



DROP IN



DROP'INSPIRATION
Policy paper



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Policy paper

DROP-IN Project

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Project coordinator

PISTES-SOLIDAIRES (France)

Project partners

Know and Can Association (Bulgaria)

CSC DANILO DOLCI (Italy)

IS "DUCA ABRUZZI - LIBERO GRASSI" (Italy)

GULBENES NOVADA PAŠVALDĪBA (Latvia)

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LEUVEN (Belgium)

119 SECONDARY SCHOOL "ACADEMICIAN MIHAIL ARNAUDOV" (Bulgaria)

COLLEGE ROSA PARKS (France)



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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

What

Formal and non-formal education must meet in order to motivate pupils and fight early school leaving (ESL). DROP'IN project proposes, creating an innovation by exploiting these two complementary environments. This includes motivating youngsters who dropped out to come back to school and become active actors in their learning process, and also intends to increase the motivation of young adults for their schooling and this indirectly can prevent ESL.

In practical terms, this includes the introduction of non-formal methods in formal settings (schools) through partnerships between associations, municipalities, universities and schools. Teachers and non-formal education experts work together and collaborate at each step of the project. The topic of schooling will be taken in its entirety and not limited to altering teaching methods.

Why

Dropping out of school is a real social issue. Unemployment amongst young dropouts exceeds 40%. In France, the cumulated costs related to dropping out throughout the whole life of an individual are estimated at 230 000€. For the State it means nearly 30 billion debt accumulated each year. For youngsters the situation has major social and economic consequences. The reasons for dropping out are multiple and their explanations are not always to be found within schools.

Who

Drop'In project has eight partners from five European countries. Namely, France, Italy, Latvia, Bulgaria, and Belgium.



When

The project started in September 2018 and has ended by February 2021. Due to Covid-19 emergency, the project has received an extension period of six months until August 2021.

How

By collecting non-formal education techniques that can be used in schools in one catalogue

- *By transferring knowledge and know-how from experts to teachers through a teacher training*
- *By strengthening the capacity of teachers to integrate non-formal activities into their professional environment through peer learning activities*

Results


1. *A state of the art research*
2. *1 catalogue of 40 non-formal learning techniques*
3. *1 transferable training program using non-formal learning techniques for teachers*
4. *1 portfolio online which highlights the tested methods*
5. *1 policy paper*
6. *Dissemination activities*

ABSTRACT

Dropping out of school is a real social issue. For youngsters the situation has major social and economic consequences. The reasons for dropping out are multiple and their explanations are not always to be found within schools. Rather, these are related to social and economic reasons, educational and behavioral reasons, ethno-cultural reasons, and finally labor market fluctuations. It is well established that in 2017 an average of 10.6 % of young people (aged 18-24) in the EU-28 were early leavers from education and training.

This policy paper of the Drop'In project aims at strengthening the capacity of teachers and stakeholders in the educational field in order to decrease school drop-outs and further reduce the drop-out related unemployment. Specifically through creating training materials and providing training instances in the field of non-formal education. To assess the proposition that non-formal education plays a positive role in motivating students which directly and indirectly leads to student retention, a catalogue of 40 non-formal education methods has been created, a teacher training on these methods has been implemented and a teacher training module has been prepared. Data on the testing of these non-formal methods with students has been collected through an online portfolio that not only kept track of the teachers' impressions but those of the students as well.

According to the council of Europe, non-formal learning is widely used and is a strongly debated notion in the youth field. It stands for a range of core learning principles, methodologies and approaches, commonly emphasizing the learners intrinsic motivation, voluntary participation, critical thinking and democratic agency¹. Furthermore, and according to the European Council, it is widely acknowledged and recognized that non-formal learning provides unique learning opportunities to millions of young Europeans on a daily basis. In support to this strong notion of the positive effects of non-formal learning in formal settings, policy recommendations related to the advised '*Intervention Policies*² on the school or training institution and on the individual level are highlighted in this paper and are being harmoniously presented in relation to the Drop'In activities and results.



This is being followed by recommendations for policy makers in the education sector at four levels: regional, national, subnational and organizational within the context of *Professional Development in Education*, *Curriculum Development* and *Monitoring & Assessment*.

Finally the paper includes a detailed annex on the development of teacher competencies within the framework of the project implementation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Project background

More than 1 out of 10 young people in the EU are school dropouts. According to the EU, every citizen who reached only pre-school, primary or lower secondary education level or who briefly attended upper secondary education for less than 2 years, is considered to be a school dropout. The EU has made the fight against dropping out one of its priorities and aims at reducing the drop-out rate to less than 10% by 2020.

In recent years, a significant work has been done in the EU in order to reduce the number of school dropouts. While several countries have already achieved their targets, some have seen an increase in the number of school dropouts between 2011 and 2016 (e.g. Bulgaria) and a study of statistics provided by Eurostat showed the disparities that may exist within the countries, especially between rural and urban areas. In order to fight against dropping out, public policies have been very focused on finding solutions for young people who have already dropped out. It is also necessary to give importance to prevention of early school leaving (ESL), to projects that aim at encouraging pupils to stay motivated at school.


DROP'IN is in line with the recommendations of the EU drop-out working group, which indicates, for example, that “ Research shows that a supportive relationship between the teacher and learner is the strongest predictor of school engagement and achievement “. But teachers face new challenges and have their jobs extended regarding the support of their students. Motivating students requires that the teachers themselves are invested, that is why it is essential to work closely with them and to support them.

Thus, even if students between 12 and 18 years of age will be the main beneficiaries of the project activities; teachers are the main participants. The project targets the educational community in a broad sense through creating educational alliances that includes parents, institutions, and associations.

The transnational dimension of the project is crucial: early school leaving is a reality in the partner countries where policies and experimentations are being implemented in order to reduce its rate. The exchange of experience and expertise provides a platform that gives space for taking a step back from the current situation and provides room to create new solutions. The partnership provided experimentation in various contexts to offer a suitable solution to European realities (rural environment, urban environment, migrant students...).

Project goals and objectives

Project Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>To decrease school drop-out</i> – <i>To lessen drop-out related unemployment</i> – <i>To motivate youngsters to be productive actors in the society</i> – <i>To enhance youngsters' self-confidence</i> – <i>To create strong relationships between teachers and pupils</i>
General Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>To collect non-formal education techniques that can be used in schools</i> – <i>To transfer knowledge and know-how from experts to teachers</i> – <i>To strengthen the capacity of teachers to integrate non-formal activities into their professional environment</i>



Specific Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>To create a partnership between associations, municipalities, universities, parents and schools. The goal is to create the ability of bringing together and involving the educational community</i>- <i>To make an inventory of the training needs for teachers</i>- <i>To give the possibility to the teachers to participate in a training using only non-formal education methods</i>- <i>To discover and test animation techniques that can be transferred</i>- <i>To share their knowledge and to support teachers</i>
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Project target groups

The projects direct target groups are:

- *Pupils between the age of 12 to 18 that are in school. Mainstream, technical & vocational, and inclusive schools, and in all study disciplines.*
- *Teachers teaching the above-mentioned target group of pupils.*

Furthermore, the project aims at the broader educational community and stakeholders. This includes the parents, educational institutions and capacity building community organizations.

METHODOLOGY

Project phases

The project is divided into three phases. Each phase comprises specific Intellectual Outputs (IO).

Project stages	What has been done
Stage one Year 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>Research was carried out on the main themes of the project (DROP'INSIGHT)</i>2. <i>A catalogue of 40 non-formal education techniques has been created (EDUC'ACTION)</i>3. <i>Teacher training on non-formal learning techniques has been implemented (LEARNING MOBILITY)</i>4. <i>A training module has been prepared (DROP'INVOLVE)</i>
Stage two Year 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>Online portfolio of non-formal learning techniques in multiple languages has been compiled (DROP'IN ACTION)</i>2. <i>A catalogue of 40 non-formal education techniques has been finalized (EDUC'ACTION)</i>3. <i>Policy paper has been drafted (DROP'INSPIRATION)</i>
Stage three Year 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>Publication and dissemination at national and European level has been organized (DROP'INFORMATION)</i>



**Extension period
(Due to pandemic)**

1. *Finalize testing of non-formal methods with teachers and pupils*
2. *Finalizing the teacher and pupil evaluation of the testing phase*
3. *Finalizing the e-portfolio final version*

LITERATURE REVIEW

A detailed literature review with quantitative and qualitative data on ESL at European, national and local level can be consulted in the [DROP'INSIGHT](#) research report. The report provides an overview of the phenomenon of ESL through analyzing public policies and innovative strategies that exist to fight against ESL. In addition to a compilation of best national practices from France, Italy, Latvia, and Bulgaria. Furthermore, the report includes the views and opinions of teachers and stakeholders that were collected from the four aforementioned partner countries through focus group meetings and individual interviews.

Statistical data at EU level

In 2017, an average of 10.6 % of young people (aged 18-24) in the EU-28 were early leavers from education and training, in other words, they had completed at most a lower secondary education and were not enrolled in further education or training. 12.1 % of young men and 8.9 % of young women in 2017 in EU were early leavers from education and training. Among the EU Member States, the proportion of early leavers in 2017 ranged from 3.1 % in Croatia to 18.6 % in Malta.

According to Eurostat³ in 2017 the percentages of early school leavers in the partner countries are the following: - Latvia 8,6% - France 8,9% - Belgium 8,9% - Bulgaria 12,7% - Italy 14%.

Causes of early school leaving

Regardless the country, early school leaving is always caused by a complex mixture of reasons but the ones that stand out the most are mainly of socio-economic nature. In the period of elementary education, school nonattendance or its leaving are related to a great degree to family and community reasons. In the higher levels of education, apart from the abovementioned factors, the environment in which the young people find themselves in, the lack of well-trained pedagogues to work with, the absence of additional qualification for the teachers for coping with youngsters demotivated from participating in the educational process, also have an impact.

Along with these factors that seriously influence poor performance at school, low academic motivation, lack of perspectives for future professional realization, bullying, etc. play also a major role.

Social Reasons	Social reasons have considerable influence on early school leaving. The most common reasons are related to the family environment. Family history of early school leaving, lack of parental support, and immigration status can have a negative effect on motivation to study. Apart from family circumstances, the social environment and circle of friends have a great influence on the students, and could impose significant influence on the decision to skip classes or drop-out of school.
Economic Reasons	As a consequence of financial and economic hardships, many young adults are forced to help their families. This leads to interrupting their participation in the learning process.



**Educational
& Behavioral
Reasons**

This encompasses a wide range of problems: low levels of academic achievements and difficulties in learning, weaknesses in the methodology of teaching and organization of learning. The educational reasons are related also to the methods of evaluation and assessment, teacher qualification, learning habits, negative mind-sets of the participants in the educational process and lack of motivation, poor quality of textbooks, and dislike to some school subjects.

Many students do not have a sense of belonging to the school institution; they often feel misunderstood and unfairly treated by the teachers. Some personal reasons like low self-esteem, stress, anxiety, emotional problems, depression are also very common and if not detected and treated on time could cause early school leaving and even social isolation at later stages.

Bullying and harassment are reality in all schools worldwide. Sadly, moral, verbal and even physical harassment sometimes can in some instances be brutal.

Ethno-cultural Reasons	The ethno-cultural variety finds expression in the specific ethnic, religious and language aspects. The strongly effective internal rules of the group and the pressure of the ethnic cultural traditions among vulnerable ethnic communities and groups presuppose the specific reasons for early school leaving, absence of cognitive motivation, low degree of eagerness for school, the parents lack motivation for their children to receive education, etc.
Health Related Reasons	In the context of the policies for development of inclusive education the trend to integrate children with special educational needs in the general education schools continues. The risks for early school leaving are related to insufficient training of the kindergartens and schools to include these children. All factors inherent to the facility amenities, educational environment, human and financial resources that do not correspond to the requirements for applying the principles of inclusive education are also part of this category.

Labor Market & ESL

Labor market characteristics showed a big influence on the ESL, the decision to drop out of school is seen in the framework of human-investment theory (Becker, 1964) whereby staying in school or leaving school can be considered as a rational choice where students try to aim to and balance between the opportunity cost and benefits of further schooling. According to the research done by Cabus & De Witte in 2013: the youth unemployment rate, the general economic condition and the minimum wage are labor market influences on ESL. Unemployment rate can also have several effects on ESL.

The overall adult unemployment rate may influence students' decisions in two different ways: if students notice that both qualified and unqualified adults have similar unemployment probabilities, they may be less inclined to continue education.

Other studies showed the role that school characteristics can play on the decision of school leaving. The education system can play a major role in that. European countries differ strongly in the way students are grouped together. Typically, there are two extremes: 1) the early grouping of students based on their ability such as in Germany & Austria and 2) a comprehensive lower secondary education such as in Sweden & Norway, i.e. no early tracking. Students can choose their track in higher secondary. The first type of grouping has been majorly criticized in the literature. It appears that in countries with early tracking, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds perform less well than those in countries without early tracking. This shows that early tracking increases social inequality in outcomes.

The role of non-formal education

Reform in education in general and in the way subjects are being taught in schools in specific is an ongoing process. Educational reform regards, among others, the curriculum, the pedagogy, or the educational system. How one links formal education in school with alternative and nonobligatory settings, for example learning experiences in informal and non-formal settings, is a key element, which influences all of the three dimensions of educational reform.

According to the council of Europe, non-formal learning is widely used and a strongly debated notion in the youth field. It stands for a range of core learning principles, methodologies and approaches in the youth sector, commonly emphasizing the learners' intrinsic motivation, voluntary participation, critical thinking and democratic agency⁴. Furthermore, and according to the European Council, it is widely acknowledged and recognized that non-formal learning provides unique learning opportunities to millions of young Europeans on a daily basis.

In Agenda 2020⁵, the Conference of Ministers highlights that the recognition of non-formal education and learning makes a strong contribution to young people's access to education, training and working life.

The European Youth Pact⁶ reaffirmed the focus on the recognition of non-formal learning, which has again been confirmed and underlined in the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)⁷: *"As a complement to formal education, non-formal learning for young people should be promoted and recognized, and better links between formal education and non-formal learning developed."*


In this sense, and based on multiple literature reviews; whether learning takes place in a formal setting such as a school, a non-formal setting such as a community or cultural center or the informal setting of the home, all learning is good and all learning is valuable.

4 <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/non-formal-learning>

5 https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084919/Agenda2020_Declaration_EN.pdf/a95702e2-dcd0-4d2a-b5a7-980046e2a25e

6 https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084919/Youth_Pact_Springs_council.pdf/726353fe-15ca-4231-aff4-53ac0fccf42a

7 https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084919/doc1648_en.pdf/92968c65-3ffe-4085-ba6b-ddd51e220e09



All learning contributes to an individual's growth, not only cognitively, but emotionally, socially and in several other ways too. Keeping that in mind, learning does not stop when a person leaves school. It can take place anytime, anywhere, throughout the lifespan. It is very important to understand how we learn. Traditional learning institutions (almost all of the schools found in Europe and around the globe) divide learning into subjects. This helps how we obtain new knowledge, but it can also create isolated disciplines. Teachers teaching in one discipline often do not work or connect with others who teach in different areas, even when those two areas are closely connected. Each and every one of us understands learning in a different way because we learn in a different way.


POLICY CONTEXT

The Council adopted the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training in May 2009. It sets out four strategic objectives for education and training in the EU:

- *making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;*
- *improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;*
- *promoting equality, social cohesion and active citizenship;*
- *and enhancing creativity and innovation (including entrepreneurship) at all levels of education and training.*

This strategy set a number of benchmarks to be achieved by 2020, including that the EU-28 share of early leavers from education and training should be not more than 10 %. This benchmark is also one of the Europe 2020 strategy targets and previously formed part of the European employment strategy (subsequently incorporated into the Europe 2020 strategy), which specifies that the share should be below 10%. Reducing early school leaving to less than 10% across the EU countries by 2020 is one of the EU Commission's priorities in education. The EU doesn't have the authority to directly define and intervene with the national laws, regulations and policies but it works closely with all member states to implement comprehensive strategies to prevent early school leaving, as well as ensure intervention and compensation initiatives to engage early school leavers in education and training.

In most countries unified and integrated strategies and policies for preventing and fighting against school dropout does not exist. Nevertheless, the main objectives, recommendations and measures to combat ESL are defined at national level by various means – laws, decrees, policies, strategies, action plans, etc. During the last years, all member states implemented educational reforms at different levels and with different effect, but the fact that ESL rate dropped with 2% for the last 5 years shows that the implemented measures are successful and that we are on the right track.



Achieving one of the aims of Europe 2020 strategy - to reduce school dropout below 10% among EU28 seems very feasible. Since the causes and effects of ESL are complex and inconsistent, the policies to reduce early school leaving must address a range of issues and combine education and social policy, youth work and health related aspects. In order for the measures to be implemented successfully and to help achieving the aimed results they should not be aimed only at the students but also should involve their parents as they play a crucial role in the educational process. Teachers, pedagogical staff, local authorities, NGOs and other stakeholders should be also involved in the process.

As best practice at European level could be considered the School Education Gateway, a platform available in 23 official EU languages which offers policy makers and practitioners a wealth of resources and practical examples of effective practices to promote educational success and prevent early school leaving.

LOCAL EXPERIMENTATION

DROP IN is in line with the recommendations of the EU working group on early school leaving, which states for example that “*research shows that a caring relationship between teacher and student is the strongest factor in school attendance and success*” while at the same time enhancing traditional teaching methods. But teachers today are facing new challenges and are seeing their role expanded to include supporting students.

In order to help students to stay motivated, DROP IN proposes to support teachers in this mission by introducing and training them to the methods and techniques of non-formal education.

For this, DROP IN project is developed as follows:

1. **A working group with teachers** and identification of needs and techniques: This allows an appropriation and an awareness of the need for certain useful skills and the usefulness of their acquisition or development;
2. **The creation of a collection of methods** with the help of national non-formal education experts to be tested with teachers: The [EDUC'ACTION](#) Catalogue;
3. **Teacher training** (in two stages in the context of the project):
 - a. International training which brought together teachers from all project partner countries who were trained by the consortium's non-formal education experts,
 - b. Local peer training where experts in non-formal education identified in each country act as teacher trainers to transmit and exchange tools and skills needed to carry out non-formal activities. The teachers then implement a training for their peers based on the training carried out with the non-formal education expert;
4. **The experimentation phase**, DROP'IN ACTION, which allows a validation of the methods and a test with the pupils in the classes of the schools participating in the project.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

In this section, a summary of the analysis of the local peer training will be presented in addition to the experimentation phase (DROP'IN ACTION).

Local peer training (teachers training teachers) evaluation:

DROP'IN ACTION experimentation and volarization can be found in detail through the [online portfolio](#), created with the aim of describing the experimentation within the project and highlighting the results and impact of the tested methods. And will be described in the following section.


As for the local peer training: a rough feedback from 29 European teachers who responded to the evaluation [questionnaire](#) showed that:

Concerning the developed learning: **the knowledge and practice of methods** from non-formal education are named by 19 participants. The **understanding of the principles of non-formal education** and the complementarity of its methods is highlighted. In particular, teachers indicated that they were more confident in approaching methods that facilitate the **expression of emotions** because they had a better understanding of their importance.

Moreover, being part of a **community of committed teachers**, being with colleagues interested in participatory methods involves students in learning differently. It is indeed as a **pedagogue committed to the empowerment and inclusion of young people** that the participants position themselves.

Similarly, teachers testify to their learning in terms of **reflection on their teaching practice**. Classroom dynamics, new ideas and a focus on the learning process are revisited through training.

The 29 interviewees project the transfer of these learnings into their teaching practice in the classroom, projects/events, during in-service teacher training or with colleagues. In the classroom, it is in the service of teaching their subject, group dynamics, learning and relationships



with students that this learning will be mobilized. Being better equipped to manage different situations and to communicate more easily with colleagues and students are two transfer points that were highlighted.

Understanding of non-formal education and awareness of its complementarity are evaluated at 3.9/5 by teachers. On average, the interviewees estimate at 3.8/5 their ability to teach with non-formal education methods and to be able to assess their pupils' learning. These figures show a significant variation between teachers who are aware of and already involved in these issues and practices and teachers who are beginning to question them.

28 teachers will share their training with their colleagues. And 16 others plan to use the methods and techniques immediately after the training.

To conclude, this indicates that this training has allowed the teachers of the 4 participating countries to have a greater appropriation to the non-formal methods by first acquiring hands-on experience in order to be able to implement them: in other words, once the teachers were able to experiment these methods themselves, they were able to develop a greater awareness of the added value that Non-Formal Education can bring to formal education in order to be able to apply it in their classrooms in a second stage.

Testing of methods with pupils: Online Portfolio

Testing of certain non-formal learning methods from the EDUC'ACTION catalogue took place in four partner countries, namely in Italy, France, Latvia, and Bulgaria during the school years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 with learners from the following age categories 10-13 years, 14-15 years, and 16-18 years. It was during the COVID-19 emergency which brought unforeseen restrictions. These restrictions were mitigated by the partners and teachers through finding alternative and creative solutions on testing these methods through blended and remote education.

DROP'IN ACTION is an [online portfolio](#) developed for teachers conducting the experimentation phase with their students. The portfolio includes a systematic collection of quantitative and qualitative data on the experiences, emotions, and



participation of school teachers involved in introducing the non-formal methods addressed in the EDU'ACTION catalogue.

The online portfolio has been developed in such a way in order to:

1. *Help share methods and resources used in the project*
2. *Provide examples of practical cases of experimentation on non-formal methods in formal education settings*
3. *Allow teachers to share their experiences: successes and difficulties, also that of their learners*

The online portfolio includes a detailed collection of feedbacks on the three stages:

1. *Self-assessment stage: this was the initial stage and included a self-assessment survey that was administered in order to understand the different contexts and learning needs that need to be met.*
2. *Evaluation stage: throughout the implementation period. Done by means of questionnaires and interviews*
3. *Analysis stage: final comparison and analysis of the collected data. This included information related to the specific methods that were tested in the specific country contexts.*

Detailed analysis of each specific national context and the achieved impact can be found in the final report [here](#).

Teacher and learner reactions in a nutshell

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Teachers were satisfied with the implementation because learners could learn/study and revise school topics (from the curriculum) using alternative learning methods➤ Careful monitoring is needed to ensure productive outcomes➤ Promoting team spirit/team work is essential < healthy competition.➤ Good time management is sometimes needed➤ Dividing roles and responsibilities among the learners is important➤ Evaluation criteria need to be clear➤ Increased trust towards the learners➤ Attention to Special Education Needs (SEN) learners. They perceive the expression of emotions differently➤ Keep in mind the age groups and the type of activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Learners were highly motivated and proud of the results that they have achieved➤ Comfortable learning atmosphere for working in groups and learning new things together➤ Appreciating and understanding how teachers can feel during the lessons.➤ Learners enjoy peer assessment➤ Respecting different opinions and point of views➤ Knowing their peers better (behavior and personal features)➤ Learned to know the other better➤ Learned to work better with the other➤ Learners expressed their dreams and realized the importance of education➤ Learners exhibited increased curiosity and enthusiasm➤ Learners get the chance to express themselves➤ Learners involved in the decision making process felt better as part of the whole school community |
|--|--|

POLICY OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the Policy Framework of the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, it was asserted 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”.

This project focuses on the recommendations related to the advised ‘Intervention Policies’:


“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.

At the level of the school or training institution strategies against early school leaving are embedded in an overall school development policy. They aim at creating a positive learning environment, reinforcing pedagogical quality and innovation, enhancing teaching staff competences to deal with social and cultural diversity, and developing anti-violence and anti-bullying approaches.

Intervention policies at individual level aim to provide a set of support mechanisms for individual students at risk of dropping out which can be tailored to their needs. They focus both on personal development in order to build resilience for students at risk, and on restoring concrete difficulties which can be of a social, cognitive or emotional nature.

DROP'IN policy options and recommendations of the council's 'Intervention policies':

Intervention policies at the level of the school	
Policy Framework of the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving	DROP'IN project
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.	Developing a working group with teachers and identification of needs and techniques: This allows an appropriation and an awareness of the need for certain useful skills and the usefulness of their acquisition or development.
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.	Developing a working group with teachers and identification of needs and techniques: This allows an appropriation and an awareness of the need for certain useful skills and the usefulness of their acquisition or development



3. Networking with parents and other actors outside school, such as local community services, organizations representing migrants or minorities, sports and culture associations, or employers and civil society organizations, 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.

Developing a working group with teachers and identification of needs and techniques: This allows an appropriation and an awareness of the need for certain useful skills and the usefulness of their acquisition or development.

<p>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.</p>	<p>Teacher training (in two stages in the context of the project):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International training which brought together teachers from all project partner countries who were trained by the consortium's non-formal education experts, 2. Local peer training where experts in non-formal education identified in each country act as teacher trainers to transmit and exchange on tools and skills needed to carry out non-formal activities. The teachers then implement a training for their peers based on the training carried out with the non-formal education expert;
<p>5. Extra-curricular activities after and outside school and artistic, cultural and sport activities, which can raise the self-esteem of pupils at risk and increase their resilience against difficulties in their learning.</p>	<p>Developing a working group with teachers and identification of needs and techniques: This allows an appropriation and an awareness of the need for certain useful skills and the usefulness of their acquisition or development.</p> <p>The creation of a collection of methods with the help of national non-formal education experts to be tested with teachers: The EDUC'ACTION Catalogue.</p>

Intervention policies at the individual level

Policy Framework of the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving	DROP'IN project
<p>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.</p>	<p>Catalogue of non-formal learning methods and techniques.</p> <p>The rationale behind this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNESCO's competencies for education for sustainable development; • World Health Organization (WHO) psycho-social competencies; • Soft skills; • Detailed explanation can be found in the section 'Implementation and Next Steps' of the policy paper.
<p>2. Tailoring teaching to pupils' needs, strengthening individualized 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.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>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".</p>	

Recommendations for policymakers

The policy recommendations are to be addressed towards policymakers in the education field, i.e. headmasters, teachers, parents, heads of institutions, institutes and teacher trainers at four levels: regional, national, subnational and organizational. These recommendations highlight the key points for action, namely professional development of teachers in specific and educators in general, curriculum development (introducing non-formal learning methods in formal learning systems) and monitoring and assessment. The extent of policy change and the specific tools required will depend on existing local conditions and policy frameworks.

The development and practice of teachers are dependent on developing the competencies -mentioned earlier in the table above and in detail in the following section of the paper- and are dependent upon a process of empowering teachers (educators). The attention is on supporting teachers to recognize their full potential.

1. Professional development in education

Empowering teachers must be the core to any professional development initiative. Teachers are crucial agents of change within education systems. Effective educational transformation is dependent upon teachers being motivated to bring about change, as well as being capable of and supported in doing so.

- *Provide training and education on non-formal learning methods and techniques.*
- *Initial teacher training institutions need to consider non-formal learning and how to integrate it within their training programmes.*
- *Continuing professional development for teachers/educators on non-formal learning*
- *Criteria for allocating resources to capacity building of non-formal learning*
- *Professional accreditation criteria should be reviewed in light of non-formal learning*

2. Curriculum development

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) competencies, World Health Organization (WHO) psycho-social competencies, and soft skills competencies (see section below) need to be the basis for the review of curriculum documents. These competencies suggest approaches to educational practice. In order for teachers to practice the competencies and integrate them in non-formal learning and teaching methods, they should be supported by a curriculum that reflects this educational approach.

- *Textbooks and other educational materials need to be reviewed to determine whether they reflect educational approaches that is in line with ESD, WHO psycho-social competencies and other soft skills competencies.*
- *Textbooks and other educational materials need to be reviewed to determine whether they reflect educational approaches that support non-formal learning methods and techniques for formal teaching/learning settings.*

3. Monitoring & Assessment

Assessment and monitoring systems for educational institutions need to be adapted in order to assess the integration of non-formal learning methods and its contribution to the competencies that this project strives for.

- *Academic quality assurance instruments need to be influenced by ESD and by the practicality of non-formal learning. This means that the new and/or existing programmes and educational strategies should be informed by both, the competencies and non-formal learning.*

CONCLUSION

The aim of DROP IN project is the fight against dropping out of school by means of training teachers in non-formal methods.

Teachers from 4 partner countries: France, Italy, Latvia and Bulgaria, were trained in facilitation principles and in collaborative and cooperative methods through concrete techniques from non-formal education.

Through the analysis of the practices and conducted trainings, it is evident that the innovative side of the approaches of non-formal/formal crossover is of interest and meets the expectations of teachers.


They confirm that this interchange of these methods promote both the active participation of all target groups and the development of skills.

The issue of continuity of the process was addressed and proved to be ensured, with teachers motivated to continue the different stages of the project, from experimentation with pupils in the classroom to evaluation in order to determine whether non-formal education methods have a place in the school environment and whether the benefit they bring also translates into school retention of pupils.

Competencies related to global citizenship education and ESD are part of the cutting-edge curricula of university teacher education. The stakeholders of the DROP IN project aim to be able to link the developed capacities of trained teachers with this broader perspective of “teaching knowledge”.

Keeping in mind our target group of learners, the experimentation phase of non-formal learning methods in formal learning structures proved to be of an added value to learners through allowing them to re-gain their trust in the schooling system. With the introduction of non-formal methods, we are showing our learners that education is not static, but on the contrary is ever changing and evolving to meet the needs and the expectations of the *now* generation of learners. A generation that is influenced by the different factors mentioned earlier in this paper (socio-economic status, employability, motivation, etc.). Also, keeping in mind to ensure quality education to all learners as part of ESD.

We urgently insist on bringing change to our existing formal learning structures in order to meet the needs of the 21st century education and



pupils. Through bringing change to the teacher training curriculums in order to have teachers empowered to teach and continue in the profession of teaching (retaining teachers). Through modifying the existing school/country curriculums to meet the needs of the future generation of pupils and the parallel needs of the growing globalized market. And finally bringing effective monitoring and evaluation systems that can portray the added value of modernizing how we learn and how we teach to meet the needs of our learners.

ANNEXES

Competencies Development and Drop'In Implementation

In the frame of UNESCO's work on core competencies for sustainability to achieve global sustainable development goals, we find a powerful inspiration echoing the work of DROP IN.

Essential sustainability competencies aim at the ability of both teachers and students to reflect on what is happening around them and to think about what they are doing to change their environment. This empowerment perspective echoes DROP IN's desired approach for teachers who advocate for Education for All and Lifelong Learning and for students who are involved in their learning and their environment. Competencies for sustainability include cognitive, affective and motivational elements, and thus result from the interaction of knowledge, abilities and skills, motivations and affective dispositions. Competencies cannot be taught but must be acquired by the learners themselves. They are acquired through action, informed by experience and reflection (UNESCO, 2015; Weinert, 2001)⁸.

UNESCO's core competencies for sustainability include the following:

- **Competence in systems analysis:** the ability to recognize and understand relationships, to analyze complex systems, to understand how systems fit into different domains at different scales, and to consider elements of uncertainty.
- **Anticipatory competence:** the ability to understand and evaluate multiple possible, probable and desirable futures, to form one's own visions of the future, to apply the precautionary principle, to appreciate the consequences of action, and to consider risks and changes.
- **Normative competence:** the ability to understand and analyze the norms and values underpinning one's own actions, and to negotiate relative sustainability values, principles, objectives and targets in the context of conflicts of interest and trade-offs, uncertain knowledge and contradictions.

- **Strategic competence:** the ability to collectively design and implement innovative actions that increase sustainability at the local level and beyond.
- **Collaborative Competency:** the ability to learn from others, understand and respect the needs, views and actions of others (empathy), understand, connect with and pay attention to others (empathic leadership), reduce conflict within a group, and facilitate collaborative and participatory problem solving.
- **Critical thinking skills:** the ability to question norms, practices and opinions, to reflect on one's own values, perceptions and actions, and to take a stand in the sustainability discourse.
- **Self-knowledge competence:** the ability to reflect on one's own role in the local community and society (the global community), to constantly evaluate one's own actions and deepen one's motivation, and to control one's feelings and desires.
- **Integrated problem-solving competence:** the overall ability to apply different frameworks to complex sustainability problems and to design viable, inclusive and equitable options to address them, promoting sustainable development, by combining the above-mentioned competencies.

Several of UNESCO's assertions on the subject seem important to mention to echo our perception of school drop-out:

- "Individuals must learn to understand the complex world in which they live. They must be able to collaborate, express themselves and act for positive change (UNESCO, 2015). In a word, to be "citizens of sustainability" (Wals, 2015; Wals and Lenglet, 20169). »

- “Core sustainability competencies are those that sustainability citizens particularly need to address today’s complex challenges. »
- “Educators using this framework are encouraged to ask themselves what essential skills the learning activities they implement facilitate the acquisition of knowledge. »

One of UNESCO’s sustainable development objectives for 2030 is “quality education”, an education that must give pride of place to a mix of education and learning (cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral). This is reminiscent of the categorization of methods proposed in EDUC’ACTION. These methods are at the service of cognitive teaching, self-understanding (emotions, stress, orientation...) and a behavior conducive to collaborative work, meaning to do and live together.

There are two levels of analysis and reflection: the evolution of skills for teachers and for students.

- *The DROP IN team proposes to focus on four types of skills:*
- *the use of non-formal education in the service of teaching*
- *expression and communication skills (self-expression and listening),*
- *collaborative and cooperative learning skills (learning with and from others),*
- *and the development of critical thinking (evaluation).*

To specify these four types of competences, three reference frameworks complement each other: the competences formulated by UNESCO as essential for sustainability, the WHO (World Health Organization) psychosocial competences and the soft skills evaluated in the teacher questionnaire.

The table below shows the definition of these four types of skills by cross-referencing the three reference systems:

Competencies addressed in the DROP IN project	Analyze training based on the “ Sustainability Core Competencies ”	WHO Psycho-social Competencies	Soft-skills
<p>The use of non-formal education in the service of education</p> <p>Creating a dynamic and a well-being environment in the classroom</p> <p>Adapt methods according to the context and pedagogical objectives</p>	<p>Self-knowledge competence: the ability to reflect on one’s own role in the local community and society (of the global community), to constantly evaluate one’s own actions and deepen one’s motivation, and to control one’s feelings and desires.</p> <p>Anticipatory competence: the ability to understand and evaluate multiple possible, probable and desirable futures, to form one’s own visions of the future, to apply the precautionary principle, to appreciate the consequences of action, and to consider risks and changes.</p>	<p>Self-awareness/ Empathy for others</p> <p>Stress Management/ Emotional Management</p>	<p>Adaptability</p> <p>Listening</p> <p>Tolerance & respect</p> <p>Creativity</p>
<p>Communication and self-expression</p>		<p>Know how to communicate effectively</p> <p>Be skilled in interpersonal relationships</p>	<p>Mediation</p> <p>Verbal Communication</p>

<p>Collaborative learning skills</p>	<p>Collaborative Competency: the ability to learn from others, understand and respect the needs, views and actions of others (empathy), understand, connect with and pay attention to others (empathic leadership), reduce conflict within a group, and facilitate collaborative and participatory problem solving.</p>	<p>Problem Solving / Decision Making Skills</p>	<p>Open-mindedness</p> <p>Ability to learn</p> <p>Teamwork</p>
<p>Development of critical thinking</p>	<p>Critical thinking skills: the ability to question norms, practices and opinions, to reflect on one's own values, perceptions and actions, and to take a stand in the sustainability discourse.</p> <p>Normative competence: the ability to understand and analyze the norms and values underpinning one's own actions, and to negotiate sustainability values, principles, objectives and targets in the context of conflicts of interest and trade-offs, uncertain knowledge and contradictions.</p> <p>Strategic competence: the ability to collectively design and implement innovative actions that increase sustainability at the local level and beyond.</p> <p>Competence in systems analysis: the ability to recognize and understand relationships, analyze complex systems, understand how systems fit into different domains at different scales, and consider elements of uncertainty.</p>	<p>Think critically/ Creatively</p>	

Reporting on the increase in skills sought during the training courses of Drop'In project:

We specified for each block of competence what is aimed at in practice and we show the constructive exchanges allowed in training through the experimentation of methods and the quality of the shared reflections.

The use of non-formal education in the service of education:

What is concretely questioned in teachers' practice:

The *creation of a group environment and dynamic of learners* requires proposing activities of self-knowledge and knowledge of others to facilitate the "Living Together" of the classroom group. The expression of one's motivations, emotions and feelings in a safe and facilitating environment helps to reinforce the well-being of each individual in the classroom. Listening to the thoughts and feelings of others facilitates students' empathy and understanding of diversity.

The dynamic is punctuated by the sequence of activities and the complementarity of methods.

The *adaptation of methods to the service of teaching* takes the form of a panel of diversified activities that are complementary to meet the learning preferences of each student and facilitate the learning process. The teaching environment is based on the cognitive (the knowledge taught) but also on the motivational (the meaning of learning), the socio-cognitive (group dynamics and comfort) and the meta-cognitive (evaluation of learning). In this perspective, the complementary nature of the methods will focus on one axis and seek a stimulating rhythm in the pedagogical session.

For the students:

At the heart of the competencies targeted is an understanding of self and others in terms of *learning processes and styles and living together with our diversity of thoughts and behaviors.*

What was discussed in training:

While the objective was to experiment with the methods in order to facilitate their remobilization, the debriefing times to reflect on the implementation of the methods for each one was a space that welcomed questioning and allowed each person to think about how and why to use the method they had experienced.

Expression and communication skills:

What is concretely questioned in teachers' practice:

Vertical and horizontal communication is the adaptation of times for knowledge sharing through its presentation (verticality) and others for exchange to allow the process of knowledge acquisition and anchoring. For students, it is also about knowing how to share knowledge and knowing how to listen in order to learn.

The *role of facilitating* a constructive exchange between learners is concretized by the form (sub-group, methods...) and by the proposed mediation.

More specifically, the role of the facilitator is to *create spaces for conflict resolution*, to express opinions and feelings.

What was discussed in training:

The [Think Tank activity](#) was aimed at the expression of emotions in the service of school retention, it was about facilitating the emergence of each person's ideas and to think about how to give space and facilitate the expression of thoughts and emotions within the class. In the example of this activity, the emerging ideas of the two teams are to be considered "horizontally" to ensure that learning is anchored. The fact that there are two teams, that work time is paced and that the combination of the emergence of an idea and then the realization of a chosen idea reinforces the awareness of effective communication.

Collaborative and cooperative learning skills:

What is concretely questioned in teachers' practice:

The *consideration of the Other in the construction of one's reflection* is the main stake in order to collaborate, it is necessary for each one to be aware of the added value of the other in his or her learning process. Thus, the challenge is to highlight the strengths of each student, to ensure the expression of each and to accompany the process of "thinking and doing together".

To facilitate collective intelligence, shared goals, a common language and a small group are necessary conditions.

Collective choices and decision making are a particular point to be supported, especially with the differentiation between a collaborative or cooperative activity. In order to prevent group mechanisms with unequal treatment of speech and decision making, methods accompany pupils in the stages of expression, choice and decision making. In the case of conflict, these stages are essentials.

What was discussed in training:

By taking up the nuances between collaborative and cooperative activity, it is a question of distinguishing the conditions and the interest of the choice of methods. Cooperative methods imply interdependence within the group and the evaluation will be collective. In this case, learning to consider the Other, his reflections and behaviors will be necessary to learn together and create things that cannot be done alone.

The development of critical thinking:

What is concretely questioned in teachers' practice:

The analysis and problem solving of complex situations with a human dimension wish to be nourished by methods of conflict of opinion. The teacher's position as a facilitator accompanies a constant questioning to build knowledge.

The questioning of the norm for both teachers and pupils is intended to accept difference and seek to understand it rather than merely judge it. It is about learning to understand one's own value system and trying to understand that of others. To this end, the rules of the group must be explicit and the group is responsible for them. Questioning conventional rules feeds this capacity. Exercises to understand the influence of the media or peer pressure are preferred.

Creative thinking aims at exploring possible alternatives by the emergence of ideas that arise from the understanding of the problem and the creativity of the individual and/or the group. Creative thinking helps to respond adaptively and flexibly to everyday situations. Thus, the methods of idea emergence are a training in adaptability.

What was discussed in training:

During the training, we exchanged on the complex situation of teaching by questioning the mechanisms to fight against dropping out of school, the influence of management and colleagues and the power/willingness/knowledge at the teacher level. This systemic analysis of the fight against dropping out is a concrete example that demonstrates the multiple possible strategies, the height of the stakes and the elements of uncertainty.

Among the methods mobilized during the training, some were the opportunity to reflect on relationships at different scales, in particular to better understand the students and enable them to better understand themselves.

[Abigail's method](#), already mentioned for example, allowed us to debrief on the expression of personal judgements in front of its own



peer group. Understanding of one's relationships and the origin of one's value system is an opening to systemic analysis.

[The Carousel of professions](#) method, for example, allows one to think about one's orientation and motivation to learn from different inputs.

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