Europe, grouped under prevention, intervention and compensation. The underlying data for the maps was sourced from the country research. The study team first reviewed the measures proposed under the 2011 Recommendation and split these into (more manageable) composite measures, to facilitate the mapping exercise. The country experts then used a combination of desk research and interviews to determine whether or not the measures were reflected in policy and legislation within the country, and the strength of the evidence. The results were used to populate the framework, using a colour coding system. The completed heat map tables are presented and described in this chapter, while the table of correspondences with the 2011 Recommendation measures is presented in Annex 2.

It is to be further noted that there is, of course, a distinction between the existence of policies, their implementation and their outcomes. It is relatively straightforward to document the existence of policies. It is more difficult to give a flavour of their implementation and the impact that they may have had, since – as seen in the previous chapter – evaluation of ESL policies has not been systematic and hence evaluative evidence is only available for a few policies and initiatives. Where evaluations have taken place, we have reported the results relating to impact.

The chapter begins with a brief reminder of the policies indicated in the Recommendation for each pillar (section 3.1), followed by a mapping of the measures implemented in different European countries corresponding to each of these policy areas (sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4). For each of the three pillars, we begin the sub-section with the 'heat map' indicating the prevalence of measures across the different countries, and analyse the main trends and gaps.

Key findings in Chapter 3

Our analysis of national ESL measures looks at prevention, intervention and compensation measures, assessing the coverage of these measures, the different elements addressed, and, where possible, their impact and effectiveness. In terms of **prevention policies**, we find that, although country coverage is overall quite comprehensive, most countries have some gaps, and around a quarter have more marked gaps. In particular, we find that the implementation of systemic or infrastructural policies such as anti-segregation policies appears to be less prevalent than measures implemented within schools or other institutions. There is evidence of relatively good coverage of 'targeted prevention' measures, oriented towards specific groups at risk of ESL, such as Roma, migrant children, families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

There is also relatively good national coverage of **intervention policies**, although with more variation than for prevention policies. Coverage is highest for intervention measures focused on in-school support, including targeted support for learners experiencing personal, social or academic difficulties, as well as CPD for teachers and school leaders to help them to manage diversity and to support learners. Over half of the countries also implement measures to promote inclusive school environments, anti-bullying and wellbeing, as well as policies to engage child participation in decision-making. However, there are some clear gaps in certain countries for these two groups of measures. Implementation of infrastructural measures shows the weakest overall coverage.

Compensation measures are comparatively well-established across Europe. Most countries offer 'second chance' education schemes of some type, often combined with careers guidance, financial, childcare and/or psychological support. The weakest overall focus in this area is on systems to support the recognition and validation of prior learning.

For all three pillars, the coverage of measures in non-EU countries covered by the study is markedly weaker than in EU countries.

3.1 Reminder of the policy measures in the 2011 Recommendation

The 2011 Recommendation sets out a framework for integrated, comprehensive and evidence-based policies and measures aimed at supporting countries to reduce early school leaving rates below 10% by 2020. The Annex to the 2011 Recommendation sets out a broad range of policies across three key pillars: **prevention**, **intervention** and **compensation**. The list of policies is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive, but rather indicative of the type of policies contributing to the three pillars[89]. Countries are encouraged to select policies based on national circumstances and contexts, underpinned by systematic data collection, monitoring and evaluation.

[89] The Recommendation states for example that 'prevention policies could include...'

As defined in the 2011 Recommendation, **prevention policies** aim to 'reduce the risk of early school leaving before problems start. Such measures optimise the provision of education and training in order to support better learning outcomes and to remove obstacles to educational success'. The Annex to the Recommendation sets out examples of different types of prevention policies, summarised in Box 3.1 below[90].

Box 3.1: Prevention policies highlighted in the 2011 Recommendation

1. Providing high quality early childhood education and care, especially to those from a disadvantaged background, including migrant and Roma children
2. Increasing the educational offer by providing education and training opportunities beyond the age of compulsory education
3. Increasing the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways
4. Promoting active anti-segregation policies, including to diversify the social composition of schools in disadvantaged areas
5. Policies to support multilingual teaching and learning and to promote linguistic diversity in schools, including inter-cultural learning programmes
6. Active measures to enhance parental involvement in school life through partnerships and forums, and parental engagement in children's learning
7. Measures to ensure access to high quality VET provision, including the integration of VET pathways into mainstream education, and upper secondary and tertiary education
8. Measures to strengthen links between education and training systems and the employment sector, via access to high quality work experience and employer engagement in schools

Intervention policies, as defined in the Recommendation, aim to 'avoid early school leaving by improving the quality of education and training at the level of the educational institutions, by reacting to early warning signs and by providing targeted support to pupils or groups of pupils at risk of early school leaving. They address all educational levels, starting from early childhood education and care to upper secondary education'. In the annex to the Recommendation, a range of intervention policies are set out, addressing both school/training institution and individual levels. The types of intervention policies identified in the Recommendation are summarised in Box 3.2 below[91].

[90] The full wording of each of the measures is provided in the correspondence table in Annex 2
[91] The full wording of each of the measures is provided in the correspondence table in Annex 2

Box 3.2: Intervention policies highlighted in the 2011 Recommendation

Intervention policies at the level of the school or training institution:

1. Developing schools into learning communities
2. Developing early-warning systems for pupils at risk
3. Networking between schools and external actors
4. Supporting and empowering teachers in their work with pupils at risk
5. Providing extra-curricular activities

Intervention policies at the individual level:

1. Mentoring support and target assistance to overcome specific academic, social or personal difficulties
2. Tailoring teaching to pupils' needs, strengthening individualised learning approaches
3. Strengthening guidance and counselling to support students' career choices and transitions within education or from education to employment
4. Access to appropriate financial support for young people with difficult economic circumstances

In the terms of the Recommendation, **compensation policies** aim to 'help those who left school prematurely to re-engage in education, offering routes to re-enter education and training and gain the qualifications they missed'. Box 3.3 below summarises the compensation policies set out in the Recommendation[92].

Box 3.3: Compensation policies highlighted in the 2011 Recommendation

1. Successful second chance education programmes, which provide learning environments that respond to the specific needs of early school leavers, recognise their prior learning and support their well-being
2. Diverse learning pathways to return early school leavers to mainstream education
3. The provision of various routes back into mainstream education and training
4. Systems to support the recognition and validation of prior learning, including competences achieved in non-formal and informal learning Providing targeted individual support, which integrates social, financial, educational and psychological support for young people in difficulties

The measures implemented under these pillars together make up the core of **comprehensive strategies** on early school leaving, to be implemented at the country level in line with national priorities and the Europe 2020 objectives. As stated in the Recommendation: 'Comprehensive strategies on early school leaving comprise a mix of policies, coordination across different policy sectors and the integration of measures supporting the reduction of early school leaving into all relevant policies aimed at children and young people. In addition to education policies that promote high-quality school

[92] The full wording of each of the measures is provided in the correspondence table in Annex 2

systems, these are principally social policy and support services, employment, youth, family, and integration policies. Horizontal coordination between different actors and vertical coordination through different levels of government are equally important. **Strategies on early school leaving should comprise prevention, intervention and compensation elements**.' As seen in Chapter 1, the Recommendation states that Member States should ensure that comprehensive strategies on early school leaving are in place by the end of 2012.

3.2 Prevention measures

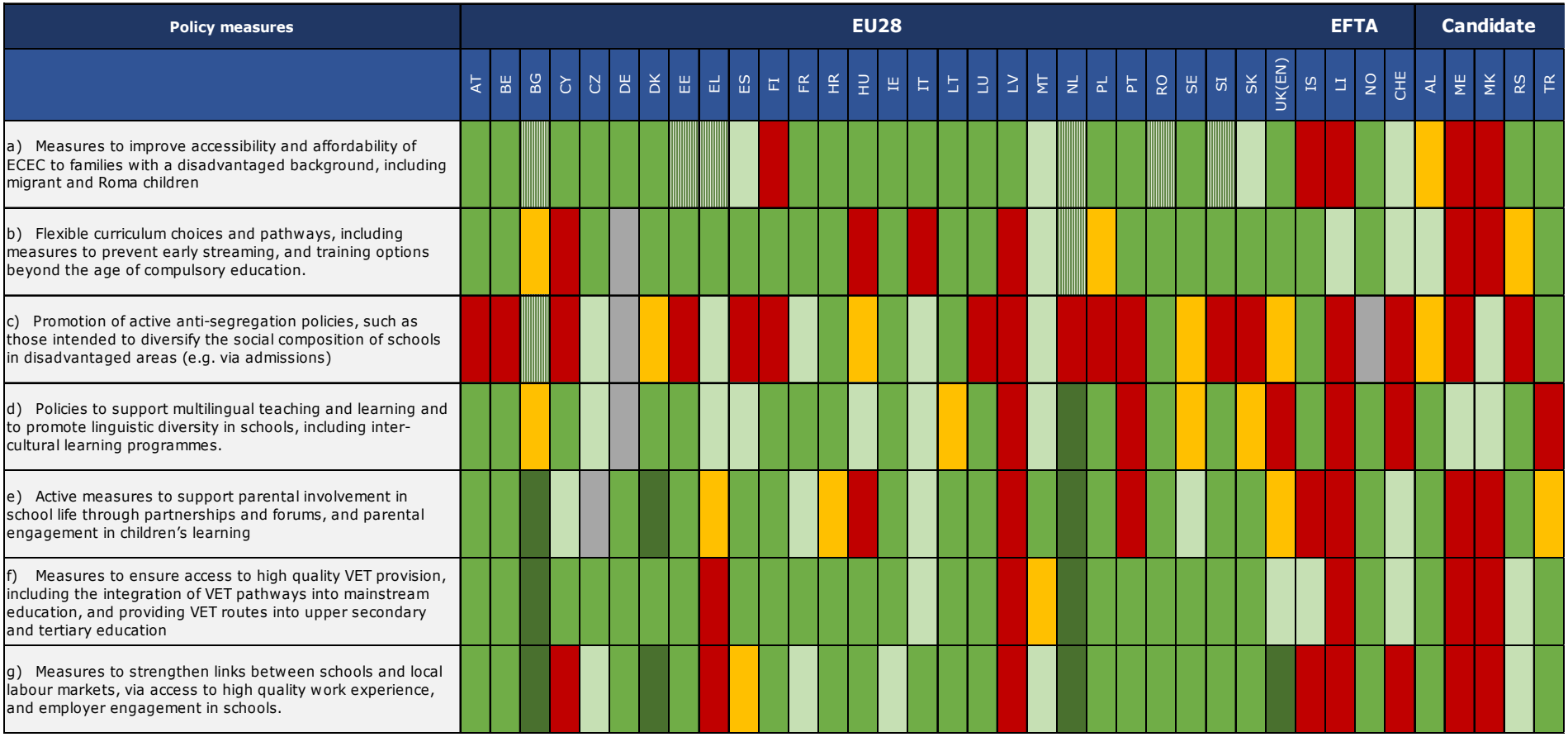
Prevention policies aim to reduce the risk of early school leaving before problems start. Such measures optimise the provision of education and training in order to support better learning outcomes and to remove obstacles to educational success. Putting into place comprehensive prevention measures is the first - and arguably also the most important - area of action for governments, schools and teachers to prevent pupils from dropping out. Prevention measures seek to tackle ESL by putting in place the necessary conditions which can ensure the success of all students, regardless of their socio-economic background. The section below sets out key national prevention initiatives and policies. It begins with a heat map providing a visual overview of the prevalence of different types of prevention policy, derived from the 2011 Recommendation[93]. As stated in its preamble, the chapter includes some illustrative examples of a range of prevention measures from Member States, aiming to showcase a variety of practice, with examples both from before and after 2011.

3.2.1 EU coverage – prevention measures

The heat map overleaf provides a visual snapshot of the ESL preventative measures across the EU28, Candidate and EFTA countries based on data gathered for the study in 2018 (Figure 3.1). As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the heat maps were developed in close cooperation with our 37 country experts, using a combination of desk research and interviews to determine whether or not the measures were reflected in policy and legislation within the country, and the strength of the evidence.

[93] The correspondence table of the derived set of prevention measures used in the heat maps with the policy measures in the 2011 Recommendation and can be found in Annex 2

Figure 3.1: Coverage of ESL prevention measures at a national level across Europe



Key			
Covered explicitly within national policy or legislation		Measures identified, but not implemented to any significant extent	
National policies exist with concrete measures at regional and local levels		Policy measure not identified, based on the country mapping	
National policies exist together with ad-hoc measures (e.g. initiatives, projects)		Multiple measures – single assessment not possible	M
Ad-hoc measures (developed in a certain area related to ESL, but not necessarily in a top-down way under the auspices of a particular national policy)		No information (Not applicable or no assessment made)	

At a country level, it can be observed that **some European countries have invested in quite a comprehensive approach towards prevention**, covering all or most of the policy measures within scope for the mapping exercise. The main differences arise from whether this coverage is secured at a national policy level (e.g. AT, BE, BG, DK, EE, HR, IE LT, LU, NL, NO, RO and SI), or whether the measures have evolved in a more *ad hoc* way, independently from policy (CZ, FR, IT and MT). According to the mapping exercise, Bulgaria and the Netherlands have developed a range of measures, but their implementation has been led by the municipalities. Locally-led implementation is also a characteristic of some measures in Denmark.

Most countries have some gaps in coverage, when compared against the policy measures for the 2011 Recommendation. However, **approaching one quarter of countries have more noticeable gaps** (three or more measures not identified), and the mapping indicates that **measures in the field of prevention are very limited or absent for a small minority of countries**. These gaps cluster geographically to a certain extent, with Candidate countries, including North Macedonia and Montenegro, showing very limited correspondence with the 2011 Recommendation. Latvia and Liechtenstein also display very limited coverage of preventative measures.

Viewed horizontally, the heat map shows that the individual measures also vary in their coverage across the 37 countries. Here, we can see that, while there is no simple pattern, **coverage is generally more consistent for preventive measures that are designed to be implemented at an institutional-level** (within ECEC settings, schools and VET providers) – curriculum choice and flexibility, measures intended to improve access, flexibility and progression within VET. **Coverage is also relatively strong for what might be termed 'targeted prevention'** – measures that are oriented towards specific groups at risk of ESL such as Roma, migrant children, and families experiencing socio-economic disadvantages. While the heat map does not include a temporal dimension nor consider the 'push' element, it is possible that widespread policy and funding reforms to ECEC across Europe has been a contributory factor.

In contrast, the **measures with relatively weaker coverage are generally more systemic in nature**, expending beyond the remit of individual schools or VET providers. Based on the heat map data, **the slowest progress would seem to have been made regarding policies designed to address school segregation and geographical patterns of socio-economic disparity** regarding educational access and inclusion. Infrastructural measures concerning links between schools and labour market opportunities are also less widespread, while parental engagement measures are missing (or have not been implemented to any great extent) in around one quarter of the countries in the review.

These patterns provide a valuable tool from which to observe the 'state of play' for ESL prevention across Europe in 2018. In the following sections, we extend and deepen the analysis by considering the specific examples of preventative measures identified through the study, their correspondence or otherwise with the measures in 2011 Recommendation, and the evidence for their effectiveness.

3.2.2 Comparative analysis - prevention measures across Europe

The following sub-sections examine the main types of prevention measures that are implemented at the national level. These include measures that are targeting at improving early childhood education and care, flexible curriculum choices and pathways, the promotion of anti-segregation policies, policies to support multilingual teaching and learning and to promote linguistic diversity in schools, measures to support parental involvement in schools, measures to ensure access to high quality VET provision, and measures to strengthen links between schools and local labour markets. As stated in the preamble to this chapter, the examples are illustrative, are not intended to reflect either a comprehensive overview or to indicate examples of best practice, and include relevant measures implemented both before and after the 2011 Recommendation. Although the policy measures cited align with the Recommendation, in most cases it is not possible to ascertain with any certainty whether there is any direct or indirect influence on their conception or implementation; this aspect is examined in more detail in Chapter 4. The order of the policy measures follows those in the 2011 Recommendation.

Prevention policy 1: Providing high quality early childhood education and care, especially to those from a disadvantaged background, including migrant and Roma children

Access to good quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) plays a key role in pupils' development of key competences and later success at school. It is a priority aim of the new European Platform for Investing in Children (EPIC). High-quality ECEC is especially beneficial for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, since it might help reduce certain setbacks (e.g. linguistic, cultural) they might otherwise experience at the start of primary education in comparison with their native peers. **Improving access to and the quality of ECEC is one of the areas on which many countries are focusing** and where there are policies/measures in place that contribute to reducing ESL, such as: the professionalisation of ECEC staff; educational guidelines; specific language support; and, support measures for parents. Further detail and data on national ECEC policies can be found in several Eurydice/Eurostat publications[94].

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) measures are a key priority in the majority of the countries studied here (see Figure 3.1 above), as this is a policy area that can address some key roots of the ESL issue. **Ensuring access to ECEC in the area of specific groups** such as the Roma community and migrants is also seen as a priority in many countries, particularly those that have large Roma communities. Approaches include national and targeted strategies, some targeted provisions, within the context of availability of ECEC for all, and financial incentives or welfare subsidies.

In some countries, particularly those in which there is a sizeable presence of Roma people, there are **national strategies** for Roma inclusion, which include measures targeted at increasing access to ECEC. Countries such as Bulgaria, Greece, the Czech Republic, Italy

[94] e.g. Eurydice/Eurostat (2014), Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe – 2014 Edition https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/key-data-early-childhood-education-and-care-europe-%E2%80%93-2014-edition_en; Eurydice (2015), Early Childhood Education and Care Systems in Europe: National Information Sheets – 2014/15, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-education-and-care-systems-europe-national-information-sheets-%E2%80%93-201415_en; Eurydice (2018), Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe 2018, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/structural-indicators-monitoring-education-and-training-systems-europe-%E2%80%93-2018_en

and Croatia have such strategies in place, which include an aim to provide access to education and quality enhancement of education for children and students from vulnerable ethnic communities. The illegality of educational segregation of Roma children has been demonstrated in the European Court of Human Rights by judgments in D.H. & others v Czech Republic (2007), Sampanis v. Greece (2008), Orsus v. Croatia (2010), Sampani v. Greece (2012) and Horvath and Kis v. Hungary (2013) all of which rejected ethnic segregation in mainstream schools and the placing of Romani students in special schools for children with mental disabilities[95]. Romania has specific provisions relating to ECEC for Roma children[96]. Further relevant provisions are contained in Bulgaria's Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities[97] and in Croatia's Strategy for Education, Science and Technology[98]. Lithuania also has a national action plan for Roma Integration into Lithuanian Society, covering 2015-2020, containing provisions relevant to ECEC[99].

Other countries have **policies in place that target groups including Roma** that are relevant to ECEC. For example, in Slovakia, there are a range of projects that can benefit Roma groups, aimed at inclusive models of pre-primary education. Several ESF-funded projects aimed at reducing ESL have been funded after 2011. Some of them have targeted the Roma communities, while others have tested a new prevention measure that will make enrolment in kindergartens one year prior to entering primary education obligatory starting from 2020-2021 school year[100]. Slovenia also has a range of policies in place that aim to promote the integration of Roma children in ECEC. In the Netherlands, ECEC is not targeted specifically at young asylum seekers or Roma children, but at any families where the main language spoken is other than Dutch. Norway also has a national action plan that identifies the importance of targeting students from low education families, students with another mother tongue/foreign language students, children with low academic performance and boys. Keeping the identity of migrant communities is an approach in a range of countries. In Poland, for example, legislation makes it possible to maintain the national, ethnic and linguistic identity of pupils belonging to national and ethnic minorities and a community using a regional language.

Financial incentives or subsidies are in place in some countries. In Denmark, although there is no specific focus on prevention, it is possible by law to obtain subsidies or total cover of costs for a child in day-care, after-school care or private care from municipalities if the family is struggling financially or the child has special social or pedagogical needs. Similarly, in Slovenia, subsidised fees for ECEC are available for families with a low income, alongside reduced fees for a second child and free admission for third or more children. Welfare benefits have also been used as an incentive to encourage ECEC attendance in some countries. For example, in Hungary, as a lower proportion of children living in disadvantaged (and Roma) families participate in pre-school education, from September 2015, the family support system has been reconstructed in the form of a family allowance conditional on compliance with mandatory pre-school attendance. This is also the case in

[95] Rostas, I. & Kostka, J. (2014), Structural dimensions of Roma school desegregation policies in Central and Eastern Europe. European Educational Research Journal, 13, 268-281
[96] https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/fisiere%20articole/Anexe%20Strategie%20PTS.pdf
[97] http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=396
[98] http://novebojeznanja.hr/UserDocsImages/datoteke/KB_web.pdf
[99] http://www.romuplatforma.lt/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Priedas-Nr.1.pdf
[100] The project 'Inclusive model of education in the pre-primary level of education system' was funded by the ESF (2013-2015) indirectly tackles ESL. Available at http://npmrk2.mpc-edu.sk

the Belgium-Flanders. In Malta, participation in ECEC is encouraged through free childcare for working mothers. Subsidies are also available in Spain on a regional basis. In Cyprus, ECEC access measures have focused on redeveloping the pre-primary education curriculum on the basis of success and adequacy indicators, with the aim of improving accessibility for all. Ireland's 2019 First5 National Strategy envisages additional resources for areas of high poverty, in a manner analogous to the DEIS action plan's prioritisation of resources for schools.

Other countries, such as Cyprus, Sweden, Luxembourg, Spain, Switzerland, Portugal, Serbia and Estonia, operate on the basis that **early school education is available to all or mandatory**, and there are no specific measures targeting families with a disadvantaged background. In Ireland, due to a lower uptake among disadvantaged families, initiatives provide these families with additional support. In France, attendance in preschool will be compulsory from September 2019. In Hungary, the key priority is to involve children in poverty and with disadvantages in ECEC services as early as possible, and to offer them complex support. To this end, the compulsory starting age of early childhood education and care has been lowered from five to three years of age. In Luxembourg, as of October 2017, all children aged 1-4 years old have access to 20 weekly hours of ECEC for 46 weeks per year. In England, all 3 to 4-year-olds, and the most disadvantaged 2-year-olds, are entitled to 15 hours' free early education and childcare. In Turkey, one of the national priorities is expanding ECEC in general. In Austria, ECEC has been made compulsory and free of charge for five-year olds in order to better reach groups at risk, such as migrants.

Prevention policy 2: Increasing the educational offer by providing education and training opportunities beyond the age of compulsory education

Training options beyond the age of compulsory education have a long tradition in some countries, such as Serbia, with others focusing on improving education and skills options beyond the age of compulsory education. This is the case in Bulgaria, for example, where legislation creates opportunities for the validation of competences. In France, legislation[101] provides for the creation of bridges between educational and training pathways, although its implementation is reported to be hindered by a lack of resources.

In England, Opportunity Areas is a national, fixed-term programme focused on improving social mobility through education, which includes measures to improve post-16 education and skills training options[102]. In Liechtenstein, some orientation workshops for young people beyond compulsory school age operate around the country.

In Finland, ensuring that individuals gain a secondary qualification beyond compulsory general education (up to age 16) is a specific policy challenge, as 16% of 25 year-olds only achieve compulsory education level. Finnish research shows that the unemployment rate for those without secondary level education is around double that of those who have completed secondary education, and many with compulsory general education only are completely outside the labour force. There is currently a public debate on making upper

[101] https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000259787&dateTexte ; see in particular Fiche 4 in http://plc1eps-grbg.weebly.com/uploads/1/4/8/4/148446/laloienfiches-2005.pdf
[102] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-and-opportunity-areas

secondary education compulsory, with extensive support among students and the general population.

The Eurydice annual publication on compulsory education in Europe[103] provides further information and discussion on the duration of compulsory education/training in 43 European education systems covering 38 countries.

Prevention policy 3: Increasing the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways

Inflexible regulation of educational pathways can form a major obstacle to the completion of upper secondary education. To reduce grade repetition, which is very costly for systems, **many Member States are now taking action to ensure the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways**, such as setting up induction programmes, providing tailored student support for socioeconomically marginalised students, and encouraging greater cooperation between primary, secondary and VET education providers. The issue of flexible pathways is also discussed in the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving's 2013 report[104] and the 2016 NESET II report on Structural Indicators for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools[105].

Although this policy measure was not often highlighted by key stakeholders in our country research, a number of measures do exist across the different countries covered. In Denmark, students in upper secondary education programmes can choose which study programmes they wish to study. In Belgium, a major education reform in the Flemish Community has been to provide a broader education during the first years of secondary education, which avoids early segregation and can leave options open as much as possible so that pupils can remain flexible, in order to prevent children being directed too quickly into an educational track which does not suit them, although there is debate about its effectiveness. In Poland, there have been recent reforms to pre-school and primary school curricula to cater for pupils with a range of special needs.

Case Study : Facilitating transitions between educational pathways in France

In France, several measures have been implemented to facilitate transitions between pathways for pupils. Bridges among education and training tracks exist since the nineties, but have been more recently reinforced again in order to reduce early school leaving. Pupils have been given the opportunity to change track during their school pathway, which aims to maintain their motivation to invest in learning outcomes. Since the 2016 Back-to-school day, the Ministerial Circular on the Entitlement to Make Obvious Mistakes in Choosing a High School Programme (*Droit à l'erreur manifeste d'orientation à l'entrée au lycée*) allows pupils in 10th grade to change their mind and have a fresh start in another track until the Autumn break. This is implemented all over France but

[103] European Commission/Eurydice (2019), Compulsory Education in Europe 2018/2019, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/compulsory-education-europe-%E2%80%93-201819_en
[104] European Commission (2013), Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support, Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, November 2013, https://ec.europa.eu/education/content/reducing-early-school-leaving-key-messages-and-policy-support_en
[105] NESET II (2016), Structural Indicators for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools, https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/early-school-leaving-group2013-report_en.pdf; http://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Structural-Indicators-.pdf

Case Study : Facilitating transitions between educational pathways in France

has a greater impact for students in vocational high schools. However, there are challenges since there is a lack of available places in the upper secondary education system for pupils to actually change track.

There are some countries in which **flexible curriculum choices and pathways** are part of the education system. This is the case in Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and Portugal. In Sweden for example, the VET and general education systems are integrated; the adoption of introduction programmes in 2011 increased flexibility by facilitating access to the upper secondary academic path for students with lower academic achievements in lower secondary education. In Portugal, a flexible curriculum was implemented after 2011, supported by co-funding from the ESF. Schools, on a voluntary basis, have the opportunity to adapt the school curricula to the profile of students.

The Luxembourg education system is also characterised by a great variety of learning pathways, including classes to cater for people with special needs or behavioural difficulties, and to provide them with study or career guidance. In Finland, legislation dating from 2010 ensures the provision of a flexible comprehensive general education. In Lithuania, VET programmes are designed for persons of different ages and educational attainment level. In Switzerland, the Geneva canton system of education also foresees gateways and opportunities for reorientation which leads to a more flexible and less definitive management of students' orientation.

Many countries are struggling with a **lack of flexibility** in education programmes. For example, in Cyprus, there is an acknowledged lack of sufficient flexibility within programmes and actions taken to prevent and deal with ESL, and it is recognised that programmes such as the New Contemporary Apprenticeship should include individualised diagnostic tests to address the specific needs of students who may come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have very limited linguistic and other knowledge.

Some countries, such as Estonia, are in the process of **modernising national curricula**, including allowing school curricula to contain more choices for students. Tracking in primary education was removed in Malta in 2011, although banding, a form of grouping, was introduced in primary and secondary schools in 2014. In Spain, there has been an emphasis on measures to simplify the curriculum and to make available learner pathways more transparent and clearly signposted. Turkey is also making the prevention of early tracking a priority.

Some countries have an **alternative pathway** in place in order to help prevent ESL. This is the case in Ireland, where an alternative curriculum programme, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) was introduced in 1996, aimed at lower secondary students at risk of ESL. Further, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is an alternative curriculum with a vocational approach. There are also alternatives available for students with special educational needs and out of school supports for those having difficulties with the mainstream education system. In Norway too, upper secondary school students have the option of vocational training certificates, which is an academic pathway involving more practical/vocational than theoretical education; this was launched in 2008 to reduce ESL.

Prevention policy 4: Promoting active anti-segregation policies, including to diversify the social composition of schools in disadvantaged areas

Tackling segregation in schools is a difficult task, given that it relies partly on buy-in from all parents. A recent position paper from the Council of Europe underlines the challenges in addressing this issue and notes the **ongoing prevalence of segregation**: 'School segregation is one of the worst forms of discrimination and a serious violation of the rights of the children concerned, as their learning opportunities are seriously harmed by isolation and lack of inclusion in mainstream schools. It is a clear manifestation of injustice against minority and other vulnerable groups, which also perpetuates the marginalisation of entire population groups in Europe'[106].

Despite slow progress and ongoing challenges, a number of countries have made efforts in this area. Accordingly, in France, there have been regional pilots of programmes aimed at increasing social diversity in schools. However, these were reported to have encountered difficulties in certain cases, with parents removing their children from schools. In Sweden, many of the same problems have been encountered, in that - although targeted government funding is available to tackle school segregation - in practice, since parents are allowed to choose the school their children attend, segregation has increased in the past decade. This issue is also under debate in Denmark, where some municipalities have experimented with diversifying the social composition of schools.

Participants in the country workshop in Bulgaria identified the promotion of active anti-segregation policies, such as those intended to diversify the social composition of schools in disadvantaged areas, as one of the key commonalities between the ESL policy framework in Bulgaria and the 2011 Recommendation. Measures aimed at desegregation were included in the 2015 Preschool and School Education Act, which requires that children of the same age from different ethnic backgrounds not to be grouped on the basis of their ethnicity (Art. 62, para. 4). Legally binding anti-segregation measures were not included in the previous law (the repealed Public Education Act). Catalonia is another example where the 2014 Plan to reduce ESL among the Roma has also included some elements from the 2011 Recommendation. The Plan includes measures to reduce ESL for the Roma, such as allowing primary schools to open secondary school classes within the same centre in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in order to prevent pupils having to change schools, which increases ESL risk.

In Albania, inclusive education has been promoted by the 2012 law on Pre-University Education, which obliges schools to apply the principles of inclusive education[107]. Further, there is EU case law relating to the disproportionate streaming of Roma children into remedial special schools[108] and more broadly the education segregation of Romani children.

[106] Council of Europe (2017), Fighting school segregation in Europe through inclusive education: a position paper, https://rm.coe.int/fighting-school-segregationin-europe-throughinclusive-education-a-posi/168073fb65
[107] See also http://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/preventethnicitymigrantsreportapril2015.pdf
[108] O'Higgins N and Bruggemann C (2014), The Consequences of Cumulative Discrimination: How Special Schooling Influences Employment and Wages of Roma in the Czech Republic. European Educational Research Journal 13(3):282-294, June 2014.

Case Study : Strengthening multi-ethnic cooperation in municipalities in North Macedonia

The aim of this initiative, which runs from 2012 to the end of 2019, is to improve interethnic integration in education through implementation of curricular and extracurricular activities with students from different ethnic backgrounds. The project is being run in 27 ethnically mixed primary schools and 9 municipalities.

So far, 175 teachers have been trained to use inter-ethnic integration approaches during teaching and more than 5,000 students from different ethnic background have actively participated in joint student activities. However, long-term impact might be a challenge due to insecure funding and a lack of long-term approach.

In other countries, **national strategies** contain provisions that are relevant to anti-segregation and diversifying the social composition of schools. In Croatia, for example, the national plan to combat discrimination[109] aims to equalise access to education for different marginalised groups and abolish discriminatory practices in the education system.

Anti-segregation policies are **linked to Roma inclusion strategies** in some countries. For example, in the Czech Republic, anti-segregation policies in education are proposed in the country's Strategy for Roma Integration, in which reducing inequalities in education and equal access to quality education are the main priorities in education. In Ireland, there are anti-segregationist policies in place in relation to children and young people with special needs and there is a renewed government focus on measures to improve attendance, participation and retention of travellers, Roma and other students at particular risk of poor engagement with education and early school leaving.

Prevention policy 5: Policies to support multilingual teaching and learning and to promote linguistic diversity in schools, including inter-cultural learning programmes

There are a range of policies aimed at **promoting linguistic diversity** in schools, although these **mainly focus on helping those with a different mother tongue to become proficient in the language of the host country**. Countries that have linguistic and cultural programmes on offer to migrant and refugee children and others who have a different mother tongue include Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Serbia and Slovenia (see Figure 3.1 for more details). In some countries, such as Austria and Bulgaria, this has **legislative underpinning**: Austrian legislation makes it compulsory for migrants to attend courses in German language and Austrian culture and values[110].

In North Macedonia, a project for increasing intercultural competencies and demonstrating positive attitudes towards different ethnicities and cultural diversities is being implemented in 27 ethnically mixed schools and 9 municipalities. In the Netherlands, government subsidies are available to support schools to the development of a multilingual curriculum.

[109]https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//Sjednice/2017/11%20studeni/69%20sjednica%20Vlade%20Republike%20Hrvatske//69%20-%2011.pdf
[110]https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Integration/Integrationsgesetz/Integration_Act_2017.pdf

In Romania too, measures aimed at promoting linguistic diversity in schools have been implemented during the past two decades. The first measures were implemented starting in the 1990s, but the system has developed considerably since then. The right of people belonging to the national minority groups in Romania to study in their mother tongue is guaranteed in Romania's constitution (revised in 2003)[111] and specified in the 1995 education law, revised in 2011[112]. Although not specifically aimed at preventing ESL, these measures allow children with minority ethnic background to enrol in classes and education programmes taught in their own mother tongue in the mainstream education system, at the national level. These measures are implemented at all education levels and forms.

Other countries include a range of provisions in relation to linguistic policies for education in **national anti-discrimination plans**. Some involve mother tongue tuition, for example, in the Czech Republic, six-year bilingual upper secondary programmes (8th to 13th grade) exist in general upper secondary schools. Others offer support in learning the language of the host country: for example, in Croatia, the national plan to combat discrimination provides for improvement of ability in Croatian for refugee, migrant and other children whose first language is not Croatian. In other countries, such as Bulgaria, a multicultural approach based on non-discrimination is included in the curriculum for many subjects[113].

Targeted **social inclusion campaigns** in schools are also run in some countries, such as Cyprus, where curricula have been revised across all levels of education, based on success and adequacy indicators. The revision started in 2006 and has now been completed for most subjects. In Germany, the Upward mobility through education initiative (*Aufstieg durch Bildung. Die Qualifizierungsinitiative für Deutschland*) aims to prevent ESL amongst pupils. There are also measures aimed at preventing ESL for pupils with a migration background. For example, there are centres that offer language classes as well as intercultural integration measures (*Zentren für Sprachbildung und Interkulturelle Bildung*), focusing in particular on integrating migrants. Municipal integration centres (*Kommunalen Integrationszentren*), also focus on improving access to education for children and young people who are at risk of ESL.

Special funding is available in Finland for municipalities where there are learners with other languages than the official languages in Finland (Finnish, Swedish and Sami). This funding is part of positive discrimination measures and allocated based on three criteria: unemployment, level of education of parents, and other language than the official languages.

Some initiatives are in place to specifically **promote students' mother tongue**. In Poland, for example, legislation dating from 2017 focuses on enabling kindergartens, schools and public institutions to maintain a sense of national, ethnic and linguistic identity of pupils belonging to national and ethnic minorities and communities using a regional language. In Spain, legislation gives freedom to regional education authorities to hire linguistic experts as teachers to cover the linguistic needs of the specific school to assist

[111] Article 32, Constitution of Romania, modified by Law no. 429/2003, at http://www.presidency.ro/ro/presedinte/constitutia-romaniei.
[112] Romania's Education law no. 1/2011 – Section 12 on the education for students belonging to national minorities, with the following amendments, at http://www.dreptonline.ro/legislatie/legea_educatiei_nationale_lege_1_2011.php
[113] https://www.mon.bg/bg/100105

foreign students and provide multilingual classes. In Denmark, there have also been some *ad hoc* measures in this area. Sweden is also a leader in this field not only in Europe, but internationally.

Further examples of national policies and measures relating to policies for linguistic diversity and intercultural learning to support the integration of students from migrant backgrounds can be found the 2019 Eurydice report on this topic[114] as well as a thematic report[115] by Ecorys for DG EAC summarising a programme of expert workshops and peer learning activities.

Prevention policy 6: Active measures to enhance parental involvement in school life through partnerships and forums, and parental engagement in children's learning

Many countries have policies that support parental involvement in school life, as this is seen as a key factor in preventing ESL. These include Austria, where inclusion of parents as a partner in their children's learning is a stated aim of the Austrian national strategy to avoid early school leaving[116]. In many countries, there are **informal arrangements and provisions** in place that encourage parents to take part in school life through a variety of means, although the success of this depends on the attitude of individual parents.

Legislation provides for parental involvement in schools in many countries[117]. In Bulgaria, legislation ensures that parents are involved as participants in the educational process[118]. In Denmark, legislation states that parents must collaborate with primary schools, which may include parental participation in meeting between teachers and parents, where parents meet with their child's teachers to discuss their child's learning. In Estonia, the law stipulates that parents and the teacher must be involved in students' individual development discussions. Legislation also provides for parental involvement in schools in Poland and Slovakia. In Ireland, new legislation will require all schools to consult with parents and students and have a Parent and Student Charter.

The **link to strategies to include Roma communities** is also present in some countries. One, although not the only, example of this is Croatia, where the national strategy for the inclusion of Roma includes some general measures aimed at raising awareness among parents of the importance of education of their children, particularly in the case of ECEC and primary education.

[114] Eurydice (2019), Integrating students from migrant backgrounds in schools in Europe, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/news/integrating-students-from-migrant-backgrounds-into-schools-in-europe_en
[115] Day, L., Meierkord, A. (2018), Rethinking language education and linguistic diversity in schools, European Commission/Ecorys
[116] https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Nationale_Strategie/National_Strategy_BF_english.pdf
[117] For accounts of Parental involvement practices in 10 European cities and the need to include marginalised parents' voices see also: Downes, P. (2014), Towards a Differentiated, Holistic and Systemic Approach to Parental Involvement in Europe for Early School Leaving Prevention. European Union; and Downes, P. (2015). Early School Leaving Prevention and Engaging Parents from Ethnic Minority and Migrant Backgrounds: Key Issues and Guiding Principles Across 9 European City Municipalities. European Union, European Regional Development Fund, Urbact Secretariat, Paris.Regional Development Fund, Urbact Secretariat, Paris
[118] https://www.mon.bg/upload/4051/zkn_PUObr_180717.pdf

Case Study : *La Mallette des parents* (The Parents' Briefcase) in France[119]

This pilot project, which began in 2008-2009, aimed to improve the involvement of parents in the life of the school, especially parents with poor educational background and/or migration history.

Parents were invited to information sessions, where academic guidance was provided. The programme was assessed by the Paris School of Economics[120], which discovered that children whose parents are involved in the information sessions had better results at school. Moreover, classes where some children had parents involved in the Parents' Briefcase also displayed better results. The programme has also been assessed as an emergent practice in the European Platform for Investing in Children (EPIC).

There are also some **targeted and funded measures** aimed at encouraging the involvement of parents in school life. In the Belgian Flemish Community, for example, extra funds are available for the 'Houses of the Child' (*Huizen van het kind*) initiative that aims to promote parental engagement with the education of their children. Regional initiatives also exist in Switzerland that aim to intensify contact between schools and especially parents with a migrant background. In Luxembourg, there are a number of courses embedded within the country's adult learning offer, aimed at stimulating parental engagement. In France, measures involving parents in the life of the school were piloted before 2011 and will be widened in the context of the country's strategy to fight ESL.

Prevention policy 7: Measures to ensure access to high quality VET provision, including the integration of VET pathways into mainstream education, and upper secondary and tertiary education

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a key role in preventing pupils from dropping out of the education and training system altogether, since it can provide them with an alternative to the more academically oriented 'traditional' school programmes. Indeed, data shows that ESL rates tend to be higher in countries with a weaker developed VET system. However, there is no common approach to ensuring the quality of the VET system itself to prevent early leaving from VET (ELVET). There is evidence of under-investment in ELVET policies in comparison to the general education sector, despite the significantly larger share of students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds in VET.

It should be noted that Cedefop has undertaken important work in the area of VET and ESL[121]. It provides many examples of initiatives that have been put into place and tools that have been designed to reduce ELET. One example cited[122] comes from a VET school in the central region of Portugal, which created an internal system in 2011 with the objective of increasing efficiency in monitoring truancy and in transmitting the information between the pedagogical and psychological staff and school management. The system

[119] http://eduscol.education.fr/pid26667/mallette-des-parents.html
[120] Paris School of Economics, Quels effets attendre d'une politique d'implication des parents d'élèves dans les collèges? Les enseignements d'une expérimentation contrôlée, https://www.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/fr/actualites/rapport-final-la-mallette-des/
[121] See, for example, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5557
[122] http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/early-leaving-education-and-training

includes detailed information on each student. When a student is absent, the teacher clicks on the student name on the truancy monitoring software. After clicking, a note is registered in the student profile and an SMS is sent to their parents/guardian to notify the students' absence. Cedefop has also produced a multidimensional toolkit for tackling early school leaving including an overview of profiles at risk, protective factors, intervention approaches and tools for evaluation and reflection[123].

VET provision has increased its profile in many countries, in the context of providing more flexibility to suit individual interests, talents and abilities. This can be a key factor in strategies to tackle ESL. Some countries, such as Finland, explicitly state that VET has parity with other educational streams.

Case Study : Improving the quality of VET in the Czech Republic

Project POSPOLU (Support for cooperation between schools and companies focusing on vocational education in practice) ran from December 2012 to October 2015 as a pilot project in 38 schools in various regions in the Czech Republic. Its aims were to support cooperation between secondary technical and vocational schools and enterprises in order to ensure higher quality of initial VET. It also aimed to identify and record the barriers that prevent or inhibit cooperation between VET schools and companies and to provide evidence for legislative change.

The project improved mutual trust between the schools and employers involved and helped pupils to gain familiarity with a real-life working environment while acquiring practical skills and self-confidence. The aim was to improve pupils' ability to find work after concluding their studies.

According to an external evaluation in 2016, the pilot stage developed measures to increase the relevance and attractiveness of VET and achieved the objectives set. However, actual impact and effectiveness is yet to be determined.

VET systems are already well developed in a number of countries, such as Germany and Austria, but also for example Slovenia and the Netherlands, where measures agreed in 2018 aim to increase VET quality. Legislation has however also been introduced in a range of countries in recent years, **expanding access to VET**. In Austria, 2017 legislation expands the framework for upgrading the skills of marginalised young people and since July 2017 all young people aged up to 18 are obliged to be in education, training or employment[124]. In Bulgaria, new legislation promotes dual education and provides for career guidance and counselling[125]. In Croatia, new VET legislation was passed in 2018, which provides for practical knowledge through work-based learning. It also establishes Regional Centres of Competence, which are places of excellence in vocational education, funded by the EU and operating in five priority areas: tourism, mechanical engineering and electrical engineering, ICT, agriculture and health.

Other countries to have upgraded and improved access to VET through legislation include Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland (where new types of vocational schools

[123] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving
[124] https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20009604.
[125] https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/zakon-za-profesionalnoto-obrazovani/

are intended to have stronger links with the labour market and be more focused on providing quality vocational education), Romania, Slovakia and Spain. In Norway, as an offer to 'school-tired' young people, a shorter VET track featuring work-placed training from day one was introduced in 2016. In France, this issue is under discussion in the context of preparing new legislation.

Measures to improve access to VET are **integrated into national strategies** in some countries. For example, in Estonia, measures in this area are part of the country's lifelong learning strategy, and in Albania as part of the national strategy for employment and skills. In Turkey, there is a dedicated action plan for vocational and technical education.

In countries with a more regional focus, **local initiatives** to encourage access to VET have been developed. In Switzerland, the *Motivationssemester* is a labour market programme targeting unemployed young people and offers them a fixed six month structure to allow them to choose their vocational path. In 2016-2017, 76 such programmes took place across 19 cantons. Switzerland also runs a programme of case management for learners at risk of dropping out of VET programmes.

Prevention policy 8: Measures to strengthen links between education and training systems and the employment sector, via access to high quality work experience and employer engagement in schools

Providing students with practical work experience and strengthening the links between employers and schools is also seen as a key contributor to strategies aimed at curbing ESL. **Many countries have provisions in place that strengthen these types of links**. For example, in Bulgaria, local employers participate in the preparation of the State plan for enrolment, provide work placements for internships and practices. Denmark also has well-developed links between employers and schools, underpinned by legislation and providing for practical work experience. In the Netherlands, part of the success of the Dutch VET system is the close and longstanding link with the local labour market. Recent developments here include the experimental space (*Ruimte voor de regio*) given to VET schools to develop education programmes that include general and local provisions in the curriculum, with the local provisions developed in close collaboration with local employers.

Linking schools to local businesses is a policy aim in Ireland across a number of Local Area Partnerships and one example of this is the Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership, which includes an education network that involves local employers. In Luxembourg, the public employment service supports apprentices in finding apprenticeships, and also functions as the link between schools and the local labour market, so that pupils who drop out of school can access high quality work experience.

A number of **special and targeted schemes** exist in some countries. For example, in Liechtenstein, special attention is given to young persons in terms of providing a voluntary extracurricular year with very individual foci on education and integrated work internships. In Norway, a special apprenticeship subsidy scheme is available to encourage companies to take on young people with special needs as apprentices and others identified as being at high risk of dropping out.

In Switzerland, some **local schemes** exist, such as the one in the Geneva canton, in which during the last three years of compulsory education in all schools, learners undertake

traineeships in companies and career fairs. The aim is to raise awareness about the diversity of the secondary education offer and professions.

In Malta, students in state secondary schools are provided with a job shadowing exercise where students go on a workplace of their choice and spend one week observing people at work. Formal partnerships exist in France to provide a smoother transition from schools to work.

An innovative scheme exists in Slovenia, which provides for the job rotation of VET trainers and mentors in companies. The scheme was launched in 2016 (partly funded through the ESF) and aims to improve quality of teaching and learning experience through job rotations. As part of the measure, teachers of vocational modules and organisers of work-based learning spend 2 or 4 months in a company. During this period they will be substituted by suitably qualified and trained experts from the host companies or by unemployed teachers.

3.2.3 Effectiveness and impact of prevention measures

This section briefly summarises the evidence uncovered by the country research in relation to the effectiveness of a number of illustrative prevention measures. Overall, as highlighted in Chapter 2, only limited examples of comprehensive and systematic evaluation of prevention measures were found at the country level. From the in-depth prevention examples[126] highlighted across the 37 countries, only eight had been formally evaluated: in the Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Italy, North Macedonia, Norway and Sweden. In other examples, indications that some positive impact has been achieved can be deduced from stakeholder interviews or improvements shown via statistical data. However, the lack of systematic evolution in most cases presents a considerable challenge to understand whether the measures have had the expected impact. Some examples with evidence of effectiveness include the following:

- The '*Fuoriclasse*' (Champion) project in Italy aims at preventing ESL in urban areas that are mostly affected by the ESL due to precarious socio-economic conditions or widespread influence of criminality. Since its implementation in 2012 students at the 4th year of primary schools or at the 2nd year of lower secondary schools are encouraged and motivated through *ad hoc* activities such as motivational labs, extracurricular activities, educational camps and teaching support. The evaluation shows that the project is cost-effective and encouraged to increase cooperation in order to establish a solid and active network of schools involved[127].
- Ireland has introduced a free of charge 'Growing up' programme to all children aged two years and 8 months[128] to increase children's participation in ECEC. The evidence from 'Growing up' in Ireland programme shows that the attendance has increased, particularly of children from socially disadvantaged families who could not afford the

[126] Each country expert was asked to identify at least one in-depth example for each of the 3 policy areas – prevention, intervention, compensation – in their country
[127] https://www.savethechildren.it/sites/default/files/files/uploads/pubblicazioni/fuoriclasse-un-modello-di-successo-il-contrasto-alla-dispersione-scolastica.pdf.
[128] https://www.dcya.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=1143

services before. However, despite a universal provision socioeconomic background is still a factor, with marginalised children availing less of the scheme[129].

- The Youth Guides Project (*Losprosjektet*) in Norway assists young people at school and in their home life to prevent early school leaving. After the pilot phase the project is implemented in 50 municipalities during 2015-2018 period. The evaluation of the pilot scheme[130] indicated that over 400 young people in 15 municipalities participated in the pilot project from whom 68% were at school, in employment or in a NAV measure at the end of the project.
- Since 2017, public and private schools of 1st and 2nd grades in Portugal have the possibility to adapt the school curricula to the individual profile of students. It is expected to promote a better learning system and the promotion of more demanding student's abilities. In the 2018 OECD monitoring report[131] the flexible curriculum has shown to have strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly, it provided the opportunity for the key education stakeholders to understand long-term education objectives and relate them to student's profiles, and also enabled teachers to experience significant professional development at schools.
- The 'Plug In' project in Sweden (2012-2018) helps reduce the dropout rate in upper secondary schools[132]. The individuals, 16 and older, at risk of interrupting their studies or who have already abandoned their studies, can benefit from workshops on mentoring, transfer to upper secondary schools and student health. Outreach and identification of target groups are also part of the project. With approximately 80 workshops in 47 Swedish municipalities, 'Plug In' is to date, the country's largest project for supporting young people to complete upper secondary school[133]. In 2018, the findings of the programme are expected to contribute in drafting the national strategy for ESL. So far, the main finding has been that Sweden needs to increase its focus on preventive measures such as an early warning system[134].

3.3 Intervention measures

This section provides an overview of intervention policies aimed at reducing ESL in the countries included in the study. Intervention policies aim to reduce early school leaving by targeting pupils at risk of ESL in educational institutions, by reacting to the warning signs and addressing the emerging difficulties at an early stage. The 2011 Recommendation divides intervention measures into those targeted at school or training institution level, and those targeted at individuals. As noted by the Thematic Working Group on Early School

[129] Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) (2015), Growing Up in Ireland: Non-Parental Childcare and Child Cognitive Outcomes at Age 5, Dublin.
[130] Evaluering av Losprosjektet. http://www.hioa.no/Om-HiOA/Senter-for-velferds-og-arbeidslivsforskning/NOVA/Publikasjonar/Rapporter/2014/Til-god-hjelp-for-mange
[131] Available at: http://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Curriculo/Projeto_Autonomia_e_Flexibilidade/apresentacao_relatorio_ocde.pdf
[132] European Social Fund (2012). Plug in Final report. Available at: https://www.esf.se/PageFiles/3363162/slutrapport%20Plug-in.pdf
[133] Strategiraded (2017), Utvärdering av Plug In. Available at: http://www.pluginnovation.se/projektet/projektverkstader/studie-och-yrkesvagledning-i-ostsam/delrapport%20mars-2015
[134] Stakeholder interviewed in Sweden, June 2018

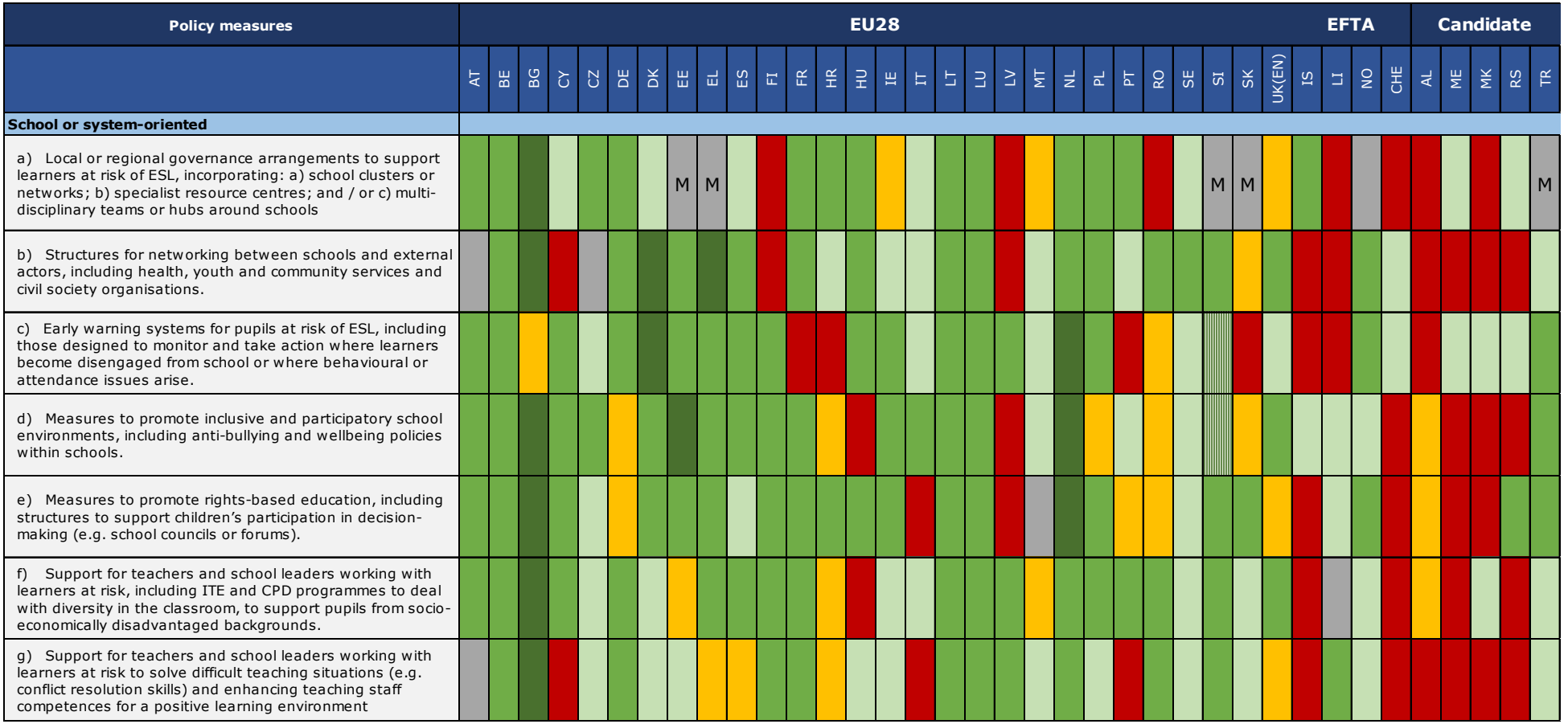
Leaving, intervention measures should target all pupils, but they are most beneficial to those at risk of ESL[135].

3.3.1 EU coverage of intervention measures

The heat map exercise again provides a reference for understanding the range and spread of ESL intervention measures across the EU28, Candidate and EFTA countries. Figure 3.2 overleaf presents the coverage of intervention measures targeted at school or training institution level (school or system-oriented), while Figure 3.3 on the following page presents the coverage of intervention measures targeted at individuals (learner-oriented). As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the heat maps were developed in close cooperation with our 37 country experts, using a combination of desk research and interviews to determine whether or not the measures were reflected in policy and legislation within the country, and the strength of the evidence.

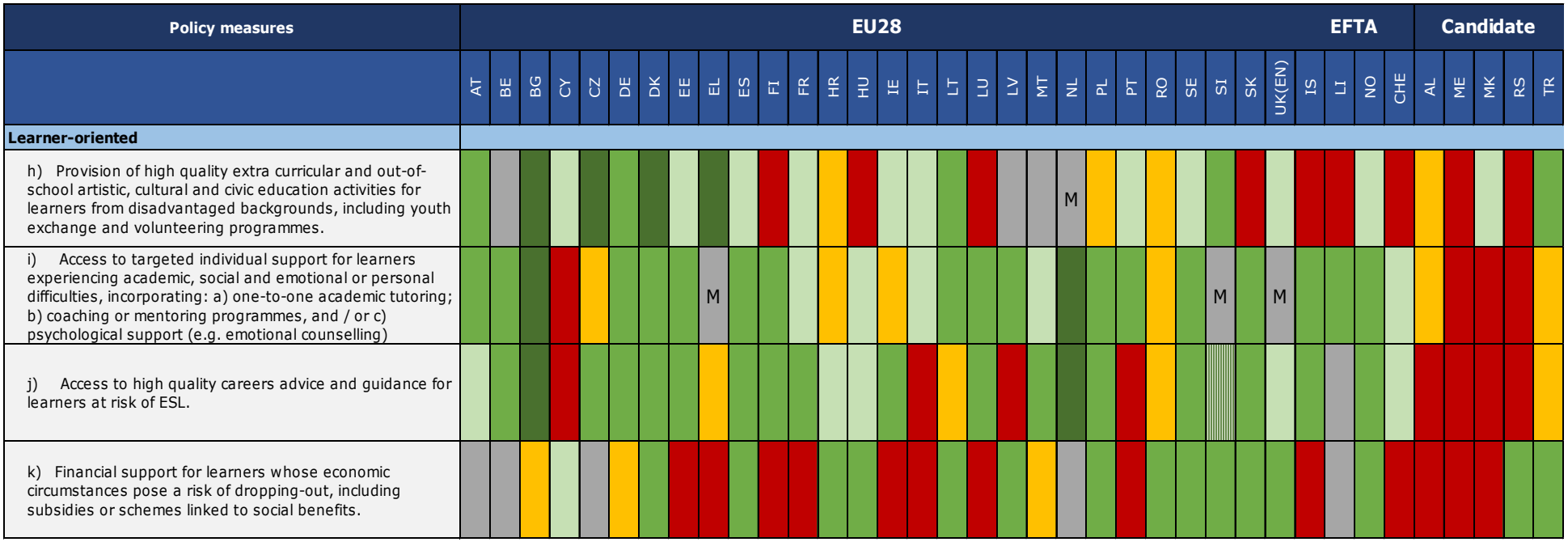
[135] Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving (2013), Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support. Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving. European Commission. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf

Figure 3.2: Coverage of ESL intervention measures at a national level across Europe (part 1: school or system-oriented)



Key			
Covered explicitly within national policy or legislation		Measures identified, but not implemented to any significant extent	
National policies exist with concrete measures at regional and local levels		Policy measure not identified, based on the country mapping	
National policies exist together with ad-hoc measures (e.g. initiatives, projects)		Multiple measures – single assessment not possible	M
Ad-hoc measures (developed in a certain area related to ESL, but not necessarily in a top-down way under the auspices of a particular national policy)		No information (Not applicable or no assessment made)	

Figure 3.3: Coverage of ESL intervention measures at a national level across Europe (part 2: learner-oriented)



Key			
Covered explicitly within national policy or legislation		Measures identified, but not implemented to any significant extent	
National policies exist with concrete measures at regional and local levels		Policy measure not identified, based on the country mapping	
National policies exist together with ad-hoc measures (e.g. initiatives, projects)		Multiple measures – single assessment not possible	M
Ad-hoc measures (developed in a certain area related to ESL, but not necessarily in a top-down way under the auspices of a particular national policy)		No information (Not applicable or no assessment made)	

The heat maps show that **there are many similarities between countries with high and low coverage of both prevention and intervention measures**. Here we see again a core group of countries where all or most measures exist within national policy or legislation, providing a continuum from ESL prevention to intervention (including AT, BE, BG, DK, EE, LT, LU, NL, and SI). The Netherlands and Bulgaria lead the way with policies that are designed nationally but implemented locally. However, the map indicates that, unlike for prevention, the intervention measures have evolved independently from national policy in Sweden and Norway, whereas the opposite is the case for France.

Furthermore, there are some countries where coverage of intervention policies is noticeably higher than the equivalent arrangements for prevention (e.g. Greece), and other countries where the reverse is true (Albania, Croatia and Romania in particular). This perhaps indicates either **a relatively weaker or stronger policy response developed under prevention and intervention respectively within some countries,** and / or **a varying emphasis on the main types of measures targeted at ESL**. These variations accord with differences in the underlying contexts for ESL (Chapter 2) and differences in the focus of comprehensive national ESL strategies or their equivalent according to their aims, structure and target groups (Chapter 4). Iceland, Switzerland, Albania, Latvia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia are among the countries with the lowest overall coverage of intervention measures, according to the study data.

Viewed horizontally, the heat map shows that **coverage is highest overall for intervention measures focused on core in-school support**, including targeted one-to-one study support for learners experiencing personal, social or academic difficulties, and for **CPD for teachers and school leaders to manage diversity and to support learners from a range of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds**. After this comes measures to promote inclusive school environments, anti-bullying and wellbeing, and measures to support children's participation in decisions affecting their education. The latter group of measures are present in well over half of European countries in some format. However, **these policies would seem not to have been implemented to any significant extent in some countries** (AL, CZ, HR, PL, RO, SK, and UK). Indeed, the gap between policy and implementation is particularly stark for Albania, Croatia, Slovakia and Romania. The barriers in this respect are further discussed in Chapter 4.

As with prevention, the more infrastructural measures showed the lowest coverage overall across European countries. This includes measures relating to school networks, clusters or multi-professional teams, early warning systems for ESL, and out-of-school provision including cultural and civic education. However, **the availability of financial support for learners in challenging circumstances is the most inconsistently available intervention measure across the 37 countries** included in the review. Many countries offering a range of other intervention measures do not systematically offer subsidies or financial measures for learners whose economic background poses a risk to ESL.

We now go on to explore the more specific intervention measures in further detail, with reference to examples identified through the study research.

3.3.2 Comparative analysis – intervention measures across Europe

The 2011 Recommendation includes various school or training institution policies and learner-oriented intervention measures that seek to help pupils at risk of ESL. Country

experts have mapped policies in each of the 37 countries against the intervention measures in the Recommendation and indicated where there are similar or corresponding measures. This section presents some of the types of school or training institution and individual intervention measures with some concrete examples. As stated in the preamble to this chapter, the examples are illustrative, are not intended to reflect either a comprehensive overview or to indicate examples of best practice, and include relevant measures implemented both before and after the 2011 Recommendation. Although the policy measures cited align with the Recommendation, in most cases it is not possible to ascertain with any certainty whether there is any direct or indirect influence on their conception or implementation; this aspect is examined in more detail in Chapter 4. The order of the policy measures follows those in the 2011 Recommendation.

A. School or training institution intervention policies

We present below an analysis of the different types of school or training institution intervention policies identified in our research.

School level intervention policy 1: Developing schools into learning communities

The promotion of inclusive and participatory school environments exists in many of the countries studied, albeit to a more limited extent. Most of these intervention measures focus on providing well-being and anti-bullying policies at schools, either through national policies or projects. Most of these measures target students in general and do not explicitly address socioeconomically and/or socioculturally excluded groups.

Creating and cultivating a collaborative and positive environment at schools was highlighted in a number of countries, and examples include:

- In Luxembourg, there is a focus on the promotion of wellbeing, media literacy, cultural education, citizenship education and diversity skills.
- In Belgium (Flemish Community), schools receive policy support for improving their teaching and overall school climate and quality, while in the French community health and wellbeing at school is promoted through the SPSE (*Les services de Promotion de la Santé à l'Ecole)* services.
- There is a policy for the development of a positive climate at school in France[136].
- Slovenia's measures to improve well-being at schools include preventing and addressing peer violence.
- In the Netherlands, all schools have a duty of care to ensure wellbeing, including the prevention of bullying and the promotion of social safety. There is obligatory monitoring and schools must take measures in the framework of this duty of care, although the schools can decide which measures to take.
- In Romania as well, new measures have been implemented to promote inclusive and participatory school environments, including anti-bullying and well-being policies within schools. This policy is in the early stages of implementation, but there is

[136] http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid122362/non-au-harcelement-le-harcelement-pour-l-arreter-il-faut-en-parler.html

evidence that its inclusion in the national ESL strategy was influenced by the framework provided in the Recommendation.

There is also a wide range of literature on the subject for promoting a collaborative and positive school environment for all[137].

Examples of **measures to combat bullying and any type of harassment at schools** include:

- In the Czech Republic, civil society organisations are involved in minimising bullying in schools[138].
- Since 2017, primary and secondary schools have been obliged to have an anti-bullying strategy and action plans in concrete cases of bullying in Denmark[139, 140].
- Bulgaria has established mechanisms for counteracting harassment and violence in institutions in its pre-school and school education system. More generally, its new Preschool and School Education Act states that '*Inclusive education is an integral part of the right to education*' (art. 7, paragraph 2). Furthermore, the Council of Ministers adopted an exhaustive Ordinance on Inclusive Education.
- Cyprus has established a Task Force on school violence[141].
- France has implemented a Yearly Anti-bullying Week[142].
- Individual schools have implemented anti-bullying policies and anti-bullying buddy programmes in Ireland on the basis of a National Action Plan on Bullying (2013)[143].
- Portugal runs 'Safe School Programme' (*Programa Escola Segura*)[144].
- A dedicated website and methodological guidelines have been adopted in Slovakia, however, most of the anti-bullying actions are project-based[145].

In other countries, there is no systematic or centralised approach to providing well-being and anti-bullying policies, however different types of policy measure exist, often at local or school level, or on a more *ad hoc* level. For example, in Croatia, schools have the autonomy to decide what kind of inclusiveness measures they will implement. Further examples are:

[137] See, for example, Downes, P. (2017), Conceptual Foundations of Inclusive Systems in and around Schools for Early School Leaving Prevention: An Emotional-Relational Focus. Psihološka istraživanja (Psychological Research), 20 (1), 9-26 and https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/integrating-students-migrant-backgrounds-schools-europe-national-policies-and-measures_en
[138] http://www.minimalizacesikany.cz/
[139] Undervisningsministeriet (2017b), Krav om antimobbeindsats på grundskoler og ungdomsuddannelser. Available at: https://www.uvm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/uvm/2017/april/170428-krav-om-antimobbeindsats-paa-grundskoler-og-ungdomsuddannelser
[140] See also Downes, P. & Cefai, C. (2016), How to tackle bullying and prevent school violence in Europe: Evidence and practices for strategies for inclusive and safe schools. NESET, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union/EU bookshop for an account of specific countries' gaps in existence of national bullying prevention strategies
[141] http://www.moec.gov.cy/paratiritirio_via/istoriko.html
[142] http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid122362/non-au-harcelement-le-harcelement-pour-l-arreter-il-faut-en-parler.html
[143] https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Action-Plan-On-Bullying-2013.pdf
[144] http://www.psp.pt/Pages/programasespeciais/escolasegura.aspx
[145] www.prevenciasikanovania.sk; http://naruc.sk/en/ https://www.minv.sk/?spravy_rk&sprava=rezort-vnutra-zvysi-vzdelanostnu-uroven-ziakov-z-marginalizovanych-romskych-komunit-poskytnutim-mentoringu-a-tutoringu.

- In Estonia, efforts aimed at decreasing bullying in schools are offered by the third sector organisation 'Foundation School Free of Bullying' (SA Kiusamisvaba Kool)[146].
- Poland has introduced a 'weekly educational class' (godzina wychowawcza), which focuses on the care of pupils in schools.
- Since 2006, Sweden has appointed child and school student representatives, who are tasked with providing information about discrimination legislation, helping schools prevent bullying, overseeing schools' efforts and representing students who have been bullied.
- The Olweus programme in Norway addresses bullying problems at individual, class and school levels[147].

Further, several countries have **implemented policies offering individual support to students**. For example:

- Malta has implemented policies regarding behaviour management, gender orientation and healthy lifestyles.
- All schools must submit annual strategies detailing how they support their students in Austria and this can cover ESL policies and actions (although this is not obligatory).
- The amendment of the 2016 Education Act focuses on supporting measures for individual pupils' needs in the Czech Republic[148].
- Special education tools (visual, digital curriculum, toys) have been developed for children with special needs in Lithuania.
- Slovakia has offered funding for the provision of mentoring and tutoring for pupils from marginalised Roma communities to NGOs, civic associations, foundations and church organisations.
- The UK has piloted Mental Health Services and the Schools Link Programme, supporting health and local authorities to work with schools and colleges in partnership in order to deliver mental health support to children and young people
- Turkey is implementing a Fight Against Violence Towards Children project[149].

Further information on the existence of measures on this policy area can be found in Downes and Cefai (2016)[150], where it is also observed that there is a notable strategic gap across most EU countries regarding an integrated strategy for ESL and bullying prevention. This review concludes that common systems of holistic[151] support for both bullying and

[146] School Free of Bullying (s.d.). Meie missioon on muuta Eesti koolid kiusamisvabaks. http://kiusamisvaba.ee/organisatsioonist/
[147] Folkehelseinstituttet. https://www.fhi.no/en/mp/children-and-adolescents/childhood-family-and-well-being/facts-about-bullying-among-children/
[148] Zákon č. 561/2004 Sb. o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání (školský zákon) v aktualizovaném znění (The Act 561/2006 Sb., on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education, as amended). Available at http://www.msmt.cz/dokumenty-3/skolsky-zakon-ve-zneni-ucinnem-od-1-1-2017-do-31-8-2017)
[149] Further information on the EU funded project available at http://siddetinonlenmesi.meb.gov.tr/www/project-summary/icerik/143
[150] Downes, P. & Cefai, C. (2016), How to tackle bullying and prevent school violence in Europe: Evidence and practices for strategies for inclusive and safe schools. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union/EU bookshop, http://nesetweb.eu/NESET-II_Bullying-Report.pdf
[151] As defined in Downes, P., Nairz-Wirth, E., Rusinaitė, V. (2017), Structural Indicators for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools, NESET II report, p.18: 'A holistic approach recognises the social, emotional and physical needs, not simply the academic and cognitive needs, of both children/young people and their parents.'

early school leaving need to include: a transition focus from primary to post-primary; multiprofessional teams for students and their families with complex needs; language supports, including speech and language therapy; family support services and education of parents regarding their approaches to communication and supportive discipline with their children; outreach to families to provide supports; support for students with academic difficulties; social and emotional education curriculum; systems to substantially promote voices of marginalised students. Both bullying and early school-leaving prevention require teacher professional development and pre-service preparation focusing on: developing teachers' relational competences for a promoting a positive school and classroom climate, including a focus on teachers' conflict resolution and diversity awareness competences; early warning/support systems to identify pupils' needs for those at higher risk.

Linked to the issue of creating an inclusive environment, **student participation in decision-making processes** has been included in national education policies in many countries (see Figure 3.2 above). Some countries have a decentralised approach, and therefore student participation depends on individual schools as in Portugal and Denmark and on the regional education administrations to set up mechanisms for student participation in Spain[152]. Most evidence of student participation has been found at the school level, but also through mechanisms set up at the national level (e.g. in Cyprus, Luxembourg, Norway). New policy developments are foreseen in the future in several countries. There is new legislation expected in Ireland that will require every school to consult with parents and students on key issues and publish a Parent and Student Charter[153]. Further detail on EU-wide child participation in the EU is provided in the 2015 European Commission report[154].

School level intervention policy 2: Early warning systems for pupils at risk

The majority of countries have introduced early warning systems (EWS) for pupils at risk of ESL, with a few exceptions. However, most of the examples gathered are limited to data gathering, and there is much less evidence of actual targeted intervention based on assessment of need. These data collection initiatives can however be used as the basis for the development and targeting of ESL initiatives and policies.

The EWS examples identified for this study have been implemented at different levels of governance and most countries do not have national monitoring systems, although there are examples of some that have adopted ad hoc regional and local approaches. Some examples include the following:

- In the Flemish community in Belgium, the absenteeism monitoring system functions as an early warning system.
- In the Netherlands, regions and schools are obliged by law to monitor absence and provide counselling and support services for young people at risk of ESL.

[152] Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación. Available at: https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2006-7899
[153] Interview conducted in Ireland, May 2018
[154] European Commission (2015), Evaluation of legislation, policy and practice of child participation in the EU, https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f425176f-cc2c-46bd-8a3a-65d958fff780

- The introduction of the early warning system in Hungary has been included in the National Public Education Act[155].
- In Sweden, schools are obliged to have EWS in order to give each student the support needed to complete their education. Schools, however, are free to choose the method in which they are designed and implemented[156].
- 'Local Youth Antennas' and the Ministry of Education jointly collect and analyse data on early leavers and assess pupils at risk based on this data at secondary schools in Luxembourg[157].
- Austria has included alert provisions in the Vocational Training Law (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*) in cases where there is a risk of early leaving from vocational education and training[158].
- Serbia and Iceland also have a type of early warning scheme in place to identify and provide individual support to those at risk of ESL.

Several countries have attempted to implement national early warning systems, but proposals were not taken forward. Some discussion regarding EWS in preschool have taken place in France, but proposals were rejected. There was an initial effort in Malta, following the publication of the Strategic Plan for the Prevention of ESL, to trace attendance of individual students in schools – but this was strongly opposed by church and independent schools on the basis of protection of personal data[159].

EU Candidate countries have mostly implemented monitoring measures on the basis of projects and, therefore, the efforts are fragmented. Most of them focus on the ethnic communities or pupils from marginalised backgrounds, for example in Montenegro and North Macedonia.

School level intervention policy 3: Networking between schools and external actors

Structures for networking between schools and external actors, including health, youth and community services and civil society organisations are implemented in nearly all the EU Member States. No Candidate countries have however implemented this type of measure to any significant degree except Turkey.

Multidisciplinary teams can play an important role in preventing ESL. They are key also to the provision of emotional counselling and therapeutic and related family support to address complex needs, given the growing recognition in international research of the links between ESL and trauma, anxiety, depression, social phobia, bullying, addiction, other mental health difficulties, as well as loneliness[160].

[155] 2011. évi CXC. törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről.] (Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education); 01.09.2012. http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=139880.339634
[156] European Commission (undated) Report on the Case study on Introductory programmes in Sweden: Learner support measures. Working Group on School Policy Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/sweden-learner-support_en.pdf.
[157] http://www.men.public.lu/fr/actualites/publications/secondaire/statistiques-analyses/decrochage-scolaire/index.html
[158] https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10006276
[159] https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/News/Documents/Attendancy%20Policy%20Document.pdf
[160] See for example, Esch , P. Bocquet, V., Pull, C., Couffignal, S., Lehnert, T., Graas, M., Fond-Harmant, L. and Ansseau, M. (2014), The downward spiral of mental disorders and educational attainment: a systematic review on early school leaving, *BMC Psychiatry* 14:237; Cornell, F., Gregory, A., Huang, F & Fan, X. (2013).

Promoting and supporting multi-professional teams in schools in order to address ESL was one of the key policy messages of the report[161] of the 2011-2013 Thematic Working Group on ESL, which also gives examples of cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary cooperation in Member States. Examples of multidisciplinary working from our research include the existence of centres for support for personal development in Bulgaria, which provide a mechanism for collaboration between institutions dealing with enrolment and retention, centring on 'inclusion teams' that aim to help students to return to school, and in the Czech Republic, local specialised resource centres (centres for psychological and education counselling) and ad hoc disciplinary commissions, which can be created in schools to work with pupils at risk of ESL. Further, in the Netherlands, a multidisciplinary approach is central to ESL policy in that municipalities play an important coordinating role. As of 2019, special attention is required in the case of young people deemed to be particularly vulnerable: in practice this has been a focus in the regions since 2016.

In Ireland, it was felt by the majority of interviewees for this research that multidisciplinary teams had not been implemented widely enough. The lack of this implementation was of particular concern with regard to the lack of emotional counselling and mental health therapeutic supports.

In Denmark, when a student is at risk of early school leaving, has a high level of absence, or is deemed 'not ready' for upper secondary education, a number of actors may become involved. These may include municipal youth guidance counsellors, 'PPR'-counsellors (pedagogical, psychological advisors), teachers and teacher teams, parents, collaboration between the local police, schools, and social services, or other relevant services. In Croatia also, each primary and secondary school has multi-disciplinary teams, usually composed of school psychologists, pedagogues or any other expert staff such as a social pedagogue or a speech therapist.

Schools cooperate with local centres, NGOs and other actors in the Czech Republic, for example. In Estonia, the provision of career and study counselling to children and young people is coordinated through the Pathfinder Centres[162]. As part of the Youth Guarantee implementation programme, multi-professional teams have been created in Finland that offer social welfare, health care and mental health care services for young people[163]. Portugal has established Municipal Commissions for the Protection of Children and Youth at Risk[164]. School counselling services, including an element of emotional counselling, are playing a coordination role among the services and institutions to support the child in need in Slovenia[165]. The Roma assistants in Slovenia are working in schools with Roma children

Perceived Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying Predicts High School Dropout Rates. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 105,* No. 1, 138–149; Frostad, Per., Jan Pijl, S & Egil Mjaavatn, P. (2015), Losing All Interest in School: Social Participation as a Predictor of the Intention to Leave Upper Secondary School Early, *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 59:1, 110-122

[161] https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/early-school-leaving-group2013-report_en.pdf

[162] The Ministry of Education and Research (2018), Õppe- ja karjäärinõustamise programm. https://www.hm.ee/et/oppe-ja-karjaarinoustamise-programm

[163] Nuorisotakuu – Youth Guarantee; https://nuorisotakuu.fi/en/frontpage

[164] https://www.cnpdpcj.gov.pt/

[165] National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (2011), Programske smernice. Svetovalna služba v srednjih šolah. (Program guidelines, Secondary School Counselling Services). Available at: http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/ministrstvo/Publikacije/Programske_smernice_SS.pdf

and acting as an important bridge between the schools and the Roma communities[166]. Students with personal, family or health problems are entitled to social and pedagogical counselling at schools in Norway. There is also evidence that Roma assistants are acting as mediators in schools in Bulgaria[167]. Nurses located onsite in schools are a prevalent feature of, for example, the French education system.

Several countries encourage **collaboration with civil organisations and local communities** to enrich the curriculum. For example, in Denmark, the Act on the Municipal Primary and Lower Secondary School states that schools should engage in collaboration with local culture institutes, athletics and civil society organisations, art and culture schools[168]. In Germany, learning activities in the school for the entire duration of the day are delivered in partnership with a wide variety of organisations. The cooperation between schools and external actors often includes psychological or pedagogical help offered to learners. Some countries rely on external psychological and pedagogical counselling and social services.

In several countries, cooperation between schools and external actors is not formally structured and instead depends on the initiative of individual schools to be more active and engage local communities in school life. For example, thanks to the College Initiative in Malta, colleges have invested in having better networking with external structures such as employers, social services and youth workers.

Key stakeholders in various countries acknowledged that collaboration between schools and external actors was however often underdeveloped, despite the examples of multidisciplinary team working shown above. In Ireland, for example, interagency cooperation between schools and external actors was felt to be an area that needed to be improved[169]. Despite an explicit national legislation being in place, networking between schools and external actors in Turkey to implement joint actions such as health screenings, back-up classes, cultural and sports activities is a challenge[170]. However, new reforms to improve the collaboration between schools and other actors are being implemented in some countries. For example, the National Observatory for Quality Education, created in 2018, is meant to bring together all different actors involved in pupils' education in Luxembourg[171].

Setting up school clusters and networks is also reported in many countries. Examples include:

- In Malta, state primary and secondary schools are organised in clusters, known as colleges, to coordinate actions taken in schools.

[166] Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. Kazalniki socialne povezanosti, Zgodnje Opuscanje Izobrazevanja (Indicator of social cohesion, Early School Leaving). Slovenija, letno, Available at : http://pxweb.stat.si/pxweb/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=0762116S&ti=&path=../Database/Dem_soc/07_trg_dela/02_07008_akt_preb_po_anketi/02_07621_akt_preb_ADS_letno/&lang=2
[167] https://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/preventethnicitymigrantsreportapril2015.pdf
[168] Undervisningsministeriet (2017), Bekendtgørelse af lov om folkeskolen. LBK nr 1510 af 14/12/2017. Available at: https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/R0710.aspx?id=196651
[169] Stakeholders interviewed in Ireland, June 2018
[170] Further information on protocols between MoNE and other institutions is available at http://mtegmprojeler.meb.gov.tr/index.php?pg=protokol
[171] See http://www.men.public.lu/fr/actualites/publications/secondaire/statistiques-analyses/decrochage-scolaire/index.html

- In Spain, specifically in Madrid, 'FP en Red' (VET network) is a network for education centres to share practices[172].
- Networks of all partners of schools in the field of education are established in France[173].

School level intervention policy 4: Supporting and empowering teachers in their work with pupils at risk

Teachers' qualifications and competences are a fundamental factor for children's achievements, particularly those at risk of ESL. In many countries, there are examples of initiatives that **support teachers and school leaders working with learners at risk and enhance teaching staff competences for a positive learning environment**. Some examples of measures include:

- The Master programmes which include modules about the relationship between social inequality and educational outcomes as well as how teachers should approach diversity are implemented in Germany[174].
- 'VoXmi' project in Austria help teachers to deal sensitively with multi-language classes[175].
- Bulgaria introduced the subject of 'Inclusive education' in initial teacher education[176].
- Teachers and all the education and training staff in general are trained and sensitised to the issue of early school leaving in France[177].
- A digital platform 'EMU' is the common portal for the educational world in Denmark. EMU gives access to teachers, students, parents and others with an interest in school and training to a vast amount of resources and information relating to education[178].
- While many ITE colleges/universities require teachers to complete a placement in a DEIS school given priority resources due to higher poverty/socioeconomic exclusion in Ireland, it is far from evident that this is provided for all student teachers and across both primary and post-primary initial teacher education.
- The Ministry for Education and Employment in Malta has set up an Institute for Education (IFE) with the remit of strengthening professional development of teachers to support them in providing a better quality teaching.
- The regional project '*Misura per Misura Atto Primo'* in Italy targets teachers and educators, in order to help them to integrate students with a migrant background and from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Hungary has developed a teachers' methodology for preventing ESL as part of the 'HRDOP-3.1.2' project.
- In Slovakia, training has been targeted to pedagogical staff in order to foster the inclusion of marginalised Roma communities (see case study box for details).
- In the Netherlands, many CPD activities for teachers deal with issues relating to ESL.

However, despite these examples, it is far from evident that there is a consistent systemic strategy at initial teacher education level or in CPD across Europe to address key issues

[172] Stakeholder interviewed in Spain, 2018.
[173] http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid25535/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=71326
[174] https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2017/2017_09_14-Umsetzung-Foerderstrategie.pdf (p. 119 - 137)
[175] http://www.voxmi.at/voxmi/
[176] https://www.mon.bg/upload/2333/naredba_12_01.09.2016_prof_razvitie_uchiteli.pdf
[177] http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid285/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=116986
[178] Undervisningsministeriet (2018), About EMU. Available at: https://www.emu.dk/modul/about-emu

for ESL, such as conflict resolution skills as part of a relational competences focus, as well as a sustained cultural competences focus (e.g., on cultural and social class awareness, sensitivity and recognition of diversity) in these domains.

Case Study : Education of pedagogical staff for inclusion of marginalised Roma communities in Slovakia

Between 2011 and 2015, Slovakia put in place an initiative to expand services to children from marginalised Roma communities, developing a model of full day care and retraining of pedagogical staff to acquire specific professional competences, in order to better serve these learners. This project was implemented in 200 schools across Slovakia, and helped more than 43,600 pupils, of whom more than 22,000 were from a socially disadvantaged environment. A total of 400 teaching assistants helped pupils and educators, and training of pedagogical and professional staff was carried out in 12 new continuing education programmes, with 4,964 certificates issued to those participating in the training.

The evaluation completed by the Ministry of Education revealed that no long-term impact has been achieved due to the lack of resources available to continue the model. However, other ESF-funded projects have been implemented afterwards that were based on the experience of the project.

School level intervention policy 5: Provision of extracurricular activities

The provision of extracurricular and out-of-school artistic, cultural and civic education activities for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, including youth exchange and volunteering programmes to tackle ESL has been **implemented to a limited extent across the countries studied.**

Most countries have included extracurricular provisions as part of their education laws but do not specifically target disadvantaged pupils or those at risk of ESL. For example, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Portugal and Turkey offer young pupils after-school activities that are implemented through a range of projects funded by ESF, Erasmus+ and other programmes. Some examples of targeted support to pupils with disadvantaged backgrounds were however found in Estonia, France, Ireland, Slovenia, Spain, UK-England. For example:

- Collaboration agreements with entities and other institutions are signed in Spain to carry out specific projects (classrooms for recreational-sports activities and healthy leisure activities, pre-employment workshops, etc.) in areas of greater risk of social exclusion and school drop-out.
- Various projects and programmes targeting young people, including learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are financially supported by municipalities or relevant ministers in Slovenia. For example, a network of Youth Centres are established across

the country, which implement a range of informative, counselling, non-formal education and volunteering programmes for all young people[179].

- In England 'Opportunity Areas' is a national, fixed-term programme focused on improving social mobility through education among disadvantaged young people to enhance their levels of achievement and future life opportunities[180].
- In Estonia, since 2016 the State has been supporting local governments that provide extra-curricular activities in at least 3 State-determined priority areas (culture, sports and natural sciences) with financial support[181].

From these examples, and more widely, it is far from evident that the potential of the arts is being sufficiently and strategically used to engage marginalised children and young people in culturally meaningful activities to promote their learning. This constitutes a missed opportunity for policymakers and practitioners, given the capacity of the arts to foster personal and social expression, leadership and innovation competences, and to overcome fear of failure strongly associated with early school leaving. The social inclusion dimension of the arts requires further strategic recognition, cognisant also of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31.1 on the right of the child 'to participate freely in cultural life and the arts' and Art. 31.2: 'States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity'. This aspect of poverty and social exclusion requires further emphasis as part of the extracurricular focus on ESL across Europe.

B. Learner-oriented intervention measures

We present below an overview of the different types of learner-oriented (or 'individual level') intervention policies identified in our research. **Learner-oriented provisions have been widely implemented across the countries examined** and depend mostly on which approach (individual or group-based) is favoured by the school communities. Providing specialist support to pupils at risk of ESL at the regional or local level is a common type of measure aimed at supporting learners at risk of ESL (e.g. in Denmark, Croatia, Poland, Sweden, Belgium).

Individual level intervention policy 1: Mentoring support and targeted assistance to overcome specific academic, social or personal difficulties

A variety of support measures to help learners overcome academic, social or personal difficulties were highlighted across the different countries.

Individual pedagogical support is available in a number of countries. For example, in Luxembourg, programmes target pupils with learning difficulties and special needs, while others provide access to all students. In the Netherlands, legislation dating from 2014 obliges schools to provide students who require extra support with the most appropriate schooling: if a school cannot offer the necessary support, it must find a school that can.

[179] Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Mladinski sector, (Youth Sector). Available at: http://www.ursm.gov.si/si/delovna_podrocja/mladinski_sektor/
[180] DfE. Social mobility and opportunity areas. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-and-opportunity-areas
[181] Ministry of Culture (2016), Noorte huvitegevuse toetussüsteemi kontseptsioon. Tallinn

Some measures also address practical constraints for learning. For example, in France, the 'Homework done' initiative helps children to do their homework at school when they have trouble doing it at home.

There are some specific examples of **coaching or mentoring programmes** (e.g. Bulgaria, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal). These can be focused specifically on VET and career guidance, or can contain a mixture of career guidance and emotional support. For example:

- The *Programa de Tutorias* mentoring programme in Portugal[182].
- In Hungary, mentoring support for learners experiencing academic, social and emotional or personal difficulties is provided through the Tanoda programme[183].
- Coaching and mentoring is available through some VET programmes, including Youthreach in Ireland[184].
- In Slovenia, education/teaching classes are organised in hospitals for pupils and students in hospital care[185].
- in Austria, there is a high-profile youth coaching scheme which is seen as very effective[186]. The Austrian government also provides targeted information to young people and helps them to find out what their strengths are and what they might be able to do in the future. These initiatives are rolled out in conjunction with the social partners.

Emotional counselling and support is provided in a range of countries in order to help those suffering from serious emotional distress, including the Czech Republic, Belgium and Germany. There is a range of literature on the role of emotional counselling in ESL prevention[187]. In France, all pupils have access to the Psychologist of Education to for psychological support and career guidance[188]. Emotional counselling is also available in Sweden, where all students have access to a school doctor, school nurse, psychologist and school welfare officer at no cost [189] and in Slovenia[190].

[182] http://www.dge.mec.pt/apoio-tutorial-especifico
[183] http://tanodaplatform.hu/
[184] http://www.youthreach.ie/
[185] EURYDICE. Slovenia. Guidance and Counselling in Early Childhood and School Education. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/guidance-and-counselling-early-childhood-and-school-education-68_en [185] Zákon č. 561/2004 Sb. o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání (školský zákon) v aktualizovaném znění (The Act 561/2006 Sb., on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education, as amended). Available at http://www.msmt.cz/dokumenty-3/skolsky-zakon-ve-zneni-ucinnem-od-1-1-2017-do-31-8-2017)
[185] Further information available at http://siddetinonlenmesi.meb.gov.tr/www/project-summary/icerik/143
[186] https://www.neba.at/jugendcoaching
[187] Downes, P. (2011), The neglected shadow: Some European perspectives on emotional supports for early school leaving prevention. International Journal of Emotional Education, 3 (2), 3-39; and Downes, P. (2017). Conceptual Foundations of Inclusive Systems in and around Schools for Early School Leaving Prevention: An Emotional-Relational Focus. Psihološka istraživanja (Psychological Research), 20 (1), 9-26.
[188] The Ministry of Education and Research (2018). Õppe- ja karjäärinõustamise programm. https://www.hm.ee/et/oppe-ja-karjaarinoustamise-programm
[189] Sweden.se (2015) Facts About Sweden: Education. Available at: https://sweden.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Education-in-Sweden-high-resolution.pdf
[190]National Curriculum Council (1999), Programske smernice. Svetovalna služba v osnovni soli, (Program guidelines, Primary School Counselling Services.Available atL http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/os/devetletka/_drugo/Programske_smernice_za_svetovalno_sluzbo_v_osnovni_soli.pdf. National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (2011). Programske smernice. Svetovalna služba v srednjih šolah. (Program guidelines, Secondary School Counselling Services). Available at:

In some countries, emotional counselling is expressly backed by legislation. In Poland, legislation mandates for the existence of a system of support to students who are having significant difficulties at school, in the form of one-to-one academic tutoring and psychological support where required. In Denmark, legislation states that school leaders can choose to recommend a student for pedagogical-psychological assessment, the results of which may initiate a process where the student may receive psychological support[191]. Croatia and Bulgaria also have legislation in place that provides for emotional counselling and psychological support.

Several countries thus provide a range of **counselling services, including psychological or socio-emotional support, to pupils at risk of ESL**. The School Counselling service in Slovenia for example has been available since 1999. Counsellors undertake pedagogical, psychological, and social counselling and offer support to the pupils, teachers, parents and management. All children, particularly children with learning, pedagogical, psychological and social difficulties have the opportunity to receive support. In Luxembourg, targeted programmes also focus on pupils with behavioural difficulties. Further examples include the following:

- Bulgaria has created school personal support teams for each child or student with the pedagogical counsellor and psychologist if necessary[192].
- In Croatia and Poland, school psychologists and pedagogues are giving support to students at risk on the school level[193].
- Pupils have access to a school counsellor or school psychologist, if there is one at the school in the Czech Republic.
- In Denmark, school leaders can choose to recommend a student for pedagogical-psychological assessment, the results of which may initiate a process where the student may receive psychological support[194].
- Some states in Germany use school psychologists to counsel students (for example, in Bavaria, Saxony-Anhalt, Hesse, Berlin and Saarland)[195].
- All students have access to a school doctor, school nurse, psychologist and school welfare officer at no cost in Sweden[196].

Case Study : School counselling service in Slovenia

In 1999, a school counselling service was put into place in Slovenia, in order to support efforts to find solutions to complex pedagogical, psychological and social issues in kindergarten or schools. The service cooperates with all the stakeholders within and

[http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/ministrstvo/Publikacije/Programske_smernice_SS.pdf

[191] Undervisningsministeriet (2014b), Bekendtgørelse om folkeskolens specialundervisning og anden specialpædagogisk bistand BEK nr 693 af 20/06/2014. Available at: https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/R0710.aspx?id=163941

[192] https://www.mon.bg/upload/4051/zkn_PUObr_180717.pdf

[193] https://www.zakon.hr/z/317/Zakon-o-odgoju-i-obrazovanju-u-osnovnoj-i-srednjoj-%C5%A1koli; http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19910950425/O/D19910425.pdf

[194] Undervisningsministeriet (2014b), Bekendtgørelse om folkeskolens specialundervisning og anden specialpædagogisk bistand BEK nr 693 af 20/06/2014. Available at: https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/R0710.aspx?id=163941

[195] https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2017/2017_09_14-Umsetzung-Foerderstrategie.pdf

[196] Sweden.se (2015), Facts About Sweden: Education. Available at: https://sweden.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Education-in-Sweden-high-resolution.pdf

Case Study : School counselling service in Slovenia

outside of schools and kindergartens by means of an advisory and autonomous relationship. The service targets all children, and particularly those with learning, pedagogical, psychological and social difficulties.

Counsellors undertake pedagogical, psychological, and social counselling and offer support to pupils, teachers, parents and management. They cover learning problems, the education of learners with special needs, the identification of talented students, self-development, personal and social development, and the coordination of ESL prevention and career guidance.

An important part of the services is the provision of psychological counselling, including direct assistance and/or organisation of the assistance and counselling for children and pupils with special educational needs, pupils with educational and disciplinary problems as well as counselling and preventive work with pupils to promote their physical, personal and social development.

In 2016, an empirical study confirmed the important role that the counselling service is playing in developing a network of collaboration with various individuals and institutions in the community, for example, other schools, preschools, governmental and non-governmental organisations, cultural and sport institutions.

Due to the increased number of students with special needs in recent years, however, the capacity of counsellors to provide the necessary support has been limited[197].

Individual intervention policy 2: Tailoring teaching to pupils' needs, strengthening individualised learning approaches

Most of the countries included in the study prioritise a range of intervention measures targeted at specific groups of disadvantaged pupils – including students with disabilities, from a migration background, from socially/economically vulnerable families and ethnic minorities – due to their high risk of ESL. The Action Plan for Inclusive Education for 2016-2018 in the Czech Republic contains proposals of measures for equal opportunities and fair access to quality education, including ESL interventions such as pedagogical and psychological counselling[198]. In Greece, most of the intervention priorities are tailor-made for the specific student group under consideration (e.g. Roma, Muslim minority). 'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)' – the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion in Ireland (2005 and 2017), aims to address educational disadvantage and includes a wide spectrum of intervention measures for pupils at risk of ESL[199].

Specific measures to **tailor teaching to specific needs** includes for example the 'Education of pedagogical staff for inclusion of marginalised Roma communities' project, implemented in Slovakia in 2011-2015. It has enabled providing full day care provision and increased the specific professional competences of teachers to better serve children from marginalised communities. In Luxembourg, a variety of service providers offer alternative classes to support pupils with special needs, learning difficulties or behavioural

[197] Interview with stakeholder in Slovenia, July 2018
[198] http://www.vzdelavani2020.cz/images_obsah/dokumenty/apiv_2016_2018.pdf
[199] https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/deis_action_plan_on_educational_inclusion.pdf

issues, and there are special education tools (visual, digital curriculum, toys) developed for children with special needs in Lithuania.

Some countries offer **one-to-one academic tutoring.** In Denmark for example, under special circumstances, a student can receive all schooling as one-to-one teaching in Denmark[200], while individual study plans (HOPS) for students at all levels of education exist in Finland. Students in Spain receive educational support inside or outside the regular classroom from members of the teaching staff, always within regular school hours.

Several countries have also implemented **policies offering individual support to students**. Examples include:

- The amendment of the Education Act from 2016 stipulates the eligibility of supporting measures for individual pupils' needs in the Czech Republic[201].
- There are special education tools (visual, digital curriculum, toys) developed for children with special needs in Lithuania. Slovakia has offered funding for provision of mentoring and tutoring for pupils from marginalised Roma communities to NGOs, civic associations, foundations and church organisations.
- England has piloted Mental Health Services and Schools Link Programme that supported health and local authorities to work with schools and colleges in partnership to deliver mental health support to children and young people [Ref 58].

Individual intervention policy 3: Strengthening guidance and counselling to support students' career choices and transitions within education or from education to employment

Specific measures for **career advice and counselling** to ensure a smooth transition from education to the labour market for all students have been identified in a wide range of countries (see Figure 3.3 above). Several countries provide career counselling in schools, others work in close cooperation with local career centres or other social partners. Skills development Scotland provides targeted support, in the form of intensive coaching guidance (e.g. a careers adviser or work coach), to young people who are at risk of not progressing into further/higher education, training or work beyond compulsory schooling. In Bulgaria, career counsellors attend schools and work with students, including students at risk of dropping out[202].

A recent amendment of Education act (June 2018) in Slovakia is introducing a specialised system of career guidance and counselling that should result in improved career guidance and counselling including professional dyadic counselling[203]. In some countries, career support is provided through cooperation between schools and local career centres; in Belgium, Flemish community provides individual career support through the CLBs, VDAB, Kind & Gezin and other services. Reforms are ongoing in Luxembourg to introduce career

[200] Undervisningsministeriet (2014), Bekendtgørelse om folkeskolens specialundervisning og anden specialpædagogisk bistand BEK nr 693 af 20/06/2014. Available at: https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/R0710.aspx?id=163941
[201] Zákon č. 561/2004 Sb. o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání (školský zákon) v aktualizovaném znění (The Act 561/2006 Sb., on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education, as amended). Available at http://www.msmt.cz/dokumenty-3/skolsky-zakon-ve-zneni-ucinnem-od-1-1-2017-do-31-8-2017)
[202] http://orientirane.mon.bg/?m=4
[203] https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2008/245/20170901

counselling at primary level and in the first two years of lower secondary education. Eurydice has published further information about careers advice and counselling in EU Member States[204].

Individual intervention policy 4: Access to appropriate financial support for young people with difficult economic circumstances

Financial support for learners whose economic circumstances pose a risk of dropping out, including subsidies or schemes linked to social benefits, **have been implemented to a lesser extent than the other individual intervention measures**. Where it exists, financial support in terms of scholarships and material assistance is mostly available to targeted populations such as students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. During the 2001–2008 period[205], the Conditional Cash Transfer programme in Turkey provided financial support to learners whose economic circumstances pose a risk of dropping out. Financial support for students has existed in Sweden for many decades and is easily accessible[206]. Further, Norway has implemented a 2015-2020 programme to improve coordination in the provision of services for children and young people under the age of 25[207]. Significant financial support is given by the national government as well as the regional institutions in supporting programmes aimed at reducing ESL in Germany while desk research shows that most are aimed at financing programme activities (and staff) rather than offering individual financial support to those at risk of ESL[208]. Denmark does however provide public support for further education regardless of social status from the Danish students' Grants and Loans Scheme.

Several countries do however provide **material and financial incentives in the form of scholarships and subsidies** to buy school supplies, to cover transport costs, lunch/hot meal vouchers and other forms of material support to support equal access to education. There are also some **financial support measures that motivate learners to finish their studies** (e.g. in the Czech Republic, Malta, Spain). The provision of hot meals in schools, which exists in a wide number of countries or local areas, can help in cases of child poverty[209].

3.3.3 Effectiveness and impact of the intervention measures

This section briefly summarises the evidence on effectiveness of intervention measures for which there is evidence available. As noted in the overall examination of evaluation and monitoring arrangements for ESL in Chapter 2, and the review of the evidence on effectiveness of the prevention measures (see section 3.2.3 above), there is generally a lack of formal evaluation mechanisms developed across the countries to assess the effectiveness of ESL measures. Formal evaluations were available only in one third of the

[204] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/general/12-educational-support-and-guidance_en
[205] Further information is available at http://projects.worldbank.org/P074408/social-risk-mitigation-project-srmp?lang=en
[206] Gunnar Anderzon, Project Manager of Plug in (04/06/2018); Per Kornhall, independent consultant (05/06/2018)
[207] 0-24 sammarbeidet. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/utdanning/grunnopplaring/artikler/0-24-samarbeidet/id2511690/
[208] https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2017/2017_09_14-Umsetzung-Foerderstrategie.pdf (p. 77, 95-96)
[209] For more information on school food provision in Europe, see https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/edc/pdf/meals_report_polish_eurydice_2.pdf

in-depth examples[210] identified by country experts in our research. Greece has evaluated a varied set of measures of the programme but has not completed an overall evaluation. Some key findings are as follows:

- One of the measures in the Study and Career Counselling Programme in the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 for the period of 2014–2020 is to coordinate career- and study counselling to children and young people through pathfinder centres[211]. It also provides support to the local governments in developing the system of first level support experts. The research shows[212] that the instrument has improved accessibility of the support services, however, due to the higher demand than expected not all individuals receive the support in a timely manner.
- The School Completion Programme (SCP) in Ireland was established in 2002 and targets children and young people (aged 4-18) who are identified to be at risk of ESL. Integrated into school structures, the SCP aims at improving children's and young people's ability to derive benefits from curricular teaching and to improve their socio-emotional wellbeing[213]. The evaluation showed that an early intervention and school-based approach with flexibility are the main strengths of the programme. Nevertheless, more attention is needed to provide adequate funding and resources to be able to cope with the increasing demand[214].
- To improve coordination in the provision of services for children and young people under the age of 25 in Norway the '0-24 cooperation' unit was established in 2015. Due to the complexity of overlapping competences across agencies and the decentralised governance the cooperation is a key to a successful provision of support services to young people. The evaluation revealed an improved communication across the agencies and the unit is planned to continue until 2020[215].
- Since 2012, the 'Last Call' programme in Switzerland helps young people to find a suitable training solution in the career centre of the city of Zurich. The programme aims to aid students who are leaving education without a secured apprenticeship or traineeship placement. The 2016 evaluation[216] revealed that only 8% of all the participants have not received any suitable offer, other participants have benefitted from the additional counselling, have enrolled in further education or received training offers.
- During the 2001–2008 period[217] , the Conditional Cash Transfer programme in Turkey has provided financial support to learners whose economic circumstances pose a risk

[210] Each country expert was asked to identify at least one in-depth example for each of the 3 policy areas – prevention, intervention, compensation – in their country
[211] http://www.dge.mec.pt/apoio-tutorial-especifico
[211] http://tanodaplatform.hu/
[211] http://www.youthreach.ie/
[211] The Ministry of Education and Research (2018). Õppe- ja karjäärinõustamise programm. https://www.hm.ee/et/oppe-ja-karjaarinoustamise-programm
[212] Civitta (2017), Õppe- ja karjäärinõustamise programmi vahehindamine. Lõpparuanne. http://dspace.ut.ee/bitstream/handle/10062/56615/Aruanne.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
[213] Interview with stakeholder in Ireland, May 2018
[214] Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) (2015) Evaluation of the School Completion Programme, Dublin
[215] Report by the public management advisory body Difi (2016)
[216] See: http://last-call.ch/reports/Bericht_Last_Call_2016.pdf
[217] Further information is available at http://projects.worldbank.org/P074408/social-risk-mitigation-project-srmp?lang=en

of dropping-out. The programme was evaluated in 2011[218] and the evidence showed a positive development in the perception of girls' education and increased support to school supplies. However, insufficient inter-institutional coordination hindered accessibility to a reliable data[219].

3.4 Compensation measures

Compensation measures are the third set of policies introduced in the 2011 Recommendation. Compensation measures aim to re-integrate early school leavers by offering alternative education and training options and obtain relevant qualifications to enter the labour market. Compensation measures are necessary for those individuals whose initial education was interrupted for various reasons. The findings suggest a wide differentiation of compensation policies with a strong emphasis on reintegration measures of low-skilled and disadvantaged persons.

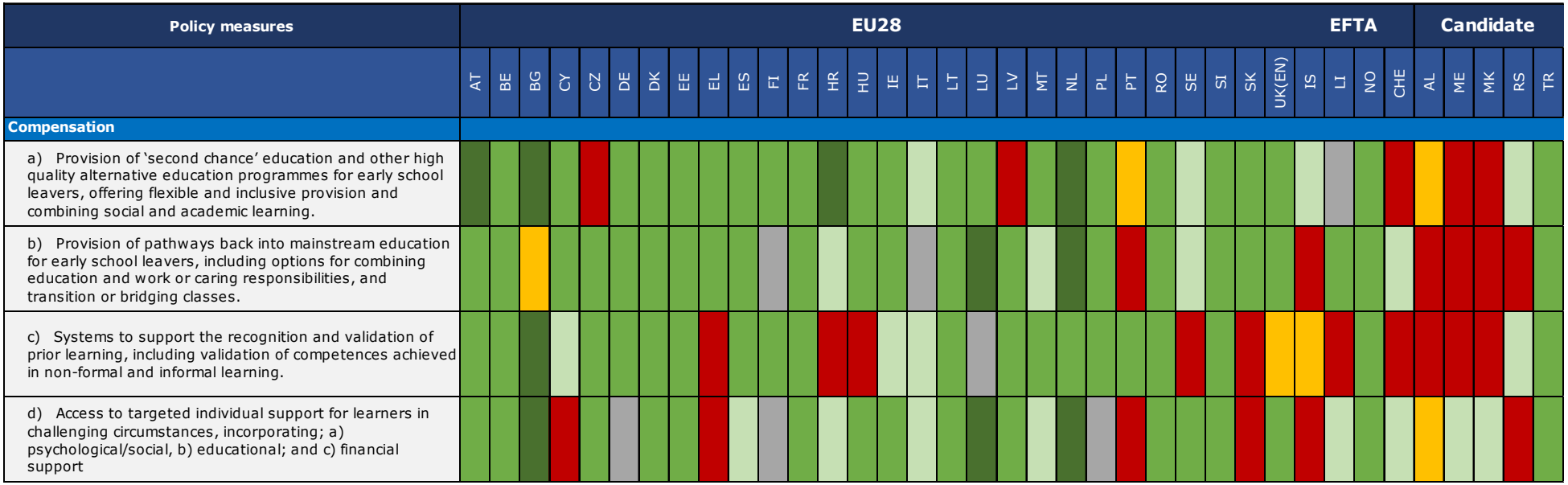
3.4.1 EU coverage of compensation measures

The final heat map shows how compensation measures corresponding with the 2011 Recommendation feature in terms of country level policies across EU28, Candidate and EFTA countries (Figure 3.4, overleaf). As with prevention and compensation, the table provides a snapshot of arrangements in 2018. Also as noted in the previous sections and in the introduction to this chapter, the heat maps were developed in close cooperation with our 37 country experts, using a combination of desk research and interviews to determine whether or not the measures were reflected in policy and legislation within the country, and the strength of the evidence.

[218] Further information is available at http://projects.worldbank.org/P074408/social-risk-mitigation-project-srmp?lang=en&tab=ratings

[219] The programme is replicated for Syrian children under temporary protection in Turkey using funds from the Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

Figure 3.4: Coverage of ESL compensation measures at a national level across Europe



As the map shows, **compensation measures are comparatively well established across Europe**. This perhaps reflects an established tradition of adult learning, and the immediate priority for countries to take action to support young people or young adults who are NEET to re-engage in education or training. The map highlights that **most European countries offer 'second chance' education schemes of some kind, often combined with labour market orientation, financial, childcare and/or psychological support**. The greatest variation in coverage can be found for systems to support the recognition and validation of prior learning, where no policy exists in just over one quarter of countries.

The country coverage mirrors the general pattern for prevention and intervention, with Albania, Latvia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, and Slovakia all showing limitations in the range of measures adopted. Iceland also appears weak regarding compensatory measures, aside from the more ad hoc availability of second chance education schemes. In contrast, **the countries with national policies corresponding with all four of the measures from the 2011 Recommendation** include AT, BE, DE, DK, EE, ES, FR, IE, LT, MT, NL, NO, PL, RO, SI and TR.

We now go on to explore the more specific compensation measures in further detail, with reference to examples identified through the desk research and interviews.

3.4.2 Comparative analysis - compensation measures

Although widespread overall, the nature of compensation measures varies widely across the countries included in the study. The sub-sections below are structured according to the compensation measures included in the ESL Recommendation, against which we have mapped corresponding or similar measures at the country level. As stated in the preamble to this chapter, the examples are illustrative, are not intended to reflect either a comprehensive overview or to indicate examples of best practice, and include relevant measures implemented both before and after the 2011 Recommendation. Although the policy measures cited align with the Recommendation, in most cases it is not possible to ascertain with any certainty whether there is any direct or indirect influence on their conception or implementation; this aspect is examined in more detail in Chapter 4. The order of the policy measures follows those in the 2011 Recommendation.

Compensation policy 1: Successful second chance education programmes, which provide learning environments that respond to the specific needs of early school leavers, recognise their prior learning and support their well-being

The opportunity to follow tailored education and training programmes (so-called 'second chance education') for early school leavers is crucial to obtain a qualification at a later age. As such, **second chance education is included in the national legislation in the majority of EU Member States, as well as in Turkey and Norway** (see Figure 3.4 above). The policy focus and implementation however differs widely: Bulgaria has for example included second chance provisions in its national policies, however, the measures are implemented on an *ad hoc* basis. Albania, Croatia, Italy, Serbia and Sweden offer alternative education and training opportunities at the regional or local levels. Specific provision does not exist in the Czech Republic, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Switzerland (see Figure 3.4 above), although other types of programmes

are available in some cases which can support skills development beyond initial education (e.g. adult education provision in CZ or LI or targeting of specific groups in ME, see below).

Second chance provision often **pre-dates the 2011 Recommendation**. For example, in France, Second Chance Schools (*Écoles de la deuxième chance*, E2C) were established in 1997. These schools provide courses for unqualified, unemployed young people who have often been out of work for a substantial period of time. Young people enrolled in E2C are interns of the technical vocational education and training system of the Ministry of Labour. The courses last, on average, six months, with a lot of internships of different durations and with different purposes. Although all second chance schools belong to a network and have to comply with a set of regulations, they nevertheless remain independent units with significant autonomy.

Many countries offer **formal adult education programmes** to help early school leavers acquire basic education. The Austrian national strategy specifically focuses on compensation measures. Its 'Adult Education Initiative' helps individuals to catch up on school education and pass compulsory school exams. Similar courses are provided in Slovakia, Slovenia and Serbia. Denmark does not have a comprehensive national strategy on ESL, however, 'General Adult Education' (*Almen voksenuddannelse*) programme allows adults (18+) to strengthen their basic education. Due to the Adult Education Act[220] in Croatia, formal adult education is provided only by certified adult education institutions. In Portugal for example, the national RVCC system (Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences) provides options for young people and young adults to gain basic or lower secondary level qualifications, or professional qualifications. There is a three-step process of 'recognition, validation and certification'[221].

Case Study : *Produktionsschulen* (Production Schools) in Austria

Since 2001, young people from backgrounds experiencing poverty and social exclusion in Austria have been able to enrol in production schools (*Produktionsschulen*)[222], which try to reduce marginalisation and act as a bridge between school and real work experience.

Schools provide basic qualifications, individual coaching, sporting activities and practical work-based training experience to around 4,000 individuals nationally every year. According to an evaluation carried out in 2011[223], Production Schools are an effective initiative to enter the labour market or training. Positive feedback has been received from the participants on career counselling, formulation of their personal strengths and weaknesses and future guidance[224].

[220] https://www.zakon.hr/z/384/Zakon-o-obrazovanju-odraslih
[221]European Commission (2013). *Preventing Early School Leaving in Europe – Lessons Learned from Second Chance Education*. Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union, p. 67. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2013/second-chance_en.pdf
[222] https://www.sozialministeriumservice.at/site/Arbeitsmarktprojekte/NEBA/Produktionsschule/
[223] http://www.esf.at/esf/wp-content/uploads/Eine-Bestandsaufnahme-der-%C3%B6sterreichischen-Produktionsschulen_LR_2011.pdf
[224] BundesKost 2018

Sweden also has a well-functioning and widely available municipal adult education system which serves as a compensation measure. Different ways to re-enter education and to provide alternative pathways and adult learning have existed in Sweden since the 1980s. Nowadays, the focus of compensation measures is mostly on employment. Some changes were introduced after the 2011 Education Act reform such as changes to second chance education. Furthermore, the recent 'folk high school initiative' offers young people a three-month course aimed at preparing them for returning to or starting studies at upper secondary level. Municipal adult education and folk high school courses are specifically designed to increase motivation to study. Participants get a certificate describing the knowledge they have obtained, and based on that they can continue studying in the same institution towards an upper secondary diploma[225].

Some countries recognise the importance of vocational education as a means to bring back early school leavers into education and training such as Ireland, Malta, Poland and Spain. **Preparatory courses for vocational training** are provided to tens of thousands of young people in Poland each year by the Voluntary Labour Corps. Ireland provides VET programmes such as Youthreach[226] or Cosan (community training centres)[227]. Spain and Malta made it easier for early school leavers without any qualifications to access VET and provide more flexible learning programmes. The role of VET in compensation measures is further discussion in the following section (compensation policy 2).

Even though Czech Republic does not specifically offer second chance education, *Centres for lifelong learning* implement various projects that provide retraining courses to adults within the Active Employment Policy programme. Similarly, in Germany and Belgium, the public employment service offers training to acquire a recognised qualification for low-skilled or unskilled adults. In Estonia everyone is treated as a learner, with adult education as a key pillar of their Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020[228]. Liechtenstein's adult lifelong learning education is divided into general adult education and continuing vocational education. Lithuania has implemented an 'Alternative Education (2009-2015)' project where three alternative education models (communication, networking with social partners, productive learning) were tested and developed guidelines for *alternative education* development in Lithuania.

Some countries that do not have national second chance education programmes employ **measures that have a compensation dimension to address the inclusion of specific target groups**. In Albania, the extended network of schools work as community centres for disadvantaged groups. Montenegro intensifies work with children of Roma and Egyptian population. However, there is no evidence of actual systematic implementation of measures with regard to ESL and their impact.

[225] European Commission (2015), ESL Strategies (Unit A2) (internal document)
[226] http://www.youthreach.ie/
[227] http://www.ancosan.ie/
[228] The Ministry of Education and Research (2018). Täiskasvanuhariduse programm. https://www.hm.ee/et/taiskasvanuhariduse-programm

Compensation policy 2: Diverse learning pathways to return early school leavers to mainstream education

Compensation measures that offer flexible education pathways to mainstream education are as widespread as second chance school provision. Various meaures of this type are included in the national policies in some 24 countries. Croatia, Sweden and Switzerland implement these types of measures on a more *ad hoc* basis.

Countries offer **opportunities for those who wish to come back to mainstream school systems**. Hungary offers Bridge I and Bridge II transit programmes[229]. Similarly, Norway implements the 'Follow-Up Project' that focuses on identifying drop-out students and tailoring suitable options for them to return to education. To promote the 'Return to School Structures' (*Structures de retour à l'école*)[230] in France an information campaign was launched entitled 'Come back to study' (*Reviens te former*)[231]. France allows to return to the same school for those who failed at upper secondary education qualification (*Baccalauréat*)[232]. In the Netherlands, early school leavers are channelled back into education or work-study placements by the municipalities, which act as regional registration and coordination centres for school drop-out (RMC). The municipalities collaborate with youth care services, educational institutions and Centres for Work and Income in order to create the appropriate conditions for early school leavers to return to school and/or work. Bulgaria offers literacy courses for adults and provides opportunities to continue education afterwards.

Several countries have created **opportunities for reintegration in the education system in various formal and non-formal settings**. Bulgaria offers the possibility for learning in clubs, libraries according to the individual curricula. Similarly, Malta offers free revision classes to students who have failed a number of subjects during exams to obtain the School Leaving Certificate. In Lithuania the 'Concept of Youth Schools' (*Jaunimo mokyklų koncepcija*) help 12–16 year old adolescents that have not managed to adapt to studying at schools of general education, lack motivation or have no other choice because of the social situation that they face. Youth schools provide basic education and pre-vocational training. Similar provisions are available in Germany (*Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung Erwachsener*), which is a general initiative that aims to increase training provision overall in Germany, with one strand focusing on preventing early school leaving through a range of targeted education and training initiatives[233]. Bridging classes are provided in Slovakia, Slovenia, Luxembourg and Hungary.

[229] Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education
[230] Generic term to designate any opportunity aiming at encouraging early school leavers to resume school: http://eduscol.education.fr/cid53699/presentation.html (oldest is E2C: 1997)
[231] http://reviensteformer.gouv.fr/ and http://www.onisep.fr/Choisir-mes-etudes/Au-lycee-au-CFA/Reviens-te-former-le-droit-au-retour-en-formation
[232] http://eduscol.education.fr/pid36767/droit-au-maintien-au-retour-en-formation-initiale.html
[233] Aufstieg durch Bildung Die Qualifizierungsinitiative für Deutschland - Bericht zur Umsetzung 2015, pp. 37-39 available at https://www.bmbf.de/files/Bericht_Qualifizierungsinitiative_in_Deutschland_2015_(2).pdf

Case Study : Project Learning for Young Adults (PLYA) in Slovenia

This initiative was developed in 1999 by the Slovenian Adult Education Institute and its main aim is to provide individual support to young adults 15 to 25 years of age, who are registered with the Public Employment Service. The support includes reintegration into the formal education system, development of their professional profile and/or access to the labour market[234] [235].

According to periodical evaluations, 60-70% of the participants have continued education, finished school or have found employment after the completion of the programme[236] [237]. Moreover, young people are reported to have developed social skills, increased self-respect and improved their healthy habits. Nevertheless, an unstable budget and an intensive curriculum hinder the attendance rates at the programme[238].

There is however an overall **lack of support measures for young parents** identified across the countries. In Ireland, there are some crèche facilities within 'Youthreach' centres and 'An Cosan' community lifelong learning centre, recognising the importance of childcare to facilitate young parents' participation in education and training. In England, childcare services are provided as part of the Youth Employment initiative activities.

Some countries increased the number of apprenticeships for young persons to gain the work-based experience; however, such provision is mostly dependent on the availability and capacity of companies, not to mention their willingness to accept young people with limited qualifications. Therefore, **alternative forms of apprenticeships** to provide young people with practical skills exist across Europe. Austria introduced 'supra-company apprenticeships and training' (*Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung*) which act as a 'safety net' for young people who could not find an apprenticeship place. The practical part (short work placements) is completed at a training institution or in several different companies. Cyprus implemented New Contemporary Apprenticeship programme[239]. In the Netherlands, employers are important actors in promoting the professional education of their employees, and in particular low-qualified young people. Tax and social insurance incentives are in place to encourage employers to take responsibility for training these employees. There are also funds for development and training, managed by the social partners and grants from the European Social Fund (ESF).

Different learning pathways to make general education more appealing exist in several countries. In Denmark several opportunities are available. One of these options may be to study single subjects at an upper secondary level. This is covered by evening schools and distance learning in Latvia. Croatia enables students who have completed a

[234] Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia (2017). The Education System in the Republic of Slovenia 2016/2017. Available at: https://eng.cmepius.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/The-Education-System-in-the-Republic-of-Slovenia-2016-17.pdf
[235] EC. Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/blog/plya-project-learning-young-adults
[236] Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training. Country report on early warning system for the prevention of early school leaving. Slovenia. Available at: http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/content/documents/CroCooS/Country_reports/Country_report_Slovenia_final.pdf.
[237] Interview with national stakeholder, Slovenia, June 2018
[238] Stakeholder interview in Slovenia, 2018
[239] http://www.moec.gov.cy/ysea/ekdoseis/nsm_tripticho.pdf

lower level vocational programme to continue their education at a higher level free of charge to achieve a superior qualification or even gain access to higher education. General and vocational upper secondary schools in Czech Republic offer evening and distance forms of study or combined form of study. In 2017/18 there were approximately 5000 18-24 year old pupils enrolled in these other forms of study. For students who have failed to acquire a school's diploma in Switzerland structures provide school remedial courses, an opportunity for remobilisation, and for students to design a clear professional project.

Poland allows for students with difficulties in the educational process to combine their studies with vocational education. The Voluntary Labour Corps assists young people in combining the two and in addition offers vocational preparatory courses themselves ('dual learning'). Included in the second chance education reform in LOMCE in Spain, the new model (*Formacion professional basica* or FPB) allows early school leavers to access VET after a two year programme that substitutes a secondary education qualification. Turkey offers various opportunities based on VET Strategy and Action Plan. The Training Candidature Scheme in Norway is a vocational track for special-needs students who cannot meet the requirements for a full vocational qualification. The Qualification Initiative for Germany 2008 provides measures aimed at further vocational training, the alphabetisation and basic education of adults.

Compensation policy 3: Systems to support the recognition and validation of prior learning, including competences achieved in non-formal and informal learning

The validation of learning outcomes from prior learning in non-formal and informal learning contexts is an important lever in ensuring accessibility to second chance education programmes, which might at a later stage lead to a mainstream education qualification[240]. **However, these provisions are implemented nationally in fewer countries than other compensation measures**.

The importance of recognising and certifying the value of **life experiences and prior learning** are however increasingly recognised[241]. The Czech Republic and Malta have developed systems to recognise prior learning, and Ireland has indicators on recognising skills and qualifications at school and vocational level[242]. Poland and Portugal have integrated qualifications systems[243]. In Austria, school leaving exams can be adapted for adults, to consider the life experiences of people who have already left school but who would like to gain a formal qualification[244]. In the Netherlands, government has made grants available to enable prior learning assessment and recognition and creates training and employment helpdesks in order to recognise and certify skills. Bulgaria has also

[240] For more information on recognition of prior learning from the European Commission, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/recognising-prior-learning_en.htm
[241] See also the Council's Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H1210(01)&rid=6
[242] European Commission (2017). *Note on Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe* .
[243] http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20160000064/T/D20160064L.pdf; https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/#/.
[244]https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20007930

established opportunities for the validation of competencies for continuing education and ensuring access to the labour market[245].

Some countries offer recognition of their previous education through **individual skills assessment and recognise qualifications obtained abroad**, mostly as a measure for recent migrants. These provisions are explicitly covered within national legislation in Denmark, France and Germany. The adult education centres (*Voksenuddannelsescentrene* (VUC)) in Denmark are obliged to offer an **individual skills assessment**. The purpose is to give applicants' a formal certificate of their qualifications, knowledge, skills and competences. The Exam Commission and Recognition of Acquired Competences centres are established in Belgium Flanders community. France validates any experiential Learning Outcomes[246] that can be submitted to assessment. In Germany, the government offers a range of support services to young migrants, including advice and guidance in the area of education. It also aims to enhance cooperation between schools, employers and parents and also offers individual integration support plans to young migrants[247].

Some countries offer **recognition of informal learning and self-learning** such as Bulgaria, Spain, Finland (Recognition of prior learning in Vocational Education in HOPS (individual study plan), Lithuania (The General Principles for Assessment and Recognition of Competencies in Higher Education)[248], Slovenia (national vocational qualification system)[249], and Serbia. In Norway, those who are entitled to receive primary, secondary and upper secondary education and training are also entitled to a validation of their prior learning[250].

Due to the recent demographic changes some countries have **initiated legislative reforms** to include recognition and validation of non-formal and self-learning in their national policies. Croatia and Sweden have started the procedure for the recognition and assessment of non-formal and informal learning as soon as possible'[251]. However, no results are available yet. In Albania, recognition of prior learning will be considered in order to fully exploit the impact of migration. The National Strategy for Employment and Skills (2020) recognises that the current vocational training system in the country does not recognise prior learning, in particular qualifications and skills gained in migration for both, Albanian citizens and foreigners. The new legislative reforms guarantee that returnees have a better access to the labour market and vocational training, to ensure maximum utilization of the skills and knowledge gained during their migratory experience.

Compensation policy 4: Providing targeted individual support, which integrates social, financial, educational and psychological support for young people in difficulties

Compensation measures are critical in supporting young people whose education has been interrupted due to a range of reasons, including serious emotional

[245] https://www.mon.bg/upload/4209/nrdb_2_13.11.2014_validirane.pdf
[246] http://www.droit-de-la-formation.fr/vos-rubriques/actualites/actualite-juridique/decret-vae-nouvelles-modalites-de-mise-en-oeuvre-au-1er-octobre-2017.html
[247] https://www.jugend-staerken.de/programme/jugendmigrationsdienste.html
[248] https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/en/legalAct/b765dae028ca11e78397ae072f58c508
[249] Nacionalna Poklicna Kvalifikacija, (National Vocational Qualification). Available at : http://www.npk.si/
[250] NOKUT, validation of foreign learning. https://www.nokut.no/en/foreign-education/validation-of-prior-learning/
[251] http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/sites/default/files/news/2017-07/Zapisnik%20s%2018.%20sjednice%20NVRLJP-a.pdf

distress, economic reasons or social reasons. Addressing these challenges through individual support may help to increase the reintegration of early school leavers into the mainstream education system. Various provisions in this area have been developed in the countries included in this study. Many of the countries studied have included provisions in their national policies, while others offer *ad hoc* regional or local approaches.

Some countries have set up comprehensive **personal support systems, involving emotional counselling**. Bulgaria's personal development scheme considers additional training, counselling on school subjects and career orientation together with language or psychological support for migrants or pupils with problematic behaviour. Similarly, Belgium, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Slovenia provide individual support for early school leavers in challenging psychological, social and educational circumstances. Coordinated provision of education, social and healthcare services can be found in Lithuania. In the Netherlands, government policy promotes a tailored approach to supporting individuals in challenging circumstances, and specific funding is available to help young people with multiple problems, i.e. those who are unable to gain a qualification due to a combination of financial, social and material problems, and who may also have a criminal record. This support was reinforced in 2019 to include additional measures such as the recognition of existing skills and increased funding to encourage employers to offer support[252]. Italy mainly targets the high number of early school leavers from the southern regions of the country. For instance, the *Giovani per i giovani*[253] project targets the area of Naples, due to its high rates of ESL where networks of educators, parents and social care assistants are created to help early school leavers.

Several countries aim to improve access and **coordination of individual careers guidance at the regional and local levels**. In Estonia, career and study guidance to children and young people are mainly provided through the Pathfinder Centres[254]. In Switzerland young people have access to guidance professionals who propose measures according to their needs[255].

Inclusive vocational training programmes and support for special needs students are in place in some countries. Austria targets marginalised groups, mainly pupils with special needs whose school end grades are very low. The programmes offer tailor-made training schedules and provide the content matching the participants' special needs[256]. Similar provisions are installed in Luxembourg and Malta where work-based learning is included if possible. Denmark's 'Act on Special Education and Special Pedagogical

[252] https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/vsv/documenten/kamerstukken/2018/03/07/kamerbrief-over-ondersteuning-minder-zelfredzame-jongeren-in-het-onderwijs
[253] http://www.maestridistrada.it/progetti/view/39/giovani-per-i-giovani#progetto-partner
[254] The Ministry of Education and Research (2018), Õppe- ja karjäärinõustamise programm. https://www.hm.ee/et/oppe-ja-karjaarinoustamise-programm
[255] Youssef Hrizi and Rami Mouad (2016). *Le décrochage scolaire : un enjeu d'éducation pour tous dans le contexte genevois*. Available at: https://www.unige.ch/fapse/erdie/files/4914/6651/2640/Hrizi-Mouad-EED7.pdf
[256] www.wko.at/Content.Node/Service/Bildung-und-Lehre/Lehre/Rechtsinformation/t/Integrative_Berufsausbildung.html

Assistance' includes a variety of offers of psychological, pedagogical and educational support for special needs students[257].

In recent years, actions to reduce youth unemployment and return NEETs to education and training have been financed and implemented through national **Youth Guarantee initiatives** in many EU Member States. Youth Guarantee policies focus on personalised guidance and further educational, psychological and social support to low-skilled and long-term unemployed persons. Some countries such as Czech Republic or Latvia focus on VET, providing NEETs with training and work-based experiences while others have special programmes to reintegrate the most marginalised groups such as Roma communities in Hungary. Sweden provide career guidance, funding, work-based learning and individualised learning plans while Cyprus implements the 'Counselling and Career Guidance for NEETs project[258].

As seen in the discussion of learner-oriented intervention measures above (individual intervention policy 4), **financial support and incentives** are provided some countries through scholarships and loan schemes, although mainly to learners still within the education system. Otherwise, provision of support to those who have left the education system tends to be in range of social benefits. The Netherlands offers financial incentives to employers in order to encourage the development of support at the workplace.

3.4.3 Effectiveness and impact of these measures

This section briefly summarises the evidence on effectiveness identified in the country research in relation to compensation measures. As for the prevention and intervention measures, the transversal analysis of the selected in-depth examples[259] of compensation measures for each country indicates there is a significant gap in evaluation of the implemented measures.

Based on the examples selected by the country experts, only four countries – Austria, North Macedonia, Slovenia, UK-England – formally evaluated the programmes. The Slovenian initiative, Project Learning for Young Adults (PLYA), was developed in 1999 by the Slovenian Adult Education Institute and its main aim is to provide individual support to young adults 15 to 25 years of age, who are registered with the Public Employment Service. Between 60 and 70% of the participants have continued education, finished school or have found employment after the completion of the programme. For more details, see the box above. The Austrian initiative, Production Schools), has also been found to be an effective initiative helping people to enter the labour market or training; again, for more details, see the box above.

There is some evidence available in several other countries as a result of the official statistics, interviews conducted or other sources of evidence. In several countries - such as Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, the Netherlands, Montenegro and Serbia

[257] Undervisningsministeriet (2014), Bekendtgørelse om folkeskolens specialundervisning og anden specialpædagogisk bistand BEK nr 693 af 20/06/2014. Available at: https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/R0710.aspx?id=163941
[258] http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/career_counselling.html
[259] Each country expert was asked to identify at least one in-depth example for each of the 3 policy areas – prevention, intervention, compensation – in their country

- the selected in-depth examples are at the early stage of the implementation and the evaluation had not yet been performed.

In North Macedonia, the programme on Inclusive Education for Marginalised Children in North Macedonia has been implemented as part of Child-Friendly Schools framework. During 2014-2016 the operation of the programme has achieved its main goal to improve the study outcomes of all students with the focus on marginalised groups such as Roma children. To achieve better results more efforts are needed while scaling up the future activities that have been successfully piloted[260].

In the UK, the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) programme aims to 'support the sustainable integration of young people into the labour market, in particular those NEET, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities.' It focuses on 15-29-year-olds who are NEET, with a particular focus on 15-19-year-olds in particular areas. In addition, there is an intention to focus on specific groups experiencing particular disadvantage such as: young lone parents; looked after children and care leavers; carers; ex-offenders; those involved in gangs; and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. It is overseen by the UK government's Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and aims to fund new and innovative youth employment programmes. A 2017 process evaluation of the YEI in England found that, overall, the initiative was being effectively implemented and that particularly successful approaches to engaging young people included targeting areas where young people gather, outreach activity outside working hours, and co-location with relevant services.

However, there was some perception, among provider representatives, that the evidence required to prove compliance with YEI eligibility criteria proved challenging for some and was the cause of less young people being supported than expected. The report suggested this indicated a lack of understanding on the part of some staff within provider organisations given that, in practice, there was some flexibility in these requirements.

[260] Expert Council of the RS for General Education. Kurikulum za vrtce, (Curiculum for Kindergartens). Adopted on 18.03.1999. Available at: http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/vrtci/pdf/vrtci_kur.pdf

4.0 Role and influence of the 2011 ESL Recommendation and policy tools

This chapter outlines the study findings regarding the role and influence of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools in the EU28, EFTA and Candidate countries on ESL policy practice and research. It starts by considering the influence exerted by the Recommendation and overall EU policy framework at a country level. It then goes on to appraise the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of each of the main policy implementation tools. It then includes a specific sub-section on the influence of the Recommendation on research. The chapter concludes by considering the priorities for further EU policy action beyond 2011-2019.

Key findings in Chapter 4

The overall picture regarding the influence of the 2011 Recommendation is a largely positive one. The country mapping and national stakeholder interviews demonstrate widespread recognition of the EU agenda for tackling ESL, along with a broad base of awareness the policy framework, and the EU headline target.

The decision to include a spotlight on ESL within successive mandates of the ET 2020 Working Groups, and the *ex ante* conditionalities for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) from 2014-2020 have helped to keep ESL on the agenda within many countries, and provided an important sustained revenue stream.

Regarding the other EU policy instruments, the EU Toolkit for Schools was widely recognised as a source of good quality resources on ESL issues, albeit with potential for further awareness-raising to capitalise on its potential. The Open Method of Coordiantion (OMC) was also greatly valued, with the best results where there was sustained engagement with the ET 2020 Working Group processes and outputs.

The most direct evidence of influence was for the eight Member States (AT, BE (FL), BG, FR, EL, HU, MT, RO) adopting a comprehensive strategy for tackling ESL after 2011, and reflecting the three pillars from the EU policy framework. A further group of countries (CY, ES, FI, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, NO, PT, RS, SE, SK, and TR) had not implemented an overarching ESL strategy, but demonstrated a range of other policy and practice measures corresponding with the EU policy framework.

The Recommendation has had a more limited influence in the remaining countries (AL, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EE, HR, IS, LI, ME, MK, PL, SI, and the UK). This was principally either due to having historically relatively low ESL rates, or long-standing ESL frameworks or policy measures in place before 2011. Perhaps understandably, influence was generally lower outside of the EU, with EFTA and Candidate countries

The study indicates that a range of factors influenced efforts to put the 2011 Recommendation into action at a country level. These include *structural factors* relating to the underlying conditions within the country – socio-economic, fiscal and infrastructural, and *implementation factors* relating to the measures set in place to facilitate changes to policy and practice. The interplay between these factors has played a significant role in determining the level of influence at a country level.

4.1 Relevance and influence of the 2011 Recommendation and target

At a broad level, the nature of the influence of the 2011 Recommendation can be summarised by way of three main categories:

a) Direct alignment of national ESL strategies with the 2011 Recommendation, and with the corresponding measures in the EU policy framework;
b) General consistency in aims and approach between the 2011 Recommendation and national measures, but drawing on a wider range of influences; and,
c) Little or no evidence of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policy.

We now go on to explain and illustrate the ways in which European counties might be classified accordingly, and the factors affecting the level of influence achieved.

4.1.1 National strategy responding to the 2011 Recommendation

The **drafting of a national ESL strategy in response to the 2011 Recommendation** is one area where the link is the most direct. We define a national ESL strategy as a guiding document with clear objectives that explicitly aims to reduce the ESL rate and has a comprehensive approach to doing so, with a combination of prevention, intervention and compensation measures and organisations responsible for tackling them, as well as a clear division of responsibilities. The extent to which such a strategy might be considered 'comprehensive' is more subjective, of course, and indeed we go on to discuss the extent to which national strategies were implemented later in this chapter (see section 4.1.5).

Following this definition, **eight European countries adopted an ESL strategy after 2011**: Austria[261], Belgium (Flanders)[262], Bulgaria[263], France[264], Greece[265], Hungary[266], Malta[267], and Romania[268]. The Netherlands[269] also has a strategy but this pre-dates the 2011 watershed. While most of these countries had some ESL-related measures in place before 2011, it is apparent that the Recommendation provided a common structure and external validation.

Among the countries with an ESL strategy, we can observe a split between those with low ESL rates (AT, BE, BG, EL, and NL) and higher rates (FR, HU, MT and RO). As might be expected with these different contexts, the aims and target groups vary considerably. Bulgaria and Malta aspire towards increased cooperation across sectors as well as monitoring mechanisms to identify risk factors and promoting inclusion. In Hungary, objectives are linked to target groups (students at risk, dropouts and teachers), in addition

[261] Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen (Aus-) Bildungsabbruchs
[262] Together against Early School Leaving (2015)
[263] National Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers. Information available in European Commission (2018)
[264] France, Ministry of Education (2013). Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage scolaire – Guide de déploiement des alliances éducatives
[265] 2018 European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011.
[266] A végzettség nélküli iskolaelhagyás elleni küzdelem középtávú stratégiája] (Middle-term Strategy of the Struggle against Early School Leaving) Government Decision No. 1603/2014
[267] A Strategic Plan for the prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta, 2014
[268] Strategy for the reduction of early school leaving in Romania (2015)
[269] Drive to Reduce Dropouts (Aanval op Schooluitval) (2005)

to more generalised objectives. In Romania, the objectives match those set out in the 2011 Recommendation and are divided into short, medium and long-term.

While prevention, intervention and compensation measures are evident in all strategies, this terminology is more or less explicit. Some countries make direct reference to the three pillars of the 2011 Recommendation (AT, BG, FR, MT and RO). The ESL strategy for Hungary is closely aligned with the Recommendation and follows the same categorisation of measures, although appearing some years later (2014).

The strategies also give a sense of prioritisation, regarding ESL measures. While some countries have a stronger focus on prevention, others aim to shift their balance or to include key actions falling under all three pillars. Austria, Malta and the Netherlands are clearly prevention-oriented, while the Netherlands places special emphasis on individualised support. France focuses both on prevention and intervention, given high ESL rates. France and the Netherlands specifically focus on counselling. Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania have actions under all three pillars, prevention, intervention and compensation, while Greece demonstrates both general and targeted actions. The elements of the strategy for Romania are further described in the case study below.

Case study – Alignment of the national strategy with the 2011 Recommendation

The Romanian Early School Leaving Strategy was developed in 2015 by the World Bank and is aimed at the groups that are exposed to the highest ESL risk, based on an identification of key risk factors such as:

- Those who will be in the 18-24 age group in 2020;
- Children and youth from families with a low socio-economic status;
- Children and youth from rural areas;
- Children and youth from the Roma minority and other marginalised and under-represented groups (including children with disabilities).

The ESL strategy is structured in 4 key pillars, which include prevention, intervention and compensation measures, based on the European Commission's guidance and the priorities for reducing ESL in Romania:

- Pillar 1: Ensuring access to quality education for all children;
- Pillar 2: Ensuring that all children finish mandatory schooling;
- Pillar 3: Reintegrating early school leavers into the education system;
- Pillar 4: Developing adequate institutional support.

For each of these pillars there are several programmes and within them, measures. A theory of change guided the development of these pillars and their sub-components.

4.1.2 Wider set of policy measures to implement the 2011 Recommendation

A further set of countries took the decision not to adopt a separate ESL strategy, but have nonetheless **transposed elements of the EU policy framework within a wider set of policy measures**. This approach has typically evolved over a number of years, with the 2011 Recommendation providing one of a number of reference points for policy

formulation, alongside national statistical reviews and research, and other EU or international sources such as OECD reports and study visits. Based on the country desk reseatch and interviews, the countries falling into this category include: CY, ES, FI, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, NO, PT, RS, SE, SK, and TR. It should be noted, however, that this category includes a fairly broad spectrum regarding the influence of the 2011 Recommendation at a policy level. It is by no means a homogenous group of countries.

The following examples illustrate the ways in which this influence was achieved:

- In Cyprus, a decision was taken to address ESL in the context of existing educational policies rather than as a stand-alone work programme. The 2011 Recommendation has nonetheless informed a range of learner-centred measures including the provision of multidisciplinary and psychological support in schools, early warning systems for ESL, and a raft of relevant ESIF programmes. In Ireland, the influence of the EU agenda is evident within a series of policies and actions that started prior to 2011, but which have converged with the measures in the Recommendation. The Irish National Development Plan and Programme for Government were reported to have drawn on the Recommendation, while the 2011 National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy was rolled-out concurrently and there was a cross-fertilisation of ideas with the emerging EU policy framework. The most recent updating of the DEIS (Department of Education and Skills) National Action Plan in Ireland (2017) shows clear signs of alignment with the EU policy framework[270].

- In Portugal, clear synergies were achieved between national and EU policy frameworks for tackling ESL. There was a sense among national stakeholders that the EU agenda has helped to accelerate transformational programmes focussing on curriculum flexibility, learner support, and equity and inclusion measures. These include the TEIP (*Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária*) Programme for Educational Priority Intervention Areas (2012-13), and the school autonomy projects (2015)[271].

- In Slovakia, ESL was reported to have been low on the policy agenda in 2011, but rising ESL rates in the intervening period have prompted action. The 2018 National Education Programme announced a focus on inclusive education, and the associated 2018-27 implementation plan[272] includes ESL-related measures with a closer fit to the EU policy framework, accompanied by new financial measures.

- In Turkey, some measures corresponding with the 2011 Recommendation were evident pre-2011, reflecting a high level of particiaption in structural programmes since 2014 through IPA funds, LLP and Erasmus+. The EU accession process further helped to keep the EU agenda for ESL at the forefront. However, it was the institutional

[270] Downes, P. (2017), 'New DEIS Action Plan: Strengths, Weaknesses, Issues for Further Consideration', In Touch bulletin April 2017, pp.46-47

[271] Further information on the TEIP programme is provided on the European Commission School Education Gateway: http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools/detail.cfm?n=434

[272] Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (2018). *Národný program rozvoja výchovy a vzdelávania* [National programme for the development of education], available at http://www.minedu.sk/17786-sk/narodny-program-rozvoja-vychovy-a-vzdelavania/

re-structuring in 2011[273] that paved the way for new measures that were clearly influenced by the 2011 Recommendation. These include: ECEC expansion; restrictions on early streaming, and VET reforms to strengthen links with the labour market[274].

- Sweden also has a long tradition of ESL policy measures, many of which pre-date 2011, and the national definitions and targets diverge from those in the EU policy framework. The 2011 Education Act[275] focuses quite specifically on the completion of upper secondary level education, while ESL has long been integrated within general educational policy. Since 2015, Sweden has placed a duty on municipalities to identify and support all NEET young people up to the age of 20, but these targets are not harmonised with EU definitions, despite an overall convergence in aims.

A number of examples can be found, where the influence of the 2011 Recommendation is apparent within specific pieces of legalisation or policy documents, even where the EU policy measures have not been adopted more systematically. In Sweden, for example, the 2017 amendments to the 2018 Discrimination Act[276] included reference to the importance of positive school environments on learner development, with a strong read-across to the measures in the 2011 Recommendation. Thus, it would be fair to surmise that the policy framework has remained visible and relevant to ongoing policy action within Member States, in the ensuing period.

4.1.3 Limited influence exerted by the 2011 Recommendation

The study found more limited evidence of the 2011 Recommendation within other European countries. Based on the country desk reseatch and interviews, the countries falling into this category include: AL, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EE, HR, IS, LI, ME, MK, PL, SI, and UK. The main factors varied between countries where ESL was afforded a lower priority per se, to those where policy action was already well established pre-2011 and had therefore evolved somewhat differently to the EU policy framework. These examples can be grouped into three categories, which we now consider in turn.

The influence of the EU Agenda was often less apparent in **countries with historically low ESL rates**, where the political priority afforded to ESL is lower; efforts have been mainly targeted towards low-SES (socioeconomic status), Roma or migrant populations, and / or preventative policies are comparatively under-developed. The Czech Republic and Slovenia largely conform with this description. Nonetheless, the diffusion of the EU policy framework, and changing circumstances at a country level have seen elements of the 2011 Recommendation adopted more widely in recent years. Other Member States have **long-standing frameworks and policy measures in place relating to ESL**, and the

[273] In 2011, the former General Directorate of Public Education was re-organised as tha General Directorate of Life-Long Learning.
[274] Republic of Turkey, Ministry of National Education, Orta Öğretim Genel Müdürlüğü, Ortagöretim İzleme ve Değerlendirme Raporu 2016 (General Directorate of Secondary Education, Secondary Education Monitoring and Evaluation Report) 2016). Available online: https://ogm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2016_11/08103135_izlemeraporubirlestirilmis_3_ekim1.pdf
[275] Education Act 2011 (2010: 800). Available here: https://www.global-regulation.com/translation/sweden/2988036/law-%25282010%253a801%2529-on-the-introduction-of-the-education-act-%25282010%253a800%2529.html
[276] Sw. Diskrimineringslagen (2008:567)

Recommendation achieved less traction as a result. This was reported to be the case in Denmark, Finland, Poland, and the UK[277].

4.1.4 Influence outside of the EU28

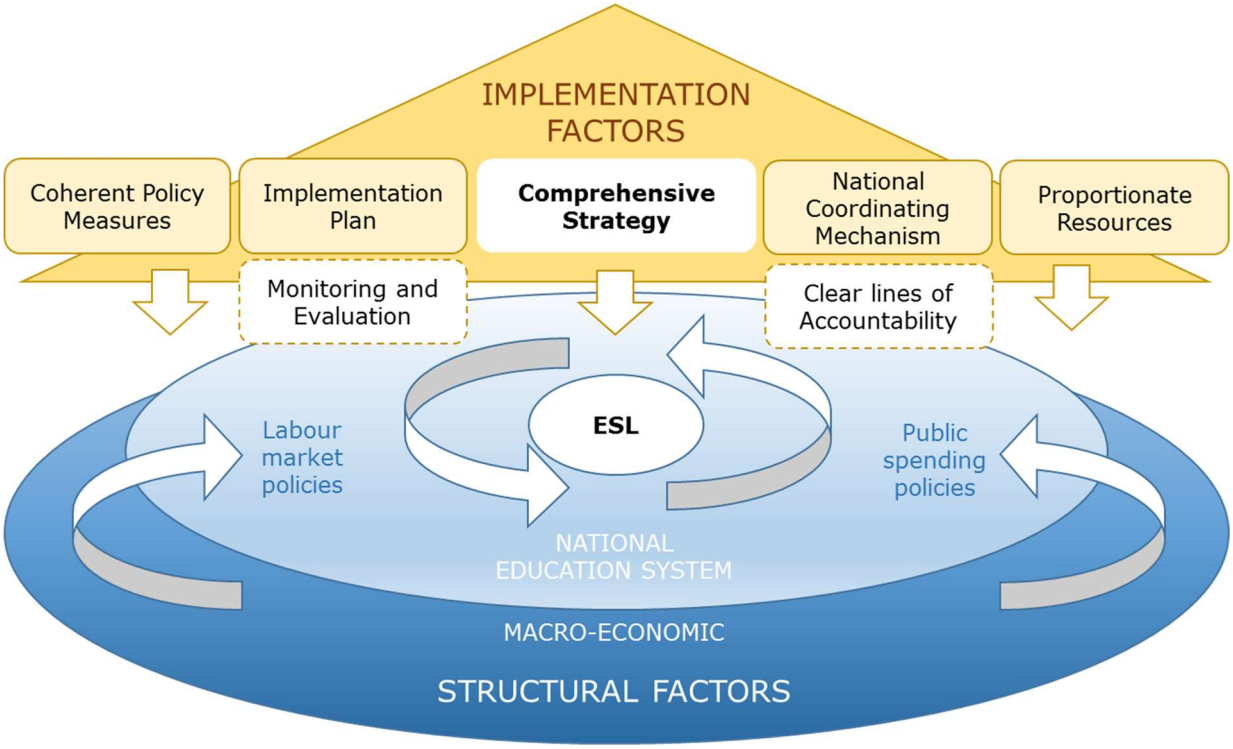
Finally, the 2011 Recommendation would seem to have achieved a **more limited influence outside of the EU28**. Perhaps understandably, direct funding for programmes and infrastructure development has been a significant factor in the level of influence exerted. For example, EU funding for Roma integration and equality has been made available through the Instrument for Pre Accession Assistance (European Commission DG Enlargement). Other EU policies targeted at Roma inclusion were reported to have been influential, such as the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020[278]. Beyond this, rights-based educational programmes funded through the United Nations (UN) agencies such as UNDP, UNESCO and UNICEF have provided a principal means of tackling education exclusion within EFTA and Candidate countries (e.g. Serbia, North Macedonia). Serbia in particular adopted an ESL strategy with a focus on equity and inclusion in 2012 shortly after the Recommendation and drawing on, among others, the suite of ESL materials produced by the Commission in 2011. Although some difficulties have been encountered with implementation, a range of important policy measures and projects have been implemented[279], including a UNICEF ESL peer support project 'Combating early school leaving in Serbia through effective dropout prevention and intervention measures at the school level' which culminated in a final conference in Belgrade in November 2016.

4.1.5 Barriers and enablers to influencing ESL arrangements at a country level

The study indicates that a range of factors have influenced efforts to put the 2011 Recommendation into action at a country level. As illustrated in Figure 4.1, these include **structural factors** (underlying conditions within the country – socio-economic, fiscal and / or infrastructural), and **implementation factors** (measures set in place to facilitate changes to policy and practice, and to ensure their sustainability). The evidence gathered for the study shows that the interplay between these factors has played a significant role in determining the level of influence that was achieved by the 2011 Recommendation.

[277] The UK was the only Member State not to sign up to the 2011 Recommendation
[278] European Commission (2011), EU framework for national Roma strategies: Frequently asked questions. Press Release Database, MEMO/11/216. European Commission, Strasbourg.
[279] See UNICEF/UNESCO (2016), Monitoring Education Participation: Framework for Monitoring Children and Adolescents who are Out of School or at Risk of Dropping Out, UNICEF series on education participation and dropout prevention, volume 1, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247861; UNICEF/UNESCO (2017): Improving Education Participation: Policy and Practice Pointers for Enrolling All Children and Adolescents in School and Preventing Dropout, UNICEF series on education participation and dropout prevention, volume 2, https://www.unicef.org/eca/reports/improving-education-participation

Figure 4.1: Factors affecting the effectiveness of ESL national strategy development and implementation



Starting with the **structural factors** (shown in Table 4.1 below), it is clear that many European countries faced an adverse set of conditions during the period when the 2011 Recommendation was introduced, and in the years that followed. This created an extremely challenging climate for policy innovation.

Table 4.1: Structural factors affecting the influence of the 2011 Recommendation
a) Fiscal climate and educational expenditure
b) Political leadership and stability
c) Labour market policies
d) Socio-demographic factors, migration and population change
e) Legal framework for compulsory education (e.g. ECEC, participation age)
f) Governance arrangements within national education system
g) Equity and inclusion policies
h) Quality and availability of ECEC
i) Quality of teaching and CPD programmes

The aftermath of the 2008-2010 economic crisis in the EU presented a particular barrier across Europe. In Spain, efforts to align national measures with the 2011 Recommendation were hindered by the fiscal context, which in turn was reflected in a reduced set of ESL measures within the 2013 Education Act[280]. Catalonia provides a case in point. Regional data show that educational expenditure ran at just 3.6% of the regional share of GDP during the recovery period, compared with an estimated 6% required to meet the needs of the region[281]. According to participants in the workshop conducted for this study, the Catalan 2012-18 Municipal Plan showed close links to the EU Policy framework, but was never implemented due mainly to a lack of resources. In Romania and Bulgaria, too, the legacy of the economic crisis was identified as a key factor suppressing the pace and scale of reforms, while the 2011 Recommendation was met with fiscal restructuring in Ireland, meaning that policy action corresponded with a period of net reduction in school budgets[282].

Related to this fiscal context, countries with higher levels of underlying socio-economic disadvantage also faced specific challenges in responding to the 20l1 Recommendation. Data from OECD, Eurostat and the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) show that many Eastern European, Candidate and Mediterranean countries in particular needed to address quite significant structural inequalities in access to education opportunities for Roma and other migrant populations, alongside challenges arising from the physical segregation of socio-economically disadvantaged communities and schools. Thus, the need for a cross-sectoral response was particularly apparent, going beyond 'educational reform' *per se*, and implicating a wider set of policy measures relating to labour markets, housing, and urban and regional development. The limitations of the 2011 Recommendation were apparent to some extent, as a framework originating specifically within the remit of DG EAC and aimed at national education ministries, but requiring cross-ministerial action at a country level.

Educational infrastructure was also a factor moderating the influence of the 2011 Recommendation. The ability to implement an ESL strategy based on the three pillars of prevention, intervention and compensation required a functioning governance system, with accountability at national, regional and school levels; a stable teacher workforce, and high quality CPD programmes within which to integrate best practices in tackling ESL. It also required a legal mechanism to raise educational participation at pre-school stage and to improve the quality of ECEC, and coherent policies for transition to post-compulsory education. These conditions were by no means consistently present within EU countries, meaning that the Recommendation was often implemented in parallel to other important educational reforms, while also being to some extent contingent upon them. In Ireland, for example, problems with lack of quality and quantity of teacher CPD opportunities hindered the progress of efforts to introduce differentiated teaching methods. Problems of quality in ECEC were highlighted in Romania, and although new legislation to strengthen pre-school education was approved in 2018, this came too late to support reforms in the intervening period. A similar time lag was apparent in other countries between policy

[280] Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (LOMCE), published by the Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE) on 10th December 2013. Available at: www.caib.es/govern/rest/arxiu/1838835
[281] Source: workshop conducted in Spain for the study
[282] Source: workshop conducted in Ireland for the study

measures initiated to tackle ESL, and legislative change to improve educational quality, access and participation (e.g. in Latvia, Slovakia and Bulgaria).

A further set of **implementation factors** must also be considered, which correspond with the different elements of the national ESL strategies, and the policy decisions, funding and political support and that were used to activate them (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Implementation factors affecting the influence of the 2011 Recommendation

a) A comprehensive ESL strategy
b) A national coordinating mechanism or structure
c) A corresponding set of policy measures - prevention, intervention and compensation
d) An implementation plan, with clear targets and milestones
e) Proportionate resources allocated to implementation
f) Synergies with other EU and national funding to achieve economies of scale
g) Clear lines of accountability – horizontally between ministries or sectors, and vertically between national and regional authorities
h) Systematic monitoring, evaluation and feedback

First and foremost, the drafting of a national ESL strategy was reported to have been a key enabling factor in the country level response to the 2011 Recommendation. Where a strategy was set in place at an early stage, this often helped to formalise commitments, and to draw lines of accountability for implementation. Conversely, the absence of a single over-arching strategy was often found to have hindered the implementation of other EU policy measures, resulting in poor coherence and unclear lines of accountability. This was reported to some extent in EL, HR, IT, LI, LV, PT, SE and SK.

The drafting of a strategy was not an isolated act, and was also contingent on a minimum level of agreement on responsibilities for ESL measures at a ministerial level. It also raised questions about budget lines, timescales, and arrangements for monitoring and review. These elements were present to a varying degree within European countries after 2011. Austria, Estonia and France all benefited from strong collaboration between ministries and other national agencies, along with a commitment and vision to implement the ESL strategy through a multi-tiered and 'whole system' approach. In Austria, the strong commitment of the social ministry as well as the education ministry, the overhaul of ESL support systems, and a strong monitoring system combined to facilitate a joined-up approach that was clearly communicated and understood – including among municipalities and schools. A further illustration of the case for Austria is provided in the case study below.

Case study – inter-ministerial cooperation for national ESL reforms in Austria

Austria has a long tradition of measures to tackle ESL, which include preventative programmes, youth coaching in schools, and a national monitoring system. The decision was taken to align directly with the 2011 Recommendation, to bring pre-existing measures together within a single framework. The strategy was developed in 2012[283], adopting the three pillars of prevention, intervention and compensation.

One of the hallmarks of the Austrian strategy is the close cooperation between the two ministries – the Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (*Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Konsumentenschutz, BMASGK*) and the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, BMBWF*). This has ensured a broad work programme, with attention to the implementation of compulsory education and training, youth coaching and apprenticeships on the one hand (BMASGK) and improvements to teacher CPD, learning environments, and language and psychosocial support on the other (BMBWF).

The ESL strategy has been rolled out alongside other structural reforms, and was most recently updated in 2016 alongside a new Education and Training Act, which will effectively raise the age of leaving compulsory education from 15 to 18 by 2020

In France, a multi-sector and multi-disciplinary approach was taken to develop the national strategy, as described within the following case study.

Case study: 'Whole system' approach to implementing the ESL Strategy in France

The comprehensive national strategy to tackle ESL in France was launched in 2014. The strategy, titled '***All Mobilised to Overcome Early School Leaving***[284]' was initiated by the Ministry of Education, with endorsement from the Ministry of Labour and of Vocational Education and Training as well as the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Regional Councils were also involved, thereby engaging key stakeholders at all levels.

The infrastructure created around the strategy is one of the distinguishing features of the French model. This included the following:

- **Governance** – an Inter-ministerial Committee for Fighting Early School Leaving was established, mirrored regionally with Operational Committees. For the first time, an ESL contact was created in each Educational Regional Authority (ERA).
- **Finance -** Additional funding of 50 million Euros was provided per year as of 2015 (+7%), with significant contributions from ESF programmes.

[283] Bundesministerium für Bildung (2012, 2016), *Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen (Aus-)* Bildungsabbruchs. Vienna

[284] 2014: The 'All Mobilised to Overcome Early School Leaving' Action Plan (*Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage*) is set in motion. Minister of Education: Ms Najat Vallaud Belkacem Online: https://www.education.gouv.fr/cid55632/la-lutte-contre-le-decrochage-scolaire.html&xtmc=deacutecrochage&xtnp=1&xtcr=2#Vaincre_le_decrochage_un_enjeu_de_cohesion_social

Case study: 'Whole system' approach to implementing the ESL Strategy in France

- **Policy tools** – improvements were made to the Inter-ministerial Exchange of Information System, which was aligned with the data module 'Early School Leaving Century' used by schools to identify and monitor pupils at risk of ESL. A new interactive instrument was set up for sharing information across the system.
- **Change management and human resources** - the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers were strengthened, bringing together local education and training stakeholders, along with the development of new CPD programmes to acclimatise school teachers in ESL issues.

The strategy created a platform for dialogue between school managers and ERAs on ESL in a quasi-systematic way. It also facilitated the implementation of two other policies with a link to the 2011 Recommendation: the development of a positive climate at school[285], and an annual Anti-Bullying Week for schools across France.

This level of policy coherence and funding support was however by no means the norm across Europe. In Slovakia and Portugal, the absence of a clear overall lead for ESL policy development was thought to have significantly hindered implementation. Coupled with the absence of a national strategy, this resulted in measures that were considered too uncoordinated, despite signs of influence from the EU policy framework. Bulgaria encountered similar challenges, prior to introducing a coordinating mechanism for ESL in 2018, while in Latvia the decision to address ESL within existing high-level educational policies meant that accountability arrangements were weakly defined. The absence of ring-fenced budgets for ESL, and **a lack of cross-sector and cross-departmental collaboration were also limiting factors for some countries**[286]. In Hungary, the cooperation of government departments proved difficult to realise during a period of restructuring to the national education system, while inter-ministerial collaboration has continued to present challenges in Romania despite the achievement of setting a comprehensive strategy in place.

Two significant challenges to implementation also related to the **lack of monitoring and evaluation** of ESL strategies where these were established, and vulnerability of ESL measures to **staff turnover in ministries and resulting policy amnesia**. Even in France, where a comprehensive strategy was set in place, national stakeholders expressed some concerns that there had been no direct follow-up via a progress report or evaluation, and that ESL had faded somewhat in recent years within national policy discourse. This is apparent in the discontinuation of the Task Force for Fighting Early School Leaving, and transfer of responsibilities for ESL-related measures to the General Directorate of School

[285] http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid122362/non-au-harcelement-le-harcelement-pour-l-arreter-il-faut-en-parler.html

[286] See European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/CEDEFOP (2014) Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures, Eurydice and Cedefop Report, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014, table, p.68 on Cross Government Cooperation on ELET (Early Leaving from Education and Training): Policy Areas Working with Education at Central/Top-Level, 2013/2014 which highlights major strategic gaps in cooperation between Education, Health and Social Ministries across much of EU

Teaching, and parallel arrangements to re-name and re-constitute the municipal hubs, with no explicit mention of ESL in their remit.

4.2 Effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of EU policy tools

The country mapping and national stakeholder interviews provide insights into the role of the more specific policy tools accompanying the 2011 Recommendation. Here, we consider the evidence regarding their effectiveness and sustainability, taking each in turn.

4.2.1 Monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including the ESL national targets and European Semester recommendations

The setting and monitoring of a **headline target for ESL was widely considered to be an effective tool** for implementing the 2011 Recommendation. The target was set at 10% at EU level as one of the high profile Europe 2020 headline targets, but almost all countries set individual national targets. The value of the target was described in terms of raising the profile and visibility of ESL at a national level, prompting public debate, and securing improved levels of political accountability. In France, for example, the national target was one of a number of factors that gave momentum to the formulation of a national strategy in 2014, following public attention to the issue of ESL rates and their high cost to the public purse. Having committed to a target of 9.5% by 2020, this became a reputational matter for policy makers. Similarly in Malta and Portugal the target was felt by stakeholders to have helped secure political backing for measures to tackle ESL, and it set favourable conditions for subsequent reforms.

Although levels of influence were lower outside of the EU28, it is notable that the decision was taken in Norway to align monitoring systems with EU reporting in the interests of data comparability. The stakeholder interviews identified that this made it easier to identify and take action to address the disproportionately high rates of ESL for young men, which had fallen well behind averages for EU Member States. This trend quickly became apparent when national statistics were compared with Eurostat data. Sweden has also reported against the headline target, in parallel to its own nationally specific measures.

While the headline target has provided a longitudinal measure of ESL across Europe, **the desk research and interviews showed the importance of understanding the drivers of change in ESL *within* European countries**. Indeed, variations in ESL rates at a municipal level, and among different sub-populations were often considered to present the greatest challenges, requiring a more targeted response:

- In Sweden, there are quite specific challenges for ESL prevention within the population of newly-arrived migrants[287], who present with a varying level of prior education and who often face additional challenges arising from languages, labour market participation, social security and housing status[288].

- The understanding of ESL in Ireland has become more sophisticated following the improvement of monitoring data. While the headline target shows an overall

[287] 6.7% in 2014 to 7.7% in 2017 (Eurostat LFS)
[288] OECD (2015) Improving Schools in Sweden. Paris: OECD. http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/Improving-Schools-in-Sweden.pdf.

downward (positive) trend in ESL rates, it is now however understood that the greatest policy challenge rests with the 8-9% of students with multiple and complex needs for whom a differentiated response is required. Again, global trends in ESL provide only a broad direction of travel, and mask the underlying challenges. Ireland's tradition of area-based programmes represents one of the ways in which this targeted approach has been implemented at a policy level.

- Furthermore, while specific within-country patterns of ESL vary considerably across Europe, most countries report challenges arising from regional variations – especially but not exclusively within decentralised countries, and also between urban / rural districts, and on the basis of gender, ethnicity or SES. In Romania, for example, real traction for ESL policies is contingent on the ability to target resources effectively at young males from rural areas, given that the country has one of the starkest urban / rural disparities in the EU (averaging 4.5% in cities and 27.1% in rural areas, based on 2017 Eurostat LFS data[289]). Similar variations are apparent in other Eastern European countries, including Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Bulgaria.

This complex picture indicates that **a more sophisticated monitoring framework** could be beneficial to better understand the situation at an EU level. While data comparability is clearly an issue, some stakeholders called for an equity or 'value-added' progress measures of some kind – to benchmark the efforts of European countries in reducing ESL rates among low SES, migrant and Roma populations, and/or in narrowing the gap between national averages and ESL rates for these higher risk groups and across different regions within a country.

The adoption of a headline ESL target often corresponded with **action to establish a suitable monitoring and reporting mechanism**. While many countries already have monitoring systems in place, **the 2011 Recommendation prompted a review of these systems in a number of cases, and encouraged greater alignment and standardisation of reporting**. Key stakeholders who were interviewed for the study commented on the value of benchmarking and comparison between EU countries, and the role this had played in reviewing and updating national data systems.

Arrangements for ESL tracking were updated in Austria, in conjunction with the launch of a national ESL strategy in 2012. The Recommendation also promoted improvements to data recording and reporting arrangements in Ireland. These included a shift to individuated recording of data at primary level in 2016, and wider improvements to data recording and self-evaluation arrangements at a school level. In Romania too, the Recommendation kick-started a long process to test and develop a new early warning system for ESL, which was launched in 2019 some four years after the introduction of the national strategy. This was made possible with the financial support of the European Commission through the Structural Reform Support Service, and with Technical Assistance support from the Word Bank, following a piloting phase during the period 2016-18.

The **European Semester reports** have provided a further tool to hold national policy makers to account for ESL reforms, and to articulate priorities beyond monitoring progress

[289] European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor Romania, p. 33, available at https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/volume-1-2018-education-and-training-monitor-country-analysis.pdf

against the global target. The official status of the reports and the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) have reportedly often carried weight with ministry officials, and provided challenge where efforts had stalled, as well as validating progress where policy actions had achieved promising results, as illustrated by the following examples.

Case studies - Influence of the European Semester recommendations

- In Slovakia, the CSRs aimed at increasing the proportion of Roma children attending ECEC and improving academic attainment informed the research activities[290] of the Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information (CVTI), and informed ESL measures that were subsequently implemented via ESIF-supported projects.
- In Austria, the European Commission recommended action to improve the educational underachievement of disadvantaged young people in CSRs published in 2012 and 2017. In 2018, the European Semester report underlined that the situation of students with a migrant background had further deteriorated and that the policy response had been ineffective[291]. Participants in the country workshop considered that this external challenge was important to keep ESL on the agenda.

In Romania, country workshop participants felt that the CSRs helped to provide momentum for the implementation of the national monitoring system. The European Commission feedback kept this issue in the spotlight, and on the political agenda.

With regard to areas for improvement, there was a sense among some participants in the workshops conducted for this study that the CSRs did not go far enough, and that the **European Commission might allocate a proportionately greater resource towards country-level diagnostic reviews and reporting**. Indeed, this chimed with the view that ESL comparative targets and monitoring would benefit from greater sophistication in general (see also the discussion on 'headline target' above). For some countries, it was also considered that the CSRs should pay greater attention to the fiscal and socio-economic context. In Portugal, for example, national experts perceived a tension between the European Semester recommendations to invest in VET programmes and to roll-out universal career guidance and counselling services, against a backdrop of Troika and associated cuts to educational expenditure.

4.2.2 Targeted funding mechanisms, including the ESIF ex ante conditionalities, and EU programmes (e.g. Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+)

There was considerable evidence that **the *ex ante* conditionalities for ESIF played an important role in levering action at a national level**. This measure was often reported to have carried weight with ministers, given its direct influence over funding, even where there was less evidence of engagement in the wider EU Policy agenda and tools.

[290] Pétiová, M. (2014), Opinions of primary and secondary school directors on the early termination of compulsory school attendance. Bratislava : CVTI
[291] European Commission (2018), Country Report Austria 2018. Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011. SWD (2018) 218 final

While it is not possible to attribute decision-making to the funding conditions in isolation from other factors, a number of countries did indeed set in place a comprehensive strategy and monitoring systems meeting the ESIF requirements following the 2011 Recommendation. Compliance with the additionality rules was an important factor, given the considerable value of ESF support to educational programmes across Europe. In Romania, for example, experts at the country workshop agreed that the funding mechanism was one of the main factors resulting in the adoption of a comprehensive strategy for ESL, given the strong compliance-orientation. Similarly, in Latvia the measure was considered instrumental to the decision to harmonise national definitions of ESL with the 2011 Recommendation, and to the subsequent targeting of ESF programmes. The funding requirement also catalysed policy action in Bulgaria, as described below.

Case Study - Leverage over national policy and legislative reforms for ESL

In Bulgaria, the desk research and country workshop showed that the ESIF ex-ante conditionalities were a strong stimulus for the development, adoption and implementation of the national strategy on reducing the ESL. Thus, they played an important role for systemising and accelerating the national ESL policy.

The ESIF ex-ante conditionalities were particularly significant because two of Bulgaria's operational programmes: '*Science and Education for Smart Growth*' and '*Human Resources Development*' are co-funded by the European Social Fund, and provide for actions aimed at reducing ESL. As such, compliance with the ESIF guidelines was a priority, and was afforded swift action at a national policy level.

The influence of the 2011 Recommendation is apparent in the National Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013–2020)[292]. Furthermore, several provisions of the new Preschool and School Education Act (2015) were inspired by the Strategy and the 2011 Council Recommendation, including the core principle of inclusive education (art. 7, para. 2), and new anti-segregation measures (art. 62, para. 4). More recently, a strategy document on anti-bullying measures was formulated and published on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science[293].

Country stakeholders agreed that, while the 2011 Recommendation was not a lone influence, there was nonetheless a strong read-across. The timing was considered fortunate, in ensuring that the EU Agenda informed the legal framework and organisational structures set in place within Bulgaria in the period since 2011.

There were **mixed views on the extent to which the measure had contributed towards more sustained engagement of key stakeholders in tackling ESL**. While some interviewees considered that the funding requirements provided assurance that countries had the necessary infrastructure to utilise ESF funding effectively, others

[292] Ministry of Education and Science (2013), Action Plan for Implementing the Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013-2020). Available at http://www.mon.bg/bg/143
[293] Mechanism on countering harassment and violence in institutions in the system of pre-school and school education (Механизъм за противодействие на тормоза и насилието в институциите в системата на предучилищното и училищното образование); available in Bulgarian at https://mon.bg/upload/14362/Mehzm_protivodejstvie_tormoz_281217.pdf=

expressed concerns that it represented a blanket approach. Not all countries had deemed it necessary to have a separate ESL-specific strategy where these arrangements were satisfactorily addressed within a wider strategy for lifelong learning, for example.

Compliance was also raised as an issue by some respondents. The requirement to involve all relevant policy sectors and stakeholders was not always realised in practice, and the existence of a strategic policy framework was considered to be an insufficient guarantor of quality for ESL measures, without an accompanying budget, and a requirement to report on progress with implementation. A number of countries had stated their commitment to establish a strategic policy framework, but this had not been implemented when the study took place (e.g. Slovakia, Spain), or implementation had been delayed by a number of years arising from a variety of political, legislative or funding challenges (e.g. Romania, Bulgaria). This raised some debates around the role of the EU in holding countries to account where the *ex ante* conditionalities were not met. Some respondents also felt that reporting on progress against the national ESL strategies would be a valuable exercise, if coordinated by the European Commission.

The EU-funded programmes, in particular Erasmus+ (2014-20), Lifelong Learning (2007-2013) and the European Social Fund (ESF), have provided a significant investment in efforts to tackle ESL at a country level. While a large-scale analysis of ESIF expenditure data was beyond the scope of the study, the country mapping affirmed that the EU programmes have been widely utilised to address national priorities in the fields of prevention, intervention and compensation. Many of the key stakeholders commented on the importance of EU funding in operationalising the 2011 Recommendation, and particularly as a tool for engaging with the sector. Erasmus+ in particular was reported to hold currency with schools and was a recognised 'brand'. Many countries reported having used the EU funds to implement measures that were additional to mainstream provision, and which therefore allowed for greater discretion in the methods adopted. This had sometimes equated to a stronger emphasis on equity and inclusion than was possible through core education budgets.

In the most impactful examples, **ESF had been utilised to support large and strategic projects with a close alignment to the 2011 Recommendation**. In some cases, this enabled countries to deliver ESL measures at scale, with a focus on capacity-building.

Case Studies - Effective utilisation of ESF to address ESL at a country level

- In Latvia, the large-scale project 'PuMPuRS'[294], was able to reach over 300 schools and to engage municipalities with substantial ESF funding support. Latvia has also benefited from synergies between a range of smaller ESF supported initiatives (including a focus on VET and school environment).

[294] Nr. 8.3.4.0/16/I/001 'Atbalsts priekšlaicīgas mācību pārtraukšanas samazināšanai' http://www.pumpurs.lv/lv/par-projektu

Case Studies - Effective utilisation of ESF to address ESL at a country level

- In Slovakia, an ESF supported project on pre-primary education provided a test bed for the subsequent 2018 educational reforms[295], which include obligatory pre-primary education one year before entering primary school, among other measures.
- In Sweden, ESF funding enabled the Plug In project to develop at scale, covering 8 regions and 59 local sub-projects between 2015-18 with the aim of improving mentoring, outreach and other ESL prevention measures in secondary schools[296]. The 2011 Recommendation helped to validate the cross-sectoral approach, engaging multiple stakeholders, and sharing accountability with municipalities.

By the same token, however, **the separate status of EU programmes** was highlighted as a challenge in some countries where the projects were felt to be isolated from policy decision making (Cyprus); where there was a relatively narrow focus on specific target groups, reflecting the dominant policy discourses on ESL (Slovenia), and where there were some questions raised around sustainability against a backdrop of fiscal consolidation measures within the school education sector (Belgium, Croatia, Estonia and Latvia). Indeed, **the risk of substitution effects was raised**, whereby ESL funds might be used to offset cuts to national education budgets, without necessarily providing net additional resources.

Finally, the study underlines **a need to avoid fragmentation in the way ESF programmes are designed and utilised**. Key stakeholders from several countries noted how ESF activity had sometimes suffered from being too piecemeal and uncoordinated, with insufficient evaluation. Discussions at the country workshop in Slovakia indicated for example that several of the larger ESF projects targeted at improving educational outcomes for Roma children proved too complex and ambitious. The absence of a mainstreaming plan was problematic, and indeed the responsibilities for developing such plan were unclear in the absence of a comprehensive strategy or a national coordinating body for ESL.

4.2.3 Open Method of Coordination – the ET 2020 Working Groups, and their outputs

The influence and effectiveness of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) was explored through a combination of interviews with national stakeholders; desk research conducted for the country mapping, and an online survey of participants in the ET 2020 Working Group Schools since 2011[297].

Overall, **the ESL Thematic Working Group (TWG) and ET 2020 Working Groups on Schools were recognised to be a valuable forum for dialogue and for exchanges**

[295] Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (2018). *Národný program rozvoja výchovy a vzdelávania* [National programme for the development of education], available at http://www.minedu.sk/17786-sk/narodny-program-rozvoja-vychovy-a-vzdelavania/

[296] Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (2017) Plug in. Sweden's largest collaborative project in combating early school leaving. Final Report. Available at: https://skl.se/download/18.157885001540f7d16c1d2018/1463060417906/Slutrapport%20p%C3%A5%20engelska.pdf

[297] 2011-13 – Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving; 2014-15 – ET 2020 Working Group on Schools (whole school approach to reduce early school leaving); and 2016-20 – ET 2020 Working Group on Schools (governance of school education systems)

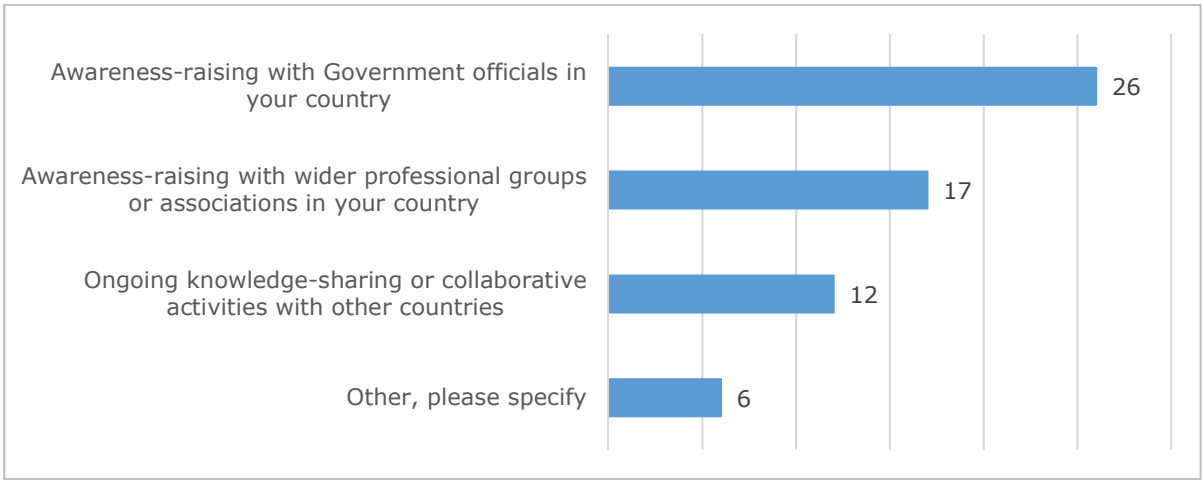
of information between national stakeholders and the EC, and between Member States. Their value was principally thought to reside in providing access to good practice examples in the field of ESL prevention, sharing and resolving common policy challenges, and keeping channels of communication open between national and EU research and policy developments. The OMC processes were therefore generally felt to have exerted a 'soft' influence at a country level. To have a more concrete and direct impact on policy-making, it would be necessary to ensure that the experts representing the participating countries are directly linked to policy decisions in their countries; this appeared to more the case on the Working Groups specifically focused on ESL (in particular the ESL TWG in 2011-2013).

With regard to factors affecting the level of influence, the stakeholder interviews suggested that much resided with the seniority of the country representative; their sense of agency and personal engagement in the OMC process, and the willingness to advocate beyond immediate participation in meetings and visits. Issues of turnover in representation over the course of the Working Groups limited the accumulation of knowledge at an organisational (and country) level. Moreover, awareness and influence of OMC processes was generally considered to have been low beyond direct participants, although the outputs from the Groups achieved greater exposure (see below).

The influence of OMC processes was generally the most apparent where there was active and sustained engagement in the ET 2020 Working Groups, and where this linked directly to national level action. In Hungary, for example, the national representatives participating in the ET 2020 Working Groups were also members of the national expert group that drafted the ESL country strategy, and who were involved in ESL programme activities and research in this field. The policy loop was therefore an effective one, and ensured an effective exchange and alignment of EU and national measures. In Romania, policy officials taking part in the country workshop for the study had also been involved in OMC activities. They described how after each ET 2020 meeting, detailed reports were prepared for the Minister of National Education and Minister for Foreign Affairs, for discussion.

The OMC survey carried out for this study provides a further indication of the types of follow-up actions that were stimulated by the Working Groups. As Figure 4.2 shows, approaching three quarters of participants responding to the survey reported having undertaken awareness-raising in relation to the ET 2020 Working Group activities with government officials in their country, while just under half had extended these awareness-raising actions to other professional groups of associations. Perhaps most significantly, around one in three had also maintained some degree of ongoing collaboration with representatives from other EU countries following their participation, illustrating the wider transnational networking potential of the Working Group format.

Figure 4.2 Which, if any, of the following actions did you undertake following your participation in the ET 2020 Working Group activities? Tick all that apply



Source: OMC online survey (base: n=34)

In addition to actions taken by individual participants, the OMC survey provided an opportunity to explore follow-up actions at a country level – asking survey participants to identify actions that were a *result* of the ET 2020 Working Groups (Figure 4.3). The results show that, beyond dissemination, one in three participants had used the knowledge or information gained through the OMC to update national ESL tools, strategies or data collection arrangements. Moreover, it was not uncommon for the outputs from the Working Groups to inform new research or project development at a country level. This is substantiated by the country mapping and workshops, which show that ESF project applications drew on a range of sources, including OMC outputs after 2011.

Figure 4.3: Which, if any, of the following actions were taken within your country as a result of participating in the ET2020 Working Groups? Tick all that apply

Source: OMC online survey (base: n=34)

The greatest benefits were often reported from smaller scale and more direct exchanges between country representatives. Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) were particularly valued, as they offered a deeper and more practical exploration of ESL measures at a country level over a period of days, often incorporating study visits. This usually resulted in the provision of country-specific guidance for the host country (e.g. Netherlands, Portugal). In a few cases, stakeholders reported having taken part in country-to-country Peer Counselling, or they had arranged further practice exchanges linked to the Working Groups.

- Portugal hosted a study visit from an academic expert from Hungary as part of the Working Group Schools 2014-15 (whole school approach to reduce early school leaving), and affiliated to the QALL (Qualifications for All) ESF project. The visit examined a range of educational reform programmes in Lisbon with a focus on inclusion and working with families, which were of interest to Hungary[298].

- Austria hosted a visit from one of the experts working with the Commission on ESL during the 2016-18 mandate. The recommendation to strengthen cooperation between the policy fields of education, health and social affairs was felt to be very useful in the Austrian context, drawing together themes such as school performance, psychosocial health, the school environment and quality assurance.

The written outputs from the OMC were also well regarded among national stakeholders, and there was some evidence from the survey results that they had been cascaded beyond the direct participants in the Working Groups and cited in action plans at a national level. **The EU Toolkit for Schools** would seem to have had some influence in this respect, as a repository for good practices (see below). The outputs from the 2014-15 Working Group on Schools on whole school approaches (where 'whole school' here includes external professionals working with the school) to reduce early school leaving, were highlighted as being particularly influential in several countries. In Bulgaria, the 'whole school' concept was used to support a dialogue between policy makers and educationalists on the importance of inclusive school environments and reportedly helped to shape the national strategic framework for ESL prevention. There were also instances where OMC processes flowed from a national to EU level, to benefit the EU agenda In Ireland for example, the concept of 'whole school self-evaluation' was cited within the 2014-15 mandate for the ET 2020 WG Schools, and also featured within the reporting outputs from the Group.

4.2.4 European Toolkit for Schools

Perceptions of the relevance and influence of the European Toolkit for Schools were explored primarily through the national stakeholder interviews, and to some extent through the country mapping exercise and the OMC online survey.

The general view held among interviewees was that **the Toolkit offers a high quality set of resources, and has provided a more practical application of the 2011 Recommendation for those working within the education sector at a country level**. In Italy, the ESL working group chaired by the ministry reportedly made use of the Toolkit when preparing their policy guidelines on tackling ESL, which directly references a

[298] http://ofi.hu/en/learning-about-early-school-leaving-portugal

number of the case study examples. In Spain, the umbrella organisation for second chance education centres reported utilising the Toolkit as a source of good practices to share with members. It also inspired a successful bid to the Erasmus+ programme, thus demonstrating the (re)application of this evidence.

As the Toolkit is available online as an open access resource, interviewees were not in a position to comment objectively on the scale of usage at a country level, although there was a perception that it was relatively under-utilised and that further signposting and awareness-raising would be beneficial (this view was expressed separately by interviewees from BG, ES, HR, HU, IE and SE). **Web analytics sourced from the EC School Education Gateway indicate that the Toolkit has in fact achieved a fair level of visibility**, with 208,449 page views and 76,606 sessions in the period from 1 August 2016 to 14 June 2019 inclusively[299]. To put this in context, over the period from 1 January – 31 March 2019, the Toolkit main page ranked 10th out of all web pages hosted on the School Education Gateway for number of page views, while the Stakeholders Engagement page of the Toolkit ranked 12th. With regard to sub-areas within the Toolkit, 'Parental involvement' ranked fourth in order of priority, as rated by users[300], indicating a good level of correspondence to one of the priority measures outlined within the 2011 Recommendation.

The potential impact of the Toolkit was considered by some to have been limited by the restriction to English language resources (Belgium, FR). In Slovakia, schools are made aware of the Toolkit through its inclusion in the Pedagogical Organisational Guidelines, which are updated and issued to school directors by the education ministry at the start of every school year. Overall, the evidence suggests that a **more coherent dissemination strategy for the Toolkit** would be beneficial for its effective take-up at national level.

4.3 Impact of the 2011 Recommendation on research

Examining the impact of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL on research requires recognition that **early school leaving is a somewhat neglected research area internationally,** by comparison with many other areas of education. Thus, assessment of the influence of the Council Resolution and its related documents on ESL research in Europe needs to distinguish between its prevalence in actual published research and the wider issue of the relative paucity of research internationally on ESL compared to other areas of education. Some discussion of this wider issue is needed to contextualise the relevance of the 2011 Council Recommendation.

An analytical review of the citation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Early School Leaving (ESL) and related key EU Commission and Council ESL documents was carried out for this study in May 2019. The review examined English language research on early school leaving since 2011, as well as research with abstracts in English on this theme, based on European country samples and/or reviews or policy accounts. Beyond this, it does not include research literature outside the English language or samples outside the EU. As the Council Recommendation is translated into all EU languages, this may be a serious

[299] Source: Toolkit Visitor Statistcis (Google Analytics, 2019)
[300] Source: Toolkit Questionnaire Statistics (Google Analytics, 2019)

underestimation of the impact of this Recommendation in local language journals and reports. The main source of the identified articles is Google Scholar.

It can be concluded that the Council Recommendation and Commission documents from 2011 have had some impact on the research literature since 2011. This is evident from the list of articles referencing them. A further issue is to highlight publications on ESL that cited EU documents but not the Council Recommendation or its related ESL documents. Key examples of literature corresponding with these categories are presented in Annex 3.

Given that a notable proportion of published ESL research refers to other Commission documents but not specifically to the Council Recommendation 2011 on ESL and its subsequent related ESL documents, including also for some EU funded studies, the issue also arises regarding not only the dissemination strategy for these EU ESL documents but also the communication strategy from the Commission of expectations that EU funded research on such a key policy issue would directly engage with, even if only to critique, the relevant EU level documents on a given area.

Issues arise as to how the Commission can more optimally disseminate its key Council Resolutions and related documents, not only to key policy stakeholders and the wider public, but also specifically to universities and education faculties in universities. It is far from clear that there is an effective, coherent dissemination strategy and process for communicating, for example, with research sections of universities, including Education Faculties. **Better ways for researchers to identify the seminal EU Council and Commission documents are arguably needed**. For example, it is notable that an article on early school leaving and EU policy[301] cites a range of EU policy documents but omits reference to both the Council Recommendation and Commission ESL documents from 2011. It does however refer to the Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving[302].

A further challenge is how to promote a research community in universities on a theme such as ESL. There is a need for a strategic vision at Commission level about how to sustain research networks on ESL beyond the limited timeframes of specific projects, such as for example, ones specifically focusing on ESL such as RESL.EU, EMPAQT and PREVENT.

It is to be acknowledged that **the research impact of the 2011 Council Recommendation and related EU ESL documents is mainly, though not solely, through EU funded research projects broadly associated with the ESL theme**. This is not necessarily a limit of the Council and Commission documents as such but it also pertains to the fact that this social policy focus on ESL prioritised at EU level is a rather peripheral and neglected area at university level generally.

Teacher education is often not particularly research-focused in many institutions across the EU while even if it is, poverty and social inclusion-related themes such as early school leaving tend not to be given the research emphasis of curricular aspects in university

[301] Gillies D. & Mifsud, D. (2016), Policy in transition: the emergence of tackling early school leaving (ESL) as EU policy priority, Journal of Education Policy, 31:6, 819-832
[302] European Commission (2013) report, Reducing Early School Leaving: Key Messages and Policy Support. Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving

Education faculties. There are frequently few dedicated positions or appointments in Education Departments specifically requiring a focus on the effects of poverty and social inclusion on education, such as early school leaving.

It is clear that the **EU Council and Commission provide a vital compensatory role in a European context for the relative neglect of this ESL theme at university level. ESL is interdisciplinary and it does not have a cohesive research community**, such as for example, is evident for many curricular areas or more discrete topics such as bullying. A further reason for the more diffuse nature of the early school leaving research community internationally is the lack of cultural power of those marginalised from the education system. Though a strong concern of social policy analysts, these tend not to be located in university contexts but rather in the 'grey' literature of research reports that may carry less weight in the increasingly influential global university rankings criteria.

Other factors that may hinder the reception of the 2011 Council Recommendation into the academic literature are as follows: the ESL Council Recommendation 2011 and Staff Working documents are not directly documented for a citation record in Google Scholar. Moreover, there may also be a reticence of purportedly scientific articles to mix empirical findings with policy, to appear to politicise scientific findings. Such a lens offers quite a limited understanding of both science and education and their interplay, however, it may affect researchers' conventions of argumentation and analysis of findings.

4.4 Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools

In this final section, we draw on the evidence presented in Chapter 4 to consider our findings in relation to each of the main study criteria in turn.

4.4.1 Relevance and effectiveness of the 2011 Recommendation

Overall, the study findings provide **a strong indication that the 2011 Recommendation is regarded as relevant and effective across Europe**. This is especially so within the EU28, but also to a varying degree among Candidate and EFTA countries. The EU policy framework, headline target and *ex ante* conditionality's for ESIF have consistently exerted the most direct influence at a country level – by linking the requirement to develop and monitor progress against a comprehensive ESL strategy with access to ESF support. Moreover, the European Semester country-specfic recommendations have provided a relevant source of national guidance, and have had some value in holding policy-makers to account.

The mapping and interviews show that the 2011 Recommendation has interacted in complex ways with national policies, and with a wide range of other EU measures and programmes, including those in the fields of youth, labour markets, and lifelong learning. Similarly, some non-EU countries have drawn on UN funding to support their educational policies in this regard. Nonetheless, the 'footprint' of the 2011 Recommendation can be traced in educational strategies and policies initiated across Europe during the period from 2011-2018. This holds true despite some evidence of policy amnesia due to turnover of ministry officials responsible for ESL policy in the intervening period.

In the the clearest example of influence, the 2011 Recommendation gave the push that was needed to adopt a national strategy and to put ESL on the policy agenda where the consensus among national stakeholders was that this would have been unlikely to have occurred otherwise. As such, at this micro level at least, the strategic approach and the leverage exerted over resources and stakeholders can be considered an efficient means of addressing ESL compared with the arrangements that existed previously. However, such efficiencies were modest in European countries where the EU policy agenda was less influential and where the main benefits came from the ability to benchmark and to exchange good practices with the European Commission and other countries. By the same token, the efficiency with which ESF funding was utilised to address ESL would seem to have varied considerably, from countries where this was utilised strategically to inform policy development, to those where project activities were relatively uncoordinated.

At the macro level, and as seen in Chapter 2, the overall ESL rate has steadily decreased in the EU since 2011 (from 13.4% to 10.6% in 2018) and important progress has been made to reach the EU 2020 headline target of reducing ESL to 10%. While there is significant variation in the level of progress across the EU, 20 EU Member States did experience a decrease in their ESL rates over the period. Although it is impossible to make a clear association between the EU agenda and trends in ESL rates over the period since they cannot be linked to one influence - also reflecting for example the underlying socio-economic context, including recovery from the 2008-10 economic crisis and its impact on educational expenditure, migration patterns, investment in ECEC and legislation to raise the participation age in some countries – it is feasible that the measures implemented following the Recommendation helped to mitigate against potentially worse educational outcomes for groups at high risk of ESL in some countries, including Roma, migrant and low SES groups. However, causality can only be indirectly inferred at this scale.

4.4.2 Relevance and effectiveness of the EU policy tools (OMC, ESF and Toolkit)

The accompanying suite of EU policy tools have procured complementary effects, through the provision of opportunities for structured dialogue, and access to research and good practice examples. Many countries have benefited from the channels of communication provided by the OMC, which have helped to sustain the EU agenda on ESL through three policy cycles of the ET 2020 Working Groups. There is also some evidence that OMC processes have encouraged networking and exchanges between countries bilaterally, outside of formal Working Group activities, although primarily between smaller groups of direct participants.

The diffusion of ideas from the OMC beyond the level of national policy has been more mixed, and indeed there was considerable demand for additional tools that engage directly with schools and educationalists. The European Toolkit for Schools was held up as a potential example, but has suffered to some extent from being under-publicised, in need of a more proactive dissemination strategy, and therefore not having achieved its full potential. Widened access to research and good practice materials in a greater range of EU languages would be beneficial.

4.4.3 Efficiency of ESL policy measures

The evidence for the efficiency of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools is rather mixed and complex to ascertain with any strong degree of certainty. As

budgets for ESL were neither ring-fenced nor extensively monitored, the causal chains between financial inputs, activities, outputs and results are weakly defined. As ESF expenditure has provided one of the most tangible forms of financial assistance from the EU to individual European countries, the EC has played a direct role in catalysing activities designed to tackle ESL at a national level. Nevertheless, as discussed in the preceding section, potential efficiencies may be possible by concentrating ESF funding on larger and more strategically important projects linked to national ESL priorities, and monitored accordingly, rather than through the dispersed activities that were reported by some European countries. A quantitative audit of ESL expenditure on ESL was beyond the scope of this study.

4.4.4 Future challenges and areas for development

In looking ahead, there are a number of areas where the 2011 Recommendation has been less influential and where challenges exist warranting further exploration:

- First, the study has shown that there is a **sizeable grouping of European countries where engagement with the EU agenda has been more limited**. In some instances this reflects a position of relative maturity in developing equivalent ESL systems, prior to the Recommendation. However, there are also signs of misplaced confidence where countries with historically low rates of ESL have not acknowledged the need for a comprehensive approach, and where efforts remain quite narrowly focussed on measures for 'at risk' groups. The negative trend in ESL rates in a number of these countries since 2011 underlines the risk of complacency.

- Second is the **challenge of implementation**. The interviews have underlined that the simple fact of adopting a national ESL strategy and monitoring system does not guarantee success. Many countries have identified barriers, including those arising from the vertical and horizontal organisation of responsibilities for ESL; conflicting interests between sectors and stakeholder groups; access to finance for school education, and the challenge of making EU funded programmes sustainable. The study has highlighted some key lessons around the need to ensure that ESF programmes are coordinated at a national level, have a direct link to policy-making. It has also outlined at set of structural and implementation factors, which served as barriers or enablers to the implementation of the EU policy framework for European countries.

- Third is the **challenge of evidencing impact**. There is no simple correlation between countries that have pursued a more comprehensive set of ESL policies on the one hand and performance against ESL targets on the other. The study has shown that the value of comparative national data for benchmarking purposes via the headline target for ESL is offset by the limitations for understanding the more complex picture at a sub-national level and for populations at different levels of risk of ESL. There is consensus around the need for more sophisticated data collection and analysis tools, also including the voices of marginalised students and parents, and the application of these data to inform policy making. The findings also point towards a need for more rigorous use of evaluation to understand the impact of different ESL measures, and the closer alignment of methods used for this purpose.

5.0 Future EU level support for tackling ESL: the stakeholders' view

Building on the learning from the previous chapter and on the research conducted throughout the study, in particular the country workshops, this chapter explores ways the EU could further support national and EU efforts in tackling ESL. It brings forward a number of suggestions from key stakeholders at national, regional and EU level for the future direction of travel. The chapter firstly considers the main needs expressed in terms of the nature of future support to tackle ESL, in particular based on areas in which the current tools are perceived to have had a weaker focus. It then moves on to a concrete exploration of the types of tools and other support mechanisms which were considered to be most useful. Drawing on the material in this chapter and the evidence from throughout the study, we propose our recommendations for future EU level support in Chapter 6.

Key findings in Chapter 5
Future needs for support in tackling ESL which were highlighted by key stakeholders included: further strengthening an integrated approach to reducing ESL; specific targeting of different policies and measures; data collection and monitoring; more systematic policy evaluation; operational recommendations that are integrated and tailored to national contexts with support to implement them; enhancing the role and voice of relevant stakeholders in tackling ESL; and, integrating ESL within broader education policies.
The future potential EU tools and actions which were considered most useful by stakeholders comprised: further opportunities for peer learning and peer counselling; progress reporting arrangements, conditionalities and financial mechanisms; flexible soft tools that can be adapted to local specificities; enhanced dissemination and awareness-raising; linking EU recommendations and policy tools with concrete programmes and activities; and, creating synergies between the activities and results of different EU-funded initiatives.

5.1 Needs for future support in tackling ESL

The 2011 Recommendation and the policy framework it proposed have supported ESL policy-making efforts at the country level. The evidence that was collected from the majority of the 37 countries included in the study indicates that the Recommendation is believed to be well structured and covers the most important elements of ESL policy. While no suggestions regarding a fundamental restructuring of the 2011 Recommendation in the future were voiced by the study participants, **the research has uncovered several suggestions for further EU level support**. This would include a renewal of the Recommendation which is generally viewed by stakeholders as being desirable, taking into account the changes that have occurred over the past either years in the approach to tackling early school leaving, and building on research and the key EU policy documents developed since 2011.

While some suggestions identify elements that are not easily visible or missing in the 2011 Recommendation, most highlight the need for continued and enhanced support from the EU in addressing existing challenges mentioned in the 2011 Recommendation or in implementing the policies that are already included in a tailored manner to the national and sub-national contexts. The key dimensions where the EU's role is perceived as critical in the future are outlined below.

Further strengthening an integrated approach to reducing ESL

A variety of public and private actors have a role in reducing ESL, **but systematic dialogue, cooperation and consistency between their actions continues to be challenging**. For example, the research conducted in **Austria** highlighted the need for more cooperation between the policy fields of education, health and social affairs, drawing together themes such as school performance, psychosocial health, school environment and quality assurance. Similarly, evidence from **France** indicates the importance of the business sector in nurturing effective links between the worlds of school and work and underlines that the EU could help nurture more efficient cooperation between the business sector and other key stakeholders. The need for EU support in this area was also underlined in **Portugal**, where key stakeholders suggested that education ought to be considered as a part of a broader system where, namely, employment and health also play an important role. In **Bulgaria**, stakeholders also suggested that the EU could play an important role in the stronger promotion of integrated policies, measures and tools for tackling ESL, which should take into account local peculiarities.

Specific targeting of different policies and measures

As seen in Chapter 2, a number of different factors contribute to ESL, including socio-economic status and specific individual characteristics. In this light, the need for a future ESL Recommendation (or other policy tools) to incorporate **specific reference to action targeted at different marginalised groups in the education system** was thus frequently highlighted (e.g. Austria, Bulgaria, Portugal, Romania). Particular target groups mentioned included people with disabilities, those with special educational needs, people with a migrant background and newly-arrived migrants, people with a history of substance misuse, LGBTI young people, young mothers, the Roma, young men, victims of domestic abuse or violence, and victims of bullying within and outside the school context.

Several stakeholders also highlighted the need to differentiate the most appropriate policies for children and young people of different age-groups. In **Bulgaria**, for example, the key stakeholders that participated in the research indicated that, given the different causes and manifestations of the ESL phenomenon, the child's age should be taken into account when proposing policies and measures.

Data collection and monitoring

The 2011 Recommendation acknowledges that early school leaving is a multifaceted process that has varied causes, which are often linked to socio-economic disadvantage, low education backgrounds, alienation from or poor achievement in education and training, pull factors from the labour market, and/or to a combination of social, emotional and

educational problems putting individuals at risk of dropping out[303]. The Recommendation strongly supports the development of evidence-informed and cost-effective policies which are based on gathering and maintaining data on why early school leaving occurs and how it manifests at local, regional and national levels. As underlined however in section 4.3 of this report, research on ESL remains limited compared to other fields of study. Chapter 2 also shows that monitoring, although much more developed than evaluation, is also implemented in different ways and to variable degrees of effectiveness across the different countries covered by the study.

The research conducted has confirmed the continued importance of **systematic and robust data collection**, research into the ESL phenomenon, as well as the evaluation of the policies and initiatives that have been implemented. Stakeholders generally perceive the role of the EU in supporting EU-wide systematic data collection and evaluation of existing policies as very valuable and would benefit from additional targeted support to tackle existing challenges.

In **Sweden**, for example, key stakeholders emphasised the need for **higher standards of data disaggregation** to understand the barriers to remaining in and completing education. For instance, the needs of students with a migrant background differ depending on whether they are first generation, second generation or newly-arrived and this information is relevant in terms of targeting policies. The country workshop in **Bulgaria** discussed a proposal for an **EU-wide mechanism for exchange of data between Member States on the movement of pupils within the EU**. This was also emphasised in **Romania** and relates to the relatively high numbers of pupils who are presumed to join their parents who migrate abroad and who feature in national databases as having left school early. There is no evidence, however, about whether or not they re-enrol in schools in the countries of destination, nor about what their outcomes are. A proposal for such a mechanism was made by Bulgarian authorities during the Bulgarian Council Presidency of the EU (January-June 2018), endorsed by the Council.

Suggestions about the **current ESL indicator at the EU level** include its expansion to cover sub-national territories, with a view to capturing the regional disparities and features. Having a clearer breakdown of ESL rates depending on different socio-economic and geographic characteristics would enable more tailored approaches to be developed and financial resources to be adequately targeted depending on the level of support different groups at risk of ESL or who have already left school need. Correlating ESL and other indicators (e.g. NEETs indicator, parents' education level, occupational status, mental health issues) would also provide additional insight into existing patterns.

More systematic policy evaluation

The research conducted for the study (see Chapters 2 and 3) has shown that, although a handful of ESL policies and measures across countries have been evaluated, a much greater focus on robust evaluation is needed in this area. We have seen that, although **promising policies and interventions have been implemented for years, they are**

[303] Council of the European Union, Council recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, 2011/C 191/01, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:191:0001:0006:en:PDF

often not evaluated. This situation has been particularly highlighted in the cases when attempts to reduce ESL at the national level was based on projects or pilot interventions that targeted different regions or groups and were not systematically implemented at the national level. The fragmented nature of such measures, coupled with limited evidence about their effectiveness and efficiency, reduces the learning process both within the country and across countries.

The evidence collected in **Sweden**, for example, highlights that the 2011 Recommendation says little around how students should re-enter education and what is considered a reasonable time gap. There is limited evidence of what works after ensuring that students re-enter education and the consequences of this being later in the young person's life. In **France** and **Romania** too, the existing research and evaluation of existing policies is considered scarce, while innovations in the field of early school leaving is weak.

Evaluating policies is critical to the successful implementation of ESL policies at the country level and further emphasis on this aspect in future EU policy tools (e.g. through an evaluation framework and toolkit) could help increase the effectiveness of policy efforts at national level.

Operational recommendations that are integrated and tailored to national contexts with support to implement them

In addition to the general policy framework included in the ESL Recommendation, the evidence collected in several countries also highlighted **the importance of the EU's role in continuing to provide country-specific recommendations on ESL**. In **Romania**, **Spain** and **Slovakia**, for example, stakeholders view the need for an even more active role of the EU in providing more detailed recommendations that are tailored to the national context.

In **Romania**, there are aspects specific to the national context where stakeholders deem that national policy-makers would benefit from external input, such as measures aimed at reducing the rural and urban gap or targeting the situation of disadvantaged groups (Roma, children from families where at least one parent emigrated to work, children with disabilities, etc.). Moreover, since policy responsibilities are quite fragmented in Romania across relevant institutions, and given that ESL is in fact a multifaceted phenomenon that requires an integrated approach, integrated country recommendations from the EU could be considered in the future as providing an additional incentive for increasing cross-institutional cooperation.

In **Slovakia**, the stakeholders who participated in the research have indicated that more detailed examples of successful prevention, intervention and compensation policies with reference to further studies are aspects where the EU could expand its activities and resources. For example, good practice examples written by policymakers for policymakers - i.e. brief, but offering context and clearly explained details of interventions.

In **Spain**, the research evidenced the need for the EU to further support Member States to prioritise between different recommended measures and provide further evidence of the level of effectiveness of different measures based on the national and regional characteristics. As in the case of Romania, the findings from Spain indicate that tailoring recommendations according to the context would further support the design and

implementation of ESL policies at the national and regional level. More operational recommendations are deemed to benefit policy-makers, civil society organisations and school officials, who would be supported to implement the applicable measures in their own context.

Enhancing the role and voice of relevant stakeholders in tackling ESL

The 2011 Recommendation elaborates extensively on the types of stakeholders that are involved in the implementation of ESL policies at different levels and whose actions critically affect pupils' educational pathways and the risk of leaving school early. While in general, the research revealed that key informants across countries believe that the 2011 Recommendation already covers a broad range of stakeholders, several highlighted other types of stakeholder whose role could be further enhanced and supported.

For example, some stakeholders indicated that including the **perspectives of the learners/students** themselves, including marginalised students, as a key stakeholder group in a future ESL Recommendation would be beneficial, given their lived experience of the problems that affect their likelihood of staying in or leaving school. This aspect was particularly emphasised in **Portugal**.

Increasing the **role of the private sector in their role of prospective employers** of pupils and youth has also been highlighted (in **France** and **Poland** in particular), in relation to the need to better link the education system with the labour market and thus contribute to reducing the risk of leaving school early.

Stakeholders in **Cyprus** also emphasised that a future ESL Recommendation and associated programmes or tools should consider placing more emphasis on **the role of schools** in tackling ESL, for example by supporting processes and mechanisms that would enable schools to respond to national policy initiatives by selecting, adapting or developing measures that are tailored to their specific challenges.

In addition, the focus on **parents and communities,** including those experiencing marginalisation, and raising their awareness level is an area that could be strengthened in future policy tools. There is a need for the future policy to help parents make and support the right choices throughout the education cycle for and with their children.

ESL in the context of broader education policies

Policies aimed at reducing early school leaving interact with broader education, welfare and employment policies in any given context. The research has shown that there is a **continued need for an integrated policy approach to reduce ESL** through broader reforms or actions related to increasing flexible pathways in the education systems in general and better linking them with the rapidly evolving demands on the labour market, to enable pupils and students access to a broader range of options that can be tailored to their needs. Increased emphasis on the need for integrated policies and cross-institutional cooperation could thus feature more prominently in a renewed ESL Recommendation, to provide a more concrete framework of how countries can adopt and implement integrated policies that address ESL.

5.2 Potential EU future policy instruments and actions

The research has highlighted a number of policy instruments that could be considered in the future to support stakeholders at the national and sub-national level to more effectively implement EU and national policies aimed at reducing ESL.

Further opportunities for peer learning and peer counselling

While – as seen in Chapter 4 - the ET 2020/Thematic Working Groups on Schools and Early School Leaving have been valued highly, stakeholders highlighted that the mandate has moved on from the original focus on ESL, and that an **alternative forum** would be beneficial to continue sharing good practices. There was a particular demand for **country-to-country peer learning and or peer-learning activities involving smaller groups of countries sharing similar education system and/or challenges**.

For example, the **Flemish community of Belgium** has benefited greatly from ongoing exchanges with colleagues in the Netherlands, to learn from their ESL tracking systems. Similarly, representatives from **Greece** expressed an interest in sharing their experiences of working with migrant communities to prevent ESL. In **Austria**, stakeholders indicated that organising smaller groups within the Thematic Working Groups would increase their utility, as learning would be enhanced given the structural and policy proximities between similar countries. The research indicates that there is, however, a need for a brokerage mechanism to facilitate these connections. On the other hand, **meetings involving all Member States** where wider learning across different types of education systems is facilitated continues to be seen as important by stakeholders, given the opportunities to disseminate knowledge more broadly and offer expertise in different policy areas related to reducing ESL.

A connected suggestion would be to **broaden the thematic basis of the Schools ET 2020 Working Groups**, for example having a stronger focus on the theme of equity and inclusion in school education, which could include ESL, migration and disability for example (as suggested by research undertaken in **Austria**), working more closely for example with the ET 2020 Working Group on Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education. This would enable a broader discussion to take place, in recognition of the importance of the interconnected nature of the early school leaving phenomenon, its multifaceted causes, the different groups that it affects and regional disparities at the country level.

Progress reporting arrangements, conditionalities and financial mechanisms

Another suggestion is related to the arrangements for **progress reporting** against the 2011 Recommendation and target. Some national stakeholders considered that progress reports should be used as an opportunity to share lessons learned and to reflect on efforts at a country level, alongside more routine measurement against the headline ESL target. This is perceived as likely to encourage self-evaluation, as well as provide greater accountability. Similarly, some countries would welcome external challenge and feedback. The Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) provided as part of the European Semester were highlighted as an example of quite precise and contextualised country-specific feedback, which some countries had found particularly useful. Along these lines, it was suggested that the role of a **benchmarking system** to support EU-wide monitoring of the implementation of ESL policies deserves consideration.

In addition, the role of conditionalities related to the adoption or implementation of ESL policies was also shown to be important. Chapter 4 has highlighted that in some countries (e.g. **Romania**), ESIF ex-ante conditionalities have influenced the adoption and implementation of national strategies aimed at reducing ESL. This aspect was highlighted as an aspect to be further enhanced at the EU level by stakeholders only in a few countries (e.g. **Hungary**, **Spain**) and is viewed as a potential 'hard' tool to incentivise countries to better implement and monitor the implementation of existing ESL policies.

ESIF *ex ante* conditionalities can provide the direct relationship between the ESL Recommendation, adopting comprehensive ESL policies at the country level and the access to ESIF funds to support their implementation. **The financial support of the EU** has been repeatedly acknowledged by stakeholders across countries as a key tool whereby the EU supports the tackling of early school leaving at the country level.

Some stakeholders have highlighted, however, that it would be beneficial if in the future there would be **further consideration given to the structure and purpose of financial mechanisms involved in supporting ESL** policies at the country level. Concerns have been raised related to the project-based nature of some of the existing EU funding mechanisms (e.g. under ESIF or Erasmus+) and the rigidity that such an approach brings. In this view, the short duration of projects that are implemented with the support of EU funds limits the likelihood of achieving sustainable impact over the long-term in a systematic fashion, at the national level. Equally, concerns about unintended effects such as the replacement of national budgets with EU funds has also been voiced, a practice that also increases the risk of ESL policy implementation being increasingly limited to short-term local projects.

Flexible soft tools that can be adapted to local specificities

A further suggestion to be considered for the future is **the development of soft tools** that support authorities and other relevant stakeholders and partners that operate on the ground (e.g. schools, other education providers, associations etc.) to be more aware of existing policies (including at the EU level) and implement existing policies and measures in a tailored fashion. Some of the tools that the research revealed as most useful in the future would be different **guidebooks**, **toolboxes**, **guidelines**, and **mutual learning activities** which would involve not only national but also local level authorities and stakeholders (in particular schools and teachers). Equally, **opportunities to fund platforms or working groups** were researchers and practitioners can discuss ESL and support the dissemination of evidence about existing measures and what works in different contexts would also be welcomed in the future.

It is also seen as critical that **any tools are translated in national/regional languages** and are actively promoted in a systematic manner at the level of local schools and teacher communities for example, to ensure that the key structures and individuals that are delivering policies at the local level are aware of existing developments. Equally, actors that are placed between the national policy-making level and local actors (e.g. regional administrations and other intermediary institutions and organisations) should be targeted with specific tools addressed to them, to support their role and activities, and raise their awareness of EU policy and tools, as well as access to learning about practices that have proven effective in other countries and can provide useful insight into how European or national policies can be adapted to local contexts.

Enhanced awareness-raising and dissemination

The countries included in the study felt that it was indeed generally critical **to enhance awareness about the 2011 Recommendation (or any similar policy framework) in the future.** Strengthened **dissemination activities** about existing policies and tools would allow existing tools to be more fruitfully used, as their potential use is currently not always fully exploited. Such action could be taken in the context of **raising awareness more generally about ESL** and the importance of tackling the phenomenon and its root causes.

For example, the key stakeholders that participated in the study in **Spain** suggested improving the dissemination of the available EU support measures through the EU national and local representations in the respective languages so that they reach a broader scope of stakeholders. The research undertaken in **France** also revealed that wide-reaching actions to tackle ESL at the local level are dependent on the broad dissemination of policy developments and soft tools that can support the relevant public and private actors to implement them and reach out to other stakeholders (e.g. parents, communities etc.). Along the same lines, **the results of monitoring and evaluation programmes** should be made available on a broad scale, at the national, sub-national and international level, to support learning.

Linking EU recommendations and policy tools with concrete programmes and activities

The EU is seen as a driver in re-motivating potential early school leavers, by providing them with opportunities to spend for instance a year abroad and have access to new opportunities that could expand their understanding of the education system and its benefits. Stakeholders in **France** suggested that **linking a new ESL Recommendation with concrete opportunities for pupils and students at risk of ESL** would be of added value to the existing policy framework at the EU level and would reach the end users themselves, thereby likely increasing its visibility and effectiveness. Stakeholders in **Croatia** suggested that the **development of career guidance systems** and the promotion of its services among students should be one of the priorities in the future, where the role of the EU could be significant. Similarly, **increasing the number of expert staff in schools** (psychologist, pedagogues, social workers etc.) and their continuing professional development would increase system capacities in preventing ESL and was again highlighted as one priority where policy tools could be developed at the EU level and disseminated at the national and sub-national level.

Creating synergies between the activities and results of different EU-funded initiatives

As noted above, the study found that the fragmented nature of ESIF-funded measures or projects is a challenge to drawing together evidence of what works well and what should be improved and to providing a consistent approach. One suggestion to be considered in the future is that **the results and activities of the different ESF projects should be better connected in order to avoid duplication** and ensure that there are synergies between individual projects that contribute to the broader policy objectives and intended outcomes in the long-term. Moreover, as the research conducted in **Latvia** suggests, in the future, ESIF investment priorities could be further linked to activities that are linked to dissemination and peer learning within and across countries, to further support relevant

stakeholders to have access to sharing and learning opportunities. Such opportunities would potentially encourage the implementation of training programmes for teachers, as well as peer learning or exchanges between schools that struggle with high ESL rates.

6.0 Conclusions and recommendations

In this final chapter of the study, we draw together the findings from the study research to present the key conclusions (section 6.1) and recommendations (section 6.2).

6.1 Conclusions

The research conducted for the study - including the country mapping, national and EU level stakeholder interviews and ten country case studies – has shown that **there is largely positive overall picture regarding the impact and influence of the 2011 ESL Recommendation and associated EU policy instruments**. The Recommendation and associated tools clearly shone a spotlight on the need to tackle ESL across Europe, as well as providing a policy framework for doing so, which countries and key stakeholders have globally responded to, albeit to different degrees and in differing manners. Although disentangling the formal and informal pathways of influence into national policy remains a complex endeavour, the study has brought to light **a range of national strategies and policies on ESL, as well as EU-funded projects and research, which either directly or broadly mirror the policy framework in the Recommendation**.

Nonetheless, the analysis of the evidence also **clearly shows that much more needs to be done to continue tackling the multi-faceted and evolving range of challenges** contributing to the ESL phenomenon. Although the ESL rate has decreased overall in the EU over past years, it is still (in 2018) on average above the headline target of 10%. While recognising the important influence of the 2011 Recommendation and tools, the study therefore also highlights **gaps and weaknesses**, on which we draw to formulate our recommendations (see section 6.2).

Before moving to the recommendations, we summarise below some of the **high-level learning points** emerging from the study.

Evolution and characteristics of ESL rates

The ESL rate has steadily decreased overall in the European Union (EU) over past years, from 17.0% in 2002 to 10.6% in 2018. In the period since 2011, when the ESL rate was at 13.4%, the rate has dropped overall by 2.8 percentage points. Similar improvements can be observed in most of the EFTA and Candidate Countries. Although the trend represents a significant improvement overall and - on average - progress is being made to reach the EU 2020 headline target of reducing ESL to 10%, important differences exist across countries and for specific population groups.

20 out of 28 Member States have experienced a decrease in their ESL rate since 2011. The countries with **the largest decrease** since 2011 are Portugal, Spain, Greece, Ireland and Malta; however most of these countries (with the exceptions of Ireland and Greece) still have some of the highest ESL rates across Europe. **The ESL rate has however increased** in the period 2011-2018 in eight EU Member States; the largest increase since 2011 has occurred in Slovakia and Sweden.

In 2018, of the 35 countries covered by the study for which data is collected by Eurostat, **13 had ESL rates above 10%** (BG, DE, EE, ES, HU, IS, IT, MT, NO, PT, RO, TR, UK)[304]. The countries with the **highest ESL rates** in 2018 were Turkey (31.3%), Iceland (21.5%), Spain (17.9%), Malta (17.5%), Romania (16.4%) and Italy (14.5%). The countries with the **lowest ESL rates** were Croatia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ireland, Poland, and Lithuania, ranging from 3.1% to 4.8%[305]. In 2018, **14 Member States had reached their specific national target**[306], while 13 Member States had not, with some missing the target by more than 5 percentage points (Malta, Romania)[307].

Data from Eurostat also shows that **ESL affects more strongly migrants and young men**. The 2018 average **ESL rate**[308] **for the non-EU born (20.7%) remained considerably higher than that of the native born (9.5%)**. The ESL rates for foreign-born individuals in 2018 were particularly high in Spain (31.9%), Italy (30.1%), Germany (22.8%), and Austria (18.4%). **The gender gap in ESL rates also remains a feature**, with an EU average male ESL rate of 12.3% and a female rate of 8.9% in 2018, although with a slight narrowing of the gap since 2011, when the ESL rate for males was 15.3% and for females 11.5%. The gender gap is particularly marked in six Member States where there is a difference of over 5 percentage points between male and female ESL rates: Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Portugal and Denmark. Outside of the EU, the gender gap is most stark in Iceland (14 percentage points). EU data also reveals that, in most cases, **people in rural areas fare worse than those in urban areas**[309].

More generally, research shows that the **interplay of a number of complex factors** related to the individual situation of each student contributes to the likelihood of early school leaving. These factors include **individual needs** (e.g. disability, psychological issues, academic underachievement), **socio-economic background** (e.g. migrant background, poverty, workless households, rural/urban location), **school-based factors** (e.g. lack of resources, lack of guidance and support, inappropriate teaching methods)[310], and **national contextual factors** (e.g. economic situation, labour market situation, availability of education and training policies).

Evidence of the influence of the 2011 Recommendation in policy measures implemented

Our country mapping, summarised in the heat maps (see Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4), allowed us to examine the **prevalence of different policy measures corresponding to the policy framework set out in 2011 Recommendation** across the 37 countries covered by the study. The mapping provides an indication as to which pillars (prevention, intervention, compensation) are the main focus of the approaches to tackling ESL and,

[304] Eurostat (2018), Early leavers from education and training [edat_lfse_14]). Available at http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_14&lang=en
[305] Op cit
[306] Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden.
[307] The UK did not set a national target
[308] Eurostat (2018), Early leavers from education and training by country of birth edat_lfse_02 http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_02&lang=en
[309] European Commission (2018), Education and Training Monitor 2018, Chapter 2, page 27
[310] NESSE (2009), Early school leaving, lessons from research for policymakers. Author: Roger Dale. Available at: http://archimedes.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/early-school-leaving-report.pdf; OECD (2010). Overcoming School Failure: Policies that Work. Paris. Available at: http://www.oecd.org/education/school/45171670.pdf

within each pillar, which types of measure are mostly commonly in place. Looking at the three pillars:

- The analysis shows that **compensation measures are comparatively well-established across Europe**. Most EU countries offer 'second chance' education schemes of some description, often combined with careers guidance, financial, childcare and/or psychological support. The weakest overall focus in this pillar is on systems to support the recognition and validation of prior learning.
- **Country coverage of intervention policies is also relatively widespread**, although with more variation. Coverage is highest for intervention measures focused on in-school support, including targeted support for learners experiencing personal, social or academic difficulties, as well as CPD for teachers and school leaders to manage diversity and support learners. Over half of the countries also implement measures to promote inclusive school environments, anti-bullying and wellbeing, as well as policies to engage child participation in decision-making. However, these measures suffer from less widespread implementation. **The more infrastructural measures show the weakest overall coverage**, including measures relating to school networks, clusters or multi-professional teams, early warning systems, and extra-curricular provision including cultural and civic education.Although **prevention policies** are widespread, **most countries have some gaps**, and around a quarter have more marked gaps.
- Coverage is strongest for 'targeted prevention' measures, oriented towards specific groups at risk of ESL (e.g. Roma, migrant children, families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage). The **systemic or infrastructural policies** (e.g. anti-segregation policies) **appear to be less prevalent** than measures implemented within schools or other institutions (e.g. improving access to ECEC, developing curriculum flexibility and choice, promoting access to VET). Coverage of parental engagement measures is also very mixed.

For all pillars, **the coverage of measures in non-EU countries is markedly weaker**.

The **most direct link to influence of the Recommendation** on national policy can be identified where countries have implemented – or adopted - a national strategy directly targeted at tackling ESL since 2011: this is the case in eight Member States (AT, BE (FL), BG, FR, EL, HU, MT, RO). While prevention, intervention and compensation measures are in evidence in all strategies, this classification is used more or less explicitly in each case. A further group of countries (CY, ES, FI, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, NO, PT, RS, SE, SK, and TR) has not implemented an overarching ESL strategy, but has **implemented different measures which clearly correspond to the EU policy framework** either as individual policies or within the context of other educational strategies, or indeed strategies aimed at addressing social inclusion, employability or poverty.

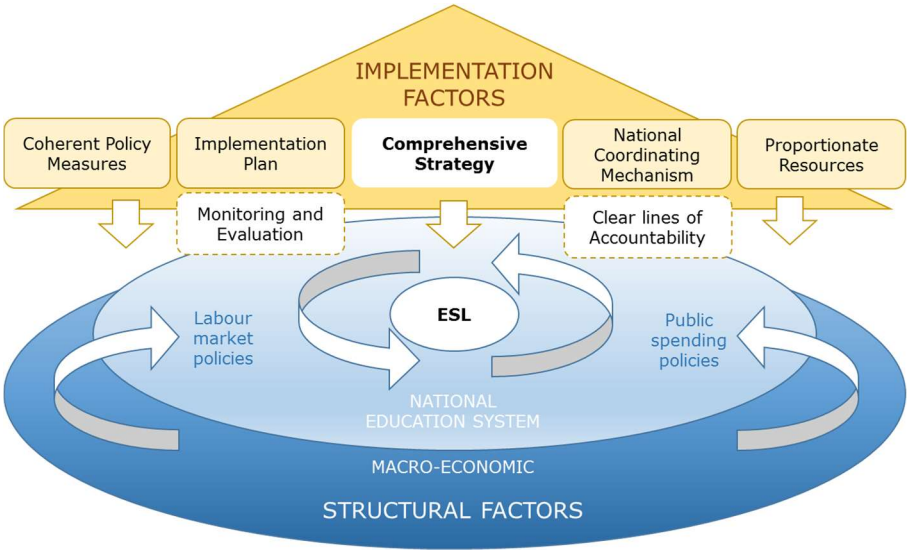
The Recommendation has had a **more limited influence** in other countries examined in the study (AL, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EE, HR, IS, LI, ME, MK, PL, SI, and UK). This was principally either due to having historically relatively low ESL rates (e.g. CZ, SI) or long-standing ESL frameworks or policy measures in place (e.g. DK, FI, NL, PL, SE, UK). However, even in these countries, we did find evidence that, due to changing national circumstances (including in some cases a rise in ESL), several have more recently turned to the 2011 Recommendation as a reference point. Finally, perhaps unsurprisingly, we found **less**

evidence of influence of the EU policy framework in the EFTA and Candidate countries, principally due to a greater availability of funding from other EU or international sources (e.g. EU funding for Roma integration, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), or funding from the United Nations). Serbia, Norway and Turkey were notable exceptions, having engaged more directly with the EU policy framework. This reflected a convergence of policy objectives.

Factors influencing the implementation of the 2011 Recommendation

The study shows that **a range of factors** have influenced efforts to put the 2011 Recommendation into action at a country level. These include both **structural factors** (underlying conditions within the country – socio-economic, fiscal and / or infrastructural), and **implementation factors** (measures put in place to facilitate changes to policy and practice, and to ensure their sustainability), as summarised in Figure 6.1 below:

Figure 6.1: Factors affecting the effectiveness of ESL national strategy development and implementation



Structural factors which have played a key role in the degree to which the policy framework from the Recommendation has been implemented include: political leadership and stability; labour market policies; socio-demographic factors, migration and population change; the legal framework for compulsory education (e.g. ECEC, participation age); governance arrangements within national education systems; equity and inclusion policies; and, quality and availability of ECEC; quality of teaching and CPD programmes. The study showed that **many countries were facing an adverse set of structural challenges** at the time when the 2011 Recommendation was introduced, **creating difficult conditions for policy innovation**.

Implementation factors include the existence of: a comprehensive ESL strategy; a national coordinating mechanism or structure; a corresponding set of policy measures - prevention, intervention and compensation; an implementation plan, with clear targets and milestones; proportionate resources allocated to implementation; synergies with other EU and national funding to achieve economies of scale; clear lines of accountability – horizontally between ministries or sectors, and vertically between national and regional authorities; and, systematic monitoring, evaluation and feedback. **Two of the most**

significant challenges to implementation included a lack of policy coherence, as well as insufficient (or inexistent) monitoring and evaluation of ESL strategies.

Effectiveness of the EU policy tools supporting the 2011 Recommendation

In order to support the implementation of the 2011 Recommendation, the European Commission **developed a range of tools and mechanisms**. The study has also examined the relevance, effectiveness and likely sustainability of each of these tools since 2011. It has shown that **there has overall been a positive and largely sustained impact**, although improvements and adjustments can be made in future to further support national-level implementation (further indications are provided in section 6.2 below).

In terms of ***EU monitoring and reporting mechanisms*** (including the ESL headline target, national targets and country-specific recommendations), it was clear that the setting and monitoring of a **headline target for ESL was widely considered to be an effective tool** for supporting the implementation of the Recommendation. The value of the target was underlined in particular for raising the profile and visibility of ESL at a national level, prompting public debate, and securing improved levels of political accountability. Although levels of influence were understandably lower outside of the EU28, it is notable that Norway decided to align its monitoring systems with EU reporting in the interests of data comparability, reporting that this made it easier to identify for example the disproportionately high rates of ESL for young men. However, the **high-level headline target was not sufficient by itself to sustain a focus on the often more urgent need to tackle specific variations in ESL rates at local level or for specific population groups**. The **European Semester reports** have provided a further tool to hold national policy makers to account for ESL reforms, and to articulate priorities beyond monitoring progress against the global target. **The official status of the reports and the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) have often carried weight with ministry officials and provided challenge where efforts had stalled, as well as validating progress** where policy actions had achieved promising results.

Targeted funding mechanisms (including the ESIF ex-ante conditionalities and EU programmes) also appear to have **played a valuable role** in supporting national-level implementation. There was considerable evidence that **the *ex ante* conditionalities for ESIF played an important part in levering action at a national level**. This measure was often reported to have carried weight with ministers, due to its direct influence over funding. While it is not possible to attribute decision-making to the funding conditions in isolation from other factors, a number of countries did indeed set in place a comprehensive strategy and monitoring systems meeting the ESIF requirements following the 2011 Recommendation (e.g. BG, LV, RO). **Challenges** were however raised in some cases in particular around **the degree to which the conditionalities led to sustained engagement of key stakeholders and compliance**, in particular with respect to quality and cooperation with relevant stakeholders. It was clear that **the EU-funded programmes** (in particular Erasmus+ (2014-20), Lifelong Learning (2007-2013) and the European Social Fund (ESF)) **have provided a significant investment in efforts to tackle ESL at a country level**. Our country mapping confirmed that the EU programmes have been widely utilised to address national priorities in the fields of prevention, intervention and compensation. In the most impactful examples, **ESF has been utilised to support large and strategic projects with a close alignment to the 2011**

Recommendation, enabling countries to deliver ESL measures at scale, with a focus on capacity-building (e.g. LV, SK, SE). However, **the separate status of EU programmes was highlighted as a challenge in some countries**, as well as **the risk of substitution effects**, whereby ESL funds might be used to offset cuts to national education budgets, without necessarily providing net additional resources.

The effectiveness of the ***Open Method of Coordination (OMC)*** in terms of supporting ESL policy implementation was however more mixed. In particular, although the ET 2020 Working Groups were recognised to be a **valuable forum for dialogue and for exchanges of information** between national stakeholders and the EC, and between Member States, **their value was principally thought to reside in providing access to good practice examples**. While the ESL Thematic Working Group (2011-2013) and subsequent School Working Group (2014-2015) directly influenced the Council Conclusions on ESL in 2015, the **influence which the Working Groups exerted on policy-making was overall difficult to establish and mostly indirect**; challenges included the wider focus (not specific to ESL) of some of the mandates of the Working Groups, the status and influence of the experts representing ministries in the Working Groups and dissemination carried out at national level. **The greatest benefits were often reported from smaller scale and more direct exchanges** between country representatives, e.g. during Peer Learning Activities (PLAs). There is also some evidence that OMC processes have encouraged networking and exchanges between countries bilaterally, outside of formal Working Group activities.

The written outputs from the OMC were however generally well regarded among national stakeholders, and there was some evidence that they had been cascaded beyond the direct participants in the Working Groups and cited in action plans at a national level (e.g. BG, IE, RO). In particular, the evidence indicates that the ***European Toolkit for Schools*** **offers a high quality set of resources, and has provided a practical application of the 2011 Recommendation** for those working within the education sector at a country level; for example, in Italy, the ESL working group chaired by the ministry reportedly made use of the Toolkit when preparing their strategy, directly referencing a number of case study examples. There was however a perception that it was **relatively under-utilised and that further signposting and awareness-raising would be beneficial**.

Influence of the 2011 Recommendation on research

Examining the impact of the 2011 Council Recommendation on ESL on research requires recognition that **early school leaving is a somewhat neglected research area internationally,** by comparison with many other areas of education. Within this context, our review concluded that **the Recommendation and Commission documents from 2011 have had some moderate direct impact on the research literature since 2011**, and have – to some degree – played a compensatory role for the neglect of ESL at university level.

The research impact of the 2011 Council Recommendation and related EU ESL documents is mainly, though not solely, through EU funded research projects broadly associated with the ESL theme. In addition, **teacher education is often not particularly research-focused** in many institutions across the EU; even if it is, poverty

and social inclusion-related themes such as early school leaving tend not to be given the research emphasis of curricular aspects in university Education faculties.

Given that a notable proportion of published ESL research refers to other Commission documents but not specifically to the Council Recommendation 2011 on ESL and its subsequent related ESL documents, including also for some EU funded studies, the question **as to how the Commission can more optimally disseminate and communicate its key Council Resolutions and related documents**, not only to key policy stakeholders and the wider public, but also specifically to universities and education faculties in universities. A further challenge is how to promote a research community in universities on a theme such as ESL, including sustaining research networks on ESL beyond the limited timeframes of specific projects (e.g. RESL.EU, EMPAQT and PREVENT).

Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the 2011 Recommendation and EU policy tools

Overall, the study findings provide **a strong indication that the 2011 Recommendation is regarded as relevant and effective across Europe**, especially within the EU28, but also to a varying degree among Candidate and EFTA countries. The Recommendation and associated tools provide a key policy focus that synthesises a range of policy concerns as regards social inclusion, employment, active citizenship, peace and stability through giving people a stake in society, as well as education providing personal and social fulfilment. The EU policy framework, headline target and *ex ante* conditionalities for ESIF have consistently exerted the most direct influence at a country level – by linking the requirement to develop and monitor progress against a comprehensive ESL strategy with access to ESF support. Moreover, the European Semester country-specific recommendations have provided a relevant source of national guidance, and have had some value in holding policy-makers to account. The 2011 Recommendation has interacted in complex ways with national policies, and with a wide range of other EU measures and programmes, including those in the fields of youth, labour markets, and lifelong learning. Nonetheless, the 'footprint' of the 2011 Recommendation can be traced in educational strategies and policies initiated across Europe during the period from 2011-2018.

The accompanying suite of EU policy tools have procured complementary effects and supported the sustainability of policy attention and efforts in tackling ESL, through the provision of opportunities via the OMC and targeted funding for structured dialogue, funding actions and research, disseminating research and good practice examples. The diffusion of ideas from the OMC beyond the level of national policy has however been more mixed, and indeed there is considerable demand for additional tools, such as the European Toolkit for Schools, that engage directly with schools and educationalists.

The evidence for the efficiency of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools is rather mixed and complex to ascertain with any strong degree of certainty. As budgets for ESL were neither ring-fenced nor extensively monitored, the causal chains between financial inputs, activities, outputs and results are weakly defined. In some countries, the 2011 Recommendation can however have been said to have generated efficiencies by giving the necessary leverage to adopt a national strategy where this would have been unlikely to have occurred otherwise.

Future EU level support for tackling ESL

The needs for future EU level support were discussed throughout the study with a wide range of national stakeholders.

Key needs in terms of future support for tackling ESL included: further strengthening an integrated approach to reducing ESL; specific targeting of policies on young people facing disadvantage including a more differentiated focus on the complex, diverse needs of vulnerable subgroups; improvements in data collection and monitoring; more systematic policy evaluation; operational recommendations that are integrated and tailored to national contexts with support for implementation; enhancing the role of other relevant stakeholders (e.g. the voice of learners) in tackling ESL; and better integrating and aligning efforts to tackle ESL within broader educational policies.

Types of future EU policy instruments that are considered useful included: further opportunities for critically reflective peer learning and peer counselling; using progress reporting against the ESL targets as an opportunity for sharing lessons, promoting self-evaluation, and inviting external challenge; the potential introduction of a benchmarking mechanism; further enhancement of mechanisms such as the ESIF *ex ante* conditionalities to incentivise a focus on ESL; review of the time and focus-orientated constraints of certain financial support mechanisms (e.g. Erasmus+, ESF); the development of more 'soft' tools to support implementation (e.g. guidebooks, toolboxes), including more translation into national languages; an enhanced focus on awareness-raising and dissemination about the need to tackle ESL, the factors which contribute to it and the potential means to address it; greater linkages between EU recommendations and tools with concrete activities and funding programmes; and, promoting greater coherence between individual initiatives (e.g. ESIF-funded) to increase effectiveness.

6.2 Recommendations

Although ESL rates have decreased on average over time, it is still too prevalent, affecting over 10% of young people across the EU, with considerably higher rates in certain countries, regions and for certain groups. Concerted and ongoing action is still required in order to tackle this phenomenon which has highly detrimental and long-term impacts both on the individuals concerned and on society more generally.

Drawing on the findings of the study, we set out below our recommendations for policy-makers and for the research community.

6.2.1 Recommendations for EU level tools to tackle ESL

1. To keep the policy spotlight on tackling ESL, it will be essential to **renew and relaunch the 2011 Recommendation and associated policy tools**, taking into account the policy learning from eight years of implementation and the contextual changes (e.g. migration crisis). The heat maps[311] we have developed for this study provide one

[311] See Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4

approach to updating the policy framework, while maintaining the three pillars of prevention, intervention and compensation.

2. The **headline target** provides a valuable and visible cross-country comparative point, and should be retained post-ET 2020. As well as reviewing the level at which to set the future target (since several countries have now decreased their rate below 10%), **it should include sub-dimensions** with disaggregation for example by gender, migrant background, Roma and regional differences, in order to provide the basis for more nuanced policy-making.
3. Translational tools such as a **grid (or 'basket') of structural indicators** (such as those developed in our heat maps) have the potential to **synthesise key policy recommendations and minimise policy amnesia**. While the intention would not be to oblige all Member States to implement all policies in a future policy framework, such tools could at least ensure that they were required to report back on why different types of measures are not being implemented. In time, **consideration of the introduction of a process such as 'benchlearning'** (currently used for PES cooperation and support[312]), based on benchmarking via such structural indicators, could be considered.
4. Continue **the inclusion of specific CSRs relating to measures to tackling ESL** under the European Semester process. **Further scaffolding** should however be provided around CSRs not only to say *what* should be done, but *how* to achieve it. MS could be signposted clearly to support to improve their approaches through a range of mechanisms including EU funding sources (e.g. ESF, Erasmus+, SRSS), peer counselling or targeted peer learning processes.
5. Consider **tougher standards to ensure that project activities funded by the ESF (or other ESIF) or other EU funds (e.g. Erasmus+) are strategic and effectively targeted** to address national priorities and needs, to avoid the piecemeal approach that was found in many countries. For more effective targeting, application processes could be structured in a similar way to the DAPHNE programme, where MS are invited to bid into a call for tenders on a range of priority themes such as 'cross-sectoral collaboration to tackle ESL'.
6. Ensure that the longstanding **focus on educational inclusion is retained within the mandate of the ET 2020 Working Group on Schools**, including an explicit focus on ESL and the importance of developing ITE to prepare teachers to tackle ESL at a classroom level. More synergies could also be sought with the Working Groups on Promoting Common Values and Inclusive Education, VET and Adult Learning.
7. Expand opportunities for **peer counselling and peer review**, to enable more focused country exchanges and visits on ESL topics, perhaps linked to CSRs, so that the EC is providing implementation support with ESL-related issues. Both processes should involve structured dialogue (potentially aided by frameworks such as structural indicators for practitioners to help focus critical yet supportive dialogue) in order to be most effective.

[312] See https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/44626fc3-4769-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1

8. Undertake further communications activities to **raise the profile of the European Toolkit for Schools**, capitalising on the potential of the Toolkit to disseminate case studies and research in a format that is accessible to educationalists across Europe.
9. Develop a **new EU-level ESL Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**, including standardised and evidence-based research instruments for evaluating policies and programmes in the field of ESL, disseminated via the European Toolkit for Schools.
10. Consider setting-up an **EU Monitoring and Evaluation Observatory for ESL**, collecting and collating both quantitative and qualitative research. This could take the form of a multidisciplinary 'what works?' centre, focusing also on the voices of marginalised students, parents and areas, linking policy experts and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across Europe to collate and disseminate good practices, and to commission research.
11. EU policy documents and tools on ESL should be much **better disseminated and communicated** to all relevant stakeholders including EU, national, regional and local policymakers, EU and national funding organisations for educational measures, the research community, teacher education institutions, NGOs and social partners.

6.2.2 Recommendations for ESL policy and practice (at EU and national level)

1. Ensure that ESL strategies or measures include **a sufficient focus on prevention and intervention**, as well as compensation. Tackling problems proactively before – or as soon as - warning signs appear avoids problems escalating and can avoid complete disengagement from with the education system, which is much harder to return from. In many countries, a much greater focus needs to be put on anti-segregation policies in schools and educational districts as well as developing more flexible and individualised pathways and measures for well-being. All learners can benefit from 'prevention' policies, not only the groups most at risk of ESL.
2. Based on evidence from targeted research, **policies should be developed to address the specific needs of particular groups**, such as newly-arrived migrants (of all ages), learners of different age-groups, young men, those living in rural or deprived areas and those with mental health issues, including trauma. There also needs to be a stronger focus on those with complex needs (e.g. children with mental health issues, children in care, children with a parent in prison, victims of domestic violence). Without adapting policy to those facing the greatest disadvantages, approaches to ESL cannot succeed.
3. In order to tackle the multi-faceted dimension of ESL, facilitate and **promote more strategic and cross-sectoral dialogue between policymakers across different fields** (e.g. education, health, employment, justice, migration) both at national level (across ministries) and at EU level (across DGs of the European Commission, but also involving other relevant players such as the EU social partners or EU level NGOs).
4. To be effective, policy-making must **include the voices of other key stakeholders** such as marginalised parents, learners, migrant communities, and NGOs.
5. A **whole community, area-based approach** merits further consideration at policy, practitioner and research level. Promising examples of community lifelong learning centres combined with multidisciplinary teams as one stop shops in a common location

could also be linked with a future dimension of the Youth Guarantee to integrate it with a common focus on ESL as part of a combined community outreach strategic approach.

6. Policies aimed at tackling ESL should be **further integrated with those targeting anti-bullying** as well as mental health and wellbeing, including trauma.
7. There is an insufficient policy focus on the **validation/recognition of prior learning**, which has a particular impact for migrants. More – and more effective – systems need to be established to facilitate the successful integration of newly-arrived migrants and refugees.
8. There is considerable scope **to better strategically exploit the potential of the arts and culture, as well as other extra-curricular activities**, to tackle ESL.
9. The potential of ESL measures to **contribute to increased peace, stability, and social cohesiveness, including the successful and sustainable integration of migrants and refugees,** is not recognised clearly enough in policy processes or documents.
10. There is a clear agenda for **the reform of ITE to place ESL – and social inclusion more widely – at the heart of the preparation of teachers and other school leaders for the classroom,** including through increased recognition of the importance of practical placements of student teachers in areas of high poverty, as well as student teachers' relational and cultural competence skills (e.g. conflict resolution skills, integrating diverse, culturally meaningful material into lessons). More focus should also be placed on the dimensions of teaching which can influence ESL in CPD, including raising awareness of the phenomenon and spotting warning signs early. To date, this issue – in line with the lack of focus on ESL in educational research at universities – has been relatively neglected in teacher education.

6.2.3 Recommendations for dialogue between the research community and the European Commission

The moderate influence of the Council Recommendation 2011 and its related documents on the European research community offers a number of policy implications:

1. ESL needs to become a **more cohesive research community through fostering research networks** building on university connections. This needs to go beyond 3-5 year research projects to engage a wider strategy of network building on this research theme across the EU
2. There is a need for **more explicit dialogue processes with research centres in universities on ESL**, given its paramount importance to all the key public policy goals of education, whether for social cohesion/inclusion, employment, active citizenship and democracy, personal and social fulfilment and also peace building, common values and community development.
3. Clarification needs to be placed onto the EU policy agenda of not only **the research role of teacher education faculties but specifically of its commitment to the area of ESL prevention and related poverty and social inclusion themes**, through not only research agendas but also staff appointments in this area.
4. There is a need for **more research on marginalised groups and their parents**, bringing in their voices and experiences of the education system.

5. The European Commission could consider building **more direct bridges with the university and College of Education communities regarding dissemination** of key Council Recommendations and Commission documents on themes such as ESL
6. For greater influence of EU policy documents on ESL prevention, there is a need to **address the wider policy/research divide, as well as a research/practice divide** across universities and the statutory and civil society sectors. While the EU level commitment to doing this has been evident through numerous events on ESL bringing these key stakeholders together at European level, the question arises as to the extent of universities' and Education faculties' community engagement commitment to bridging these divides and their wider public policy and service commitments to engaging with themes that are of most relevance to the most vulnerable students in their societies - rather than universities giving emphasis to thematic areas that may affect more directly those with more wealth, political power, cultural capital and ultimately research revenue funding sources.
7. There is a lack of **automated system for tracking citations of EU Commission documents, akin to the Google scholar system**. This may require reconsideration by the Commission for the future, to enhance the research impact of its key documents, and especially those priority EU Council documents.

Table of Contents for Annexes

Annex 1: Reducing ESL – intervention logic A2

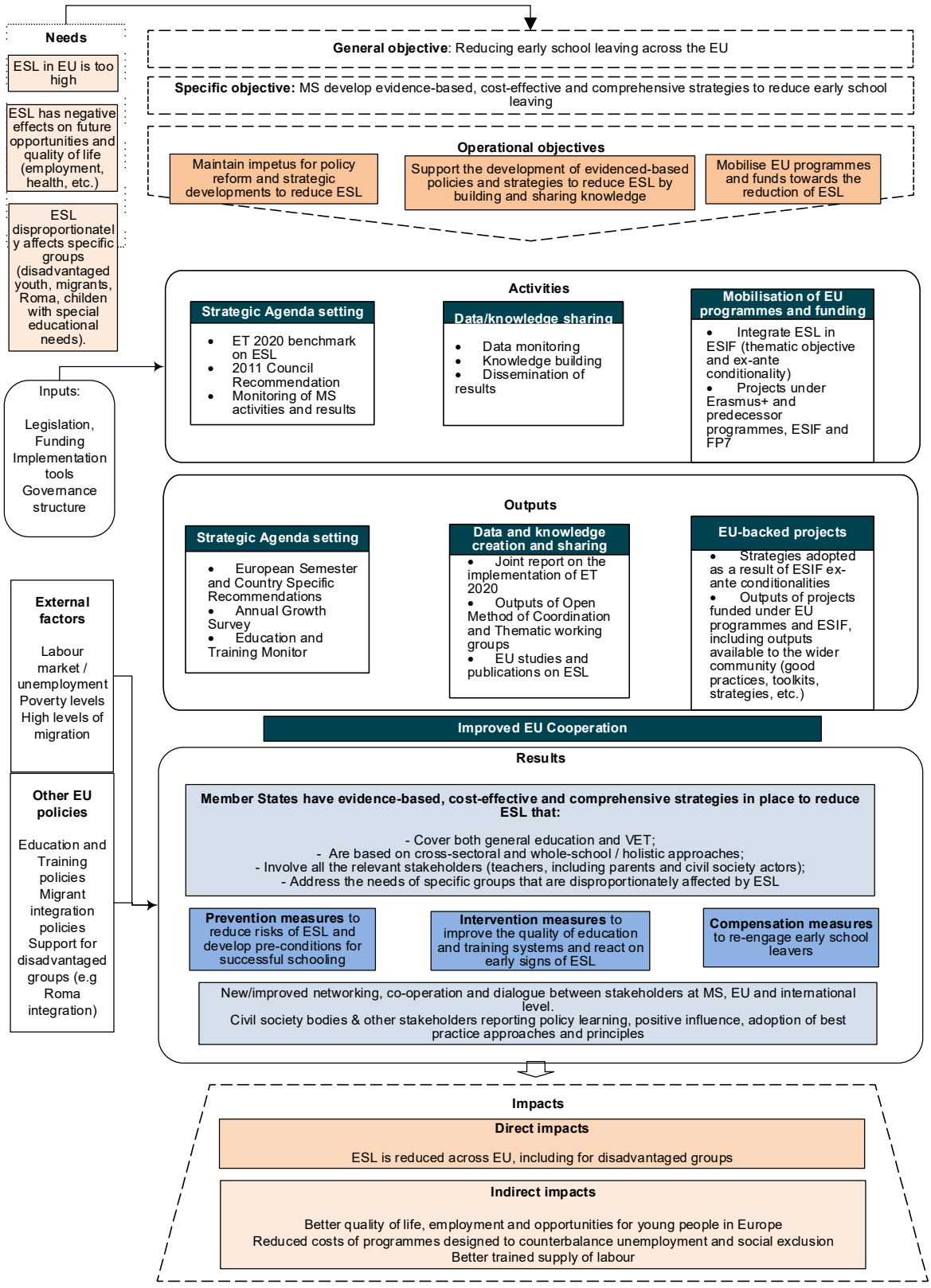
Annex 2: Correspondence table – measures devised for the country mapping .. A3

Annex 3: Analytical review of the citation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Early School Leaving (ESL) and related key EU Commission and Council ESL documents A8

Annex 4: Bibliography A12

Annex 5: Country case studies A23

Annex 1: Reducing ESL – intervention logic



Annex 2: Correspondence table – measures devised for the country mapping

Prevention	
2011 Recommendation – Policy Framework	**Measures devised for the country mapping**
1. Providing high-quality early childhood education and care is beneficial for all children and especially relevant for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, including migrants and Roma. It enhances physical well-being, social and emotional development, language and basic cognitive skills. Provision should be high-quality, affordable, adequately staffed and accessible to families with a disadvantaged background.	A. Measures to improve accessibility and affordability of ECEC to families with a disadvantaged background, including migrant and Roma children
2. Increasing the educational offer by providing education and training opportunities beyond the age of compulsory education can influence the behaviour of young people and their families and lead to higher rates of completion of upper secondary qualifications.	B. Flexible curriculum choices and pathways, including measures to prevent early streaming, and training options beyond the age of compulsory education.
3. Increasing the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways, for example by modularising courses or alternating school and work, supports in particular pupils with lower academic performance, and can motivate them to continue education and training which is better adapted to their needs and abilities. It also helps to address gender-specific reasons for early school leaving, such as joining the labour market early or teenage pregnancy. In addition, limiting the repetition of school years and replacing this with flexible individual support has been associated with lower early school leaving.	
4. Promoting active anti-segregation policies and providing additional support for schools in disadvantaged areas or with high numbers of pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds help them to diversify their social composition and enhance their educational offer. This improves the educational achievements of pupils from socio-	C. Promotion of active anti-segregation policies, such as those intended to diversify the social composition of schools in disadvantaged areas (e.g. via admissions)

Prevention	
2011 Recommendation – Policy Framework	**Measures devised for the country mapping**
economically disadvantaged backgrounds and reduces their risk of early school leaving.	
5. Emphasising the value of linguistic diversity and supporting children with a different mother tongue to improve their proficiency in the language of instruction and, where appropriate, in the mother tongue, as well as supporting teachers to teach children with different levels of linguistic competence, can improve the educational achievements of children with migrant background and reduce their risk of early school leaving.	D. Policies to support multilingual teaching and learning and to promote linguistic diversity in schools, including inter-cultural learning programmes.
6. Enhancing the involvement of parents, reinforcing their cooperation with the school and creating partnerships between schools and parents can increase learning motivation among pupils.	E. Active measures to support parental involvement in school life through partnerships and forums, and parental engagement in children's learning
7. Strengthening high-quality vocational pathways and increasing their attractiveness and flexibility provide pupils at risk with credible alternatives to early school leaving. VET provision, which is well integrated into the overall education and training systems, allows for alternative pathways into upper secondary and tertiary education.	F. Measures to ensure access to high quality VET provision, including the integration of VET pathways into mainstream education, and providing VET routes into upper secondary and tertiary education
8. Strengthening the link between education and training systems and the employment sector, in order to emphasise the benefits of completing education for future employability. This could be in the form of work experience placements or greater employer engagement in schools and colleges.	G. Measures to strengthen links between schools and local labour markets, via access to high quality work experience, and employer engagement in schools.
	H. Other types of preventative policy measures (specify)

Intervention	
2011 Recommendation – Policy Framework	**Measures devised for the country mapping**
Part 1: Intervention measures at school or training institution level	
1. Developing schools into learning communities based on a common vision for school development shared by all stakeholders, using the experience and knowledge of all, and providing an open-minded, inspiring and comfortable environment to encourage young people to continue in education and training.	• Measures to promote inclusive and participatory school environments, including anti-bullying and wellbeing policies within schools.
	• Measures to promote rights-based education, including structures to support children's participation in decision-making (e.g. school councils or forums).
2. Developing early-warning systems for pupils at risk, which can help to take effective measures before problems become manifest, pupils start to alienate from school, play truant or drop out.	• Early warning systems for pupils at risk of ESL, including those designed to monitor and take action where learners become disengaged from school or where behavioural or attendance issues arise.
3. Networking with parents and other actors outside school, such as local community services, organisations representing migrants or minorities, sports and culture associations, or employers and civil society organisations, which allows for holistic solutions to help pupils at risk and eases the access to external support such as psychologists, social and youth workers, cultural and community services. This can be facilitated by mediators from the local community who are able to support communication and to reduce distrust.	• Structures for networking between schools and external actors, including health, youth and community services and civil society organisations.
	• Local or regional governance arrangements to support learners at risk of ESL, incorporating school clusters or networks, specialist resource centres; and / or multi-disciplinary teams or hubs around schools
4. Supporting and empowering teachers in their work with pupils at risk, which is a pre-requisite for successful measures at school level. Initial teacher education and continuous professional development for teachers and school leaders help them to deal with diversity in the classroom, to support pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and to solve difficult teaching situations.	• Support for teachers and school leaders working with learners at risk, including ITE and CPD programmes to deal with diversity in the classroom, to support pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
	• Support for teachers and school leaders working with learners at risk to solve difficult teaching situations (e.g. conflict resolution skills) and enhancing teaching staff competences for a positive learning environment
5. Extracurricular activities after and outside school and artistic, cultural and sport activities, which can raise the self-esteem of	• Provision of high quality extracurricular and out-of-school artistic, cultural and civic education activities for learners

pupils at risk and increase their resilience against difficulties in their learning.	from disadvantaged backgrounds, including youth exchange and volunteering programmes.
Part 2: Intervention measures at individual level	
1. Mentoring supports individual pupils to overcome specific academic, social or personal difficulties. Either in one- to-one approaches (mentoring) or in small groups (tutoring), pupils receive targeted assistance, often provided by education staff by community members or by their peers.	• Access to targeted individual support for learners experiencing academic, social and emotional or personal difficulties, incorporating i. one-to-one academic tutoring ii. coaching or mentoring programmes; and/or iii. psychological support (e.g. emotional counselling)
2. Tailoring teaching to pupils' needs, strengthening individualised learning approaches and providing support for pupils at risk helps them to adapt to the demands of formal education and to overcome barriers created by the education and training system, and can thus contribute to limiting the repetition of school years.	
3. Strengthening guidance and counselling supports students' career choices, transitions within education or from education to employment. It reduces poor decision making based on false expectations or insufficient information. It helps young people to make choices which meet their ambitions, personal interests and talents.	• Access to high quality careers advice and guidance for learners at risk of ESL.
4. Ensuring that young people whose economic circumstances may result in their dropping out of education are given access to appropriate financial support. Where considered appropriate, such support might be subject to conditions or might be linked to social benefits.	• Financial support for learners whose economic circumstances pose a risk of dropping-out, including subsidies or schemes linked to social benefits.
	• Other types of intervention policy measures (specify)

Compensation	
2011 Recommendation – Policy Framework	**Measures devised for the country mapping**
1. Successful second chance education programmes, which provide learning environments which respond to the specific needs of early school leavers, recognise their prior learning and support their well-being. These programmes are different from schools in both organisational and pedagogical approaches and are often characterised by small learning groups, by personalised, age-appropriate and innovative teaching and by flexible educational pathways. As far as possible, they should be easily accessible and free of charge.	A. Provision of 'second chance' education and other high quality alternative education programmes for early school leavers, offering flexible and inclusive provision and combining social and academic learning.
2. Various routes back into mainstream education and training, the provision of which is important. Transition classes with a strong emphasis on guidance can help to bridge the gap between previous school failure and re- entering mainstream education.	B. Provision of pathways back into mainstream education for early school leavers, including options for combining education and work or caring responsibilities, and transition or bridging classes.
3. Recognising and validating prior learning, including competences achieved in non-formal and informal learning, which improves the confidence and self-esteem of young people and facilitates their re-entry into education. It can motivate them to continue education and training, helps them to identify their talents and to make better career choices.	C. Systems to support the recognition and validation of prior learning, including validation of competences achieved in non-formal and informal learning.
4. Targeted individual support, which integrates social, financial, educational and psychological support for young people in difficulties. It is especially important for young people in situations of serious social or emotional distress which hinders them from continuing education or training.	D. Access to targeted individual support for learners in challenging circumstances, incorporating: i. psychological/social ii. educational; and iii. financial support
	E. Other types of compensation policies or programmes (specify)

Annex 3: Analytical review of the citation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Early School Leaving (ESL) and related key EU Commission and Council ESL documents

Table A3.1: Literature citing the 2011 ESL Recommendation[313]

Daly, M. (2012). Paradigms in EU social policy: a critical account of Europe 2020. *European Review of Labour and Research.* doi.org/10.1177/1024258912448598
Díez-Palomar, J., Santos Pitanga, T., Álvarez Cifuentes, P. (2013). La Paz School. From a Ghetto to a Magnet School. *International Review of Qualitative Research, Vol. 6* No. 2, Summer 2013; (pp. 198-209)
Downes, P. (2013). Developing a Framework and Agenda for Students' Voices in the School System across Europe: from diametric to concentric relational spaces for early school leaving prevention. *European Journal of Education*, 48, 3, 346-362
Downes, P. (2011). The neglected shadow: European perspectives on emotional supports for early school leaving prevention. *International Journal of Emotional Education, 3*, 2
Downes, P., Nairz-Wirth, E., Rusinaite, V. (2017). *Structural Indicators for Developing Inclusive Systems in and around Schools in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union/EU bookshop.
Downes, P. (2014). *Towards a differentiated, holistic and systemic approach to parental involvement in Europe for early school leaving prevention*. PREVENT, Urbact: Paris.
INCLUD-ED (2014). *Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from Education. Political impact.*
Maslo, I., Fernández González, M.J. (2015). *Supporting the engagement and reintegration of 18-24 year old early school-leavers in lifelong learning: evidences for targeted compensatory and preventive strategy in education*, Riga.
Magalhães, A.M., Araújo, H.C., Macedo, E., Rocha, C. (2015). Early school leaving in Portugal: Policies and actors' interpretations. *Educação, Sociedade & Culturas*, 45, 97-11.
Nicaise, I. (2012). A Smart Social Inclusion Policy for the EU: the role of education and training. Special Issue: The Privatisation of Higher Education: comparative perspectives. *European Journal of Education*, 47, 2, 327-342.
Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Library Service, *Briefing Paper 1, Paper 47/11 2 March 2011 NIAR 151 – 2011*, Eoin Murphy.
Nouwen W., Clycq N., Uličná, D. (2015). *Reducing the risk that youth with a migrant background in Europe will leave school early*. Sirius Network Policy Brief Series. Issue no 6.
Oomen, A., Plant, P. (2014). *Early School Leaving and Lifelong Guidance*. ELGPN Concept Note No. 6.
O'Reilly, J., Eichhorst, W., Gábos, A., Hadjivassiliou, K., Lain, D., Leschke, J., McGuinness, S., Mýtna Kureková, L.,Nazio, T., Ortlieb, R., Russell, H., Villa, P. (2015). *Five Characteristics of Youth Unemployment in Europe: Flexibility, Education, Migration, Family Legacies, and EU Policy.*
Przybylski B.K. (2014) Unsuccessful in Education: Early School Leaving. In: Eißel D., Rokicka E., Leaman J. (eds) *Welfare State at Risk*. Springer, Cham.
RESL.eu Working Paper Series. Working Paper 2. *Flemish Policies on Early School Leaving: A Field Description & Policy Analysis.*

[313] Council of the European Union, Council recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, 2011/C 191/01, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:191:0001:0006:en:PDF

Ríos, O., Herrero, C., Rodríguez, H. (2013). *From Access to Education.*
Sigurdsona, F., Wallanderab, J., Sundac, A.M. (2014). Is involvement in school bullying associated with general health and psychosocial adjustment outcomes in adulthood? *Child Abuse & Neglect, 38*, 10, 1607-1617.

Table A3.2: Literature citing the European Commission Communication from 2011: Tackling Early School Leaving - A Key Contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda[314]

De Witte, K & Cabusb, S. (2012). Dropout prevention measures in the Netherlands, an explorative evaluation. *Educational Review, 65*, 2, 155–176
Downes, P. (2015). *Early School Leaving Prevention and Engaging Parents from Ethnic Minority and Migrant Backgrounds: Key Issues and Guiding Principles Across 9 European City Municipalities.* PREVENT project. European Union, European Regional Development Fund, Urbact Secretariat, Paris.
Downes, P. (2014). *Towards a Differentiated, Holistic and Systemic Approach to Parental Involvement in Europe for Early School Leaving Prevention.* PREVENT project. European Union, European Regional Development Fund, Urbact Secretariat, Paris.
Estêvão, P., Álvares, M. (2014). What do we mean by school dropout? Early School Leaving and the shifting of paradigms in school dropout measurement. *Portuguese Journal of Social Science, 13,* 21-32
Jugović, I., Doolan, K. (2013). Is There Anything Specific about Early School Leaving in Southeast Europe? A Review of Research and Policy. *European Journal of Education, 48,* 3, 363-377
Macedo, E., Santos, S.A., Doroftei, A.O. (2019). Tackling early school leaving: Principals' insights into Portuguese upper secondary schools. *European Journal of Education*, https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12328
RESL.EU Project Report (2017). *Finding inspiring practices on how to prevent ESL and school disengagement. Lessons from the educational trajectories of youth at risk from nine EU countries.*
Ross, A., Leathwood, C. (2013). Problematising Early School Leaving. *European Journal of Education, 48*, 3, 405-418
Vallejo, C., Dooly, M. (2013). Early School Leavers and Social Disadvantage in Spain: from books to bricks and vice-versa. *European Journal of Education, 48* 3, 390-404

Table A3.3: Literature citing the 2010 European Commission Staff Working Paper on Reducing Early School Leaving[315]

Brunello, G., De Paola, M. (2014). The costs of early school leaving in Europe. *IZA Journal of Labor Policy,* 2014, 3:22.
Lavrijsen J., Nicaise I. (2013). *Parental background and early school leaving,* Steunpunt Studie- en Schoolloopbanen, Leuven.
Lavrijsen, J., Nicaise, I. (2015). Social Inequalities in Early School Leaving: The Role of Educational Institutions and the Socioeconomic Context*. Journal European Education, 47*, 4.
Leek, J. (2014). An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Reducing Early School Leaving in Slovakia. *Studia Pedagogiczne. Problemy Społeczne, Edukacyjne i Artystyczne 24*, 377-386.
Traag, T. (2012) *Early school-leaving in the Netherlands: A multidisciplinary study of risk and protective factors explaining early school-leaving.* Den Haag: Statistics Netherlands.

[314] COM(2011) 18 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0018:FIN:EN:PDF
[315] SEC/2011/0096 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52011SC0096

Table A3.4: Literature citing the Council Conclusions (2015) on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school[316]

Downes, P., Nairz-Wirth, E., Rusinaite, V. (2017). *Structural Indicators for Developing Inclusive Systems in and around Schools in Europe.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union/EU bookshop.
Downes, P. (2018). Postscript - The Emotional-Relational Turn for Early School Leaving Prevention: Building on The Neglected Shadow for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools. *International Journal of Emotional Education, 10,* 122-130.
EUMOSCHOOL Intellectual Output 1: *Comparative Research Report Project n° 2015-1-IT02-KA201-015383.*

Table A3.5: Literature on ESL citing other EU policy documents (but not the specific EU policy documents on ESL)

Literature on ESL	EU policy documents cited
Bäckman, O., Lorentzen, T., Österbacka, E & Dahl, E. (2015). Early school leaving in Scandinavia: Extent and labour market effects. *Journal of European Social Policy, 25*(3), 253–269.	• Eurofound (2012). NEETS: Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training: Characteristics, Costs and Policy Responses in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. • European Commission (2010). Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth.
Cederberg, M., Hartsmar, N. (2013). Some Aspects of Early School Leaving in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland. *European Journal of Education, 48,* 3, 378-389.	• European Commission (2012). Rethinking Education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes – COM 669. • European Union (2012). Study on Educational Support for Newly Arrived Migrant Children. • Eurostat (2009). Eurostat Union Labour Force Survey — Annual Results 2009.
De Witte, K., Nicaise, I, Lavrijsen, J., Van Landeghem, G., Lamote, C & Van Damme, J. (2013). The Impact of Institutional Context, Education and Labour Market Policies on Early School Leaving: a comparative analysis of EU countries. *European Journal of Education*, 48, 3.	• Eurostat (2010) EU Labour Force Survey Database User Guide, version November 2010, Brussels. • ET2020 headline target for ESL.
Meierkord, A & Mascherini, M. (2012). *Preventing and re-integrating early school leavers-a meta evaluation of policies implemented in 7 European Member States.* Eurofound.	• Eurofound (2012). Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs), Characteristics, costs and policy responses– European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin. • Eurofound (2012). Evaluation of the effectiveness of policy measures implemented by Member States to increase the employability and to promote a higher employment participation of young people in Europe, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin. • Eurofound (2012). Recent policy developments related to those not in

[316] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52015XG1215%2803%29

	employment, education and training (NEETs), European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin. • European Commission (2010). Communication from the Commission EUROPE 2020, a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
RESL.EU Project Report. *Attitudes of school personnel to Early School Leaving* https://www.uantwerpen.be/images/uantwerpen/container23160/files/Publication%202_revisedfinal.pdf.	• European Commission (2010). Europe 2020, A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
RESL.EU Project Report (2017). *Early School Leaving: Risk and Protective Factors Findings from the RESL.eu international survey* https://www.uantwerpen.be/images/uantwerpen/container23160/files/Publication%204%20final%20version.pdf.	• European Commission (2010). Europe 2020, A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
RESL.EU Project Report. *Policies on Early School Leaving in nine European countries: a comparative analysis.* https://www.uantwerpen.be/images/uantwerpen/container23160/files/RESL%20Publication%201.pdf.	• European Commission (2010). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. An Agenda for new skills and jobs: A European contribution towards full employment. • European Commission (2010). Youth on the Move - An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union. • European Commission (2012). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes.
Stepanovic Ilic, I., Lazarevic, L.B., Simic, N. (2017). Social factors outside of family and school related to student dropout. *Psihološka istraživanja 1*:89-105.	• European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Cedefop (2014). Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures.
Wrona, A., Malkowska-Szkutnik, A., Tomaszewska-Pekala, H. (2015). Perceived support from parents, teachers and peers as a factor of early leaving from upper secondary schools in Poland. *Przegląd Socjologiczny 1*:61-80.	• European Commission (2010). Europe 2020, A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Annex 4: Bibliography

1. EU policy documentation

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (2009). *Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020').* Luxembourg: Official Journal of the European Union. Available at: http://eurlex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (2011). *Council Recommendation on Policies to reduce early school leaving C191/1.* Council of Ministers. Published July 1. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32011H0701(01)

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (2013). *Council Recommendation on Effective Roma integration measures in the Member States C 378/01.* Published December 9. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224%2801%29

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (2015). *Council Conclusions on Reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school.* Published November 24. Available at: http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14441-2015-INIT/en/pdf

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (2017). *Council Conclusions on Inclusion in diversity to achieve a high quality education for all.* Published February 1. Available at: http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5741-2017-INIT/en/pdf

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2011). *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.* Available at: http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2010658%202011%20INIT

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2015). *Council conclusions on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school (2015/C 417/05).* Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215(03)&from=EN

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2015). *Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.* Paris, Tuesday 17 March 2015. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2018). *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching*. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1528379535771&uri=CELEX:32018H0607(01)

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2018). *Council recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning*. Available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&rid=7

EUROPEAN COMMISSION & COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (2012). *Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020). "Education and training in a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe.* Luxembourg: Official Journal of the European Union. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52012XG0308%2801%29

EUROPEAN COMMISSION & COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (2015). *Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020). "New priorities for European cooperation in education and training".* Luxembourg: Official Journal of the European Union. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52015XG1215%2802%29

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2010). *Communication from the Commission: Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.* Published March 3. Available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2011*). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Tackling early school leaving:* A key contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda. COM (2011) final 18, of 31.01.2011. Available at : http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0018

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2011). *Staff Working Paper on Reducing early school leaving. Accompanying document to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Policies to reduce early school leaving SEC(2011) 96 final.* Published January 31. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011SC0096&from=EN

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2012). *Communication on Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes COM(2012) 669 final.* Published November 20. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012DC0669&from=EN

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2016). *Communication on improving and modernising education COM(2017) 941 final*. Published December 12. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2016:941:FIN

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2016). *Communication on school development and excellent teaching for a great start in life COM (2017) 165 final.* European Commission. Published May 30. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1496304694958&uri=COM:2017:248:FIN

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017). *Communication on Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture COM(2017) 673 final.* The European Commission's contribution to the Leaders' meeting in Gothenburg 17 November 2017. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-strengthening-european-identity-education-culture_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017). *Staff Working Document on The Value Added of Ex Ante Conditionalities in the European Structural and Investment Funds SWD(2017) 127 final.* Published March 31. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/value_added_exac_esif_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018). *Education and training initiatives*. European Commission. Published January 17. Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-18-103_en.htm

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018). *New measures to boost key competences and digital skills, as well as the European dimension of education*. European Commission. Published January 17. Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-102_en.htm

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018). *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems.* COM/2018/271 final. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0271

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018). *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*. European Commission. Published January 17. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/recommendation-key-competences-lifelong-learning.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018). *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching*. European Commission. Published January 17. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/recommendation-common-values-inclusive-education-european-dimension-of-teaching.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2019). *Issue Paper on Inclusion and Citizenship for the Forum on the Future of Learning.* European Commission: Brussels. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/events/forum-on-the-future-of-learning_en

EUROPEAN COUNCIL (2015), *Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, Informal meeting of European Union Education Ministers*, Paris, 17 March 2015. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

EUROPEAN POLITICAL STRATEGY CENTRE (2017). *10 Trends transforming education as we know it.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/sites/epsc/files/epsc_-_10_trends_transforming_education_as_we_know_it.pdf

2. OMC documentation

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (undated). *Data collection and monitoring of Early School Leaving (ESL): Draft analysis of the results from the mapping exercise on data collection and monitoring of ESL.* Brussels: European Commission. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2011-2013/esl/data-monitoring-esl_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (undated). *Overview and examples of costs of early school leaving in Europe.* Brussels: European Commission. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2011-2013/esl/europe-esl-costs_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2011). *Mapping: Early warning systems in Europe: practice, methods and lessons.* Brussels: European Commission. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2011-2013/esl/europe-warning-systems_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2012). *Conference Report: Reducing Early School Leaving: Efficient and Effective Policies in Europe.* European Commission: Brussels. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/conference-2012-early-school-leaving-report_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2013). *Peer Learning Activity on Reducing early school leaving in France.* 16-19 April 2013, Paris. Brussels: European Commission. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2011-2013/esl/france-esl_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2012). *Peer Learning Activity on Reducing early school leaving in the Netherlands.*9-12 September 2012, the Hague and Rotterdam. Brussels: European Commission. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2011-2013/esl/netherlands-esl_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2013). *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support.* Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on 'Early School Leaving' 2011-13. European Commission: Brussels. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/content/reducing-early-school-leaving-key-messages-and-policy-support_en

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2014). *Country focus workshop: School governance and collaborative practices.* Portugal, 11-14 November 2014. European Commission: Brussels. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/portugal-school-goverance_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2014). *Preventing early school leaving in Europe – Lessons learnt from second chance education.* Available at: https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/575dc3dc-a6fb-4701-94a2-b53d62704567

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2014). *Report on case study on Antwerp, Belgium-Flanders.* Antwerp, 11-14 November 2014. European Commission: Brussels. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/report-belgium-study_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2014). *School autonomy questionnaire.* December 2014. European Commission: Brussels. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/school-autonomy_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2014). *Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in preventing early school leaving (ESL).* Available at: https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0a886828-72b0-4be6-be75-a2b8f5196aef

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2015). *A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving. Policy messages.* Produced by the ET 2020 Working Group Schools Policy 2014-15. European Commission: Brussels. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/early-leaving-policy_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2015). *Country focus workshop: Parental involvement.* France, 13-16 January 2015. European Commission: Brussels. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/france-parental-involvement_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2015). *Country focused workshop: Whole school approach to early school leaving.* Ireland, 24-25 March 2015. European Commission: Brussels. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/ireland-school-approach_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2015). *Report on the Case study on Introductory programmes in Sweden:Learner support measures* European Commission: Brussels. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/sweden-learner-support_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2016). *Education and Training 2020: Highlights from the Working Groups 2014-2015.* European Commission: Brussels. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/group-highlights_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017). *Continuity and transitions in learner development. Guiding Principles for policy development on learner pathways and transitions in school education.* Produced by the ET 2020 Working Group Schools 2016-18. Brussels: European Commission. Available at: https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/Governance/2018-wgs3-learner-development_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017). *Quality assurance for school development. Guiding principles for policy development on quality assurance in school education.* Produced by the ET 2020 Working Group Schools 2016-18. European Commission: Brussels. Available at: https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/Governance/2018-wgs2-quality-assurance-school_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017). *Teachers and school leaders in schools as learning organisations. Guiding principles for policy development in school education.* Produced by the ET 2020 Working Group Schools 2016-18. Brussels: European Commission. Available at: https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/Governance/2018-wgs4-learning-organisations_en.pdf

3. Other EU reports and documentation

CEDEFOP (2016). *Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage*. Volume II: evaluating policy impact. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 58. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.2801/967263

COUNCIL OF EUROPE (2017). *Fighting school segregation in Europe through inclusive education: a position paper*. Available at: https://rm.coe.int/fighting-school-segregationin-europe-throughinclusive-education-a-posi/168073fb65

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2016). *The implementation of the provisions in relation to the ex-ante conditionalities during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds*. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/how/studies_integration/impl_exante_esif_report_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017). *Europe 2020 Targets.* Available here: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/%204411192/4411431/Europe_2020_Targets.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017). *Structural Indicators on Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe – 2016.* Available at: https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffea0a0e-f995-11e6-8a35-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017). *Tackling Early School Leaving. A collection of innovative and inspiring resources.* Brussels: European Commission. Available at: https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f540a7e3-297f-11e7-ab65-01aa75ed71a1

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018). *Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies,* COM(2018) 268 final. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0268

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018). *Education and Training Monitor 2018*, Chapter 2. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/volume-1-2018-education-and-training-monitor-country-analysis.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (web repository). *European Toolkit for Schools. Promoting inclusive education and tackling early school leaving.* Available at: https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools.htm

EUROPEAN COMMISSION/EURYDICE (2019). *Compulsory Education in Europe 2018/2019.* Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/compulsory-education-europe-%E2%80%93-201819_en

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2011). *Reducing early school leaving in the EU*, Brussels: European Parliament. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2011/460048/IPOL-CULT_ET%282011%29460048%28SUM01%29_EN.pdf

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (2019). *Research for CULT Committee – How to tackle early school leaving in the EU*. European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels, Authors: Van der Graaf, A., Vroonhof, P., Roullis, G., and Velli, F

EURYDICE (2019). *Integrating students from migrant backgrounds in schools in Europe.* Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/news/integrating-students-from-migrant-backgrounds-into-schools-in-europe_en

NESET II (2016). *Structural Indicators for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools*. Available at: http://nesetweb.eu/NESETII_Structural_Indicators.pdf

4. Wider national and international research literature

Allensworth, E. and Evans, S. (2016). *Tackling Absenteeism in Chicago*. In: *Phi Delta Kappan* 98(2), p. 16-21.

Aubert, A., Molina, S., Schubert, T., et al. (2017). *Learning and inclusivity via Interactive Groups in early childhood education and care in the Hope school, Spain*. In: *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* (13), p. 90-103. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2017.03.002

Bäckman, O., et al. (2011). *Dropping out in Scandinavia: Social Exclusion and Labour Market Attachment among Upper Secondary School Dropouts in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden*. Working Paper, No. 8. Copenhagen : Institute for Futures Studies.

Bäckman, O., Jakobsen, V., Lorentzen, T., et al. (2015). *Early school leaving in Scandinavia: Extent and labour market effects*. In: *Journal of European Social Policy* 25(3), p. 253-269. Available at: https://doiorg.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.1177/0958928715588702

Bademci, H. Ö., Karadayı, E. F., & de Zulueta, F. (2015). *Attachment intervention through peer-based interaction: Working with Istanbul's street boys in a university setting.* In: Children and Youth Services Review, 49, p. 20-31.

Baysu, G. and K. Phalet (2012). *Staying on or Dropping out: The Role of the School Environment in Minority and Non-minority School Careers*. In: *Teachers College Record* 114 (5), p. 1-25.

Berendt, B., Littlejohn, A., Kern, P., et al. (2017). *Big Data for monitoring educational systems.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/94cb5fc8-473e-11e7-aea8-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-31396079

Borgna, C. and Struffolino, E. (2017). *Pushed or pulled? Girls and boys facing early school leaving risk in Italy*. In: *Social Science Research* 61, p. 298-313. Availableat: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2016.06.021

Cabus, S. and De Witte, K. (2011). *Does School Time Matter? On the impact of compulsory education age on school dropout*. In: *Economics of Education Review* 30, p. 1384-1398. Available at: http://www.tierweb.nl/assets/files/UM/Does%20school%20time%20matter_(Cabus&DeWitte2010)_website.pdf

Cabus, S. J. and Haelermans, C. (2017). *Work or Schooling? On the Return to Gaining In-School Work Experiences*. In: *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 55(1), p. 34-57. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/bjir.12166

Cardinali, P., Migliorini, L., Andrighetto, L., et al. (2016). *Improving academic attitudes among ethnic minority youth at risk for early school leaving: the interactive effects of cross-group friendships and ethnic identity*. In: *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 46 (5), p. 294-301.

Chapman, C., Laird, J., KewalRamani, A. (2010). *Trends in high school dropout and completion rates in the United States: 1972–2008*. Washington DC: *US Department of Education.* Available at: https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011012.pdf

Day, L., Meierkord, A. (2018). *Rethinking language education and linguistic diversity in schools*, Ecorys: European Commission.

De Witte, K. and Rogge, N. (2012). *Dropout from secondary education: all's well that begins well*. In : *European Journal of Education* 47 (4), p. 131-149.

De Witte, K. and Van Klaveren, C. (2012). *Comparing students by a matching analysis – on early school leaving in Dutch cities*. In : *Applied Economics* 44 (28), p. 3679-3690.

De Witte, K., Cabus, S., Thyssen, G., Groot, W. and Maassen van den Brink, H. (2013). *A Critical Review of the Literature on School Dropout*. In : *Educational Research Review* 10 (1), p. 13-28. Available at : http://www.tierweb.nl/assets/files/UM/Working%20papers/TIER%20WP%2014-14.pdf

De Witte, K., Nicaise, I., Lavrijsen, J., Van Landeghem, G., Lamote, C. and Van Damme, J. (2013). *The impact of institutional context, education and labour market policies on early school leaving: a comparative analysis of EU countries*. In : *European Journal of Education* 48 (3), p. 331-345. Available at : http://www.tierweb.nl/assets/files/UM/Working%20papers/TIER%20WP%2014-12.pdf

De Witte, K., Van Klaeveren, C. and Smets, A. J. H. (2015). *Can cities be held responsible for early school leaving? Evidence from the Netherlands*. In: *Policy Studies* 36(2), p. 217-239. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2014.1000847

Doll, J.J., Zohreh, E. and Walters, L. (2013). *Understanding Why Students Drop Out of High School, According to Their Own Reports: Are They Pushed or Pulled, or Do They Fall Out? A Comparative Analysis of Seven Nationally Representative Studies*. In: *SAGE Open* 3(4), p. 1-15.

Downes, P. & Cefai, C. (2016). *How to tackle bullying and prevent school violence in Europe: Evidence and practices for strategies for inclusive and safe schools.* NESET, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Downes, P. (2011). Multi/Interdisciplinary Teams for Early School Leaving Prevention: Developing a European Strategy Informed by International Evidence and Research. *NESET Research Paper, 2011. Available at: http://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2011-Multi-Interdisciplinary-teams-for-early-school-leaving-prevention.pdf*

Downes, P. (2013). *Developing a Framework and Agenda for Students' Voices in the School System across Europe: From Diametric to Concentric Relational Spaces for Early School Leaving Prevention*. In: *European Journal of Education* 48(3), p. 346-362.

Downes, P. (2014). *Towards a Differentiated, Holistic and Systemic Approach to Parental Involvement in Europe for Early School Leaving Prevention*. European Union.

Downes, P. (2015). *Early School Leaving Prevention and Engaging Parents from Ethnic Minority and Migrant Backgrounds: Key Issues and Guiding Principles Across 9 European City Municipalities.* PREVENT project, European Union, European Regional Development Fund, Urbact Secretariat, Paris.

Downes, P. (2017). *Conceptual Foundations of Inclusive Systems in and around Schools for Early School Leaving Prevention: An Emotional-Relational Focus.* In: Psihološka istraživanja (Psychological Research), 20 (1), 9-26. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/integrating-students-migrant-backgrounds-schools-europe-national-policies-and-measures_en

Downes, P. (2017). *New DEIS Action Plan: Strengths, Weaknesses, Issues for Further Consideration*. In: Touch bulletin, April 2017, pp.46-47.

Downes, P; Nairz-Wirth, E; Rusinaité, V. (2017), *Structural Indicators for Inclusive Systems in and around Schools*, NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Doi: 10.2766/200506

DuBois, D.L. et al. (2002). *Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth: A meta-analytic review*, In: *American Journal of Community Psychology* 30 (2), p. 157-197.

Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). (2015). *Growing Up in Ireland: Non-Parental Childcare and Child Cognitive Outcomes at Age 5*, Dublin.

Esch, P., Bocquet, V., Pull, C., et al. (2014). *The downward spiral of mental disorders and educational attainment: a systematic review on early school leaving*. In: *BMC Psychiatry*, 14(237), p.1-13. Available: DOI: 10.1186/s12888-014-0237-4

Faubert, B. (2012). *In-school policies and practices for overcoming school failure: A Literature Review for the OECD*. OECD Education Working Papers. Paris: OECD.

Fernandez-Macias, E. et al. (2013), *Early School-Leaving in Spain: Evolution, Intensity and Determinants*. In: *European Journal of Education* 48(1), p. 150-164.

Field, S., Kuczera, M. and Pont, B. (2007). *No more failures. Ten steps to equity.* Paris: OECD. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/education/school/45179151.pdf

Fish, T. (2017). *Therapeutic responses to 'at risk' disengaged early school leavers in a rural alternative education program*. In: *Ethnography and Education* 12(1),p. 95-111. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2016.1216321

Frostad, P. et al. (2014). *Losing All Interest in School: Social Participation as a Predictor of the Intention to Leave Upper Secondary School Early*. In: *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 59(1), p. 110-122.

Gillies, D. and Mifsud, D. (2016). *Policy in Transition: The Emergence of Tackling Early School Leaving (ESL) as EU Policy Priority*. In: *Journal of Education Policy* 31(6), p. 819-832.

Gitschthaler and Nairz-Wirth. (2015). *Education policies concerning early school leaving in Austria*. In: Educação, Sociedade & Culturas, nº 45, p. 55-74.

Hadjivassiliou, K., Tassinari, A., Eichhorst, W. et al. (2016). *Assessing the Performance of School-to-Work Transition Regimes in the EU*. Bonn: iZA Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2861086

Harte, E., Herrera, F. and Stepanek, M. (2016). *Education of EU migrant children in EU Member States*. Pittsburgh: Rand Corporation. Available at: http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1715.html

Heckman, J.J. et al. (2009). *The Rate of Return to the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program*, In: *Journal of Public Economics* 94 (102), p. 114-128.

Heller, S.B. et al. (2015). *Thinking, Fast and Slow? Some Field Experiments to Reduce Crime and Dropout in Chicago*, Cambridge: NBER Working Paper (21178). Available at: www.nber.org/papers/w21178

Jugovic, I. and Doolan, K. (2013). *Is There Anything Specific about Early School Leaving in Southeast Europe? A Review of Research and Policy*. In: *European Journal of Education Research* 48(3), p. 363-377.

Kantzara, V. (2016). *Education in Conditions of Crisis in Greece: An Empirical Exploration (2000-2013)*. In: *Social Cohesion and Development* 11 (1), p. 45-66. Available at: https://ejournals.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/SCAD/article/view/10854

Kaye, N., D'angelo, A., Ryan, L., et al. (2017). *Early School Leaving: Risk and Protective Factors. Findings from the RESL.eu international survey*. Antwerp: Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies. Available at: https://www.uantwerpen.be/images/uantwerpen/container23160/files/Publication%204%20final%20version.pdf

Lamb, S., Markussen, E., Teese, R., Polesel, J. and Sandberg, N. (Eds.) (2011). *School Dropout and Completion: International Comparative Studies in Theory and Policy*. Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media B.V.

Lavrijsen, J. and Nicaise, I. (2012). *Social Inequalities in Early School Leaving: The Role of Educational Institutions and the Socioeconomic Context*. In: *European Education* 47(4), p. 295-310.

Lyche, C. (2010).*Taking on the Completion Challenge: A Literature Review on Policies to Prevent Dropout and Early School Leaving*. OECD Education Working Papers (53). Paris: OECD. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5km4m2t59cmr-en

Markussen, E. et al. (2011). *Reaching for the Unreachable: Identifying Factors Predicting Early School Leaving and Non-Completion in Norwegian Upper Secondary Education*. In: *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 55(3), p. 225-253.

Martinelli, V. (2016). *Weak English Language Literacy and Early School Leaving in a Maltese Context.* In: *Bulgarian Comparative Education Society.* Available at: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED568136.pdf

Mayne, J (2001). *Addressing attribution through contribution analysis: using performance measures sensibly*. In: Canadian Journal of Programme Evaluation [16]; p.1-24.

Mayne, J. (1999). *Addressing Attribution through Contribution Analysis: Using Performance Measures Sensibly*. Discussion paper, Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

Murray, S. and Mitchell, J. (2016). *Teaching Practices That Re-engage Early School Leavers In Further Education: An Australian Study*. In: *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 40(3), p.372-391. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2014.971107

NESSE (2009). *Early school leaving, lessons from research for policymakers*. Author: Roger Dale. Available at: http://archimedes.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/early-school-leaving-report.pdf

Nicaise, I. (2013). *A Smart Social Inclusion Policy for the EU: The Role of Education and Training*. In: *European Journal of Education* 47(2), p. 327-342.

Nouwen, W., Van Praag, L., Van Caudenberg, R., et al. (2016). *School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures and Alternative Learning Approaches to Reduce Early School Leaving*. Antwerp: Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies, University of Antwerp. Available at: https://www.uantwerpen.be/images/uantwerpen/container23160/files/RESL%20eu%20Publication%203%20Final%20version%2203082016.pdf

O'Higgins, N. and Bruggemann, C. (2014). *The Consequences of Cumulative Discrimination: How Special Schooling Influences Employment and Wages of Roma in the Czech Republic*. In: European Educational Research Journal 13(3), p. 282-294, June 2014.

OECD (2010). Overcoming School Failure: Policies that Work. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: http://www.oecd.org/education/school/45171670.pdf

OECD (2011). *Tackling inequalities in education*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (2012). *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*. Paris : OECD. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/education/school/50293148.pdf

OECD (2013). *PISA 2012 Results: Ready to Learn: Students' Engagement, Drive and Self-Beliefs (Vol. III)*, Paris : OECD Publishing. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201170-en.

OECD (2014). *PISA 2012 Results: Excellence through Equity (Volume II): Giving Every Student the Chance to Succeed,* Annex B1, Chapter 4. OECD. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932964946

OECD (2015). *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD. Available at: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/9615031e.pdf?expires=1516875793&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=F0667CBFBFB68017424FA8F772175108

OECD (2015). *Helping immigrant students to succeed at school – and beyond.* Paris: OECD. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/education/Helping-immigrant-students-to-succeed-at-school-and-beyond.pdf

OECD (2015). *OECD Skills Outlook 2015: Youth, Skills and Employability*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264234178-en

OECD (2016). *Society at a Glance 2016*. Paris: OECD. Available at: http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/social-issues-migration-health/society-at-a-glance-2016_9789264261488-en#.WmmtHa6nEdU

OECD (2017). *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD. Available at: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/9617041e.pdf?expires=1516875751&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=DC253707EF24E0F5DA0924A4E3ACD032

OECD (2017). *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III) Students' Well-Being. Chapter 1, Figure III.1.3 Snapshot of sense of belonging at school and bullying.* Paris: OECD. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en

Ong, C. and De Witte, K. (2013). *The influence of ethnic segregation and school mobility in primary education on high school dropout – Evidence from regression discontinuity at a contextual tipping point*. Maastricht : UNU-Merit Working Paper Series 2013-064. Available at : http://www.tierweb.nl/assets/files/UM/Working%20papers/TIER%20WP%2014-09.pdf

Pétiová, M. (2014). *Opinions of primary and secondary school directors on the early termination of compulsory school attendance*. Bratislava : CVTI.

Pijl, S.J. et al. (2014). *Students with Special Educational Needs in Secondary Education: Are They Intending to Learn or to Leave?.* In : *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 29(1), p. 16-28.

RESL (2014). *Policies on Early School Leaving in Nine European Countries: A Comparative Analysis.* Antwerp : RESL.

Rosário, P., Núñez, J. C., Vallejo, G., et al. (2017). *Promoting Gypsy children's behavioural engagement and school success: Evidence from a four-wave longitudinal study*. In: *British Educational Research Journal* 43(3), p. 554-571. Available at: DOI:10.1002/berj.3271

Ross, A. and Leathwood, C. (2013). *Problematising early school leaving*. In: *European Journal of Education* 48(3), p. 405-418.

Sahin, S., Arseven, Z. & Kiliç, A. (2016). *Causes of Student Absenteeism and School Dropouts*. In: *International Journal of Instruction* 9(1), p. 195-210. Available at: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1086967.

Tarabini, A., Curran, M., Monte, A., et al. (2016). *The politics of educational success: a realist evaluation of early school leaving policies in Catalonia (Spain)*. In: *Critical Studies in Education*, online, 1018. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2016.1197842

Traag, T. (2012). *Early School Leaving in the Netherlands. A multidisciplinary study of risk and protective factors explaining early school-leaving.* Den Haag: CBS. Available at: https://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/CAFDC1FC-E23B-49C8-9833-2AE9E639E4E3/0/2012X11Traagpub.pdf

Traag, T. and Van der Velden, R. (2011). *Early school-leaving in the Netherlands: The role of family resources, school composition and background characteristics in early school leaving in lower secondary education*. In: *Irish Education Studies* 30(1).

Traag, T., Lubbers, M. J., and Van der Velden, R. K. W. (2012). *That's what friends are for? The impact of peer characteristics on early school-leaving*. Maastricht: Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market.

Traag, T., Marie, O. and Van Der Velden, R. K. W. (2010). *Social Bonding, Early School-leaving, and Delinquency*. Maastricht: Research Centre For Education and the Labour Market.

UNICEF (2017). *Improving Education Participation. Policy and Practice Pointers for Enrolling All: Children and Adolescents in School and Preventing Dropout*. UNICEF Series on Education Participation and Dropout Prevention, Volume 2. Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

UNICEF and UIS (2016). *Monitoring Education Participation: Framework for Monitoring Children and Adolescents who are Out of School or at Risk of Dropping Out.* UNICEF Series on Education Participation and Dropout Prevention, Vol I. Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Van Caudenberg, R., Van Praag, L., Nouwen, W., et al. (2017). *A Longitudinal Study of Educational Trajectories of Youth at Risk of Early School Leaving*. Antwerp: Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies, University of Antwerp. Available at: https://www.uantwerpen.be/images/uantwerpen/container23160/files/RESL%20eu%20Publication%205%20FINAL.pdf

Van Eijck, K. and De Graaf, P.M. (2004). *The Big Five at School: The Impact of Personality on Educational Attainment.* In: *Netherlands' Journal of Social Sciences* 40(1), p. 24-40.

Van Heesch, M. M. J., Bosma, H., Traag, T. and Otten, F. (2011). *Hospital admissions and school dropout: a retrospective cohort study of the 'selection hypothesis'*. In: *European Journal of Public Health* 22(4), p. 550–555.

Van Praag, L., Van Caudenberg, R., Nouwen, W., et al. (2017). *How to support and engage students in alternative forms of education and training? A qualitative study of school staff members in Flanders*. In: Journal of Education and Work Online, p. 1-13. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2017.1319567

Wilson, S.J. Tanner-Smith, E.E., Lipsey, M.W., Steinka-Fry, K. and Morrison, J. (2011). *Dropout prevention and intervention programs: effects on school completion and dropout among schoolaged children and youth.* In: *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 8.

Annex 5: Country case studies

Contents

Country case study: Austria 24
Country case study: Bulgaria 37
Country case study: France 64
Country case study: Ireland 94
Country case study: Latvia 117
Country case study: Portugal 137
Country case study: Romania 153
Country case study: Slovakia 177
Country case study: Spain (Catalonia) 199
Country case study: Sweden 219

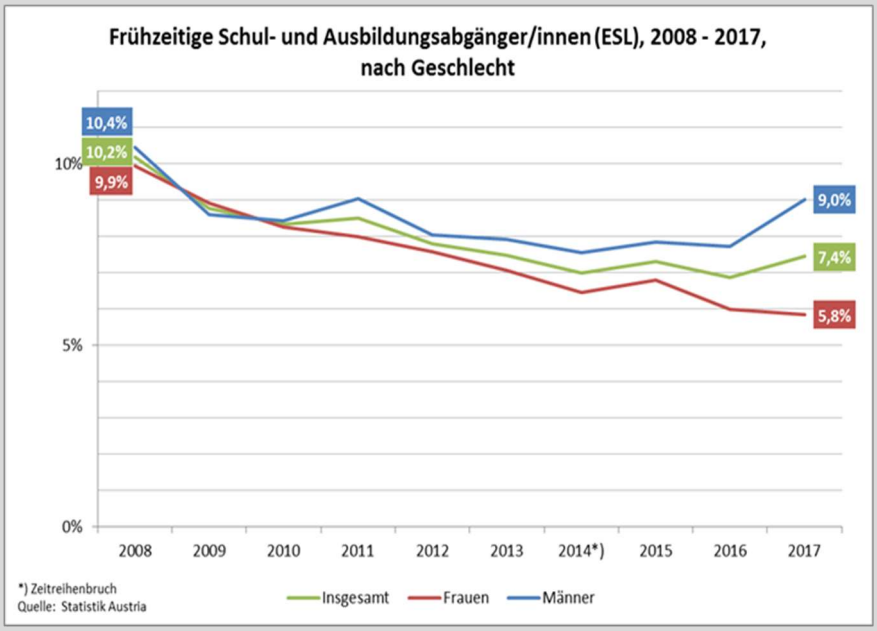
Study on the Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (ESL)

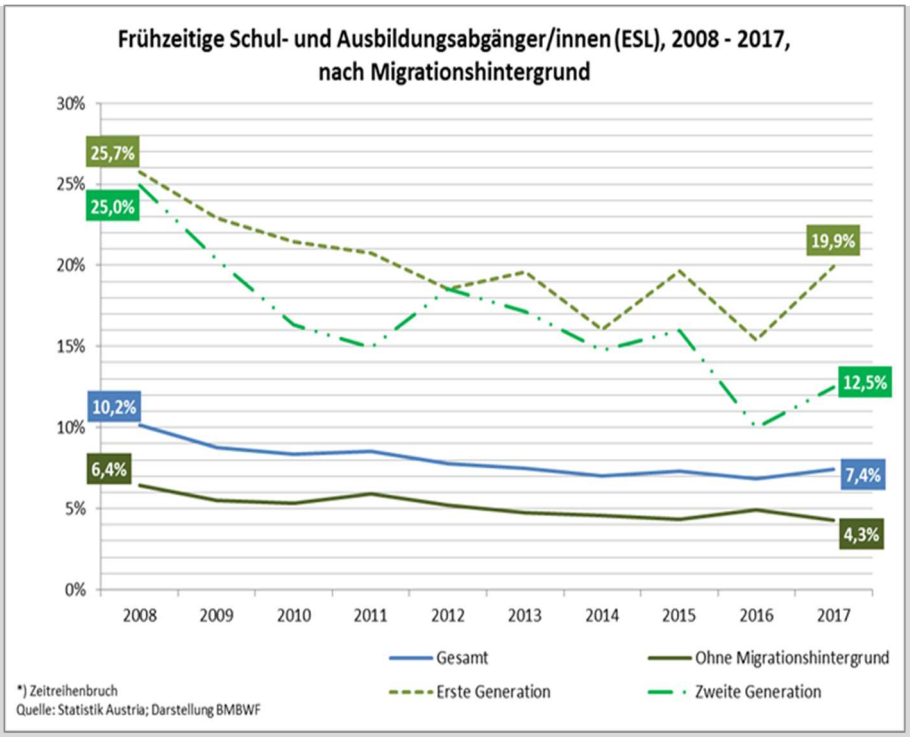
Country case study: Austria

A. Identification	
Country	Austria
Reasons for selection as case study	The 2011 Recommendation was quite directly linked to the development of a national ESL strategy, which was formulated in 2012 and renewed in 2016. The strategy shows clear signs of influence by EU policy, including the use of prevention, intervention and compensation measures. Austria also has a well-established national ESL monitoring mechanism. Degree of influence of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools, and engagement with the EU agenda: **High**[317].
Date and location of country workshop	4 March 2019, Vienna.
Organisations participating in country workshop	• Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research • Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection • Vienna University of Economics and Business (Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien) • Austrian PES (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS) • BundesKost (organisation working with young people, funded by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection)

[317] The definitions used to classify countries are:

- High level (H) - Evidence of a direct alignment of national ESL strategies with the 2011 Recommendation, and with the corresponding measures in the EU policy framework
- Medium level (M) - General consistency in aims and approach between the 2011 Recommendation and national measures, but drawing on a wider range of influences
- Low level (L) - Little or no evidence of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policy.

B. Country context regarding ESL	
Evolution of ESL rates since 2011	ESL rates in Austria are low by EU comparison and policymakers attribute the relatively advantageous position of Austria to the country's focus on preventative actions relating to ESL in recent years, in addition to a focus on quality of teaching and the introduction of youth coaching, which has been carried out on a national level since 2013. ESL rates have been falling in Austria since 2011, although the past year or so has seen an increase, which may be attributable to the increased presence of migrants and refugees in Austria since 2015. See the figure below, which breaks the rate down by sex. The 2018 figure, which was published in March 2019, was 7.2%, a slight fall on the previous year.  The effect of migration can be seen very clearly in this next graph, which breaks the rate down by migration background. The rate is highest for first generation migrants (and for boys in particular), and is rising. It is also high for second generation migrants. Those with no migrant background have the lowest rate of all, and this rate is not increasing.



Specific national challenges and priorities on ESL	The main challenges for ESL in Austria include the fact that there is no separate budget for the implementation of the Austrian national ESL strategy, and that there is little room for manoeuvre on this, as the ESL rate is Austria is relatively low by European comparison. Further, there could be better and more systematic engagement in schools, especially in light of the fact that certain types of schools experience higher ESL rates than others. Migration represents a very specific challenge for Austria and therefore more concentration of policy and resources in this area would be beneficial. As noted above, foreign-born students are more likely to leave school early than Austrian-born students. In its country-specific recommendations for 2017, the Commission notes that in 2015, foreign-born pupils were three times more likely to leave school before completing upper secondary education than Austrian-born pupils, and that the integration challenge also affects Austrian born children of immigrants. Furthermore, Austria faces challenges to integrate a large number of asylum seekers and refugees into its education system. Many stakeholders are involved in implementing the ESL strategy, but more could be done at school level. There are structural issues around how the school system functions that need to be addressed by national policy. Whole-day schools would help, according to interviewees and workshop participants: this policy is being gradually rolled out across the country.

	The choice of education/training/career paths in Austria is very complex and this can be problematic for young people who are unsure, at risk of being excluded from the system, and/or do not have appropriate support from their families.
Recommendations from EU level on ESL	Since 2012, the European Commission has been recommending that Austria "Improve the educational achievements of disadvantaged young people, in particular those from a migrant background" in the context of the Annual Growth Survey and the country-specific recommendations. CSR 2 in 2017 stated that Austria should "Improve the educational achievements of disadvantaged young people, in particular those from a migrant background". However, the Country Report for Austria for the European Semester 2018 states "Austria's policy response on education did so far not lead to improved outcomes. International testing shows that the performance of disadvantaged students and those with migrant background has deteriorated."

C. Key national policies on ESL	
Main organisations responsible for ESL policy	A range of institutions are involved in trying to prevent early school leaving, bringing young people back into education or integrating them into the labour market and providing social and vocational support. On a national level the key institutional actors are the Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Konsumentenschutz, BMASGK) and the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung BMBWF). The Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS), the Federal Social Office (Bundesamt für Soziales und Behindertenwesen – Sozialministeriumservice, BSB) as well as the social partners all have a prominent role. National measures are complemented by measures devised at the level of the Austrian provinces (Bundesländer). The two ministries (BMASGK and BMBWF) cooperate closely on the implementation of the Austrian national ESL strategy. The focus of BMASGK is on the implementation of compulsory education and training (Ausbildungspflicht) and the youth coaching programme. There is also an apprenticeship coaching scheme for young people at risk of dropping out of the dual system of education and training. The ongoing reforms of the Ministry of Education aim to improve learning and teaching environments in general (including language and psychosocial support) as a measure of prevention for pupils at risk.

Mechanisms for monitoring ESL	Comprehensive data on ESL is collected by Statistics Austria for the purpose of submitting to Eurostat. National data on ESL is also provided by BibEr (Bildungsbezogenes Erwerbskarrierenmonitoring) from Statistics Austria, which gives a more in-depth picture of ESL in Austria. Regular national education reporting in the form of a national education report is a core task of the Federal Institute of Educational Research, Innovation and Development of the Austrian School Sector (Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens, BIFIE). The report is written by experts of the Austrian education research landscape and issued since 2009 every three years. The report aims to serve as an empirical and scientific basis for evidence-based decisions. Topics are analysed and discussed on the basis of available data and research results.
Comprehensive strategy	Austria has had a policy of trying to prevent and reduce early school leaving for many years, pre-dating the Council Recommendation. It therefore views itself as something of a role model for other countries in this area. The Recommendation did help to bring everything together in one place, however the Recommendation is considered by many to not go far enough in the Austrian context. The Austrian national strategy for the prevention of early school leaving (Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen (Aus-) Bildungsabbruchs) was first developed in 2012 by the then Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in cooperation with the then Federal Ministry of Economy, Families and Youth, the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection and the social partners. It was most recently updated in 2016 alongside a new Education and Training Act (Ausbildungspflichtgesetz, APflG), which obliges every person under the age of 18 to attend another school or attend vocational training after compulsory schooling from 1 July 2017. This effectively raises the age of leaving compulsory education from 15 to 18. It will be fully operational, after three annual school intakes, in 2020 and by that time it is expected that it will have covered 15,000 young people. The national strategy rests on three planks: prevention, intervention and compensation, in line with the Recommendation, and contains a range of measures to help young people to successfully complete their education. It advocates the interlocking of systems, schools and individual students, in order to ensure a coordinated focus across all of the

	three planks. It covers both general and vocational education and training.
Specific measures: prevention	Improving the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a focus in Austria, even though it is not formally included in the national ESL strategy. ECEC has been made compulsory and free of charge in order to better reach groups at risk, such as migrants. This corresponds to section 2.1.1 in the annex of the Recommendation. Ensuring that children acquire basic competences in school is a key priority. Young people from a migrant or disadvantaged background are also a focus for the national strategy. This follows European Commission recommendations to Austria and point 3 of the Recommendation. The Austrian government is also trying to ensure that children do not have to repeat classes, as research has shown that this can contribute to ESL. Another focus is VET provision, as cited in section 1 of the annex to the Recommendation. There are several projects run by vocational/commercial schools to help students to compensate for the lack of basic competences („Diagnosechecks"). The government also provides targeted information to young people and helps them to find out what their strengths are and what they might be able to do in the future. These initiatives are rolled out in conjunction with the social partners. One specific measure is career counselling (ibobb: Information, Beratung, Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf). Austria's dual system of education and training, resting on apprenticeships, is held to function very well, although matching the interests of young people with the needs of the economy is not always straightforward. All schools must publish a strategy that sets out how they support their students, and this can include measures to prevent ESL, although this is not compulsory. It is also difficult to monitor whether strategies are being implemented effectively. The **youth coaching** (Jugendcoaching) measure is seen as a key prevention tool. The scheme requires teachers to identify students at risk and to refer them to coaches who, with the help of other professionals, support the young people according to their needs. The coaching continues during job search. The coaching aims to bring together families, schools, training bodies and business in order to help young people to plan their own trajectory from school into the labour market. Those at risk of

	leaving school early or who do not have any educational qualifications receive additional support. The measure involves a three-stage process, comprising an initial consultation with the individual, a more detailed advisory meeting at which a personal plan is drawn up, and a third case management stage at which concrete measures such as training and experience interventions are put into place, and medium- and long-term goals are set.
Specific measures: intervention	There is a strong focus on the school environment and on targeted attention for individuals at risk of ESL. Early warning systems are in place, seeking to identify individuals at risk, with an obligation to engage with these individuals. A holistic approach, involving all stakeholders, including partners, is a feature of intervention measures. There are also ESF-funded projects that target schoolchildren in the 9th year in commercial schools (kaufmännische Schulen), coaching in German and helping with study skills. The development of all-day schooling is also seen as a way of supporting those at risk of ESL. Other relevant measures include compulsory mediation in cases where there is a risk of early leaving from education and training, and a range of measures to support teachers in diverse classrooms, such as providing German/other language dictionaries for all school students, as far as practicable, and initiatives to help teachers to deal sensitively with multi-language classes.
Specific measures: compensation	The Austrian national strategy focuses specifically on compensation measures. There are a range of ESF-funded projects that focus on enabling teachers to give extra coaching to schoolchildren who have had difficulties at school and who need extra help to gain the qualifications that they need. There is also a focus on children from a migrant background. There are also measures to support young people who have left school without any formal qualifications, enabling them to gain a school qualification. There are also measures to ensure that young people gain an apprenticeship place if they want it. Production Schools (**Produktionsschulen)** are an important part of Austrian compensation policy, preparing young people to enter apprenticeships or regular dual training. Another key compensation measure is the **Adult Education Initiative** (Erwachsenenbildung), which helps individuals to catch up on school education and pass compulsory school exams. Support is tailored to the individual and coaching is given depending on individual circumstances, learning abilities and qualifications/exams needed.

D. Influence of the 2011 Recommendation and other EU tools on ESL	
Relevance of the Recommendation to national challenges	The 2011 Recommendation, the headline target, and the European toolkit for schools are seen as relevant to the ESL challenges faced by Austria. The Commission is seen as having prepared the Recommendation very well, taking into account the differences in this policy area between Member States. At that time, Austria had an ESL rate of over 10%, and has reduced this since. Austria took note of the policy framework contained in the Recommendation and used it to shape its own national strategy. The supporting tools are in general not discussed to any detailed degree by those involved in the management of ESL in Austria. Overall, however, the exchange of good practice examples and mutual learning are seen as very useful. The overall view is that the existing tools available at EU level to help Member States to manage ESL seem to have worked very well. More can always be done, but it also comes down to funding at national level, and the Austrian national ESL strategy does not have its own funding stream from the Austrian government. As noted above, the Austrian ESL rate has fallen since 2011, although it is difficult to pinpoint with any accuracy the specific influence of the Recommendation. However, the national ESL strategy is based on the Recommendation, and contains a wide range of measures under the three pillars, which are seen as having had a positive impact on reducing ESL. The Recommendation can also help to maintain awareness of ESL, as there are still many young people in need of help and/or a second change in terms of education and training, in order to be able to reach their potential in the labour market.
Influence / impacts of the Recommendation and other EU tools on national ESL policy, including examples	Overall, the Recommendation has been very influential, in that it has guided and shaped Austria's national ESL strategy. The national strategy follows the Recommendation closely and is based on the three pillars set out in the Recommendation – prevention, intervention and compensation. It should be noted, however, that many of the policy areas covered by the Recommendation were already in place in Austria, and it was a question of bringing things into one place and structuring policy and practice, aligning it to the structure of the Recommendation. The Recommendation has also been useful in terms of keeping ESL at the forefront of the debate, ensuring that it was a

continuing focus for politicians and that even though there was a national strategy in place, more needed to be done.

At the time, in 2011, the influence of the Recommendation was arguably greater, but with time, it has become less visible, as Austria has its own national ESL strategy. However, the view from the experts contacted for this study was that there is a lasting impact of the Recommendation, as it has completely shaped Austria's national strategy. The stakeholders in Austria are still aware of the Recommendation, although it has been eight years since it was issued, and those involved in ESL in Austria are in general and understandably very much concerned with their own immediate and specific issues in relation to ESL.

Some workshop participants who have been involved with ESL at EU level are aware of the other EU tools, for example the ET 2020 Thematic Working Groups, which were not only influential in terms of exchange of good practice and benchmarking, but also something in which Austria participated quite strongly in terms of providing research and statistical support.

The two Thematic Working Groups on ESL (2013 and 2015) were judged by to be useful and influential in shaping Austrian national policy. Other EU-level activities in the ESL field, such as annual conferences, were judged to be useful.

All in all, the Austrian government has had good cooperation with the Commission on the subject of ESL.

The main contribution of the Recommendation in Austria has been to organise existing policies and interventions under a common framework. This has given ESL a higher and more coherent profile in the country. Building on this, good coordination between the ministries and other actors has been developed, and data collection has been streamlined in order to support the strategy.

ESF funds are very important to Austria in the ESL area, as they support many initiatives. Therefore, the ESIF ex-ante conditionalities are very important in the Austrian context for those who work in this area and are applying for EU funding, and arguably more important in terms of influence than the Recommendation. In the Thematic Working Groups on ESL, it was made very clear that these ex-ante conditionalities needed to be met in order to receive money for ESF-related projects in the ESL field.

	Applications for ESF funding from Austria contain measures relating to ESL and compensation-related projects receive a relatively high level of ESF funds. In addition, the project targeting schoolchildren in the 9th year in commercial schools (kaufmännische Schulen), offering coaching in German and helping with study skills, seen as an intervention measure, is also funded by the ESF. It is difficult to say whether the ex-ante conditionalities have been useful in influencing policy formation, although the fact that ESL-related measures need to be included in proposals for ESF funds for projects means that ESL is kept at the forefront of political consciousness and is maybe influential in that way.
Barriers and success factors for the implementation of the Recommendation and other EU tools	**Success factors** 1. There is very good cooperation between the different ministries in the area of ESL and strong commitment on the part of the social ministry, which is seen as a real success factor in the implementation of the Recommendation and the national ESL strategy. 2. There has also been a strong focus on system change, in the form of all-day schools, which are being rolled out across the country, and an overhaul of ESL support systems. 3. There is a good statistical basis in Austria, which helps to monitor progress and movement in ESL rates. 4. There are a range of measures that operate on the level of individual schools, which means that support can be tailored to individual school circumstances. This incorporates a range of guidance measures that can be discussed with individual schoolchildren. **Barriers** 1. There is no separate budget for the implementation of the Austrian national ESL strategy, and that there is little room for manoeuvre on this, as the ESL rate is Austria is relatively low by European comparison. 2. There could be better and more systematic engagement in schools, especially in light of the fact that certain types of schools experience higher ESL rates than others. 3. Migration represents a very specific challenge for Austria and there needs to be more concentration of policy and resources in this area. Foreign-born students are much more likely to leave school early than Austrian-born students. Furthermore, Austria faces challenges to integrate a large number of asylum seekers and refugees into its education system. 4. A further challenge is that those that have not yet been reached by policies are a 'hard core' that are difficult to reach, often suffering from multiple disadvantage.
Degree of engagement of the	

country in EU level activities linked to ESL and use of outputs and outcomes	There have been two relevant Thematic Working Groups on ESL (in 2013 and 2015) in which Austria has participated, with collaborative work at EU level in this area beginning in 2010/2011. In these, the Commission led a discussion about what can be done to prevent ESL, based on a policy framework using the three pillars of prevention, intervention and compensation. The first Thematic Working Group looked at what could be done at national level to prevent ESL in terms of education policy. The second focused on individual schools, taking a whole school approach to reducing ESL. These Thematic Working Groups are held to have been important and influential in helping Austria to think about the issues connected to ESL. Austrian delegates participated fully in these meetings. Overall, and in the context of the work being done at EU level on this subject, there has been a lot of work undertaken in Austria on ESL over the past 10 years, looking also at OECD policy work and statistics, and taking a systemic view of how to reduce ESL.
Degree to which the EU tools have contributed to efficiency of implementation of ESL policy	The ESL rate has decreased since 2011 and so although it is difficult to prove any exact correlation between that and the EU tools in the area of ESL, there has been a positive development since that time. The greatest challenge is how to implement learning in a national context, and the Thematic Working Groups were deemed to have been helpful in this sense, providing practical examples, which may have some transferable elements.
Added value of EU ESL policy and tools in the country	It is difficult to know in which direction Austrian policy would have taken in this area if the Recommendation and the related tools had not been in place. In general, although it is not as visible now as it was in 2011, the view is that it was useful to be able to refer to its existence and that it and its related tools have helped to keep ESL at the forefront of the political debate.

E. Need for future EU level support	
Key suggestions for EU support needed in the future (e.g. tools, initiatives, target groups, thematic areas)	The Recommendation is seen as comprehensive since it covers all the main relevant areas. The general view is that no key elements are missing and that it corresponds closely to Austrian national ESL policy. Domestic violence is an issue that needs to be addressed in more detail in the context of ESL. In addition, bullying, both within and outside of schools, could also be addressed in more

	detail, also in the context of cyberbullying and the widespread use of social media. Workshop participants noted that it was very helpful for Austria to work with Paul Downes, who is also working with the Commission on ESL. His suggestion of encouraging more cooperation between the policy fields of education, health and social affairs was felt to be very useful in the Austrian context, drawing together themes such as school performance, psychosocial health, the school environment and quality assurance. Likewise, his ideas of developing a whole school approach and cross-sectoral cooperation were also felt to be very helpful in the Austrian approach to managing ESL.
Types of future policy instruments which would be most helpful	There is no appetite for a new Recommendation, or even significant revisions of the existing Recommendation. Overall, the sharing of good practice and benchmarking is seen as very useful. One example thought to be useful is that of the city of Antwerp, which has showcased its truancy coaches system as part of the Thematic Working Group on ESL[318]. Another example came from France, in the form of its Second Chance Schools project, also showcased during peer learning[319]. Peer learning in general is seen as a very useful activity. The Thematic Working Groups were seen as very valuable and something that would definitely be worth repeating in the future. One way of developing this may be to have smaller groups and put countries together which have similar types of education systems and ESL policies, or which face similar types of challenges. This would mean that they would be more useful and that the participating countries would be able to learn more from each other in an international context. Another useful innovation would be to broaden the thematic basis of the working groups, for example taking the theme of disadvantage in education, which could include ESL, migration and disability. This would enable a broader discussion to take place, which may be very useful in the ESL context and would help Austria to refine its policies in the education area more broadly. A specific Austrian working group would also be very useful, although probably outside the remit of the EU.
Other comments	Austria is doing well in comparison to other EU countries in dealing with ESL. Nevertheless, increased migration and refugee

[318] http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/report-belgium-study_en.pdf
[319] http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2011-2013/esl/france-esl_en.pdf

	flows into Austria have increased the overall ESL rate slightly in the past four years. Austria also struggles to reach the hard core of school drop-outs: this is a very difficult task that requires complex interventions, including therapy and other support measures. Nevertheless, a broad range of measures are in place in the three pillars, and Austria is also undertaking wide-ranging policy reform, in terms of raising the school age to 18 and introducing whole-day schools, which will no doubt have an impact on ESL rates in the future. Priorities for the future include more focus on prevention measures and specifically more focus on and investment in ECEC. In order to reach the 'hard core' of early school leavers, it would help to direct resources towards support systems, including social and psychological support in schools. Cooperation between health and social services could also be strengthened in the light of increasing psychosocial problems among young people.

Study on the Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (ESL)

Country case study: Bulgaria

A. Identification	
Country	**Bulgaria**
Reasons for selection as case study	The key selection criteria for country workshops have been the different challenges concerning ESL, different progress in ESL rates and different levels of engagement in EU-related actions at the country level. Bulgaria is classified as a *single structure* type of education system: education is provided from the beginning to the end of compulsory schooling, with no transition between primary and lower secondary education, and with general education for all pupils.[320] Bulgaria has an ESL rate that is above the EU average, which has deteriorated during 2011-2016. The national strategy for tackling ESL in Bulgaria is closely aligned with the 2011 Recommendation, and sets out a range of policy measures corresponding with prevention, intervention and compensation. The evidence gathered for this study suggests that the main difficulties have arisen from the implementation of the strategy, due to system-level issues (e.g. relating to curricula and teacher education). In comparison with other countries, the degree of influence of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools, and engagement with the EU agenda was estimated to be at a relatively high level in Bulgaria.[321]
Date and location of country workshop	13 February, 2019 Ministry of Education and Science, Sofia, Bulgaria

[320] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2014a) *The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: schematic diagrams.* Available online: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/education_structures_EN.pdf

[321] The definitions used to classify countries are:
- High level (H) - Evidence of a direct alignment of national ESL strategies with the 2011 Recommendation, and with the corresponding measures in the EU policy framework
- Medium level (M) - General consistency in aims and approach between the 2011 Recommendation and national measures, but drawing on a wider range of influences
- Low level (L) - Little or no evidence of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policy.

Organisations participating in country workshop	Ministry of Education and Science Ministry of Labour and Social Policy State Agency for Child Protection National Agency for Vocational Education and Training Sofia Municipality (Directorate "Education") Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities Open Society Institute – Sofia Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Department for Information and Improvement of Teachers at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" Agency for Social Assistance Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance "AMALIPE" Centre for Vocational Training at the Bulgarian Industrial Association

B. Country context regarding ESL	
Evolution of ESL rates since 2011	The national target in relation to ESL was set in the first National Reform Programme adopted in 2011 – 11% share of early school leavers by 2020. The National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the Period 2014-2020[322] provides for reducing "*the share of early leavers from the educational system aged 18-24 from 12.5% in 2012 to less than 11% in 2020*". The main challenge indicated by the key informants during the first stage of the study is that the ESL indicator measures the consequences. From a policy perspective, other indicators should also be monitored to follow up short-term results and effects of policy interventions. The *drop-out rate* and *net enrolment rate* are similar indicators. They also do not give a clear picture because those who move abroad cannot be precisely traced and measured, as some of them continue their education abroad or some parents just use this as an explanation to avoid sanctions. In the methodology used by the National Statistical Institute, the drop-outs statistic is presented by the following indicators: *students and drop-outs by reasons and level of education* and *students I–VIII grade*; and *drop-outs from general and special schools by statistical regions, districts and municipalities*. For these indicators, *students who have left school* are defined as students who were enrolled at the beginning of the previous school year but before its end (due to some of the above listed reasons) had left school.

[322] National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020 (Национална стратегия за учене през целия живот 2014-2020 г.), available in English at http://www.strategy.bg/FileHandler.ashx?fileId=9418.

However, those who have left school cannot be treated as drop-outs from the educational system, because they could continue their education during the next school year and those who are under 16 years of age are obliged to continue their education (to a great extent these two groups usually overlap). The drop-out rate measures the share of students who left school before the official end of the school year. It could be used as an intermediate output result, while *ESL is a long-term impact indicator* of education policies and prevention of school leaving.

Another indicator used by the National Statistical Institute is the *net enrolment rate* of the population in the education system. For this indicator, group coefficients are calculated as a percentage of the number of students aged 3-6, 7-10, 11-18, 19-20, 19-21 and 19-23 years out of the whole population of the same age groups.

According to official press releases of the Ministry of Education and Science of 5 July 2017, 206,378 children and pupils aged 5 to 18 have dropped out of the education system or have never been enrolled in it[323].

The ESL rate in Bulgaria has increased from 11.8% in 2011 to 12.9% in 2014, to 13.4% in 2015 and to 13.8% in 2016[324]. 2017 marked a decrease in the ESL rate with more than one percentage point to 12.7%.

The 2016 ESL rate in Bulgaria is 2.8 percentage points above the national target set in the National Strategy "Bulgaria 2020" (11%), while the 2017 ESL rate is only 1.7% above the national target. If Bulgaria continues to improve at this rate, it should be able to reach its national target by 2020.

The main drivers behind the negative trend in the period 2011-2015 are the consequences of the economic and financial crisis (especially for people from disadvantaged groups and Roma), migration and the ineffectiveness of some measures, early marriages among Roma population (especially among women) which lead to drop out of school at the age of 12 or 13.[325]

Besides the economic factors, experts[326] explain ESL by cultural patterns and characteristics of some of the sub-groups of Roma minorities, for whom sustainable participation in education has been challenging. This pattern is more common in the case of more conservative and patriarchal Roma communities, i.e.

[323] https://www.mon.bg/bg/news/2730; https://www.mon.bg/bg/news/2829

[324] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=t2020_40&plugin=1

[325] Boyadjieva, P., Milenkova, V., Gornev, G., Petkova, K, Nenkova, D. (2012). *The LLL hybrid: Policy, Institutions and Learners in Lifelong Learning in Bulgaria.* Sofia.

[326] According to the key stakeholders interviewed in the first stage of the research (2018).

	known as "wanderers". The extent to which the local community and parents acknowledge education as a value is also a significant factor. Therefore, a factor that correlates with ESL is the level of parents' education. Children with parents with lower secondary or primary education are more likely to drop-out from school. The main drivers behind the recently observed positive trends are some introduced measures, the most important of which are: a mandatory two-year pre-school education before entering first grade in school[327]; all-day long training for all pupils in 1st-4th grades; measures related to Roma communities[328]; significant public attention to ESL[329]; – change in the financial model[330].
Specific national challenges and priorities on ESL	The National Statistical Institute data show that the ESL rate in Bulgaria is characterised by large differences between regions, between urban and rural areas, and within minority groups. ESL is low only in the South-West region (5.7%), which includes the capital Sofia. The share of early school leavers is above the national average for all other five NUTS regions, reaching the alarming level of 23.1% in the North-West region. ESL especially affects the Roma population. A survey by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) estimates that 67% of Roma children are early school leavers[331]. The European Commission regularly acknowledges the high regional variations and urban-rural ESL disparities in Bulgaria and explicitly highlights that "*it is particularly high among Roma*"[332]. According to the key informants who participated in the research, the main challenges related to ESL in Bulgaria are: migration abroad; insufficient number of social workers; parents who do not accept Roma children at school; alienation of

[327] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014). Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe. 2014 Edition, page 72.
[328] Ibid.
[329] Ibid.
[330] Ibid.
[331] FRA, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2016), *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey ,EU-MIDIS II: Roma – Selected findings*, available at: http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings
[332] European Commission (2016). Education and Training Monitor 2016 Bulgaria; page 3; https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2016-bg_en.pdf
European Commission (2017). COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Country Report Bulgaria 2017 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, Brussels, 28.2.2017 SWD(2017) 68 final/3; page 34.

	students when they do not perceive school as an attractive place to go to. To conclude, the reasons for ESL are complex, and so should be the measures for tackling them. Applying a combination of different measures for overcoming the risk factors behind each case is still not a well-developed practice, although it is considered a national priority. With regard to this, a system was developed recently, which should register and trace the needs of and the support provided to every student at risk.
Recommendations from EU level on ESL	Since 2014, the Council of the European Union recommended Bulgaria to improve the quality of mainstream education, in particular for Roma. Specifically, in two consecutive years (2014[333] and 2015[334]) the Council recommended the adoption of a School Education Act and inclusion of Roma students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The recommendations emphasised integration as well as supporting low skilled youth into employment. For instance, in 2016, the Council recommended to "*reinforce and integrate social services and active labour market policies, in particular for the long-term unemployed and young people not in employment, education or training*."[335] However, the European Commission in its Report for the European Semester 2018 recognises that "*to improve equity in education and Roma inclusion, Bulgaria has started implementing an inclusive education reform*."[336] Bulgaria's Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers 2013-2020[337] is part of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) ex ante conditionalities for implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative. The Strategy is part of a strategic framework that ensures

[333] European Commission, Recommendation for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on Bulgaria's 2014 national reform programme and delivering a Council opinion on Bulgaria's 2014 convergence programme; Brussels, 2.6.2014; COM (2014) 403 final.

[334] European Commission, Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the 2015 National Reform Programme of Bulgaria and delivering a Council opinion on the 2015 Convergence Programme of Bulgaria; Brussels, 13.5.2015; COM(2015) 253 final.

[335] European Commission, Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the 2016 national reform programme of Bulgaria and delivering a Council opinion on the 2016 convergence programme of Bulgaria; Brussels, 18.5.2016; COM(2016) 323 final.

[336] European Commission (2018). 2018 European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011; available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2018-european-semester-country-report-communication_en.pdf.

[337] Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers 2013-2020 (Стратегия за намаляване дела на преждевременно напусналите образователната система 2013-2020), available in Bulgarian at http://www.strategy.bg/FileHandler.ashx?fileId=4126.

	sustainable labor market integration of young people, especially those who are not in employment, education or training, of young people at risk of social exclusion and of youth from marginalized groups, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

C. Key national policies on ESL	
Main organisations responsible for ESL policy	A coordination Mechanism for implementation of the Strategy for Reducing the share of Early School Leavers has been established in Bulgaria (June 2018)[338]. The Ministry of Education and Science is in charge of the national ESL policy. Horizontal coordination and cooperation with regard to reducing the ESL is performed pursuant to the cited Mechanism. It involves the following authorities: the Council of Ministers, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, State Agency for Child Protection, Agency for Social Assistance, regional and local authorities, etc. The responsibilities of institutions at each level are also defined by a strategic framework at local level which transposes the measures and make them more concrete at local level[339]. According to one of the key interviewees who participated in the research, the Mechanism is still too mechanical and a real synergy between actors is necessary. Additional qualification of teams working with pupils at risk of dropping out is needed. Furthermore, specialised knowledge and approach for handling individual ESL situations should be developed as well.
Mechanisms for monitoring ESL	The National Statistical Institute publishes data each year on the number of students and drop-outs disaggregated by reasons for leaving and level of education. The monitoring process is still not well developed. Information on individual cases is difficult to obtain. In addition, information

[338] Decree of Council of Ministers No. 100 of 8 June 2018 on the establishment and operation of a Mechanism for joint work of the institutions on enrollment and inclusion in the educational system of children and pupils who are at compulsory preschool and school age (Постановление на Министерския съвет № 100 от 8 юни 2018 Г. за създаване и функциониране на Механизъм за съвместна работа на институциите по обхващане и включване в образователната система на деца и ученици в задължителна предучилищна и училищна възраст); promulgated: State Gazette No 50 of 15.06.2018; available in Bulgarian at http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=127310.

[339] Ibid, footnote 326.

	about individual students, their status, problems and measures taken for addressing each case are not available. A monitoring system for tracking students in risk of early school leaving is in a process of being developed.[340] A systematic approach for collecting and analysing data on ESL is established at national and regional level. A web-based register for monitoring the movement of children and pupils was introduced as from academic year 2012/2013. It records the number of pupils in kindergartens, general and vocational high schools, culture schools and special schools. Data are entered by schools and reflected in the register in real time. Access to it is provided to the Ministry of Education and Science, the Regional Educational Inspectorates, to municipal administrations, and to school and kindergarten principals.[341] Evaluations of the effectiveness of the existing policies for tackling ESL are very limited at this stage, since the most substantial measures were introduced in the last 3 to 4 years. There are several policies and measures which contribute to reducing the ESL. However, as long as there is not a systematic impact assessment, the extent to which these measures are effective remains undetermined at present.
Comprehensive strategy	The national Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers in Bulgaria (2013-2020) was adopted in 2013. Its strategic objective is "*ensuring equal access and support for development and inclusion in the system of pre-school and school education of children and young people as a prerequisite for equal social inclusion and full personal realization and participation in the development of local communities and the country*". The Strategy defines 5 operational objectives: • Development, implementation and monitoring of a comprehensive and integrated policy for widening the scope of the education system on the basis of cross-sectoral cooperation with a clear division of responsibilities and interaction between different levels of government; • Identifying the risk factors for early school leaving with the aim of limiting their consequences; • Encouraging the inclusion of risk groups in education and development of inclusive education; • Increasing the diversity and effectiveness of mechanisms and incentives for inclusion in education and training; • Building broad public confidence and support for prevention policies and reducing early school leaving.

[340] Early warning system for monitoring the risk of dropping out of children in pre-school and school education. (Система за ранно предупреждение за риск от отпадане на деца и ученици от предучилищното и училищното образование), https://srp.mon.bg/.
[341] Web site of the above cited Mechanism: http://back2school.mon.bg/.

	The Strategy is a comprehensive document. It covers all relevant educational sectors, including early childhood development and contains measures for prevention, intervention and compensation as well as all policy sectors and stakeholders. The Strategy is evidence-based and identifies the main factors causing early school leaving in Bulgaria. The proposed measures correspond to the specific situation in the country (at the respective territorial levels) and are aimed at groups at risk of early school leaving. The Strategy pays a special attention to the key measures related to providing access to education and improving the quality of education of children and pupils with special educational needs and those of vulnerable ethnic communities. The prevention pillar focuses on measures that should eliminate or mitigate the preconditions for early school leaving and the situations that favour it. Prevention policies and measures are targeted at education and care in early childhood to secondary level of education. Their main focus is on improving the quality of education as a prerequisite for development of the personality of each child and pupil and for avoiding early school leaving. Measures are to be implemented at school level in order to support those at risk. An early warning system should be developed in each educational institution. The Strategy also provides for identification of children and pupils at risk of early school leaving, as well as the causes or factors that are behind each case. Career counselling, guidance and financial support as a compensation policy measure are also provided for. There are planned measures for establishment of suitable conditions for helping early school leavers to reintegrate back into the education system. Furthermore, there is a functioning, albeit new, national system for validation of competences acquired through non-formal education and/or informal learning. The Strategy also provides for development of the above cited and already established Mechanism for cooperation and coordination between all stakeholders. With regard to monitoring, the Strategy sets out two groups of indicators related to: the scope of pre-school and school education (10 indicators); and, taking back on-board persons who have dropped out of the education system (1st indicator). The collected information should include quantitative and qualitative data, as well as data on specific groups of persons (including age, gender, mother tongue, education obtained, type of school attended, etc.).

	To achieve the objectives set out in the Strategy, three Action plans have been elaborated so far: for the period 2014-15; for the period 2016-17; and, for the period 2018-20. All three provide for measures in each of the three pillars: prevention (overcoming the reasons for early school leaving); intervention (creating conditions for limiting the phenomenon); and, compensation (support for reintegration). The first two Action Plans describe the Coordination Mechanism for implementation of the planned measures.
Specific measures: prevention	The key *measures* for preventing ESL provided for in the National Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers are: • Providing a positive school atmosphere; • Improving quality of education; • Ensuring access to education and improving quality of education for pupils from vulnerable groups and with special needs. *The following key priorities with regard to prevention of ESL were outlined:* • Further development of early warning system; • Further development of the system for tracing each and every pupil; • Professional development of teachers; • Career guidance and counselling; • Further development of the mechanism for collaborative work of different institutions on enrolment and retention in the education system of children and pupils in compulsory pre-school and school age; • Introducing of dual education. *Policies to Prevent Early School Leaving set in the Strategy:* • Ensuring a positive educational environment - school climate, atmosphere relationships, governance; • Improving the quality of education as a prerequisite for development the personality of each child and student and prevention of early school leaving; • Providing access to education and quality enhancement of education for children and students from vulnerable ethnic communities; • Access to quality education for children and students with special educational needs. The above listed measures, priorities and policies are part of the Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013-2020) and fully correspond to the measures included in the 2011 Recommendation.
Specific measures: intervention	According to the interviewees the key priorities with regard to intervention in tackling ESL are:

	• Additional training in Bulgarian language for children and students who do not speak Bulgarian at home; • Increasing the scope of the whole-day organisation of the school day; • Ensuring 2-years compulsory attendance of each child at kindergarten; • Provision of different extra-curricular activities; • Ensuring individual support for students at risk of dropping out; • Provision of opportunities for individual counselling on different subjects and of school personal support teams for each child or student; • Career guidance and counselling; • Developing a mechanism for collaborative work of the institutions on enrolment and retention in the education system of children and pupils in compulsory pre-school and school age; • Introducing dual education; • Introducing the subject "Inclusive education" in the initial teacher training; • Raising awareness of the benefits of education. All these measures are part of the Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013-2020) and fully correspond to the measures included in the 2011 Recommendation.
Specific measures: compensation	The key priorities for compensation with regard to ESL in Bulgaria are: • Providing literacy courses for adults; • Creating opportunities for continuing education after literacy courses; • Facilitating the procedures for recognition of a completed class, stage or grade of pupils trained abroad; • Providing opportunities for reintegration in the education system, for learning in clubs, libraries, for individual curricula; • Providing opportunities for validation of competencies for continuing education and ensuring access to the labour market; • Developing opportunities for informal learning; All these measures fully correspond to the priorities and measures included in the 2011 Recommendation.

D. Influence of the 2011 Recommendation and other EU tools on ESL	
Relevance of the Recommendation to national challenges	Early school leaving was a challenge in Bulgaria before the adoption of the 2011 Council Recommendation and the EU's Europe 2020 targets. Eurostat data show that 20 years ago, for a period of five years (2001 – 2005) one fifth of the population aged 18-24 was with lower secondary education and not in further education or training. The situation slightly improved

over the following years and 2011 was the "best" one in terms of ESL rates.

However, as mentioned above, different factors and drivers, which change over time, drive the fluctuation of ESL rates in Bulgaria. National authorities (e.g. Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, State Agency for Child Protection, Agency for Social Assistance, etc.), non-governmental organisations and employers often expressed their concerns and undertook various, and sometimes less coordinated steps to address early school leaving.

Only after 2011–2012, both public authorities and private organisations started to develop a more comprehensive and consistent response to ESL. As already mentioned above, the priorities and the measures outlined in the National Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013-2020) are aligned to the Recommendation's pillars and themes, and the new Preschool and School Education Act, adopted in 2015 (see below), legally binds all stakeholders to implement these measures.

These commonalities indicate that the ESL Recommendation provided a beneficial policy framework to inform the development of the national strategic documents and the respective legislation that address ESL in Bulgaria. In particular, the National Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013) generally mirrors the themes provided for in the Recommendation. The latter also strongly contributed to focusing and intensifying the efforts of various institutions.

More information about the commonalities between the Council's Recommendation and the legal measures on reducing the ESL applied in Bulgaria are included in the next sections of the report.

At an earlier stage, in 2009, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy proposed a National Action Plan on Employment[342] (later adopted by the Council of Ministers), which recognised the negative impacts of ESL on employment rates and its quality, and the importance of accessibility of early childhood education and care for disadvantaged families, as well as the multi-institutional approach that has to be implemented for increasing measures' effectiveness.

The themes under prevention and intervention pillars included in the Recommendation resonate most clearly with national policy-

[342] National Action Plan on Employment 2009 (Национален план за действие по заетостта през 2009 г.), adopted by the Council of Ministers on 15.01.2009; the document is available in Bulgarian at http://www.strategy.bg/FileHandler.ashx?fileId=804.

	makers in Bulgaria. They are well described in the National Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers and most of them are implemented through explicit legal provisions in the Preschool and School Education Act (2015) and in the Vocational Education and Training Act (1999). On the other hand, the participants in the country workshop agreed that the compensation themes are relevant and well developed in the Recommendation. However, they are less present and practiced at national level and need further attention. The key stakeholders who participated in the workshop generally did not identify any missing elements in the Recommendation, save some provisions or measures which are described in Section "E" of this country report. In general, the professionals who attended the workshop are of the opinion that prevention measures are of greatest priority for Bulgaria since they perceive them as being the most effective and efficient for avoiding and reducing early school leaving. The National Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers was adopted in 2013. The new Preschool and School Education Act, which legally binds stakeholders to implement the measures provided for in the Strategy, was adopted in 2015 and entered into force in August 2016. However, its provisions became effective as from 2017/2018 school year. Therefore, considering that the new Education Act has only been enforced for a limited time, and impact evaluations have not been made for this short period, it cannot be concluded at this stage whether there is a sustainable change in the education system so far.
Commonalities between the 2011 Council Recommendation and other EU tools, and national ESL policies, practices and research	The evidence gathered indicates that the 2011 Recommendation strongly influenced the development of the National Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers 2013–2020 in Bulgaria. Several provisions of the new Preschool and School Education Act (2015) were inspired by the Strategy and the Council Recommendation. The latter incentivised the greater involvement of stakeholders and intensified their efforts. It is difficult to assess Recommendation's impact on the educational practices in the country, however. This is so because the provisions of the new Education Act came into force in 2017/2018, and it is still too early for any visible or tangible outcomes. Furthermore, the practical implementation or application of many measures and good practices depend on the proactive approach of school principals, local societies and local businesses. Research in the field of ESL and the impact of the

Recommendation is very limited, which presents an additional barrier.

Commonalities between the Recommendation and national policies and practices

The workshop participants could not point out the most and the least developed prevention, intervention and compensation themes or measures in Bulgaria with a view to identifying the main commonalities with those outlined in the Recommendation. The participants made a distinction between the formal introduction of measures (e.g. through primary or secondary legislation, or through the national Strategy) and their practical implementation.

With regard to the former, there is almost complete commonality in prevention and intervention policies, whereas similarities in the compensation pillar are less vivid. The practical application of all three pillars in most cases depend on local specifics, school leaders, individual cases and skillfulness of the bodies directly involved in application of the respective measure.

With regard to ***prevention***, in particular to **"Promotion of active anti-segregation policies, such as those intended to diversify the social composition of schools in disadvantaged areas"[343]**, the new Preschool and School Education Act (2015) requires children of different ethnic backgrounds at the same age, when they are enrolled in a kindergarten, not to be grouped on the basis of their ethnicity (art. 62, paragraph 4).

A similar provision is introduced for pupils: the Act requires pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, when they are enrolled in the same grade, not to be classified in classes on the basis of their ethnicity (art. 99, paragraph 4).

These are new provisions, which fully correspond to one of the proposed prevention themes in the Council Recommendation. The repealed Public Education Act[344] did not provide for any legally binding anti-segregation measures. Therefore, the evidence indicates that the measure (promotion of active anti-segregation policies) is included in the national legislation; it is

[343] 2011 Council Recommendation, prevention pillar, policy theme 3. "Promoting active anti-segregation policies and providing additional support for schools in disadvantaged areas or with high numbers of pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds help them to diversify their social composition and enhance their educational offer. This improves the educational achievements of pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and reduces their risk of early school leaving".

[344] Закон за народната просвета (Public Education Act); promulgated State Gazette No 86/18.10.1991; repealed State Gazette No 79/13.10.2015); available in Bulgarian at https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2132585473.

implemented substantially, in a systematic way at national level, and was introduced after June 2011.

Another ***prevention*** policy example corresponds to theme **"*Measures to ensure access to high quality VET provision, including the integration of VET pathways into mainstream education, and providing VET routes into upper secondary and tertiary education*"**[345].

An amendment of the Vocational Education and Training Act in 2014 introduced the dual form of training, i.e. general education in school and vocational training both at school and at the premises of an employer. The measure is included both within national policy (on VET) and legislation; it is implemented substantially at the national level, and was introduced after June 2011.

A third ***prevention*** example is the greater involvement of employers for "**strengthening the links between schools and local labour markets, via access to high quality work experience, and employer engagement in schools**"[346].

The new Preschool and School Education Act (2015) requires educational plans to be coordinated with employers' organisations (art. 93), and employers are directly involved in the dual form of training (art. 115, paragraph 2) for strengthening the links between education and local labour markets. Similar provisions did not exist in the old Public Education Act. Therefore, the measure was included in the national legislation after June 2011 and is implemented in a systematic way at national level.

With regard to ***intervention***, one of the new themes for Bulgaria for which a measure is provided for in the national policy and legislation is promotion of "***inclusive and participatory school environments, including anti-bullying and wellbeing policies within schools***."[347] To that end, at the very beginning, the new Preschool and School Education Act

[345] 2011 Council Recommendation, prevention pillar, policy theme 7. "Strengthening high-quality vocational pathways and increasing their attractiveness and flexibility provide pupils at risk with credible alternatives to early school leaving. VET provision, which is well integrated into the overall education and training systems, allows for alternative pathways into upper secondary and tertiary education".

[346] 2011 Council Recommendation, prevention pillar, policy theme 8. "Strengthening the link between education and training systems and the employment sector, in order to emphasise the benefits of completing education for future employability. This could be in the form of work experience placements or greater employer engagement in schools and colleges".

[347] 2011 Council Recommendation, intervention pillar, policy theme 1. "Developing schools into learning communities based on a common vision for school development shared by all stakeholders, using the experience and knowledge of all, and providing an open-minded, inspiring and comfortable environment to encourage young people to continue in education and training".

states that "*Inclusive education is an integral part of the right to education*" (art. 7, paragraph 2).

Furthermore, art. 22, paragraph 2 explicitly says that State Educational Standards in the system of preschool and school education, among other things, are developed for "inclusive education". Pursuant to this provision, the Council of Ministers adopted an exhaustive Ordinance on Inclusive Education[348], which describes the State Educational Standard in this field.

In addition, a formal policy (but not yet in a legal form) document on anti-bullying measures[349] was developed in 2017 and published on the web site of the Ministry of Education and Science. Therefore, this theme is included both in national policy and legislation; its implementation started after 2011 in a systematic way at national level.

Another post 2011 ***intervention*** measure introduced in Bulgarian policy and legislation reflecting Council's recommendations is the one for "**Local or regional governance arrangements to support learners at risk of ESL, incorporating: school clusters or networks; specialist resource centres; and / or multi-disciplinary teams or hubs around schools**"[350].

Legal provisions, which could be found in the new Act (2015) but not in the old one, are those of articles 49 and 50. The former defines the functions of Support Centres for Personal Development, and the latter, those of Specialised Service Units. Both are introduced to help and support children at risk of dropping out from school, teachers and parents including through counselling and psychological support. As already mentioned, the measure was introduced after June 2011 at national level through a legal provision, which is applied at national level.

[348] Ordinance on Inclusive Education (Наредба за приобщаващото образование); adopted by the Council of Ministers Decree No 232 of 20 October 2017; promulgated: State Gazette No 86/27.10.2017; available in Bulgarian at http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=119142.

[349] Mechanism on countering harassment and violence in institutions in the system of pre-school and school education (Механизъм за противодействие на тормоза и насилието в институциите в системата на предучилищното и училищното образование); available in Bulgarian at https://mon.bg/upload/14362/Mehzm_protivodejstvie_tormoz_281217.pdf=

[350] 2011 Council Recommendation, intervention pillar, policy theme 3 "Networking with parents and other actors outside school, such as local community services, organisations representing migrants or minorities, sports and culture associations, or employers and civil society organisations, which allows for holistic solutions to help pupils at risk and eases the access to external support such as psychologists, social and youth workers, cultural and community services. This can be facilitated by mediators from the local community who are able to support communication and to reduce distrust."

At individual level, another theme within the ***intervention*** pillar that was recently introduced in Bulgaria is the opportunity for "***access to targeted individual support for learners experiencing academic, social and emotional or personal difficulties, incorporating: one-to-one academic tutoring; coaching or mentoring programmes; and/or psychological support (e.g. emotional counselling)***"[351].

Articles 174–198 (Section "*Support for personal development of children and students*") of the new Act exhaustively enumerate the type of support and the responsibilities of all tasked with its delivering. Similar provisions cannot be found in the old Public Education Act. Although children at risk of early school leaving received various types of individual support and counselling services prior to the new Preschool and School Education Act, they were not systematically provided for in a legal act. The measures are legally stipulated and are implemented at national level.

Concerning ***compensation*** measures, as mentioned above, they are relevant for Bulgaria and all of them are implemented to some degree, but not as extensively as the other two types of measures under the prevention and intervention pillars.

For example, one of the Recommendation's themes proposes "***Provision of 'second chance' education and other high-quality alternative education programmes for early school leavers, offering flexible and inclusive provision and combining social and academic learning***."[352]

A similar measure is not legally introduced in Bulgaria, but was implemented through a project managed by the Ministry of Education and Science (2016-2018)[353]. It aimed at the creation of an environment that promotes literacy, and organisational opportunities for lifelong learning.

Within this project, beneficiaries could attend adult literacy courses and adult learning courses for acquiring competencies equivalent to those for 5th, 6th and 7th grades. The measure has

[351] 2011 Council Recommendation, intervention pillar, policy theme 1. "Mentoring supports individual pupils to overcome specific academic, social or personal difficulties. Either in one-to-one approaches (mentoring) or in small groups (tutoring), pupils receive targeted assistance, often provided by education staff by community members or by their peers".

[352] 2011 Council Recommendation, compensation pillar, policy theme 1. "Successful second chance education programmes, which provide learning environments which respond to the specific needs of early school leavers, recognise their prior learning and support their well-being. These programmes are different from schools in both organisational and pedagogical approaches and are often characterised by small learning groups, by personalised, age-appropriate and innovative teaching and by flexible educational pathways. As far as possible, they should be easily accessible and free of charge".

[353] New Chance for Success Project (Проект „Нов шанс за успех"), web site: http://novshans.mon.bg/.

not been implemented in a systematic way because the "second chance" was not compulsory, but available on demand.

Lastly, a ***compensation*** measure which corresponds to a theme of the Council Recommendation (**Systems to support the recognition and validation of prior learning, including validation of competences achieved in non-formal and informal learning**)[354], which was introduced in Bulgaria 20 years ago is article 40 "*Validation of professional knowledge, skills and competencies*" of the Vocational Education and Training Act (amended in 2014 and 2016).

It sets out the rules and procedures for recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. Pursuant to the cited norm, in November 2014, the Minister for Education and Science issued an Ordinance on the rules and conditions for validation of vocational knowledge, skills and competences[355]. Furthermore, Chapter 8 (articles 165-170) of the new Preschool and School Education Act regulates recognition, comparison and validation of learning outcomes – themes which were not subject to regulation by the old Public Education Act.

Conclusions

In summary, the Council Recommendation had a strong impact and influence on the national policies and legislation designed to tackle early school leaving. Most measures are implemented at national level (e.g. through legal acts), but still there are initiatives (e.g. projects) inspired by local communities or by specific cases, which are not realised in a systematic way.

Although some measures were known and applied well before 2011, most of them were introduced after the Council Recommendation was adopted. Evidence for its influence (e.g. examples of documents which mention or refer to it are given in the text below). Nonetheless, it is still too early to conclude if and what would be the real impacts and outcomes of the adopted measures.

The 2011 Council Recommendation and the EU tools designed to support its application helped to tackle ESL in Bulgaria in other

[354] 2011 Council Recommendation, compensation pillar, policy theme 3. "Recognising and validating prior learning, including competences achieved in non-formal and informal learning, which improves the confidence and self-esteem of young people and facilitates their re-entry into education. It can motivate them to continue education and training, helps them to identify their talents and to make better career choices".

[355] Ordinance No 2 of 13.11.2014 of the Minister for Education and Science on the rules and conditions for validation of vocational knowledge, skills and competences (Наредба № 2 от 13 ноември 2014 г. на Министъра на образованието и науката за условията и реда за валидиране на професионални знания, умения и компетентности); promulgated: State Gazette No 96/21.11.2014; available in Bulgarian at http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=89754.

	ways too. For example, the Recommendation inspired and fostered the development of the above mentioned "*mechanism for joint work of the institutions on enrollment and inclusion in the educational system of children and pupils who are at compulsory preschool and school age*", and the "*monitoring system for tracking students at risk of early school leaving*". The workshop participants confirmed that the 2011 Council Recommendation is regularly mentioned or referred to at meetings where early drop out from school and/or other educational policies are discussed. They provided examples of studies and projects dealing with ESL, which directly or indirectly are in line with the Recommendation themes. Two initiatives were mentioned – "*Bridge to Business*" Programme[356], and a study commissioned by UNICEF – "*The Lost Future? Studying phenomena of non-attendance at school*"[357]. Furthermore, desk research results show that the Recommendation is well known in Bulgaria among both policy makers and educators. The Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers states that it is in full compliance with the 2011 Council Recommendation (Introduction, page 6); a Programme on Prevention of Early School Leaving[358] for the 2018/2019 school year of a primary school provides definition of "early school-leaving" pursuant to the one given in the Recommendation. The latter is mentioned in a study reviewing Bulgaria's progress in the fields of Employment, Education and Poverty towards the Europe 2020 Strategy[359] (page 24). The Council's act is cited as one of the main EU policies and initiatives aimed at reducing ESL in a position of the Economic and Social Committee of the

[356] Programme "Bridge to Business" (Мост към бизнеса), supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI") 2014-2020: http://bridgetobusiness.eu/public/portfolios/view.cfm?id=89.

[357] UNICEF, "The Lost Future? Studying phenomena of non-attendance at school". (УНИЦЕФ, „Изгубеното бъдеще? Изследване на феномените на необхващане в училище); 2013; the document is available in Bulgarian at the following link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0Ey3TluYtUWcG5HTVZKSjBYV0U/view

[358] Programme on Prevention of Early School Leaving of Primary School "Hristo Botev", village Ruptsi, Pleven District for school year 2018/2019 (Програма за превенция на ранното напускане на училище на Основно училище „Христо Ботев", село Рупци, област Плевен, за учебна година 2018/2019); available in Bulgarian at http://ou-rupci.schoolbg.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/%D0%9F%D0%A0%D0%9E%D0%93%D0%A0%D0%90%D0%9C%D0%90-%D0%9F%D0%A0%D0%95%D0%92%D0%95%D0%9D%D0%A6%D0%98%D0%AF-2018-2019.pdf.

[359] Review of Bulgaria's progress under Europe 2020 Strategy – Employment, Education, Poverty (Преглед на напредъка на България по стратегия Европа 2020 – Заетост, Образование, Бедност); Institute for Market Economy, June 2014; available in Bulgarian at https://www.bednostbg.info/var/docs/reports/Europe2020_June2014.pdf.

Republic of Bulgaria (published in 2012) on the policies for reducing early school leaving[360].

The participants in the workshop agreed that all Recommendation themes addressing ESL directly or indirectly contribute to lowering its share. The policies that focus on teachers (support, motivation, specialisation, and training courses), which are not so emphasised in the 2011 Recommendation, were suggested as potentially beneficial for that purpose. Mechanisms and practices that aim at reducing/eliminating school harassment/bulling also support falling ESL rates.

A view that was widely shared by workshop participants was that a coordination system for data exchange between Member States on drop-out school-age students would improve proper measurement of ESL rates both at country and at EU level. This is so because a student might be considered out of the educational system in one Member State while at the same time they might attend school in another Member State when their family has moved abroad. Therefore, all workshop participants agreed that a recommendation for EU level action is needed for overcoming this challenge (see Section E).

The contribution of EU associated tools to national policy and practice

The evidence gathered shows that only the ESIF ex-ante conditionalities and monitoring and reporting mechanisms had somewhat of an impact on the national ESL policy in Bulgaria so far. With regard to the other tools (EU programmes, Outcomes of the Open Method of Cooperation, the European Toolkit for Schools and Research and development projects) the stakeholders had a low level of awareness about them.

The implementation of the ESIF ex-ante conditionalities was compulsory for Bulgaria because two of its operational programmes, "*Science and Education for Smart Growth*" and "*Human Resources Development*" are co-funded by the European Social Fund, and provide for actions aimed at reducing early school leaving. The implementation of this additional tool involved stakeholders at national level to the extent that both programmes were developed and are managed by managing authorities located in or subordinated to the Ministry of

[360] Economic and Social Committee, Position on the policies for reducing the early school leaving, 2012 (Икономически и социален съвет, Становище на тема „Политики за ограничаване ранното напускане на образователната система, 2012); the document is available in Bulgarian at http://www.esc.bg/bg/documents/category/4?download=148.

	Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, respectively. Under thematic objective "*Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning*", the Operational programme "*Science and Education for Smart Growth*" has investment priority "*10i Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education, including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training.*" Several grant schemes have been opened so far under priority axis "*A learning environment for active social inclusion*". The operational programme "*Human Resources Development*" provide for measures aimed at social inclusion of marginalised and Roma groups, including for social support and training of minority groups for bringing their children back to school. The workshop participants reported that the ESIF ex-ante conditionalities were a strong stimulus for development, adoption and implementation of the national Strategy on reducing the ESL. Thus, they played an important role for systemising and accelerating the national ESL policy. However, at country level, implementation of the ESL policies takes into account both overall economic development and country's regional disparities. Therefore, it should be argued that the ex-ante conditionality is effective in general (to the extent that legal and organisational tools are in place) but it is too early for measuring its real impacts. Bulgaria participates in the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, which played a significant role for development and deployment of the National Monitoring System. National officials are members of ET 2020 working groups but their usefulness for reducing ESL is not as significant as that of the ex-ante conditionalities. In general, the Bulgarian stakeholders at national level were not much aware of the other tools, such as EU programmes, the European Toolkit for Schools and Research projects which help for tackling ESL. As mentioned above, the new Preschool and School Education Act was practically enforced as from 2017/2018 thus it is yet too early for registering any long-term results. However, the share of ESL dropped to 12.8% in 2017 after it was rising for several years in a row.
Barriers and success factors for the implementation	The main barriers identified during the research are: • Lack of well-developed alternative and flexible pathways; insufficient provision of flexible opportunities for learning and

of the Recommendation and other EU tools	for acquiring a profession or a part of profession; second chance opportunities should be further developed; • Lack of complex approach and changes, i.e. there is a need simultaneously to make school more attractive for students and to change the attitude of teachers toward students, teachers' approach, and the method of teaching; • There is a need for development of early warning system at EU level and a joint system which will allow a child to be traced in each EU country thus to help obtaining information when a family is abroad and when this is a reason for dropping out of school. This will give opportunities for better statistics of drop-outs and early/prevention measures for tackling ESL361; • The developed mechanism for collaborative work of the institutions on enrolment and retention in the education system of children and pupils in compulsory pre-school and school age has not yet been fully realised. The instruments are clear and the teachers know that they have support from other institutions, social workers, police, etc., but they still need to develop skills how to implement the instruments; • Teachers' knowledge and skills for work with children at risk of dropping-out should be further developed, for example through training program for teachers for development of skills for analyses and identification of risks of dropping-out and for implementation of supporting measures362. Concrete pragmatic tools for teachers will be very helpful. • The link between teachers and family and relatives of students at risks is not easy and it should be strengthened; • Additional training and work with principals is needed. School management skills of principals of schools where drop-out rate is high should be developed. • Studies and analyses are needed to identify thoroughly all factors which cause ESL, to classify different types of children at risk and to assess the effectiveness of different measures363; • Large number of school-age children that live outside the country due to family migration (authorities do not know if these children attend school abroad, or not; in Bulgaria, they are registered as early school-leavers); • Weak public support for compulsory preschool education364; • Poor implementation of policies that require coordination between various stakeholders and institutions (ESL is a complex problem, as it affects various social groups; tackling it requires different measures and approaches and an effective coordination of the many institutions that are involved);

[361] Ibid, footnote 326.

[362] Ibid, footnote 326.

[363] Ibid, footnote 326.

[364] Note: The measure was criticized because school education is free of charge, whereas parents should pay a monthly fee (circa 20-30 Euros) if their children attend a kindergarten. Making preschool education compulsory for children aged 5 and 6, it was perceived that the preschool education system leave no choice to parents – they are obliged to send children to an educational institution, and they have to pay for this service. And finally, within another context but still concerning child education and protection, the government was criticized that it "invades" private lives of people and regulates personal issues such as raising a child.

	• Insufficient or underdeveloped integrated measures, because ESL is a complex phenomenon and institutions outside the education system should also be involved (e.g. local communities, employers, families, local or professional leaders, etc.); • Discriminative attitude towards some disadvantaged groups; • Insufficient capacity for monitoring and evaluation of ESL by the public administration (until the implementation of the monitoring mechanism, there was lack of reliable, longitudinal data); • Insufficient targeted financing for implementation of policies and measures (usually financing comes from school budgets); • Students' alienation – the mainstream system is not flexible enough to meet pupils' needs; • The Roma group is considered heterogeneous and the application of a 'one size fits all' approach does not always work. The main success factors identified in the research are: • Strong political will for tackling early school leaving; • Strong support by employers' organisations; • A legal framework and organisational structures are put in place since 2016-2017; • EU ex-ante conditionalities for ESIF.
Degree of engagement of the country in EU level activities linked to ESL and use of outputs and outcomes	Workshop participants confirmed that Bulgaria participates in ET 2020 and in Thematic Working Groups but did not provide details. The analysis provided in the sections above indicates that other associated tools have been more effective in influencing national policies and practice in Bulgaria than participation in these meetings. Workshop participants shared the view that it is difficult to assess whether EU resources could have been used more effectively. Instead, one of them asked rhetorically what would have happened if the EU had provided sanctions for not meeting the stated objectives. This suggests that if the EU had provided for sanctions for not meeting the stated objectives for ESL rates, the member states, including Bulgaria, would have taken more robust measures for reducing early school leaving. Another participant said that the measures introduced in Bulgaria might have been more effective in other countries with different ESL challenges. This is to mean that the reasons leading to early school leaving in different member states and within different social groups are so diverse that a measure applied in one country, or in support of a particular social group might not produce the same results in other regions or for other groups. Furthermore, a measure might not be applied in one and the same way in all countries, or its application might need more or

	less resources, or time, which inevitably would lead to different outcomes and degree of effectiveness.
Degree to which the EU tools have contributed to efficiency of implementation of ESL policy	Taking into account that Bulgaria's ESL rates increased for five consequent years (2012–2016) after the 2011 Council Recommendation and the 2014-2020 ESIF requirements were in place, the research did not identify hard evidence related to the efficiency of the EU programmes and the other policy instruments. As a result, definitive conclusions are difficult to draw. As described above, measures fully compliant with the Recommendation have already been taken in Bulgaria, which are expected to produce positive results in the near future. An unequivocal response to this question (i.e. degree of efficiency) cannot be provided at this stage, because, as mentioned previously, Bulgarian authorities do not know how many early school-leavers attend school in other countries, when the stated reason for dropping out is "for family reasons" or "moving abroad". The latter could be explained with the lack of information system for exchange of data on ESL between Member States. The National Statistical Institute data show that "moving abroad" accounts for between 30% and 40% as a reason for early school leaving in the last six years. The lack of a tracing system is an important aspect of the authorities' not so efficient efforts to bring part of early school leavers back to school, or to qualify them as "children continuing their education abroad". A lot of institutions (e.g. regional educational inspectorates, child protection authorities, providers of social services, mediators, etc.) are mobilised to identify and to find the pupils which do not attend school, to find out the reasons for their absence, and to propose and/or to apply the most appropriate measures which would send pupils back to the classroom. The authorities might spend much time and resource looking for a child, especially if it is of Roma or of another ethic background, which often move from one place to another. At the same time, a child might have left the country with its parents, who travel for work. Thus, the authorities, instead of quickly checking if and where the child was enrolled in another educational institution, would have to spend time and efforts to track its movement (whenever this is possible). However, despite the lack of a tracing information system, the additional funding provided through the ESF enabled the Bulgarian government to implement measures that were adopted.

	The EU monitoring mechanisms are efficient in collecting and analysing the data on ESL. On the one hand, the National Statistical Institute collects and publishes *ex-post* data on ESL, i.e. data about facts which have already occurred. On the other hand, after the adoption the National Strategy for Reducing the Share of Early School Leavers (2013-2020), the Ministry of Education and Science put in place information systems for real time monitoring, which have potential to prevent ESL, or to help authorities to intervene when one or more risk factors are observed. As mentioned earlier, the Strategy is inspired by and the policies and measures provided for therein are in full compliance with the 2011 Council Recommendation. Section 8 of the Strategy is titled "*Coordination Mechanism for application of the Strategy*". For its effective implementation, the document provides for establishment of a coordination Mechanism, which should bring together the efforts of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, of other ministries, as well as of citizens and local authorities. This Mechanism should improve information management and reduce the discrepancies between the data entered and stored in existing information systems on children in preschool and school age. As mentioned at the beginning of Section C of this Report, in 2018 the Council of Ministers adopted a legal instrument establishing the Mechanism and regulating its functioning[365]. Its article 4 states that the responsible authorities shall implement, develop, maintain and operate an Information System for implementation of the Mechanism, which provides an integrated electronic environment and tools. The Information System serves as a platform for exchange of information and coordination between the bodies and the institutions involved in tacking early school leaving in Bulgaria. Therefore, the evidence gathered appears to indicate that if the EU monitoring and reporting requirements did not exist, the data would not be as recent and exhaustive as they are now (or would be in future).
Added value of EU ESL policy and tools in the country	The research shows that the EU ESL policy and tools have had a significant added value for Bulgarian national policy. As mentioned above, early school leaving has been a problem for Bulgaria long before the adoption of the 2011 Council Recommendation and certain measures were already put in place. However, the situation significantly deteriorated after

[365] Ibid, footnote 338.

	2011 and the country welcomed and made full use of the support provided by the EU. As one of the workshop participants said, "*knife already rests on the bone*", and with or without the EU tools, Bulgaria had to act. Thus, the Recommendation provided well-structured and organised policies, measures and supporting tools to national authorities right on time. Therefore, it could be said that there is an added value of the EU policies and tools, in particular in terms of guidelines, focused efforts, and shared experience and best practices, but Bulgaria, in either case, would have had to take action to reduce early school leaving.

E. Need for future EU level support	
Key suggestions for EU support needed in the future (e.g. tools, initiatives, target groups, thematic areas)	The workshop participants did not point out to unnecessary elements or elements which they deem less useful in the Recommendation. Instead, they agreed on elements which might be considered for inclusion in the future EU policies and tools. The key suggestions are outlined below. 1. All participants were of the opinion that the EU needs a Mechanism or a system for exchange of data between Member States on the movement of pupils. As mentioned above, a potentially significant number of the so called "early school leavers" (anecdotal evidence indicates that their share reaches 50% out of all ESL) move along with their parents abroad. However, Bulgarian authorities do not know if these children continue their education in the destination country or they have completely left the education system. A proposal for such a Mechanism was made by Bulgarian authorities during the Bulgarian Council Presidency of the EU (January-June 2018), which was endorsed by the Council[366]. 2. Organising themes and measures into three pillars (prevention, intervention and compensation) is considered appropriate and useful by the workshop participants. However, some of them are of the opinion that a distinction

[366] Council of the European Union, Council conclusions on moving towards a vision of a European Education Area (2018/C 195/04), OJ C 195, 7.6.2018, p. 7–12, available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2018.195.01.0007.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2018:195:TOC.
Paragraph 12.4.
[The Council] STRESSES that it is key to join forces to reduce early school leaving in Europe and increase the opportunities for equal access to education and basic skills for all vulnerable groups, including the children of workers who relocate to another Member State for shorter or longer periods.
Paragraph 12.5.
[The Council] NOTES the difficulties children and pupils could encounter when returning to their home country's education system after periods abroad in cases of insufficient communication between the national educational systems.

between policies and measures should also be made in terms of children's age. This is so because pupils aged for example 7–12 drop out from school for one reason, whereas those aged 13–17 – for other reasons.

Therefore, future tools might suggest prevention measures aimed at children at elementary school, and prevention measures for pupils at risk at secondary school.

3. The third proposal concerns the need of stronger promotion of integrated policies, measures and tools for tackling ESL, which should take into account local peculiarities.
4. And finally, a recommendation which generated a heated debate during the workshop, and which was not supported by some participants (whereas others deemed it is more than important) is education in Bulgarian (the official national language). Participants discussed that pupils in both elementary school and graduating students (usually from minority groups) are not fluent in Bulgarian, i.e. they do not understand, and/or cannot read and/or cannot write in Bulgarian.
5. According to article 13, paragraph 1 of the Preschool and School Education Act, "*the official language of preschool and school education is Bulgarian*." Lack of knowledge of and skills in the official language is a strong educational barrier for children of minority background. Some participants expressed their view that a recommendation requiring stronger focus on measures for acquiring and/or improving knowledge of the national state language would contravene the 2011 Council Recommendation but at the same time agreed that without fluency in Bulgarian, inclusive education could not be delivered.

It was noted that there are often talks in the public space about discrimination against Roma when employers do not want to hire them. However, one of the workshop participants referred to the challenges related to hiring employees who have no or limited Bulgarian language skills. Therefore, as a compromise between the different opinions expressed during the workshop, the participants recommended, through EU policies and tools (to the extent that it is relevant for action at EU level), further emphasis on measures that equip teachers and other educational practitioners with greater flexibility for determining when and which pupils should strengthen their knowledge and Bulgarian language skills.

In such cases, they could be able to increase the number of language classes for such pupils, which will help the latter to improve their school performance, would reduce the risk of dropping out, and provide them greater chances at the labour market. It was also mentioned that the Preschool and School Education Act provides for such flexibility, but it is not sufficient for addressing the needs of children at risk.

Types of future policy instruments which would be most helpful	With regard to the types of future policy instruments, the workshop participants indicated that a Regulation would be the most appropriate one if the EU authorities accept the proposal for a Mechanism or a system for exchange of data between Member States on the movement of pupils. Regulations are directly applicable in the Member States, which will help avoid different applications of its provisions that could limit the use of such as mechanism. Concerning the other proposals, it was believed that guidebooks, guidelines, mutual learning, and other soft tools would be more appropriate to the extent that these instruments would provide flexibility for implementation of policies and measures aligned to local specificities.
Other comments	At the end, it should be noted that the Bulgarian government has introduced appropriate measures (mainly through legal requirements) for tackling ESL but their proper implementation very much depends on the initiative of school principals and teachers.

Study on the Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (ESL)

Country case study: France

A. Identification	
Country	France
Reasons for selection as case study	The key selection criteria for country workshops have been the different challenges concerning early school leaving, different progress in early school leaving rates, and different levels of engagement in EU-related actions at the country level. The early school leaving rate in France has improved in the 2011-2016 period. The country is classified as having a common core curriculum, i.e. after successful completion of primary education, all students progress to the lower secondary level, where they follow the same general curriculum.[367] There is some evidence that the national target introduced with the 2011 Recommendation was a catalyst for public debate on early school leaving, and prompted comparisons with other EU countries. It also gave momentum for the formulation of the 2014 national strategy (alongside other drivers, including growing evidence for the high cost of early school leaving rates within the country). The degree of influence of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools, and engagement with the EU agenda was assessed as medium[368], relative to the other countries included in the study.
Date and location of workshop	N.A. A number of interviews were carried out instead of a workshop.
Organisations participating in country workshop	Interviewees: Ms. Sabrina Foka, Psychologist, Ministry of Education. Ms. Frédérique Weixler, General Inspector of Education (Groupe Établissements et vie scolaire), Ministry of Education, author of "Le

[367] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2014a) The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: schematic diagrams. Available online: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/education_structures_EN.pdf

[368] The definitions used to classify countries are:
- High level (H): Evidence of a direct alignment of national ESL strategies with the 2011 Recommendation, and with the corresponding measures in the EU policy framework
- Medium level (M): General consistency in aims and approach between the 2011 Recommendation and national measures, but drawing on a wider range of influences
- Low level (L): Little or no evidence of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policy.

	décrochage scolaire : entre parcours singuliers et mobilisation collective, un défi pour l'école" (2017). Ms. Isabelle Recotillet, former Head of School-to-work transitions, Céreq (Centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications), Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour. Mr. Claude Bisson Vaivre, former General Inspector of Education, co-coordinator of the report "Agir contre le décrochage scolaire : alliance éducative et approche pédagogique repensée" (June 2013), Ministry of Education.

B. Country context regarding ESL

Evolution of ESL rates since 2011

Eurostat provides the following figures:

Category	2011 ESL national rate	2016 ESL national rate	2016 ESL EU average rate
All (18-24 years old)	12.3%	8.8%	10.7%
Female (18-24 years old)	10.4%	7.50%	9.2%
Male (18-24 years old)	14.1%	10.1%	12.2%
Foreign country of origin	22.60%	16.30%	19.8%
Employed (18-24 years old)	5.20%	2.90%	4.5%
Unemployed (18-24 years old)	7.1%	5.9%	6.2%

When observed from the point of view of each cohort of young people leaving the initial education and training system, and entering the labour market, the figures are:

Publication year	Survey year	Year leaving school (i.e. "Génération")	Absolute number of early school leavers	Proportion in the cohort	Average age at school leaving	Proportion of female leavers
2008	2007	2004	123'000	17%	18	36
2011	2010	2007	133'000	18%	18	38
2014	2013	2010	119'000	17%	18	35
2017	2016	2013	96'000	14%	18	42

Source: Céreq, "Génération" Surveys, 2008-2017

Specific national challenges and priorities on ESL

In France, the main challenge has been to address the needs of the entire **group of people that left initial education and**

	training with no qualification at all[369], i.e. at a level of education and training that is below the lowest level of the French National Qualifications Framework (Level V in the French qualifications framework[370], which is Level 3 in the European Qualifications Framework). Therefore, the target group – as defined is the General Code of Education – consists of people that left the initial education and training system at Levels Vbis and VI in the French historical classification[371] (1969), which are not qualification levels and therefore which do not appear in the National Qualifications Framework. In addition, within the general topic of early school leaving, **two general issues** have also received some attention: - Careers guidance, in the most generic sense (i.e. career is about progression in learning and in work, and should therefore cover both education and the labour market; see OECD, 2004, for example); and - Educational streaming, with the particular issue of the vocational tracks being kept in low esteem; and therefore sending students in vocational upper secondary education always proves a second best choice. Finally, some attention has been paid to the geographical aspects of early school leaving with an attempt at **identifying relevant geographical zones** (rural areas, overseas areas, pockets of early school leaving within well off areas).[372]
Recommendations from EU level on ESL	The impetus for fast-tracking the fight against early school leaving, in the modern era, was clearly the Lisbon Strategy and the quantitative objective of 10% in particular. More recently, the 2011 Recommendation of reducing the average share of early school leavers to less than 10%; this contributed to making France realise that the number of early school leavers was high in France, and the response was to make the fight against early school leaving a priority (Action Plan "All Mobilised to Overcome Early School Leaving" – Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage scolaire, France 2014; and also the revival of the Hope for the Suburbs Plan, Plan espoir banlieues, initiated in June 2008).

C. Key national policies on ESL

[369] Which is the definition of early school leaving.

[370] The five-level classification where the highest level is Level I (Master and PhD).

[371] The French historical classification therefore has seven levels, five levels of qualifications plus two additional levels below Level V (Vb and VI).

[372] Patrice Caro and Gérard Boudesseul (https://www.education.gouv.fr/cid106032/atlas-des-risques-sociaux-d-echec-scolaire-l-exemple-du-decrochage-france-metropolitaine-et-dom.html)

Main organisations responsible for ESL policy	The Ministry of Education is the leader in implementing this recent strategy. In addition, there are the Regional Councils, which are key actors since the Law of 2015. The extent of their commitment varies from one region to another but they are globally very active in the field of prevention in particular. The Ministry of Labour and of Vocational Education and Training as well as the Ministry of Social Affairs are also partners in implementing the strategy. In the context of the steps taken toward improved governance – with a focus on prevention, intervention and compensation - at the national level, the Interministerial Committee for Fighting Early School Leaving was established and, at the regional level, Operational Committees were set up.
Mechanisms for monitoring ESL	The Directorate for the Evaluation, Prospective and Performance (DEPP, Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance) of the Ministry of Education is the main provider of official data on early school leaving. The official statistics are based on administrative data provided by all schools within the French territory (mainland and overseas). **Simultaneously to the 2011 Recommendation, the Interministerial Exchange of Information System (Système interministériel d'échange d'informations, SIEI) was created**. The Ministerial Circular was published on the 9th of February 2011. This is an interministerial information system aimed at identifying early school leavers. It functions by **combining databases of the Ministry of Education and its partners** (Ministry of Agriculture, Apprenticeship Training Centres, employment data) twice a year. These data led to the establishment of the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (Plates-formes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs, PSAD) in charge of contacting young people both identified by the Interministerial Exchange of Information System (SIEI) and those that spontaneously approach the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers. In both cases, an interview is proposed as well as a personalised solution (return to education and training, or a job). The issue is that the tool was meant to identify early school leavers and assist them in finding a solution, whereas it has become a statistical tool. However, as a statistical tool, it may not be totally fit-for-purpose as it often includes some double counting, and misses certain early school leavers (those who do not appear in the statistics even if they actually are early school leavers e.g. because they move a lot, regularly change contact details, and/or are totally marginalised soon after dropping out). The Interministerial Exchange of Information System (SIEI) is however constantly being improved and the figures published are more and more reliable.

	The data produced by the National Research Centre on Qualifications (Centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications, CEREQ) are **survey data**. They are called the "Generation" surveys, and are carried out every three years. They also are reliable because the CEREQ sample is based on the French National Statistical Institute (INSEE) Labour Force Survey. Thanks to the abundance of potential covariates in the CEREQ surveys, there is room for interesting monographs and the CEREQ has issued some publications relating to early school leaving based on these "Generation" surveys.[373] The future of data collection probably relies on joint work between the current Interministerial Exchange of Information System (SIEI) partners and the French counties (Départements, i.e. an administrative division between the regional and the municipal levels). This is because Family Benefits are managed at the county level in France, and the Family Benefit system gathers a lot of data relating to families.
Comprehensive strategy	France has a comprehensive national strategy to tackle early school leaving. It was decided just after the Eurydice report[374] was published, which is based on evidence available over the year 2011-13. France elaborated its Action Plan from the second semester of 2013 on, and published it in **2014**. It is called "**All Mobilised to Overcome Early School Leaving"** (Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage scolaire). It is a comprehensive strategy, initiated by the Ministry of Education and involving the Ministry of Labour and of Vocational Education and Training as well as the Ministry of Social Affairs. It also heavily involves the Regional Councils. There are three principles at the core of this strategy: • **Involving <u>all</u> stakeholders** including: schools, with for example the yearly Week of Perseverance at School (Semaine de la persévérance scolaire); and parents, who should be involved in the functioning of the school, especially at crucial moments such as school counselling and academic guidance at the end of each academic year, and especially at the end of grade 9 (i.e. just before entering upper secondary education). A toll free number

[373] www.cereq.fr/publications/Cereq-Bref/Enquete-2016-aupres-de-la-Generation-2013-Pas-d-amelioration-de-l-insertion-professionnelle-pour-les-non-diplomes

www.cereq.fr/publications/Cereq-Bref/Decrocher-un-diplome-une-deuxieme-chance-pour-l-insertion-des-non-diplomes

www.cereq.fr/publications/Cereq-Bref/Retours-precoces-sur-la-voie-des-diplomes-vers-une-formation-tout-au-long-du-debut-de-la-vie

[374] Eurydice/CEDEFOP (2014), *Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures*. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/tackling-early-leaving-education-and-training-europe-strategies-policies-and-measures_en

has been made available for parents and young people to reach an adviser.

- **Opting for prevention**, with the integration of a specific module on early school leaving in the training of all professionals within the education and training system. In addition, individual options will be elaborated, with a multidisciplinary approach, and proposed to young people at risk of early school leaving. Finally, all opportunities offered by digital tools will be mobilised (for improved pedagogies, support and careers guidance).
- **Creating a second chance for qualification**, by creating a more flexible curriculum for young people who failed[375] in a qualification – CAP, Baccalauréat, BT, and BTS – e.g. by allowing them not to repeat again the classes for the subjects in which they succeeded, and working only on the subjects where they underperformed, or by organising the assessment all year around rather than as final set of examinations at the end of the academic year. There is also the Right to Return to Initial Education and Training (Droit au retour en formation initial, DARFI) for young people who have dropped out for several months.

In order to make this Strategy works, several measures have been implemented:

- **Improved governance**. Governance was adapted to specifically address early school leaving, and cover the three fields – prevention, intervention and compensation – at the national and regional levels. At the national level, the Interministerial Committee for Fighting Early School Leaving was established. At the regional level, Operational Committees were set up. Monitoring is therefore heavily based on a partnership approach.
- **Increased budget**. Additional funding of 50 million euros was provided per year as of 2015 (+7%), thanks to the European Social Fund in particular (95 million euros in the 2014-20 programming period).
- **Improved tools**. The scope of the Interministerial Exchange of Information System (Système interministériel d'échange d'informations, SIEI) was widened in order to improve the relevance, comprehensiveness and reliability of the data (in particular by taking into account apprentices that have dropped out of the vocational education and training system, and promoting closer cooperation with all potential partners such as the Local Youth Outreach Offices (Missions Locales), Call-up for Defence and Citizenship Days (JDC, Journée défense et citoyenneté, formerly JAPD, Journée d'appel de préparation à la défense) during which literacy levels of all participants and numeracy levels of a sample or participants are assessed). The module "Early School Leaving Century" (Siècle décrochage scolaire) used by schools to identify and monitor pupils at risk of early school leaving was improved. A new interactive instrument was set up for sharing information across the system on young people at risk of early school leaving.

[375] In practice, some schools demand that all students follow all courses after a first failure, and implement this initiative only after two failures for the same qualification.

- **Change management and improved human resources policy**. This was implemented through improved training of all staff, and the strengthening of the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (Plates-formes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs, PSAD). The Platforms are an instrument for coordinating local education and training stakeholders as well as those involved in school-to-work transitions. They also bring on board all other stakeholders that may take responsibility for young people looking for a solution (e.g. Youth Offices, Second Chance Schools, Apprenticeship Training Centres, Not for profit organisations, Voluntary Military Service (SMV), EPIDE Centres that are Institution for Integration into Employment of the Ministry of Defence). In particular, the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers include the Education/Training, Qualification and Employment networks (Formation Qualification Emploi, FOQUALE). These networks are located across the whole of France, bringing together institutions and programmes of the Ministry of Education, including the Return to School Structures (Structures de retour à l'école) such as the Micro-HighSchools (Micro lycées) and the Second Chance High Schools (Lycées de la deuxième chance). At the time of drafting, there were approximately 380 Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (PSAD). It was also from this moment on that the dialogue between school managers and regional education authorities (Académies) brought on board the early school leaving dimension in a quasi-systematic way.
- **A more systematic evaluation**. Pilots and full-fledged programmes were to be evaluated thanks to a framework to be established across institutions.

The schedule was planned as followed:

- **November 2014**: introduction of the **toll free number**, mobilisation of **additional funding**, strengthening of the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (PSAD), inception of the **Week of Perseverance at School**, and generalisation of **measures to involve parents** in the life of the school and the education of their children.
- **September 2015**: **piloting** (especially strengthening of the modularisation of the vocational education and training system, and multiplying the bridges between different education and training pathways), signing of the first Educational Alliances in the pilot territories, adapting curriculum to young people at risk (the "interns in the initial education and training system"), inscribing the vocational preparation of education and training staff in the national priorities, and implementation of the Individual Learning Account (Compte personnel de formation, CPF).
- **September 2016**: **evaluation of the pilots** implemented in 2015-16 of early interventions if things do not develop according to plan, and improvement of the information systems (improving digital tools for the early identification of early school leavers).

	There were also some measures that were rapidly discontinued[376], because they involved ineffective and unnecessarily punitive measures for parents and siblings, such as the Law on connecting family benefits to school attendance of the children (Ministry of Solidarity and Social Cohesion, Decree no 2011-89 of the 21 January 2011 on the withholding or discontinuation of family benefits in case of school absenteeism. NOR: SCSS1027242D). **Key initial dates – A summary** **2011:** The first significant move was setting in motion the programme for fighting early school leaving (Programme de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire), whose most prominent component is the establishment of the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (Plateformes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs, PSAD); just before the 2011 Recommendation. Minister of Education: Mr Luc Chatel. **2012:** Early school leaving is at the top of the agenda in the work on the "Refoundation of School" (Refondation de l'école). The programme of the candidate, and future President, François Hollande contained an explicit objective of reducing by half the number of early school leavers. The Government committed to bring 20,000 young people back into the education and training system. Minister of Education: Mr Vincent Peillon. **2014:** The "All Mobilised to Overcome Early School Leaving" Action Plan (Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage) is set in motion. Minister of Education: Ms Najat Vallaud Belkacem.[377]
Specific measures: prevention (Global)	• Law in 2005[378] on bridges between education and training pathways: this was not however very successful (due to lack of resources). The message was reinforced in September 2010 (see Circular n° 2010-010 du 29-1-2010[379] with the Update Training Session (Stages de remise à niveau) and Bridge Internships (Stages passerelles); but, again, implementation was poor. • Flexible curriculum possible for early school leavers as part of the new Strategy (e.g. by allowing them not to repeat classes in subjects in which they succeeded and attending only the subject classes they need to take again and pass, or by organising the

[376] For a rationale, see: https://www.cairn.info/revue-l-ecole-des-parents-2011-2-p-29.htm

[377] *https://www.education.gouv.fr/cid55632/la-lutte-contre-le-decrochage-scolaire.html&xtmc=deacutecrochage&xtnp=1&xtcr=2#Vaincre_le_decrochage_un_enjeu_de_cohesion_social*

[378] https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000259787&dateTexte ; see in particular Fiche 4 in http://plc1eps-grbg.weebly.com/uploads/1/4/8/4/148446/laloienfiches-2005.pdf

[379] www.education.gouv.fr/cid50477/mene1002843c.html

	ongoing assessment rather than as a final set of examinations at the end of the academic year).[380] • Bridges between education and training pathways since the 2013 Law, for students to change their orientation, or to shift from vocational tracks to academic ones, and vice versa. • Programme involving Regions and Counties (Départements) for more social diversity in school,[381] which were launched by the former Minister of Education. There were pilots in some cities; these however faced a lot of difficulties[382], first and foremost because parents disagreed, and moved their children out. Political will was there but society was not ready. • Foreign languages taught in the primary education system. • Ad hoc activities regarding cultural diversity in the preschool system. • Involving parents more closely in school life for the success of their children; e.g. the "Parents Satchel" (La mallette des parents)[383] was piloted before 2011. As a consequence the Creation of Parent Spaces within schools was introduced in a Law in 2013. At the time of drafting, the principle of involving parents in schools is about to be extended again. • Annual Week of Perseverance at School.[384] • The 2018 Law for the "Freedom to Choose a Career" (a.k.a Loi Pénicaud 2[385]) is now being implemented, but its implementation started only in early 2019 so it is impossible to assess its impact yet. A reasonable assumption is that it may have some impact on prevention by making the vocational track more attractive. • Trade Forum, for informing participants with the aim to strengthen links between schools and local labour markets, and therefore potentially creating a vocation. Some school may even organise job dating event, even if potential early school leavers are not really among the most assiduous. • Involvement of the Regional Councils, for a better information of students – including early school leavers – regarding local needs. • Some schools implement a programme called "Homework Done"[386] (Devoirs faits). It is about helping children to do their homework at school, when or if they have trouble working at

[380] See also: http://eduscol.education.fr/cid55057/prise-en-charge-des-jeunes-sortis-du-systeme-scolaire-sans-qualification.html#lien3 or www.lycee-nouvelle-chance.org/un-suivi-personnalise_1014176.html or http://reseau.lycee-nouvelle-chance.org/une-pedagogie-differente_1012486.html

[381] https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/occitanie/herault/montpellier-metropole/montpellier/petit-bard/montpellier-4-ecoles-du-petit-bard-occupees-plus-mixite-sociale-676355.html and http://www.liberation.fr/france/2016/10/27/montpellier-le-petit-bard-a-l-ecole-de-la-mixite_1524782

[382] See for example, Toulouse: www.liberation.fr/france/2018/01/09/mixite-sociale-toulouse-tente-le-melange-des-classes_1621322

[383] http://eduscol.education.fr/pid26667/mallette-des-parents.html

[384] http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/08_-_aout/75/3/2015_persevancescolaire_kit_505753.pdf

[385] A first Law on the reform of the Labour Code was passed on the 01.01.2017

[386] http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid118686/devoirs-faits-un-temps-d-etude-accompagnee-pour-realiser-les-devoirs.html

	home. Other schools organise additional support for pupils in need. • Prevention Groups against Early School Leaving (Groupes de prévention contre le décrochage scolaire, GPDS) integrated into schools. • The recently passed reform by the current Minister of Education (voted 19 February 2019), Mr Jean-Michel Blanquer, confirms the split of classes in Grade 1 and 2, or the presence of two teachers for schools located in deprived areas. It is a preventive action to allow pupils to succeed as early as possible, by allowing individualisation of the work of the pupils, and take measures to avoid later early school leaving. Small class sizes allows for the implementation of adapted pedagogies. • Monitoring and evaluation is necessary in order to assess the performance, or under-performance, of pupils, and therefore in order to anticipate issues. The PISA[387] evaluation takes place every three years in France but is highly criticised and always disregarded; even if there are some slight changes in the way each new issue of PISA is received. For example, trade unions use the PISA results to claim more resources, whereas they used to complain that the approach to measuring competences was flawed ("bad thermometer" was the belief).

Specific measures: intervention (Individual)	• The Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (PSAD)[388] (NOR: MENE1710739C; Circular n° 2017-066 du 12-4-2017; MENESR – DGESCO – DRDIE).
	• Education/Training, Qualification and Employment (Formation Qualification Emploi, FOQUALE[389]): networking of all partners of schools (Circular n°2013-035, 29 March 2013). As the PSAD, these are multidisciplinary in essence.
	• There is however no dashboard system with blinking red lights to raise the alarm where there is a risk of early school leaving. Some discussion began regarding an early warning system in preschool (maternelle): however, it was massively rejected, and never implemented.
	• The approach is more about raising awareness regarding the general issues throughout society. For example:
	  ○ There is one ESL contact point per Educational Regional Authority (Académie).
	  ○ There is a policy for the development of a positive climate at school.[390]

[387] Programme for International Student Assessment

[388] http://eduscol.education.fr/cid55057/prise-en-charge-des-jeunes-sortis-du-systeme-scolaire-sans-qualification.html and http://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/_-Sans_nom-_/73/6/LesacteursdelaPSAD_778736.pdf

[389] http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid71571/foquale-des-reseaux-pour-la-formation-la-qualification-et-l-emploi.html

[390] http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid122362/non-au-harcelement-le-harcelement-pour-l-arreter-il-faut-en-parler.html

	○ There is an annual Anti-Bullying Week (one of the most successful policies). ○ There have been pupils' representatives attending all school councils for decades. In 1995, Councils for High School Students were created (Conseils académiques de la vie lycéenne, CAVL, and Conseil national de la vie lycéenne, CNVL). They are regularly reviewed.[391] The structure exists but there is room for improvement (e.g. school heads could be more active in making them operational). ○ Teachers and all the education and training staff in general are trained, and sensitised to the issue of early school leaving. ○ The Motiv'Action ("motivation and action") programme was introduced in the Rouen Educational Region.[392]
Specific measures: compensation (ex post)	• The New Chance High Schools (Lycées de la nouvelle chance), generalised since 2009 (older in the Bordeaux, Lyon and Nantes Educational Regions). • The Return to School Structures (Structures de retour à l'école), promoted by the information campaign entitled "Come Back to Learn" (Reviens te former), launched in 2016. • The Second Chance Schools (Écoles de la deuxième chance) of the Ministry of Labour, since 1997. • The Institution for Integration into Employment of the Ministry of Defence (EPIDE, Établissement pour l'insertion dans l'emploi). Since its creation, in 2005, the EPIDE have prepared about 30,000 "responsible citizens". • All measures connected to "my second chance" described by the National Bureau of Information on Education and Occupations (Office national d'information sur les enseignements et les professions, ONISEP). • Right to return to the same high school for those who failed their upper secondary education qualification (Baccalauréat). • Validation of Experiential Learning Outcomes (Validation des acquis de l'expérience, VAE). Between WWI and WWII: first programme. 1985: creation of a systemic system in the tertiary education system, still active. 1992: first general Law on the validation of occupational learning outcomes (Validation des acquis professionnels, VAP). 2002: last Law (VAE) that allows any experiential learning outcomes to be submitted to assessment. • There are Educational Psychologists to whom all pupils have access, for psychological support and career guidance[393]. The first such professionals were introduced in 1931. Successive reforms included: the creation (2016) of the profession of Psychologist of Education (PsyEN) that replaces the Guidance Adviser

[391] http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid285/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=106687

[392] http://eduscol.education.fr/cid106698/motiv-action.html; see also an experiment: https://journals.openedition.org/reperes/1052

[393] http://acop-asso.org/index.php/l-association/historique

	Psychologist (Conseiller d'orientation psychologue, COPsy, 1991) that had replaced the Vocational Guidance Adviser (Conseiller d'orientation professionnelle, COP, 1956).

D. Influence of the 2011 Recommendation and other EU tools on ESL	
Relevance of the Recom-mendation to national challenges	The headline target of reducing early school leaving proved very relevant in France, at a time were France was also focusing on fighting this phenomenon. Historically, early school leaving had considerably reduced in France until the turn of the century. Then the rate remained flat and there was no further reduction for about twelve years; hence the decision, in the early years of the current decade, to address the issue. As the rest of this document will show, it is difficult to assess the actual role of the 2011 Recommendation. Most informants interviewed in the course of this study clearly establish a link between the 2011 Recommendation and French policy, but were hesitant to indicate any potential causality. In general, interviewees instead highlighted common objectives, coincidences of timing, benchmarking, and mutual enlightenment. The French economic context over the last decade has been largely influenced but the economic crises (2008 and 2010), as in many other European countries. As a consequence, unemployment rates have continued increasing, especially for young people. France has been committed to fighting early school leaving ("décrochage scolaire") since 1989 (Framework Act, Mr Lionel Jospin Minister of Education). Initiatives were set in motion, however without significant impacts. In 2010, one year before the European Commission Recommendation, France undertook an evaluation of the cost of early school leaving: the cost of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). It was through a realisation of the investment in the schooling of children and young people that France realised the importance of the issue. At that time, it was estimated that the average cost of a pupil was 230,000 Euros.[394] France realised that it was investing a lot, but that there was no reduction of early school leaving (between 140,000 and 160,000 early school leavers each year, representing a million over seven year). In addition, youth unemployment rates remained very high. In this context, the 2011 Recommendation helped the realisation that it was urgent to implement an efficient policy for fighting early school leaving, but did not entirely trigger it. The stocktaking exercise showed that actions set in motion at that time revolved around compensation – 70% of the budget – with no or little

[394] https://www.education.gouv.fr/cid55632/la-lutte-contre-le-decrochage-scolaire.html (First bullet poiont).

	prevention. Despite compensation actions that were implemented, the youth unemployment rate was not falling. Actions targeting early school leavers did not foster a return to employment or to learning. It was from the year 2000 that French researchers started to carry out empirical studies with the aim of proposing more effective solutions. The previous Minister of Education (Ms. Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, 2014-18) clearly recognised the importance of early school leaving and was very active in fighting it. She based her policy on measures aiming at improving the well-being of pupils, equity, and achievement for all; this resonates with the 2011 Recommendation where equity and social coherence are also highlighted. In terms of missing elements in the Recommendation, actors in France underlined that it could have better promoted the importance of dialogue, the capacity to listen, and the need to ensure interaction among the different actors.
Commonalities between the 2011 Council Recommendation and other EU tools, and national ESL policies, practices and research	As mentioned above, the 2011 Recommendation cannot be said to have triggered the policies and strategies implemented in France because the work started before the Recommendation. Nevertheless, the 2011 Recommendation contributed to ensuring the continuity of the newly formulated French policy to fight early school leaving. Since then, France reports to the European bodies on a regular basis. It provides results of its policy, in particular by participating in several working groups, and by addressing this issue during meetings of Chief Executive Officers or even at ministerial level in the field of education, or of technical vocational education and training. Other French measures which existed before the 2011 Recommendation include e.g. working groups organised in 2010, or monitoring of early school leavers with the creation of the Interministerial Exchange of Information System (Système interministériel d'échange d'informations, SIEI) in February 2011. More significantly in term of timing, some measures adopted in the early years of the current decade were already present one way or another in the "Act for Youth" Plan (Agir pour la jeunesse) launched in September 2009, and based on some of the recommendations proposed in the Green Paper of the High Commissioner for Youth (Haut commissariat à la Jeunesse), Mr Martin Hirsch. **Commonalities between the Recommendation and national policies and practices** The main commonalities are: **Identification**. France recognised early on that the identification of [potential] early school leavers was a key priority in order to

provide them with appropriate help and to be able to follow them up later in life in order to assess their achievements (e.g. performance in the labour market). The identification is organised on several levels:

- National and interministerial level. France created the Interministerial Exchange of Information System (Système interministériel d'échange d'informations, SIEI) in February 2011. It lists all the young people that left school without a qualification. It is an interministerial information system aimed at identifying early school leavers. It functions by combining databases of the Ministry of Education and its partners (Ministry of Agriculture, Apprenticeship Training Centres, employment data) twice a year. These data led to the establishment of the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (Plateformes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs, PSAD), in charge of contacting young people identified by the Interministerial Exchange of Information System (SIEI) and young people that spontaneously approach the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (PSAD). In both cases, an interview is proposed as well as a personalised solution (e.g. return to education and training, or a job).
- Regional Education Authority (académie) level. Within each Regional Education office for Information and Guidance (Service académique d'information et d'orientation, SAIO), there is an officer of the Task Force for Fighting Early School Leaving (Mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire, MLDS), who is responsible for implementing the policy in their Region.
- Local level. Schools organise Prevention Groups against Early School Leaving (Groupes de prévention contre le décrochage scolaire, GPDS) that have two missions. Firstly, they are in charge of identifying truants and potential early school leavers. Secondly, they implement prevention actions, and have a role in preventing school dropout (raccrochage). To this end, they implement actions aimed at remobilising young people. Even if these groups (GPDS) are present in all schools in France, the lack of harmonisation of the practices may hamper the effectiveness in the monitoring of early school leaving and in the implementation of preventive actions.

Pupil assessment. There has been a growing belief – amplified by the current Minister – that assessing pupils on a regular basis will help knowing, and therefore anticipating, early school leaving.

A new approach to assessment has just been implemented: the assessment of competences with no grades (just acquired or not), and the establishment of a Unique School Booklet (Livret scolaire unique, LSU)[395] that charts each child's progress throughout primary education, from entry into the preschool system (maternelle, 3-6 years). The Core Competences were introduced in 2005, and the related Competences Booklet (Livret de compétences) was implemented with it. The Unique School Booklet

[395] http://eduscol.education.fr/cid104511/le-livret-scolaire.html

will replace it. At the time of drafting, it is unclear to what extent these approaches are consensual.

Flexibility of pathways. Several measures were implemented to facilitate transitions between pathways for pupils. Bridges among education and training tracks exist since the nineties, but they were reinforced again in order to fight early school leaving. Pupils have been given the opportunity to change track during their school career, which aims to maintain their motivation to invest in learning outcomes. Since the 2016 Back-to-school day, the Ministerial Circular[396] on the Entitlement to Make Obvious Mistakes in Choosing a High School Programme (Droit à l'erreur manifeste d'orientation à l'entrée au lycée) allows the pupils in 10th grade to change their mind and have a fresh start in another track until the Autumn break. However, the implementation of such bridges is not effective since there is a lack of time and of available places in the upper secondary education system for pupils to actually change track. The French education system is still too rigid to allow effective implementation of flexible educational pathways.

A more promising avenue, from a pragmatic point of view, was to allow students that failed to pass the upper secondary education qualification (Baccalauréat) to keep the grades they achieved in the subjects which they did succeed in, and to guarantee them a place in the high school (Lycée) where they were when they took this upper secondary education qualification. This particular measure was implemented because many pupils – especially those enrolled in the vocational track – could not go back to their high school and therefore would drop out before achieving any upper secondary education qualification. Finally, for those who failed repeatedly to pass any qualification, the Ministry of Education established structures for them to return to school (e.g. the Micro High-Schools, micro lycées): in September 2017, 44 structures were established with 5 more to come, and 26 Regional Education Authorities (académies) had at least one such structure. The recent reform of the General and Technological track in high school (Lycée général et technologique, 2018) fosters greater flexibility, as students do not have to choose a vocational field anymore at the end of the 9th grade for the 10th grade. However, they now have to choose subjects at the end of the 10th grade for the 11th grade. At the time of drafting, there is not enough feedback to evaluate this measure but it is likely that it will generate some anxiety – among students, parents, and teachers – since it is somewhat early to be positive about the subjects selected, especially in the perspective of post-secondary education. The uncertainty is about the strategy

[396] Circulaire n°2016-055 du 29 mars 2016 - BOEN n°13 du 31 mars 2016 : Réussir l'entrée au lycée professionnel Circulaire académique du 18 septembre 2017 : priorités de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire

of universities, for example, since nothing is known about the combinations of subjects they will value. The very first indications tend to show that, in this uncertain environment, students continue to select subjects as in the old system (e.g. maths and physics), and few choose more innovative combinations of subjects, such as maths and arts for example.

France also insisted on the preparation of the teachers but this seems absent from the 2011 Recommendation.

As a summary, Eurydice and Cedefop (2014, Figure 3.2) propose the following table. It shows the potential commonalities between French policy and the 2011 Recommendation, at least because the three same types action (prevention, intervention, and compensation) can be found.

Policies and measures in France for tackling or contributing to reducing early school leaving, 2013/14, by type of action	Specific or general policy/measure, and timing
Prevention	
Improving access to and quality of ECEC	Recent policy/measure developed to tackle early school leaving
Reducing grade retention (somewhat revisited recently, 2017 on)	On-going/general policy/measure contributing to reducing early school leaving
Positive discrimination measures	Recent policy/measure developed to tackle early school leaving; and On-going/general policy/measure contributing to reducing early school leaving
Increasing flexibility and permeability of educational pathways	Recent policy/measure developed to tackle early school leaving
Education and career guidance	On-going/general policy/measure contributing to reducing early school leaving
Intervention	
Providing individual support	On-going/general policy/measure contributing to reducing early school leaving

Support for low achievers	On-going/general policy/measure contributing to reducing early school leaving
Absenteeism management	Recent policy/measure developed to tackle early school leaving
Networking with parents and other actors outside school	Recent policy/measure developed to tackle early school leaving; and On-going/general policy/measure contributing to reducing early school leaving
Compensation	
Reform of the second chance education system	On-going/general policy/measure contributing to reducing early school leaving
Identification of early leavers and measures to help them re-enter education and training	Recent policy/measure developed to tackle early school leaving; and On-going/general policy/measure contributing to reducing early school leaving

Concrete examples (<u>measures</u>) that illustrate these commonalities:

Identification: establishment of the Task Force for Fighting Early School Leaving (Mission de Lutte contre le Décrochage Scolaire, MLDS)[397]. It is legislated by the Circular NOR: MENE1306159C Circular n°2013-035 du 29-3-2013 - MEN - DGESCO A1-4. It was implemented all over France through its inclusion in the general policy but not as a result of the 2011 Recommendation.

The Action Plan "All Mobilised to Overcome Early School Leaving" (Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage), presented on 21 November 2014, mobilise all levers and actors. It has delivered results thanks to the mobilisation of the entire educational community, researchers, other ministries, communities, and not-for-profit organisations.

Flexibility of pathways: In the 2013 Law "From School to Core Competences Development" (De l'école au socle de compétences). Since September 2016, the Circular[398] on the Entitlement to Make

[397] http://eduscol.education.fr/cid55115/mission-de-lutte-contre-le-decrochage.html

[398] Circulaire n°2016-055 du 29 mars 2016 - BOEN n°13 du 31 mars 2016 : Réussir l'entrée au lycée professionnel Circulaire académique du 18 septembre 2017 : priorités de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire

Obvious Mistakes in Choosing a High School Programme (Droit à l'erreur manifeste d'orientation à l'entrée au lycée) allows the pupils in 10th grade to change their mind and have a fresh start by changing high school programme by the Autumn break. This is implemented all over France but students in vocational high schools are more affected by such an opportunity. There is no obvious link however with the 2011 Recommendation.

Other ways in which the 2011 Recommendation has contributed towards the approaches taken to tackle ESL in the country:

The fight against early school leaving was fully integrated into Education policy from 2011 via: the creation of the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (Plateformes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs, PSAD), and the work following from the work on the New Foundation of the School of the Republic (Refondation de l'École de la République, 2012), with two successive initiatives: a programme in December 2012 entitled "Fighting Early School Leaving" (Lutte contre le décrochage scolaire), and one Action Plan in November 2014 entitled "All Mobilised to Overcome Early School Leaving" (Tous mobilisés contre le décrochage scolaire) (see Cnesco, 2017).[399]

There were also compensation measures which were in line with the 2011 Recommendation. However, the main measures were implemented significantly earlier than 2011 e.g. the Second Chance Schools (Écoles de la deuxième chance) of the Ministry of Labour, since 1997; and the Institution for Integration into Employment of the Ministry of Defence (EPIDE, Établissement pour l'insertion dans l'emploi). Since its creation, in 2005, the EPIDE have prepared about 30'000 "responsible citizens".

Other policies/ measures or practices that exist in France which are not included in the 2011 Recommendation

Precisely because there is a time disconnect between the French policies and the 2011 Recommendation – with France having introduced new schemes, measures and structures before the 2011 Recommendation – many of the programmes and strategies set in motion in France are not in the 2011 Recommendation, for instance:

The "Parents' Satchel" (La malette des parents) [400] is about involving all school pupils' families in the life of the school. The idea is to demystify the educational system, and the school. It was piloted before 2011, and is about to be amplified in the context of the Strategy to fight early school leaving. This programme has not

[399] www.cnesco.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/171208_Preconisations_Decrochage_scolaire.pdf

[400] http://eduscol.education.fr/pid26667/mallette-des-parents.html

	been fully understood by the education team or the parents, except in some places where the action was piloted and therefore given more attention. The component of the programme that has been the most in use has been the delivery of the Competences Booklet directly to the parents. This allow for the teachers to explain the difficulties, if any, of their child to the parents, and to involve them in the education of their child(ren). The pilots were evaluated and children whose parents are involved in the Parents' Satchel have achieved better results at school. There is also a multiplier effect: classes where some children have parents involved in the Parents' Satchel also have better results.[401] The possibility to keep the grades achieved when taking the upper secondary education qualification (Baccalauréat). Early school leavers are the target group. With this measure indeed, upper secondary education students who did not achieve the Baccalauréat do not have to follow again the courses they have succeeded in; this a way to fight against boredom in the classroom. The counter argument is that some of them do not have a lot of classes during the week, and this may be detrimental to motivation because they are somewhat outside the life of the school. The actual involvement of parents, with the teachers, in the decision-making process at the end of the 9th grade to select an education track in upper secondary education proved to be a successful approach (the early school leaving rate dropped by 25% in comparison to the previous years). The "Relay Classes" (Classes relais). This is a rather old measure (1998) aimed at anticipating early leaving by allowing young people at risk of early school leaving to temporarily step out of the school, for a year or so, and then come back if they wish to do so. It was implemented in a context of increasing violence in upper secondary education. All young people below 16 that feel they are about to drop out are allowed to temporarily leave school, to keep the status of school pupil, and engage in any activity that suits her/him (e.g. sport, not-for-profit work). It also provides the opportunity to address issues such as bad behaviour for instance in a context that is less tense. It is literally about allowing young people at risk of early school leaving to "breathe" and step back to think about the future they want.[402] It is an early intervention measure and is among the French priorities. It was complemented

[401] See the evaluation by the Paris School of Economics (https://www.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/fr/actualites/rapport-final-la-mallette-des/).

[402] http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/08_-_aout/74/6/DGESCO.DRDIE_Guide_du_Parcours_amenage_de_formation_initiale_505746.pdf

by the "Relay Workshops" (Ateliers relais), in 2002, which are meant to be more flexible than the Relay Classes.

The Task Force for Fighting Early School Leaving (Mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire, MLDS). Its main objectives are to anticipate issues, mobilise local resources, receive and provide guidance, prepare and qualify.[403] At the time of the drafting, no evaluation is available.

The Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (Plateformes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs, PSAD). It is an instrument for coordinating education and training of local stakeholders as well as those involved in school-to-work transitions. It also brings on board any other stakeholder that may take responsibility for young people looking for a solution (e.g. Youth Offices, Second Chance Schools, Apprenticeship Centres, Not-for-profit organisation, Voluntary Military Service (SMV), EPIDE Centres – Institution for Integration into Employment of the Ministry of Defence). In particular, the PSAD harbours the networks Education/Training Qualification Employment (Formation Qualification Emploi, FOQUALE) that are located throughout the country and gather institutions and programmes belonging to the Ministry of Education, including the Return to School Structures such as the Micro High-schools (micro-lycées) and the Second Chance High School (Lycées de la deuxième chance). Mid 2018, there were approximately 380 Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (PSAD).

The Youth Guarantee (Garantie jeune) is a European Commission initiative. It is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. It is a good example of a measure that was inspired by the European Commission, but that are not connected to the 2011 Recommendation. It was implemented in France in 2013 and it mainly consists of intense guidance by the Local Outreach Offices (Missions locales), and a guaranteed income.

The Second Chance Schools (Écoles de la deuxième chance, E2C). The first second chance school was established in 1997. The idea is to provide second chance education. These schools provide courses for unqualified, unemployed young people who have often been out of work for a substantial period of time. Young people enrolled in E2C are interns of the technical vocational education and training system of the Ministry of Labour. The courses last, on average, six months; with a lot of internships of different durations

[403] http://eduscol.education.fr/cid55115/mission-de-lutte-contre-le-decrochage.html

and with different purposes. Although all second chance schools belong to a network and have to comply with a set of regulations, they nevertheless remain independent units with significant autonomy.

All second chance schools are organised into three hubs: a Training Hub, in charge of updating young people's basic competences, with a strong orientation towards the standards of the Ministry of Education; a Business Hub, responsible for establishing partnerships with local companies; and a Social Life Hub, which is the responsibility of educators, project leaders for inclusion in the community and facilitators. It is in charge of organising extra-curricular activities (sport, cultural and social events) and ensuring that young people respect the school regulations. Each second chance school is a not-for-profit organisation, benefiting from national and regional funding. Local employers often provide for internships positions. The work of the E2C Network was evaluated (Sénat, 2015). There are a number of key success factors. The second chance schools combine education and training to develop basic competences, using appropriate pedagogy, based on e-learning approaches; immersion internships in partner businesses; and extra-curricular activities for the development of social competences. They respond to the significance of monitoring and certification of competences by delivering a certificate of learning outcomes. The E2C network is composed of independent units, each of which benefits from a large degree of autonomy and the capacity to adapt to local contexts. Partnerships with local businesses are a fundamental pillar of E2C success.

The Return to School Structures (Structures de retour à l'école) propose alternative approaches to pedagogy, with constant revisiting of the way they work.[404]

The three tables below (in French[405]; Cnesco, 2017)[406] present a summary of the main public policies that were implemented in France, in the recent period, to fight early school leaving, and whether they have been evaluated.

LES POLITIQUES DE PRÉVENTION		
La *Mallette des parents*	**Effet positif sur l'assiduité scolaire et le comportement des élèves en classe**. Effet très faible sur les résultats scolaires.	Avvisati, Gurgand, Guyon et Maurin, 2010
L'implication des parents sur l'orientation en fin de troisième	**Effet positif sur le choix de l'orientation** (faire accepter aux jeunes et à leurs familles, la possibilité de l'apprentissage ou d'une formation professionnelle courte) **et le décrochage scolaire**.	Goux, Gurgand et Maurin, 2014

[404] http://eduscol.education.fr/cid53699/presentation.html

[405] They could be translated if they were deemed useful.

[406] Cnesco, 2017. Comment agir plus efficacement face au décrochage scolaire ? Dossier de synthèse. (http://www.cnesco.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/171208_Dossier_Synthese_Decrochage_scolaire.pdf)

LES POLITIQUES D'INTERVENTION		
ÉLÈVES DE MOINS DE 16 ANS		
Le contrôle de l'absentéisme	*Non évalué*	
Groupes de prévention du décrochage scolaire (GPDS)	Ils ont fait l'objet de mises en œuvre extrêmement variées d'un établissement à l'autre. En particulier, la place qu'occupent les enseignants est très variable.	Maillard et *al.*, 2016
Les dispositifs relais	**Effet positif sur le rétablissement de la confiance en soi.** Effets les plus positifs enregistrés pour les élèves les plus jeunes, ayant le moins de retard dans leur scolarité et ne faisant pas l'objet d'un suivi éducatif. Pas d'information sur la situation des élèves dans l'année suivant leur passage en dispositif relais. Le retour en formation ordinaire semble difficile.	Benhaim-Grosse, 2011
ÉLÈVES DE PLUS DE 16 ANS		
Mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire	Pour les élèves ayant quitté l'école en deuxième année de CAP ou de BEP, ou en second cycle long, effet significatif du dispositif sur le raccrochage en formation. En revanche, pour les élèves sortant de collège ou de première année de CAP ou BEP, il n'y a pas de différences significatives entre les parcours des jeunes, qu'ils aient ou non suivi un dispositif.	Bernard et Michaut, 2013
Plateformes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs (PSAD)	*Non évalué*	

LES POLITIQUES DE COMPENSATION		
Missions locales pour l'insertion des jeunes	Parmi les facteurs favorisant l'insertion ou le raccrochage en formation, importance des expériences de stages de formation et d'emplois non aidés au cours de l'accompagnement. Parmi les facteurs défavorables : l'impact du faible niveau de formation, les conditions de vie défavorables et la durée de l'accompagnement (faible ou longue).	Mas, 2002
Le dispositif Garantie jeune	Effet positif du programme sur l'**accès à l'emploi**.	Dares, 2013 ; Loison-Lerouste, Courronné et Sarfati, 2016 ; Farvaque, Kramme et Turchszirer, 2016
Les micro-lycées (Structures de retour à l'école-SRE)	Les micro-lycées sont touchés par des phénomènes de renoncement ou d'échec mais 50 % des sorties peuvent être qualifiées de « sorties dynamiques » débouchant sur une perspective de qualification ou un emploi. Les micros-lycées nécessitent une dotation importante mais pas davantage que la voie professionnelle ou les SEGPA.	Cour des comptes, 2015
Les Écoles de la deuxième chance (E2C)	*Non évalué*	
Les dispositifs de seconde chance	Peu de jeunes intégrés et un coût élevé au regard des autres dispositifs.	Cour des comptes, 2015

The contribution of EU associated tools to national policy and practice

	The European Social Fund (ESF) has been used to resource some actions to combat early school leaving, especially in the context of the Second Chance Schools (E2C). More recently the Regional Directorate for Enterprises, Competition, Consumption, Work, and Employment (Direction régionale des entreprises, de la concurrence, de la consommation, du travail, et de l'emploi, DIRECCTE) of the Region Hauts-de-France (North) issued a call for projects in order to use this money for supporting actions implemented in 2017-18. A new cooperative action entitled "School Exchanges Erasmus +" (Échanges scolaires Erasmus +) is proposed to the school sector since 2018. The European Toolkit, since 2015. France contributed to the elaboration of some of the tools (e.g. the Interministerial Exchange of Information System, SIEI; the Parents' Satchel; the flexibility of pathways). This provided school heads with the opportunity to obtain objective data regarding early school leaving rates in their school. The European Toolkit has however been barely used in France. Interestingly, in France, it seems that the ET 2020 Policy has been the main driver to achieve the headline target in relation to early school leaving, perhaps more than the 2011 Recommendation, although there is not enough evidence for any certainty. At the time of drafting however, early school leaving is not the priority of the Government. Policies, strategies and actions set in motion by the previous government are not discontinued, but the rhetoric has shifted to other topics (e.g. primary education). There is no active mobilisation, or rhetoric, in relation to early school leaving. France was involved in the international forum, especially during the elaboration of the tools. For example, France contributed to the elaboration of the Toolbox, and to the policy document issued at the end of 2015 (A Whole School Approach to Tackling Early School Leaving – Policy Messages). However, this document remained somewhat unknown despite a focus on relevant issues: School governance, Learner support, Teachers, Parents and families, and Stakeholder involvement. It has not been possible to find any influence of the ESF ex-ante conditionality relating to ESL. The policy for addressing early school leaving was launched with the creation of the Interministerial Exchange of Information System (Système interministériel d'échange d'informations, SIEI) in February 2011, for identification of early school leavers and potential early school leavers; which is before the 2011

	Recommendation was issued. The establishment of the Monitoring and Support Platforms for Early School Leavers (Plateformes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs, PSAD) somewhat followed the 2011 Recommendation but was not a consequence of it.
Barriers and success factors for the implementation of the Recommendation and other EU tools	Paradoxically, the fact that France had started implementing policies and strategies to tackle early school leaving before the Recommendation is at the same time a barrier and a success factor. A barrier to using the 2011 Recommendation was that many actions were already set in motion before the 2011 Recommendation was issued; and this was also a success factor because the 2011 Recommendation arrived in a context that was conducive to addressing all issues revolving around early school leaving. Some barriers: 1. The fact that France was already implementing actions for tackling early school leaving was certainly a factor that hindered the immediate adoption of the 2011 Recommendation. As often, when there is a vacuum, new recommendations receive greater attention. In this case, the thinking was quite advanced, and several programmes were already set in motion. 2. There is general belief that the issues France is faced with are too idiosyncratic to benefit from an approach coming from outsiders. Perhaps, the 2011 Recommendation was perceived as too broad. In short, "too little too late" may have been the feeling at that time. Some success factors: 1. Funding is always a necessary condition and the 2011 Recommendation was clearly very timely to apply for funding (e.g. ESF). 2. There is a will to share practice and learn from one another. 3. It was a time where France was very active in this field, with the preparation of the Report on the Partnership Based Evaluation of the Policy to tackle early school leaving (Évaluation partenariale de la politique de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire – Diagnostic et recommandations). The Minister was very focused on early school leaving and tackling it was explicitly in the Presidential rhetoric. 4. The 2011 Recommendation had the merit to allow for the sharing of data across countries, thanks to the use of comparable indicators proposed by Eurostat.
Degree of engagement of the country in	It has not been possible to precisely track down the frequency of participation to any of the relevant meetings.

EU level activities linked to ESL and use of outputs and outcomes	Nevertheless, France participated in several working groups, and addressed the issue of early school leaving during meetings of Chief Executive Officers or even at ministerial level in the field of education, or of technical vocational education and training. At least from 2013, France contributed to the sharing of information in relation to early school leaving at the European level. For example, benchmarking and sharing of tools are methods that are seen as useful for France as well as they help European Union partners. It is a direct application of the Open Method of Coordination in the field of early school leaving. A general feeling is that France was perhaps more into operationalising the fight against early school leaving and less at the political level. There is evidence that France checked on policies and practices implemented abroad, in European Union Member States. One of the key Reports by the National Council for the Evaluation of the School System (Conseil national d'évaluation du système scolaire, CNESCO) on early school leaving[407] presents the approaches used in several countries. Interestingly, it focuses on the three pillars: prevention, intervention, and compensation. As already stated on several occasions in this document, it is practically impossible to ascertain direct causality between France checking on international experiences and French policy; except perhaps for the Quebec approach that seems to have received a great deal of attention in France.
Degree to which the EU tools have contributed to efficiency of implementation of ESL policy	Interestingly, in France, the ET 2020 Policy has probably been the main driver to achieve the headline target in relation to early school leaving, perhaps more than the 2011 Recommendation. The main impact was in terms of image. Once France decided it would aim for a global early school leaving rate of 9.5%, it increased its efforts to meet this objective of dramatically reducing the global rate of early school leavers. Again, it is difficult to assert anything positive but it is probably a good example of the application of the 'name and shame' philosophy behind the concept of Open Method of Coordination. In addition, it is thanks to European Union funding that France has been able to implement some of its actions (e.g. Second Chance Schools in the compensation area). In all likelihood (see figures provided by stakeholders and published statistics), France has mainly been relying on surveys carried out, data produced, and analyses carried out domestically.

[407] www.cnesco.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/171208_Dossier_Synthese_Decrochage_scolaire.pdf

	Three bodies have produced relevant data and analyses: the National Research Centre on Qualifications (Centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications, CEREQ) of both the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, the National Statistical Institute (Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques, INSEE) that reports to the Prime Minister, and the Directorate for Evaluation, Prospective and Performance (Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance, DEPP) of the Ministry of Education. They have carried out the monitoring and use their own tools. Since the National Statistical Institute provide the French data for Eurostat, it is likely that there is some proximity between the INSEE data and the Eurostat ones. The publications by Eurostat are considered useful for direct access to comparable indicators and statistics since it is well known that there is some sort of ex ante harmonisation of the concepts. The financial support for France, through the European Social Fund, allowed actions that have not been evaluated, or are being evaluated. After the Action Plan "All Mobilised to Overcome Early School Leaving", no figures or statistics have been published. It is therefore difficult to assess whether the results have been proportional to the investment. (Nevertheless, fighting early school leaving has proven expensive, and France would need additional support). Incidentally, the lack of systematic evaluation (monitoring is very satisfactory), is a general issue in France, at all levels (local, regional, and national). There is a reduction of the early school leaving rate, but it seems difficult to determine its actual cause and the strategies/measures/programmes that have been the most efficient. In particular, the European Union resources are merged with other resources and there is no specific research done to disentangle the issue. No evidence regarding the ways in which resources could have been used more effectively has been uncovered during the research.
Added value of EU ESL policy and tools in the country	Without the European Social Fund, many actions would not have been possible. However it is hard to assess the situation precisely as those actions are local actions, and the European Social Fund represents seed or matching money; and alternative solutions may have been found if the European Social Fund was not there.

E. Need for future EU level support	
Key suggestions for EU support needed in the future (e.g. tools, initiatives, target groups, thematic areas)	Key elements missing: • The full continuum from 3 years before the end of upper secondary education to 3 years after it is not fully addressed. Early school leaving is too often defined in terms of leaving the initial education and training system without any qualification – including in France – whereas the issues related to lack of qualifications also appear little by little in short tertiary education. The transition between upper secondary education and tertiary education is not satisfactory in France these days. More and more tertiary students give up before achieving a qualification. Finally, even if tertiary education is open to students coming from vocational upper secondary education, there is strong evidence that they underperform compared to students with a general upper secondary education qualification (Baccalauréat général). • The business sector is missing. There is a lack of consistency, and of links, between the world of education and the world of work. There are some recent initiatives, in France, that try to bridge this gap and strengthen the link. There is, for example, "Parcours avenir" for a better guidance toward the world of work and economic/business actors. Nevertheless, a more holistic approach would be necessary. There is also some decentralisation of the information, advice and guidance system and this helps the Regions to become a catalyst for bringing the business sector into schools. • The professional development of all actors. From the detection of potential early school leavers to the intervention, education and training staff need to enrol in continuous professional development to familiarise themselves with all the dimensions of early school leaving. • The approaches to prevention should be augmented so that new concepts are introduced in the functioning of the school: e.g. wellbeing, desire to learn, improved school climate. In France, a new concept has recently appeared and it should be amplified: hooking (accrochage), as in hooking the children and young people to the education and training system. • The vocational preparation and personal development of the staff. They are key actors in fighting early school leaving, but they must be sensitised for the policy to reach the ground and be effective. • Systematic dialogue among the different partners involved in tackling early school leaving. This is for each partner to be able to back up its work on the work of the other partners rather than all the partners working in isolation from one another. This is also for always promoting the best solution for the end users. • Research is scarce, and proper monitoring and evaluation of the pilot experiments even more. Therefore innovation is also weak in the field of fighting early school leaving.

	There are also the recommendations proposed by the National Council for the Evaluation of the School System (Conseil national d'évaluation du système scolaire, CNESCO): • Gather data on pupils and their families. • Develop alternatives for potential early school leavers so that they do not leave early. • Improve guidance and multiply options (e.g. vocational 10th grade that would be general; September 2019). • Improve the school climate.
Types of future policy instruments which would be most helpful	The sharing of information about practices should be more systematic, and better explained (e.g. the context in which different practices work is key). There is a need to provide Member States with tools for harmonising the measure and for tackling early school leaving. The early school leaving rate is now a priority of all schools and stakeholders in the school system, but this has creating drawbacks as each Regional Education Authority (Académie), each Information and Guidance Centres (Centre d'information et d'orientation; within schools), and each Local Outreach Office (Mission locale) create tool(s) to tackle it. This need for harmonisation may extend to a need for sharing exemplary practices, and why they work. The broad dissemination of the/a Toolbox, accessible to all vertically. Some of the tools remain confidential and this is not very conducive to a wide-reaching action against early school leaving, especially in relation to prevention. The result of monitoring and evaluation programmes should be made available on a broad scale, nationally and internationally. Just as Erasmus+, and its predecessors, have been key drivers in connecting young people across Europe, and creating a sense of European identity, the European Union could be a driver in re-motivating potential early school leavers, for instance by providing them with opportunities to spend for instance a year abroad. Children would probably be transformed by such opportunities; not least because they would be extracted from their everyday context that may enter to a large extent in the difficulties they are experiencing at school (e.g. conflict with one particular teacher, family issues, deprived neighbourhood). Now that time has elapsed since the 2011 Recommendation and the beginning of the work in France for tackling early school leaving, now that there has been an exchange of ideas, and now that there is a solid knowledge base, it is probably time of the European Commission to issue a new General Recommendation, as in 2011. It would be more fit-for-purpose. For instance, it could be connected with a European Erasmus type of programme – of it could be a new

	strand of the Erasmus + programme – for extracting early school leaving from their clearly poorly conducive context, and give them a second chance in another language/country. This programme could be called "Fresh Start +". Existing recommendations (from 2011) are still valid but they would benefit from being refreshed, based on actual cooperation between Member States, and on international exchanges of early school leavers.
Other comments	Early school leaving was put forward as a priority policy area in France between 2012 and 2017, with major moves somewhat before that and before the 2011 Recommendation (e.g. the creation of the Interministerial Exchange of Information System, Système interministériel d'échange d'informations, SIEI), and preliminary work at the end of the last century (e.g. harmonisation of the school leaving statistics between the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education). There is some consistency between the 2011 Recommendation and the French approach (e.g. when it comes to the three pillars prevention, intervention, and compensation; i.e. Recommendation 2) but it is not possible to determine whether there is causality. Nevertheless, between 2012 and 2017, France worked on the same lines as the European Commission when it comes to fighting early school leaving. The French approach seems more influenced by the ET 2020 policy than by the 2011 Recommendation. Since the current Minister of Education took office (mid 2017), the issue of early school leaving is still of some topicality (e.g. the 2014 Action Plan "All Mobilised to Overcome Early School Leaving", Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage, is continued but it is not explicitly at the top of the agenda anymore (there has been no new action explicitly aiming at reducing early school leaving since 2017). As a consequence the official formal rhetoric barely mentions the issue nowadays. Retrospectively, it seems the fight against early school leaving was championed by some individuals, and was not fully integrated into a global policy and a legislative framework; hence the possibility to downplay it if a more urgent political priorities emerged. The most visible consequence of this change of focus is that the early school leaving policy (i.e. the Task Force for Fighting Early School Leaving (Mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire, MLDS) is now under the responsibility of a division called Research, Development, Innovation and Experimentation (Département de la Recherche et du Développement, de l'innovation et de l'expérimentation, DRDIE) within the General Directorate of School Teaching (Direction générale de enseignement scolaire, DEGESCO) of the Ministry of Education; which results in a dilution of early

	school leaving into other files. In the regions, the former Poles of this Task Force (Pôles de la mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire) are now called Guidance for Perseverance Poles (Pôles d'accompagnement à la persévérance scolaire, PAPS).[408] The term early school leaving (décrochage) does not even appear in the name... As confirmed during the fieldwork, something that has no name and is not mentioned explicitly does not exist, especially in the political field; hence the worries expressed on several occasions regarding the ongoing willingness to specifically address early school leaving. Nowadays in France, it seems the leitmotiv is not so much "décrochage scolaire" (early school leaving) but "accrochage ou raccrochage" (hooking up). Approaches focusing on prevention of early school leaving and on detection of potential early school leavers have the highest priority. The Government implements approaches as early as in the primary education system, and in sensitive geographical areas. This may explain the feeling that early school leaving is less at the top of the agenda, but there is some consistency with the ultimate goal of tackling early school leaving. The 2014 Plan maintains the continuity with the other major previous initiatives of the Ministry of Education: e.g. primary education, and the priority education policy that aims to balance socioeconomic inequalities.

[408] See for example: www.ac-poitiers.fr/cid107243/les-poles-d-accompagnement-a-la-perseverance-scolaire.html

Study on the Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (ESL)

Country case study: Ireland

A. Identification	
Country	**Ireland**
Reasons for selection as case study	The key selection criteria for country workshops have been the different challenges concerning early school leaving (ESL), different progress in ESL rates and different levels of engagement in EU-related actions at the country level. Ireland has a *common core curriculum* type of education system*:* after successful completion of primary education, all students progress to the lower secondary level, where they follow the same general curriculum education system.[409] Ireland currently has an ESL rate that is below the EU average and which has improved since 2011. The 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving reinforced pre-existing national initiatives to tackle ESL, and its timing meant that the EU agenda aligned with a raft of reforms between 2011-17 around Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), literacy & numeracy strategy and curriculum reform. The link with the Recommendation is made explicit in the 2017 updated Department of Education and Skills (DEIS) Plan. Ireland has also been very active in activities included in the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). In comparison with other countries, the degree of influence of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools, and engagement with the EU agenda were estimated to be at a relatively medium level.[410]
Date and location of country workshop	4 February 2009 Department of Education and Skills (DES), Marlborough Street, Dublin 1

[409] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2014a) *The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: schematic diagrams.* Available online: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/education_structures_EN.pdf

[410] The definitions used to classify countries are:

- High level (H) - Evidence of a direct alignment of national ESL strategies with the 2011 Recommendation, and with the corresponding measures in the EU policy framework
- Medium level (M) - General consistency in aims and approach between the 2011 Recommendation and national measures, but drawing on a wider range of influences
- Low level (L) - Little or no evidence of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policy.

Organisations participating in country workshop	DES, Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) Tusla Child and Family Agency Pavee Point (Traveller and Roma organisation) Psychological Support Service (City of Dublin Education and Training Board CDETB) School Completion Programme (Tusla) Youthreach Dublin City University Irish National Teachers Organisation National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals University College Cork

B. Country context regarding ESL	
Evolution of ESL rates since 2011	The ESL rate has evolved very positively since 2011 and Ireland is continuously improving its performance. The ESL rate has dropped from 10.8% in 2011 to 6.3% in 2016 (Eurostat, 2016). Ireland is ranked seventh in Europe[411]. Eurostat has also published a new figure of 5.1% for 2017.[412] The percentage of 18-24 year-olds in Ireland whose highest level of education is at least upper secondary level education is 94%, the second best in Europe.[413] Foreign born students have had positive educational outcomes, and have lower rates of ESL than native-born students at 5.2% (in comparison with 6.3%). This is significantly below the Europe 2020 national target of 8% and the EU average of 10.7%. Rates of ESL halved in Ireland since 2009. As is further outlined below, policies implemented to date have impacted positively on the general population. The rate has lowered significantly and the cohort now continuing to leaving school early have a higher concentration of needs and more complex needs that need to be addressed to prevent ESL and further reduce the rate.[414]

[411] Department of Education and Skills, Education Statistics, available at: http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics.
[412] This was expressed during interviews and at the country workshop
Eurostat Early leavers from education and training, age group 18-24 years, 2017, available at: www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tqm/table
[413] Department of Education and Skills, Education Statistics, available at: http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics.
[414] These concerns were addressed during interviews and at the country workshop

Specific national challenges and priorities on ESL	ESL in Ireland does affect **specific target groups and geographical areas.**[415] These groups include students from disadvantaged areas and disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, Traveller young people, Roma young people; and migrants. ESL is more prevalent in disadvantaged areas, while not exclusively. Many of these are deprived inner city, urban areas or suburban areas with limited resources and amenities. As ESL rates have gone down, those currently leaving school early are from more marginalised groups and while the group is smaller in number, these young people have more concentrated and complex needs, including learning difficulties, psychological and mental health issues and substance abuse. Some concerns were expressed that policy has not been sufficiently focused towards this most marginalised group and that this represents a challenge.[416] It has been determined that those **children and young people in disadvantaged areas** are most at risk of disengagement from school and ESL. As a result, it is a national priority to engage young people from disadvantaged areas. This objective has underpinned the 2017 **DEIS strategy**[417] which targets disadvantaged schools and provides them with increased supports. The DEIS review process identified a gap in terms of supporting vulnerable groups and the DEIS Plan 2017 has a renewed focus on measures to improve attendance, participation and retention of **travellers, Roma and other students at particular risk of poor engagement with education and early school leaving.** Almost 12% of children in Ireland live in poverty, a further 18% are at risk of poverty, and children are 1.4 times more likely than adults to live in consistent poverty[418]. Between 2008 and 2011 Ireland had the highest increase in child poverty in EU, based on Eurostat AROPE indicator, while child poverty significantly increased from 2011 to 2014. In 2014, the Government set a child poverty target as part of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures policy framework for children (2014-2020).[419] This target is "to lift over 70,000 children (aged 0-17 years) out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two-thirds on the 2011 level".

[415] This was expressed during interviews and at the country workshop
[416] These concerns were addressed during interviews and at country workshop
[417] DEIS Plan, 2017. *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools.* available at https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/DEIS-Plan-2017.pdf
[418] Survey of Income and Living Conditions, Ireland (SILC), 2016
[419] Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures policy framework for children - The national policy framework for children & young people (2014 – 2020), available at https://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/cypp_framework/BetterOutcomesBetterFutureReport.pdf .

In 2016, there were around 141,700 children in persistent poverty, 34,700 more than when the target was set. The poverty target under the **National Action Plan for Social Exclusion 2007-2016**[420], also called the 'national social target for poverty reduction', was to "reduce consistent poverty to 4% by 2016 as an interim target and to 2% or less by 2020, from the 2010 baseline rate of 6.2%". This was followed by the **Updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2015-2017**[421]. Based on the commitment in the 'A Programme for a Partnership Government 2016' to 'developing a new integrated framework for social inclusion, to tackle inequality and poverty', the Government is now in the process developing a new anti-poverty strategy.

The Irish National Teachers Organisation/DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre joint conference (December 2015) which informed the national DEIS Action Plan, attended by the key Department of Education and Skills official who led the writing of the 2017 DEIS plan was strongly influenced by the EU ESL documents in the design of the conference themes. This conference was the largest face to face consultation for the new DEIS plan. Key themes raised in the conference were multidisciplinary teams, interagency working, wellbeing.[422]

In addition to the commitments at national level, the Irish Government, along with all other EU Member States, has also signed up to the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Regarding inequality, a 2018 study of 11 EU countries shows that Ireland has a significant and increasing gap in deprivation between vulnerable adults and other adults in society and that poverty lasts longer for members of vulnerable groups, including lone parents and those who are unemployed.[423] The research, from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) shows there is a significant and widening gap in the rate of persistent deprivation experienced by vulnerable adults, including lone parents and adults with a disability, and the rate experienced by other adults. Of the 11 EU countries studied, Ireland's gap was the largest and increased the most during the study's time frame of 2004-2015.

The majority of debate regarding **segregation** in Irish schools has in relation to religion and the so-called 'baptism barrier' due

[420] National Action Plan for Social Exclusion 2007-2016, available at https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/National-Action-Plan-for-Social-Inclusion-2007-2016.pdf

[421] Updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2015-2017, available at https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/Updated%20National%20Action%20Plan%20For%20Social%20Inclusion%202015-2017.pdf

[422] The Irish National Teachers Organisation/DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre joint conference (December 2015). Available at: https://www.into.ie/ROI/Publications/ReviewofDeis.pdf

[423] Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) (2018), Poverty dynamics of social risk groups in the EU: an analysis of the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, 2005 to 2014

to be abolished, effective for students entering school in 2019/2020[424]. There were concerns expressed that the proposal may be deemed to be in breach of the Constitution and may be successfully challenged.[425] The fact that 96% of all primary schools are either Catholic or Protestant and that fewer than 4% are multi or non-denominational, indicates that the Irish primary school system is de facto religiously segregated.[426]

There is a significant amount of **social segregation** in Ireland in terms of school composition. The socioeconomic background of teachers is being sought to be addressed in the PATH DES programme which seeks to offer additional supports to increase access to the teaching profession in marginalised areas.

The **reduction in the resources available for the School Completion Programme (SCP) and guidance support, as well as the lack of speech and language therapy (SLT) supports and supports for children and young people experiencing emotional, psychological and mental health difficulties** are considerable challenges. The **availability of mental health and speech and SLT supports** is also a challenge and waiting lists are considerable. There has been a focus on school-based speech and language therapists in the Programme for Government and DEIS Plan 2017. **Hunger prevention** is also a challenge.

Sleep deprivation and rising levels of anxiety and general mental health issues among children and young people are considerable challenges as well and have been linked to increased engagement with social media. Linked to these challenges is the lack of development of **multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs)** in and around schools. As an initial step, 19 speech and language therapists and 12 Occupational therapists will be recruited to work with 150 schools and pre-schools. €2.25m was allocated to Phase One of the project in 2018 by the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs and Health and in conjunction with the HSE (Health Service Executive).[427] This was a significant development toward MDTs in and around schools and could be built upon further to form MDTs.

The further development of **early childhood education and care (ECEC)** is a significant challenge and priority for Ireland and the accessibility of ECEC by marginalised groups. It was mentioned at the workshop that the quality as well as quantity of ECEC was a challenge and that the professionalisation of this sector should be a priority. The sector is underpaid comparatively,

[424] This was expressed during interviews.
[425] This was expressed during interviews.
[426] This was expressed during interviews.
[427] Government launch new project to bring specialised therapists into schools and pre-schools, 14 May 2018. Available at: https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2018-press-releases/PR18-05-14.html

it should be valued more and staff given appropriate training and related supports.

Public spending on education generally in Ireland is recovering to its pre-crisis level. Expenditure on education in Ireland should be considered in the context of **demographic change**. Ireland faces large increases in pupil numbers at primary and secondary level in the immediate future. Birth rates have increased significantly and pupil numbers at primary level are expected to peak in 2018/2019. At post-primary level, enrolment is expected to increase until 2025.

In terms of **literacy and numeracy**, the Report of the Interim Review of the **National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy (2011-2020)** was published in March 2017.[428] The plan identifies a range of programmes and targets to be achieved. In terms of **modernising school education**, Ireland's main strategic mid-term policy-steering instrument is the **Action Plan for Education 2016-2019**.[429] This policy tool was published in September 2016 and provides for the development of an updated literacy and numeracy strategy. With regard to **the teaching profession and the financing of new teacher positions,** extra teaching posts were announced the 2017 budget, to be put in place from September 2017.

The **modernisation of curricula** is being phased in. The new language curriculum is being phased into primary schools for pupils up to 2nd class: changes to the oral strand with effect from September 2016 and to reading and writing from 2017-2018. On **continuous teacher professional development**, the professional programme for teachers and school leaders is under way. A revised language curriculum for pupils in 3rd to 6th class is also under development. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is undertaking a **consultation on the primary curriculum** more broadly.

The **lower attractiveness of vocational education** compared to academic education remains a challenge. High enrolment in tertiary education reflects the lack of alternative pathways and the relative undervaluing of vocational routes. SOLAS published a national research project in 2017 that examined the extrinsic and intrinsic **barriers to participation in Further Education and Training (FET)**. This included the identification of barriers to the participation of specific groups who are experiencing socio-economic exclusion and distance from education and/or the

[428] National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy (2011-2020). Available at https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Literacy-and-Numeracy/Literacy-and-Numeracy-Learning-For-Life.pdf

[429] Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, available at https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/Department-of-Education-and-Skills-Strategy-Statement-2016-2019.pdf

	labour market. **New types of apprenticeships are being introduced**. Among key stakeholders there are **concerns about equity and access to higher education.**[430] **Equity of access to higher education** is identified as a core national objective for the higher education system in the Department of Education and Skills Higher Education System Performance Framework (SPF) 2018-2020.
Recommendations from EU level on ESL	Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) were made to Ireland in 2014 to reduce ESL to 8% by 2020 and these have been achieved, as the ESL rate was measured at 6.3% in 2016 and 5.1% in 2017 (Eurostat 2016, 2017).

C. Key national policies on ESL	
Main organisations responsible for ESL policy	The **Department of Education and Skills (DES)** is in charge of education and ESL policy and the implementation of the DEIS strategy. There are several other government departments involved in DEIS. For instance, the School Meals Programme, operated by the **Department of Social Protection**, provides schools with funding for meals for disadvantaged children. The DES also manages **Youthreach**, an education, training and work experience programme for early school leavers, aged between 15 and 20 years. It offers various education options and opportunities to get certification, operating on a full-time, year-round basis. The DES is also involved in the inter-Departmental delivery of other strategies such as the National Migrant Integration Strategy and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. The **Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)** manages **Tusla**, which is the oversight governance body for the Educational Welfare Service which includes the **School Completion Programme (SCP); the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL); and the Education Welfare Board.** Tusla collects information on school attendance as mentioned above. The **Early Years Education Policy Unit** is co-located in the DES and DCYA to ensure that policy developments in the early childhood sector are developed within an overall strategic policy framework for children. The Department **of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP)** manages the **Youth Guarantee Programme** which

[430] Education and Training Monitor 2017, Country Analysis. European Commission (2017). Available at: *https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2017-country-reports_en.pdf*

	brokers clients of SOLAS and inputs into the SOLAS education and training programme. **SOLAS** is the state-funded Further Education and Training (FET) authority that is responsible for the funding, planning and coordinating training in Ireland. **Education and Training Boards (ETBs)** are responsible for the delivery of this training programme at regional and local levels. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) also provide school meals to DEIS schools **Schools** play a key role in the implementation of ESL policy and are subject to external and internal evaluations in this regard. The Department of Education and Skills provided an example of peer support and local networking with a presentation on the OSCAILT network - a network of principals coming together from Limerick City DEIS primary and post primary schools. Parents are acknowledged in the Irish Constitution as the primary educators of their children. In terms of cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination, the **policy areas of employment, youth, social affairs and justice are involved in cooperating on early school leaving**, but cooperation mechanisms are not yet established. Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well-established.
Mechanisms for monitoring ESL	Ireland conducts national data collections on early school leaving, based on a **student register**, in addition to the data gathered for the EU Labour Force Survey.[431] The **statistics unit in the DES produce annual reports** which include numbers of early school leavers. The information covers early school leavers among students enrolled in DES supported post-primary schools in the Post-Primary Pupils Database using student PPS (social security) numbers. Background of early school leavers is collected, including gender, age, nationality and whether post-primary school was fee-paying or not. Reasons for leaving are not collected. The School Completion Programme, a national measure to reduce ESL, annually collects data on young people not completing educational milestones.
Comprehensive strategy	The **Action Plan for Educational Inclusion Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)** was launched in May 2005. This, together with the DEIS 2017 National Action Plan, is the main policy initiative to address ESL and educational disadvantage. The DEIS plan constitutes an early school leaving

[431] Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures (2014). European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Cedefop. Available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/175EN.pdf

	strategy and is the main policy focused on addressing educational disadvantage.
Specific measures: prevention	Several prevention policies are in place in Ireland, as briefly described below. Universal free ECCE year, accessible to families with a disadvantaged background. Measures are not specifically targeted at migrant/Roma children. Due to lower uptake among disadvantaged families there are plans being developed to provide these families with additional supports. Alternative curriculum programmes Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) are part of DEIS programme. DES education policy is anti-segregationist, though State funding is provided to private schools which supports the disproportionate entry of students from private schools into State funded universities as is evident from The Irish Times 'league tables' of entry to university by school. Religious segregation or the 'baptism barrier' is expected to be abolished, effective for students entering school in 2019/2020. There is a **Traveller Education Strategy** in Ireland (2006).[432] There are also anti-segregationist policies in relation to children and young people with special needs. **DEIS Plan 2017** has a renewed focus on measures to improve attendance, participation and retention of Travellers, Roma and other students at particular risk of poor engagement with education and early school leaving. Additional language support is provided for students who do not speak English as their first language and it is possible to take examinations in languages other than English. The **National Parents Council Primary** (NPC), concerning primary education has published guidelines for parent associations, developed in consultation with parents and parent associations. The National Parents Council post-primary (NPCpp) offer training programmes for establishing parent associations. HSCL supports parental engagement and school life and their children's learning since the 1990s. Literacy programmes involving parents have been implemented in DEIS schools. Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) contains a vocational approach and aims to prepare students for adult and working life in two years at upper secondary level.

[432]Traveller Education Strategy (2017 – 2021), available at https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/National-Traveller-and-Roma-Inclusion-Strategy-2017-2021.pdf
Subsequent strategy Available at: http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/des_recom_traveller_educ_strategy.pdf

	One of the DEIS themes is to link with local business and Transition Year includes business courses and making links with local businesses.
Specific measures: intervention	Several intervention measures are in place in Ireland, as briefly described below. School clusters and networks are encouraged through DEIS and the Schools Excellence Fund though this is largely undeveloped. Education welfare services HSCL and SCP work with schools, local service providers and communities. SCP use early warning systems; attendance reports compiled by Tusla can also be used.[433] The Education Act underpins the right to establish and participate in a student council. There is an anti-bullying action plan coordinated by the DCYA. Individual schools have implemented anti-bullying policies and anti-bullying buddy programmes. There is a National Action Plan on Bullying (2013) but this is not explicitly linked with DEIS or ESL. The Education Act[434] underpins right to participate in school councils. Rights of children to participate in decisions affecting them were enshrined in the Children's Rights referendum in 2012 and in the policy framework Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (2014). It is not fully evident the extent to which all Initial Teacher Education (ITE) colleges require teachers to have done a placement in a disadvantaged school. Very limited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is available for DEIS teachers regarding social realities faced by young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. CPD is available for DEIS teachers regarding social realities faced by young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. DEIS funds extracurricular activities for DEIS schools. Many of these are coordinated by SCP, though there is concern that these are being minimised in favour of a more targeted approach in current SCP reform proposals. Emotional counselling supports, as well as coaching and mentoring is available through some VET programmes including Youthreach. Informal mentoring is available through SCP. However, in contrast to Youthreach, there is little systematic emotional counselling support services in schools in Ireland, including DEIS schools. Home tuition is available to those experiencing difficulties with the mainstream education system.

[433] Tusla, Annual Attendance Reports available at: www.tusla.ie

[434] Education Act 1998, available at: www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51/enacted/en/html

	Guidance is part of the curriculum. Under current teacher allocation, schools make the decision locally to allocate hours to guidance provision.
Specific measures: compensation	Several compensation measures are in place in Ireland, as briefly described below. Ireland provides **second chance education and training**, including VET programmes such as Youthreach, An Cosan, community training centres (CTCs), and the Youth Guarantee. There are some crèche facilities within some Youthreach centres and An Cosan, recognising the importance of childcare to facilitate young parents' participation in education and training. Young people in Ireland receive additional targeted support if needed, including financial support, but also career guidance and emotional counselling. DEIS and programmes integrated within DEIS such as SCP and HSCL, supports students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are at risk of leaving education and training early to provide additional support on the basis of individual educational needs. Youthreach and An Cosan offer guidance and mentoring supports. This has been done through additional teaching, increased guidance or better collaboration with parents. With regard to **financial support,** Youthreach and CTCs operate monetary incentives.

D. Influence of the 2011 Recommendation and other EU tools on ESL	
Relevance of the Recommendation to national challenges	Workshop participants reported that the 2011 Recommendation has had an impact on education policies in Ireland, but that it is very difficult to trace evidence for this. It was noted that there is very limited – if any – awareness of the Recommendation and related tools among practitioners working on the ground and that they look to national policy for guidance.[435] It was also noted that it is embedded practice for Irish government departments, including DES, to look to European policy, OECD and international best practice when setting policy. In this way, aspects of the Recommendation and the ET2020 workshops may have fed into some policies post-2011 but there is not clear evidence for this. The workshop participants discussed the aspects that are included in the Recommendation and found that the ones which resonate most with the national context are around the following aspects: • Bullying and promoting wellbeing;

[435] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018

	• The importance of student-centred targeted supports, including the development of multidisciplinary teams that can provide speech and language therapy (slt) and emotional counselling; • Increasing outreach to make education more accessible to marginalised groups, including traveller and Roma; • The importance of second chance education and developing the status of apprenticeships in Ireland, as often higher education is promoted without sufficient understanding that this will not suit every student (workshop participants estimated 20% of students will be unsuited to completing the Leaving Certificate) and that in this sense Ireland is behind other European countries. Participants also reported that the message regarding the value of apprenticeships needs to be effectively communicated to parents also to avoid stigma.[436]
Commonalities between the 2011 Council Recommendation and other EU tools, and national ESL policies, practices and research	***Relevance of the 2011 Recommendation for national policies*** At the country workshop feedback was given that for the Compensatory education sector in Ireland the Council Recommendation was a direct influence, for example, regarding emotional counselling supports in compensatory education and through their participation in Commission Working Groups. School-site multidisciplinary professionals (onsite speech and language therapists, DEIS 2017 Action 94) and the new policy of school based occupational therapists mentioned at the country workshop offer a multidisciplinary team-based focus resonant with the Commission's Thematic WG on ESL 2013 and School Policy WG 2015 documents. DEIS 2017 (Goal 3.4, Action 38, 39 Positive School Climate, Goal 3.1 Initial Teacher Education) offer direct correspondence with the Council Recommendation, as does the interagency working focus of DEIS 2017 Action 40 on links with support services, and 45 for complex needs. DEIS 2017 takes a stronger wellbeing focus than DEIS 2005. This is an emphasis in not only the 2011 Recommendation but also the Commission Thematic WG 2013 and School Policy WG documents and the Council Conclusions on ESL 2015. It is to be noted that the main civil servant with responsibility for writing the DEIS 2017 National Action Plan on Social Inclusion in Education has since retired and was not in attendance at the workshop. Hence directly causal connections to these commonalities were not possible to be made. As above, the information collected during the country workshop indicates that while the Recommendation has had an impact, this

[436] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018

is not identified by practitioners on the ground and has been impossible to trace evidence for the direct influence of the Recommendation on educational policy, practice and research.

There are many commonalities between the Recommendation and national policy, practice and research. It was, however, not possible to establish certain causal links suggesting the influence of the Recommendation on national Irish policy. Key stakeholders have, however, emphasised that the Department of Education generally looks to Europe and international examples of best practice when formulating policy.[437]

Commonalities between the Recommendation and national policies and practices

Participants identified 3 key policy themes that national policies and practices in Ireland have in common with the 2011 Recommendation. The first is Youthreach, intervention measure, policy themes h) and compensation measure, policy themes a) and d); the second is multidisciplinary teams, intervention measure, policy theme i) and the third is free universal ECEC, prevention measure, policy theme a). These are discussed in detail below.

The evidence that was gathered indicates that in Ireland many ESL strategies and measures pre-date 2011 (i.e. the year when the Recommendation was adopted) and that ESL has been on the Irish policy agenda since the 1990s. It was also noted that the measures to tackle ESL and related supports were substantially reduced as a result of perceived cuts introduced in 2011 and onwards.[438] In this sense, workshop participants shared the perception that 2011 marked the introduction of perceived cuts to already existing services to tackle ESL rather than a ramping up of or initiating of activities. In this way, it was seen as a year that introduced cutbacks rather than saw in improvements.

The information collected during the country workshop also indicates that Ireland was still only gradually coming back to pre-2011 levels of services and supports and that it had been a leading country in Europe before 2011. The School Completion Programme was cut by 25% and supports to Travellers were perceived as having been significantly cut also by up to 86%, including the cessation of traveller training workshops and visiting teachers to Traveller communities.

These cuts have not yet been restored. A representative from DES stated that these perceived cuts to Traveller support had in fact not been cuts but had been a redirection of 86% of resources to be absorbed in the mainstream school system as part of a

[437] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018

[438] This point was emphasised during the country workshop and also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018.

mainstreaming initiative. In this way, said it was reported that the supports and their implementation had been made less visible.

Stakeholders participating in the workshop also stated that many resource posts had been maintained under a general allocation model where resources were allocated bearing in mind the number of Travellers in a particular school. Views were expressed that while this could have been interpreted as an anti-segregation policy the results were that Travellers experienced discrimination as a result as they were not aware that services had been mainstreamed and this was not effectively communicated. These mainstreaming initiatives came in part from the Traveller Education Strategy 2005. As a result, they were under the impression that supports had been discontinued and there was less engagement with education among Travellers reported as a result.

It was also reported during the country workshop that there has since been a National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy 2014 which has recognised the shortcomings of this focus on mainstreaming and the negative impact this has had and seeks to provide resources to meet the additional needs of Traveller and Roma students. This impact was discussed by the workshop participants and was expressed as unintended consequence of pursuing an anti-segregation mainstreaming approach of the 2005 Traveller Education Strategy. Views were expressed that anti-segregation policies run risks and need to have processes in place to mitigate these risks, central to this is the meaningful participation of target groups.

Stakeholders participating in the workshop also mentioned that the Educational Committee was disbanded in 2005 and also that in 2012 the statutory basis for the national Educational Disadvantage Committee and the section on educational disadvantage was taken out of the Education Act. This was interpreted by some participants as reflecting a mindset that mainstreaming had worked and that the issue of ESL had been solved.[439]

All workshop participants acknowledged that there is now a more nuanced understanding that while incidences of ESL have been reduced, the smaller numbers of students (8-9%) have more complex needs and often more entrenched experiences of disadvantage impacting on their education and there is now more than ever a need for a targeted response to address the needs of this target group, while also appreciating the distinct experiences of each individual student.

[439] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018.

One participant gave first-hand accounts of exclusionary practices that they experienced in school in Ireland in the 1990s and that these had contributed to them leaving school early. In this context workshop participants called for more to be done at teacher training and CPD level to support teachers to create inclusive atmospheres in the classroom. It was mentioned that cultural awareness modules should be strengthened and increased and that more diverse teachers should be recruited.

Path is a DES project which is beginning to address this. Its goal is to have the teacher population reflecting the population of Ireland.[440] Some participants commented that where past pupils from schools in disadvantaged areas are recruited as teachers this had a positive impact on the school and the morale of students and the wider community as they saw educational attainment and teaching as a viable option and career choice.

Some participants felt that the requirement for Honours Irish to enter the BEd (teaching degree qualification) was prohibitive and that it should be acceptable for students to acquire Honours level Irish as part of their teaching degrees. It was noted by workshop participants that effective access to the teaching profession was an important preventative ESL strategy. It was also noted that sometimes there is a need for more implementation support at school level to implement policies appropriately.

Remaining challenges

In addition to the **need for more focus on diversity in CPD for teachers, the quality and quantity of CPD in general** was raised as a challenge and the fact that it was largely limited to curricula change was criticised. The view was expressed that the calibre of Irish teachers was behind those in European countries regarding training and CPD. It was reported that a lot of teachers do their own CPD in their own time and were not sufficiently supported in this. Workshop participants suggested that SLT also be included in initial teacher training. In this way, it was suggested that **intervention policies f) regarding ITE and CPD programmes and g) conflict resolution skills and creation of positive learning environment** are intertwined and should be treated as so.

Another gap identified was **differentiated teacher training methods** which it was felt should be incorporated more into teacher training. In terms of wellbeing, workshop participants expressed frustration that the current focus on examinations and points put extreme pressure on students and additional hours

[440] 1916 Bursary Fund For students from target groups identified as currently being under-represented in Higher Education. *Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund.* Available at: http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/08/PATH-2-Guidelines-2018_19-002.pdf

spent on wellbeing programmes did not address this issue in the structure of education.[441]

It was noted during the workshop that the recent Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy is a Department of Justice strategy but it has a cross-departmental approach and the DES are participating and overseeing delivery of education-related actions in schools. This is currently being piloted. Stakeholders noted that consultation with Travellers had improved and that a consultative process was being employed for the Strategy with 50% traveller representation on its plenary group. It was also noted that the involvement of Travellers had been acknowledged as key to ensure the transfer of information to the Traveller community and that public sector organisations should focus on implementing positive discrimination toward potential employees from the Traveller community.

It was felt that the needs of students regarding **multilingual supports** and supports to learn in their mother tongue should be a priority in the context of increasing new communities in Ireland.[442] While schools can apply for additional supports in this regard it was considered that these supports were not meeting the current needs and that parents' language was a challenge also.[443] It was noted by workshop participants that ETBs provide adult English classes for refugees and residents in direct provision facilities.

The information collected during the workshop indicates that supports for **additional needs** had been treated similarly as a result of mainstreaming and that while there had been well-meaning anti-segregation intentions behind this, it had had a negative impact on the level of one to one supports for children and young people with additional needs.[444] It was noted by workshop participants that fee paying schools had very limited support for additional needs.

It was also noted during the workshop that there had been an **embargo on recruitment** which had negatively impacted educational services which meant that if staff left they could not be replaced. There are now approximately 60 Educational Welfare Officers as opposed to the recommended 250-300.

It was noted that ESL also went down during the recession in Ireland as a result of a lack of jobs, in particular in the construction industry.[445] Regarding equity of access to further and

[441] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018
[442] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018.
[443] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018.
[444] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018.
[445] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018.

higher education, workshop participants mentioned that Solas have developed measures to focus the implementation of policy in this area and have developed agreement with education and training boards (ETBs) in this regard.[446]

A participant mentioned that while there are supports for Travellers going back to mainstream higher education, there is often very little awareness of these in the Traveller community. Workshop discussions also indicate that it was very important in terms of validation of qualifications and experience that softer skills be appropriately recognised to support students, despite the fact that this qualitative learning could be challenging to capture and articulate.

A general point was made that while ESL rates were down, there was now a **smaller number (8-9%) of students leaving school early and that this cohort had more acute needs**. As a result, it will be important that future strategies have a very targeted focus.[447]

Workshop participants discussed and agreed on three key policy themes addressed in the national policy framework in Ireland and which are also reflected in the 2011 Recommendation. Their design and implementation are briefly outlined below.

1. **Example 1: Youthreach** - Second chance education – alternative pathways – Intervention and compensation measure. Youthreach is funded by Youthreach is joint funded by DES and DEASP and is implemented at a national level. Its development preceded the adoption of the Recommendation in June 2011.

Youthreach is a Department of Education and Skills official education, training and work experience programme for early school leavers aged 15 – 20. It offers young people the opportunity to identify options within adult life, and provides them with opportunities to acquire certification. As it operates on a full-time, year-round basis, Youthreach has a continuous intake policy. This has been rolled out nationally and it was said at the workshop that this had been significantly influenced by participation in 2020 workshops.

2. **Example 2: MDTs** – Intervention measure, largely undeveloped, recent pilot launched in 2018

As mentioned above and during interviews, it was reiterated at the workshop that while MDTs have been largely undeveloped until recently, there has been significant progress in this regard. 19 speech and language therapists and 12 Occupational therapists will be recruited to work with 150 schools and pre-schools. €2.25m was allocated to Phase One of the project in

[446] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018.
[447] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018

2018. This was expressed as a welcome opportunity to explore a model of school-based therapies and could provide a potential model for a national roll out of MDT supports in and around schools.

In a context of national waiting lists for mental health, emotional supports and SLT (participants cited waiting lists of up to two years) it was considered that this should be a priority for Ireland going forward.[448] This was seen as an area that Ireland were behind other European countries as most European countries have a team of professionals based in schools and that this has not previously been part of Irish educational culture. Rather there has been a tendency to leave teachers to deal with a wide range of issues and that this is not always appropriate.[449] It was also mentioned that appointments were often in school time and took children out of school and this was a problem that would be solved by school-based supports.

In terms of context, it was also mentioned during the workshop that mental health needs and anxiety were growing among young people, that there were no emotional counselling supports in schools and that guidance counsellors in schools were not equipped to deal with these issues.[450] Youthreach was praised by workshop participants for providing emotional supports. Psychological support and mentoring and for the recognition that often in education the relationship between student and teacher is more important than the methodology as young people are not likely to learn from someone they do not have a good relationship with.

These were planned but it has not happened yet. It was mentioned during the workshop that Youthreach are rolling out a trauma-informed approach that has been applied in the US which takes into account traumatic incidents which may be impacting on a young person's wellbeing and educational experience. SCP was also credited with employing therapists and counsellors. SCP structures and processes vary as there is no standardised blue for SCP services. In many cases, students' education is impacted by emotional issues and they do not have any specific learning difficulties.

In this regard, workshop participants expressed that it was important that an approach be followed that is more focused on promoting mastery of processes rather than being solely task oriented. The Bologna Declaration of June 1990 was referenced by one participant in this regard. It was suggested that wellbeing should be part of school self-evaluation process.

[448] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018
[449] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018
[450] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018

Again, it was suggested that CPD should be improved to give teachers more of an understanding of their pastoral role and the importance of teacher-student relationships. One participant spoke of the possibility for schools to appoint emotional counsellors but that this had to come out of the teaching allocation for the school and that this was not satisfactory.

3. **Example 3: Free ECEC –** prevention measure, included in national policy, implemented at national level and preceded the adoption of the 2011 Recommendation

This measure is implemented nationally, with. one free year in 2010 and two free years in 2016. The ECCE programme is a universal programme available to all children aged two years and 8 months in Ireland. One free year was introduced in 2010 and two free years in 2016. It provides children with their first experience of early learning prior to commencing school. It provides for three hours per day, five days per week over 38 weeks.

This preventative measure was introduced to increase the relatively low participation rates in ECEC in Ireland. It was discussed at the workshop that Ireland has broadly learned from Member States in this area of rolling out state-funded ECCE, a new development for Ireland and the Recommendation was seen as influential, if indirectly.[451] It was also mentioned that funding for ECEC had been reduced since 2011 and funding was gradually returning to pre-2011 levels.

School clusters were mentioned as another commonality with the Recommendation and collaborative initiatives are funded through Ireland's school excellence fund at primary and post-primary level. Interagency working and networking were promoted in the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures policy framework and examples of this include ABC, CYPSC, ETB and Meitheal model.[452] Again, it was expressed that this synergy may or may not be conscious or deliberate.

Finally, the inclusion of wellbeing as part of the new DEIS strategy was mentioned as something that had been raised as part of a national conference and mentioned the link with the recommendation.

The contribution of EU associated tools to national policy and practice

Additional information was received from the DES following the workshop regarding the engagement that Ireland has had with the ET 2020 working groups. Ireland has been involved with the ET 2020 Working Group on Schools since 2016. One participant spoke of their participation with the ET 2020 Working Groups and

[451] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018
[452] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018

	how the knowledge that he learned had influenced the student-centred approach to second chance education and the provision of holistic supports for students, including emotional, psychological and financial. Relative to the way in which the tools promoted the policy of reducing ESL, the workshop participants indicated that Irish students are participating in the Erasmus programme and forming links with other European countries. An overall impact of the Recommendation and its supporting tools in Ireland is difficult to identify. Consulted stakeholders emphasised that ESL was on the Irish policy agenda since the 1990s, but that The Recommendation and its associated instruments have been useful I general and easy to work with in an Irish policy context. The European Toolkit for Schools and the monitoring and reporting mechanisms have been the most useful in the view of the interviewed stakeholders. The resources regarding whole school approach were reported as having been particularly useful: "*The output from the first working group was very good and has been very useful regarding the whole school approach. We were already doing it, but we have developed and expanded it; the concept of whole school self-evaluation was prompted by this*". There evidence gathered from interviews and the workshop indicates a relatively low level of awareness of key stakeholders about the ESIF conditionalities, however, and their role in influencing policy design and implementation at the national level in Ireland.
Barriers and success factors for the implementation of the Recommendation and other EU tools	The evidence collected indicates that the stakeholders that were interviewed and consulted during the workshop have very limited awareness about the EU associated tools, such as the headline ESL target, the ESIF ex-conditionalities, monitoring and reporting mechanisms etc. An exception is one participant who spoke of participation with the Working Groups and said that participation had influenced the development of their work in further education for early school leavers or those at risk of early school leaving in Ireland. Participants in the research felt that there would be little awareness in schools of the existence of the European Toolkit for Schools and that it would be welcome if the Commission engaged in more proactive outreach to this end. It was suggested by workshop participants that there had been an impact in terms of the new DEIS strategy focus on wellbeing but that this was impossible to evidence.

	DEIS targets around raising literacy and numeracy and related inspections are an important preventative ESL strategy and there are commonalities with the recommendation. It was also suggested that with regard to the DES Inspectorate, there was more awareness of the need to link with European policy. Schools look to DES circular for information on policy rather than to Europe and it was suggested that this was appropriate given that education is a national competence. In general, there is some evidence to indicate that Ireland has benefited from its engagement with Europe and knowledge of the Recommendation, that there are many commonalities between the Recommendation and national policy, while there are outstanding policy implementation issues in some areas. However, there is limited evidence of the processes through which EU education policy and tools have impacted policy-making and practices in Ireland.
Degree of engagement of the country in EU level activities linked to ESL and use of outputs and outcomes	One participant from Youthreach spoke of participation with the Working Groups. The DES official linked with the ET 2020 working groups was not in attendance and was contacted by the researcher to provide further information. This was received and constituted of the fact that Ireland has been involved with the ET2 020 Working Group on Schools since 2016.
Degree to which the EU tools have contributed to efficiency of implementation of ESL policy	The research indicates there is very little awareness about the efficiency of EU tools in the implementation of ESL policy. The key stakeholders that have been consulted for the study reported that there should be more promotion of the resources to raise awareness about them amongst policy-makers and other stakeholders.
Added value of EU ESL policy and tools in the country	The most direct country workshop evidence mentioned for the added value of EU ESL policy was for compensatory education, such as regarding the importance of emotional counselling supports. The multidisciplinary team approach in the DEIS Action Plan 2017 and government policy regarding speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists onsite in schools mentioned at the country workshop is another candidate for EU ESL policy influence regarding multidisciplinary teams [453]. As noted above, there are direct commonalities between the EU ESL Policy and the DEIS 2017 Action Plan on a) school climate, b) initial teacher education, c) interagency working and d) new wellbeing focus.

[453] Downes, P. (2017), 'New DEIS Action Plan: Strengths, Weaknesses, Issues for Further Consideration', In Touch bulletin April 2017, pp.46-47

	As distinct from EU policies, there was very little evidence expressed by participants in the research relating to the added value of EU tools and very limited awareness of tools. The evidence gathered indicates that ESL was already on the Irish agenda since the 1990s., with the exception of one representative who spoke of their practice in second chance education having been influenced by their participation in the ET 2020 Working Groups. It was also felt that the fact that a focus area of the new DEIS strategy was wellbeing could have been somewhat influenced by European policy but that it was too difficult to find concrete evidence for this.[454]

E. Need for future EU level support	
Key suggestions for EU support needed in the future (e.g. tools, initiatives, target groups, thematic areas)	As highlighted previously in the report, the research found that more promotion of the EU associated tools and resources is necessary to increase awareness among key stakeholders in Ireland One issue where participants in the research indicated a more focused approach would be beneficial. It was the need for **post-primary capacity to teach students of variable ability and use different teaching styles to cater to students' varying needs**. This was discussed as a suggested area for focus nationally but that guidance could be provided for this at a European level. In terms of **activities to increase the participation of marginalised groups in early childhood education and care (ECEC)**, workshop participants noted that Traveller participation in the education system was lower than it had been pre-2011. In this regard, it was suggested that outreach could happen at a pre-school stage, similar to the outreach carried out by home school community liaison teachers (HSCLs) at primary level. This would increase school readiness. In the case of Traveller children, it was expressed that many Traveller children began primary already behind their classmates and that this was disheartening and was not a positive start to their educational experience.[455] It was also suggested that the **quality of early years education** should also be a focus as this is a sector that is very poorly paid in Ireland and early years professionals should be as qualified and get same levels of support and training as other educational professionals at primary

[454] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018
[455] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018

E. Need for future EU level support	
	and post-primary levels. This was discussed as an issue nationally.
Types of future policy instruments which would be most helpful	The research has revealed very little, if any, awareness of tools. One representative spoke of their practice in second chance education having been influenced by their participation in the ET 2020 Working Groups. It was mentioned by one participant that education in Ireland is a national competence and that it is appropriate that stakeholders would look to national policy for guidance. It was also noted that the Irish Government explicitly signed up to the 2011 ESL Council Recommendation, unlike the UK government. It was suggested that a lot more could be done to raise awareness of the resources and tools as there is very limited or no awareness of these in Irish schools.[456]
Other comments	As mentioned above, the point about more promotion regarding awareness raising in relation to the tools was raised by stakeholders that participated in the research.[457] It was also noted that while the Recommendation is likely to have had an impact in Ireland, the impact is not identifiable by practitioners working on the ground. There was also a lack of awareness of the impact of the Recommendation at policy level apart from a general embedded practice to look to European policy, OECD and examples of best practice internationally when formulating national policy.

[456] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018
[457] This point was also corroborated during the interviews in the first phase of this research in 2018

Study on the Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (ESL)

Country case study: Latvia

A. Identification	
Country	Latvia
Reasons for selection as case study	Latvia has improved its ESL rate between 2011 and 2016 and has a single education structure[458] where education is provided from the beginning to the end of compulsory schooling, with no transition between primary and lower secondary education, and with general education for all pupils. The 2011 Recommendation was instrumental to the development of a national policy framework in Latvia for tackling ESL. The Education Development Guidelines[459] (2014) reflect the measures proposed in the Recommendation on inclusive education and individual support. There are two on-going ESF projects implemented in Latvia that directly tackle the problem of ESL: one focuses on the identification and support to learners at risk of ESL and the other works with young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs). The degree of influence of the 2011 Council Recommendation and selected policy tools was estimated to be at a medium level in comparison with other countries included in the study.[460] The Recommendation and the ex-ante conditionalities have helped to structure the policy framework and the design of ESF projects tacking ESL.
Date and location of country workshop	29 March 2019 Ministry of Education and Science, Riga, Latvia

[458] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2014a) The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: schematic diagrams. Available online: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/education_structures_EN.pdf

[459] IZGLĪTĪBAS ATTĪSTĪBAS PAMATNOSTĀDNES 2014.-2020.GADAM, Riga, 2014 https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406

[460] The definitions used to classify countries are:
- High level (H) - Evidence of a direct alignment of national ESL strategies with the 2011 Recommendation, and with the corresponding measures in the EU policy framework
- Medium level (M) - General consistency in aims and approach between the 2011 Recommendation and national measures, but drawing on a wider range of influences
- Low level (L) - Little or no evidence of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policy.

Organisations participating in country workshop[461]	• Ministry of Education and Science; • Agency for International Programs for Youth; • State Education Quality Service; • Association of Latvian Educational Managers; • Sigulda State Gymnasium; • Academic Information Centre; • National Youth Council of Latvia; • Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees.

B. Country context regarding ESL	
Evolution of ESL rates since 2011	Just like the EU average, the ESL rate in Latvia has been steadily decreasing for the past 15 years (since Eurostat data is available), from 16.5% in 2002 to 12.9 in 2010 to 8.6% in 2017.[462] The historical Eurostat data shows that there have always been and continue to be **fluctuations in the general trend towards lower ESL** rate in Latvia. According to the workshop participants, these fluctuations are largely due to market factors: a higher demand for labour during peaks of economic activity that make employers willing to take employees with lower qualifications, and learners leave education or training opportunities for those of the labour market. Figure 1 below that shows periods where the ESL rate stops to decrease or even increases during periods of high economic activity (as before the 2008 financial crisis). Moreover, there was no visible change in the reduction of the ESL rate in the periods before and after the 2011 Recommendation: in the six years after the Recommendation the ESL rate shrunk by 3 p.p, while it shrunk by 3.6 p.p. during the six years before the Recommendation. The workshop participants suggested that the decrease in the ESL rate in Latvia could be **attributed to a number of factors**, including increased quality of life (see Figure 1 below), increase in tertiary education attainment[463], impact of preventive measures targeted to those learners at risk of ESL, the introduction of career education support, better choices of further education for learners, improved access to vocational education and eased transitions from general education to VET. The data collected which monitors **reasons for absenteeism from education**[464] shows that the main reasons for not attending school is lacking motivation to study (2,409 cases), followed by family circumstances (1,132 cases), health problems (1,000 cases) and other, a lot less common reasons (entered employment – 249,

[461] *Full list of participants to be included in the annex of the country workshop write-up*
[462] Eurostat (2017). Early leavers from education and training by sex and country of birth edat_lfse_02. Available at: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_02&lang=en
[463] that stood at 17.3 in 2002% and had increased to 43.8% in 2017, according to Eurostat data. Tertiary educational attainment by sex (Code: sdg_04_20) % of population aged 30 to 34, accessed on 12 April 2019.
[464] Ministru kabineta 01.02.2011. noteikumu Nr.89 "Kārtība, kādā izglītības iestāde informē izglītojamo vecākus, pašvaldības vai valsts iestādes, ja izglītojamais bez attaisnojoša iemesla neapmeklē izglītības iestādi"

financial reasons – 123, extracurricular activities – 106 and inaccessibility of education institution – 46 cases)[465].

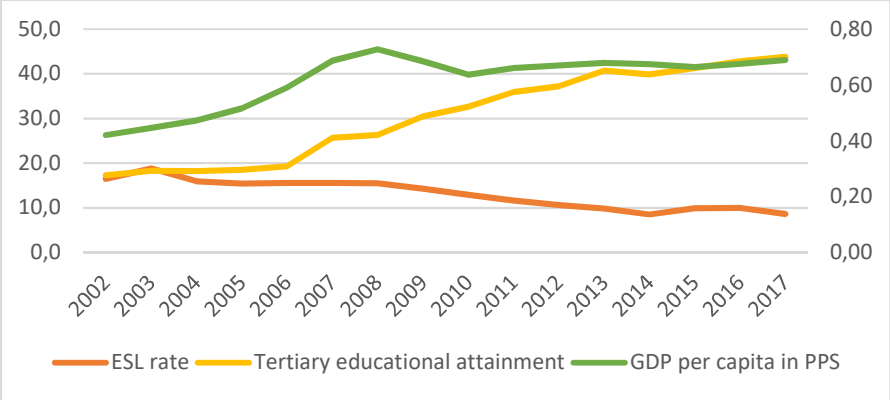
In terms of the **demographic characteristics of early school leavers**, the 2015 report on policy alternatives for addressing ESL in Latvia[466] featured a survey among young people who have left their studies. The largest share of respondents come from families with three and four children, a majority did not have any income, and more than one third were unemployed. According to the study the respondents from rural areas had much lower education attainment levels (i.e. ESL without finished basic education). The 2015 report also included an assessment of respondents' reasons to leave their studies. The first most important reason mentioned by 15% of respondents was the lack of motivation to study, 13% indicated that they wanted to start working, 12% pregnancy or marriage and 12% dislike for studies or boredom at school.

As socio-economic circumstances and prospects feature prominently among the reasons for ESL identified by the 2015 study, one of the possible explanations for the decrease in ESL rate in Latvia during the last 15 years could be the increase in wealth / quality of life during the period (coinciding with increase in tertiary education attainment levels and reforms mentioned earlier in this case study report). The figure below presents the decrease in ESL in the context of increasing volume index of GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) and increasing tertiary education attainment. The workshop participants suggested that increasing quality of life may demonstrate the value of E&T, change attitudes towards education and mitigate against ESL.

[465] IKVD report on long-term unjustified absences from general education and vocational education institutions and actions taken to address them: 1 semester of the academic year 2017/2018. Copy of the report provided by IKVD. (Title in Latvian: 'ZIŅOJUMS Par vispārējās izglītības un profesionālās izglītības iestāžu izglītojamo ilgstošiem neattaisnotiem kavējumiem un rīcību to novēršanai 2017./2018. mācību gada 1.semestrī, Rīgā, 19.02.2018.)

[466] Aptauju Centrs and Excolo Latvia. Pētījums par politikas alternatīvu veidošanu priekšlaicīgas mācību pārtraukšanas problēmas risināšanai. Final report, 2015. Available in Latvian: https://www.izm.gov.lv/images/statistika/petijumi/IZM_PMP_Gala_zinojums_AptaujuCentrs_ExcoloLatvia_2015.pdf

Figure 1. Decrease of ESL rate in correlation with increasing tertiary education attainment and the increasing volume index of GDP per capita in PPS (axis on the right).



Source: Eurostat (2018), edat_lfse_14, prc_ppp_ind, sdg_04_20.

The inequalities in distribution of wealth and education attainment levels would further partially account for the higher ESL rates in rural areas (compared to urban centres).

The gaps between female and male youth unemployment and ESL rates[467] are higher in Latvia than in the EU on average. It is also important to consider cultural aspects to account for higher shares of unemployed young men and male early school leavers. The interviewees and workshop participants highlighted that understanding and addressing these regional and gender differences would need to be the focus of future EU/national policy interventions.

Specific national challenges and priorities on ESL

The main challenges Latvia faces in relation to ESL are:

- A considerably higher ESL rates among young men and in rural areas, as well as among learners in secondary schools and VET institutions (compared to state gymnasia);
- Persisting stereotypes about VET as a second choice that do not match the realities of VET as modern, demanding and complex education. According to the workshop participants this is one of the reasons for higher ESL rates in VET (as leaners' perception of VET as the 'easier path' to a qualification is no longer true with increasing focus of VET on subjects such as mathematics and physics);
- The State strategy to encourage 60/40 division between VET and general education has been neglected. While there is considerable flexibility in changing learning pathways and no limitation for the times or age this can be done, there are no effective measures to guide learners where they have most talent and best opportunities (hence increasing their motivation by following education that they like). Quality and extractives of VET could be further improved;

[467] In 2017, youth unemployment rate was 18% among men and 15% among women in Latvia among the active population (17% and 16% in the EU on average respectively). Eurostat [une_rt_a]. The share of early school leavers among young men was also much higher than among young females in Latvia (12% vs. 5% in 2017, compared to 12% and 9% EU averages), Eurostat [edat_lfse_14].

	• The national experts consulted during the workshop agreed that while considerable attention has been given to guarantee access to ECEC in Latvia during the recent years, more now needs to be done to ensure a high quality of ECEC. In ECEC, but also in education more generally, more could be done to fight segregation through more developed individual support systems that would help to prevent ESL (the level of this support depends highly on the municipality, their decision to get involved and cooperate with ESF supported projects); • The introduction of the revised education content and methods based on learning outcomes (developed though an on-going ESF project[468]) that would have a potential to improve the attractiveness of education is late largely due to political reasons; • According to the experts who took part in the country workshop, one of the areas of the Recommendation that received less attention in Latvia during the current period was the role of teachers in developing cooperation with parents and children aimed, among other things, at preventing ESL.
Recommendations from EU level on ESL	As the ESL rate has been relatively low in Latvia, compared to the EU average, there have been no recommendations from the Commission specifically on reduction of ESL in the country. But there have been a few recommendations on VET. Based on the Commission's country specific recommendations (CSRs) in 2013, 2015 and 2016 the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training remain issues that need to be addressed in Latvia.[469] A few areas of improvement include speeding up the curricula reform in VET and improving the quality and accessibility of apprenticeships and work-based learning. It is particularly concerning due to the importance of VET in reducing ESL and facilitating transitions to labour market. Only the interviewees and workshop participants working for the MoES were aware of these CSRs. However, many of the above areas were identified by the interviewees as potential areas where a considerable effort has already been invested. For example, with the support of the Structural Funds VET schools and their infrastructure have been modernised. In addition, curricula reform in VET has been undertaken. However, one of the interviewees recognised that Latvia is a couple of years behind schedule in transitioning to the new curricula (the curricula have been developed, but the transition has been postponed to 2019). The interviewees also noted that there is a good progress with the enterprise engagement in provision of work-based learning. In

[468] ESF supported project 'Competence Approach to Learning Content' aims to ensure the approbation of the curriculum based on the competence approach and the gradual introduction of the curriculum at pre-school, primary and secondary education levels https://visc.gov.lv/visc/projekti/esf_831.shtml

[469]CSR 2013: "Improve the employability of young people, for example through a Youth Guarantee, establish comprehensive career guidance, implement reforms in the field of vocational education and training, and improve the quality and accessibility of apprenticeships."
CSR 2015: "Improve vocational education and training, speed up the curricula reform and increase the offer for work-based learning.
CSR 2016: "Speed up the curricula reform in vocational education, establish with the involvement of social partners a regulatory framework for apprenticeship type schemes and increase their offer."

	addition, the workshop participants mention Riga Conclusions on VET.

C. Key national policies on ESL	
Main organisations responsible for ESL policy	The main organisations and their involvement in ESL policy are listed below: • Latvian Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) - responsible for the development of education policy in Latvia; • The State Education Quality Service (IKVD) under direct supervision of MoES is responsible for the implementation of the ESF project and monitoring of absenteeism in Latvian schools; • State Education Development Agency (VIAA) responsible for the implementation of the national policy in the field of higher education and science, LLL, vocational education and general education systems; • Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (OCMA) collects population data (that is used in correlation with absenteeism data to identify those ESL who may have left education because they have emigrated); • Schools and VET institutions are involved in the absence monitoring which is undertaken twice per year (each semester). The ESF project plans to involved around 300 schools in provision of individual support, expert consultations, personalised learning materials, necessary personal equipment, catering, transport, accommodation and projects targeting youth at risk of ESL; • Municipalities are involved in the ESF project and provide support measures. They are also responsible for putting in place and managing general education institutions and absenteeism monitoring.
Mechanisms for monitoring ESL	The European Commission publishes a report every year, entitled 'Education and training monitor – Latvia'[470]. It includes a progress update towards the Europe 2020 target as well as an overview of the gender and regional differences in ESL. The Latvian Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) published a report on youth in Latvia in 2014 presenting the 2011 Population Census data.[471] In addition, the State Education Quality Service collects two types of monitoring data on: 1. Young people who are not registered in any education institution by comparing the data from the Population register held by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (OCMA)

[470] European Commission (2018) Education and Training Monitor 2018. Latvia. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2018-latvia_en.pdf

[471] http://www.csb.gov.lv/sites/default/files/nr_13_jauniesi_latvija_2014_14_00_lv.pdf

	with the data on the young people who are registered on the State Education Information System[472] (VIIS) managed by the MoES; 2. Long-term absences (more than 3 days) from the education institutions as reported by these institutions that also need to report on reasons for such absences and the actions that they have taken to address each case. This systematic monitoring of absences from education has been in place since 2011[473] and pre-dates the 2011 Recommendation. Data on Early leavers from education and training[474] is collected by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB). This data set provides a breakdown of the ESL rate between urban and rural areas. There is no data on ESL in VET in Latvia, but the data obtained through the above absence monitoring provides an indication that ESL is more of a problem in VET than in general education. The workshop participants pointed out that the methodologies for monitoring of ESL Latvia may not account for young people who have left education to find other education opportunities or who have left education to enter the labour market.
Comprehensive strategy	There is no single strategy and dedicated strategy for tackling ESL in Latvia. Instead, the problem of ESL is addressed as one of the issues in wider education strategy documents. While these documents, as demonstrated below, cover many aspects of prevention, intervention and compensation put forward by the Recommendation, they are of a too high political level to set particular priorities in terms of target groups or geographical areas to be addressed by policies aiming to reduce ESL. The **National Development Plan 2014-2020 (2012)** provides an overarching framework for the prevention, intervention and compensation activities by envisaging the country moving towards compulsory secondary education (an idea that according to the interviewees has lost political attention). It mentions the importance of individual learner motivation, an active involvement of parents in the education process and their active engagement in extra-curricular activities. While there is no separate strategy specifically focusing on the reduction of ESL, this aspect of education policy is one of the areas covered by the **national policy-planning document 'Education Development Guidelines' (2014)**. The Guidelines focus more generally on prevention measures and 'second chance'

[472] Valsts izglītības informācijas sistēma http://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/izglitiba/valsts-izglitibas-informacijas-sistema

[473] Introduced with the Cabinet of Ministers Rules No. 89, which require education institutions to inform parents, municipalities or state institutions if a learner is absent from the institution without a justifying reason (Ministru kabineta 01.02.2011. noteikumu Nr.89 "Kārtība, kādā izglītības iestāde informē izglītojamo vecākus, pašvaldības vai valsts iestādes, ja izglītojamais bez attaisnojoša iemesla neapmeklē izglītības iestādi").

[474] Early leavers from education and training. The percentage of the population aged 18–24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training in the four weeks. https://www.csb.gov.lv/en/statistics/statistics-by-theme/social-conditions/education/key-indicator/early-leavers-education-and-training-and

	compensation measures as well as safe learning environment, monitoring of low performers, providing them with individualised support (intervention measures) and early childhood education and care[475]. The Guidelines also stipulate that children and youth of third countries and national minorities should be included, considering their cultural and historical traditions. The Guidelines also foresee training for ESL, among other specific groups, for their integration in the labour market. Because there is no separate strategy for tackling ESL in the country, there is also no single framework for implementing the ESL policy directions provided by the Guidelines. Instead the problem of ESL is addressed by a range of policy measures in Latvia. The central initiative tackling the ESL in Latvia, **the ESF project 'PuMPuRS'**[476], implemented in the framework of the Operational Programme "Growth and Jobs"[477][478]. The project targets pupils from grades 5-12 (10 to 17 years old) in general education and 1-4 course students in vocational education programmes. This project addresses the areas listed in the Guidelines mostly focusing on prevention and intervention measures aimed at identification of learners at risk and supporting them through a number of practical measures. It is worth nothing that according all interviewees and workshop participants considered that the 2011 Recommendation's categorisation of prevention and intervention measures did not mirror the categorisation used in Latvia. Some of these measures include monitoring of absences, training of pedagogical staff to recognise ESL risks, developing guidelines for teachers, schools and municipalities for working with children who are at risk of ESL as well as identification of learners at risk of ESL and provision of individual support to them. The project also aims to enhance the institutional cooperation in provision of this support. The ESF project does not cover the other aspects foreseen by the Guidelines such as early prevention, second chance measures, compensation measures and safe learning environment measures. These are covered by other policy instruments in the country (please see sections: 'Specific measures: prevention', 'Specific measures: intervention' and 'Specific measures: compensation').
Specific measures: prevention	The ESF project 'PuMPuRS' has developed methodologies for enhancing **cooperation between parents and education institutions**, but the experts who participated in the country workshop underlined that more needs to be done to develop cooperation between schools, parents and children. This position

[475] Guidelines. Section 5 – introduction of inclusive education principle and insufficient individualised support in education

[476] Nr. 8.3.4.0/16/I/001 'Atbalsts priekšlaicīgas mācību pārtraukšanas samazināšanai' http://www.pumpurs.lv/lv/par-projektu

[477] The implementation of the project is regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers rules No. 460. The project is implemented by IKVD in collaboration with municipalities and state general and vocational education institutions.

[478] There is an evaluation of the ESF project planned in the end of the project (after December 2020), to be implemented in the context of the Education Development Guidelines (2014) evaluation (this is foreseen by the Cabinet of Ministers rules No. 286).

	was echoed by the representatives of the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees who underlined the importance of **career guidance training** not only to new, but also to existing teachers that would help them to develop competences they need for communication with children and their parents. **Improving the school environment** is supported by other EU Structural funds in Latvia. The European Social Fund project "Support for the Development of Individual Competences for Learners" No. 8.3.2.2 **supports children with learning difficulties**, talent development among pupils and introduction of modern teaching approaches. Another on-going ESF project "Career Support in General and Vocational Education Institutions"[479], led by the State Education Development Agency, provides career development support in Latvia. In terms of increasing the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways, the national experts who took part in the country workshop noted that the national system is open to **facilitating learner transitions**. There are no age restrictions, nor limitations in terms of the number of times a learner change education programmes. In terms of second chances learners can return to VET programmes in one or two years. Distance learning offer in general education complements these measures and is high demand in Latvia. The regulation for distance learning has been recently reviewed to allow the recognition of distance learning outcomes in colleges, aside VET and middle-schools[480]. Improving **the quality and attractiveness of VET** as a prevention measure for ESL has not been a focus on prevention measures in Latvia to date. Modular programmes in VET have been developed with ESF support[481]. The prevention measures to improve **accessibility and affordability of ECEC** to families with a disadvantaged background, including migrant and Roma children is explicitly covered by the policy framework (the 2014 Education Development Guidelines), but are not among the policy measures currently implemented. The prevention measures that focus on assisting learners with a different mother tongue are not implemented in Latvia. Nor are there any active anti-segregation polices implemented providing additional support for schools in disadvantaged areas or with high numbers of pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
Specific measures: intervention	The ESF project PuMPuRS', which focuses mostly on intervention measures, provides the following intervention measures: • Development of supportive learning environment;

[479] Project Nr.8.3.5.0/16/I/001 https://viaa.gov.lv/library/files/original/Projekta_progress_01.07.2017.pdf
[480] Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 505 'Rules for recognition of competences acquired outside formal education or acquired in professional experience and recognition of learning outcomes achieved in previous education'. Issued pursuant to the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Article 59.2, fifth paragraph and Article 59.3, second paragraph. Riga, August 14, 2018. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301013
[481] Nr. 2010/0274/1DP/1.2.1.1.1./10/IPIA/VIAA/001
https://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/programmas_moduli.shtml

- Financing for teachers for additional consultations for pupils with ESL risk;
- Financing for further development of teachers' professional competences, including individual and group consultations, supporting learning environment and teacher competences and effectiveness;
- Methodological support materials: Consultation guidelines, Recommendations for behaviours and cooperation in class, Recommendations for work with parents, Recommendations for conflict and problem management, Recommendations for communication and cooperation with other institutions and Recommendations for work with society more generally[482];
- Financial support for learners whose economic circumstances pose a risk of dropping-out including individual learning materials, items for individual use (clothes, shoes, hygiene products), meals, transport and overnight lodgings. The State Education development Agency provides scholarships for vocational education students; and
- Youth projects that provide support to young people outside school.

Other intervention measures implemented in Latvia include:

- Early warning systems for pupils at risk of ESL is covered explicitly within national policy by the 2011 Cabinet of Ministers Rules No. 89; Independent of the ESF project and the Council Recommendation there are institutionalised practices of absence reporting and 'investigation';
- Career guidance activities to learners. Children typically attend the schools closes to them and may require carrier guidance to make choices on the learning pathways that interest them. Latvian country workshop participants also noted that carrier guidance works for those learners who are motivated to pursue education or training. Those who lack motivation require individual counselling. In order to offer this type of individual support carrier consultants in Latvia are required to have a Master's degree. This represent a challenge in country's regions. Currently there is a shortage of career consultants in regions where their services are shared among up to 700 children across 3-4 regions. Starting in 2020, a project has been planned, supported by EU Structural Funds, to work with grade 10 students and help them until the end of grad 12 (middle-school in Latvia) to decide on their future learning pathway. Moreover, municipalities are legally obliged to provide access to high quality careers advice and guidance for all learners despite their economic and social status. However, their quality depends on the resources available to particular municipalities;
- Consultations by teachers, psychologists, social pedagogues, teacher assistants, special education teachers, sign language translators, and therapists provided in the context of the ESF project 'PuMPuRS' are the most in-demand service offered by the project according to its representative who took part in the

[482] From a project presentation provided by IKVD.

	national workshop. Young people in schools are in need of a person to talk to and who would listen to their concerns. However, psychologists' consultations are often not available in rural areas;[483] • The State Education Quality Service has developed procedures for supporting learners that are included in the accreditation system for education institutions[484]. According to the Regulation the self-assessment report of education institutions need to cover provisions for the support for learners, including psychological support and socio-pedagogical support, guaranteeing the safety of learners (security and labour protection), support for personality building, support for career education, support for differentiation of teaching work, support for students with special needs, and cooperation with the learner's family; • The provision of high quality extracurricular and out-of-school artistic, cultural and civic education activities for all learners is the responsibility of municipalities. According to the workshop participants the offer of interest education (i.e. extra-curricular activities after and outside school) is unique in Latvia. This offer supports learners introduction to arts, sports and creativity. State partially co-finances interest education through grants for teacher salaries and social security contributions. However, the offer of interest education largely depends on resources available to municipalities; • The government also supports national, European and international youth projects.
Specific measures: compensation	The ESF project 'PuMPuRS', focusing on addressing the ESL problem, does not include compensation measures as described in the 2011 Recommendation. Another ESF supported project 'PROTI un DARI!'[485] has developed guidelines for experts to work with NEETs and offers training and mentoring courses young people who have already left school. One of the workshop participants noted that the delays in education reform will disadvantage youth in education and training. The reform will not help NEETs who need personalised support in identifying factors that hinder their motivation and on-going work to address them. Other compensation type of measures that exist in Latvia include: • Second chance education programmes, as pathways back into mainstream education for early school leavers, are provided by a network of evening schools and through distance learning in Latvia since the school year 2001/2002. According to the data provided by the MoES there were 45 general and vocational education institutions that provided evening or extramural general education programmes in the school year 2017/2018,

[483] Discussed during the country workshop

[484] Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 831 'Procedures for Evaluation of Educational Institutions, Examination Centers, Other Institutions Determined by the Education Law, Accreditation of General and Professional Education Programs and Professional Activities of Heads of Education Institutions' Riga, December 20, 2016.

[485] https://jaunatne.gov.lv/lv/jauniesu-garantija/par-projektu-proti-un-dari

	with 9,940 learners following these programmes. The data on the number of education institutions that provide second chance education programmes substantially increased after the changes in regulation allowed other education institutions aside evening schools to provide evening and distance learning programmes. This data also shows that during recent years there is a decreasing demand for these programmes that could be lined to economic recovery and reduction of ESL rate; • Systems to support the recognition and validation of prior learning such as informal learning while obtaining qualification. The possibility is provided by vocational education institutions to everyone. Self-Assessment Report prepared by the Academic Information Centre in 2018 provides an overview of the 'Implementation of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in Latvia';[486] • The Youth Guarantee measures are also available in the form of one and two year vocational programmes that provide young people with a possibility to enter the labour market.

D. Influence of the 2011 Recommendation and other EU tools on ESL	
Relevance of the Recommendation to national challenges	According to the experts consulted during the national interviews and the country workshop, the 2011 EU Recommendation influenced the design of the national education policy framework in Latvia. Mostly the Recommendation had a structuring effect e.g. on the categorisation of measures in the Education Development Guidelines (2014) and the design of the ESF project focusing on the reduction of ESL. The interviewees and the experts who took part in the country workshop highlighted that the main impact of the Recommendation was to allow the national policy makers and practitioners to examine ESL in a systematic way (benchmarking against the areas and points included in the Recommendation) what they were already doing and what still needed to be done to address the problem of ESL, including with the ESF supported projects. However, while the country has reached its national target, the experts pointed out that achieving the target rate on 'average' may divert policy attention and funding from the areas where further work is very much need (i.e. tackling ESL among young men, in VET and in rural areas). The holistic nature of the Recommendation resonated with consulted Latvian policy makers. The holistic nature of the Recommendation allowed benchmarking national systems and measures against this framework and also structuring and focusing

[486] https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/lv_2.pdf

	policy interventions (ESF projects) on areas of the Recommendation that still needed to be addressed.
Commonalities between the 2011 Council Recommendation and other EU tools, and national ESL policies, practices and research	*Influence of the 2011 Recommendation on educational policy, practice and research in the country* As mentioned above, the Recommendation mostly had influence on policy design. To fulfil ESIF ex-ante conditionalities the MoES commissioned studies in 2014[487] and 2015[488] to assess the main reasons and risks for ESL and to develop policy alternatives for addressing the problem of ESL respectively. The definition of the ESL in Latvia was also standardised at this time to match the EU definition. *Commonalities between the 2011 Recommendation and national policies, practices and research* While the 2014-2020 Education Development Guidelines provide an overarching strategy for the development of education in Latvia, the parts of these Guidelines that provide an assessment of the ESL problem in the country and propose future policy directions talk about prevention, intervention and compensation measures. Because the focus of the Guidelines is much broader than the Recommendation, the Guidelines do not systematically cover the three types of measures, but rather set priorities in the work on tacking the ESL problem in Latvia. The ex-ante analysis of the proposed measures to tackle ESL is annexed to the Guidelines. As mentioned, the Recommendation was also used to design the ESF projects that are currently implemented in Latvia to tackle the issue of ESL. The design of these projects reflects the typology of the prevention, intervention and compensation measures, but their policy priorities i.e. chosen emphases among all the areas listed in the Recommendation are on national strategic priority areas that are listed earlier in this case study (under the section 'Specific national challenges and priorities on ESL' above). Examples of commonalities include: • All the national policy measures that are implemented with the ESF projects 'PuMPuRS' (prevention and intervention) and 'PROTI un DARI!' (compensation measures);

[487] "Pētījums par priekšlaicīgas mācību pamešanas iemesliem un riskiem jauniešiem vecuma grupā no 13 līdz 18 gadiem". BISS, 2014. Pieejams šeit: http://www.izm.gov.lv/images/statistika/petijumi/41.pdf

[488] https://www.izm.gov.lv/images/statistika/petijumi/IZM_PMP_Gala_zinojums_AptaujuCentrs_ExcoloLatvia_2015.pdf

- Review of 2012 regulation in 2018 to, among other things, regulate the recognition of distance learning outcomes in colleges, aside VET and middle-schools[489];
- The State Education Quality Service has developed procedures to assess the support provided to learners that are integrated in the accreditation system (please see their description on the section 'Specific measures: intervention' above). The procedures developed in 2016[490] are in line with the '*Supporting and empowering teachers in their work with pupils at risk*' intervention policies listed in the Recommendation, and built on the procedures foreseen in the previous regulation that entered in force in 2010[491];

Latvia is currently working on its new National Action Plan (NAP) and a new strategy for development of education. These documents will include measures that will continue from the current implementation period.

Other policies/ measures or practices not included in the 2011 Recommendation

The experts consulted during the workshop agreed that the 2011 Recommendation was holistic and it is difficult to find areas that are not covered by this Recommendation.

The experts noted that the State provides grants and services to private ECEC institutions to guarantee *access* to ECEC. The access to ECEC is less prominent in the Recommendation, that puts the emphasis on quality of ECEC (that is one of the areas where further progress is required in Latvia).

The Recommendation also does not talk about the involvement of wider society in recognising and addressing the problem of ESL. In Latvia there was a social campaign targeting parents and wider interested public to pay more attention to children's school progress and success.

Another EU instrument that was described as effective by the experts during the workshop was the Youth Guarantee that was developed in 2013, a couple of years after the Recommendation. In the new funding period Youth Guarantee support is not planned and the support will come from the ESF+ and focus on NEETs (instead of ESL).

[489] New Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.505 entered in force on 14 August 2018 and replaced previous Regulation No.36 of 10 January 2012 'Regulations Regarding Recognition of the Study Results Achieved in Previous Education or Professional Experience', available at: https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/242653-regulations-regarding-recognition-of-the-study-results-achieved-in-previous-education-or-professional-experience

[490] Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 831 of 20 December 2016

[491] Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.852 of 14 September 2010 'Procedures for accrediting general and vocational education programs, educational institutions and examination centres'

Influence of other EU tools on ESL educational policy, practice and research

The EU provides a number of policy instruments to support Member States in their efforts to tackle ESL. Their influence to the national policy framework to tackle ESL has been assessed through the national interviews and workshop to be as follows:

- Monitoring and reporting mechanisms - Annual Growth Survey and Education and Training Monitor were useful on benchmarking country performance;
- EU programmes (LLP, E+) – these programmes were actively used on the level of schools and other E+ projects. According to the information provided by the MoES:
  - two Erasmus+ projects[492] have been completed in Latvia to address the ESL problem, introducing innovative teaching methods, exchanging experience in addressing ESL, delivering a study with schools in other countries on solutions to improve school environment, encourage professional development of teachers and introduction of new learning materials.
  - 15 Latvian schools have been involved in Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships for Schools (KA219) that had ESL as their main thematic priority.
  - Currently nine schools implement School Exchange Partnerships (KA229) that have mention ESL as their main thematic priority.
  - In addition, in 55 Erasmus+ School Exchange projects ESL is mentioned as one of the three possible thematic priorities.
  - The ESL is one of the priorities of the Strategic Partnership Project in the School Education Sector (KA201) coordinated by the Education, Culture and Sports Department of the Riga City Council '*Supporting teachers for developing intra-personal competencies and character education at school*'; and the project 'Coordination of help for students with dyslexia - right service, right time', led by the Latvian Dyslexia Association. Both projects have been approved in the framework of the 2017 competition.
  - In 2015, the State Education Development Agency within the framework of the Erasmus+ International Cooperation Activities (TCA) organised an international thematic seminar "*Possible solutions for reducing the number of early school leavers and experience within the Erasmus+ programme*", during which the project promoters and experts from Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and France shared their

[492] Project of Malpils county secondary school 'The School We like to Learn in' and Riga Pardaugava Primary School Project 'Development and Implementation of Innovative Methods of Teaching Math, Science and languages in the Multicultural European Classroom to Increase Student Literacy and Prevent Early School Leaving'

	experiences on national strategies, challenges and success stories for tackling ESL. • Outcomes of the Open Method of Cooperation (ET2020 and Thematic Working Groups, etc.) – the ET working groups, especially the exchanges in the Schools working group were helpful in exchanging ideas about how to improve school governance, among other things to reduce ESL; • European Toolkit for Schools – experts consulted recommended asking schools to assess the usefulness of this toolkit. They mentioned that European Schoolnet[493] operates and publishes information on a number of projects;[494] • ESIF ex-ante conditionalities: Experts that were involved in preparing the national strategies for addressing the ex-ante conditionalities were among the participants of the country workshop. The experts noted that these conditions were a mandatory requirement to access the ESF support and helped to structure the strategic framework for tackling the ESL problem. The experts noted that it was important to have these conditions and to address them. However, it was also felt that the solutions for structuring the policies for addressing ESL would have emerged also in the absence of these conditionalities. The experts also recommended complementing this list with the EU Youth Strategy that defined strategic aims for education and now has been renewed. Moreover, experts consulted during the country workshop indicated that Latvia could have made greater use of the EU programmes and projects supporting innovation, for example to support scientific research in areas linked to ESL. These programmes could be used more to find out what the EU could do more globally to address ESL through solutions that tackle demographic and inclusion problems. In terms of long-term impacts, the Recommendation has led to systemic changes in structuring the policy response to ESL – the two ESF project, one addressing the learners at risk and the other working with those who have already left the E&T, the early warning systems in place that focus on development of ability to identify learners at risk, according to the workshop participants these type of discourse did not exist before the Recommendation. The Recommendation was also a good justification to introduce changes to regulation (e.g. validation of distance learning outcomes) and to develop new aspects that are covered by legislation (assistance to learners that have been developed in the accreditation process).
Barriers and success factors for the	The country workshop participants named two considerations, which can be both barriers and success factors for the implementation of measures across the areas foreseen in the 2011

[493] http://www.eun.org/home
[494] http://www.eun.org/projects

implementation of the Recommendation and other EU tools	Recommendation. First, they insisted that all the organisations involved in the delivery of the measures fighting ESL need to be involved in the planning of the support activities to be financed by ESF+ in the next programming period. Second, they noted that it is challenging to foresee on the national level what will be the ESF+ investment priorities in the next multi-annual planning period and to ensure that these are aligned with the work that has been delivered and needs to continue in supporting young people with prevention, intervention and compensation measures in the country.
Degree of engagement of the country in EU level activities linked to ESL and use of outputs and outcomes	NA
Degree to which the EU tools have contributed to efficiency of implementation of ESL policy	The results of the national interviews and the country workshop indicate that the above-mentioned EU tools and instruments (ESF, ESL Recommendation) have been useful in system development and maintenance. The exchange of experiences with other EU countries through ET 2020 working groups and presidency conferences has also been useful to find common solutions to addressing ESL. The common target has also been useful for monitoring and benchmarking. The country workshop participants further suggested that the experience of other countries would be further appreciated in issues such as mediation in difficult situations and alternative work forms. The ESF support could also be channelled towards digitalisation of education, diversifying ways how to receive an education (beyond traditional education and distance learning). The recommendation has promoted an approach that is centred on a child and led to systemic changes as well as paradigm changes in how the ESL problem should be tackled (through involvement of all the relevant stakeholders and society at large). The country workshop participants considered that in order to ensure a more effective use of resources, the State and implementing organisations would have higher motivation to use the ESF resources if the associated administrative burden were reduced. In terms of administrative process requirements there are some discrepancies between the Latvian legislation and reporting requirements for ESF supported projects. At the local level, the requirements for implementation could be more user-friendly. The implementing organisations need to use complex and extensive

	administrative instruments. If a school has only three learners at risk of ESL they be cautious to get involved in ESF supported projects due to this administrative burden. The admin burden drains resources from project activities. The rules of what is and what is not to be supported, control mechanisms (reports, receipts and unit costs) need to be better balanced with the scale of activities. On the other side, experts also noted that project budgets may be high enough to engage an accountant to cover these issues.
Added value of EU ESL policy and tools in the country	The workshop participants indicated that without the ESF support and the Recommendation the progress towards the ESL target would be slower and the possible results are hard to assess. The ESF project 'PuMPuRS' reports inspiring results and a high number of young people who are grateful for the material and emotional support received. The ESF projects are a good framework for providing support to learners at risk of ESL and NEETs and allow individual young people to receive individual support that they need.

E. Need for future EU level support	
Key suggestions for EU support needed in the future (e.g. tools, initiatives, target groups, thematic areas)	The Latvian experts consulted were of the opinion that the Recommendation was well developed. Hence, instead of pointing out missing elements in the Recommendation, they focused on pointing out the areas where more work could be done to implement the Recommendation in Latvia: • Need to reduce gender and regional differences of ESL and policy instruments designed to tackle these issues specifically i.e. focus on tackling ESL among boys, VET learners and children/youth rural areas. The new EU strategy should provide a more detailed target for the reduction of ESL rate among women and men. EQAVET Indicators[495] could also be used; • Need to improve professional development of teachers and strengthening of school collectives to develop supporting environment for learners; • Increase focus on the inclusion of learners with different mother tongues than Latvian. Currently, there is no data on the involvement of Russian minority schools in the ESF projects. In 2018 amendments to the Law on Education were adopted that foresee a gradual transition to education in Latvian language in minority education institutions (minority pupils will have the opportunity to learn the minority language, literature and cultural and historical subjects in their mother tongue).

[495] https://www.eqavet.eu/EU-Quality-Assurance/For-VET-Providers/monitoring-your-system/evaluation/EQAVET-Indicators

Types of future policy instruments which would be most helpful	*Most useful EU policy instruments or tools to support sustainable change in tackling ESL at national (or regional) level* According to the interviewees and workshop participants, further areas of focus could be: • The work on informing the society about the ESL problem and helping it and parents in particular, to identify and provide assistance to young people at risk of ESL needs to continue; • New platforms for delivering learning content are emerging that were not a priority during the current multi-annual period: remote learning, online education, MOOCs, recognition and referencing (not only on HE level); • Recognition and use of digital skills in general education represent new and ongoing challenges for creating a modern learning environment. Improving learning infrastructure is also of continued importance. More generally the workshop participants highlighted the following opportunities for future policy aimed at reducing ESL: • Experts would prefer the peer learning process to be less formal in the context of the European Semester, only involving the Member States that face particular problems and / or wish to share good practices (rather than formal requirement for MS to participate); • Experts highlighted that the results and activities of the different ESF projects need to link together. There is a need to create synergies between different measures to address the problem of ESL. Project management and administration could be further streamlined, reducing the reporting and administrative burdens. Integrated peer learning and research analyses that are currently not among the investment priorities; • The State, the implementing organisations and NGOs are eager to know which investment priorities (and sub-priorities) will continue to ensure that the work that has been started is continued and complemented with new activities, where necessary; • Experts highlighted a need for EU Structural funds to continue to work both with NEETs and with learners who are especially talented (and, hence, also have special needs), without restricting the support to young people with learning difficulties. In the next period, experts consider that the focus should be not only on the learners who struggle to follow the learning content or lack motivation, but also those who are especially gifted and are bored because studies do not represent a sufficient challenge. Finally, once the key challenges and investment priorities have been defined, new instruments may emerge. In this process timely evaluation will be of the essence. It is important that the implementing organisations are involved in these consultations on policy priorities and evaluation.

	In the future, the positive experience of the ESF project 'PuMPuRS' needs to be considered in sensitising parents and wider interested society, to allow them to recognise the risks of ESL and assisting learners at risk. The project has produced a video, an online show and campaign that have been noticed by wider public. From the other side the communication has allowed learners at risk to understand that they are not alone facing the problems that lead to ESL (in the campaign people who are known in the Latvian society share their experiences during school and how they have overcome them).
Other comments	

Study on the Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (ESL)

Country case study: Portugal

A. Identification	
Country	Portugal
Reasons for selection as case study	The key selection criteria for country workshops have been the different challenges concerning ESL, different progress in ESL rates, and different levels of engagement in EU-related actions at the country level. Portugal is classified as having a *common core curriculum* type of education system: after successful completion of primary education, all students progress to the lower secondary level, where they follow the same general curriculum.[496] The ESL rate is higher than the EU average, but the rate has reduced since 2011. Portugal has been active in the OMC activities relating to ESL. ESL monitoring has been an important tool for benchmarking progress given the high ESL rate and the considerable progress made in reducing it in the past years. A large number of school reform and inclusion measures were implemented during the period 2012-2015, with a strong read-across to the EU agenda. In comparison with the other countries included in the study, the degree of influence of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools, and engagement with the EU agenda was estimated as relatively high in Portugal.[497]
Date and location of country workshop	18/2/2019 at CESIS's premises, Lisbon. 25/2/2019 at the Municipality of Matosinhos's premises, Matosinhos
Organisations participating in country workshop	Directorate-General for Education of the Ministry of Education Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. National Council for Education. Portuguese Unit of Eurydice Network. National Programme for the Promotion of School Success.

[496] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2014a) *The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: schematic diagrams.* Available online: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/education_structures_EN.pdf

[497] The definitions used to classify countries are:
- High level (H) - Evidence of a direct alignment of national ESL strategies with the 2011 Recommendation, and with the corresponding measures in the EU policy framework
- Medium level (M) - General consistency in aims and approach between the 2011 Recommendation and national measures, but drawing on a wider range of influences
- Low level (L) - Little or no evidence of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policy.

	University of Lisbon. School Cluster Almeida Garret (Municipality of Amadora). Project "Percursos Acompanhados" (Accompanied Pathways) / CooperActiva (NGO). High Commission for Migration. City Councillor for Education at the Municipality of Matosinhos. Matosinhos Second Opportunity School. University of Oporto. Arco Maior Second Opportunity School. Municipality of Matosinhos. School Cluster Gonçalves Zarco (Municipality of Matosinhos). ADEIMA (NGO). Centro Social de Valongo (NGO).

B. Country context regarding ESL	
Evolution of ESL rates since 2011	The ESL rate has reduced significantly since 2011, and declined from 23% in 2011 to 11.8% in 2018.[498] The improvement in ESL must be understood within the social and economic context of Portugal and the emigration of young people and the increase in youth unemployment during the economic recession. The *Education and Training Monitor – Country analysis report (2018)* summarises the progress in education in Portugal: "Portugal still struggles with early school leaving but is making headway to reduce it. Considerable progress has been made in the last decade in reducing the early school leaving rate (from 28.3 % in 2010 to 12.6 % in 2017; rates are, however, over 20 % in the autonomous regions of Madeira and Azores)".[499] In the aftermath of the financial crisis, many young uneducated young people emigrated from Portugal, which may have influenced the drop in the ESL rate.[500] [501] Secondly, the increase

[498] Data available at: https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Taxa+de+abandono+precoce+de+educa%C3%A7%C3%A3o+e+forma%C3%A7%C3%A3o+total+e+por+sexo-433.

[499] European Commission (2018). *Education and Training Monitor – Country analysis report*. European Union, pp 5. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/document-library/education-and-training-monitor-2018-portugal-report_en

[500] The Economic Adjustment Programme for Portugal, usually referred to as the Bailout programme, is a Memorandum of understanding on financial assistance to the Portuguese Republic in order to cope with the 2010–14 Portuguese financial crisis. The three-year programme was signed in May 2011 by the Portuguese Government under then-Prime Minister José Sócrates on one hand, and on the other hand by the European Commission on behalf of the Eurogroup, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In order to accomplish the European Union/IMF-led rescue plan for Portugal's sovereign debt crisis, in July and August 2011 the new government led by Pedro Passos Coelho announced it was going to cut on state spending and increase austerity measures.

[501] European Commission (2018). 2018 European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011, Brussels. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2018-european-semester-country-report-portugal-en.pdf.

	in youth unemployment is seen as a reason for young people staying in education and for delaying the entrance into the labour market, with positive consequences for ESL.[502] However, the improvements in the early school leaving rate in Portugal was criticised by one of the interviewees, and by some participants at the workshops, by saying that most of all this is an outcome of the expansion of compulsory education to 18 years (Law 85/2009).[503] As a result of the expansion, students have stayed in education longer, rather than as a result of preventive measures. Those participants noted instead the persistent problem of high school retention rates in Portugal, which are one of the highest among OECD countries.
Specific national challenges and priorities on ESL	The two key priorities in Portugal related to ESL are: 1) addressing school failure; and 2) reducing inequality in terms of reducing the risk of ESL for specific groups. **School failure and providing quality education** The most important challenge and priority regarding ESL has been the promotion of school success in the sense that this is a path to prevent ESL – "*If I have to identify an urgent problem in the education system, I have to speak about school failure*".[504] This perspective was confirmed by the workshop participants, particularly those in Lisbon, who stressed the importance of "*quality education*" in order to avoid school failure, and to stabilize the low ESL rates. Quality education is on the Portuguese Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, with targets including: to produce relevant and effective learning outcomes; and to eliminate inequalities, namely gender inequalities.[505] On the other hand, participants at the workshops considered that Portuguese schools are focusing too much on administrative issues rather than on adapting methodological approaches and tools to the needs and characteristics of today's students.[506] Also retention is a strategy used too often. Another important matter for "quality education" is the teacher's training system which is currently being restructured. Elements of this restructuring such as the evaluation system of professional performance, are strongly opposed by the teacher community. In the National Reform Programme 2016-2020 school failure is understood as one of the main reasons that leads to school dropout and low qualification of adult population. For this

[502] Conselho Nacional de Educação (2017). *Estado da Educação 2016*, Lisboa, pp. 130.
[503] See also European Commission (2018). *Education and Training Monitor – Country analysis report*. European Union, pp 5. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/document-library/education-and-training-monitor-2018-portugal-report_en
[504] Interview with national stakeholder, Portugal, 6/2018; 18/2 workshop.
[505] Conselho Nacional de Educação (2017). *Estado da Educação 2016*, Lisboa
[506] Lisbon and Oporto workshops.

	reason, promoting school success is a major challenge and a political priority.[507] **Social inequalities in education.** A recent study by the Portugal DG of Education and Science Statistics shows a "strong relation between school failure and families' weak economic conditions, as well as with parents (particularly mothers) low educational levels".[508] This means that very often young leavers are also those who grow up in families with low educational levels and facing economic stress. The 2017 report of the National Educational Council mentions that school failure is socially unfair: "*Portugal is one of the countries where there is a stronger correlation between the social economic status and cultural belonging and the school results*" ("*Portugal é um dos países onde é mais forte a correlação entre o estatuto socioeconómico e cultural de pertença e os resultados escolares*").[509] According to one of the interviewees, and also referred at the workshop, families in poverty tend to be "*in cultural shock with school*". For families from disadvantaged backgrounds work seems to be more important than education, while they do not consider that what is taught at school is relevant to them, or address the challenges they face and school is not understood as a path to social mobility.[510] A recent OECD study mentions that "*taking into account earnings mobility from one generation to the next as well as the level of income inequality in Portugal, it could take 5 generations for children born in a family at the bottom of the income distribution to reach the mean income, close to OECD average*". The study also refers that in Portugal "*mobility measured in terms of education is the lowest across OECD countries*" and concludes: "*Despite widespread reforms aiming to improve educational attainment and reduce early school dropouts in Portugal, young people's chances of having a successful career depend heavily on their socio-economic backgrounds or the level of human capital of their parents*".[511]

[507] *Programa Nacional de Reformas 2016-2020 (atualização 2017). Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-national-reform-programme-portugal-pt.pdf*.

[508] Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência (2016). *Desigualdades Socioeconómicas e resultados escolares – 3º ciclo do ensino público geral*. Available at: http://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/97/%7B$clientServletPath%7D/?newsId=147&fileName=DesigualdadesResultadosEscolares.pdf.

[509] Conselho Nacional de Educação (2018). *Estado da Educação 2017*, Lisboa, pp. 8.

[510] Interview with national stakeholder, Portugal, 6/2018.

[511] OECD (2018). *A broken social elevator? How to promote social mobility – How does Portugal compare?.* Available to: http://www.oecd.org/portugal/social-mobility-2018-PRT-EN.pdf.

Gender also emerges as a significant inequality factor for ESL. In Portugal, early school leaving rates are much higher among men.

	Total	Men	Female
2012	20.5	26.9	14.0
2013	18.9	23.4	14.3
2014	17.4	20.7	14.1
2015	13.7	16.4	11.0
2016	14.0	17.4	10.5
2017	12.6	15.3	9.7
2018	11.8	14.7	8.7

Source: INE, PORDATA.

For foreign students the information available shows that, in general, the levels of school success (79% in year 2015/2016) are lower than among Portuguese students (90.3% in the same year). According to Eurostat data, in 2018 ESL rate for foreign-born students was 12.8% close to the average ESL rate in 2018 and for foreign-born non EU was 13.3%.[512]

However there has been a positive trend for closing the gap between non-migrants and people with a migrant background: as measured by early school leaving rates, PISA performance and grade retention are small compared to other countries.[513]

However, there is a considerable variation among different migrant groups. In Portugal, young people with an African background and particularly those from Lusophone African countries have the higher rates of school failure and are more at risk of ESL.[514] Students from other foreign backgrounds are less at risk. For instance, those coming from other African countries, from South America (including Brazil) and from Asia.[515]

Regarding students from Asian countries there is a marked

[512] Eurostat. Early leavers from education and training by sex and country of birth [edat_lfse_02]

[513] Oliveira, Catarina (2017). *Indicadores de integração de imigrantes – relatório de 2017*, Lisboa. Available at: https://www.om.acm.gov.pt/documents/58428/383402/Relat%C3%B3rio+Indicadores+de+Integra%C3%A7%C3%A3o+de+Imigrantes+OM+2017.pdf/432839ce-f3c2-404f-9b98-39ab22b5edc5.

[514] Oliveira, Catarina (2017). *Indicadores de integração de imigrantes – relatório de 2017*, Lisboa. Available at: https://www.om.acm.gov.pt/documents/58428/383402/Relat%C3%B3rio+Indicadores+de+Integra%C3%A7%C3%A3o+de+Imigrantes+OM+2017.pdf/432839ce-f3c2-404f-9b98-39ab22b5edc5.

[515] Oliveira, Catarina (2017). *Indicadores de integração de imigrantes – relatório de 2017*, Lisboa. Available at: https://www.om.acm.gov.pt/documents/58428/383402/Relat%C3%B3rio+Indicadores+de+Integra%C3%A7%C3%A3o+de+Imigrantes+OM+2017.pdf/432839ce-f3c2-404f-9b98-39ab22b5edc5.

	difference between young people from China – who have one of the lowest rates of school failure among foreign students – and the ones from India and Pakistan who are most at risk of leaving education early. Minority groups from Roma communities are considered to be most at risk. In the 2014 a national study on Roma communities states that "*the present generation stays in school for a little bit longer period than their parents. It moves from Illiteracy, or school dropout in primary school, to the conclusion of the 2nd grade*".[516] For girls from Roma communities, school dropout is something that, in general, occurs even in younger ages mainly due to the dominant cultural representations about the roles of girls and women in Roma communities, strongly influenced by tradition. Finally, another important challenge is the overcoming of geographical GDP inequalities that leads some regions, like Açores, to experience the highest of ESL rates.[517] Moreover, the labour market demand on low skilled jobs due to the demand from the tourism industry has also acted as a pull factor encouraging young people to leave education early.[518]
Recommendations from EU level on ESL	During the period under analysis, the European semester reports for Portugal presented some recommendations for ESL related to career guidance and counselling, monitoring ESL, and providing effective measures for upskilling and reskilling of workers. In 2014, the EC highlighted the *"(…) need to effectively implement career guidance and counselling services for secondary and tertiary students in line with labour market needs and skills anticipation, and strengthen links with the business sector*."[519] In 2015 during the European semester, the EC recommended introducing – *"(…)the use of the monitoring tool and the diversification of pathways with new vocational education and training programmes should address early school leaving and help improve performance rates*".[520] Finally, in 2017 the EC recommended to ensure that the 'Qualifica' programme (programme that intends to promote

[516] Mendes, Manuela et al (2014). *Estudo nacional sobre as comunidades ciganas*, Lisboa, pp.91. Available at: https://www.acm.gov.pt/documents/10181/52642/estudonacionalComunidades.pdf/f4aa9b13-797d-40bb-a3b3-1c4011b05760.

[517] Justino, David (coord.) (2017). *Atlas da Educação*. CICS.NOVA-EPIS. Lisboa. Available at: https://www.epis.pt/upload/documents/59fafbec27c55.pdf.

[518] European Parliament (2011) Reducing Early School Leaving in the EU. Study. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2011/460048/IPOL-CULT_ET%282011%29460048%28SUM01%29_EN.pdf

[519] Council of Europe (2014). *Council Recommendation of 8 July 2014 on the National Reform Programme 2014 of Portugal and delivering a Council opinion on the Stability Programme of Portugal, (2014/C 247/20)*.

[520] Council of Europe (2015). *Council Recommendation of 14 July 2015 on the 2015 National Reform Programme of Portugal and delivering a Council opinion on the 2015 Stability Programme of Portugal* (2015/C 272/25).

	adult education and digital skills) is effective: "*it will be crucial that they provide quality opportunities for upskilling and reskilling workers, in line with labour market needs*".[521] The target groups of the programme are young people in employment, and early school leavers who have limited work experience. However, stakeholders consulted during this piece of research questioned the usefulness of the EU level recommendations and highlighted some of their shortcomings in the Portuguese context. Some stakeholders considered that the recommendations from the Commission were, at some point, incoherent: "*The EC recommendation comes in a particularly difficult moment for Portugal. The government agenda was the decreasing of expenditure. (…) Troika's orientation was to cut costs even in education which is somehow in contradiction with the Recommendation on ESL and with the measures outlined*".[522] The same perspective is mentioned in the Working paper on policy analysis on early school leaving for Portugal: "*There is a contradiction between the objectives of the EU and, in particular, the 2020 Strategy and EU action in Portugal through Troika which has led to substantial cuts the education system*."[523] Finally, some stakeholders considered that the approach and guidance provided by the EU on ESL put much emphasis on the reasons that can be attributed to families, but forgot the economic and social context and social inequalities.[524]

C. Key national policies on ESL	
Main organisations responsible for ESL policy	**National level** 1. The Ministry of Education (ME) is responsible for **general non-higher education** in Portugal. The direct administration of the Ministry of Education is formed by different central bodies, namely the: • Directorate-General of Education whose mission is to ensure the implementation of policies regarding the pedagogic and didactic component of pre-primary, basic and secondary education and of extra-school education, providing technical support to its formulation and monitoring and evaluating its implementation, as well as coordinating the planning of the several tests and exams. • Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics that ensures the production and statistical analysis of education and science, providing technical support to the

[521] Council of Europe (2017). *Council Recommendation of 11 July 2017on the 2017 National Reform Programme of Portugal and delivering a Council opinion on the 2017 Stability Programme of Portugal* (2017/C 261/21).
[522] Interview with national stakeholder, Portugal, 6/2018.
[523] Universidade do Porto / Centro de Investigação e Intervenção Educativas (2014). *Policy Analysis on Early School Leaving (ESL) – Portugal*, RESL.EU Working Paper Series, Working Paper 1.
[524] Lisbon workshop.

	formulation of policies and strategic planning, creating and ensuring a proper integrated information system of ME. • Directorate-General for School that ensures the implementation of administrative measures and the exercise of peripheral competences relating to MEC attributions, ensuring the superintendence, coordination and monitoring of schools, promoting the development of their autonomy in articulation with local authorities, public and private organisations in the domains of intervention of the education system. 2. The **vocational and professional paths** are the joint responsibility of the ME and the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security (MTSSS). 3. **Adult education and training** is the joint responsibility of the ME and the MTSSS. 4. The **school network** is organised in school clusters which are made up of schools that offer all education levels from pre-school education to secondary education. **Municipal level** The municipal Commissions for the Protection of Children and Youth at Risk (CPCJP) have a role on the identification of early school leaving situations since all schools are obliged to report repetitive absences to the CPCJP, in line with current legislation that provides the legal basis of what constitutes as school absenteeism.
Mechanisms for monitoring ESL	**Definition** The ESL indicator is defined as the rate of people aged between 18 and 24 years who left school without completing secondary education and are no longer in education or training. **Statistical information available** Statistics on the ESL rate are available in the most accessible database on social and demographic indicators – PORDATA.[525] The information for the ESL statistics is collected by Statistics Portugal (INE) - Labour Force Survey, in each quarter.[526] Furthermore, there is an education statistical system powered by all schools. The schools are bound to produce data on absenteeism, and school leaving on systematic basis and provide them to a national platform (MISI).[527] In the glossary of the education statistical data the definition of school leaving (instead of early school leaving) is the act of leaving school before the accomplishing of compulsory education in the age limits foreseen by law.

[525] Available at: https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Taxa+de+abandono+precoce+de+educa%C3%A7%C3%A3o+e+forma%C3%A7%C3%A3o+total+e+por+sexo-433.

[526] The Labour Force Survey is a statistical operation carried out by sampling with statistical significance only for NUTS II.

[527] The data are public and can be consulted at: http://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/96/; http://www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/97/.

	How monitoring data is used Data on ESL are reported in important documents such as the annual report on the state of education of the National Council for Education. It is also used in the Portuguese National Reform Programme. Factors influencing ESL are a topic for research and had been used as grounds to define political priorities (such as in the National Reform Programme) and policy measures. Portugal is also taking part in the Eurydice network. The available ESL data is used on the Eurydice/Cedefop Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures report (English and Portuguese version). The Qualifica network of educational centres has as one of its objectives to collect information regarding the interaction between the learning outcomes of young people and adults and the labour market, in order to improve the quality of education and training system.
Comprehensive strategy	The issue of having, or not, a comprehensive strategy is a very controversial issue in Portugal. The general opinion is that there are important measures put in place but there are no common goals, and no coherence at a national level. In Portugal different measures addressed to the promotion of school success have been implemented. They complement each other, and there are measures that can be considered as prevention, intervention and compensation measures. However, the general perspective mentioned at the workshops is that despite 'the 2011 Recommendation was a strong inspiration'[528] there is no national strategy for tackling ESL and, at least in the opinion of the participants at Oporto workshop, "*the government, when preparing the National Programme for the Promotion of School Success (PNPSE) lost an opportunity for the implementation of a real strategy for reducing early school leaving*"
Specific measures: prevention	• **Expansion of the early childhood education (2009)** • **Autonomy and flexible curriculum (2017):** Schools, on a voluntary basis, have the opportunity to adapt the school curricula to the profile of students. It is expected to promote a better learning system and the promotion of more demanding student's abilities. • **VET system (2012).** The vocational courses on basic education are addressed to students who already knew school failure aged more than 12 years old. After a process of vocational evaluation students are advised to enter into vocational courses. There is a commonality with the thematic area (prevention measures) "*Strengthening high-quality vocational pathways and increasing their attractiveness and flexibility*". Senior research fellow of the HIERD Anna IMRE examined **successful prevention projects of early school leaving in**

[528] Lisbon workshop.

	Lisbon, between the 16th and 19th February 2014. The study visit was realised within the frames of the QALL (Qualifications for All) project, and is closely related to Ms. Imre's work in the ET 2020 working group on school policy. She examined three types of programs closely: 1. Programs related to school districts (TEIP 1-2-3); 2. A program related to underachieving students (EPIS); 3. Programs related to support integration within education (Phoenix, Class Plus) Some elements of these programs are increased financing of schools, strong methodological support and close partnership with families. Ms. Imre participated in discussions with program coordinators, school leaders and teachers, visited schools, and gained valuable insights that can be adapted into Hungarian efforts to prevent early school leaving.[529]
Specific measures: intervention	**National Programme for the Promotion of School Success (2016):** The objective of the PNPSE is to promote school success by intervening at the first signs of difficulty using a proactive approach based on the principle that educational communities best understand their contexts, difficulties and capabilities. As such, they are better prepared to design plans for strategic action, designed at individual schools level, with the aim of improving student learning. The PNPSE includes training addressed to school directors and teachers as well as support for the development of local action plans. In this context schools can propose new pedagogical initiatives adapted to their student population and receive additional resources to develop them on a voluntary basis within their local action plans. **Mentoring Programme (2018):** Mentoring is ensured by a multidisciplinary team and addresses students of the 2nd and 3rd cycles of basic education who experienced more than two retentions. The main objective is to promote the involvement of students in the educational activities. **Choices Program (2001):** The Council of Ministers was integrated into the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural).[530] Its mission is to promote social inclusion of children and teenagers coming from vulnerable or unstable socio-economic contexts, aiming towards equality of opportunities and the reinforcement of social cohesion and non-formal learning. Now, in its call for the 6th generation, the Choices program holds protocols with 110 local social inclusion programs in vulnerable communities, with an option to finance an additional 30 projects,

[529] http://ofi.hu/en/learning-about-early-school-leaving-portugal

[530] http://www.programaescolhas.pt/enquadramento

	many of which located in areas where there are large numbers of descendants of immigrants and ethnic minorities.[531]
Specific measures: compensation	**The Qualifica Programme - previously called the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences System (RVCC):** The Qualifica Programme is implemented by local educational centres that develop the educational and occupational Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies processes for adults (RVCC). The objectives are for schools to collaborate in the definition of criteria for structuring a network of educational and training opportunities appropriate to local qualification needs: • Improve contact between schools and companies' training centres; • Monitor the progress of the young people's and adults' 'learning paths' for insight into different qualification solutions; • Benchmark the fulfilment of or deviation from the trajectories defined; • Collect information regarding the interaction between the learning outcomes of young people and adults and the labour market, in order to improve the quality of education and training system. The national system for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences was created in 1999. Over the years different changes were introduced. The Qualifica Programme is the most recent version implemented in 2016. **Second Opportunity School** (only two local experiences). **The Second Opportunity School of Matosinhos (ESOM)** was implemented in 2008 with the financial support of the Ministry of Education and the Municipality of Matosinhos. It has been also supported by ESF trough Norte 2020 Programme. The ESOM is addressed to young people who left school with very low educational levels and different pathways. The aim of ESOM is to promote social inclusion of those youngsters supporting them on the pathway from early school living to successful training and to employability. Besides Arco Maior, no other centres are addressing these issues and that target population. [532] The **other Second Opportunity School, named Arco Maior,** is located in Oporto city, close to Matosinhos. The School started in 2010 with the financial support of the Ministry of Education and the Municipality of Oporto. It has also support from the church and the Catholic University of Oporto. According to information provided by Arco Maior, the "school" is not an alternative to the national educational system but a transitional period from ESL to

[531] http://carma-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/WP2-1-Country-specific-report-mapping-data-across-all-7-partner-countries.pdf

[532] http://www.segundaoportunidade.com/.

	regular education. The target group of Arco Maior are children aged 15-18 years old who left school in a very early stage.[533]

D. Influence of the 2011 Recommendation and other EU tools on ESL	
Relevance of the Recommendation to national challenges	The 2011 Recommendation was relevant in two ways: First, it reinforced the attention paid to school failure as a predictor for early school leaving. Second, it was also relevant in setting a headline target. However, the influence of the recommendation on the design of policy measures is relatively weak. Regarding the elements that are missing in the Recommendation the participants at the workshops stressed the need to: • Consider the view of the child/ student; • Maintain the continuous training of teachers; • Consider education as a part of a broader system where, namely, employment and health also play an important role; • Make reference to gender gaps; • Address youth employment as a pull (or push) factor.
Commonalities between the 2011 Council Recommendation and other EU tools, and national ESL policies, practices and research	The support of European Social Fund has been crucial for the implementation of the most mentioned programmes and actions like the TEIP programme, the Promotion of School Success and the Qualifica programme. Moreover, the 2011 Recommendation is considered to have had a major influence on the **political narrative,** emphasising that "*early leaving from education is not a fatality; it is not a moment but a process*".[534] It is also argued that it gave visibility to the problem and to create **political awareness** - "*the EU recommendation put this problem into the political agenda*", while paving the way for the expansion of some of the existing measures as the Recommendation was considered as an "*inspiration, an important reference*"[535]. In addition to this, it also created a **system of monitoring and comparing indicators** with other countries. However, it is very difficult to find a clear relationship between the Recommendation and the policy measures put in place. It is possible to identify **commonalities** in measures that, in the different areas foreseen in the recommendation are contributing for the decreasing of ESL: • **Autonomy and flexible curriculum.[536]** Implemented after 2011. It is co-funded by ESF. Schools, on a voluntary basis, have the opportunity to adapt the school curricula to the profile of students. It is expected to promote a better learning system and the promotion of more demanding

[533] http://arcomaior.pt/projetohistoria.asp.

[534] Interview with national stakeholder, Portugal, 6/2018.

[535] Lisbon workshop.

[536] Available at: http://www.dge.mec.pt/autonomia-e-flexibilidade-curricular.

student's abilities. The first step of the measure was a study responding the question: "*What kind of competencies do today's students need to create a new future of Portugal*?"

- **VET system** (Cursos Vocacionais do Ensino Básico).[537] Implemented after 2011. The vocational courses on basic education are addressed to students who already experienced school failure and are more than 12 years old. After a process of vocational evaluation students are advised to enter into vocational courses. There is a commonality with the thematic area (prevention measures) "*Strengthening high-quality vocational pathways and increasing their attractiveness and flexibility*".
- **The National Programme for the Promotion of School Success.[538]** Implemented after 2011. Implemented after 2011. The National Programme for the Promotion of School Success is an opportunity for schools to design local diagnosis and to implement a continuous teacher training programme that enable schools for innovation learning strategies. There is a commonality with the thematic area (intervention measures) "*Supporting and empowering teachers in their work with pupils at risk*".
- **Mentoring Programme (Programa de Tutorias).[539]** The programme establishes individual support to students in order for them to define a planning of time for study and to monitor their own learning. There is a commonality with the thematic area (intervention measure) "*Mentoring supports individual pupils to overcome specific academic, social or personal difficulties*".
- ***Qualifica* Programme.** Implemented in 1999, and revised after 2011. It is a programme addressed to adult population with the aim of increasing their educational and training levels. There is a commonality with the thematic area (compensation measures) "*Recognising and validating prior learning*".

The implementation of the National Programme for the Promotion of School Success and the autonomy and flexible curriculum are based on a bottom-up approach, which means that it depends on each school's willingness to be involved in the programme. The other measures have a national coverage.

ESL has been a subject for some academic research but more important than the Recommendation itself is the availability of EU funds for research – "*all the research carried out in Portugal on ESL has exclusively EU funds*".[540]

One of the objectives of the Portugal Horizon 2020 is defined as the reinforcement of the investment in education and training,

[537] Available at: https://www.dgeste.mec.pt/index.php/cursos-vocacionais/.
[538] Available at: http://www.dge.mec.pt/programa-nacional-de-promocao-do-sucesso-escolar.
[539] Available at: http://www.dge.mec.pt/apoio-tutorial-especifico.
[540] Lisbon workshop.

	namely in order to decrease the ESL rate,[541] but it is impossible to make a relation between the Recommendation and its supporting tools with the evolution of ESL rates, and with the measures implemented in the educational system - especially if we consider that, during the period 2011 – 2014, Portugal was under the Troika intervention. In terms of the influence of **other tools**, Portugal was one of nine countries participating in the EU funded **RESL.eu** research project, which relates directly to the 2011 Recommendation.[542] In addition to this, Portugal hosted one of the **Peer Learning Activity (PLA)** study visits as part of the 2016-18 mandate for the ET 2020 Working Group Schools, which examined "*the governance of school education systems*". Case study examples from Portugal also feature in the published thematic reports from the Working Group.[543]
Barriers and success factors for the implementation of the Recommendation and other EU tools	The main barriers for the implementation of the 2011 Recommendation are:[544] • The lack of visibility of the 2011 Recommendation and its tools outside the ministry. • The difficulties regarding the recognition of the importance of the compensation measures. According to the participants at the workshops the compensation measures are difficult to implement: they are expensive and they need the cooperation of two different ministries: education and employment. • The lack of investment (and lack of political will to invest) particularly in compensation measures such as Second Opportunity Schools: "*there are 300 thousand youngsters outside the education and training system. This is a serious problem of social exclusion. These young people have the right to education. How can you ignore them and do not care for them.*"[545] • The fact that schools are, in general, very 'closed institutions', not open to change – "*Schools are road rollers even when there are measures such as the flexibility in terms of curricula and the mentoring programme*".[546] • The fact that schools are not open to community which means, sometimes, a waste of resources – "*We [ADEIMA, a local social development agency] has to ask permission for being at school when we could have a very active role on the promotion of school success*".[547]

[541] Information available at: https://www.portugal2020.pt/Portal2020/Media/Default/Docs/COMUNICACAO/Portugal2020%2019%20Dez%2014.pdf.
[542] http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policies_early_school_leaving.pdf
[543] https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/governance-of-school-edu.htm
[544] According to interviews and workshops.
[545] Oporto workshop.
[546] Oporto workshop.
[547] Oporto workshop.

	• The lack of quality of some teachers and their recruitment procedure. As success factors, it can be pointed out the different measures already put in place in order to tackle school failure. (see previous section).
Degree of engagement of the country in EU level activities linked to ESL and use of outputs and outcomes	Portugal participated in the ET 2020 Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, which is part of the Open Method of Coordination. For instance, Senior research fellow of the HIERD Anna IMRE, who has done extensive research into ESL in Lisbon[548], worked closely in the **ET 2020 working group** on school policy. In addition to this, Portugal hosted one of the **Peer Learning Activity (PLA)** study visits as part of the 2016-18 mandate for the ET2020 Working Group Schools, which examined "*the governance of school education systems*". Case study examples from Portugal also feature in the published thematic reports from the Working Group.[549] However, stakeholders consider that neither the 2011 Recommendation nor its supporting tools are well known outside the Ministry of Education. This is one of the reasons why some participants at the workshops said that "*Portugal has done too little for the implementation of the 2011 recommendation*".
Degree to which the EU tools have contributed to efficiency of implementation of ESL policy	The accomplishment of the headline target was relevant but the way to achieve it is not strongly linked to the recommendation or to the other EU tools. Portugal has approved a set of measures that can provide an approach to the ESL problem but they overall respond to a general plan to address school failure. Please see above.
Added value of EU ESL policy and tools in the country	The most important added value of EU ESL policy involved: • The co-financing of new programmes with ESF funding. • Giving visibility to the problem and to create political awareness - "*the EU recommendation put this problem into the political agenda*." • Paving the way for the expansion of some of the existing measures. One of the measures expanded was TEIP – a National programme to support schools in disadvantaged areas for the promotion of school success. • Creating a system of monitoring and comparing indicators with other countries.

E. Need for future EU level support	
Key suggestions for EU support needed in the future (e.g. tools, initiatives,	About the key elements missing from current EU Recommendation the participants stressed the need to: • Consider the view of the child/ student; • Provide continuous training of teachers;

[548] http://ofi.hu/en/learning-about-early-school-leaving-portugal

[549] https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/governance-of-school-edu.htm

target groups, thematic areas)	• Consider education as a part of a broader system where, namely, employment and health also play an important role; • Make reference to gender gaps; • Address youth employment as a pull (or push) factor. In addition to this, the Recommendation lacks specific reference to target groups such as people with a disability, drug abusers, LGBTI young people and teenage mothers.[550]
Types of future policy instruments which would be most helpful	• Information tools (Brochures and online factsheets able to reach schools and teachers community) about ESL with the reinforcement of the instruments (like workshops; research at a local level) to produce knowledge about who are the young leavers, where they are, what are they doing, why they left school, what they would like to do in the future.[551] • Creating and developing instruments for an early identification and monitoring of school abandonment situations.[552] • Re-establishing the thematic working groups system.
Other comments	

[550] Oporto Workshop.
[551] Oporto Workshop.
[552] Oporto Workshop.

Study on the Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (ESL)

Country case study: Romania

A. Identification	
Country	Romania
Reasons for selection as case study	The key selection criteria for country workshops have been the different challenges concerning ESL, different progress in ESL rates and different levels of engagement in EU-related actions at the country level. Romania is classified as having a *common core curriculum type of education system*: after successful completion of primary education, all students progress to the lower secondary level, where they follow the same general curriculum.[553] Romania currently has an ESL rate above the EU average, which fluctuated between 17-19% since 2011. Only in 2018, provisional data shows a slight improvement of this indicator (i.e. 16.9% in 2018 vs. 18.1% in 2017). . The preliminary research has shown a clear influence of the 2011 Recommendation and associated EU policy tools (e.g. ESIF conditionalities and participation in the ET 2020 Working Groups). A national strategy for reducing early school leaving was adopted in 2015 that is aligned with the key pillars of the 2011 Recommendation, but challenges related to its implementation remain. In comparison with other countries, the degree of influence of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools, and engagement with the EU agenda were estimated to be at a relatively high level.[554]
Date and location of country workshop	28.02.2019, 15.00-17.30

[553] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2014a) *The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: schematic diagrams.* Available online: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/education_structures_EN.pdf

[554] The definitions used to classify countries are:

- High level (H) - Evidence of a direct alignment of national ESL strategies with the 2011 Recommendation, and with the corresponding measures in the EU policy framework
- Medium level (M) - General consistency in aims and approach between the 2011 Recommendation and national measures, but drawing on a wider range of influences
- Low level (L) - Little or no evidence of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policy.

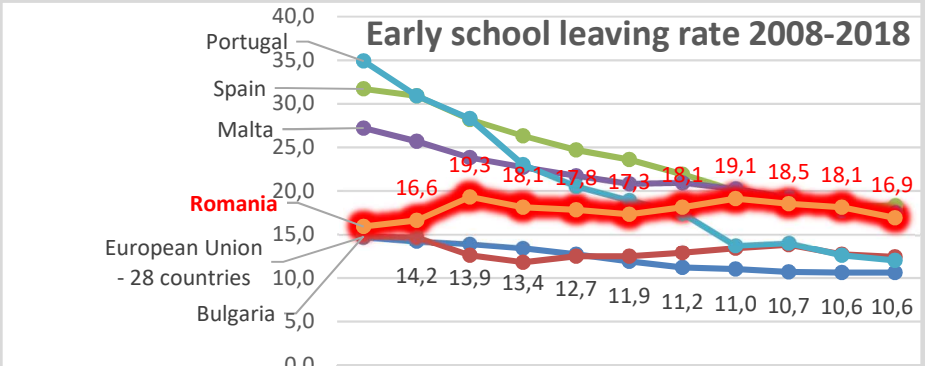
Organisations participating in country workshop	• Minister of National Education • Ministry of Foreign Affairs • Institute for Educational Sciences • Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education (ARACIP) • UNICEF - Country office • World Bank - Romanian branch

B. Country context regarding ESL

Evolution of ESL rates since 2011

EUROSTAT data shows that Romania is still far from reaching its ESL national target, which is set at 11.3%, to be reached by 2020. ESL rate in Romania fluctuated between 17-19% over the past 8 years. Only in 2018, provisional data shows a slight improvement of this indicator (i.e. 16.9% in 2018 vs. 18.1% in 2017). However, it ranks Romania third from the bottom at EU level, after Spain and Malta. The chart of ESL evolution in Romania over the last 11 years as compared to other relevant cases is presented below, in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The evolution of ESL rates in Romania in comparative perspective (2008-2018)



	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
European Union - 28 countries	14,7	14,2	13,9	13,4	12,7	11,9	11,2	11,0	10,7	10,6	10,6
Bulgaria	14,8	14,7	12,6	11,8	12,5	12,5	12,9	13,4	13,8	12,7	12,4
Spain	31,7	30,9	28,2	26,3	24,7	23,6	21,9	20,0	19,0	18,3	18,3
Malta	27,2	25,7	23,8	22,7	21,7	20,8	20,9	20,2	19,2	17,7	17,5
Portugal	34,9	30,9	28,3	23,0	20,5	18,9	17,4	13,7	14,0	12,6	12,0
Romania	15,9	16,6	19,3	18,1	17,8	17,3	18,1	19,1	18,5	18,1	16,9

Source: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_14&lang=en (01.03.2019)

The chart above shows that Romania, unlike other countries that have encountered major challenges related to this phenomenon - such as Portugal, Spain or Malta - has not made similar progress to reduce the ESL rate, which is almost at the same level in 2018 as in 2008, even increasing by one percentage point (p.p.) in this

timeframe: from 15.9% in 2008 to 16.9% in 2018. Portugal had the highest ESL rate in 2008 (34.9%) but has made significant progress by reducing the ESL rate to just 12% in 2018, within 10 years. Consistent decreases in the last 10 years in terms of ESL rate have been recorded in Spain and Malta as well (by more than 10 p.p.). Bulgaria, a neighbouring country that joined the EU the same year as Romania, reduced its ESL rate by 2.4 p.p in the last 10 years. Overall at EU-28 level, ESL rate has decreased from 14.2% to 10.6% from 2008-2018.

Taking the year 2011 as benchmark (when the EU Recommendation on ESL was adopted), there has been some oscillation in the levels. There was a reduction in the ESL rate in the first two years after the adoption of the Recommendation (i.e. 2012, 2013), after which the ESL rate increased, starting with 2014, when it reached the same level as in 2011; subsequently, in 2015, ESL rate reached the highest level so far i.e. 19.1%, after which it has dropped constantly to 16.9% (provisional data for 2018).

With regard to ESL, relevant events (e.g. socio-economic crisis, dedicated public policies, etc.) show their effects after a certain amount of time. For example, the early investment in pre-school/early education will show its effects on ESL only over 10-15 years, etc. Thus, that may explain this oscillating evolution of the ESL rate in Romania, where there was the influence of the economic crisis in the period 2008-2010, but also the influence of the measures adopted at the level of public policies, including as a result of or at least under the EU Recommendation of 2011. The phenomenon of the children left home by their parents who migrated to work abroad, or the economic revival after 2012/13, are also relevant variables in the evolution of ESL phenomenon.

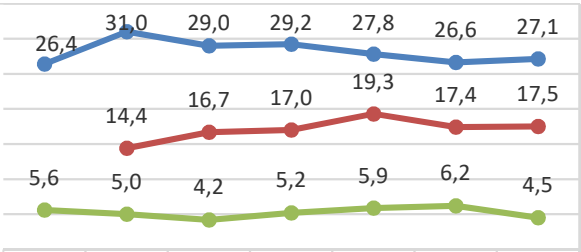
However, starting with 2015 Romania has constantly reduced ESL rate from 19.1 to 16.9 in 2018 (-2.2 p.p.), which is a sharper downtrend than that recorded at EU level 28 where the ESL rate has been reduced by only 0.4 p.p. over the same time frame. While no causal inferences can be drawn based on the existing evidence, the year 2015 overlaps with the adoption of the Romanian national Strategy on Early School Leaving.

The high ESL rate in Romania is explained by complex causes, such as:

- Structural problems of the Romanian education system (especially the poor coverage of rural areas with secondary education facilities);
- The challenges related to building a quality and inclusive education system, in particular in rural areas, and the particularities regarding the mandatory schooling period;

	• The fragmented nature of education and ESL related policies over the past three decades; • The plethora of pilot-initiatives (programmes and projects) that showed initial positive results but have not been followed and sustained. The effects of poor school infrastructure in the rural area are amplified by the difficult socio-economic situation of the rural population in comparison with the urban area. In rural milieus there is a higher share of people living in poverty with weaker economic opportunities, lower educational attainment, etc. Evidence from the interviews conducted for this research indicates that the political context may also have negatively influenced the ESL rate – e.g. a decision made in 2009-2010 in relation to dismantling the vocational schools in arts and crafts, which is believed to have led to increased ESL and NEET rates. This conclusion is presented clearly also in National Strategy for protection and promotion of children rights – 2014-2020: *"The abolition of Schools of Arts and Crafts caused early school leaving for at least 10% of students who had completed the 8th Grade, mainly due to the fact that families could no longer cover the costs for another 4 years of high-school education*[555].
Specific national challenges and priorities on ESL	The key challenges for Romania are: • High and persistent ESL rates, particularly in rural areas and among the Roma population; • Equal access to inclusive and quality education; • The lack of a comprehensive ESL strategy before 2015; after the adoption of the strategy (in 2015), there have been challenges regarding its implementation and monitoring. The main challenge that Romania is facing with regard to ESL is the situation in the rural area. Approximately 45% of the population lives in rural areas, and the data show that the gap in terms of ESL rate between the rural population and the urban population is significant - see the Figure 2 below. **Figure 2. Urban-rural divide in early leavers from education and training in Romania (2011-2017)**

[555] http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Transparenta/2014/2014-02-03_Anexa1_HG_Strategie_protectia_copilului.pdf (2.04.2019), p.28.



	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Romania: RURAL AREAS - thinly populated areas	26,4	31,0	29,0	29,2	27,8	26,6	27,1
Romania: TOWNS & SUBURBS - intermediate density areas		14,4	16,7	17,0	19,3	17,4	17,5
Romania: CITIES - densely populated areas	5,6	5,0	4,2	5,2	5,9	6,2	4,5

Source: EU Labour Force Survey, Eurostat, online data code [edat_lfse_30]

Thus in 2017, as shown in the chart above, significant variations between ESL in urban areas (4.5 % in cities and 17.5% in towns and suburbs) and rural areas (27.1%) are noticeable. The situation is explained by the enduring structural problems of the Romanian education system, in particular the poor lower-and upper-secondary school network in rural areas, which creates disincentives for students from those areas to continue in education once commuting costs intervene (the students usually drop-out school after they complete the primary or the lower-secondary education cycle).

The data also show that at EU 28 level, taking into account only young men, Romania has the biggest gap in the ESL rate in the rural area vs. urban area[556] which leads to the conclusion that *"specific actions are needed to increase the education levels of young men (and, to a lesser extent, young women) in rural areas of Romania*(…)".[557]

The *Strategy on reducing early school leaving in Romania* adopted in 2015, identifies as the priority target groups the following categories:

1) Minorities and other marginalized groups;
2) Children from rural communities;
3) Students repeating a class or dropping out of school;
4) Children / young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The Roma minority has been highlighted as a distinct vulnerable group with regard to the ESL phenomenon. Although there is no national official data on the ESL rate among Roma, the 2019 Country Report Romania recently released by the European Commission

[556] [European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor Romania, p. 33, available at https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/volume-1-2018-education-and-training-monitor-country-analysis.pdf]
[557] Idem, p. 33.

	mentions a Fundamental Rights Agency report according to which in 2016 the ESL rate among Roma was 77%. However, the 2011 national Census data on the educational structure of ethnic groups provides relevant information: 9.9% of Romanian citizens who have self-declared Roma have at least completed upper secondary (high-school) education, compared to 57.1% among the majority citizens; moreover, the illiteracy rate among Roma is 14.1% as compared to 1% among the majority population.[558] There also are dimensions of inequality among more and less developed regions in Romania and that location affects access to and participation in the education system with negative impact on individuals' life chances in terms of educational routes, career paths and personal welfare.
Recommendations from EU level on ESL	Over the last 6 years, starting with 2013, ESL-related Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) issued by the European Commission have highlighted the high national ESL rate and, in particular, among Roma and rural / isolated areas, the lack of an adequate data collection mechanisms, as well as the difficult access to affordable and quality ECEC. In this framework Romania was also recommended to elaborate and adopt a comprehensive ESL strategy. The year 2015 marked the adoption of the ESL strategy as an ex-ante conditionality for accessing EU funds. The substantive ESL issues in Romania were maintained in the 2016 CSRs, which recommended the implementation without delay of the adopted strategy taking into account that *"the early school leaving rate is high, in particular for the Roma and the rural population. Prevention and remedial programs are limited. For vocational education and training, quality issues persist and participation in adult education is very low*."[559] The 2017 CSRs mentioned the implementation of some programmes and projects, such as the warm meal pilot programs, reimbursement of commuting costs, social vouchers, and projects to improve the quality of teaching and school curricula, and it was noted that "*the early school leaving Strategy was adopted in response to repeated CSRs. There was some progress on this in 2016, but speeding up implementation on the ground will be instrumental to reduce the rate of school dropouts. Some progress was made in vocational education and training (VET) by adoption of a VET Strategy, and by reinstating the professional schools, but with insufficient links to the labour*

[558] 2011 Census Data cited in the Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority, 2015-2020, available at: https://www.swedenabroad.se/globalassets/ambassader/rumanien-bukarest/documents/romanian-strategy-for-2015-2020.pdf

[559] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/cr_romania_2016_en.pdf (2.04.2019), p.3.

	market".[560] Furthermore, it was also mentioned that were no available second-chance education programmes. The 2018 EU Country Report issued for Romania under the European Semester concluded that "*After the adoption of the Strategy for Early School Leaving in 2015 and the progress observed the following year, efforts to continue implementation were modest in 2017. This is reflected in high early school leaving rates, unequal access to quality education including for the Roma and large gaps in terms of student performance all pointing to persistent hurdles*" [561]. The 2019 EU Country Report for Romania mentioned that the "*early school leaving remains very high, hampering the development of high skills…An integrated approach to prevent early school leaving is still missing. There have been only scattered efforts to improve the quality of education in schools with high dropout rates. A project setting up an early warning system to identify pupils at risk of drop out started in 2018*" [562]. Indeed, at the beginning of 2019, the Ministry of National Education announced the start of the project "*Development of an Early Warning System for early school leaving in Romania*" with the financial support of the European Commission through the Structural Reform Support Service and with the Technical Assistance of the World Bank[563]. Furthermore, there was an earlier stage in the implementation of this component of the strategy, run in 2016-2018, consisting of a specific study on the data collection mechanism for the quantification of the ESL phenomenon. This study was funded by the Structural Reform Support Programme through the Structural Reform Support of the European Commission. However, this study has not been published, so we were unable to review it.

C. Key national policies on ESL	
Main organisations responsible for ESL policy	There are several institutions involved in implementing policies on or related to early school leaving. The main actor in this process is the Ministry of National Education (MEN), which co-ordinates and cooperates closely with other bodies and public entities (most of them

[560] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-romania-en.pdf (2.04.2019), p.10.
[561] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2018-european-semester-country-report-romania-en.pdf (2.04.2019), p.11.
[562] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/2019-european-semester-country-report-romania_en.pdf (2.04.2019), p.39.
[563] Unfortunately this project does not have yet an official website presentation. The only reference regarding the project could be seen on WorldBank Romania facebook page : https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=262014901390990 (2.04.2019)

being under the coordination or subordination of MEN) with responsibilities in the field of education, namely:

- National Agency for the Assurance of Quality in the Education System (*Agenția Română pentru Asigurarea Calității în Învățământul Preuniversitar* - ARACIP);
- National Centre for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education (*Centrul Național de Dezvoltare a Învățământului Profesional și Tehnic* - CNDIPT);
- National Authority for Vocational Training in Dual System in Romania, recently established in 2018 (Autoritatea Naţională pentru Formare Profesională Iniţială în Sistem Dual din România);
- Institute of Educational Sciences (*Institutul de Științe ale Educației*);
- County school inspectorates (*Inspectoratele Școlare Județene* - ISJ);
- Teaching staff resource centers (*Casele Corpului Didactic* - CCD);
- County Centers for Resources and Educational Assistance (*Centrele Județene de Resurse și Asistență Educațională* - CJRAE)

Considering the ESL socio-economic prerequisites, another important stakeholder in this process is the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice (Ministerul Muncii și Justiției Sociale - MMJS).

A role is played in the process by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) through the European Semester Directorate (formerly the Europe 2020 Strategy), which coordinates and monitors each year the National Reform Programme (NRP) prepared by the line ministries. MFA - which is the technical contact point in the Europe 2020 Strategy issues at national level - communicates the NRP to the European Commission and reports on the progress made in the implementation of Europe 2020 Strategy objectives and CSRs. Thus, MFA supervises and regulates the process at national level. Romania's NRP closely follows and puts forward solutions to achieve Europe 2020 indicators, including ESL, and to fulfil CSRs issued by the European Commission and approved by the EU Council yearly.

Another role in this process is also played by NGOs and international organizations such as the Roma Education Fund Romania, "Copiii noștri" (*Our children*) Foundation, Save the Children Romania, Romani-Criss, "Copiii în dificultate" (*Children facing difficulties*) Foundation, World Vision Romania, World Bank - Romanian Branch - which provide evidence and collaborate with the Minister of National Education on reducing ESL.

There is little evidence about how effective the cooperation between the different institutions is. Interview evidence seems to indicate that the existing policy framework provides incentives for schools to report reduced yearly drop-out rates. Moreover, the absence of an integrated monitoring system which helps trace pupils' movements in

	and out of the education system, as well as transfers between different schools (in Romania and abroad) is illustrative of the degree to which institutions can effectively cooperate in the absence of an infrastructure that integrates data from different institutions. One of the problems that seem to persist and which is also reported by the European Commission in many of its reports is the lack of coordination between the line ministries (i.e. Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, etc.), both in terms of ESL, as well as in other issues, such as the inclusion of Roma citizens.
Mechanisms for monitoring ESL	Romania's national strategy for reducing ESL includes a monitoring and evaluation system, which is aimed at feeding future decisions related to the strategy and its implementation with accurate information. Relevant data are collected through the National Institute for Statistics and a tracking system called SIIIR (Integrated Educational Information System in Romania - Sistemul Informatic Integrat al Învățământului din România). Some of its components are currently still under development with the support of EU funds from the Operational Programme Development of Administrative Capacity 2007-2013 (*Programul Operațional Dezvoltarea Capacității Administrative*). This new information system is being set up as a result of the repeated recommendations made by the EU in relation to a better and more effective monitoring, data collection and evaluation mechanism related to ESL at the school, local and national level.
Comprehensive strategy	The Government commissioned the elaboration of Romania's ESL Strategy to the World Bank. The Strategy was adopted in 2015. Its involvement is a result of the constant financial and expert support that the World Bank has offered Romania since the early 1990s, including for the design and implementation of the first post-communist reform of the education system and various programmes and projects aimed at reducing ESL. The Strategy is aimed at the groups that are exposed to the highest ESL risk, identified on the basis of a combination of risk factors. • Those who will be in the 18-24 age group in 2020; • Children and youth from families with a low socio-economic status; • Children and youth from rural areas; • Children and youth from the Roma minority and other marginalised and under-represented groups (including children with disabilities).

	These are the key target groups, but the strategy mentions that it also looks beyond them at other categories affected by or at risk of leaving school early. The ESL strategy proposes 4 pillars and 6 programmes which include prevention, intervention and compensation measures. It acknowledges that they were selected in accordance to Romania's as well as the European Commission's priorities for reducing ESL. • Pillar 1: Ensuring access to education and the access to quality education for all children; • Pillar 2: Ensuring that all children finalise mandatory schooling; • Pillar 3: Reintegrating early school leavers in the education system; • Pillar 4: Developing adequate institutional support. For each of these pillars there are several programmes and within them, measures. A theory of change guided the development of these pillars and their sub-components. Importantly, the Strategy explicitly refers to preschool children reaching the age of 18 years after 2020, as a specific target sub-group. For example, Pillar 1 of the Strategy contains programme 1.1 that aim at "*increasing access to early education and care for children (age groups 2-3 and 3-6)*". This strand of intervention is part of the preventive measures - see below.
Specific measures: prevention	Regarding all type of specific measures (prevention, intervention, compensation): • In Romania, ESL measures have been fragmented, across time and region. Many of them were pilot-initiatives, discontinued after the initial funding period was over. This occurred despite indications about their positive effects in reducing ESL or contributing to its diminishment from various perspectives; • The measures have also been rather uncoordinated and have not addressed ESL as the complex phenomenon that it is, with multiple and interacting causal factors; • The desk research seems to indicate that often ESL 'measures' are equivalent with 'projects'/ 'pilot-initiatives' that address different issues over limited periods of time. Key prevention priorities, according to the ESL Strategy: • Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC); • Collaborating with local public administration authorities, parents and other stakeholders in the community; • Developing teacher competences; • Children in disadvantaged communities and areas; • Ensuring quality education;

	• The development of early warning/ identification system for children at risk of dropout/ ESL. The most representative prevention measures adopted so far have been: 1. Improvement of accessibility and affordability of ECEC to families with a disadvantaged background, including Roma children through the implementation of some pilot-projects: *a.The reform of early education for Roma children (Reforma educatiei timpurii pentru copiii romi) (2007-2012);* *b. The programme for inclusive early education, as a component of the programme aimed at successful integration in schools (Programul pentru proiectul de educaţie timpurie incluzivă (PETI) (2006-2013);* *c. PRET – Project for the reform of Early Education (Proiectul pentru Reforma Educaţiei Timpurii) – as a component of the strategy to reform ECEC (2005-2011).* Through the laws adopted in 2018[564], Romania intends to gradually introduce compulsory pre-school education - the last year group of pre-school education (5 years old) becomes compulsory until 2020 at the latest, the middle age group (4 years old) until 2023 at the latest, and the smallest age group (3 years old) up to 2030. 2. Promotion of active anti-segregation policies, such as those intended to diversify the social composition of schools in disadvantaged areas (e.g. via admissions), for which there is some specific anti-segregation legislation in place.[565]
Specific measures: intervention	Key intervention priorities, according to Romania's ESL Strategy are: • Developing teachers' competencies; • Social measures aimed at supporting pupils from disadvantaged communities (including different forms of financial support); • Supporting schools and communities; • supporting parents and their role in children's education; • supporting and adopting initiatives aimed at counselling pupils within and outside the education system; • the reform of vocational and technical education. At the beginning of 2019, the Ministry of National Education announced the start of the project "*Development of an Early Warning System for early school leaving in Romania*" with the financial support of the European Commission through the Structural Reform Support Service and with the Technical Assistance of the World Bank. This project will integrate in the foreseen development of "*Early warning*

[564] http://parlament.ro/comisii/invatamant/pdf/2018/re447_17.pdf (2.04.2019)
[565] https://www.edu.ro/ordin-cadru-nr-613421122016-privind-interzicerea-segreg%C4%83rii-%C8%99colare-%C3%AEn-unit%C4%83%C8%9Bile-de-%C3%AEnv%C4%83%C8%9B%C4%83m%C3%A2nt (02.04.2019)

	systems for pupils at risk of ESL, including those designed to monitor and take action where learners become disengaged from school or where behavioural or attendance issues arise", also responding to the European Commission's recommendation for Romania to improve data collection and monitoring system in tackling ESL. There are also other specific intervention measures of relevance: 1. PHARE Programme Access to education for disadvantaged groups, with a focus on the Roma (2002 – 2010) ("Acces la educaţie pentru grupurile dezavantajate, cu focalizare pe romi"); 2. Some measures targeted at providing individual support are on the political agenda, but they are not implemented at the national level/ systematically; 3. Programme School after School ("Școala după școală")[566].
Specific measures: compensation	Compensation measures aimed at the 18-24 age group have been predominant over the past decade, according to the interviewed stakeholders. The most frequent compensation measure implemented in Romania (even before adopting the ESL Strategy) was the "*Provision of 'second chance' education and other high quality alternative education programmes for early school leavers, offering flexible and inclusive provision and combining social and academic learning*".[567] These programmes were introduced by the 2011 Education Law and have continued since in different formats. One of the main difficulties encountered in implementing this measure is to motivate those eligible to benefit from the support offered, and to resume education. One of the stakeholders interviewed for this study mentioned that the focus on compensation measures for young adults (18-24) in the absence of an equal effort to roll out prevention and intervention measures is likely to only perpetuate the vicious cycle of ESL in Romania. Along the same lines, compensation measures are believed by the same interviewed stakeholder to be less likely to work, since the intervention may occur too late. Instead, prevention and intervention measures for pupils at risk of ESL are recommended in parallel, to address the cause of the phenomenon rather than address it after individuals have left schools, sometimes years after this occurred ESL rates might not decrease despite funds invested in compensation measures, because they occur too late.

[566] https://www.edu.ro/scoala%20dupa%20scoala (2.04.2019)

[567] Legislative framework: Order of the Ministry of Education 4093/ 2017 for the modification of Order 5248/ 2011; Order of the Ministry of Education 5248/ 2011 – Methodology, available at https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/fisiere%20articole/OMEN%204093_%20din%2019%20iunie%202017.pdf. See also https://www.edu.ro/a%20doua%20sansa.

D. Influence of the 2011 Recommendation and other EU tools on ESL	
Relevance of the Recommendation to national challenges	The headline target of reducing ESL and the 2011 Recommendation are highly relevant in the Romanian national context. The ESL target set at national level of 11.3% (to be reached by 2020) has been a landmark and has raised concern among policy makers in education. During the workshop organised in Bucharest, the participants emphasised that although there is some progress in reducing the ESL rate to 16.9% in 2018 (provisional data), in the years following the adoption of Romania's ESL Strategy (2015), the target for 2020 (11.3%) is unlikely to be reached. Romania has performed modestly in dealing with ESL compared to other EU Member States. In 2008, Romania ranked 6th in the European ranking, in 2018 it ranked 3rd. While other EU Members States that had high ESL rates have succeeded in significantly reducing the level thereof over the past 10 years, the ESL rate has remained quite steady in Romania at around 17-19% (third worst performer among all EU MS in 2018). But, if 10 years ago, the gap between ESL in Romania and the ESL rate recorded in the EU MS with the poorest performance was about 10 p.p., this difference has reduced constantly and in 2018 the gap separating the ESL rate in Romania from the worst performer was less than 2 p.p.. The remaining MS with high rates of ESL have recorded a higher dynamic in decreasing ESL phenomenon as against Romania, whose ESL rate has remained relatively constant over the last decade. However, as noted above, in the last 4 years, after Strategy for early school leaving was adopted, the ESL rate in Romania has decreased year after year (reaching 16.9% in 2018 according to EUROSTAT provisional data). The persistence of a high ESL rate in Romania has been a matter of concern for national policy makers. Stakeholders participating in the Bucharest workshop as well as stakeholders that were interviewed previously have advanced several explanations of this state of play: the effect of the economic crisis from 2008-2010, as well as a certain effect of the migration of Romanian parents abroad. In this case, children who continue to live in Romania without parental support or the children leaving the country temporarily with their parents become a category vulnerable facing the risk of ESL. The structure of Recommendation across the three pillars (prevention, intervention and compensation) has been appreciated by the Romanian policy makers who attended the workshop and identified as one of the key aspects that have been relevant for the Romanian context and policies.

	• At prevention level, the ECEC development component of the Recommendation has been highlighted as vital when dealing with ESL; • At the intervention level, it was shown that it is essential to develop early warning systems for pupils and students at risk of ESL, a measure included in the 2011 Recommendation but also in Country Specific Recommendations. However, a project to implement such a measure at the national level has only been launched in February of 2019 (with the support of the World Bank); • At the level of compensation measures, the "Second chance" measure was discussed at the workshop, and participants emphasised that there are major challenges related to the implementation of such a programme: for example, difficulties faced in identifying, and motivating the return to education of the specific target groups are specific to such compensation measures. The Recommendation and its supporting tools are likely to have generated a sustainable effect in Romania by changing the paradigm of educational policies, and by prioritising the target groups that have received support in this process. The Recommendation and its supporting tools contributed to the prioritisation of measures to support ECEC, the use of early warning data, the emphasis on the importance of generating a friendly and inclusive school milieu (e.g. adoption of legislation combating school segregation, school bullying, etc.). Thus, important effects in reducing ESL are likely to be noticed in time, provided efforts continue to be made and existing policies are adequately financed and implemented effectively at the national level over the long term.
Commonalities and influence of the Recommendation and other EU tools on national ESL policy, including examples	The evidence gathered for this study (desk research, interviews with key stakeholders and the workshop) provide clear indications that the 2011 Recommendation and the ex-ante conditionality mechanism have directly and complementarily influenced the way the content of educational policies has been developed in Romania after 2011. If ex-ante conditionality was the impetus that led to the development and adoption of an ESL Strategy in Romania, the 2011 Recommendation shaped the content of this Strategy. The development of the ESL Strategy in Romania (recommended by World Bank experts), adopted in 2015, includes direct reference to the content of the 2011 Recommendation and the European Commission's guidelines in that matter. The outcome was that Romania's ESL Strategy is very similar with the ESL Recommendation, and not only includes measures divided across the three pillars (prevention, intervention and compensation), but also uses definitions heavily inspired by the Recommendation.

Stakeholders with a deep knowledge of the process that led to the elaboration of the Strategy have confirmed (during interviews and at the workshop) that the Romanian Government has taken EU Recommendations for Romania into account when deciding on the drafting of the ESL strategy, including the 2011 Recommendation.

For example, workshop participants mentioned the EU's recommendation for Romania to include ECEC as a priority on ESL prevention - although it is obvious that the effects of this type of intervention will be observable in time.

The 2011 Recommendation was a framework-milestone on which the Strategy approach was embedded. The consulted stakeholders have indicated that it was of added value that disparate measures and programmes already in place in Romania before the adoption of the Strategy (such as the Second chance, School after school programmes or previous projects on early education reform) could be combined and included in a common and coordinated strategic framework approach, organised across the three pillars - prevention, intervention, compensation. This enabled considerable progress in coordinating governmental measures to reduce ESL after 2011 in Romania.

The 2011 Recommendation has also brought educational policy innovation through new approaches targeting ESL that had not been previously in place at the level of education policies in Romania, such as early warning systems for pupils at risk of ESL or measures to promote inclusive and participatory school environments, including anti-bullying and well-being policies within schools.

Moreover, stakeholders involved in the development of Romania's ESL Strategy have confirmed that the Recommendation addressed all the essential challenges specific to the national context, and the participants did not indicate essential issues regarding ESL that had not been dealt with in Recommendation. The ESL Strategy has also been tailored on Romania's national particularities, and various vulnerable groups at risk of ESL in Romania were specifically targeted.

However, the implementation of the measures foreseen in the Strategy is quite slow, facing a delay against the initial schedule. Some measures only started effectively in 2019 (such as the "Development of an early warning system for early school leaving in Romania" project). This was also signalled in the ESL Strategy Implementation Report for 2017 (elaborated with the support from the World Bank), approved by the Coordination and Monitoring Committee of the strategies in education - ex-ante conditionalities placed under the primary responsibility of the Ministry of National Education.

An ESL Strategy Implementation Report for 2018 was also developed (yet the latter is still unapproved by the Coordination Committee) which also raises a red flag regarding the slow process of implementing the strategy in relation to its initial timetable. The implementation reports were not available during the period in which the research was conducted, however. The information included above is thus based on contributions from workshop participants who possess knowledge of this issue.

In line with the ESL Recommendation of 2011, Member States are recommended to identify the main drivers generating ESL and to monitor these characteristics at national level, as well as to establish a national strategy on ESL by 2012 along with the implementation thereof. The Recommendation directed the EU Member States to substantiate their comprehensive strategies through intervention measures around three central pillars - prevention, intervention, and compensation. It was also recommended that appropriate measures should be tailored for vulnerable groups facing the ESL in each country, mentioning, for example, children from socio-economic disadvantage groups, Roma or children with children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Consistency between the mainstream, general education and TVET as well as coordination between different policy sectors is also recommended. Involvement of all stakeholders (school principals, teachers, etc.) is recommended in the strategy' development and implementation. The recommendation also contained details of the suggested preventive, intervention and compensation measures. Examples of the types of prevention, intervention and compensation policies that are included in Romania's Strategy and in the ESL Recommendation as well are provided in Section C – key national policies on ESL above.

Romania's strategy on ESL identifies four vulnerable groups - minorities and other marginalized groups, rural children, the grade repeaters or school drop outs, and SEN. That shows that "*it focuses mainly on implementing successful prevention and intervention measures and, as far as possible, on action to prevent school drop out among students, while offering viable options for young adults who have already left the education*" (p. 44).

The intervention measures within the Romania's ESL Strategy focus on four central pillars:

- *"Pillar 1: Ensuring access to education and quality education for all children*
- *Pillar 2: Ensure completion of compulsory education by all children*
- *Pillar 3: Reintegration of early school leavers into the education system*

- *Pillar 4: Developing adequate institutional support "(Section 4.4).*

Before 2011, pilot programs at the level of early education had been developed in Romania, *The reform of early childhood education for Roma children* (2007-2012) project*, The program for inclusive early education* (2006-2013), PRET - *Project for the Reform of Early Education* (2005-2011), PHARE Program *Access to education for disadvantaged groups, with a focus on Roma* (2002 - 2010).

However, all the aforementioned projects have not evolved towards a systematic approach which would indicate a comprehensive public policy, integrating relevant areas of intervention. They were rather disparate interventions, developed to tackle specific issues over a limited period of time. Only with the adoption of the national Strategy on ESL, such a unitary approach at the concept level has emerged in order to ensure coherence of such interventions.

The 2015 ESL Strategy of Romania has also put forward new approaches within educational policies. Such examples are the Measure 10 of the Strategy - "*Developing Early Detection/Warning and Early Intervention Systems to Identify Children at Risk of repeating or School Drop-out*" or Measure 12 "*Increasing the attractiveness and relevance of TVET to enhance flexibility and permeability, and to expand the quantity and quality of learning opportunities in the workplace, with particular focus on reintegration of early school leavers*."

The contribution of EU associated tools to national policy and practice

The evidence collected for this study shows that the ex-ante conditionalities mechanism strongly contributed to elaboration and adoption of the ESL Strategy in Romania. One participant at workshop clearly stated that in the absence of this mechanism, this Strategy would not even have been in place in the country. This was confirmed during interviews and at the country workshop by stakeholders that were involved in the process and have first-hand knowledge of the decisions made at the time.

One of the experts who participated in the workshop described the context in which the elaboration of the ESL Strategy in Romania was developed*: "In order for Romania to have access to European funds it had to have those strategies requested by the [European] Commission. I think it was a good thing that at that time the [European] Commission was pretty clear what it expected from these strategies beyond the consultations, but that was very clear, it was a grid outlining what to achieve with those strategies, and subsequently they were evaluated at government level or formally adopted in the [European] Commission, for that moment I think it*

was very good. This kind of obligation to the ministry to stay and reflect upon about these great themes."

The evidence indicates that the concern of policy makers in Romania regarding the ESL rate would have probably generated some targeted measures or programmes, but it would probably not have led to the adoption of a framework-strategy *per se* to reduce ESL in the absence of the ESIF conditionalities. As already emphasised, the 2011 Recommendation provided a policy framework that supported the design of the ESL Strategy and the inclusion of measures from all three pillars (prevention, intervention and compensation). It systematised the approach to reducing ESL at the national level by providing a comprehensive range of policies to be implemented at the national level.

In this framework, the conditionality attached to accessing EU funds is seen by the stakeholders who attended the workshop as having had the highest impact on the public policy decisions that were made in Romania. As the education budget has been limited, the financial support that goes into ESL measures from EU funds is critical to the implementation of the Strategy.

The other European instruments used (e.g. the headline target, monitoring and reporting mechanisms, outcomes of the Open Method of Cooperation – ET 2020, and Thematic Working Groups) have had a more limited influence on the political decision-making level. The headline target was sometimes referred to in the public discourse as an argument of the poor state of the educational system in Romania and the need for reform. Within the ET 2020 and the Thematic Working Groups, the ministry's technical experts were able to familiarise themselves with European best practices in the field, with successful working methods in place in other countries, but their influence at the political level has been limited.

The workshop discussions indicate that the effects of EU tools have also manifested in ESL policy implementation. One of the participants in the discussion has synthesised this as follows:

> *"Things did not stop in developing a strategy and Commission also asked what was happening with these strategies, who was monitoring them, whether the targets were to be achieved and if the activities are to be implemented and so on. So it happened that the Ministry [of National Education] again had to take the ownership, to set up some working groups. We have a program by which we support them, a Technical Assistance program, precisely for the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of these strategies; also it seems to me also a good idea that I don't think would have happened if the [European] Commission [leverage] did not exist, perhaps not in this form and not so steadily. As a*

	result, the Ministry [of National Education] managed to do this, to monitor and to produce a report for the first year [of ESL strategy implementation] and is going to be developed this year as well, showing how much progress has been made at the time in implementing these strategies. In my view it seems to be a very good thing that would not have happened [otherwise]."
Barriers and success factors for the implementation of the Recommendation and other EU tools	**Success factors** 1. The overall positive perception the EU has and the broad support for the European project in Romania, implicitly the influence of different EU recommendations (including the 2011 Recommendation) at the level of the public policies decision makers in Romania; 2. The cooperation between the Ministry of National Education with the World Bank and the involvement of the latter in the development of educational policies at technical level. 3. Existence of the ex-ante conditionalities mechanism that allowed the European Commission to consistently influence policy-making decision regarding the content of educational policies. 4. Running pilot-projects relevant to the ESL in order to draw some lessons learned and capitalise best practices. **Barriers** 1. Poor cooperation and coordination between relevant ministries in tackling the ESL phenomenon i.e.- Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc. - and local public authorities. School management decisions made at the level of each school depend on the relationship with local authorities (Mayor's office) that allocates the necessary resources for investment in school infrastructure; social assistance activities complementing education interventions to prevent ESL are coordinated by local public authorities (Mayoralty). 2. Weak data collection and a weak analysis system that, if improved, would allow for rapid identification of ESL risk cases and effective and to identify effective and efficient response-prevention and intervention solutions in combating ESL. 3. Poor school infrastructure (lack of well-trained human resources, insufficient education facilities at pre-school level, poor transport facilities at the disposal of schools, etc.) in the vulnerable communities reflects a poor, isolated rural environment, remote from developed urban centres and in some cases with significant Roma communities. 4. The extent of the migration phenomenon among the population of Romania accompanied by negative effects on the school attainment and attendance of the Romanian children left at home. 5. A reduced budget share allocated to education from GDP, which is insufficient to cover steady investment to reduce ESL - which

	should follow and expand the lessons learned and good practices resulting from pilot-projects.
Degree of engagement of the country in EU level activities linked to ESL and use of outputs and outcomes	During workshop discussion, the stakeholders that participated in the ET 2020 Thematic Groups indicated that the discussions focused on the future directions of education including the good practices used by other countries in dealing with ESL. It was furthermore emphasised that particular attention was paid to the recommendations the European Commission issues for different countries. It was revealed that after each ET 2020 meeting, Romanian participants developed detailed reports that were circulated within the Minister of national Education and sent to Minister for Foreign Affairs for discussion. Workshop participants stated that Romania is one of the countries that have rallied to the early warning mechanism, which also occurred as a result of the participation in the thematic working groups. The "school governance" concept which is a school management model evoked and discussed within Thematic Working Groups, inspired the understanding of the ESL related schooling process, was also evoked as an example of the work in this area. It has been confirmed that practices used at the EU level to address the ESL phenomenon - more or less relevant to the Romanian national context - have been shared during the working group meetings. As far as the ESL level in the Romanian rural area is concerned, with its peculiarities, European practices are not necessarily always relevant. As one of the experts involved in these thematic groups said: *"We make use of some practices from other countries as much as possible."* Based on available evidence, as a result of participating in ET 2020 and its Thematic Working Groups, Romanian participants seem to have increased their expertise, but this situation did not generate content at the level of educational policies or at the level of political decision-making. Discussions in these groups took place at a technical level, not at a political level, and in Romania the influence from the technical level to the political level appears to be limited in the absence of a political motivation mechanism (such as ex-ante conditionalities in the current Multiannual Financial Framework or the enabling conditions in the forthcoming one).
Degree to which the EU tools have contributed to efficiency of implementation of ESL policy	The evolution of the ESL rate has undoubtedly been a key challenge and preoccupation for educational policies in Romania, has stimulated the attention and reflection of public opinion experts and decision-makers on the ESL phenomenon, on its causes and means of effective intervention. As emphasised above, the ESL indicator does not place Romania among the top performers within the EU, but some improvement has

	been noticed after 2015 when the ESL Strategy was adopted (though no evaluations are available currently to evidence a direct relationship). Looking at things from this perspective, the influence of European mechanisms has certainly existed in terms of public policies content. EU tools ”shaped” the Romanian ESL strategy, introduced new policies practices, stimulated integrative approach of ESL in Romania. However, taking into account the slow implementation process of Romanian ESL strategy and the fact that ESL rate in Romania remained still high as compared to other European countries we could conclude that the contribution of EU tools to the efficiency of implementation of ESL policy in Romania seems to have been rather modest. Nevertheless, the influence of EU tools and the use of other countries' experience in terms of policies necessarily implies filtering and adaptation to the specific challenges of a particular socio-cultural context, and in this respect national expertise and the effectiveness of the local institutional framework are paramount. The level of local political will and of the commitment of the relevant political factors in this process does matter. These elements are prerequisites for a good impact of the EU tools on the efficiency of implementation ESL related policies.
Added value of EU ESL policy and tools in the country	In the absence of the EU ESL policy and tools, the ESL Strategy in Romania would likely not have existed (at least not in the timespan it was adopted in), resources would likely not have been allocated to combating this phenomenon to the same extent, and the ESL issue would not have penetrated the governmental agenda to the same degree as it has nowadays. The evidence collected for this study provides clear indications that EU ESL policy and tools in Romania have allowed, on the one hand, a closer coordination and coordination of the already existing ESL related measures and, on the other hand, they allowed the adoption of innovative measures at the level of ESL related relevant policies.

E. Need for future EU level support	
Key suggestions for EU support needed in the future (e.g. tools, initiatives, target groups, thematic areas)	The 2011 Recommendation has covered the ESL phenomenon in a comprehensive way and has structured the public policy approach of this phenomenon very well. Participants in the workshop emphasised that they would benefit from more concrete and tailored recommendations from the European Commission, to be adapted to the Romanian national context. There are aspects specific to the national context that would require more detail – e.g. measures aimed at reducing the rural and urban gap, respectively at targeting the situation of

	disadvantaged groups in Romania (Roma, children from families where at least one parent emigrated to work, children with disabilities, etc.). Some participants mentioned the need for greater flexibility over the funding cycle compared to the negotiated plan in the ex-ante conditionality mechanism, since new challenges may arise, or some targets may prove to be unrealistic, and thus an adjustment may be needed in the process, which is now very cumbersome. Another aspect that would require greater attention in the Commission's recommendations is that of inter-institutional cooperation between ministries with responsibilities in different areas. The ESL phenomenon needs an integrated approach, focused on the interconnected needs of the child / youth at risk of ESL. From this point of view, Romania faces a certain lack of co-operation and synchronisation between the ministries relevant when tackling ESL. Currently, it seems that the main responsibility for combating ESL is placed on the shoulders of the Ministry of National Education although a key role in the process is played or should be played by other public entities such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice (with regard socio-economic situation, relevant social assistance in the education process), the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (with regard housing and infrastructure), local public authorities (providing and deciding on the financing of investments in school infrastructure), etc. In other words, not only educational policies, but also social, health, housing, public administration, economic policies etc., are relevant to ESL.
Types of future policy instruments which would be most helpful	A problematic issue in dealing with ESL in Romania is the inter-institutional cooperation at the level of relevant ministries. It would be useful, from this point of view, for the recommended measures approaching ESL to be issued in an integrated manner (e.g. aspects related to the schooling process, issues related to the socio-economic situation of the families, issues related to the health condition, aspects related to the transport of children to school, etc.). Disaggregating recommendations on such areas of responsibility, pointing to the need for an integrated approach, would make stakeholders liable and stimulate inter-institutional cooperation at the level of each Member State in general, and in the case of Romania in particular. As we also mentioned in the previous section, a broader spectrum of policies than educational policies take into account the diversity of ESL.

	It would also be useful that the ESL indicator be refined, to allow its disaggregation by the level of education attained by those who face the ESL risk. For example, how many of those young people included in ESL group have the highest level of education according to ISCED 2011, how many have level 0 (early childhood education), how many have graduated level 1 (primary education) and how many have graduated level 2 (lower secondary education), respectively. This is important because each of these sub-groups included in ESL indicator requires a different approach in terms of the type of required support intervention, a different level of necessary resources (time, financial, human) to escape from the ESL group category. For instance, an individual who has completed at most ISCED2011 level 2 and included in the ESL target group needs fewer resources and must attend high school classes to escape the ESL group compared to a person who has graduated ISCED 2011 level 0 of education at most. It would also be useful for the ESL indicator to be disaggregated according to ethnic self-assumed identity. A characterisation of the ESL phenomenon among Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity would allow a more appropriate substantiation of policies in order to support this large target group. It would be useful also to correlate the NEETs and ESL indicators in order to see and explain any connections and consistencies between them. Finally, it would also be useful for the ESL indicator to be correlated with other relevant socio-demographic variables - such as education of the parents of a person included in the ESL target group, the family members' occupational status or cultural capital. This would allow for a more appropriate substantiation of public policies aiming at reducing this phenomenon.
Other comments	Romania has a high ESL rate i.e. over 16% for almost ten years. Knowing that the indicator only covers people aged 18-24, it is clear that this phenomenon has already significantly affected cohorts of young people who are older now. It would also be useful to look into the impact of this situation, what is happening with early school leavers now, after they have reached the age of 24. It can be helpful to investigate and correlate the ESL state of play and how to structure the education system from a VET approach or differentiated instruction perspectives. In Romania there are large groups of students who fail to keep up with the pace of teaching according to the national curriculum (due to their poor socio-economic conditions, etc.) since this curriculum has being developed to prepare young people for an academic career. These students are also at risk of early school leaving.

	Separating the VET route (with a more relaxed school curriculum) from the one dedicated to an academic career starting with the completion of ISCED 2011 level 1 could reduce the risk of early school leaving among vulnerable students. Such a perspective on the implications of the structure of education systems and cycles on ESL could be explored and valued in the future.

Study on the Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (ESL)

Country case study: Slovakia

A. Identification	
Country	Slovakia
Reasons for selection as case study	The key selection criteria for country workshops have been the different challenges concerning ESL, different progress in ESL rates and different levels of engagement in EU-related actions at the country level. Slovakia can be seen as a single structure type of education system: general education for all pupils is provided (with only limited streaming in lower secondary level) for a minimum 9 years of the country's 10 years of compulsory education. The 10th year is as a rule offered by a variety of secondary schools. Slovakia has a high rate of ESL, although it is falling. Slovakia's early school leaving strategy sits predominantly within its social inclusion policy. In comparison to other countries, the degree of influence of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools and engagement with the EU agenda on ESL were estimated to be at a relatively low in Slovakia.[568] Given the low degree of influence of the 2011 Recommendation, the country was selected as a case study to explore how EU tools can be made more relevant for the country in the future.
Date and location of country workshop	March 6, 2019, Bratislava
Organisations participating in country workshop	The Education Ministry, the Slovak Academy of Science and the State Institute of VET are the main stakeholders. The other organisations are presented in the annexed list of participants.

[568] The definitions used to classify countries are:
- High level (H) - Evidence of a direct alignment of national ESL strategies with the 2011 Recommendation, and with the corresponding measures in the EU policy framework
- Medium level (M) - General consistency in aims and approach between the 2011 Recommendation and national measures, but drawing on a wider range of influences
- Low level (L) - Little or no evidence of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policy.

B. Country context regarding ESL

Evolution of ESL rates since 2011

Early leavers from education and training by sex and NUTS 2 regions (%)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
EU28	13.9	13.4	12.7	11.9	11.2	11.0	10.7	10.6
Slovakia	4.7	5.1	5.3	6.4	6.7	6.9	7.4	9.3
Bratislava region	:	:	:	4.7	:	:	:	:
Western Slovakia	2.3	2.0	3.0	5.2	4.8	3.6	4.2	6.1
Central Slovakia	4.4	4.4	5.9	6.5	7.0	7.7	7.3	7.6
Eastern Slovakia	8.2	9.3	7.9	7.9	9.1	10.4	11.5	14.7
Slovakia - females	4.9	4.6	4.6	6.1	6.6	6.8	7.2	10.3

Source: Eurostat [edat_lfse_16], : - not available

In 2010, ESL rates in Slovakia were the lowest in the EU, at 4.7% compared to an EU average of 13.9%. This contributed to an over-optimistic decision to adopt a significantly lower 2020 national target of 6% compared to the EU target of 10%. Since then, ESL rates have been rising in Slovakia. In 2017, Slovakia ranked 18th I the EU, with a rate of 9.3% compared to the EU average of 10.6%. ESL rates are particularly high in Eastern Slovakia, at 14.7%, but increases in ESL in relation to the national target of 6% are also apparent in two other regions of the country. In addition, the ESL for females is above 10% nationally for the first time.

NUTS 2 data presented in the table above show that ESL is lowest in the west and highest in the east of Slovakia. This coincides with the fact that the share of socially disadvantaged ethnic Roma also increases from the west to the east of the country. However, in Slovakia ethnic data cannot be collected via official statistical tools.

Specific national challenges and priorities on ESL

The ESL definition set by the European Commission has been adopted in Slovakia, but no national priorities on ESL have been set, with the exception of the national target of 6%, based on the originally very low ESL figures in 2010, as shown in the table above. Nevertheless, there were early warnings from experts about ESL and ESL data in Slovakia.

For example, Net Slovakia stated in 2005: *"Although Slovakia is among the best performing countries in the EU in terms of ISCED 3 attainment and early school leaving rates (91.3 % among 20-24 year-olds and 7.1 %, respectively - Eurostat 2004), low educational attainment continues to be a problem, and in fact is becoming worse. Slovakian data do not adequately reflect the educational achievements of socially marginalised groups, such as*

	poor families living in Roma settlements - an estimated 140,000 people."[569] In Slovakia's census, individuals are free to declare their nationality, including Roma. The ethnicity of individuals is irrelevant for the census. According to the newest census, dating from 2011, 105,738 out of 5,397,036 individuals (less than 2%) declared themselves to be Roma. Other ethnic Roma declared another nationality. The most important data on attributed ethnicity (indicated by relevant community members regardless of the declared nationality of respective individuals) were collected in 1,070 municipalities, out of a total of 2,890 municipalities in Slovakia and published in the 2013 Atlas of Roma communities drawn up by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in cooperation with national authorities and experts.[570] In these municipalities that were selected as having at least 30 Roma individuals according to estimates, 402,741 ethnic Roma were identified, meaning that only 26.3% of ethnic Roma declared themselves Roma to be nationals[571] In these municipalities. 726 Roma with tertiary education were identified an additional 486 Roma were tertiary students, meaning that in total, 1,212 (0.3%) of Roma were found to have some tertiary education experience. A total of 23,234 (5.77%) Roma were identified as having completed secondary education and a further 9,310 Roma were currently in secondary schools, meaning that in total, 32,544 Roma (8.08%) had secondary education experience. By contrast, a high percentage of Roma were identified as having a low education level: 114,871 Roma had completed primary education, representing 28.52% of all Roma in Slovakia, 68,318 (16.96%) had not completed "basic school" (lower secondary education), and 20,072 (4.98%) had graduated a from special education school programmes. Thus, together 203,261 (50.46%) of Roma were identified with an education level below ISCED 3 and can be considered to have an extremely low level of education.

[569] Cedefop (2005) SLOVAKIA: A second chance for second-chance schools, Cedefop Info 3/2005, page 12, available at http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/Cinfo32005EN.pdf
[570] Mušinka, A, at al, (2013) Atlas rómskych komunít Atlas of Roma communities, available at https://www.minv.sk/?atlas_2013&subor=203148
[571] There also Roma living in other municipalities not included into the Atlas

	In fact, over half of all ethnic Roma were identified as early school leavers according to the 2013 Atlas.[572] The collection of administrative data based on ethnicity is not possible in Slovakia, and therefore ESL related educational statistics focuses on the following three categories: • Children/pupils/students from a socially disadvantaged environment (SDE) as defined by legislation (245/2008 Coll., §2p); • Inhabitants from marginalised Roma communities (MRC) that are normally living in segregated or semi-segregated settlements of a low standard of living; • Children/pupils/students from families receiving benefits and in material need (RBMN). Ethnic Roma are over-represented in the SDE category and therefore data on SDE and MRC as well as targeting policies at people from these categories is often simplified as addressing Roma. The Value for Money Division of the Ministry of Finance published in January 2019 an important study offering also ESL-related data about these categories: • In 2017/2018, 7.8% of 16-year-olds reached age 16 before entering the final class of lower secondary education and were therefore at high risk of ESL. Overall, 32.6% of children from RBMN families, 37.2% children from MRC and 40.7% from both (RBMN and MRC) were at risk of ESL; • 80.3% of 16-year-olds were in formal education in 2017/2018. However, this was the case for only 60.8% children from RBMN families, 49% from MRC and 51.7% from both (RBMN and MRC); • 31% of the population aged 19-23 were in higher education in 2017/2018. However, this was the case for only 7.5% of students from RBMN families, 4.4% from MRC and only 0.6% from both (RBMN and MRC).[573] They also found that more than a third of children from SDE dropped out of school before completing lower secondary education and that only a little more than half of children from SDE continued education after compulsory schooling.[574]

[572] Mušinka, A. (2017) Niekoľko poznámok k problematike vzdelanostnej úrovne Rómov na Slovensku na základe výsledkov Atlasu rómskych komunít na Slovensku 2013 (Some remarks on the issue of educational level of the Roma in Slovakia based on the results of Atlas of Roma communities in Slovakia in 2013), available at https://www.pulib.sk/web/kniznica/elpub/dokument/Lukac3/subor/Musinka.pdf

[573] See detailed data in Tables 11,12,13 in Hellebrandt, T. et al. (2019): Revízia výdavkov na skupiny ohrozené chudobou alebo sociálnym vylúčením. Priebežná správa (Spending review on groups at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Preliminary report). Finance Ministry, Value for money division, available at https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/14208.pdf

[574] See Pictogram of Value of Money Division at https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/14210.png

	Not surprisingly, fighting ESL has been subsumed into policies addressing Roma living in marginalised communities or addressing children from socially disadvantaged environments. This is also visible in the education reform paper[575], adopted by the government in June 2018, in which measures relevant to ESL (No 5,6,7,10,11 of its Implementation plan) target children from MRC and SDE.
Recommendations from EU level on ESL	Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) from the European Commission to Slovakia do not explicitly address ESL[576]. However, ESL is indirectly present in CSR addressing the low educational achievement of Roma. The recommendations aimed at increasing the proportion of Roma children attending early childhood education and care facilities are undoubtedly very valuable in terms of tackling ESL in Slovakia. The absence of appropriate early intervention services can be considered to be a major cause of later difficulties in the education of children suffering from unfavourable social conditions and who lag behind in cognitive, physical, social or emotional development. Although still insufficient, a gradual increase of kindergarten capacities and solid investment in new facilities can be evaluated as a positive response of the government. The provision of sufficient capacities is, however, only a first step and other obstacles preventing enrolment also need to be removed. In contrast to this, CSR concerning increasing investment in second chance education can be considered problematic. Courses

[575] Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (2018). *Národný program rozvoja výchovy a vzdelávania* [National programme for the development of education], available at http://www.minedu.sk/17786-sk/narodny-program-rozvoja-vychovy-a-vzdelavania/

[576] Relevant parts of Country specific recommendations:
2018 CSR - Improve the quality and inclusiveness of education, including by increasing the participation of Roma children in mainstream education from early childhood onwards.
2017 CR - Improve the quality of education and increase the participation of Roma in inclusive mainstream education.
2016 CSR - Improve educational outcomes by making the teaching profession more attractive and by increasing the participation of Roma children from early childhood in mainstream education.
2015 CSR - Improve teacher training and the attractiveness of teaching as a profession to stem the decline in educational outcomes. Increase the participation of Roma children in mainstream education and in high-quality early childhood education.
2014 CSR - Adopt systemic measures to improve access to high quality and inclusive pre-school and school education for marginalised communities, including Roma and take steps to increase their wider participation in vocational training and higher education.
2013 CSR - Step up efforts to improve access to high quality and inclusive pre-school and school education for marginalised communities, including Roma.
2012 CSR - Take active measures to improve access to and quality of schooling and pre-school education of vulnerable groups, including Roma. Ensure labour market reintegration of adults through activation measures and targeted employment services, second-chance education and short-cycle vocational training.

offered by secondary schools for drop outs from basic schools (offering integrated ISCED 1+2 programmes), considered a promising alternative to second chance education offered by basic schools, are questioned by State School Inspection authorities[577]. Nevertheless, provision of this kind of course by basic schools is marginal and has declined from 41 courses for 654 learners in 2013 to 9 courses for 110 learners in 2017.

In contrast to this, courses organised by secondary schools increased to 41 courses with 718 learners in 2016 from 26 courses and 579 learners in 2013 and no courses opened in 2011. Furthermore, criticism presented by Refer Net Slovakia in 2005 concerning the piloting of second chance schools remains valid. It noted that learning by doing should be strengthened at the expense of returning to the environment of traditional academic education. This is also expected from programmes in initial VET which will soon be introduced.

The substantial improvement of early childhood education and care is a crucial step for the prevention of ESL in Slovakia. However, on its own it is not sufficient to lead to a substantial decrease in ESL in the future. Systemic intervention measures able to fix weaknesses in the performance of the education system still need to be discussed as the education system in Slovakia is among European systems that is the most heavily criticised by international experts, due to the high influence of the socio-economic status of learners on their school performance.

The Partnership Agreement of the Slovak Republic for 2014 – 2020[578] tackles ESL explicitly. In part 2.2: "*Information required for ex-ante verification of compliance with additionality rules*", item 10.1, a "*strategic policy framework to reduce early school leaving*" is envisaged. It should be noted that this strategic policy framework based on evidence and covering "*relevant educational sectors including early childhood development, (that) targets in particular vulnerable groups that are most at risk of ESL including people from marginalised communities, and addresses prevention, intervention and compensation measures*" is not yet in place.

Nevertheless, the mention of prevention, intervention and compensation measures in this document clearly signals the

[577] Provision of education by qualified upper secondary teachers, but who are not specialists in respective subjects has been identified by the School Inspection as the major obstacle for not meeting prescribed lower secondary education standards by learners despite the completion of courses. The Chief School Inspector explicitly criticised these courses in the interview and called for revision of this programme.
[578] http://www.partnerskadohoda.gov.sk/data/files/108_partnership-agreement-of-the-sr-for-the-years-2014-2020_en.docx

	influence of the 2011 Recommendation. A Sectoral Information System (RIS) is now in place, and this can be seen as the requested instrument for creating a monitoring system at national, regional and local level.

C. Key national policies on ESL	
Main organisations responsible for ESL policy	No organisation can be identified as the main organisation in charge of fighting ESL, which can be justified by the fact that there is no comprehensive strategy on ESL. The Education Ministry can be seen as responsible for some ESL-related policies, in particular those preventing ESL and for the creation of a framework for intervention and compensation policies. Directors of schools are responsible for prevention and intervention measures to help individuals. Taking into account the fact that poverty and a lack of support in families are important factors for ESL, horizontal policies are important. A crucial institution that acts horizontally is the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities, which is affiliated to the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic[579], given that Roma from marginalised communities are over-represented among early school leavers. Fighting ESL is explicitly mentioned among documents of Office[580] and introducing obligatory preschool education one year prior to school enrolment[581] has been repeatedly emphasised by the Plenipotentiary as his priority. The Office of the Plenipotentiary is visible in the 2012 Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma Integration until 2020[582] and the Office presented in its 2017 Annual report [583] its activities across governmental sectors.

[579] See tasks of this Office with 32 staff people in the headquarter and additional 44 in branches spread nationwide (in Slovak) at https://www.minv.sk/?ulohy_usvrk

[580] See e.g. 2017 Annual report accepted by the government on April 24,2018, available (in Slovak) at http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=27383 and Updated Action Plans for the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma Integration until 2020 for the years 2016-2018, available (in Slovak) at https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/romovia/akcne_plany/2017/AktualizovaneAPStrategie.pdf

[581] There is already agreement on obligatory enrolment in kindergartens of children in age 5/6 with the Ministry of Education and its introduction is in the pipeline. Further expansion of obligatory preschool education in the age 4/5 is under the discussion.

[582] Original 2012 Strategy (in English) is available at www.employment.gov.sk/files/legislativa/dokumenty-zoznamy-pod/strategyoftheslovakrepublicforintegrationof-romaupto2020.pdf

[583] See http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=27383

A number of additional policies also play a role in fighting ESL and the following organisations are therefore also responsible for tackling ESL:

The Research Institute for Child Psychology and Pathopsychology (VÚDPaP, www.vudpap.sk/en) is the institution directly driven by the Ministry of Education It is focused on complex research in the area of the psychological aspects of child and youth development and research of the conditions that influence this development in order to better serve schools and staff, and in particular counsellors and psychologists dealing with children with special needs.

High quality of diagnostics and early intervention is crucial for preventing ESL, and VUDPaP has been involved in improving diagnostics of the so-called schooling maturity of children and also in the provision of tools for educational counsellors acting in schools (Komposyt, www.komposyt.sk).

VÚDPaP is also involved in preparing of a new model of governance, methodological support for the provision of counselling and prevention services as well as in setting qualification standards and minimum requirements on the number of specialists needed nationwide[584]. This is based on current dissatisfaction of schools with the level of assistance to address special needs of children.

The Methodological Pedagogical Centre (MPC, https://mpc-edu.sk/), a teacher in-service training institution with 9 branches spread over the country is expected to contribute to the training of pedagogical staff in order to help them to master challenges created by the specific needs of disadvantaged children. The training of teachers is crucial for reducing ESL, as they need specific competences to be able to cooperate with children at risk and also with their parents. The level of in-service training on offer is however still not sufficient (in volume and variability) and needs to be improved. New legislation on in-service training is being prepared, although it is not thought that this will bring wide-reaching change.

The State Institute of VET is responsible for developing VET national curricula (state educational programmes) and is also introducing systemic changes such as enriching the provision of

[584] 850 specialists are currently missing nationwide according to the estimation of the Ministry of Education based on the new model of counselling and prevention services within which school psychologist per 1000 children and special pedagogue per 250 children are considered an appropriate target.

	lower secondary VET programmes, supporting bridging from lower to secondary education VET programmes and supporting adults in the acquisition of a variety of qualifications at secondary vocational schools. Revisiting the national qualification register, and in particular enriching the provision of labour market-driven qualifications within the so-called fourth sub-framework of the Slovak Qualification Framework (https://www.kvalifikacie.sk/katalog-skkr) is a precondition for further progress.
Mechanisms for monitoring ESL	Slovakia's Sectoral Information System (RIS) has been operating since the 2017/2018 school year, offering individualised educational data that is updated monthly by schools. This could serve as a basis for the development of a monitoring system at national, regional and local level, allowing detailed analyses and targeted measures related to ESL. Ethnic data are not collected within RIS as collection of administrative data based on ethnicity is forbidden. This is due to concerns about supporting racism and discrimination by publishing ethnic data. It is, however, worth considering a change in legislation as ethnic data are already published in international surveys (e.g. United Nations Development Programme, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights) or from the above-mentioned Atlas of Roma communities. In the absence of comprehensive data, the only data available covers the categories mentioned above (MRC, SDE, RBMN).
Comprehensive strategy	There is no comprehensive strategy exclusively addressing ESL in place in Slovakia. Nevertheless, the national programme for the development of education adopted by the government in June 2018[585] indicates that inclusive education is among its priorities and its associated 2018-2027 implementation plan contains ESL-related measures (No 5,6,7,10,11) targeting MRC and SDE.
Specific measures: prevention	Although not explicitly considered as measures to prevent ESL, there are many measures aimed at improving school attendance and the school performance of children, and in particular children at risk: • Increasing capacity in kindergartens is in progress, backed by the 2016 Government manifesto;

[585] Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (2018). *Národný program rozvoja výchovy a vzdelávania* [National programme for the development of education], Measures No 5,6,7,10,11 of the Implementation plan available at http://www.minedu.sk/17786-sk/narodny-program-rozvoja-vychovy-a-vzdelavania/.

	• So called "zero grades" were introduced in 2002[586], offered before entering first grade of primary education to children at risk of failure in the first class, due to more time needed for their development; • So called "elocated branches" of secondary VET schools (i.e. affiliated, but away from the main site and situated closer to Roma settlements) are emerging, supported by the government, and action plan activities are being carried out in districts lagging behind in development[587]. These schools offer qualifications for low achievers from lower secondary education after completion of practice-oriented two-year VET programmes;[588] • A change in the financing of afternoon activities offered to children in first four years of primary education (in so-called school clubs) came in force from 2018. This offers schools more and better targeted means, in order to better serve children at risk and in need of assistance; • A change in financing stipulates that at least 50% of the contribution from the state budget offered for enrolment of children from socially disadvantaged environments must be spent on the remuneration of a specialist (teaching assistant or social pedagogue), provided there are at least 85 children from socially disadvantaged environments registered in the affected school; • Stipends (according to §149 of the Education Act 245/2009 Coll.) For upper secondary students from low-income families, (i.e. Receiving benefit in material need or having a comparably low income) aimed at helping children from poor families to achieve upper secondary education. While a positive effect has been assumed with regard to all these measures, a detailed impact analysis before implementation has not been made. Some important finding were however recently published by the Institute of Financial Policy and the State School Inspection that clearly indicate that additional interventions and/or detailed analyses are needed: • Kindergarten capacities are increasing rapidly, due to ESIF funding (11,147 new places in 2014-2020), which translates into increased enrolment of 5-year-old children, from 83% in 2018 up to maximum 96.4% in 2020. An additional 2,122 new places are however needed for 100% enrolment[589], to be

[586] Quite controversially, "zero grades" are explicitly targeting SDE children according to legislation and its completion (coded ISCED 030) is calculated as part of 10-year compulsory education.
[587] The Act on Support of the Least Developed Districts No 336/2015 Coll. backs identification of districts lagging behind development and the creation of Action plans contain goals, measures and projects to boost development. 20 districts have been identified as lagging behind and 16 of them have already developed their action plans. For more see http://www.nro.vlada.gov.sk/support-of-least-developed-districts/
[588] They can accept also early school leavers and therefore this programme can be also seen as compensation measure.
[589] Hellebrandt, T. et al. (2019): Revízia výdavkov na skupiny ohrozené chudobou alebo sociálnym vylúčením Priebežná správa (Spending review on groups at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Preliminary report). Finance Ministry, Value for money division, available at https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/14208.pdf, pages 27-28.

	introduced from 2020 according to the government agreement in November 2018[590]; • In "zero grades", MRC children and SDE children are over-represented (72% and 88% respectively)[591], but the impact of enrolment in zero grades on further school proficiency is questionable and apparently very sensitive in the area of socio-economic background. In the school year 2017/2018, 45.3% of MRC pupils, compared to 80.8% of non-MRC pupils, completed ISCED 1 education, and 15.6% of MRC pupils, compared to 62.9% of non-MRC pupils, completed ISCED 2 education- according to state school inspection data on pupils earlier enrolled in zero grades[592]; • Establishing "elocated branches" of secondary VET schools is supported by the government in particular in districts lagging behind in development, many of them are in municipalities with semi- or fully segregated Roma settlements, aiming to enable Roma children to achieve at least lower secondary vocational education. However, only 33% of VET school students successfully complete these 2-year programmes, according to the estimation of the value for money division of the finance ministry[593]; • The effects of changes in financing are questionable, as there is anecdotal evidence that children at risk leave school after the lunch break, therefore not or only briefing participating in school club activities, and numbers of assistants are still insufficient[594]; • Stipends (€36 monthly on average in 2017) for students from low-income families in upper secondary education are not competitive, compared to other income activities available after ESL: further, only 34% of students at risk of poverty or social exclusion qualified for stipends in 2017[595] Some ESL prevention aspects are also present in diverse ESF projects. Testing inclusive education and the creation of inclusive teams can be seen as first step to the mainstreaming of individualised assistance to children at risk. The most important of these projects are therefore listed later as the intervention aspect is also present and can be seen as dominant.
Specific measures: intervention	There is no overall strategy focusing on intervention measures. Identification of 'at risk' pupils, and assistance to them is left to respective schools and its pedagogical staff. In-service training courses are offered to pedagogical staff, however not in the

[590] Government resolution No 525/2018 from 20 November 2018, available at https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/17375/1

[591] Ibid, pages 30-32; furthermore 44,4% of 6 years old MRK children and 46,7% of SDE children entered zero grades suggesting the poverty causes high of insufficient maturity of enrolment in regular primary education.

[592] State School Inspection report (2019) offering findings on pupils enrolled in zero grades in 2013/14 and 2008/2009 school years available at https://www.ssiba.sk/admin/fckeditor/editor/userfiles/file/Dokumenty/SPRAVY/2019/Vyhodnotenie_0_rocnik_08_09_18_upr%281%29.pdf

[593] Hellebrandt, T. et al. (2019), page 39.

[594] 260 assistants and 78 social pedagogues were paid from SDE related funding in 2017 resulting in 1:120 staff to SDE students ratio according to Hellebrandt, T. et al. (2019, page 39.

[595] Ibid, page 41.

	variety and amount needed. The dominant part of training has been financed from ESIF, and funding from the state budget is insufficient. The service of diverse centres of counselling and prevention services is also considered insufficient, and is predominantly hampered by a lack of personnel. Some ESF projects have addressed ESL indirectly, trying to enhance the inclusion of Roma and/or other children with special needs, for example: • 2011-2015 ESF project "Education of pedagogical staff for inclusion of marginalised Roma communities (MRC1[596]); • 2013-2015 ESF project "Inclusive model of education in the pre-primary level of education system" (MRC2, http://npmrk2.mpc-edu.sk/); • 2014-2015 ESF project "Project of inclusive education" (PRINED, http://prined.mpc-edu.sk/); • 2016-2019 ESF project School open to all (ŠOV, http://npsov.mpc-edu.sk/o-nas). The stipends mentioned earlier as a preventive policy example can also play an intervention role. Learning contracts between learners and companies within dual VET can also offer a basis for interventions aimed at the completion of education and the acquisition of qualifications.
Specific measures: compensation	Second chance education opportunities in Slovakia have been partly influenced also by the 2011 Recommendation and the CSRs. This is apparent from the research activities[597] of the Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information (CVTI), and from highlighting the ESL agenda within ESIF-supported projects. Second chance education is offered to early school leavers via: • Bridging courses offering a way back to lower secondary general education and achieving ISCED 2 level of education (these are declining in number); • 2-year VET programmes offered to those who have dropped out of lower secondary general education, who if they simultaneously complete the above bridging course, can be enrolled in ISCED 353 programmes (these are increasing in number); • Selected 2-year VET programmes offering a way back to the mainstream for pupils with a mild degree of mental disability (so-called variant A programme). There have been already

[596] List of in service training programmes is available at http://npsov.mpc-edu.sk/vzdelavanie/vzdelavacie-programy/vzdelavaci-program-v-ramci-np-mrk1

[597] See e.g. Pétiová, M. (2014): Názory riaditeľov základných a stredných škôl na predčasné ukončenie povinnej školskej dochádzky (Opinions of primary and secondary school directors on the early termination of compulsory school attendance). Bratislava, CVTI, available at http://www.cvtisr.sk/buxus/docs//prevencia/texty/Nzory_riaditeov_zkladnch_a_strednch_kl_na_predasn_ukonenie_povinnej_kolskej_dochdzky_.pdf

	tested in the 2018/2019 school year in a VET school in Košice; • New programmes merging selected 2-year VET programmes and the above-mentioned bridging courses to achieve ISCED 2 level of general education together with a VET qualification that is already under preparation. Furthermore, second chance programmes for adults are supported within "Don't BE disQUALIFIED"(NedisKVALIFIKUJ SA!) – demand-driven ESF projects[598] and all low-qualified registered unemployed people are targeted by all active labour market policies containing a training component. Specific labour market policies of the public employment services target low-qualified people in districts lagging behind in development.[599]

D. Influence of the 2011 Recommendation and other EU tools on ESL	
Relevance of the Recommendation to national challenges	This headline target is relevant and Slovakia must take strong decisive actions, otherwise Slovakia's national ESL rate will rise above the target very soon. At the start of this decade, when Slovakia had the best ESL rate in the EU, national authorities underestimated the risks of this rate rising, and set a 2020 national target of 6%. Now, it is clear to all that this agenda is urgent, and that the 2011 Recommendation are very relevant for Slovakia as well. The 2011 Recommendation was insufficiently reflected by policy makers, as it was considered not relevant in the period featuring excellent ESL data in Slovakia. A strong positive has been the explicit development of a triad of policies and measures: prevention, intervention, and compensation. This is visible in the debate on ESL in Slovakia, but not in the implementation of ESL policy. In essence, the ESL agenda has been focused on reducing the ESL rate of Roma children, in particular those from marginalised communities. Although the importance of ESL policies has been reflected in the Roma initiatives and many other initiatives from the education ministry (on prevention) and the labour ministry

[598] Call for projects launched by the Ministry of Education is available at https://www.minedu.sk/21112016-vyzva-na-predkladanie-ziadosti-o-nenavratny-financny-prispevok-na-podporu-celozivotneho-vzdelavania-oplz-po12016dop141-01/, 144 projects were in progress in early 2019, some of them are directly targeting ESL.
[599] List of these districts and Action plans containing goals and measures are available at http://www.nro.vlada.gov.sk/support-of-least-developed-districts/

	(on compensation) have been supported by the ESIF, the results are disappointing so far. The validation workshop held on 6 March 2019 agreed that there was nothing missing in the 2011 Recommendation from Slovakia's point of view, but that the focus should be on learning from the 2011 Recommendation and translating policies into practice. Nevertheless, the inclusion of specific international best practice examples would be helpful, with links to relevant sources. This would help national authorities to study other experiences in order to identify relevant efficient policies. Detailed research and analyses of the reasons for ESL, divided into relevant factors of ESL and indicators of risks of future ESL were stressed as a first step in terms of the efficiency of any policy. This could also be a focus for any future Recommendation. Slovakia has seen a dramatic worsening of the ESL rate, and no clear impact of the 2011 Recommendation can be documented. As set out above, the main issue was that the Slovak authorities failed to recognise future ESL risks despite the existence of the 2011 Recommendation. The 2011 Recommendation and its supporting tools were studied, but not translated into efficient policies. No sustainable change in the education system can therefore be attributed to the 2011 Recommendation. However, Slovakia now needs to implement sustainable changes in the education and qualifications system that corresponds with 2011 Recommendation: for example, obligatory pre-primary education one year before entering primary school, approved by the government in 2018, and plans for more flexible acquisition of VET qualifications.
Commonalities between the 2011 Council Recommendation and other EU tools, and national ESL policies, practices and research	**Commonalities between the Recommendation and national policies and practices** There is no visible direct influence of the 2011 Recommendation on educational policy, practice and research in Slovakia. Favourable national ESL data led to a narrower approach, focusing on ESL in the case of Roma children or individuals from socially disadvantaged environments and this is a well-known problem signalled by schools for some years. Research and policies related to this started before 2011 and are generously supported from the ESIF in all programming periods, however still with insufficient impact.

	There are no clear commonalities between the 2011 Recommendation and national policies, practices and research, with the exception of those targeting Roma marginalised communities and individuals from socially disadvantaged environments. The 2011 Recommendation is reflected by the 2014-2020 Partnership Agreement and Roma marginalised communities are often targeted by ESIF projects. As already indicated, there are no national policies directly influenced by the 2011 Recommendation, but there are ESL projects indirectly tackling ESL. 2013-2015 ESF project " Inclusive model of education in the pre-primary level of education system" (MRK2, http://npmrk2.mpc-edu.sk/) can be seen as an example of preventive action and testing a massively applied preventive measure, with obligatory enrolment into kindergartens one year prior entering primary education from 2020/2021 school year. Thus, this is an example of a national prevention policy implemented after 2011 capitalising on earlier project experience. Access to high quality careers advice and guidance should be available from educational counsellors acting in all schools or school psychologists acting in some schools as stipulated by the Education act 245/2008 Coll. (https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2008/245/20170901). A recent amendment of this Act (June 2018) is introducing a specialised system of career guidance and counselling that should result in improved career guidance and counselling including professional dyadic counselling. Prevention coordinators (set by § 130 of the Education Act 245/2008 Coll.) are regular teacher appointed by the Director of School are responsible for prevention of drug and other social pathology and should support cooperation of school with specialists from respective institutions. Furthermore, new legislation on pedagogical and professional staff was adopted by the parliament in April 2017. Education counsellors are offered more time for their service (via slightly reduced teaching load) and by institutionalising the position of a guidance counsellor working directly in schools. That can be seen as a positive example of intervention policy backed by recently amended legislation. However, a more generous teaching load relief for education counsellors, as

advocated by Learning Slovakia[600] strategy paper and rejected by the Finance ministry, must be discussed again.

Compensation policies currently focus on traditional provision of programmes for early school leavers aimed at achieving general ISCED 2 level introduced before 2011, and on two new initiatives:

- Piloting a way back to mainstream for special school graduates with a mild degree of mental disability in one VET school from the school year 2078/2019 that should lead to qualifications valued by the labour market;
- Targeting low skilled adult via integrated learning and working in social enterprises and municipality activation work. The respective F call, elaborated within 2018 Mutual Learning Workshop Implementing Upskilling Pathways initiative, is already in the pipeline.

There are no other policies in place. It can be explained (as already commented elsewhere in more detail) by favourable ESL data in the past. A substantial change can be expected as a consequence of deterioration in ESL data that makes the need for measures more visible.

The contribution of EU associated tools to national policy and practice

There is no direct visible influence of other EU tools on educational policy, and practice. European and national headline targets have been monitored but without specific decisive action. There is also no impact from participation in Thematic Working Group activities.

The European Toolkit for Schools has been taken into consideration by the Education ministry and recommended to directors of schools via regular instruments (Pedagogical Organisational Guidelines issued by the education ministry before the start of the school year), but there is no information available about impact.

There is research that is related to ESL, However, no European influence can be documented except in the case of projects funded by the EU. For example, a Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation project "Encouraging Lifelong Learning for an Inclusive & Vibrant Europe" (ENLIVEN, https://h2020enliven.org)

[600] Ministry of Education expert group (2017). *Učiace sa Slovensko* [Learning Slovakia]. Bratislava: Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, measure 3-06.04 , page 154-155, http://www.minedu.sk/data/files/7532_uciace-sa-slovensko2017.pdf

	The 2018-2020 ESF-funded Project „Forming a Modern Adult Education Policy in Slovakia", (MOVED, http://www.ainova.sk/en/moved/), run within the Operational Programme „Effective Public Administration" by Academia Istropolitana Nova, a civic association, is inspired by the European adult learning agenda, but it is also relevant for ESL policy: two analyses and policy recommendations will be published in 2019 aimed at second chance schools, and the education of Roma from marginalised communities. The above-mentioned Horizon 2020 ENLIVEN project's most interesting finding is that unequal chances in the overall learning setup are also increasing in respect of after-school learning activities financed by parents. Children of low-skilled parents and/or low-income parents can be also disadvantaged due to a lack of support/help/advice from their parents, and a lack of financial means to access additional individual support if needed. Furthermore, better interlinking of educational and social policies and the need to allow for more multi-level actions, with targeted local actions and regional coordination, is recommended by ENLIVEN. The Erasmus+ programme considers ESL to be a priority. In 2014-2018, there were 10 KA2 projects identified by the national agency as having an ESL component, out of which three had Slovak leadership (2014-1-SK01-KA201-000436, No Enemies Violence - Equal Rights; 2017-1-SK01-KA201-035313 Work for an Inclusive School Heritage; 2018-1-SK01-KA229-046404, Learning for Life). It is not possible to assess the effectiveness of ESF ex-ante conditionality in ESL policy design due to the absence of dedicated ESL policies per se, as explained earlier. The situation may change soon as Slovakia needs a dedicated ESL strategy and policies much more urgently than earlier. In the future, explicit prevention, intervention, and compensation policies based on analyses and identification of relevant factors causing ESL or signalling risks of ESL should be required at national and subnational levels. There is no need to address the link between ESL policy and funding mechanisms differently. It is just necessary to make relevant policies a priority and to request reducing ESL based on administrative data of respective supported schools or territories. ESL data based on LFS cannot be considered relevant for achieving improvement and for

	assessing efficiency. This must relate to real (administrative) data and not only to inferential statistics data as LFS. No long-term positive results can be determined, and by contrast there has been a serious increase in the ESL rate in Slovakia. There have been no sustainable changes in the education system, perhaps partly with the exception of ESL national projects aimed at improving Roma education. These national project (e.g. MRC1, 2 and PRINED mentioned above) goals were, however, too ambitious as it is not possible to expect rapid and far-reaching change. On the other hand, it is not realistic to run projects in the future that are too complex, aimed the at development of new models without a clear mainstreaming strategy.
Barriers and success factors for the implementation of the Recommendation and other EU tools	The key barriers are as follows: • Underestimating the ESL problem by national authorities in the 'good times'; • Lacking fundamentals for evidence-based policy-making (identification of relevant underlying factors in particular) after recognition of the need to take an action; • Lacking personal capacities and means for decentralised actions in municipalities and regions (prevention and compensation) and in schools (intervention). In more detail this means the following: • Improving early childhood interventions, in particular in marginalised Roma communities, such as via community centres and local services; • Expanding pre-school education; • Hiring specialists in schools (i.e. Roma-speaking teaching assistants); • Providing alternative methodologies and learning content, in particular in ISCED 2 level; • Improving the provision of teacher and tutor in-service training related to ESL prevention and intervention practice. There are no specific success factors worth mentioning. In fact, the Recommendation per se has not been implemented.
Degree of engagement of the country in EU level activities linked to ESL and use of outputs and outcomes	Slovakia participates in the Thematic Working Group meetings and activities within the Open Method of Coordination regularly. The education ministry specialist who was involved in earlier ET 2020 working groups cycles 2011-13 Early School Leaving and 2014 -2015 Whole School Approaches, has now left the education ministry and is no longer in touch with the education community. A different education ministry expert participated in the meetings during the 2016-2018 Governance of School Education systems cycle.

	There are no visible outputs and outcomes with a direct impact on ESL, due to the reasons described above. It is too soon to assess whether resources used at the EU level have been proportional to the results achieved. There were no resources used explicitly and exclusively for ESL and it is not possible to assess the proportionality of allocation of means in the case of complex national projects. Although the impact of these projects is seen as limited so far (in terms of time and benefitting localities), future capitalising on this investment is possible. Resources could have been used more effectively. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, there were no resources used directly to tackle ESL in terms of prevention, intervention, and compensation policies. Secondly, large national projects (e. g. MRC 2 and PRINED mentioned above) were too complex and ambitious (e.g. developing a new "model") but also not complemented with a clear mainstreaming strategy. This is why the impact of these large "systemic" projects is still insufficient.
Degree to which the EU tools have contributed to efficiency of implementation of ESL policy	ET 2020 policy instruments and EU programmes have not been effective as visible in the severely deteriorating ESL statistics (see table above). It cannot be ruled out that EU tools prevented even worse results, but there are no data allowing for precise assessing this. Thus, addressing the efficiency is not possible yet. It can be however assumed low effectiveness and low efficiency. ESL data were collected on national and regional (NUTS2) level using LFS only. Now, individualised data can be collected via the Sectoral Information System (RIS) that is fully operational from the 2018/2019 school year. Dedicated research and analyses are lacking, however. EU monitoring mechanisms could in future stress more the need for a better understanding of the reasons for ESL, by identifying relevant factors and signals of future ESL, as a crucial precondition for efficiency in policy making.
Added value of EU ESL policy and tools in the country	Nothing in this specific case: at first it was a carefree attitude due to excellent ESL data, and later the government was unprepared in terms of acting locally and there was a lack of time for systemic change. A different result can be expected in the future due to the new situation concerning ESL and the urgent need for change.

E. Need for future EU level support	
Key suggestions for EU support needed	There are no missing substantial elements in the current Recommendation and there are no unnecessary elements either.

in the future (e.g. tools, initiatives, target groups, thematic areas)	The 2011 Recommendation has fulfilled its task and has placed the ESL agenda on the table appropriately. There are different reasons, set out above, that have contributed to the weak reaction of national authorities and the low impact of the Recommendation on policies in Slovakia. Nevertheless, some changes for any future Recommendation can be recommended (see below).
Types of future policy instruments which would be most helpful	New Recommendations can be useful, containing more detailed examples of successful prevention, intervention and compensation policies with reference to further studies. For example, good practice examples written by policymakers for policymakers- i.e. brief, but offering context and clearly explained details of interventions. Mutual learning workshops with 5-10 country stakeholders can be helpful, provided that a solid preparatory phase is in place to enable relevant policy learning and the identification of concrete actions to address shortcomings. A mutual learning workshop aimed at socially disadvantaged communities and techniques of early childhood intervention and on the upskilling of low-educated adults within community outreach services would be very useful. The current LFS-based headline target should be expanded to cover subnational territories and data that is disaggregated by sex, in order to reduce the risk of underestimating ESL issues and disparities.
Other comments	First, ESL severely affects disadvantaged ethnic Roma often living in low living standard settlements, many of which are situated in Eastern Slovakia. It is however important to add analyses identifying crucial factors relating to recent developments as well as factors relating to future change. Favourable national data (and ignoring unfavourable subnational data) contributed to the underestimation of future risks. Thus, it is worth holding a debate on comparing the risks of collecting ethnic administrative data on ESL and ESL relevant features and not collecting these data. Second, fighting ESL has been essentially reduced to a specific problem affecting socially disadvantaged children and in particular ethnic Roma living in poverty. ESL has been often attributed to the cultural differences of Roma and fighting ESL

has been often seen as the need to increase the school attendance of Roma.

Although an increase in ESL in Central and Eastern Slovakia coincide with an increase in the share of the Roma population in those areas, an increase in ESL is also due to other reasons. So far, no relevant data and subsequent analyses of the main reasons of ESL are available as a basis for effective policies.

Thus, the main specific national challenge in Slovakia can be formulated as follows: the country urgently needs to identify the detailed factors causing ESL. Although Roma are disproportionally affected by ESL, specific factors such as poverty, a lack of family support, undervaluing education, doubts about possible social mobility, behavioural disorders, etc. need to be studied to better understand the diversity in ESL by individual factors. Monitoring these factors at national, regional and local levels is therefore crucial if the country is to develop targeted and effective evidence-based policies.

Finally, recommendations for the Slovak authorities can be summarised as follows:

General recommendation: Better interlinking of educational and social policies, to fulfil minimum standards (in terms of wellbeing of children and pupils at risk of exclusion) necessary for a smooth entry into learning environment is crucial.

Specific recommendation, related to prevention policies: Early childhood intervention must not be focused simply on looking after children with health impairments and/or the provision of institutional preschool education one year before entering primary education. Interventions before 3 years of age should be introduced in order to eliminate obstacles to the further development of individual children (in particular those living in poverty) as soon as possible.

Specific recommendation, related to intervention policies: "Learning by doing" needs to be highlighted as an alternative to the traditional transmission pattern. There should be a variety of approaches in classes and afternoon programmes in schools as well as diversity in the learning contents offered to learners. This is crucial in order to better address the diversity of learning needs. In-service training of pedagogical staff, in order to create a suitable learning environment, including the cooperation of specialists is an important precondition for this.

Specific recommendation, related to compensation policies: Introducing outreach policies (currently missing in Slovakia due to insufficient institutional support) and learning for low-skilled individuals, in parallel to work in social enterprises (currently backed by the 2018 new legislation[601]) is crucial, in order to identify people at risk who are not registered and served by labour offices and for the creation of a meaningful learning environment.

These examples highlight the fact that crucial change is needed at the national level in Slovakia, and this could also be a signal for possible priority policies on the European level.

[601] Act No 112/2018 Coll on social economy and social enterprises, available at https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2018/112/

Study on the Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (ESL)

Country case study: Spain (Catalonia)

A. Identification	
Country	Catalonia, Spain[602]
Reasons for selection as case study	The key selection criteria for country workshops have been the different challenges concerning ESL, different progress in ESL rates and different levels of engagement in EU-related actions at the country level. Spain has a common core curriculum provision. This means that after successful completion of primary education, all students progress to a lower secondary level where they follow the same general curriculum.[603] With a high rate of ESL, above the EU average, Spain has experienced a considerable success in reducing its ESL rate. Early School Leaving is high on the political agenda in Spain, with a strong focus on implementing prevention and compensation measures. Despite relatively limited evidence of the influence of the Recommendation, the alignment of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early school leaving with national policies and guidelines to reduce ESL is substantial at the national and regional level. However, the challenging economic context in Spain has hampered efforts to implement the necessary measures to continue reducing ESL and reaching the national target. In comparison with other countries, the degree of influence of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools, and engagement with the EU agenda were estimated to be at a relatively medium level.[604]

[602] Given the decentralised education policies in Spain, the research focused on the case of Catalonia, which was selected on account of its improvement in reducing its ESL since 2011 and the definition of prevention, intervention and compensation measures that mirror those recommended by the Council of Europe.

[603] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2014a) The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: schematic diagrams. Available online: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/education_structures_EN.pdf

[604] The definitions used to classify countries are:

- High level (H) - Evidence of a direct alignment of national ESL strategies with the 2011 Recommendation, and with the corresponding measures in the EU policy framework
- Medium level (M) - General consistency in aims and approach between the 2011 Recommendation and national measures, but drawing on a wider range of influences
- Low level (L) - Little or no evidence of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policy.

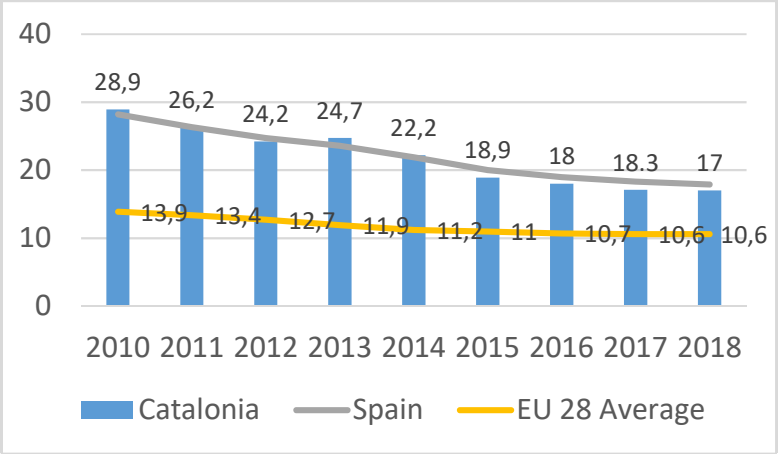
Date and location of country workshop	14 March, Representation of the European Commission in Barcelona
Organisations participating in country workshop	• Indicators and Statistics, Technical Cabinet • Department for Education • Deputy Director General of Organization, Knowledge and • School success services and new opportunities in the DG for Innovation, Research and Digital Culture • Federation for movements of pedagogical renewal • Member of the Education Council of Catalunya • Escola de Segona Oportunitat El Llindar • Escola Nova 21 • Autonomous University of Barcelona

B. Country context regarding ESL

Evolution of ESL rates since 2011

According to Eurostat[605] and the National Statistics Institute (INE), Early school leaving (ESL) rates have significantly decreased in Spain since 2010. However, according to the latest available data, in 2018 the ESL rates in Spain (17.9%) and in Catalonia (17.0%) remain considerably higher compared to the EU average (10.6%).[606] The national average ESL rate (17.9%) is also high compared to the 15% national target set for Spain in the ET 2020 strategy. In Catalonia, the ESL rates have followed a similar trajectory to that in Spain (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Evolution of ESL rates in Catalonia, Spain and EU28



[605] Eurostat (2016). Early leavers from education and training by sex and country of birth edat_lfse_02. Available at: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_02&lang=en

[606] Instituto Nacional de Estadistica (2018) Abandono temprano de la educación-formación por comunidad autónoma, sexo y periodo. Available at: http://estadisticas.mecd.gob.es/EducaJaxiPx/Datos.htm?path=/Formacionyml/EPA2018/Indi//l0/&file=Indi01.px&type=pcaxis

Source: Idescat[607]

Prior to the economic crisis in 2007, it was common for early school leavers to go into employment in the construction and tourism sectors, which required considerable large numbers low-skilled labour. However, after the economic crisis, with the reduction of employment and the slow-down in hiring, many low-skilled early school leavers ended up unemployed. Moreover, the lack of compensation measures hindered them from re-entering education. Given the fact that ESL affects different groups differently and young people at risk are more susceptible to leaving education, and more at risk of losing employment, ESL has implications for persistent inequality.

In Spain, this is reflected through a **regional disparity.** Within Spain, some regions face more challenges than others in reducing their ESL rates, specifically provinces in the south of Spain have historically had higher ESL rates and their decrease is slower than in the rest of the country.

Moreover, there is a significant difference between the ESL rates for different groups of students (males and females, native and non-native), as the ESL rates amongst males and students with a foreign country of origin is considerably higher, both in Spain and in Catalonia:[608]

- **Gender imbalance:** male students are more likely to abandon education than female ones. Research demonstrates that the reason behind this trend is that males who abandon education are more likely to find employment than females are. Hence, this assurance of employment provides an incentive to males to leave, although this may not be the case anymore in recent years;[609]
- **Differences in origin:** Dropping out from school at an early stage is more likely for students with a foreign background. The literature demonstrates that the main reason is the linguistic difficulties that pupils of immigrant origin experience. Specifically, ESL rates amongst Roma people are much higher than the average although efforts have been made at the regional level to limit this trend.[610]

[607] Idescat (not dated) Abandonament escolar prematur. Available at: https://www.idescat.cat/indicadors/?id=ue&n=10101

[608] Diputacio de Barcelona (2018) L'abandonament escolar prematur no afecta a tothom igual. Available at: https://www.diba.cat/web/educacio/-/l-abandonament-escolar-prematur-aep-no-afecta-a-tothom-per-igual

[609] Felgueroso F., Gutierrez-Domenech, M. and Jimenez-Martin, S. (2013) ¿Por qué el abandono escolar se ha mantenido tan elevado en España en las últimas dos décadas? El papel de la Ley de Educación (LOGSE). Fundación de Estudios de Economia Aplicada. Colección Estudios Económicos 02-2013. Available: http://www.fedea.net/documentos/pubs/ee/2013/02-2013.pdf

[610] Interview with stakeholder in Spain (June 2018)

Figure 2: ESL national rates per target group

Category	2011 ESL national rate	2018 ESL national rate	2018 ESK regional (CAT)	2018 ESL EU average rate
ESL (18-24 years old)	26.3%	17.9%	17.0%	10.6%
Female (18-24 years old)	21.5%	14.4%	12.5%	8.9%
Male (18-24 years old)	31%	21.7%	21.5%	12.2%
Foreign country of origin	41.1%	32.0%	NA	20.2%
Employed (18-24 years old)	11.3%	8.4%	NA	4.9%
Unemployed (18-24 years old)	15.1%	9.5%		5.6%

Source: Eurostat (2018), edat_lfse_02 and EducaBase from INE

The reasons driving school dropout could be categorised in two large groups. First, **individual and family characteristics** such as being older than the rest of the students, or repeating a grade[611] as well as parents' educational achievements and family income. Second, certain **environmental factors**, which could also drive ESL: these include quality of education, and the employment opportunities after leaving education. [612]

Specific national challenges and priorities on ESL

As a result of the **demographic differences** of early school leavers and the resulting inequalities and risk of poverty, a key challenge is the ESL effect on the composition of the labour market preventing young people from certain societal groups from accessing quality jobs. Moreover, consulted stakeholders highlighted that graduating from school does not necessarily mean acquiring the necessary competences to succeed in school.

Some stakeholders argued that in schools with limited resources it is often easier to allow students at risk of ESL to graduate despite not having acquired the necessary competences that keeping them in the schooling system repeating the last grade. Hence, they are given a diploma in lower secondary and allowed to graduate despite not having passed the year.

[611] EUROPEAN COMMISSION/EACEA/EURYDICE/CEDEFOP (2014). Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures. Available: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/175EN.pdf

[612] Serrano Martinez, L. and Soler Guillen, A. (2015) La formación y el empleo de los jóvenes españoles. Trayectoria reciente y escenarios futuros. Fundación BBVA. Informe 2015. Economía y Sociedad. Available: https://www.fbbva.es/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/dat/DE_2015_formacion_y_empleo.pdf

	In addition to this, the consulted stakeholders highlighted the key challenge in designing policies that help prevent and reduce ESL is the **lack of economic resources**. In Catalonia, for instance, the regional government has agreed on the need for investment in education of 6% of the region's GDP. However, the regional government is currently investing only 3.6% of the region's GDP. As a result, stakeholders working in education do not consider that it is "*early school leavers abandoning their studies, but rather the system abandoning them not providing enough options to keep them in the education system*". Consulted stakeholders also added that is often up to teachers to make a difference, without any additional financial resources to implement the necessary changes. Taking into account the very high youth unemployment rates, keeping youth in education and ensuring their preparation for the labour market is considered a main **priority**. In order to do this, it is essential to develop a **comprehensive strategy** that takes on a **holistic approach** to understanding early school leavers motivations, with a strong emphasis on **prevention** measures that include **support systems** and an **early warning system** from primary school education. In addition to this, providing more financial resources to fund **compensation** measures to allow those who have dropped out of education to re-enter is seen as another key aspect of this comprehensive strategy. Nevertheless, stakeholders considered that many of these policy measures had already been designed but had not been implemented yet due to the **lack of human and economic resources.**
Recommendations from EU level on ESL	Spain has received a number of specific recommendations from the EU level on the need to tackle ESL. You can find a list below, listed chronologically: • **2012**: a Country Specific Recommendation, issued by the Council, highlighted the need to "*reinforce efforts to reduce early school-leaving and increase participation in vocational education and training through prevention, intervention and compensation measures*."[613] • **2014**: Council recommended to "*effectively implement the new educational schemes to increase the quality of primary*

[613] Council of the European Union (2012). Country Specific Recommendations- Spain. Council Recommendation on the 2012 National Reform Programme of Spain and delivering a Council opinion on the 2012 Stability Programme of Spain. Available: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52012DC0310

	and secondary education" and "enhance guidance and support for groups at risk of early school leaving."[614] • **2017**: Council recommended to "*address regional disparities in educational outcomes, notably by strengthening teachers' training and individual students' support*".[615] • **2018**: Council recommended to "*Reduce early school leaving and regional disparities in educational outcomes, in particular by better supporting students and teachers* and the 2019 recently published: *Reduce early school leaving and improve educational outcomes, taking into account regional disparities.*""[616]

C. Key national policies on ESL	
Main organisations responsible for ESL policy	The **Ministry of Education** is responsible for designing national education acts that will provide high level policy guidelines to all regional governments. The latest Education Act is the Organic Law for the Improvement of Quality of Education (LOMCE) which, since 2013, aims to limit and reduce ESL. The Ministry coordinates with **regional authorities** and **social stakeholders** for its implementation. In **Catalonia**, the main governmental organisations responsible for designing the regional ESL policy framework and implementing it is the Department for Education. This Department can develop its own educational policies within the framework set by the Spanish legislation. The Department is responsible for devising plans and programmes to be implemented within schools as well as designing the curriculum. The process is done in consultation with municipalities who have better understanding of their local contexts and can provide examples of good practices and guidance from their experience in working closely with schools within the municipality.[617] It is worth noting that Catalonia has a very strong civil society network and multiple civil society organisations with focus on the education field. These include foundations, associations, unions

[614] Council of the European Union (2014). Country Specific Recommendations- Spain. Council Recommendation on the 2014 National Reform Programme of Spain and delivering a Council opinion on the 2014 Stability Programme of Spain. Available: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52014DC0410

[615] Council of the European Union (2017). Country Specific Recommendations- Spain. Council Recommendation on the 2017 National Reform Programme of Spain and delivering a Council opinion on the 2017 Stability Programme of Spain. Available: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-specific-recommendations-commission-recommendations_-_spain_0.pdf

[616]Council of the European Union (2018). Country Specific Recommendations- Spain. Council Recommendation on the 2018 National Reform Programme of Spain and delivering a Council opinion on the 2018 Stability Programme of Spain. Available: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0910(08)&from=EN

[617] Albaiges, B. (2013) Descentralització de la política educativa: consolidació, debilitats i crisi. Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona: Fundació Carles Pi i Sunyer d'Estudis Autonòmics i Locals: Fundació Jaume Bofill. Available at: https://www1.diba.cat/uliep/pdf/52940.pdf

	and independent schools that are often involved in implementing the guidelines provided by the government.
Mechanisms for monitoring ESL	Spain does not have a single, coordinated and dedicated ESL tracking and monitoring system. However, it has a number of reliable sources for data collection on ESL by the Institute for Evaluation at the Ministry of Education. The Institute for Evaluation Sub-Directorate General for Statistics and Studies in the Ministry of Education collects data on absenteeism and dropouts in coordination with the National Statistics Institute (INE) and regional statistics institutes. Results based on the collected data can be found in the following three different reports:[618] • 'Facts and Figures' (Datos y cifras): annual report published by the Sub-Directorate General for Statistics and Studies[619]; • 'Data on Education in Spain' (Las cifras de la educación en España): produced by the Sub-Directorate General for Statistics and Studies. It includes data on students' enrolment rate[620]; • 'State system of education indicators' (Sistema estatal de indicadores de la educación): is published by the National Institute for Educational Assessment (INEE) and includes an indicator on early school leavers[621]. Additionally, the National Statistics Institute also collects data on ESL rates in accordance with Eurostat and education indicators for the ET 2020 Strategy. The data is collected in accordance with European definition for ESL, which makes the Spanish results comparable with those from the rest of the EU. The data is collected by each autonomous community and then presented disaggregated by autonomous region, collected each trimester and published annually at national level. Data on factors concerning individual characteristics which influence ESL is provided through different country-wide surveys:[622]

[618] EUROPEAN COMMISSION/EACEA/EURYDICE/CEDEFOP (2014). Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures. Available: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/175EN.pdf

[619] Ministerio de Educacion y Deporte (2019) Datos y cifras. Available at: http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano-mecd/estadisticas/educacion/indicadores-publicaciones-sintesis/datos-cifras.html

[620] Ministerio de Educacion y Deporte (not dated) Las cifras de la educación en Espana. Available at: http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano-mecd/estadisticas/educacion/indicadores-publicaciones-sintesis/cifras-educacion-espana.html

[621] Ministerio de Educacion y Deporte (not dated) Sistea Estatal de Indicatores de la Educacion. Available at: http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano-mecd/estadisticas/educacion/indicadores-publicaciones-sintesis/sistema-estatal-indicadores.html

[622] Serrano Martinez, L., Soler Guillen, A. and Hernandez, L. (2013) El abandono educativo temprano: análisis del caso español. Instituto Valenciano de Investigaciones Economicas (IVIE). Available:

- Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA) (survey conducted by INE): measures family income;
- Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida (ECV) (survey conducted by INE): measures parents' level of education.

Another yearly study on the state of the education sector (produced by the Ministry of Education) helps to provide insights into the quality and characteristics of the education system. However, it does not explicitly analyse the relationship with ESL.[623]

Finally, Spanish schools also use the yearly assessments to track the impact of short and long-term administrative and pedagogical adjustment on school and student performance. These are then used by the Evaluations Institute to provide guidance to the Ministry of Education.

According to the interviewees, implementation of any policy changes as a result of the data collected through the abovementioned monitoring tools is limited, as the central government has little impact on what is implemented at the regional level in Spain. Instead, the monitoring which each autonomous region does may have a further impact. However, this depends how the how much each region prioritises ESL.[624]

In Catalonia, the agency responsible for collecting data and monitoring ESL is the Regional Statistics Institute (Institut d'Estadistica de Catalunya) together with the Department from Education. They collect the information at the school and municipal level, and report back to the Ministry of Education. The Regional Statistics Institute publishes the progress of Catalonia and Spain against the ET 2020 Strategy on their website.

The key challenge in terms of monitoring is the lack of information on the pathways of those students who drop out from school. Catalonia is currently developing a unique identifier for ESL that will allow policy makers to understand what happens to students once they leave compulsory education. Although the follow-up system is still imperfect, as it does not include all educational pathways, the Department will be able to follow students participating in upper secondary education and several pathways within VET, as well as knowing when students drop out.

https://www.mecd.gob.es/dctm/inee/documentos-de-trabajo/abandono-educativo-temprano-2.pdf?documentId=0901e72b818e38f4

[623] MECD. Consejo Escolar del Estado (2017) Informe 2017 sobre el estado del Sistema educativo. Available: http://ntic.educacion.es/cee/informe2017/i17cee_informe.pdf

[624] Interview with stakeholder in Spain (June 2018)

	This measure is intended to provide longitudinal data following students from their entrance at the education system (at age 3) until they join the labour market.[625]
Comprehensive strategy	Spain does not have a comprehensive national strategy to tackle ESL. However, ESL is set it out as one of the main objectives in the LOMCE, the latest **education act from 2013**[626]. The education act, aims to increase the percentage of students completing upper secondary education and obtaining initial and intermediate vocational training diplomas. It intends to achieve these aims by making educational pathways more flexible and vocational education more attractive. Although LOMCE (2013) acknowledges the seriousness of the ESL problem in Spain, its sole focus is not ESL. The LOMCE does not organise the policy changes into prevention, intervention or compensation measures, but rather across education levels. Since the education reform, Furthermore, another tool at national level aimed at decreasing the ESL rates is the **Plan to reduce early school leaving (2008),** published by the Ministry of Education. This plan sets out a number of recommendations to be followed by national and regional authorities to tackle early school leaving. It highlights that prevention measures respond to the need to encourage the interest of the population registered for learning and training, as well as ensuring their permanence in training activities.[627] However, the Plan was produced with the aim to provide guidelines to regional governments, with no additional funding attached to it. In Catalonia, the regional government developed a separate strategy to reduce ESL, namely **Plan to reduce school failure in Catalonia (2012) for the period between 2012 to 2018.**[628] It aims to halve school failure (meaning students dropping out from either lower secondary, upper secondary or VET) over a period of eight years, focusing on nine axes: 1) Professionalisation of teaching; 2) Personalised school support;

[625] Departament d'educacio (not dated) Itineraris Educatious. Available at: http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/ca/departament/estadistiques/itineraris-educatius/

[626] Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (LOMCE), published on the Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE) the 10th of December of 2013. Available at: *www.caib.es/govern/rest/arxiu/1838835*

[627] Resolución de 28 de diciembre de 2011, de la Dirección General de Evaluación y Cooperación Territorial, por la que se publica el Convenio de colaboración con la Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña, para la reducción del abandono temprano de la educación y la formación, en el año 2011. Available at: http://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2012/02/13/pdfs/BOE-A-2012-2180.pdf

[628] Generalitat de Catalunya (2012) Ofensiva de país a favor de l'exit escolar. Pla per a la reduccio del fracas escolar a Catalunya (2012-2018). Available at: http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/departament/publicacions/monografies/ofensiva-exit-escolar/ofensiva_exit_escolar.pdf

	3) Impulse of reading; 4) Methodological and didactic innovation in classrooms; 5) Autonomy of schools; 6) Professionalisation of school management; 7) Involvement and commitment of the family in the school life; 8) Improving the relationships between schools and communities; 9) Absenteeism and abandonment of school.[629] However, despite the plan including clear prevention, intervention and compensation measures, the consulted stakeholders highlighted that many measures in the plan have not been implemented due to lack of resources. Moreover, when they have been implemented, this has been done in an uneven way cross schools depending on their available resources. An additional disadvantage of the Plan is the fact that it does not include organisations which provide solutions to prevent and reduce ESL outside the formal education system. Catalonia has also devised and implemented a specific **Strategy to integrate Roma people (2014).** This Strategy includes measures to prevent ESL, such as allowing primary schools to open secondary school classes within the same centres in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in order to prevent children having to change schools and increasing the risk of dropout. Additionally, it includes a measure to incentivise 'second chance education' for parents to increase the level of the education in the family in order to enhance the understanding of the importance of education.[630]
Specific measures: prevention	Since 2011, measures attempting to prevent and limit ESL rates have increased. The **LOMCE (2013)** puts an emphasis on providing more **flexibility to students**, adapting curricula and providing different classrooms for those students with more difficulties to follow mainstream classes, regardless of the reason (low education attainment, lack of fluency in the language of instruction, learning disabilities, etc.). LOMCE attempts to support multilingual teaching and learning by allowing schools to hire **linguistic experts** as teachers to cover the linguistic needs of foreign students. Additionally, LOMCE implements active measures to support **parental involvement** in school life by viewing parents as key actors supporting the educational achievements of their children. [631]

[629] Generalitat de Catalunya (2012) Ofensiva de país a favor de l'exit escolar. Pla per a la reduccio del fracas escolar a Catalunya (2012-2018). Available at: http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/departament/publicacions/monografies/ofensiva-exit-escolar/ofensiva_exit_escolar.pdf

[630] Interview with stakeholder in Spain (June 2018)

[631] MECD (2014) La participación de las familias en la educación escolar. Available at: https://www.mecd.gob.es/dam/jcr:8c2e037a-8673-4911-8594-d7aa12214d87/estudioparticipacion-pdf.pdf

	In Catalonia, the **Plan to reduce school failure in Catalonia (2012)** includes measures such as identifying students at risk and providing individualised support; improving cooperation between stakeholders working on ESL, networking with parents, multilingualism, and curriculum simplification by broadening of the curriculum and limiting the different number of study choices and study paths in order to make sure everyone develops the same skills.[632] Some of the key areas highlighted as priorities have been implemented, while others have not. and, in practice, the prioritisation has been up to individual schools to decide and to implement what they saw fit and had the resources available.[633] Moreover, the **Curricular Diversification Programmes** (known as 'open classrooms' in Catalonia) have the objective of favouring students who need it, the achievement of the competences and the objectives established in the second cycle of the compulsory secondary education. Specifically, the organisation of the curriculum and the education contents is different from the one established in general classrooms, thus, adapting the curriculum to the needs of the students.
Specific measures: intervention	In **2015** the Spanish national government developed a strategic **Plan for coexistence in schools** (Plan para la Convivencia Escolar, 2015) which, despite not specifically directed to reduce ESL, has an instrumental role **in improving school environments**, by preventing bullying, violence and abuse, which can also help prevent ESL.[634] This Plan was also implemented in Catalonia in 2017,[635] ensuring the involvement of all relevant actors in the field of education. In addition, at national level, the **Plan to reduce early school leaving (2008)** developed by the Spanish government includes several intervention measures. It has a key focus on competences such as **multilingualism and digital learning**. It also puts a strong emphasis on identification of early school

[632] Generalitat de Catalunya (2012) Ofensiva de país a favor de l'exit escolar. Pla per a la reduccio del fracas escolar a Catalunya (2012-2018). Available at: http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/departament/publicacions/monografies/ofensiva-exit-escolar/ofensiva_exit_escolar.pdf

[633] The Department for education provides infographics summarising the key achievements here.

[634] MECD (2015) Plan de Convivencia. Available at: https://www.mecd.gob.es/educacion/mc/convivencia-escolar/plan-de-convivencia.html

[635] Departament d'Ensenyament (2017) Projecte de coexistencia. Available at: http://educacio.gencat.cat/portal/page/portal/Educacio/PCentrePrivat/PCPInici/PCPProjectesEducatius/PCPProjecteConvivencia

	leavers and having an **early warning system** that allows the provision of proper guidance to those at risk.[636] The Spanish Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Government of Catalonia developed a series of cooperation plans and programs to combat school failure[637] under the previous Education Act (LOE 2006). School failure includes leaving education early, dropping out of lower secondary education or VET. For instance, the **PROA Plan** (**guidance and support programs**) aims to meet the needs related to the sociocultural environment of the student through development of three specific programs of support in schools: • School support program in primary schools; • Support and reinforcement program for secondary education;[638] • School support program in high schools. More recently, in 2018, Spain providd additional funds for a territorial cooperation programme called Orientation and Reinforcement for the Progress and Support in Education (previously called PROEDUCAR) to promote coordination between the central government and regional governments on matters relating to students at risk of leaving education early to provide better support.[639] Fifty percent of the funding comes from ESF funding and the other half is provided by the Ministry of Education. Finally, also with support from the European Social Fund and through the 2018 budget, Spain also approved the funding of new measures to promote the training and mobility of teachers in VET.[640]
Specific measures: compensation	In Spain, the focus on compensation measures has increased since **2008** after the presentation of the **Plan to reduce ESL (2008)**. The Plan introduced personal tutors to inform, advice, and stimulate early school leavers on how to get back to formal education and are present in primary schools and secondary

[636] MECD (2008) Plan para la reducción del abandono educativo temprano. Available: https://www.mecd.gob.es/dms/mecd/educacion-mecd/areas-educacion/sistema-educativo/estudios-sistemas-educativos/espanol/especificos/estrategia-competencias-ocde/documentacion/Plan-para-la-reducci-n-del-abandono-eductivo-temprano.pdf

[637] CTESC (2011) Informe sobre el risc de fracas escolar a Catalunya. Page 40. Available at: http://www.barcelonesjove.net/sites/default/files/filelibrary/Frac%C3%A0s%20escolar.pdf

[638] CTESC (2011) Informe sobre el risc de fracas escolar a Catalunya. Available at: http://www.barcelonesjove.net/sites/default/files/filelibrary/Frac%C3%A0s%20escolar.pdf

[639] MECD (07/12/2018) El Gobierno aprueba más de 200 millones de euros en programas de cooperación territorial educativos con las comunidades autónomas. Available at: http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/prensa/actualidad/2018/12/20181207-programas.html

[640] Eurydice (2019) Reformas en Educación Primaria y Secundaria. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-reforms-school-education-70_es

	schools to work with students. Second chance education committees are also established to manage available spots in secondary education for adults out of education.[641] The lack of recognition of diplomas of basic vocational education and the transferability of skills did not make second chance education attractive to early school leavers. Additionally, the **Strategy for Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment (2013),** provides financial aid for early school leavers to return to formal education and get a lower secondary education certificate. The **Strategy for Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment** is implemented in Catalonia through the **Young People for Employment** programme, which is aimed at young people aged between 16 and 25 who have not obtained their lower secondary education diplomas or those who despite having obtained such have not continued studying. The main objectives of this programme are the educational reintegration of these young people and equipping them with skills necessary for finding employment. The process combines personalised orientation, guidance and support on training and gaining work experience.[642] Regional administrations across Spain have implemented measures to offer second opportunities to students who had abandoned their studies. Second chance VET programmes have also been developed as **new formal VET pathways** for adults, opening up new VET pathway for people who had been previously excluded from VET due to lack of compulsory education qualifications. The LOMCE changed the organisation of **second chance education** in 2014 and made it more flexible and easier for early school leavers without any qualifications to access VET. As a result of that change students are awarded a recognised basic VET diploma. Recognition is an advantage. However, many programmes that did not fit the new requirements for the curriculum stopped being recognised, reducing the offer for VET students. The name of the education level achieved has changed from **PCPI to FPB** and provides different educational and labour

[641] MECD (2008) Plan para la reducción del abandono educativo temprano. Available: https://www.mecd.gob.es/dms/mecd/educacion-mecd/areas-educacion/sistema-educativo/estudios-sistemas-educativos/espanol/especificos/estrategia-competencias-ocde/documentacion/Plan-para-la-reducci-n-del-abandono-eductivo-temprano.pdf

[642] Ajuntament de Barcelona (2015). Programa Joves per l'ocupació.

	pathways to different profiles of early school leavers, depending on their educational background and age.[643] **Second chance education** has also become a strong priority since 2008, given the increase in youth unemployment rates. The development of the **E2O network (Second Chance Education Network)** across Spain, which includes Catalonia as a participating region, has aided second chance education being high on the agenda. The network aims to develop a system of schools that provide second education and advocates for the recognition of their diplomas.[644] The network has a list of prerequisites[645] that organisations and schools need to comply with before becoming a member of the network that match and have been influenced by the 2011 Recommendation, which helped inform the understanding of what quality second chance education means.[646]

D. Influence of the 2011 Recommendation and other EU tools on ESL	
Relevance of the Recommendation to national challenges	The measures included in the 2011 Council Recommendation are still considered **very relevant** to the context in Catalonia. However, many of the consulted stakeholders only became familiar with the Recommendation in the context of this study.[647] Despite the already existing strategies and plans aiming to implement many of these measures, the **lack of a comprehensive strategy** that adapts the Recommendation measures to the national context, and which takes into consideration the regional differences, shows that ESL is an ongoing challenge and that more work is needed to transform strategies and plans into measures that are implemented systematically. Some of the **key points** from the Recommendation that the consulted stakeholders highlighted as relevant to the Catalan context are: • The need for an improved **monitoring system** that allows to develop an early warning system;

[643] Olmos-Rueda, P. and Mas-Torelló, O. (2017). Perspectiva de tutores y de empresas sobre el desarrollo de las competencias básicas de empleabilidad en el marco de los programas de formación profesional básica. Educar 2017, vol. 53/2. Pages: 261-284. Available: http://www.redalyc.org/html/3421/342151828003/index.html

[644] Escuelas de Segunda Oportunidad (E2O). Available at: www.e2oespana.org

[645] Escuelas de Segunda Oportunidad (E2O) (2018) Proceso de Adhesion como socio candidato E2O. Available at: http://www.e2oespana.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Acreditacion-E2O_Aprobada_180417.pdf

[646] Interview with stakeholder in Spain (June 2018)

[647] Supported by participants in the workshop and interviewees in the country desk research phase

	• The need to strengthen **prevention measures** to avoid those at risk from leaving education; • The emphasis on **compensation measures** as a way of getting students back into education. Although the consulted stakeholders considered that it is the responsibility of each Member State to **identify their own priorities** depending on the specific context, they also considered that the Council and the European Commission could have provided **more steer** in identifying key priorities in different national context and highlighting evidence of good practices.[648]
Commonalities between the 2011 Council Recommendation and other EU tools, and national ESL policies, practices and research	Consulted stakeholders consider that the 2011 Council Recommendation has influenced national policy, particularly in terms of emphasising the importance of tracking ESL rates and implementing measures to reduce it by **putting ESL on the agenda** and providing a general policy framework at national level. However, these considerations were limited to stakeholders in government, as other education stakeholders were unware of the existence of the 2011 Recommendation or had limited knowledge of it.[649] This influence and the resulting commonalities in policy frameworks are mainly reflected '**on paper'** and have rarely had enough resources to be implemented systematically in Catalonia. As a result, the policy frameworks may have been influenced, but that this has not resulted in the implementation of a comprehensive strategy. Three key commonalities between key policies in Catalonia (that have been fully implemented) and the 2011 Council Recommendation were identified: 1. One of the prevention measures implemented in Catalonia, and considered by the consulted stakeholders as key in ensuring that students with a profile considered at risk of dropping out remain in education, is **quality ECEC**.[650] The support system and quality of pre-primary and primary education is seen as essential in preventing early school leaving. The involvement of primary school teachers and counsellors in designing measures to prevent ESL demonstrates a **holistic approach** to tackling ESL.[651] 2. In terms of intervention, Catalonia has a longstanding tradition of **local governance arrangements to support**

[648] Supported by participants in the workshop
[649] Supported by participants in the workshop, the desk review and consultations with interviewees
[650] This is reflected in the Recommendation under prevention policies, measure 1.
[651] FEDAIA (2012) Informe FEDAIA: Fracas escolar a Catalunya. Page 6. Available at: http://xarxanet.org/sites/default/files/informefracasescolarfedaia.pdf

learners at risk of dropping out through the work of civil society organisations and school clusters.[652] [653] Despite these often working outside of the formal governance structures, they play a significant societal role. For instance, networks of school, youth associations and community-focused extra-curricular activities are essential to the Catalan schooling system and often provide alternatives for students at risk who struggle in mainstream education. Some examples of this include Escola21 and El Llindar, both second chance education schools that provide alternative pathways for students.

3. Catalonia's Plan to **reduce ESL among the Roma population (2014)** also has included some elements from the 2011 Council Recommendation.[654] This Plan includes measures to prevent ESL, such as allowing primary schools to open secondary school classes within the same centre in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in order to prevent children having to change schools, which increases the risk of dropout. Additionally, it includes a measure to incentivise 'second chance education' for parents to increase family education and enhance the family understanding of the importance of education.[655]

Other commonalities were identified in terms of priorities for change and the Recommendation.[656] These include:

1. **Better and continuous training for teachers** to help address the challenges related to early school leaving and students at risk.
2. Increase the **flexibility and recognition of the curriculum** to develop more flexible pathways to education (including formal and non-formal education). Some of the consulted stakeholders in Catalonia highlighted that they see a key need for improvement in that area, however the national legal framework limits the possible actions that the regional government can take in it.
3. Improved **support and professional orientation** for all students, integrated into school practices and values. Such practices should take into consideration the historical and societal local context.
4. **Better links with the community** in order to involve good role models in the education environment who can help inspire and support students, as well as assist teachers.

The impact of **other EU tools** in Catalonia is very limited. The consulted stakeholders working on educational policy were rarely

[652] CTESC (2011) Informe sobre el risc de fracas escolar a Catalunya. Page 40. Available at: http://www.barcelonesjove.net/sites/default/files/filelibrary/Frac%C3%A0s%20escolar.pdf

[653] This is reflected in the recommendation under intervention policies, measure 1.

[654] This is reflected in the Recommendation in the overall identification of priorities.

[655] Interview with stakeholder in Spain (June 2018)

[656] Generalitat de Catalunya (2012) Ofensiva de país a favor de l'exit escolar. Pla per a la reduccio del fracas escolar a Catalunya (2012-2018). Available at: http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/departament/publicacions/monografies/ofensiva-exit-escolar/ofensiva_exit_escolar.pdf

	aware of the existing tools. However, after a brief presentation of the key EU tools identified in the previous research phase for this project, they recognised their usefulness. Stakeholders at the Department for Education were aware of the ESF funding and are developing proposals for **ESF** funding with focus on adult learning. Awareness was highest for **Erasmus+** funding but had not been used in relationship to ESL. In terms of the relevance of other available EU tools, the **Toolkit for Schools** resonates clearly with Spanish policy makers and their needs as it is manageable and usable by schools directly, which increases its usefulness since it gives schools the flexibility to adapt the content to their needs. The E2O Network[657] promotes the recognition of second chance education centres, was the only one that was familiar and had used the **European Toolkit for Schools** as well as the **Youth Guarantee Programmes** as a source for funding. The practices gathered in this toolkit has motivated the Network to come up with good practice within their Network to match it to the recommendations in the Toolkit.[658] However, consulted stakeholders stated that they are not aware of the Spanish Government using all of the available policy instruments provided at the EU level to support Spain in its efforts to tackle ESL.[659]
Barriers and success factors for the implementation of the Recommendation and other EU tools	The remaining barriers to tackling ESL and complying with the 2011 Council Recommendation are the following: 1. A **lack of political consensus** on education policy and its priorities, as well as an overall unfavourable political climate for policy change. The changes in legislation that have resulted from changes in government have created a confusing legislative framework between the national government and the regional governments that schools, teachers, autonomous communities and different types of organisations struggle to understand and adapt to. There is a need for political agreement to develop coherent policy programme in long term.[660] 2. The lack of **economic resources** to implement the necessary measures and the limited investment in education is seen as another key challenge in Spain and Catalonia. As such, the Jaume Bofill Foundation in Catalonia estimates that 30% more

[657] Escuelas de Segunda Oportunidad (E2O). Available at: www.e2oespana.org
[658] Interview with stakeholder in Spain (June 2018)
[659] Interview with stakeholder in Spain (June 2018)
[660] Supported by discussions during the workshop and with interviewees

	investment is required into schools with a high proportion of students at risk, so as to reduce ESL in order to ensure sufficient resources to tackle risk of students leaving education early.[661] [662] In addition to this, the attraction of young **students to low-skilled jobs** poses a challenge to tackling ESL.[663] 3. The **teaching style and the selection process of teachers could be improved through continuous professional development (CPD).** The quality of training for teachers and the availability of **CPD and evidence-based training** are considered as remaining barriers to reducing ESL rates.[664] 4. Lack **of knowledge about available EU policy tools on ESL**. The consulted stakeholders highlighted that a bigger part of the teaching community are not aware about the EU level tools on good practice examples.[665]
Degree of engagement of the country in EU level activities linked to ESL and use of outputs and outcomes	Given the high level of decentralisation in Spain, Catalonia has **limited engagement** at EU level and this engagement is often not systematic or formal.[666] However, **civil society organisations, academics** and the **EU Representations** in Catalonia are very active and often become involved in EU level activities. For instance, academic specialising in education have been involved as experts in the ET 2020 expert platform, in developing the Toolkit for Schools and in the EU programme INCLUDE-ED. The E2O platform for second chance education is also engaged with EU institutions and seeks out financial resources and evidence of what works.
Degree to which the EU tools have contributed to efficiency of implementation of ESL policy	Given the lack of knowledge of the tools and the limited economic and human resources, the ET 2020 policy instruments have had **limited efficiency** in assisting Catalonia in reducing ESL. At a national level, ESF funding has been key in helping fund some of the latest measures approved with the 2018 budget to improve education quality (see the section with intervention measures). Some of these measures are targeted at reducing early school leaving and are also benefitting Catalonia. However, government stakeholders in Catalonia confirmed that they had not yet submitted any requests for ESF funding, but were working on them at the time of the workshop.

[661] CCMA (05/11/2018) Catalunya inverteix menys en educació que la resta d'Espanya i d'Europa. Available at: https://www.ccma.cat/324/catalunya-inverteix-menys-en-educacio-que-espanya-i-europa/noticia/2884940/
[662] Interview with stakeholder in Spain (June 2018)
[663] Interview with stakeholder in Spain (June 2018)
[664] Supported by discussions during the workshop and with interviewees
[665] Supported by discussions during the workshop and with interviewees
[666] Supported by discussions during the workshop and with interviewees

	EU **monitoring mechanisms** have encouraged the region to track their progress in reducing ESL and develop better statistics to understand the challenge at hand. This has promoted the development of better statistical indicators and improved tracking systems of pupils to develop early warning systems.
Added value of EU ESL policy and tools in the country	Stakeholders in Spain consider that the added value of having EU level ESL policy and tools is providing guidance to countries struggling with high ESL rates and helping them understand what common practice in other countries is, as well as contributing to ESL being on top of the political agenda.

E. Need for future EU level support	
Key suggestions for EU support needed in the future (e.g. tools, initiatives, target groups, thematic areas)	Some of the key outstanding issues identified by stakeholders are[667]: 1. The need to help MS **prioritise** between different recommended measures and provide further evidence of the level of effectiveness of different measures based on the national and regional characteristics. 2. Tailor the recommendations according to the **context:** make them **operational** for policy-makers as well as for civil society organisations and school officials, so that the latter can not only advocate for the changes but also implement the applicable measures in their own context. 3. Improve the **dissemination** of the available EU support measures through the EU national and local representations in the respective languages so that they reach a broader scope of stakeholders.
Types of future policy instruments which would be most helpful	Non-governmental stakeholders in the expert workshop considered that tools and recommendations should come with **higher conditionalities**. Despite not being aware of the existing ex-ante conditionalities, these were perceived as a good idea. Stakeholders in the country workshop also encouraged the European Commission to provide more tools and resources that are **in person** and provided in local languages, **in-country** so that they reach those who would generally be less engaged. Finally, having more tools **targeted towards teachers** rather than policy-makers was considered useful. For instance, training programmes, peer learning or exchanges between schools who struggle with high ESL rates and implement different measures to tackle these were discussed as potential helpful practices.

[667] Supported by discussions during the workshop and with interviewees

Other comments	*NA*

Study on the Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (ESL)

Country case study: Sweden

A. Identification	
Country	Sweden
Reasons for selection as case study	The key selection criteria for country workshops have been the different challenges concerning ESL, different progress in ESL rates and different levels of engagement in EU-related actions at the country level. Sweden is classified as having a *single structure* type of education system: education is provided from the beginning to the end of compulsory schooling, with no transition between primary and lower secondary education, and with general education for all pupils.[668] With an ESL rate below the EU average, the influence of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving in Sweden has been limited, although the country has engaged with other EU tools such as the headline target and ESF funding for ESL related programmes. For the last two governments, ESL is high on the policy agenda at national level with the aim to ensure that every young person at the age of 20 has obtained an upper secondary education, with less of a focus on leaving education. Despite relatively limited evidence of the influence of the Recommendation, Sweden has undertaken a series of programmes tackling ESL. In comparison with other countries, the degree of influence of the 2011 Recommendation and policy tools, and engagement with the EU agenda were estimated to be at a relatively medium level.[669]

[668] European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2014a) The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: schematic diagrams. Available online: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/education_structures_EN.pdf

[669] The definitions used to classify countries are:

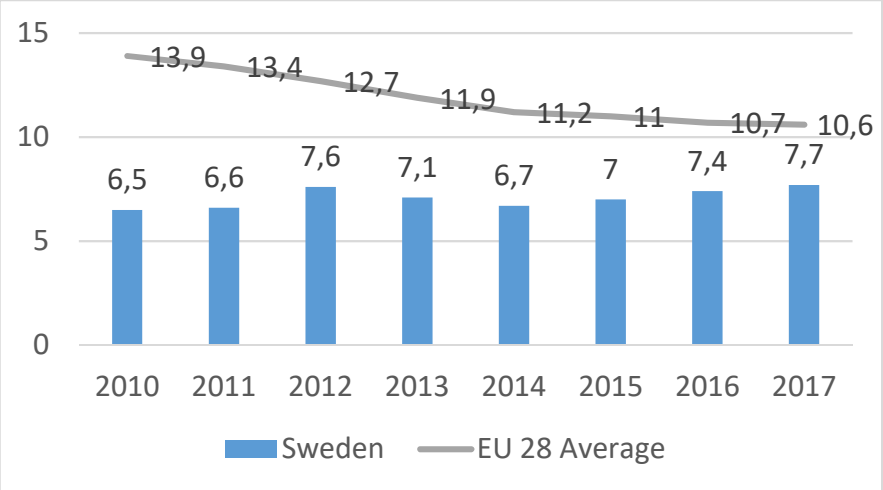
- High level (H) - Evidence of a direct alignment of national ESL strategies with the 2011 Recommendation, and with the corresponding measures in the EU policy framework
- Medium level (M) - General consistency in aims and approach between the 2011 Recommendation and national measures, but drawing on a wider range of influences
- Low level (L) - Little or no evidence of influence of the 2011 Recommendation on ESL policy.

Date and location of country workshop	11/03/2019 Ministry of Education and Research (Drottninggatan 16), Stockholm
Organisations participating in country workshop	• Ministry of Education and Research, Division for Upper Secondary and Adult Education and Training, Division for Youth Policy and Liberal Adult Education, Division for Schools • Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants • Academic covenant (Akademikerforbundet SSR) • Association of school Counsellors (Sveriges skolkuratorers föreningen) • Stockholm University • The National Agency for Education (Skolverket) • Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions- SALAR (SKL) • Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society • The Swedish Schools Inspectorate • Sweden´s Education Counsellor in Brussels

B. Country context regarding ESL	
Evolution of ESL rates since 2011	Sweden has a lower rate of ESL (7.4%) compared to other EU countries and is below the EU average (10.7%).[670] However, early school leaving rates have increased since 2016 by about one percentage point. As shown in Figure 2, the ESL rate is higher amongst students who are migrants or with a migrant background (15% in 2016 compared to a national average of 7.4%). Some stakeholders argue that a key determinant in this increase was the change to the Education Act in 2011 which reduced the flexibility in the pathways to upper secondary education. Stakeholders consider that the ESL rate is likely to continue increasing due to the influx of newly arrived families of immigrants and unaccompanied minors in 2015 who struggle to stay in education. Figure 1 shows the ESL rates in Sweden compared to the EU28 average.

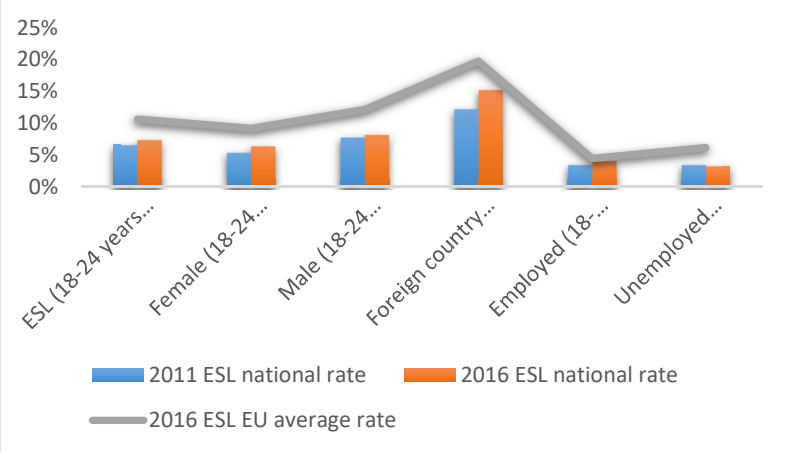
[670] Eurostat (2016). Early leavers from education and training by sex and country of birth edat_lfse_02. Available at: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_02&lang=en

Figure 1. Trends in ESL Sweden and EU 28 rates



Source: Eurostat (2017), edat_lfse_02.

Figure 2. ESL national rates per target group



Source: Eurostat (2016), edat_lfse_02.

Mainly individual-level factors are identified in studies in Sweden as to why individuals would leave education early.[671] Those include:

- Low educational achievements leading to a loss in motivation to graduate;
- Family environment and socioeconomic background;
- School environment and teaching methods;
- Lack of interest in education and the prospect of entering the labour market without graduating
- Teachers lack of motivation has been seen to influence the motivation amongst students at risk;
- Tactical reasons given the fact that with an incomplete upper secondary education, there are greater opportunities to re-enter education through second-chance education in the adult education system;
- The changes introduced in the education reform in 2011 (Gy2011)[672] that increased difficulty of acquiring a graduation diploma.[673]

Specific national challenges and priorities on ESL	After the 2011 upper secondary education reform, Early School Leaving understood as ensuring that every young person at the age of 20 graduates from upper secondary, has been a policy priority, and the ESL rate is below the EU average. One of the reasons why ESL has not been considered a priority during the last years is that many early school leavers re-enter education through adult learning or vocational education and training within five years after dropping out from school.[674] Even if the Education Act does target dropout students, it does so indirectly, without mentioning ESL.[675] However, there are two key priorities related to ESL: 1. Ensuring that all upper secondary students graduate with a diploma is a key priority in Sweden since 2011. 2. Ensuring that newly arrived migrants have equal opportunities and the necessary support to graduate. According to discussions with national stakeholders consulted during the country workshop, some of the challenges in tackling ESL from upper secondary education include they consider priorities include: • **A lack of stronger prevention measures** implemented across the country based on the recommendation of the Swedish National Education Agency (*Skolverket*); • **Decentralisation of education policy implementation** generates differences in the services and quality of services provided in different municipalities;[676]

[671] Skolinspektionen (2014a) "Kunskapsöversikt för studieavbrott i gymnasieskolan" Dnr 400-2014:4245; Statistics Sweden (2017) Unga utanför? Så har det gått på arbetsmarknaden för 90-talister utan fullföljd gymnasieutbildning. Temarapport 2017: 4 Utbelidning och Arbete. Available at: http://www.scb.se/contentassets/8470acff99c54f21bd4aba8ca058cb5b/uf0549_2015a01_br_a40br1704.pdf ; Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (2013) Preventing Early School Leaving. The Challenges of Making Sure that all Students Complete their Upper Secondary Education. Available at: https://webbutik.skl.se/bilder/artiklar/pdf/7164-925-6.pdf; Hall, C, Lundin, M; and Sibbmark, K. (2018)_Strengthening teachers in disadvantaged schools: Evidence from an intervention in Sweden's poorest city districts. IFAU publication. Available at: https://www.ifau.se/globalassets/pdf/se/2018/wp2018-26-strengthening-teachers-in-disadvantaged-schools.pdf

[672] Skolverket (2011) Gymnasieskolan. Available at: https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.6bfaca41169863e6a65942e/1553963779361/pdf2597.pdf

[673] Statistics Sweden (2017) Unga utanför? Så har det gått på arbetsmarknaden för 90-talister utan fullföljd gymnasieutbildning. Temarapport 2017: 4 Utbelidning och Arbete. Available at: http://www.scb.se/contentassets/8470acff99c54f21bd4aba8ca058cb5b/uf0549_2015a01_br_a40br1704.pdf

[674] Statistics Sweden (2017) Unga utanför? Så har det gått på arbetsmarknaden för 90-talister utan fullföljd gymnasieutbildning. Temarapport 2017: 4 Utbelidning och Arbete. Available at: http://www.scb.se/contentassets/8470acff99c54f21bd4aba8ca058cb5b/uf0549_2015a01_br_a40br1704.pdf

[675] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (05/06/2018)

[676] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (05/06/2018)

- Some national level priorities related to ESL are implemented at the municipal level in the form of projects supported with state funding, which poses a **challenge to the sustainability** of the impact and achievements of the programmes;[677]
- **Decline in performance of 15 year-old students on average** in all three core subjects (reading, mathematics and science) in PISA in the last decade to below the OECD average.[678]

On the positive side, one of the major achievements Sweden has made in the past years in tackling ESL is to encourage the coordination of municipalities, their governments and the national government to discuss measures and policy developments, and share best practices.[679]

However, stakeholders involved in education policy consider that more work is needed in this area, with stronger steer from the national institutions to alleviate the burden on municipalities. According to SKL (SALAR), priority actions in Sweden should be focused on **establishing a definition of ESL that works nationally as well as speeding up the data collection process from the municipal level to the national level to enable swifter actions.**

Recently, with two proposed reforms undertaken to the Education Act of 2011 (to be implemented in 2018 and 2019), ESL returned to the national agenda. The reforms will aim to develop a better understanding of what support provided to students means in schools and provide a holistic approach to it.[680]

There is a need to **develop a working definition of ESL,** ensuring that the headline target reflects the national reality in Sweden. Currently, ESL in Sweden focuses on those students leaving upper secondary education, which does not align with the definition provided by the European Commission which also includes early school leavers from lower secondary. As a result, academic stakeholders argued that the ESL headline indicator did not match the Swedish priorities in terms of education policy. Stakeholders highlight addressing students drop out of upper

[677] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (05/06/2018)
[678] OECD (2015) Improving School in Sweden. An OECD Perspective. Available at: http://www.oecd.org/education/school/Improving-Schools-in-Sweden.pdf
[679] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (04/06/2018)
[680] En gymnasieutbildning för alla**.** Proposition 2017/18:183 Available here: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/proposition/en-gymnasieutbildning-for-alla_H503183

	secondary education as very relevant, as under the Swedish definition and considering the respective country's national targets, the Eurostat statistics do not reflect the scope of the ESL problem. In 2016, in Sweden one in four students did not finish upper secondary education by the age of 20.[681] In addition to this, given the decentralisation of the education system, **monitoring data are collected** at school level and aggregated at the municipal level. As a result, there are delays in the data reaching national authorities. According to non-governmental stakeholders such as SALAR and the Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants, the delay can have an impact on the capacity of national authorities to react and coordinate a comprehensive and impactful early warning system.
Recommendations from EU level on ESL	Sweden has not received any specific recommendations or comments from the EU level on the need to tackle ESL. According to the European Semester Country Report for 2018, Sweden is making progress in achieving its national targets on ESL under the Europe 2020 strategy (below 7%).[682]

C. Key national policies on ESL	
Main organisations responsible for ESL policy	Since the 1980s, implementation of education policy has been decentralised in Sweden. **The Ministry of Education** sets the national goals and targets for education and develops national level reforms. **The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket)** is the central administrative authority for the public school system, organised pre-schooling, school-age childcare and for adult education. The Swedish National Agency for Education is tasked with ensuring that all children and students have access to the same high-quality standard of education and activities in secure environments. There is a current will at the national level for the Swedish National Agency for Education to take on a more active role in supporting and guiding municipalities.

[681] European Commission (2016) Education and Training Monitor. Sweden. Available at: http://europski-fondovi.eu/sites/default/files/dokumenti/monitor2016-country-reports_en.pdf

[682] European Commission (2018) 2018 Country Semester Sweden Report. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2018-european-semester-country-report-sweden-en.pdf

	The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, SKL) represents and advocates for local government in Sweden. All of Sweden's 290 municipalities, county councils and regions are members of SALAR. In terms of education policy, it raises awareness and brings together public institutions and organisations to reduce the percentage of early school leaving and ensures cooperation between municipalities.[683] It is also the leader of the Flagship initiative School to Work (S2W) that initiates and supports collaboration in the Baltic Sea Region to prevent early school leaving and to develop support measures for young people who are neither in education, nor employment or training (NEETs).[684] Both **municipalities, private providers and schools** have a great deal of freedom to implement school or city level initiatives with their own budget, as long as these are aligned with the national priorities. It is also the responsibility of school providers (municipalities and private providers) to decide on the organisation of multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level. Thus, the implementation of measures and practices varies widely among school providers. In addition to this, there is a legal obligation – in line with the Education Act – to involve **stakeholders** at all levels in addressing ESL, such as school principals, teachers, guidance personnel, psychologists, social and youth workers, therapists, nurses, speech and language specialist, and special needs education specialists.[685]
Mechanisms for monitoring ESL	Municipalities have always had a legal obligation to monitor young persons under the age of 20 who are not in education, and since 2015, following an amendment to the Education Act (2010:800) must also provide them with options to re-enter and tailor-made support. [686] There is a systematic approach to collect and analyse data on absenteeism and drop-out from schools. Data are collected at school level and aggregated at the local level. The data collected are collected by the Statistics agency and the Swedish National

[683] Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (not dated) Background Information. Available at: https://skl.se/tjanster/englishpages/activities/schooltowork/backgroundinformation.14428.html
[684] Region Ostergotland (not dated) #jagmed. Available at: https://www.regionostergotland.se/Regional-utveckling/Naringsliv-och-arbetsmarknad/Kompetensforsorjning/jagmed/jagmed-in-English/
[685] 2015. Source B. Internal document.
[686] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden. (13/06/2018)

	Agency for Education (Skolverket)[687] and are made available on the website of Skolverket[688] once a year. In addition to this, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, SKL) also publishes data collected by Skolverket on municipal schools, which they run, in 290 municipalities.
Comprehensive strategy	Sweden has not adopted a dedicated strategy on tackling early school leaving. Early school leaving is **not looked at as a separate issue from general educational policy**. The reason for this is that a key priority for the Ministry of Education is ensuring all students finish their upper secondary education, which is the key focus of the latest Education Act. However, Sweden did have a separate strategy in place to work with NEETs (2015-2018) and is currently discussing whether a renewed strategy is needed.[689] Some of the stakeholders consulted for this study considered that although most measures in the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving are covered by national policy or policy practices, it would be beneficial to have a comprehensive strategy that encompasses all students (not just those at risk) to streamline the implementation of the measures. However, following the adoption of the **2011 Education Act**[690] and the accompanying regulations, Sweden has put in place comprehensive reforms of compulsory and upper secondary education. The overarching goal of the policy framework is that all students should be given the possibility to fullfill their education ambitions.[691] In addition to this, a reform is being introduced in the Education Act in 2019 to give head teachers more responsibility to explore why students stop going to school and to give a clearer definition

[687] Skolverket (2017) Skolor och elever i gymnasieskolan läsår 2017/18. Available at: http://www.skolverket.se/statistik-och-utvardering/statistik-i-tabeller/gymnasieskola/skolor-och-elever
[688] SOU 2016:77 Betänkande av Gymnasieutredningen ”En gymnasieutbildning för alla – åtgärder för att alla unga ska påbörja och fullfölja en gymnasieutbildning”
[689] Youth Wiki (2017) National Youth Policies in Sweden. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/qdlsweden.pdf
[690] Education Act 2011 (2010: 800). Available here: https://www.global-regulation.com/translation/sweden/2988036/law-%25282010%253a801%2529-on-the-introduction-of-the-education-act-%25282010%253a800%2529.html
[691] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (04/06/2018)

	to what school support should be, encompassing pedagogy, competence support and psychological support.[692] Other initiatives have been implemented in different municipalities such as "Plug in" and "#jagmed", both funded by the ESF.[693]
Specific measures: prevention	Most of the prevention measures as described in 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving existed before 2011. Additional policies to tackle school segregation were adopted only when the proportion of asylum seeking children started to increase, including targeted government funding to municipalities with a high proportion of asylum seeking children.[694] The Spring Budget Bill 2017 includes additional funding for deprived schools, to tackle school segregation (ISCED 1-3) (Jämlikhetspengen).[695] Specific ESL prevention measures explicitly covered by the national policies include: • Preschool activities as a separate school form. They are included in the school system as the first step in a child's education; • Due to 2011 Education Act the curriculum choices are less flexible by emphasising the difference between academic training and a vocational training. Despite both paths being integrated under the same system, they are clearly differentiated in terms of the curriculum and the possibility of accessing university courses after graduating; • Flexible pathways were strengthened through introductory programmes to provide a bridge for students to enter upper secondary education (including VET), further education and the labour market; • Since 2011 expanded vocational tertiary studies are available to all with completed upper secondary education, irrespective of the previous attended programme.[696]

[692] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (13/06/2018)
[693] Region Ostergotland (not dated) #jagmed. Available at: https://www.regionostergotland.se/Regional-utveckling/Naringsliv-och-arbetsmarknad/Kompetensforsorjning/jagmed/jagmed-in-English/
[694] Skolverket (not dated) Statsbidrag för stor mottagning av asylsökande barn och ungdomar. Available at: https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statsbidrag/grundskole-och-gymnasieutbildning/statsbidrag-for-stor-mottagning-av-asylsokande-barn-och-ungdomar-1.243864#
[695] Skolverket (not dated) Nya satsningar for att minska skolsegregationen. Available at: https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statsbidrag/nya-satsningar-for-att-minska-skolsegregationen-1.260539#
[696] Mellander, E. (2017) Upper secondary curriculum reform in Sweden: a case study. Part of a collection of six case studies commissioned by the Royal Society. launched at the Royal Society's symposium Broad and Balanced: What is the future for our post-16 curriculum? Available at: https://royalsociety.org/~/media/policy/topics/education-skills/Broadening%20the%20curriculum/sweden-case-study.pdf

	Education suppliers dominated by private enterprises and municipalities receive state grants to finance education services provided at zero or nominal costs for the students.[697] Policies to support multilingual teaching and learning, together with active measures to support parental involvement in school life, are based on ad hoc measures and are not streamlined nationally.
Specific measures: intervention	The key priorities in intervention are not seen as ESL-specific measures, but rather as a part of the education sector in general, as many have been a part of education system for decades. Most of the intervention measures are already present in the national legislation, however, there are various ad hoc and project-based measures undertaken at local and regional level to support learners at risk of ESL (e.g. 'Plug in').[698] One of the main priorities in terms of education policy is finding the balance between the national government guidelines and priorities, and the municipalities implementing these, rather than the adoption of new specific measures.[699] According to stakerholders from SALAR more emphasis has been put on the importance and the need of implementing an early warning system, which has not materialised in a concrete new measure yet.[700]
Specific measures: compensation	Sweden has a well-functioning and widely available municipal adult education system that provides compensation measures for early school leavers. Different ways to re-enter education and to access alternative education pathways, as well as adult learning opportunities, have existed in Sweden since the 1980s. Nowadays, the focus of compensation measures is mostly put on employment. The 2011 Education Act reform introduced changes in second chance education, for example.

[697] Mellander, E. (2017) Upper secondary curriculum reform in Sweden: a case study. Part of a collection of six case studies commissioned by the Royal Society. launched at the Royal Society's symposium Broad and Balanced: What is the future for our post-16 curriculum? Available at: https://royalsociety.org/~/media/policy/topics/education-skills/Broadening%20the%20curriculum/sweden-case-study.pdf

[698] Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (2017) Plug in. Sweden's largest collaborative project in combating early school leaving. Final Report. Available at: https://skl.se/download/18.157885001540f7d16c1d2018/1463060417906/Slutrapport%20p%C3%A5%20engelska.pdf

[699] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (13/06/2018)

[700] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (05/06/2018)

	Compensation measures are mainly the responsibility of municipalities given the decentralisation of the implementation of education policy in Sweden. Often, municipalities cooperate with Public Employment Services to provide the training and opportunities best suited for the respective municipality context. Since 2017, a right to adult education at upper secondary level was adopted as part of the 2016 budget. The aim is to ensure that all adults have the right to complement their previous studies and obtain an upper secondary qualification that gives access to higher education and improves their chances in the labour market.[701] A recent focus of compensation measures has been put on integration and newly arrived migrants in order to promote their rapid integration and employment, whether this be through introduction programmes, opportunities to re-enter education or training to integrate in the job market. Overall, compensation measures have little relation to the 2011 Recommendation, as they have a much broader perspective than just reducing early school leaving.

D. Influence of the 2011 Recommendation and other EU tools on ESL	
Relevance of the Recommendation to national challenges	Education stakeholders consulted in the national workshop in Sweden consider that the 2011 Recommendation was **very relevant** when it came out. Before the Recommendation was adopted, there was little incentive in Sweden to frame education policies and measures in terms of the effect that they have in reducing early school leaving as ESL was not a national priority. Despite the limited knowledge of the Recommendation outside of the education policy sector, the representatives from the Ministry of Education and Research (Division for Upper Secondary and Adult Education and Training) at the workshop welcomed the opportunity to **monitor their progress** in reducing early school leaving. However, it informed that the EU definition of ESL falls short for the national priorities identified, namely ensuring every student who enrols in upper secondary completes the education.

[701] Eurydice (2019) Overview: Sweden. Available at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Sweden:Overview

	The Recommendation provided a **framework** to examine the pre-existing measures, and the Education Monitor and European Semester Country Report'provided information on what measures are taken in other countries to better identify **gaps** in the Swedish system and **best practice** which could be borrowed. In terms of the specific **priorities identified in the Recommendation** that resonate well in Sweden, during the workshop with national stakeholders several gaps were discussed. Some of the gaps identified were: • The lack of an effective early warning system and the need to develop more effective monitoring systems; • The lack of involvement of parents in the school process; • The need to promote a rights-based approach to education with students more involved in decision-making; • The need to improve coordination between national and local governments to ensure no one is left behind and that strategies are implemented equally in all regions; • The need to improve the sustainability of initiatives tackling ESL in Sweden in terms of their funding; • The need to increase the connection between students and the labour market (e.g. employers). In terms of what needs developing further, Swedish stakeholders considered that there may need to be more thinking around the **definition of early school leaving** and the implications that having a different national definition from the EU definition has on the monitoring of ESL and the headline target. Several elements were considered to be **missing from the Recommendation** that could have made it more relevant to the Swedish context: • **Higher standards of data disaggregation to understand the barriers to finishing education**. For instance, students with a migrant background diverge in whether they are first, second generation or newly arrived and this information is relevant in terms of targeting policies; • **The Recommendation says little around how students should re-enter education and what is considered a reasonable time gap.** There is little evidence of what works after ensuring that students re-enter education and the consequences of this being later in the young person's life.
Commonalities between the 2011 Council	Overall, the 2011 Recommendation has **influenced the national approach** to early school leaving **indirectly** in the sense that it has set clear indicators and measures according to

Recommendation and other EU tools, and national ESL policies, practices and research	which to track the progress Sweden is making in tackling ESL and what good practice looks like. In terms of indirect influence, some non-governmental stakeholders consider that the Recommendation encouraged the Swedish government to • provide more **support to municipalities** to implement the required measures to reduce ESL and improve the coordination mechanisms. Stakeholders admitted the need to improve coordination to ensure that learning flows between all levels responsible for implementing education policy [702] However, stakeholders participating in the workshop shared some examples, which they consider might have been a result of direct influence by the Recommendation and the momentum it created: • The emphasis put on the support municipalities must provide to dropout students (Education Act Gy11) may have been influenced by the political momentum that ESL had at the time;[703] • However, it was stated in one of the interviews that the Discrimination Act (2017) was considerably influenced by the 2011 Recommendation and highlighting the importance of having a positive school environment, instead of only focusing on competences acquired by students as a way to measure success.[704] **Commonalities between the Recommendation and national policies and practices** The key commonality of the Recommendation with national policy in Sweden is the fact that Swedish legislation has long included **prevention, intervention and compensation** measures, even if they are not explicitly named as such. Three **key examples** are: **1. Flexible pathways to education[705]** According to the Ministry of Education, the fact that VET education and general education are integrated into the same educational system is evidence that Sweden has very flexible pathways.[706] However, the flexibility of accessing different pathways was reduced with the Education Act (2011), which

[702] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (13/06/2018)
[703] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (05/06/2018)
[704] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (13/06/2018)
[705] In the 2011 Recommendation this measures falls under prevention policies, measure 7.
[706] This was discussed during the workshop.

made it more difficult for students to access upper secondary education by increasing the requirements for the national programmes at upper secondary.[707] Furthermore, the adoption of introduction programmes in 2011 increased the flexibility by facilitating access to the upper secondary academic path for students with less academic achievements in lower secondary education.

Introductory programmes are programmes provided within upper secondary education intended for those students whose grades were below the threshold to enter national programmes in upper secondary school (general and vocational). The introductory programmes provides them with the opportunity to enter upper secondary education including VET or support the establishment on the labour market, Introductory programmes are intended for those young people who do not have necessary pass grades to go to a national programme at upper secondary level and are outlined in the Education Act.

Two out of the five introductory programmes are aimed at preparing students to move up to upper secondary national programmes, while the rest are more vocationally oriented and aim to prepare young people to the labour market. Programmes last between 1 and 3 years, depending on the type. All municipalities are obliged to offer Introductory Programmes to young persons who do not meet the entry requirements for a national programme in upper secondary education. However, municipalities have flexibility to decide how to provide these programmes. There is no common programme, but an individual learning plan is developed for the participating students.[708]

2. Safe environments in schools[709]

Although difficult to express in terms of specific measures, stakeholders working on education in Sweden consider that the safety in school environments is important to reducing early school leaving.

The design and management of wellbeing policies aimed at improving the safety at school premises are decentralised at the municipality level.

[707] EUROPEAN COMMMISION (2015). *ESL Strategies (Unit A2) (Internal document)*

[708] European Commission (undated) Report on the Case study on Introductory programmes in Sweden: Learner support measures. Working Group on School Policy Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2014-2015/school/sweden-learner-support_en.pdf

[709]Safe school environments fall under Intervention policies in the 2011 Recommendation, despite not being linked to a specific measure.

In 2006, Sweden appointed its first **Child and School Student Representative**, who is tasked with providing information to students and teachers about the discrimination act, helping schools prevent bullying, as well as overseeing schools' efforts in this regard and representing students who have been bullied. The representative is a part of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, the government agency tasked with school inspections.[710]

In addition to this, the curriculum states that education and career guidance should be integrated in all subjects and constitutes a responsibility of all teachers and staff in schools. Study and guidance counsellors are to cooperate with teachers. The syllabus explicitly includes vocational and career guidance but does not specify the content. These are specified in guidelines from the Swedish National Agency for Education.[711]

3. Second chance education[712]

Sweden has a well-functioning and widely available municipal adult education system which serves as a compensation measure. Different ways to re-enter education and to provide alternative pathways and adult learning have existed in Sweden since the 1980s. Nowadays, the focus of compensation measures is mostly put on employment.

Some changes were introduced after the 2011 Education Act such as changes to second chance education. Furthermore, the recent 'folk high school initiative' offers young people a three-month course aimed at preparing them for returning to or starting studies at upper secondary level. Municipal adult education and folk high school provide some courses that are specifically designed to increase motivation to study. Participants get a certificate describing the knowledge they have obtained, and based on that they can continue studying in the same institution towards an upper secondary diploma. [713]

The stakeholders that were consulted in Sweden for this study recognised some limitations related to how their education policy covers the measures recommended by the Council Recommendation. Key areas for improvement where that Sweden could further develop were identified:

[710] Sweden.se (2015) Facts About Sweden: Education. Available at: https://sweden.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Education-in-Sweden-high-resolution.pdf

[711] EURYDICE/CEDEFOP (2014). *Tackling early leaving from education and training in Europe: Strategies, policies and measure*s. European Commission.

[712] Reflected in the 2011 Recommendation under compensation policies, measure 1.

[713] EUROPEAN COMMMISION (2015). *ESL Strategies (Unit A*2) (*Internal document*)

- Need to improve the equality in the provision of services across municipalities and tackle segregation of students in schools;
- Need to develop a better early warning system and follow-up systems with students;
- Need to provide pathways for greater parental involvement in schools;
- Need to make transitions between education areas and levels easier (e.g. from VET to general education);
- Need to develop better validation systems.

The contribution of EU associated tools to national policy and practice

In Sweden, political actors working on ESL and education in general are very **familiar with the headline target** and with the 2011 Recommendation, but much less with other EU associated tools. The 2020 target has helped the government appreciate the need to track and monitor progress in reducing ESL.[714] Outside of the policy-making sphere, these **tools are mostly unknown** and not discussed in public debates.[715]

The most commonly used tools that relevant stakeholders admitted using was the **Toolkit for Schools** and the **Education Monitor.** They help them to become familiar with the EU recommendations in the education field and the respective targets as well as provide evidence of working examples across the EU in different thematic areas related to education, such as early school leaving or the integration of migrants.[716] Stakeholders working on the integration in the education system of newly arrived young people claimed to have used the **Education Monitor** as a source of evidence of best practices other countries and found specifically useful those ones from Germany.

In terms of the effectiveness of **ESF funding**, Sweden has used ESF funding for one of its largest projects on ESL. **Plug In** is a collaborative project run in collaboration between by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions together with eight regions in Sweden with an overall aim of raising the quality of education in upper secondary schools and preventing students at risk from leaving education. It was implemented between 2015 and 2018 in eight regions, developing 59 local projects (project workshops). Plug in continues to develop, apply

[714] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (04/06/2018)
[715] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (05/06/2018)
[716] Discussed during the workshop

	and spread the methods developed in the first Plug In project through an online platform, despite the end of the funding. The regional project offices have contributed to the development of the workshops. The methodology workshops have varied greatly in content and design. The workshops have focused on the following: 1. Mentorship/coaching. 2. Identification and mapping of risk groups. 3. Outreach activities. 4. Transfer from compulsory school to upper secondary school. 5. Student health. The initiative was **motivated by the ET 2020 target to reduce ESL** and inspired by the momentum that ESL received following the 2011 Recommendation, but the programme itself was not designed according to the Recommendation. This programme is nationally considered to have been very effective but has ended due to the end in the funding.[717] In 2018, the findings of the programme were gathered in a final report and evaluated internally and externally aiming to use the findings to lead a nation-wide collaboration to develop a national strategy for ESL which is currently being developed. The main finding has been that Sweden needs to increase its focus on preventive measures such as an early warning system.[718] Another key finding is the lack of focus in schools on promoting "softer values" such as the confidence and relationships of students and measuring these as individual development indicators, beyond dropout rates. Finally, one of the participants in the country workshop had recently participated in **RESL.eu** to conduct the research in Sweden for the comparative research study of ESL in 9 EU countries.[719]
Barriers and success factors for the implementation of the	NA

[717] Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (2017) Plug in. Sweden's largest collaborative project in combating early school leaving. Final Report. Available at: https://skl.se/download/18.157885001540f7d16c1d2018/1463060417906/Slutrapport%20p%C3%A5%20engelska.pdf

[718] Interview with Gunnar Anderzon, Programme Manager for Plug In.

[719] Reducing Early School Leaving in the EU: A Comparative Qualitative and Quantitative Research (RESL.eu). Available here: https://www.socant.su.se/polopoly_fs/1.167754.1392904842!/menu/standard/file/RESL_eu.pdf

Recommendation and other EU tools	
Degree of engagement of the country in EU level activities linked to ESL and use of outputs and outcomes	Sweden has been engaged at the EU level in activities related to ESL in multiple ways. The active participation of Sweden in **thematic working groups**, such as the early school leaving one, and peer learning activities is regarded as a positive contribution by stakeholders consulted during the national workshop. Sweden has organised and hosted several **peer learning activities**, for example, how to integrate newly arrived students through education[720]. In addition to this, the representative of the Ministry of Education and Research in Brussels is highly involved in different European institutions and familiar with the relevant available tools.
Degree to which the EU tools have contributed to efficiency of implementation of ESL policy	EU tools have had an **indirect impact** on policy developments. They have raised attention to the issue of Early School Leaving and prompted Sweden to reassess whether they have the right systems in place to address the issue. Stakeholders highlight that the difference in how ESL is defined by the EU and how it is defined in Sweden is challenging and results in a lack of alignment in terms of priorities. Under the Swedish definition and the country's national targets, the scope of the ESL challenge in the country is much larger compared to what is presented by the EU ESL rate, fed in by the Eurostat data (lower than the headline target). Some stakeholders highlighted the role that the **2011 Recommendation** and that the **Toolkit for Schools** had in defining on the implementation approach for the Plug In (ESF funded programme). However, those involved in the programme were not aware of the existence of these tools until the programme had been running for over a year. Hence, the tools did not have an influence in the programme design. The part of the Recommendation that had the largest influence was the need to coordinate stakeholders and sectors, which resulted in Plug In being implemented at multiple levels, with municipalities responsible for direct implementation, regional coordination and national guidance.

[720] European Commission (2016) Reception of newly arrived migrants, and assessment of previous schooling. Highlight report from the Peer Learning Activity in Stockholm. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=24065&no=5

	The current debate on **monitoring of ESL** and the need to improve the system in order to establish an early warning system and prioritise its streamlining at the national level is a challenge that remains. A stakeholder from the Delegation for the Employment of Young People and Newly Arrived Migrants considers that the limited disaggregation of available statistical data at the EU level is insufficient to capture what the challenges are in Sweden.
Added value of EU ESL policy and tools in the country	Stakeholders in Sweden consider that the added value of having EU level ESL policy and tools is providing guidance to countries struggling with high ESL rates and helping them understand what common practice in other countries is. For those countries where ESL rates are lower, the added value is helping policy-makers put ESL on the political agenda to reassess the effectiveness of their existing measures and identify gaps.

E. Need for future EU level support	
Key suggestions for EU support needed in the future (e.g. tools, initiatives, target groups, thematic areas)	In terms of what further measures could be taken to tackle the ESL problem in Sweden, stakeholders highlighted the need for more nuanced **definition of early school leaving** that can be adapted at the country level and reflect the nuances in the monitoring of ESL and the headline target. Several elements are considered to be **missing from the Recommendation** that would make it more relevant to the Swedish context: • **Higher standards of data disaggregation to understand the barriers to finishing education**. For instance, students with a migrant background diverge in whether they are first, second generation or newly arrived and this information is relevant in terms of targeting policies; • **The recommendation says little around how students should re-enter education and what is considered a reasonable time gap.** There is little evidence of what works after ensuring that students re-enter education and the consequences of this being later in the young person's life. In addition to this, stakeholders highlighted the need to develop more sustainable funds to work on **long-term impacts** than ESF funding. The challenge of funding measures to address ESL through ESF is the lack of sustainability of the funds and the consequences that this has on achieving long term impacts.

Types of future policy instruments which would be most helpful	The evidence gathered for this study indicates that stakeholders in Sweden would find two types of policy instruments most useful in the future: • **Better evidence and benchmarking** of good practice examples from other Member States after 2020 would be useful to build on the evidence from the ET 2020 Strategy.[721] • The creation of a separate **fund similar to ESF** that focused on education policy while encouraging policy-makers to connect policy areas (education, employment, integration…), rather than looking at all policy areas separately. This would help avoid prioritising of different policy areas in terms of funding and would force national stakeholders to adopt holistic policy solutions.[722]

[721] Discussed in the workshop

[722] Interview with stakeholder in Sweden (04/06/2018)

HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

Free publications:

- one copy:
  via EU Bookshop (http://bookshop.europa.eu);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:
  from the European Union's representations (http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);
  from the delegations in non-EU countries
  (http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm);
  by contacting the Europe Direct service
  (http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm) or
  calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (*).

  (*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (http://bookshop.europa.eu).

NC-04-19-473-EN-N

Publications Office

ISBN: 978-92-76-08605-5