

**Priority Issues for Early School Leaving Prevention for ET2020 Working Group on
Schools Policy**

European Commission DG EAC Experts' Workshop on Early School Leaving

**Rue Joseph 11, Brussels
5th December 2014**

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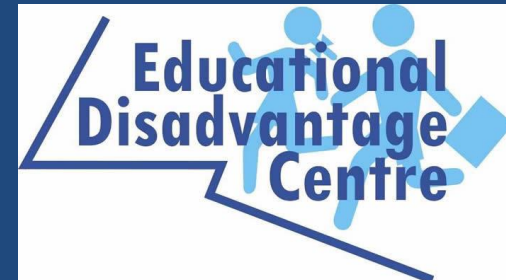
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European Commission Directorate General, Education and Culture, European Education and Youth Forum for "Future Priorities of the ET2020 Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training and Synergies with Youth Policy", October 9-10, 2014

Priority Recommendations of Workshops: Equity, social cohesion & active citizenship, Supporting a new generation of educators, Tackling the low-skills gap:

A.

5B2 Funding to promote participatory school/learning

3B2 Enhance educator to become professional

B.

5B1 Family support; partnership with parents; early childhood / early years

2B1 Focus on family (early tracking)

2B2 Holistic cross-sectoral approach

A. Democracy – Inclusive Systems as Emotional-Relational Communicative Systems

5B2 Funding to promote participatory school/learning

3B2 Enhance educator to become professional

B. Outreach - Holistic bridges between Health and Education - Differentiated Focus on Need through Multidisciplinary Teams (Downes 2014)

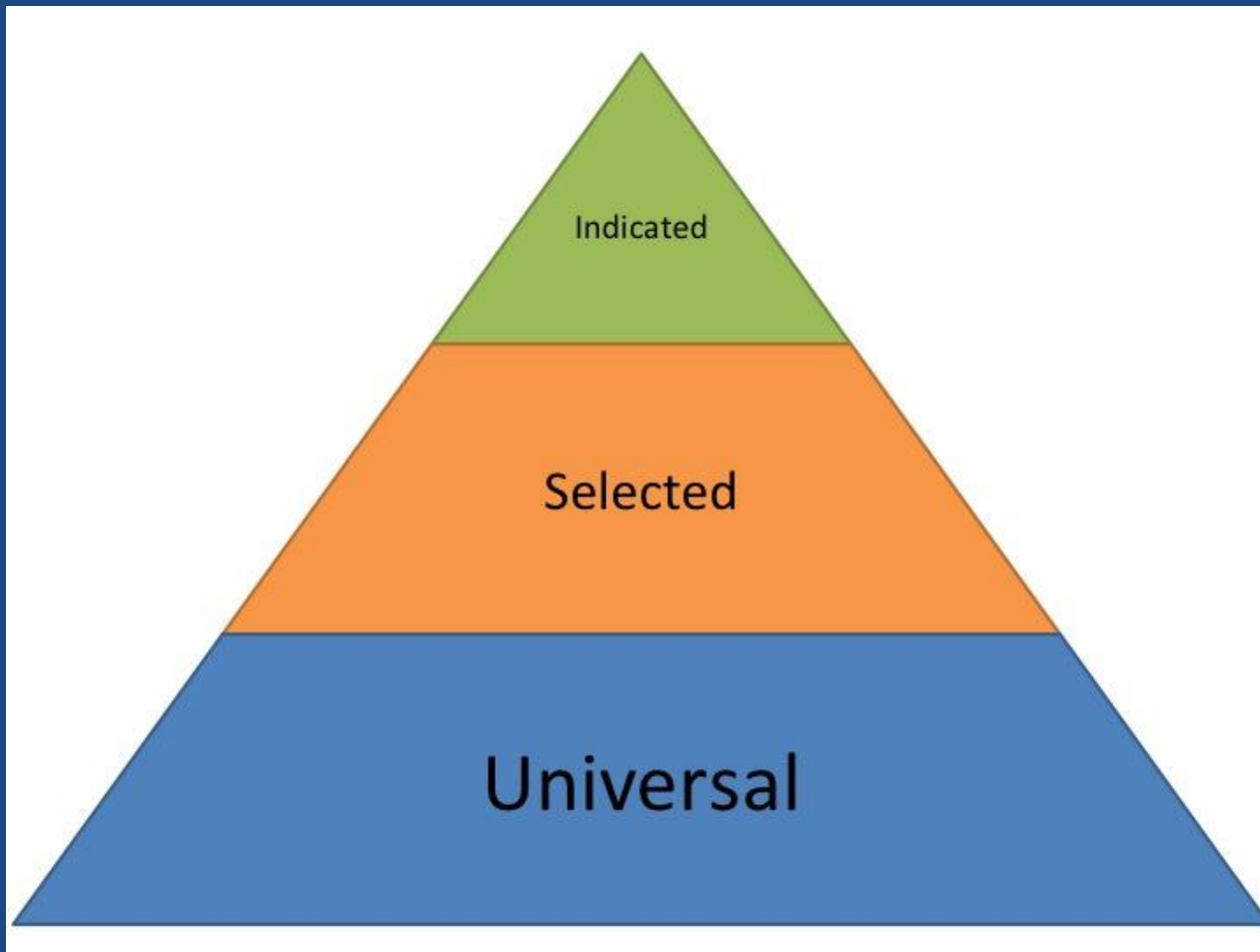
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Figure 1. Differentiated Levels of Need for Prevention

Downes (2014)



A. Democracy – Inclusive Systems as Emotional-Relational Communicative Systems

5B2 Funding to promote participatory school/learning

3B2 Enhance educator to become professional

In the EU Commission public consultation 'Schools for the 21st century', classroom management strategies were raised as an issue needing to be better addressed by teacher initial education.

WHO (2012) Modifications that appear to have merit include:

- establishing a caring atmosphere that promotes autonomy;
- providing positive feedback;
- not publicly humiliating students who perform poorly;
- identifying and promoting young people's special interests and skills to acknowledge that schools value the diversity they bring



Cefai & Cooper (2010), Malta review of qualitative research: 'the autocratic and rigid behaviour management approach adopted by many teachers in their response to misbehaviour. Their blaming and punitive approach was seen in many cases as leading to an exacerbation of the problem...It looks...that perceived victimisation by teachers was more prevalent and had more impact than victimisation and bullying by peers'

A number of US longitudinal studies provide evidence that a teacher's report of a supportive relationship with a student has positive effects on elementary students' behavioral and academic adjustment (Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, & Ponitz, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson, 1999; Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008).

Overcoming System Blockages in Communication: Professional Development for Teacher Conflict Resolution Skills and Cultural Competence/Diversity Training

Pyhältö et al. (2010) Finland, 518 students, 9th grade, 6 schools: 'unjustified and authoritarian behaviour that undermined pupil's agency was considered as a source of burden, anxiety, and anger'

A school principal from the Estonian national report:

“schools can create circumstances where unwanted students feel that they have to leave... and they do...” (Tamm & Saar 2010, in Downes 2011).

The secondary education system in Lithuania according to a school management representative: *“The attitudes towards students have to change and then they will feel better at schools. [...] at the moment students are selected under the criteria „good“ and „bad“ and those who get the „bad“ label do not want to stay at such school – they leave it”* (Taljunaite et al 2010, in Downes 2011)

No sunlight ! (Downes & Maunsell 2007)



“I can’t wait to leave, I would leave tomorrow if I had the choice because I get picked on by a teacher”

“No some[teachers] think they own the school”

Downes' (2004) student centered research in Ballyfermot, Dublin, 12 focus groups and 173 questionnaire responses from secondary students:

“Have anger management courses for teachers” (female, focus group):

“The teachers shouting at you. That makes me really, really down” (Age 13, F)

“If the teachers didn't roar at you” (Age 13, F)

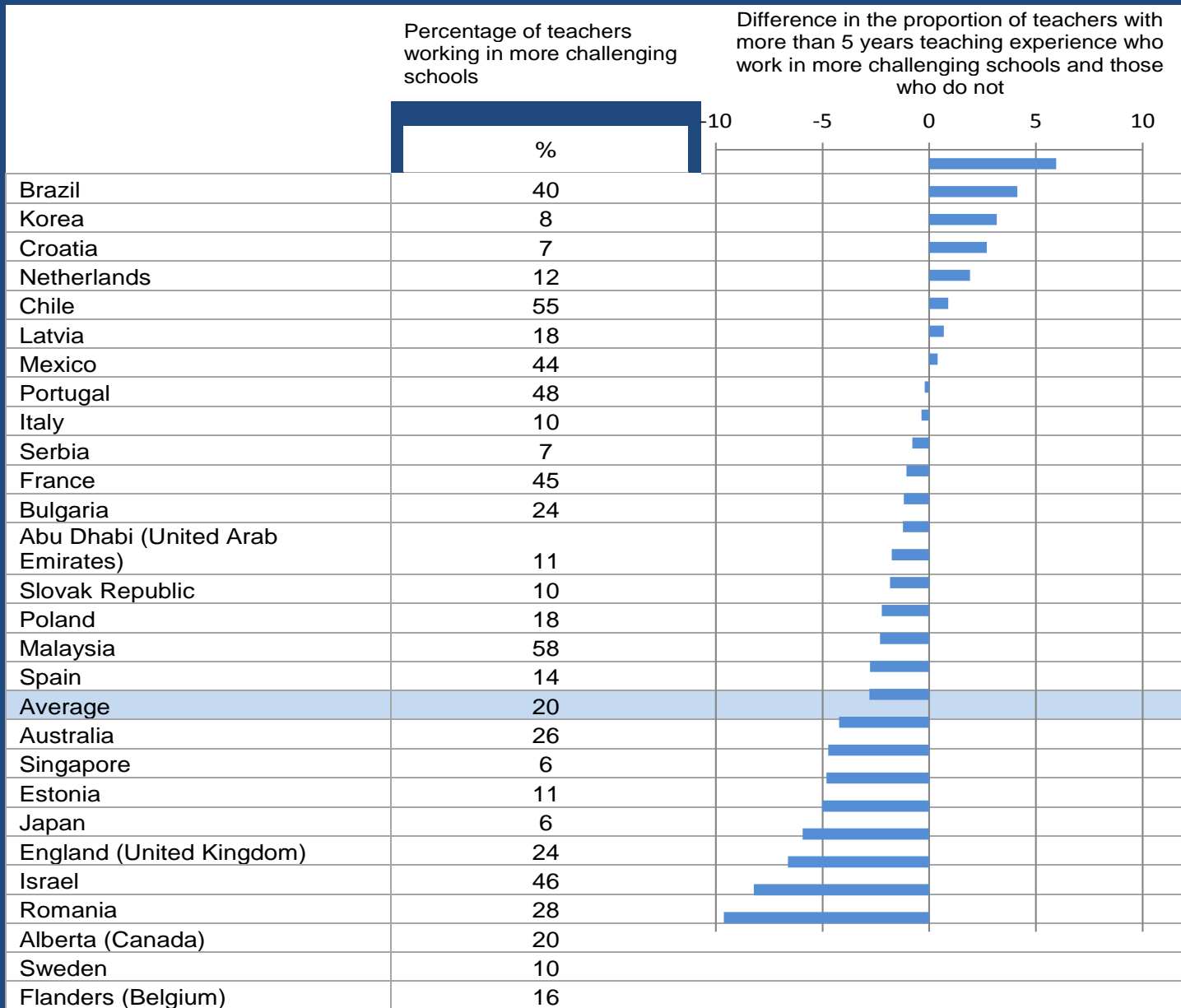
“Have an equal teaching system and sack ignorant snobby teachers...very harsh teachers usually make me stay out of school” (Age 16, M)

Challenge: Improve Experience of School Belonging and School Climate for Socio-Economically Excluded Groups

Challenge: Improve Teaching Experiences in Schools with High Levels of Social Exclusion and Early School Leaving: Helping to Minimise High Teacher Turnover

Percentage of socio-economically disadvantaged students who agree/disagree with the following statements (PISA 2012)

Countries	I feel like I belong at school		I feel like an outsider (or left out of things at school)	
	%	S.E.	%	S.E.
Austria	82	(1.6)	89.9	(1.1)
Belgium	63.5	(1.6)	88.4	(1.0)
Czech Republic	73.6	(1.9)	80.5	(1.6)
Denmark	69.3	(1.6)	90.3	(1.0)
Estonia	78.2	(1.8)	90.0	(1.3)
Finland	80.5	(1.1)	89.2	(1.0)
France	38	(1.7)	73.2	(1.8)
Germany	83.8	(1.6)	89.7	(1.4)
Greece	87.8	(1.2)	83.9	(1.4)
Hungary	83.5	(1.1)	85.6	(1.6)
Ireland	76.7	(1.5)	91.6	(1.0)
Italy	75	(0.9)	89.3	(0.6)
Luxembourg	71.9	(1.7)	85.9	(1.2)
Netherlands	82.4	(1.7)	89.8	(1.3)
Norway	83.5	(1.5)	89.1	(1.0)
Poland	73.2	(1.8)	88.2	(1.3)
Portugal	87.9	(1.2)	87.4	(1.5)
Slovak Republic	75.4	(1.8)	74.0	(2.3)
Slovenia	83.7	(1.7)	89.0	(1.2)
Spain	92.1	(0.7)	90.1	(1.0)
Sweden	74.8	(1.9)	87.0	(1.3)
United Kingdom	74.9	(1.5)	86.9	(1.1)
OECD Average	78.1	(0.3)	86.2	(0.2)



Source: OECD, TALIS 2013 Database, Table 2.11.

B. Outreach - Holistic bridges between Health and Education - Differentiated Focus on Need through Multidisciplinary Teams (Downes 2014)

5B1 Family support; partnership with parents; early childhood / early years

2B1 Focus on family (early tracking)

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A mental health/emotional support and early intervention focus for national ESL strategies – depression, trauma, bullying, school climate, family support outreach, substance abuse prevention, fear of failure/success

Poverty impacts on mental health, mental health impacts on early school leaving

- Mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, disruptive behaviour disorders, eating disorders, or post-traumatic stress disorder, can negatively impact on a child's school success, as well as general well-being (Kessler 2009; World Health Organization 2003)
- Children living in low-income families are especially vulnerable to mental health difficulties (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2009; US Department of Health and Human Services 2001).

Quiroga et al. (2013) based on a high-risk longitudinal sample (2000–2006) of French-speaking adolescents living in Montreal

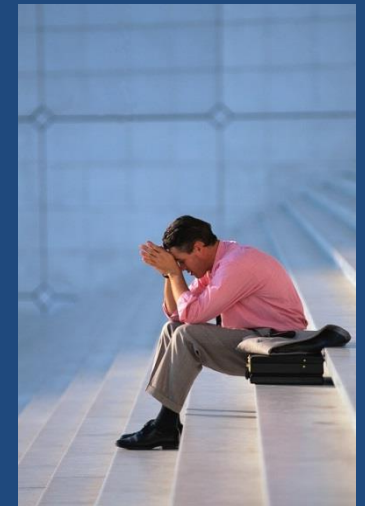
- recruited from two suburban secondary schools ranked by the Ministry of Education of Quebec (MEQ) in the three lowest deciles of socioeconomic status (SES) according to mother's education and parental employment.

* 493 participants (228 girls and 265 boys).

Quiroga et al. (2013) Results show that depression scores were negatively correlated with self-perceived academic competence but not with self-reported academic achievement –

*depression symptoms at the beginning of secondary school are related to higher dropout mainly by being associated with pessimistic views about the likelihood to reach desired school outcomes; student negative self-beliefs are in turn related to lower self-reported academic performance and predict a higher risk of dropping out. These findings emphasize that the connection between early depression and leaving school without qualifications is mostly indirect, as it is accounted for by achievement-related self-perceptions.

Quiroga et al. (2013) “interventions that target student mental health and negative self-perceptions are likely to improve dropout prevention”.



Even apart from poverty related depression, emotional distress contributes to early school leaving:

A troubling number of adolescents showing serious emotional distress and depression symptoms are at risk for school failure and dropout (Quiroga, Janosz, Lyons, & Morin, 2012; Thompson, Moody, & Eggert, 1994; Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, Epstein, & Sumi, 2005).

A meta-analysis of 28 longitudinal studies found that bullying doubled the risk for depression an average of 7 years later, even after controlling for numerous other risk factors (Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Loeber, 2011).

Emotional trauma (bereavement, rape, sexual abuse, bullying, family break up, sleep related problems) – supports needed to prevent early school leaving

Irish Parliament and Senate Report on early school leaving (2010):
Case studies of those who left school early due to trauma factors of rape, bereavement, sexual abuse

Wider referral processes – reach withdrawn kids

-Evidence suggests that the emotional support needs of withdrawn students, who are at risk of early school leaving, may be missed by teachers compared with those students displaying and externalising problems through aggression (Doll 1996; Downes 2004).

Downes & Maunsell (2007):

“Why do you think some people are dying ? Because there is no one to talk to”

- *“we should do more personal development”*

- *“girls slit their wrists”*

- *“girls take tablets and slice their wrists”*

- *“girls sleeping around to hurt themselves, other ways instead of slitting wrists”*

Multiple domains intervention needed for bullying prevention success – a risk factor for ESL

Pervasive teasing and bullying in a school may lead to disengagement and avoidance of school, distraction and inattentiveness in the classroom, and, ultimately, poorer academic performance (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2011; Lacey & Cornell, 2011; Mehta et al., in press).



School Climate, Teasing, Bullying

Notably, one standard deviation increases in student and teacher-reported Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying were associated with 16.5% and 10.8% increases in dropout counts, respectively, holding all other variables constant.

A basic conclusion from our study is that the Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying in high schools deserves serious consideration by educators in addressing the problem of dropout. In a sample of 276 high schools, the level of teasing and bullying reported by both ninth-grade students and teachers was predictive of cumulative dropout counts over 4 years after the cohort reached 12th grade.

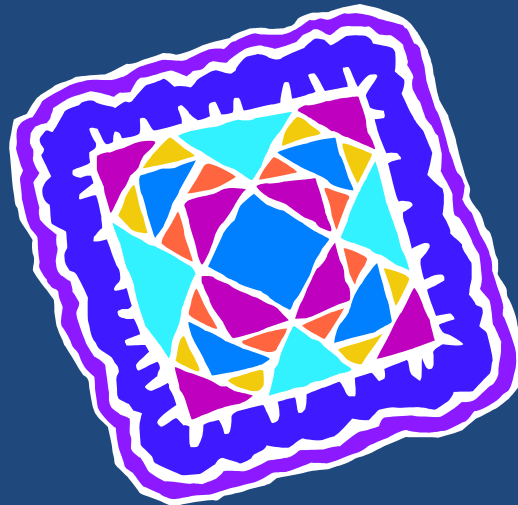
Cornell et al. (2013) “Because educators are often concerned about the impact of student poverty and academic capability on dropout rates in their schools, these findings suggest that a climate of teasing and bullying in the school also deserves consideration. Notably, the increased dropout count that was associated with Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying was quite similar to the increases that were associated with FRPM [i.e., poverty] and academic failure”.

Cornell et al. (2013) note that dropout programs often focus too narrowly on changes in individual students, without considering broader peer and school influences.

Cornell et al. (2013) “teasing and bullying may be a neglected source of decay to the social capital of schools that generates an atmosphere of mistrust and alienation, animosity and fear that ultimately pushes students to abandon their educational aspirations”.

From Multiple Agencies to Cohesive Multidisciplinary Teams for Early School Leaving Prevention

- Emotional support
- Outreach family support
- Speech and language



The *Alliances for Inclusion* report (Edwards & Downes 2013) reviewed the enabling conditions for the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams and crosssectoral approaches for early school leaving prevention, building on 16 examples from 10 European countries.

-A policy focus is needed to go beyond multiple agencies -Need to minimise fragmentation across diverse services 'passing on bits of the child' and family (Edwards & Downes 2013)

-the multi-faceted nature of risk requires a multi-faceted response that needs to go beyond referrals to disparate services resulting in this 'passing on bits of the child'

- For genuine interprofessional collaboration for early school leaving prevention, for example, between schools and multidisciplinary teams of outreach care workers, therapists/counsellors, nurses, speech and language therapists, social workers, occupational therapists, policy-led co-location is not sufficient. Efforts are needed to support inter-professional collaborations and overcome resistance. It is not enough just to designate a desk for these services in schools.

Need to focus on direct delivery and to minimise 'committee sitting' (Downes 2013a)

- For ESL, to adopt a multifaceted approach via multi-disciplinarity through either one team or two collaborating agencies as a common direct delivery network (Downes 2013a)
- A focus is needed on expanding the multi-disciplinarity of existing teams (2 agencies or one team) in a local area, bridging (mental) health and education expertise

Prevention and early intervention focus

- To engage directly with problems related to early school leaving, for example, nonattendance, trauma, bullying, mental health difficulties, language development, parental support, sleep deficits, risk of substance misuse, suspension/expulsion, conflict with teachers

*Outreach work to reach most marginalised families

- Each family has one 'lead professional' to link them with others (Edwards & Downes 2013a)

*Continuum of interventions – all, some, intensive individual

Community based family support centres, with multidisciplinary teams linked with preschools and schools, with a focus on child and parent mental health, emotional support and school attendance

Between 2006 and 2012 approx. 3,000 of the total 9,000 child care centres in the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) are being developed into certified “Familienzentren” (family centres). Family centres are designed to bundle services for families in the local community. The concept of the state programme “Familienzentrum NRW” acknowledges the significance of early support and intervention for children and families (Eurochild 2011)

As described by Eurochild (2011), the Familienzentrum Nordrhein-Westfalen...

- develops children's day-care facilities into places for learning and gathering experience for children and their parents whose parenting skills get enhanced,
- assists parents in resolving everyday conflicts because such assistance can be provided more immediately and smoothly,
- helps immigrant families and educationally deprived families to be better cared for,

The municipality of Eindhoven has chosen for a family support policy based on multifunctional services directly linked to primary schools in these SPIL Centres. This choice had been made based on the principle of the early detection of children at risk as early as possible and as close to the family as possible. The main reason for this is that schools, day care centres and kindergartens are places with the best access to 'find' children at risk and their parents (Eurochild 2011)

Downes (2014) 10 European City Municipalities Strategies for Early School Leaving Prevention:

*Community 'one stop shops' of multidisciplinary teams address system fragmentation of services

*Beyond community centre focused outreach, there is also a need for individual outreach to some families' homes at the level of highest need (indicated prevention). Many such families may have a history of intergenerational substance abuse.

*High levels of unexplained nonattendance by a student at school is a clear behavioural manifestation associated with risk of early school leaving. This nonattendance issue is tied up with emotional and mental health issues in the family system and needs to be engaged with through an integrated holistic response, such as with outreach care workers or other professionals to provide psychological and practical support.



There is an emerging European Union consensus on this issue, as the recent EUNEC (European Network of Education Councils) statement on early school leaving, following the Vilnius EU Presidency conference (2013) on early school leaving:

Tackling early school leaving should be part of a multi-institutional and inter-institutional approach that puts the school in the center of a chain of public and social services. It is about a common approach between the society outside the school and the community within the school. Family and social services, community centers and labor market services are involved

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