



## Key issues regarding early school leaving prevention for the EU2020 headline target

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EU2020 Headline target of 10% Early school  
leavers

Where is Estonia's national strategy for Early  
School Leaving Prevention ??

\* Not one early school leaving problem

• Early school leaving strategy needs multiple layers to address a range of problems

• Different kinds of interventions with a focus on different risk groups

# Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in education and training (2009)

Benchmark 2010 + 2020	Country
13.9	Estonia
13.9	Latvia
5.3	Slovenia
8.7	Lithuania
9.9	Finland
11.3	Ireland
15.7	United Kingdom
31.2	Spain
36.8	Malta

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER SEC (2012) Reducing early school leaving. Accompanying document to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving. It advocates the establishment of national strategies in every member state by 2012

Downes (2003): Living with heroin: HIV, Identity and Social Exclusion among the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia.

- Less academic Russian-speaking students at risk from language reforms
- Socioeconomic integration neglected in integration strategy, with severe consequences for Ida-Virumaa
- Social competence in the integration documents a political rather than psychological construct
- Drug and HIV Prevention strategies need to be in the Russian-language
- Term 'non-Estonian' a discriminatory term for Russian-speaking Estonian citizens, lessening parity of esteem
- See also Downes, Zule-Lapimaa, Ivanchenko, Blumberg (2008) Not One Victim More: Human Trafficking in the Baltic States. Living for Tomorrow NGO: Tallinn

## Key priorities for an Early School Leaving Strategy in Estonia

- Reform of Early Stratification
- Alternatives to Suspension
- Conflict Resolution Skills for Teachers
- Mental health/Emotional Supports (Bullying, Substance Abuse, Multidisciplinary Teams)
- Focus on less academic Russian-speaking students for supports as part of a distinctive strategic focus on Russian-speakers, especially in North-Eastern Estonia

## Reform of Early Stratification

The OECD report (Field, Kuczera & Pont 2007) has identified ten key steps to equity in education:

- Step1: Limit early tracking and streaming and postpone academic selection

An Estonian Education Ministry official highlights the extremely early stage of elitist selection processes for schools at post-primary and even, as in Estonia, primary level:

People believe that if you have finished a so-called elite school (one of the best schools in Tallinn or Tartu that accept 7 year olds to year one on the basis of entrance tests) then you have the right to a state funded study place, because you are better than others. Nobody seems to realise that the advantages of an elite school graduate may be the result of his/her better starting position compared with a graduate from a secondary school in the countryside or a small town. Our society does not recognise that social fairness is a problem. People do not want to see it (Tamm & Saar 2010).



A Hungarian Education and Culture Ministry raises a similar theme:

The reduction of the selection and the segregation is also important. There are legal endeavours and programmes against segregation. I think this process has to be carried out consistently. Such programmes are as follows: transformation of the schooling districts, the obligatory reception of the underprivileged ones, maximising the proportion of the underprivileged ones in the classes, the integration norm (those that can motivate the institutions to continue the integration pedagogic programme) (Balogh et al., 2010).

## Alternatives to suspension

Evidence from Lithuania and Ireland in particular highlights the serious scale of the problem of suspension and expulsion from secondary schools. The Lithuanian national report provides the following example:

- According to management and the teacher interviewed approximately 10 percent of students are expelled from school in each year. The reasons are usually behaviour problems, bullying, harassment, and aggressiveness i.e. non-academic reasons prevail. The teacher mentioned that there were no expelled students for not attending classes. The statistics, according to the management can be collected, but this will not solve the problem (Taljunaite et al., 2010).

This figure seems to be in addition to their estimates of those who 'drop out' from school which also reaches approximately 10%. The Irish post-primary figure of 5% for suspension, applied to the total population of 332,407 students equates to well over 16,000 students suspended from post-primary schools in 2005/6 (ERC/NEWB 2010).

## **A multidisciplinary team plays a key role in devising alternative strategies to suspension (Downes 2011)**

### **See this example from a Russian school:**

The school does not practice expulsion or suspension of students. Instead, the psychological support service team regularly conducts preventive meetings and conversations with students who have discipline or study problems. Each school has a Preventive Council aimed at dealing with 'problem' students and the evening school #5 is no exception. The school police inspector is in charge of young students and deals with their discipline problems. The psychologist and social teacher conduct conversations and meetings with adult students in case their discipline or studying practices are improper. Use of preventive measures as an alternative to expulsion shows that the school staff aims to keep as many students at risk of early leaving at school as possible, which proves how much they are indeed interested in students and care for them (Kozlovskiy, Khokhlova & Veits 2010).

In the Irish report, the school guidance counsellor continues:

*They are sent to the Behaviour Support Unit, where there's more intensive tuition and intensive development of skills...to focus themselves back in the classroom where they can...prepare better and...they don't act out in the same extent in a negative manner (Dooley et al., 2010).*

## Conflict Resolution Skills for Teachers

Estonian national report:

In view of the big number of pupils who drop out of general educational schools we are offering courses for teachers on teaching pupils with special needs. We are also developing a new programme concerning conflict management and coping in a situation of crisis...The Ministry of Education and Research has also made suggestions for teacher training courses and has funded such courses (Tamm & Saar 2010).

How well developed are these conflict resolution skills courses for teachers ?

Tamm (2010) highlights a number of problems at the level of principal's awareness of professional development, referring to a:

Lack of knowledge among principals about training opportunities and its benefits and that School heads need specific training and information on courses on managing risk groups; they also need an opportunity to share relevant experiences (Tamm 2010).

The majority of those who have dropped out of or left their previous school are lower secondary students. They had conflicts with teachers or other problems and could not continue in their old school (Tamm & Saar 2010).

Lithuanian national report observed the following problems:

- There are no alternative schools for early school leavers and drop-outs;
- Negative teachers' attitude towards students who do not attend school regularly;
- Teachers lack of psychological and counselling skills when communication with those students;
- The psychological support is unavailable. It is difficult to get this support, the quality and efficiency of support is insufficient (Taljunaite et al., 2010).



## **Mental health/Emotional Supports (Bullying, Substance Abuse, Multidisciplinary Teams)**

The Commission Staff Working Document on early school leaving (2010) explicitly recognises that early school leaving 'can be part of a situation of serious social, academic and/or emotional distress' (p. 36). Significantly, this is reiterated in the Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation (2011) on early school leaving:

Targeted individual support 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 (2011, p.13).

Many students need individual support and tutoring. Sometimes they simply want to talk to somebody they trust, to pour out their heart. The teacher of family studies is in great demand also outside the curriculum: Sometimes the students come and ask: 'Has she come yet? I need to talk to her.' Even those who have no classes on that particular day come to school to talk to her (Tamm & Saar 2010).

The school on its turn has tried to compensate for the family studies teacher's extra work (Tamm & Saar 2010).

Estonian larger schools, including adult secondary schools have a psychologist on their payroll. We also have counselling centres in counties offering the services of a psychologist and a career counsellor (Tamm & Saar 2010).

It is apparent that gaps in emotional support provision are a systemic feature of the educational system in Lithuania, including third level provision:

There are no emotional support services or staff responsible for this area [in the private college]. Students receive emotional support, according to the management, from the teachers and staff members and their fellow colleagues. This is based on personal relationships (Taljunaite et al., 2010).

There is a need for supports to challenge fatalism which is a risk factor for drug use and other self-harming behaviour, including a fatalism associated with early school leaving (Kalichman et al., 2000; Downes 2003; Ivers et al., 2010).

**Focus on less academic Russian-speaking students for supports as part of a distinctive strategic focus on Russian-speakers, especially in North-Eastern Estonia**

Less academic Russian-speakers more troubled by language reforms in education (Kello 2009; Kello et al., 2011)

Kello's (2009) focus groups with Russian-speaking students in Narva, Estonia highlighted that 'students whose language skills are poorer are left aside or leave completely' (p.47)

OECD 10 steps to equity in education (2007):

Step 9: Direct resources to students and regions with the greatest needs

Table 8. Which of the following opinions about the possible negative results of the reform do you agree with?

RUSSIAN SCHOOLS OF ESTONIA. Compendium of Materials. Part 2. Study report "Socially Active Teachers and Parents on Russian Education Reform in Estonia".

			Teacher	Teacher	Parent	Parent	Student	Student
	Total No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Large share of students will not cope with the disciplines in Estonian</b>	196	97.6%	107	90.7%	74	93.7%	15	100%
<b>More students will quit schools</b>	177	83.5%	97	82.2%	69	87.3%	11	73.3%

Still need firm focus on socio-economic integration, especially for Ida-Virumaa

‘Although the first integration programme did include a chapter of socio-economic integration, its place in the integration policy was very low-key’ (Lauristin et al., 2011).

‘Ethnic differences in employment widened during the period of economic recession. The difference in unemployment between ethnic Estonians and people of other ethnicities is larger than before the crisis; the gap has also increased for the proportion of permanently employed (in 2007 and 2010, 96% and 90% of ethnic Estonians and 95% and 84% of other ethnicities, respectively)’ (Lauristin et al., 2011).

## **Political (not Psychological) ‘Social Competence’ now an Integration Hierarchy of Success**

‘For the 2008 integration monitoring, a model of a “well integrated non- Estonian” was constructed – a naturalized citizen who is proficient in Estonian language, considers oneself as part of the Estonian nation, communicates closely with ethnic Estonians and is oriented towards Estonia’s success’ (Lauristin et al., 2011).



## QUESTIONABLE INTEGRATION HIERARCHY OF SUCCESS

**‘Successfully integrated (cluster A).** Compared to others, this group is slightly more open regarding the language of instruction at schools, i.e. there is willingness to acquire basic and higher education in Estonian language. On the other hand, “successfully integrated” people are also a little more likely to consider partially or fully English language based secondary school as a possible option. Hence, for this group, high quality of education is more important than the working language. A regional school with in-depth instruction in Russian and various other languages (e.g. in Tallinn or Tartu), providing good chances and motivation to continue education in Estonia, may be a good support for this group’ (Lauristin et al., 2011).

**‘Russian speaking Estonian patriot (cluster B).** As this cluster with strong citizen identity doesn’t mainly include young people but rather their parents and grandparents, it would be important to engage the latter in school life – including civic education – both through boards of trustees and various cooperation opportunities’ (Lauristin et al., 2011).

**‘Critically minded Estonian speaker (cluster C).** As for educational preferences, this group is relatively similar to the aforementioned clusters, preferring to acquire education (both secondary and higher) in Estonian’ (Lauristin et al., 2011).

‘Instead of the formal so-called state education, the main emphasis regarding teaching aids, teacher training and methodology, should be put on citizen education that provides more opportunities for dialogue and self-expression. **Serious consideration should be given to developing a youth policy that would focus on developing in young people the skills of active citizenship**’ (Lauristin et al., 2011).

**'Not integrated (cluster E).** This group has also more limited educational choices, as the members of the group believe that they might not even reach secondary education(Lauristin et al., 2011).'

## **PARTICIPATION AND IDENTITY ASPECT OF INTEGRATION**

‘...directing resources to promoting citizen education and democratic values in Ida-Virumaa County, Lasnamäe district (Tallinn) and Maardu, having in mind the youth as an especially important target group’ (Lauristin et al., 2011).

## 2 further concerns

Socio-economic not same as social:

‘...dimensions of integration (linguistic, political, and social)’ (Lauristin et al., 2011)

‘Minorities engaged as subjects of policy’ (Lauristin et al., 2011).

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