Towards a Differentiated, Holistic and Systemic Approach

to Parental Involvement in Europe

for Early School Leaving Prevention

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Abstract

This report seeks to inform and guide the short and medium term strategic planning of the 10 Urbact PREVENT city municipalities and all other municipalities, local authorities and schools across Europe with regard to Parental Involvement in Education for Early School Leaving Prevention. This review of Parental Involvement in Education for Early School Leaving Prevention in Europe is based on three interrelated aspects. Firstly, it involves an analysis of EU Commission and Council documents on early school leaving and social inclusion from the perspective of parental involvement in education. Secondly, it involves a dialogue and ongoing consultation process with the 10 municipalities engaged in the Urbact, PREVENT project with regard to key themes, practices and priorities in this area. Thirdly, it interrogates international research relevant to this area. Emerging from these aspects, a holistic, differentiated approach to parental involvement is taken.

A *holistic* focus recognises the need to include family support within a parental involvement in education framework, bridging health and education domains, as part of a multidisciplinary focus on complex needs. A holistic approach recognises emotional and physical needs and not simply academic, cognitive ones of both children/young people and their parents in contexts of socio-economic exclusion. A *differentiated* strategy recognises parental roles and influences relevant to early school leaving at universal (all), selected (some – moderate risk) and indicated prevention (individual – high need) levels and the level of promotion of strengths and cultural identity. It further includes lifelong learning dimensions, especially concerning social cohesion and active citizenship. Developed by analogy with the UN right to health structural indicators, the framework being adopted in this report is that of identifying key structural indicators for a *systemic* strategic response.

This report identifies the three areas of *Outreach* (community and individual family), *Health* and *Democratic Systems in School* as central to a holistic, differentiated and systemic focus on parental involvement in education, specifically for early school leaving prevention. An outreach approach to parental involvement for schools and municipalities requires active efforts to engage with groups, in contexts where they feel most comfortable, such as in their homes and local community based contexts. A key theme in this report in response to challenging issues of outreach and system fragmentation is to focus on development of *centres*, of accessible community based centres as a 'one stop shop' for family support, as well as centres for lifelong learning (both nonformal and formal). Major recommendations in the report are for a) 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 and b) community based lifelong learning centres, with both nonformal and formal education classes, targeting areas of highest social marginalization. Such community lifelong learning centres may also include the complementary approach of school building locations, as part of a strategy of opening the school up to the local community after school hours.

Another major recommendation regarding promoting democratic systems of communication in schools recognises that municipalities are in an ideal position as a mediating space for dialogue between schools, parents and students. Such a dialogue, targeting schools especially in areas of high poverty, nonattendance and early school leaving, would include student surveys of their needs and school experiences, including open-ended questions and also focus groups of students and parents. It is recommended that municipalities develop a 'Quality Mark for Democratic School Systems for Parents' and Students' Voices' for participating

schools, as an incentive to participate in this process. The recommended process of dialogue to promote democratic systems in schools is not an expensive commitment and is central to a strategic commitment to parental involvement in schools. It is to include an EU Commission Quality Mark for Children and Young People's Voices and Democratic Communication to be heard in school, together with a similar Quality Mark for Parental Involvement and Democratic Communication.

A key system blockage highlighted by the PREVENT network is that of *system fragmentation*. This can take place where there is a diffusion of responsibility across different agencies in a municipality about who is the lead person responsible for organising a strategy of engagement with families and children experiencing social marginalisation. There is a need to go beyond a fragmented approach of endless referrals across services that are 'passing on bits of the child' (Edwards & Downes 2013) and family. This system fragmentation can also occur at a school level if there is not a key worker in the school with specific responsibility for parental involvement and for collaborating with the rest of the teachers and principal on this issue. Other key themes highlighted in the report include an active role for parents to intervene and be involved for overcoming sleep difficulties of pupils, alternatives to suspension/expulsion from school, bullying in school, first-language problems of pupils, family literacy outreach and for festivals to promote bridges between schools and local communities. Going beyond Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systems approach to interrogate system blockage or displacement (Downes 2014), distinct kinds of system blockage for parental involvement can be seen to emerge and need to be firmly addressed through the identified recommended structural indicators to promote holistic, differentiated parental involvement for early school leaving at system levels. In doing so, a relational approach to engaging with parents from socio-economically excluded groups must always be kept to the fore.

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Aim

This report seeks to inform and guide the short and medium term strategic planning of the 10 Urbact PREVENT city municipalities and all other municipalities, local authorities and schools across Europe with regard to Parental Involvement in Education for Early School Leaving Prevention. This is as part of meeting the EU2020 commitment to the headline target of 10% early school leavers across the EU.

Method

This review of Parental Involvement in Education for Early School Leaving Prevention in Europe is based on three interrelated aspects. Firstly, it involves an analysis of EU Commission and Council documents on early school leaving and social inclusion from the perspective of parental involvement in education. Secondly, it involves a dialogue and ongoing consultation process with the 10 municipalities engaged in the Urbact, PREVENT project with regard to key themes, practices and priorities in this area. These municipalities are from Antwerp (Belgium- Flanders), Catania (Italy – Sicily), Gijon (Spain), The Hague (Netherlands), Munich (Germany), Nantes (France), Sofia (Bulgaria), Stockholm (Sweden), Tallinn (Estonia), Usti (Czech Republic). Thirdly, it interrogates international research relevant to this area.

Scope

The main focus of this report is on parental involvement for children and young people of schoolgoing age in Europe. However, given the importance of the early years for children's educational development and for early school leaving prevention, a number of issues regarding early years education will also be highlighted. The report seeks to inform the short and medium term strategic planning of municipalities, schools, national governments, EU Commission and international non-governmental organisations in this area. The scope of this review report is limited, especially as it is not based on research directly with parents, students or schools in the participating municipalities. However, schools in the participating municipalities have contributed to the development of the Local Action Plans for Parental Involvement for Early School Leaving Prevention that are part of another related milestone of the PREVENT project. Issues arising for discussion for these Local Action Plans have also influenced the dialogue that informs this report. Whereas themes such as parent-teacher meetings, parents' councils, and parent representation on the school board are a mainstream

part of school systems in Europe, the focus for current purposes is less on these formal roles and more specifically of developing parental involvement for early school leaving prevention, to engage more marginalised parents.

Table 1. Target Audience for this Report

Who is the target audience ?
Urbact
European Commission DG Education and Culture, DG SANCO (Health)
10 participating municipalities in PREVENT
All EU municipalities
EU national governments
Schools
Parents
Students
International and national researchers
International and national non-governmental organisations

A. Introduction

- **Background Context: Key European Union Documents on Early School Leaving and Social Inclusion**

The EU Urbact PREVENT project on parental involvement for early school leaving operates against the background of the EU2020 headline target for early school leaving of 10% across the EU. This headline target and priority of focus has led to the development of an EU Council Recommendation (2011) on early school leaving, signed up to by all EU Member States, with the exception of Britain. It is the focus of this Council Recommendation, together with a number of related EU Commission documents (2011, 2011a, 2013, 2013a) on early school leaving and on child poverty and social inclusion, that form the basic overarching framework both for early school leaving prevention generally and for the approaches to parental involvement in these documents related to ESL prevention.

The most direct references to parental involvement is in the Annex framework to the Council Recommendation (2011) itself with regard to both prevention and intervention[2]:

> Prevention policies could include:... '(5) Enhancing the involvement of parents, reinforcing their cooperation with the school and creating partnerships between schools and parents can increase learning motivation among pupils.

> Intervention policies at the level of the school or training institution could include:... (3) Networking with parents and other actors outside school, such as local community services, organisations representing migrants or minorities, sports and culture associations, or employers and civil society organisations, which allows for holistic solutions to help pupils at risk and eases the access to external support such as psychologists, social and youth workers, cultural and community services. This can be facilitated by mediators from the local community who are able to support

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[2] A further rationale on the need for bridges between school and home is provided by the Commission Staff Working Paper (2011) regarding ' Enhancing the involvement of parents: 'If key actors such as parents are disengaged, it deeply undermines the success of school education and means that warning signs are more easily missed. Cooperation between families and school is indispensable especially for pupils at risk of ESL. However, parents from socio-economically disadvantaged and low-education backgrounds are often reluctant to contact the school. They might believe themselves to be unwelcome, have their own experiences of school failure or might not expect appropriate support from the school. Sometimes, schools may find it difficult to reach out to families because of a real or perceived attitude of non-cooperation among some families. Building trusting relationships between parents and schools is a crucial and challenging task in reducing ESL. Innovative approaches which support communication with parents, which create partnerships between parents and schools and which enhance mutual understanding do exist, but are not yet sufficiently widespread.'

communication and to reduce distrust.

This latter emphasis on the role of parents is significant in that it is part of a wider holistic approach that encompasses a multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral focus as part of a community level interaction with schools.

A Holistic Multidisciplinary Approach to Parental Involvement for Early School Leaving Prevention

Such a wider holistic and multidisciplinary approach to parental engagement is also a feature of key EU Commission documents in this area of early school leaving prevention. The Commission Communication (2011) recognises that 'Early school leaving is not just a school issue and its causes need to be addressed across a range of social, youth, family, health, local community, employment, as well as education policies'. Moreover, the Commission Recommendation (2013), *Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage* adopts a framework which explicitly seeks to 'enhance family support' and 'promote quality, community-based care' as part of a challenge to the effects of poverty and social exclusion in education. Again a multidisciplinary approach across different levels to engage with complex needs in a holistic fashion is a feature of this Commission (2013) framework recommendations for investment in children through 'multi-dimensional strategies'.

The Commission Staff Working Paper (2011a) on early school leaving also gives this emphasis to a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach when referring to 'Networking with actors outside school':

Difficulties at school often have their roots outside. Solving problems at school cannot be done effectively without tackling the range of problems that put children in difficulty, which can include drug or alcohol use, sleep deficits, physical abuse and trauma. Some of the most successful measures have been those which provide a holistic solution by networking different actors and so support the whole person. Partnerships at the local level seem to be highly effective ways of doing this.

This strategic approach of the Commission (2011a) not only locates the issue of early school leaving prevention in a wider systemic context than school but recognises parents and social support services as being central to this issue:

> In addition, all policies relevant to children and young people should contribute to the strategy against ESL. This concerns especially social policies and support services, employment, youth and integration policies. Every new policy or measure aimed at children, young people, parents or professionals working with children and young people, irrespective whether it is related to the formal education system or not, should therefore be tested against its contribution to reducing ESL.

Thus, the issue of family support policies is envisaged as being relevant to early school leaving prevention.

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

Similarly, the Commission's (2013a) Thematic Working Group (TWG) report highlighted the need for a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to ESL prevention that engages broadly with parents:

> Central role of schools: Cooperation should be centred on schools. Their boundaries should be opened up to enable them to include other professionals (as teams) such as social workers, youth workers, outreach care workers, psychologists, nurses, speech and language therapists and occupational guidance specialists in efforts to reduce ESL. Schools should be encouraged to develop strategies to improve communication between parents and locally based community services to help prevent ESL.

In its priority recommendations, 'Support cooperation between schools, local communities, parents and pupils in school development and in initiatives to reduce ESL', the TWG report (2013) states:

Reducing ESL requires the active involvement and cooperation of stakeholders at national, regional, local and school level. This includes teachers, parents, pupils and their representative associations together with guidance centres, trade unions, employers, and other experts such as social workers or school psychologists. Key representatives from policy fields such as employment, youth, health, welfare and social policy need to be involved in a collective approach to reducing ESL from the start.

Parental Involvement Integrated with Family Support for Holistic Parental Involvement

It is to be emphasised that the consensus vision across these various EU documents is for an integrated strategic approach to encompass parental involvement in education as being integrated with family support needs in a holistic fashion, as part of a multidisciplinary approach to early school leaving. This holistic approach bridges health and education domains and discourses. Moreover, it embraces a wider understanding of the systemic needs of marginalised parents than well-established and oft-cited conceptions of parental involvement in education, such as that of Epstein (2001). It is also notably broader than well-known definitions such as the following ones which tend to be quite judgmental of parents, as well as being more narrowly academic, 'the degree to which parents are interested in, knowledgeable about, and spend time relating to their children concerning activities and experiences such as schoolwork' (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991, p.509), 'parents' commitment of resources to the academic arena of children's lives' (Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994).

Epstein's research based 'Framework of Parental Involvement' identifies six ways in which schools and parents can be involved i.e. Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at home, Decision Making, Collaborating with the Community. Epstein has also identified challenges and redefinitions from traditional practice for all six of these areas based on her research e.g. under the Communicating Strand, this is not just a one way stream of school to parent but a two way and sometimes maybe even a three way stream of dialogue and feedback between parent school and community.

Epstein and Sheldon (2006) proposed that school, family and community partnership is a better term than parental involvement. However, there is a need to go further than this to encompass a health and family support focus. Epstein and Sheldon's (2006) emphasis on partnership is an important one with regard to challenging hierarchical systems and moving towards more democratic relational systems that give spaces for student and parental voices. Yet partnership is for Arnstein (1969) weaker than power delegation and citizen control, though stronger than placation and consultation. Though the term partnership is frequently used, it often becomes vague lipservice to genuine partnership as it masks realities of power differences in roles and ignores differentiated contexts of need. Also as it displaces issues regarding collaboration with shared goals rather than merely consultation (Tett et al., 2001), it is not being used as the key concept in this report. The term parental involvement will be retained, though expanded into *holistic parental involvement*.

Epstein's focus is less tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable, often highly marginalised parents who experience high levels of stressful environmental factors due living in poverty. These poverty related stressors impact upon their health and well-being. Mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, disruptive behaviour and post- traumatic stress disorder, can negatively impact on a child's school success, as well as general well-being (World Health Organization, 2003; Kessler, 2009; Downes 2011). Children living in low-income families are especially vulnerable to mental health difficulties (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2001; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009). The huge socio-economic disparities in levels of illness across the lifespan are well documented (Townsend and Davidson, 1992; Acheson, 1998). Children in the child welfare system, who come primarily from families in poverty, have a greater prevalence of mental health problems compared with those in the general population (Leslie et al., 2004; Dore, 2005). Social anxiety is associated with school avoidance and refusal, suicidal ideation, substance abuse and conduct problems (Harrington, Rutter, and Fombonne, 1996). Quiroga et al.'s (2013) research on 493 high-risk French-speaking adolescents living in Montreal concluded that depression symptoms at the beginning of secondary school are related to higher early school leaving 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 early school leaving.

It is important to emphasise that these stresses impacting upon mental health and well-being are on a continuum of risk and need not be at the level of a clinical disorder to still be a significant problem impacting upon early school leaving.

Poverty in Europe

The importance of this issue of mental health and family support for early school leaving prevention is accentuated given the increasingly high levels of poverty experienced by many families due to the economic crisis and austerity in Europe over the recent years.

In 2012, 124.2 million people, or 24.8 % of the population, in the EU-28 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), compared with 24.3 % in 2011. The AROPE indicator is defined as the share of the population in at least one of the following three conditions:

1) at risk of poverty, meaning below the poverty threshold,

2) in a situation of severe material deprivation,

3) living in a household with very low work intensity.

With a rate of 28.0 % in EU-28, children were at greater risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2012 than the rest of the population in 17 of the 27 Member States for which data are available

The percentage of children living in a household at risk of poverty or social exclusion ranged from 14.9 % in Finland, 15.3 % in Denmark and 15.4 % in Sweden to more than 35.0 % in Greece, Latvia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. The main factors affecting child poverty are the labour market situation of the parents, which is linked to their level of education, the composition of the household in which the children live and the effectiveness of government intervention through income support and the provision of enabling services.

Material deprivation rates complement the social exclusion picture by providing an estimate of the proportion of people whose living conditions are severely affected by a lack of resources. The severe material deprivation rate represents the proportion of people who cannot afford at least four of the nine following items: 1) (arrears on) mortgage or rent payments, utility bills, hire purchase instalments or other loan payments; 2) one week's annual holiday away from home; 3) a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day; 4) unexpected financial expenses; 5) a telephone (including mobile phone); 6) a colour TV; 7) a washing machine; 8) a car and 9) heating to keep the home adequately warm.

In the EU-28, 9.9 % of the population were severely materially deprived. The share of those severely materially deprived varied significantly among Member States. On the one hand, only 1.3 % of the population were severely deprived in Luxembourg and Sweden, 2.3 % in the Netherlands and 2.8 % in Denmark. On the other hand, the deprivation rate exceeded 40.0 % in Bulgaria, and 25.0 % in Hungary, Latvia and Romania. Overall at EU level, severe material deprivation increased by 1 pp between 2011 and 2012   *Source: EU-SILC 2012*

A Differentiated Approach to Parental Involvement

A much more *differentiated* approach to parental involvement is required, as part of a focus on this issue with regard to early school leaving prevention. Such a differentiated approach, bridging health and education, as well as other sectors as part of a common parental involvement/family support approach, requires distinguishing between different levels of prevention. These distinct levels of prevention based on need are well-established in health domains but only recently are being recognised as part of strategic systemic approaches for education (Downes 2011, 2013b). These universal, selected and indicated prevention levels have also centrally informed that framework for the models of good practice report (Haaglund 2014), as part of the Urbact PREVENT initiative.

Figure 1.   **Differentiated Levels of Need for Prevention**
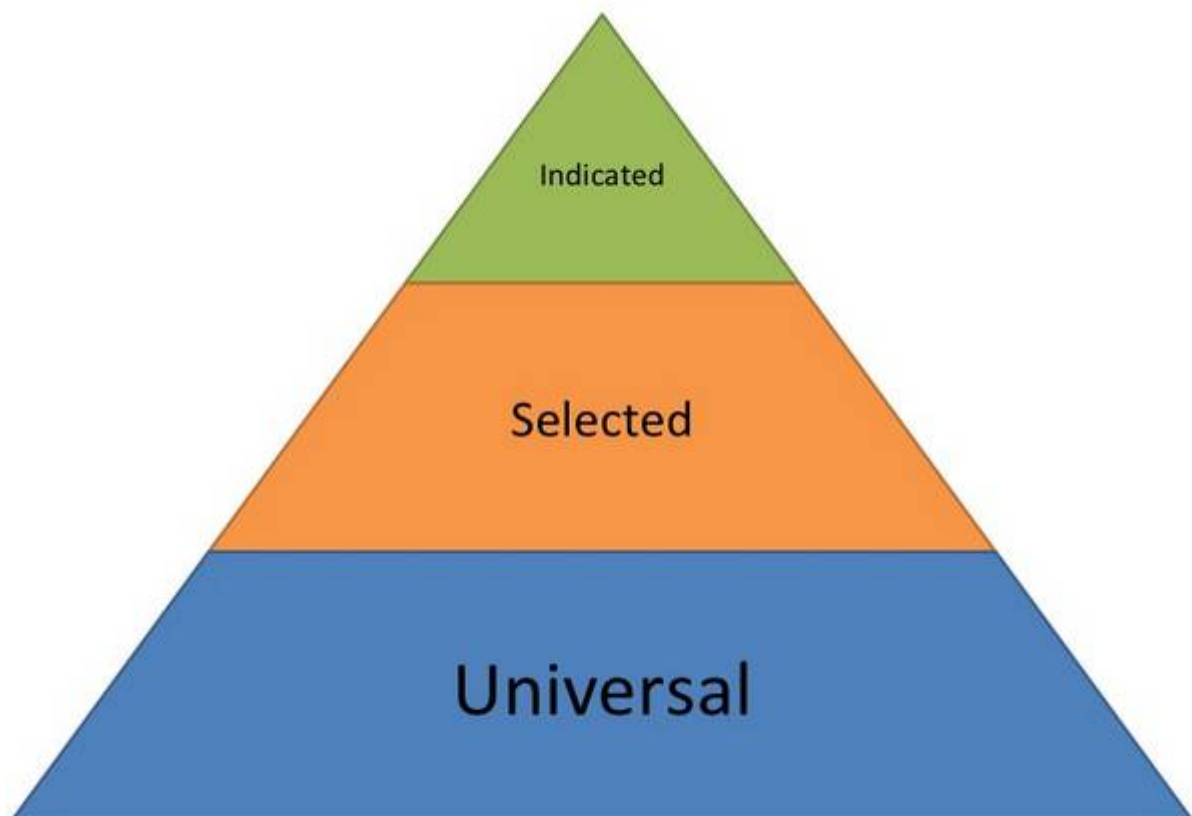
An additional aspect to this differentiated focus is to move from solely prevention to also promotion through concentrating on promotion of *strengths* of parents, children, schools and communities. Fiks et al (2010) review states that:

> Each of the partnership models includes key characteristics that foster collaboration across home, school, and community systems. These characteristics include an emphasis on strengths and assets (rather than problems or deficits), a focus on building trusting, long-term relationships, an emphasis on shared ownership across systems, an attempt to build capacity for sustainability over time...(p.49).

Figure 2. Building on Strengths and Differentiated Levels of Need: Promotion and Prevention Levels
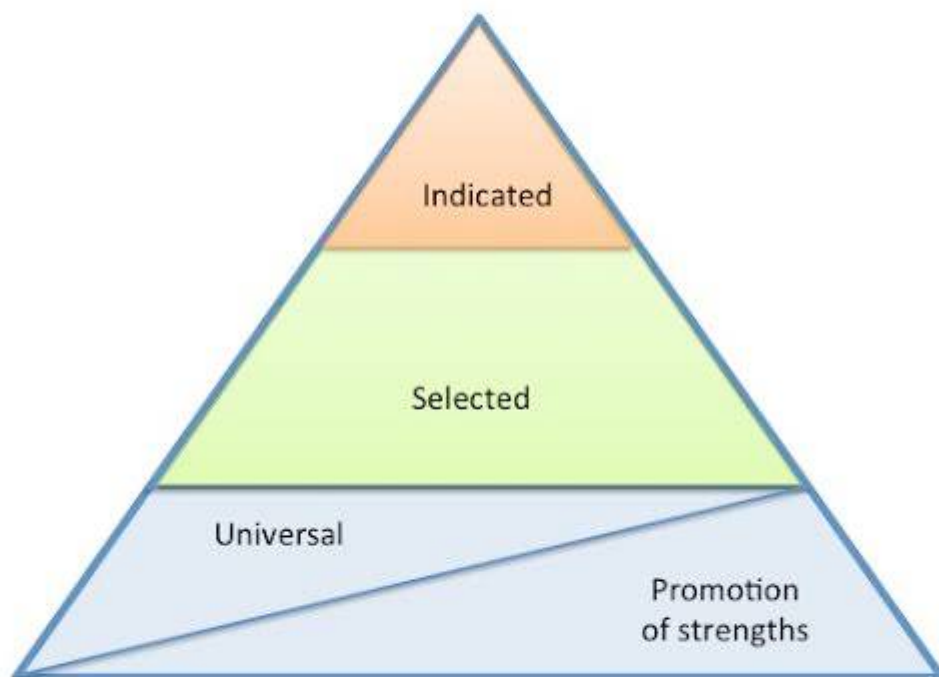
As part of a differentiated strategic approach, it is important to highlight a weakness built into the framework of the EU2020 headline target for early school leaving prevention. This weakness is that because it focuses on 18-24 year olds for early school leaving, it invites a tendency to overlook processes of alienation from the school system and wider society that

may set in at a much earlier age (Downes 2013a; Downes 2014a). This is of further concern, given Pyhältö et al.'s (2010) finding in a Finnish context that critical incidents for pedagogical well-being reported by the pupils were situated all along their school career. Moreover, Heckman's (2012) well-known international research has highlighted that interventions at a younger age maximise future impact. With this in mind, a developmental focus will be built into this differentiated strategic approach, to ensure that parental involvement issues for younger ages are firmly addressed for early school leaving prevention.

Policy and Funding Neglect Across Europe of Parental Involvement for Early School Leaving Prevention

Despite this policy emphasis on parental involvement, the Commission has also drawn attention to the relative policy and funding neglect in EU Member States for parental involvement, as is evident from the following spider graph devised by the Commission in its Commission Staff Working Document (2011) analysis of the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) and the European and national levels.

Figure. 3   **Frequency of measures against Early School Leaving mentioned in National Reports across Europe**
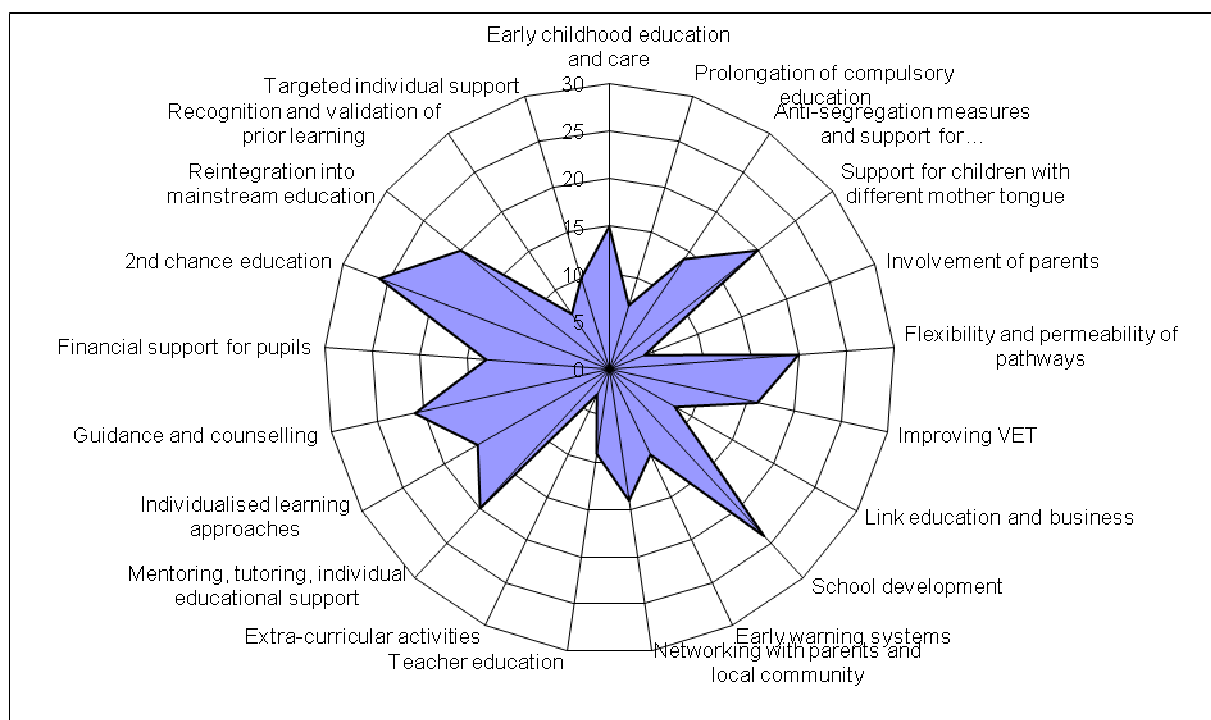
It is important to note that this is not a direct indication of investment in these areas. Nevertheless, it does highlight the lack of strategic priority given at national levels to parental involvement in education and especially, an underappreciation of the role of parents in helping to support and retain students in the school system.

Lifelong Learning

A further issue of importance for parental involvement in education that is not directly included in this graph of relevant areas, but which is of relevance has been addressed elsewhere at EU Commission and Council level, namely, the strategic priority of access to lifelong learning. Significantly the EU Council (2009/C 119/02) agrees on a range of strategic priorities for lifelong learning that include social cohesion, personal and social fulfilment and active citizenship:

> 1. In the period up to 2020, the primary goal of European cooperation should be to support the further development of education and training systems in the Member States which are aimed at ensuring:
> (a) The personal, social and professional fulfilment of all citizens
> (b) Sustainable economic prosperity and employability, whilst promoting democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue

Thus, it is important, as part of a differentiated approach to incorporate a lifelong learning educational vision into a focus on parental involvement in education. Moreover, the social cohesion and active citizenship rationales for lifelong learning are both strongly resonant with a strategic focus on parental involvement, specifically for early school leaving prevention. This lifelong learning feature is mainly one that targets specific groups to access education; it predominantly operates at the level of selected prevention.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from this background overview that a *differentiated* strategy to parental involvement in education is required as part of an early school leaving prevention focus. This requires focus on different levels of need and recognition that there is not a one size fits all approach to be taken. A framework of parental involvement, specifically for early school leaving prevention, requires conceptual and strategic integration with family support initiatives as part of a differentiated strategy that recognises parental roles and influences

relevant to early school leaving at universal, selected and indicated prevention levels and the level of promotion of strengths and cultural identity. It further includes lifelong learning dimensions, especially concerning social cohesion and active citizenship, as well as scrutiny of interventions for parents of younger children to prevent an alienation process from school taking root.

Together with this, a holistic strategic approach is also necessary. A *holistic* focus recognises the need to include family support within a parental involvement in education framework, bridging health and education domains as part of a multidisciplinary focus on complex needs. A holistic approach recognises emotional and physical needs and not simply academic, cognitive ones of both children/young people and their parents in contexts of socio-economic exclusion. It recognises mental health, emotional and instrumental support needs of some of the more vulnerable children, young people and families, for early school leaving prevention. In doing so, this holistic approach to children, young people and their parents' needs bridges between health and education domains in particular at municipality level. Furthermore, it acknowledges the stresses of poverty that impinge upon the mental health and wellbeing of many families suffering under this burden of socio-economic exclusion. The second statement of PREVENT, signed by the municipalities' Deputy Mayors, in Munich, June 2014, commits to a more holistic approach to system development for early school leaving prevention.

Background Context: Urbact PREVENT Project Dialogue Process

Process

Key to the logic of the Urbact PREVENT project is that system change is not simply a top-down process imposed by the EU Commission and national governments. It must centrally and actively involve local actors and levels in the construction of systemic strategic responses. Policy without engagement of local people and local municipalities and schools will be doomed to resistance, displacement and failure. Thus, the Urbact initiative of PREVENT seeks to reconcile an EU level commitment to parental involvement in education with local municipality levels, as part of an integrated strategic approach that is both centralised to some degree and also decentralised, through a principle of subsidiarity, that where possible local decisions are made by local actors regarding local issues.

As part of the dialogue with municipalities to inform this report, a number of steps were taken across consortium meetings in Gijon (June 2013), The Hague, Antwerp (March 2014) and Munich (June 2014). These built also on the good practice sourcebook (Haaglund 2014) that sought to identify existing good practice in the municipalities. Initially, after discussion of key themes to be of relevance, the following consultation processes were put in place to inform this policy report

a)   Each municipality was asked firstly, to respond to a range of questions as potentially relevant structural indicators for early school leaving prevention for their own municipality (see appendix for this list)

b)   Those issues revealing most *gaps* in strategic responses at municipality levels were concentrated upon. Further dialogue with the municipalities took place on these structural indicators where there were highest levels of responses stating 'no', i.e., to indicate that these areas were not being systemically addressed in many municipalities.

c)   Each municipality was also asked to offer their views on priority issues for system development

d)   Each municipality was requested to respond to a number of questions regarding current activities in their specific system.

e)   The process PREVENT has engaged in has included commitment to agreed policy statements signed by the respective Mayors of each of the 10 participating municipalities (see appendix).

f)   The consortium as a whole were asked to identify and formally agree on key barriers or system blockages to parental involvement in education for early school leaving prevention relevant to all their municipalities.

This report is complementary to the Local Action Plans for Early School Leaving Prevention and Parental Involvement that each municipality is committed to devising as part of the PREVENT project. It is complementary also to a subsequent envisaged report on parental involvement of ethnic minorities and immigrants that is another milestone of this Urbact, PREVENT project. Moreover, it is to be clearly recognised that the process and scope of this report is a limited one. It has not been developed through systematic extensive consultation with parents locally across the participating municipalities, nor through systematic extensive consultation with students and teachers. Given not only the diversity of countries and limitations of the scope of the consultation process, it is not being sought to

recommend specific ways of intervening for parental involvement. In other words, the 'how' question is not being addressed as this is to be adapted to local issues and concerns. Rather, the focus for current purposes, is to identify key *holistic, differentiated systemic* issues for parental involvement specifically for early school leaving prevention. In other words, the 'what' question is being addressed. This scrutiny of priority issues raises the following question:

- *What are some of the key elements, processes and priorities for a holistic, differentiated and systemic strategic response to parental involvement, including family support, for Early School Leaving prevention ?*

This question also requires recognition that different municipalities are at different levels of implementation of strategic interventions.

A Systemic Approach to Parental Involvement for Early School Leaving Prevention

System Scrutiny: Structural Indicators for Strategic Priorities

The framework being adopted for current purposes is that of identifying key structural indicators for such a systemic strategic response. These structural indicators will be sought to be developed for both EU and national level interventions in this domain, and for local municipality level. It is envisaged that these structural indicators are to be relevant both for the 10 participating municipalities in PREVENT and more widely across the EU.

This framework seeks to go beyond an approach that simply recommends particular models of good practice, whether as an off-the shelf packaged programme or specific project. A difficulty occurs as to identifying which are the core rather than peripheral features of any good practice, whether it has to be taken wholesale without adaptation to other contexts. There is a need to go beyond such a mode of comparative analysis to one which extracts structural features of good practice that be taken for transfer across different contexts (Downes 2013, 2014; Day et al., 2013).

Developed by analogy with the UN right to health structural indicators, structural indicators are generally framed as potentially verifiable yes/no answers, they address whether or not key structures, mechanisms or principles are in place in a system. As relatively enduring features or key conditions of a system, they are, however, potentially malleable. They offer a scrutiny of State or institutional effort (Downes 2014, 2014a, see also UN Rapporteur 2005, 2006)

Table 2. Illustrative Examples of Structural Indicators (SIs)

Guiding principles as SIs :	
- Active involvement of target groups in design	YES OR NO
- Active involvement of target groups in delivery	YES OR NO
Roles in organizational structures as SIs	
- Intervention of sufficient intensity to bring change	YES OR NO
- System change focus and not simply individual change focus	YES OR NO
- Clear focus on level of prevention – universal, selected and/or indicated	YES OR NO
- Distinct age cohort focus	YES OR NO
- -Clear outreach strategy to reach marginalised groups	YES OR NO
- Alternatives to Suspension	YES OR NO
Physical spaces as SIs	
-Specific space in school building for parents to meet	YES OR NO

Benefits of structural indicators for holistic parental involvement include:

- They can offer transparent criteria for establishing a municipality and school institution's progress in this area over time.

- Structural indicators offer a *system* focus not simply an individual focus – a policy relevant focus

- Structural indicators provide a focus on *prevention and promotion*

- They offer a framework for ongoing review and dialogue both within a municipality and across municipalities and countries

- They allow for self-assessment of progress: The comparison point for progress is the municipality's and a given school's previous performance in relation to these indicators.

- Clear targets for progress can be established based on the indicators.

- The indicators can distinguish municipality and school effort from actual outcomes; they can offer an incentive for governments to invest in the area of parental involvement for early school leaving.

- The indicators, as a cluster, provide a systemic level focus for change rather than reducing change to one simplistic magic bullet cause.

- They can include dimensions of progress for comparison within and between education institutions concerned with increasing access for marginalised groups.

- They can bring greater unity to an area recognised as fragmented at national levels.

- They are much less expensive to observe than outcome and process indicators, and thus, there can be more of them employed to scrutinise change in a system.

- The indicators provide recognition of diverse starting points of some countries relative to others (see also Downes 2014).

In the words of Stockholm municipality: '[The] Municipality needs to use more strategic tools to make both internal and external discussions more creative'. They continue:

> The structural indicators are very useful and are indeed eye-opener for an organisation or for community work. Community work tends to "think for" groups of people in need of service but have undeveloped methods to involve the targeted group. When involving it is often done by interviews or inquiries which do not lead to "real involvement". The way of working with SI may take some time but could bring in some new ideas and system changes. It also makes you take a wider and more holistic grip on issues. It will probably also lead to more empowerment and a feeling of deeper democracy.

A Focus on Inclusive Systems and on Overcoming Blocked Systems

In developmental and educational psychology, much of the research framework on parental involvement in education tends to rely uncritically on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model (Downes 2013; 2014). This systemic model was proposed also at PREVENT project meetings in Antwerp and Munich respectively (Colpin 2014; Kalicki 2014). It distinguishes the role of parents in the microsystem, i.e, their immediate settings and the mesosystem relation between settings such as the school and home of the child[3]. An important implication of a system level focus on transitions, advocated by Bronfenbrenner, is that there is a need for sustained interventions, developing over time, rather than merely once-off interventions (Downes 2014). Another important contribution of Bronfenbrenner's systemic model is concentration on promotion of growth rather than simply focusing on deficits. However, there is a gap in Bronfenbrenner's framework for understanding system change and this means that Bronfenbrenner's accounts offer little understanding of system blockage and displacement (Downes 2014) or power issues in a system (Downes 2014a).

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[3] A mesosystem involves interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates—for a child,home, school neighbourhood and peer group and, for an adult, family, work and social life (Bronfenbrenner 1979 , p. 25).

This focus on an understanding of system blockages informed the consultation process with the municipalities at the Munich PREVENT meeting in June 2014. Here the municipalities were asked to agree on key areas where their systems are blocked with regard to parental involvement in education – to identify points of blockage or inertia to change.

This focus on developing inclusive systems differs somewhat from the more individualistic concerns of Rutter's (1985) influential concept in developmental psychology of resilience (Downes 2014a). Beyond school itself and social support figures such as friends, neighbours, family, Rutter's focus is conspicuous by its absence of analysis of the roles of system supports in influencing outcomes of children at risk of early school leaving and adversity[4]. The conception here is less on developing resilient systems than on developing *inclusive* or *enabling* systems for parental involvement for early school leaving prevention. This concern with system enablers gives expression to the multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral needs approach emphasised across the Commission and Council documents on early school leaving. The structural indicators can be interpreted as key system enablers for parental involvement.

Systems change examines simultaneously two aspects of organisational culture, the 'apparent' official organization and the 'below the surface' unofficial organisation (Scholtes 1998). It is at this 'below the surface' level of informal patterns of thought, values and behaviour that system blockages or displacement of strategic visions can take place. As Ford (2007) recognises:

> Pushing on a vision is often overvalued by leaders who would like to assume almost a "clean slate" in their organization...reality is often fraught with disconnects where the aims of a change effort are not meeting reality (p.323)

The question therefore arises as to anticipation of what may be the systemic splits and disconnects in communication and goals across the relevant actors. From such a focus on system blockages, splits and displacement, the PREVENT municipalities were asked to highlight from their perspective where such system blockages to parental involvement are

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[4] Ungar (2008) broadens Rutter's conception of resilience to a socio-ecological model of resilience: 'In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of the individual to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual's family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways' (p.225). However, this broader environmental model does not include a focus on State systemic supports, as integrated services, in its role of developing inclusive systems. Ungar's socio-ecological broadening of Rutter's resilience does not go far enough in its systemic concerns.

occurring in their systems. This kind of questioning resonates to some degree also with Freire's (1970) emphasis on the importance of a problem-posing approach, rooted in the realities of lived experience in given contexts. The key system blockages agreed upon by the PREVENT network were a) time, b) fragmentation of services and responsibility, c) teacher roles, d) school principal roles, e) money.

From the perspective of engaging teachers in parental involvement, system blockages can occur as this may be seen as peripheral to their perceived main role of engaging with the pupil. Low salaries of teachers in some countries may contribute to low morale and lack of incentive to 'go the extra mile' and actively engage with parents (see also Mitter 2003 on a tradition of low pay for teachers in some Central and Eastern European countries in particular). Again on such views, whether official or unofficial, parental involvement is treated as a bonus rather than intrinsic part of the teacher's educational role. As well as the issue of incentivisation of teachers to engage in a more open approach with parents, the issue of power sharing with parents involves matters of trust. In a Swedish context, Bouakaz & Persson (2007) ask 'do the teachers' distrust parents ?' (p.97).

Focus was placed also on the key role of school principals, that parental involvement will only happen with their active support. A principal may perceive some parents, especially from different cultures or from marginalised backgrounds as a 'problem' to be managed, as a threat to the smooth workings of the school. Day (2013) emphasises the importance of constructive relationships and communication to open the terms of engagement with parents rather than treating them as 'hard to reach'. O'Reilly (2012) highlights concerns that a school principal may deliberately cherry-pick a few 'solid' parents as part of a parental involvement approach that thereby excludes many others, including many from backgrounds of low education and social marginalisation. Active involvement of parents in school policy and in the school's organisational culture necessarily involves a power shift from a hierarchical model of organisation to one more founded on a network of power sharing initiatives. Again this challenges a model of a school as a static system (see also Downes & Downes 2007), as it is not simply a matter of assimilating parents to the school's agenda. A dynamic systemic shift is again required, away from static hierarchy and towards more distributed networks of

power sharing and trust across the school's organisational culture and roles (see also Spillane 2006 on distributed leadership[5]). This system change is no small matter.

A further area of systemic splits and blockage of communication and strategy that was frequently identified by the PREVENT network includes the links between some municipalities and their schools and social services. Systemic fragmentation can lead to a vagueness as to which person and institution is taking the lead role in an initiative, as well as to problems of territoriality between services (Downes & Maunsell 2007). The following account also illustrates the notable differences in influence and power the municipalities view themselves as having in their relations with schools in their area.

Municipality Influence

As can be seen from the following table of municipality responses, it is to be recognised that there is also much variation in the level of influence municipalities have with schools across the participating cities.

Table 3. Municipality Influence with Schools

Country	On a scale of 1-3 what is the level of power your local municipality has over local schools? 1 means high influence/decision making power in most schools, 2 means some influence/decision making power in most schools, 3 means little influence/decision making power in most schools
Nantes	1
The Hague	1
Munich	1
Tallinn	1
Antwerp	3
Gijon	3
Usti	3
Stockholm	3
Sofia	2

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[5] Spillane et al.'s (2006) distributed leadership approaches envisage multiple groups of individuals in a school context guiding and mobilising staff in the change process through interdependency rather than dependency.

Table 4. Illustrative Comments from Municipalities on their Influence with Schools

Hague: 'We can steer schools' behaviour by the subsidies we offer'.
Munich: '(i.e. 100%) concerning city-driven schools and some state-driven schools (within the city borders of Munich)'.
Nantes: 'The French educational system is based on a very centralized organization. The role of cities is to work together with the National Education Administration to help parents to appropriate what is necessary to reach the school requests'.
Gijon: 'The municipalities don't have influence over the compulsory education'.
Stockholm: 'All schools are managed by Education department in Stockholm City while city district are managing pre-schools, spare time activities, elderly care, social service and service for people with special needs. Headmasters also have great influence over the specific school and are in charge of budget and results'.
Antwerp: 'In Flanders exists different school networks: - Gemeenschapsonderwijs: Schools of the Flemish Community - Vrij gesubsidieerd Onderwijs: Schools organized by for example the Catholic, Jewish community and subsidized by the Flemish Community (also Steiner, … -Officieel gesubsidieerd Onderwijs: Schools organized by local communities and subsidized by the Flemish community. Local municipality has little influence over the schools , even the official subsidized schools. In Antwerp we work together in the 'Antwerp education council' with representatives of the school networks, parental organisations, NGO's, unions of teachers, general education policy, …' 'The city government installed the Antwerp Education Council to create a local governance instrument to tackle the challenges and problems schools are facing in this typical city environment. All major stakeholders take part in the meetings of the council (the school networks, teachers' unions, chamber of commerce, parents' associations, pupils' representatives). Semi-formally the "bureau" of the Antwerp education council advises on all education governance matters. This bureau (board) includes the vice-mayor, a representative

of each of the four largest school networks and one for OKO, the coordination of smaller networks and independent schools'.
Tallinn: All schools, pre-schools and centres for extra-curricular activities are managed by Education Department of Tallinn City. Headmasters also have great influence over their institution and they are responsible for the implementation of the education and teaching process and results and budget.
Sofia: Sofia Municipality has a high power but only within the municipal schools, and less power within the government schools… Municipality has some influence/decision making power in most schools in Sofia.

C. A Differentiated and Holistic Approach to Parental Involvement for Early School Leaving Prevention

C1. Outreach

An outreach approach to parental involvement for schools and municipalities requires active efforts to engage with groups in contexts where they feel most comfortable, such as in their homes and local community based contexts. This requires a sensitivity to location and territory (Downes & Maunsell 2007; Downes 2011a) that ensures that the physical location of outreach efforts are not in places alien to the parents who are experiencing social marginalisation. In communities experiencing high levels of social exclusion, there needs to be neutral spaces where a range of groups can feel comfortable and professionals may not often be aware of local mindsets, territories and divisions with regard to location. It has already been highlighted that the report of the EU Commission Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving (2013) explicitly refers to the need for schools and services to engage in outreach to marginalised parents.

An individual outreach approach is especially relevant to those parents and families at highest level of need (indicated prevention). In the words of Carpentieri et al., (2011):

> As a method of providing services to families, home visiting has an extensive pedigree, not only in health and social services but also in education (Bryant and Wasik, 2004). Advantages of home visiting include the fact that is family focused, meeting parents on their own terms in their own homes at times suitable for their

own schedules. Home visitors can gain a great deal of information about the child's home learning environment and cultural and/or socio-economic issues that may impact on the child's literacy development. Home visitors can identify and potentially build on family strengths uncovered on visits that may not be evident in classrooms or centres, particularly if parents lack confidence in educational settings (p.103).

A community based outreach approach may also be needed for groups of parents at moderate risk (selected prevention). Outreach must also be firmly distinguished from mere information based efforts to reach socio-economically marginalised parents. A Belgian national report on access to education highlights the severe limitations to an informational approach[6]:

> The Sociale School Heverlee Centrum voor Volwassenenonderwijs vzw (SSH-CVO) also uses printed press (programme brochure, local newspaper, fl yers, adverts, documents, etc.) and online tools (such as a website) to increase the access to their educational provision. Although this type of advertisement reaches the most people, a recent evaluation research by the SSH-CVO has shown the effects of this strategy are rather minimal. (Vermeersch and Vandenbrouke 2010)

This Belgian national report continues with a related point

> A lot of the promotion to open access for adults at risk is done through word-of mouth advertisement. According to both interviewees this is by far the most effective form of widening access. The organisation tries to cultivate this type of advertisement through different strategies:
>
> • Community leaders and key figures in a community can take on the role of 'key influencers'. The SSH-CVO tries to give them incentives to do so;
>
> • Participants and former participants are just as important in the process of widening access. They tell others about their learning experiences or someone in their community will hear about the courses, etc. Both strategies take limited budget but have unlimited potential. (Vermeersch and Vandenbrouke 2010).

An interesting example of active outreach in the Nantes municipality is their 'tricycle' stands that involves cycling into local community areas and talking with local people

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[6] See also Downes (2014) for a wider critique of information reliant approaches for engaging traditionally excluded groups in education.

regarding relevant educational issues, while giving them leaflets relevant to their contextual concerns. It is clear, however, that the concept and approach of outreach is not strongly embedded in some municipality approaches to engaging parents. For example, one of the municipality submissions for this report states that:

> *Schools have various outreach programmes to students. They offer programmes to students like career counseling, invite parents over to school on so called 'parents evenings'. Also, many schools that offer primary, secondary and vocational education have a parent board, which parents may join to advise schools on their policies (although this is perhaps not so much an outreach approach).*

However, none of these examples are of outreach. Outreach is where the school meets parents on their terms, whether individually in their home or communally in community based locations that are familiar and accessible to groups of parents as their 'own turf'.

C1.1 Family Support Outreach for Mental Health, Emotional Support and School Attendance

Indicated, Selected and Universal Prevention: Community Outreach Indicated Prevention: Individual Family Outreach

Regarding the international right to the highest attainable standard of health, including mental health, Hunt & Backman (2008) refer to the key role of 'outreach programmes for disadvantaged individuals and communities' (p.11) and observe that 'a State has a core obligation to establish effective outreach programmes for those living in poverty' (p.12). Community outreach good practice also means that 'recruitment of health workers must include outreach programmes to disadvantaged individuals, communities and populations' (Hunt & Backman 2008, p.17). In a report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (2006), international good practice is observed as: '7....Properly trained community health workers [who]…know their communities' health priorities…Inclusive, informed and active community participation is a vital element of the right to health'.

This principle of representativeness regarding the need to employ members of those groups being targeted for intervention in order to ensure cultural affinity, credibility and competence of the project is given insufficient recognition generally across municipalities. A notable exception and leading initiative in this area is that of the Roma mediators, in the Sofia

Schools of inclusion in Bulgaria. This pilot municipal model aims for the inclusion of Roma families in general and, specifically, for an increase in pre school enrolment of Roma children .Training of Roma mediators, training of pedagogical staff and training of institutional experts consists of 20 persons across 3 days training in "Family Involvement", "Effective models for interaction, awareness raising and multilateral partnership", "Conflict management", "Communication with institutions". After passing a test, the best 5 mediators are invited to join the project on a contract basis. A further feature of this project is its developmental focus on age needs of children that could work as a model for other projects. Another example of an important outreach initiative that relies on employing staff who are members of the groups the project is trying to engage with is that of *Unga In*, across 5 areas of Sweden, including Stockholm[7].

Examples of responses from municipalities to this issue of outreach to engage marginalised families in parental support are as follows:

Table 5.1 Employment of Family Support Workers Linked with Schools and Key Workers Specifically for Parental Involvement

Questions	Munich	Gijon	Tallinn	Nantes	The Hague
	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
Are family support workers employed by your municipality or others in your municipality to work with schools? Yes/No	-Department of Social Affairs (Centres for Parental Support)	-There are special teams provided by social services department to work directly with schools and families	There are family support centres of Department of Social Affairs in Tallinn	-a municipality level with closing initiatives on the ground -non profit organisation of parents -some meeting points -parental information	-We don't pay school employees. We pay schools to pay them

				points -coffee of parents… -dedicated meeting with elected parents -some specific events **in** and **out** schools	
	NO	**YES**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**
Are there specific key workers or others in school or at municipality level currently taking a specific role concerning parental involvement in improving school attendance for students with poor school attendance levels? Yes/No If yes, please give details	-School social workers - class teachers [as] part of their daily routine	-There is a specific project between schools, social services area, local police, sports, aim to prevent and fight against absenteeism	-Specific key workers are at school level social workers, class teachers who work together. So yes, we do have a specific worker who coordinates and keeps together the whole supportive team	specifically about school attendance -for all -we have specific initiatives for some very young children identified as students at risk for school leaving	-The truancy officer. About 20-3- in the Hague. 5-10 year old pupils. They work for the municipality (paid by us)
	YES	**YES**	**YES**	**NO**	**NO**
Are there specific key workers or others in school or at municipality level currently taking a specific role concerning parental involvement in improving school readiness/preparation (i.e., homework, food, sleep) for students with poor school attendance	-strong focus on vocational preparation class -school social workers -professionals who	-There are support teachers, social workers and educators, day centres, ONGs…	We have a childcare specialists at municipality level who work with school staff		-Not yet specific for students with poor school attendance levels. But this project – 'Parent Education language + course – does

					exist at primary school for **all** parents
levels? Yes/No If yes, please give details	"accompany" parents				

Table 5.2 Employment of Family Support Workers Linked with Schools and Key Workers Specifically for Parental Involvement

Questions	Usti nad Labem	Stockholm	Sofia	Antwerp
Are family support workers employed by your municipality or others in your municipality to work with schools? Yes/No	NO	YES	YES	YES -We have the educational welfare workers from the Schoolbridge (DE SCHOOLBRUG) -The care teacher witing schools (employed by the Flemish region)
Are there specific key workers or others in school or at municipality level currently taking a specific role concerning parental involvement in improving school attendance for students with poor school attendance levels? Yes/No If yes, please give details	YES -School committee (focusing on the topic of 'hidden truancy')	YES -In 17 of our schools we are working in close cooperation with social workers and key school staff, focusing on students with high absence from school	YES -They're consulting parents for career/professional education. They work in different municipality centres	YES -We have the educational welfare workers from the Schoolbridge (DE SCHOOLBRUG) -Truancy officer -Youth coaches -time out projects (teachers &

				social workers)

-truancy mirrors: with school directors we analyse the situation in school and help them to position themselves in relation to other school – bench marking

-cultural point of registration for truancy and other deviant behaviour: it is enrolling now towards 'school career counselling' therefore we build a broader network of key workers for different disciplines |
| **Are there specific key workers or others in school or at municipality level currently taking a specific role concerning parental involvement in improving school readiness/preparation (i.e., homework, food, sleep) for students with poor school attendance levels? Yes/No   If yes, please give details** | **YES**

-Each school has a counsellor. This person is usually trying to solve behavioural problems of the students more than focusing on improving school readiness | **YES**

-The local municipal social services provide this service, but it needs to focus even more on school related issues.

See also #1 | **YES**

But only for children with special educational needs or problems/drop outs students | _____ |

Table 6. Illustrative Responses from Municipalities Regarding Outreach Roles to Parents

'Parent coordinators and parent coaches in The Hague'
Gijon: 'FMSS (Social Services Department) is very involved in working in the relationship social indicators and vulnerability, risk and early school leaving. Our profile is educators, sociologists, psychologists and social workers. We focus on the participation of all the partners related to the area and the target group included. This is our work methodology. We are drawing now a childhood plan of Gijón with all the departments, entities and people in the city involved, such as gardens and parks department, schools, police, parents associations, citizens association, students, children…'
Usti: 'a) What is done in the outreach approach ?... currently nothing regarding [this] is in action; anyway, it doesn´t mean there are no special activities run by the some schools which correspond to the activities defined by SI' [i.e., this issue raised as a structural indicator in the PREVENT project]   'b) How is it done, i.e. guiding principles of working ….there is no unifying approach, each institution does it separately and according their own consideration   c) Who does it ? i.e. what professional background of staff, are there members of the target group involved, who is the organisation and its funding source …. Mostly schools and their own staff; school must seek the finances and get them through the different (mainly) EU projects, municipality won´t help with this'
Hague: 'The municipality reaches out to parents and children when a student stays away from school without authorization. Then, civil servants will either visit a student's house or invite the student and his or her parents over to the town hall. Parents of students under 18 are obliged to come with their children, while parents of students over 18 may only be advised to join. Civil servants have generally graduated university of applied sciences and sometimes university and hold a social sciences degree.'
Stockholm: Over the years the school has to be more outreaching and inviting to parents that show little or no interest in their child's education. By some means it is about "inviting the parent individually" and encourage them to be a "teaching parent" and as a teacher be

interested in how that can be done in general and individually. This must start at a very early stage in some living areas. As early made choices by parents, pre-school or not pre-school for example, tend to make a difference for many school years ahead.

The plan for involving parents must be divided into different areas some is general, some are individual, and some are done on routine others must be more intense, outreaching and involve other stakeholders and resources.

...PREVENT has made us (City district) think and work more with outreach work, primarily through ideas started in the Local Support Group. Schools and education department is not a part of that, yet.

A pervasive theme across research into approaches for family support, including emotional and mental health supports is that many services are not able to reach those parents who are most marginalised, who are at the highest levels of need for an indicated prevention strategy requiring intensive individualised work. Weist et al. (2009) described a school mental health quality intervention that emphasised family engagement and empowerment, noting that despite the widely acknowledged importance of family involvement in school mental health, actual practice typically does not reflect best practice in this dimension. Providing support to parents has been found to be very difficult and is rarely provided (Wagner et al., 2006).

Cultural barriers between home and a multidisciplinary team associated with school need to be anticipated, as is evident from Mellin et al's (2011) findings:

> several community providers also noted addressing the historical mistrust of schools
> and mental health systems that is a part of the experiences of many parents in this
> urban community. In particular, they discussed taking time to show families file
> cabinets and the keys. They explain to families that the files belong to the
> collaborating agency, not the school, and that the files will not follow their child to
> another school. (p.87).

These issues are arguably understated in this study as the sample did not include voices of families and youth. Based on 35 interviews, 27 with mental health clinicians, Langley et al. (2010) perceived that one of the main 'barriers' to the implementation of CBITS (cognitive behavioural intervention for trauma in schools) was parent engagement, with Lack of Parent

Engagement (Ranked #1 by Implementers and #2–3 by Non-Implementers). Langley et al (2010) continue:

> Many clinicians described difficulties in contacting parents. One clinician described clear difficulty in ''reaching parents'' and working with parents of impoverished students... Clinicians who implemented CBITS also described challenges in engaging parents in treatment. For example, one clinician reported that ''It [the main barrier] was parent participation. We had only one parent session and parents did not help kids with getting their practice and homework done'' (p.109).

Langley et al (2010) conclude that:

> Parent engagement in school-based services has been a consistent challenge in the implementation of school mental health programs more broadly (Weist, Evans, & Lieber, 2003), and it is not surprising that parental involvement was a challenge here. The development of strategies for engaging parents in school based mental health services like CBITS may be a key element in increasing access to quality mental health services for youth in schools (p.112).

However, these findings also point to the need for both a community based team approach and not simply a school based team, in order to facilitate family involvement and gain greater credibility and trust. It also highlights the need for a family outreach dimension for such multi/interdisciplinary teams based in the community, including employees with cultural links to the target groups. As Day (2013) emphasises, the issue is more 'terms of engagement' with parents than classifying them with destructive labels of being 'hard to reach'.

A number of examples of multidisciplinary, community based family support centres are available in European contexts. For example, there is the SPIL centre in Eindhoven, highlighted by Eurochild:

> 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, p.21) .

This approach resonates strongly with the Commission Recommendation (2013), *Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage* which explicitly seeks to 'enhance family support' and 'promote quality, community-based care' as part of a challenge to the effects of poverty and social exclusion in education.

Basically, such a centre is a 'one-stop shop' where a range of vital services across health and education are available in an accessible local location to engage marginalised families:

> For parenting support that is close to home and easily accessible, parents in Eindhoven can go to a so-called SPIL centre in their neighbourhood. The name is derived from Spelen (play), Integreren (integration) and Leren (learning) and the Centre is built around primary education, playgroups and childcare. Other services may be added, such as parenting support, child welfare, youth healthcare and social work. (Eurochild 2011, p.5).

Another important example documented in the Eurochild report (2011) is the Nordrhein-Westfalen state programme *Familienzentrum* has been launched by the government in order to develop up to 3,000 children's day-care facilities into family centres by the year 2012. It is an evidence informed joint project of the state government, local authorities (youth welfare offices) and non-governmental organisations. An ever increasing number of parents benefit from the family centres because these centres offer excellent care and education plus counselling and support to children and parents. Family centres are designed to strengthen parenting skills as well as to improve compatibility of working life and family life. Acting as the hub of a network of family and child welfare services, the family centres offer parents and their children advice, information and assistance in all phases of life at an early stage (Eurochild 2011, p.6).

As described by Eurochild (2011, p.7), 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,
- improves compatibility of work and family life,

- provides greater flexibility in terms of day-care service hours as well as the mix of age groups by extending a variety of provision in partnership with families, day-care mothers or fathers,

- …is a suitable place for exchanges in the neighbourhood.

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, p.44)

> Eurochild (2011) argue for such family support centres to be universally available:

> Nowadays in European countries, it seems that it is not well accepted for parents to ask for support. In addition, once parents do ask for help, parenting support tends to work from a deficit model; it tries to find a 'cure' to fix something bad. What is needed, is the normalization of parenting support. Parents should feel it is normal to ask for help and then receive the necessary support as soon as possible (Eurochild 2011, p.10).

While this is an important perspective, in a climate of scarcity of resources there is also a compelling argument to target such centres to areas of highest need, especially from the perspective of a municipality strategy for parental involvement with regard to early school leaving prevention. It is to be recognised that such local community based, multidisciplinary 'one stop shop' centres require substantial investment. A further reason for a targeted approach is to a) be sensitive to issues of location and territory for families in areas experiencing high levels of socio-economic marginalisation and b) acknowledge that unless active efforts are made to ensure such community centres relate to the needs, experience and lives of those experiencing social exclusion, then those groups at highest levels of need for support will not attend such services. Concerns with targeting versus universalism can be overcome over time as part of a phased universalism over time that starts firstly with the priority of establishing and expanding the scope of such community health and education centres for families in areas of higher need. Thus, such community based centres are best envisaged as being both universal and selected prevention approaches, with additional aspects being needed for an indicated prevention approach.

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.

The Familiscope (now Familibase) Morning Programme, Ballyfermot, Dublin is an intervention used to support children with chronic absenteeism. It involves:

• supporting parents to implement appropriate morning and night time routines

•monitoring and tracking children's attendance

•offering practical support and advice to parents to overcome the issue

•rewarding children for improved school attendance

•promoting an awareness of the link between poor school attendance and early school leaving

•resolving transport issues

•engaging the necessary outside supports to benefit the child.

The Child Welfare Worker, from a social care background, regularly calls to the child's home to

•support the parent implement morning time routines,

•enable the breakfast, uniform and schoolbag preparation,

•ensure the child gets to school on time

•support the parent to be firm and follow through when a child is school refusing.

Work is also carried out with the parents to support them with night-time routines i.e. homework and bedtimes. The Child Welfare Worker will often transport the child to school or arrange for the child to take the school bus when available. This individual family outreach intervention to the family home is a child-centred one, focusing on the key needs of the child such as school attendance, adequate breakfast etc. This approach has observed sizeable improvements in school attendance for primary school children with highest levels of chronic nonattendance at school (Downes 2011).

While there is a need for multidisciplinary community based teams linked with schools to focus on key issues of family support, emotional and mental health support for families, as well as outreach care support to the home for children with high levels of school nonattendance[8], it is important to emphasise that such multidisciplinary teams require clear goals and shared outcomes across the diverse professionals (Downes 2011; Edwards & Downes 2013). For example, a study of the Integrated Supervision of Youth Affairs in Eindhoven from 2006 showed that the youth care teams at school are not working on high level or high speed; not all the services addressed the same goals. In addition, there was a lack of coordination and continuity in care and support. There also was a problem in reaching the targeted groups by all the services, especially children in need do not use the services (Eurochild 2011). There needs to be clear leadership for who is responsible for what in the team and to go beyond passing on bits of the child (Edwards & Downes 2013) and family across disparate local services. The problem in reaching the targeted groups raised for this Eindhoven example, highlights the importance of outreach to individual families of high need, in their home contexts through a care rather than social control approach. With the valuable resource of multidisciplinary teams, it is important also that they focus on direct delivery and minimise 'committee sitting' (Downes 2013c).

Another issue is that it is unclear how integrated information systems from schools are regarding pupil attendance with national data on early school leaving figures. It is also unclear the extent to which municipalities have direct access to data on schools with high levels of pupil and student nonattendance to enable a strategic focus on allocation of resources. For example, the Munich municipality has separate data systems between its regional and national governments, so that school nonattendance figures are not integrated

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[8] Combined with speech and language therapists, where needed, in such teams.

with early school leaving figures. This provides difficulty for targeting resources to areas and schools of highest level of need.

C1.2 Family Literacy Outreach

Selected Prevention

The term family literacy typically describes literacy development work that focuses on how literacy is developed at home, and education courses that support and develop this dimension of literacy development. It can refer to a set of programs designed to enhance the literacy skills of more than one family member. A focus on parental engagement with reading and literacy was not a strong emphasis in the examples of good practice provided by municipalities for the PREVENT Good Practice Sourcebook. An exception is the example given by Nantes municipality, for its Club '*Coup de pouce*' Reading support after school to children (5-6 years). This includes support to parents so they can support their children. Small groups of 5-6 year old pupils who are learning to read at school. To avoid early school leaving by promoting the pleasure of reading, dedicated to children where family environment does not allow practising at home after school. Target groups: Children (13 groups consisting of 65 children), parents. While Antwerp's KAAP project is for parents to learn Dutch as a second/further language in the school of their children and Stockholm's 'Parental involvement in study support for students' project offers language support to newly arrived youths in the age 16-20 years, focus for current purposes is on first language acquisition[9].

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[9] As noted earlier, a subsequent envisaged report on parental involvement, specifically focusing on ethnic minorities and immigrants is another milestone of this Urbact, PREVENT project. See also the "Coordinated parent in Järva" project in Stockholm municipality which focuses on the immigrant population. This project recognises that it is 'a problem for democracy that many migrants due to difficulties with the Swedish language do not have access to public information, parental support and public education to which they are entitled. With customized study material that focus on images rather than on the written word we want to reach out also to those groups who not only have difficulties with the Swedish language but perhaps never have had the opportunity to learn to read and write at all'.

The Harvard Family Research Project's Home-School Study of Language and Literacy Development (Snow et al., 2001) found that supporting literacy both at home and in school was a much more powerful predictor of early literacy abilities than families' socio-economic status or cultural background. Carpentieri et al., (2011) offer a comprehensive review of family literacy programmes internationally. They identify the need for structured family literacy approaches for those with low levels of education and at risk of poverty:

> Programmes based on evidence collected from relatively advantaged families may not provide the structure possibly required by less advantaged families. Such an argument is not unique to family literacy programmes; it also appears in policy debates about schools (p.106)

Carpentieri et al., (2011) also highlight the need to address dyslexia as well as a relative neglect of this issue in Europe:

> Although dyslexia runs in families (van Otterloo et al, 2009), very little of the European primary research we found investigated family literacy interventions targeted at children who were dyslexic or who were at heightened risk of dyslexia. One exception was a study of the Dutch Sounding Sounds and Jolly Letters (Klinkende Klanken en Lollige Letters) intervention, which was a home-based intervention aimed at children at increased risk of dyslexia (characterised in this instance as having at least one parent who self-reported as dyslexic). Sounding Sounds and Jolly Letters was an adaptation of a Danish programme known as "Towards initial reading: phonological awareness". However, the Danish version was set in school classrooms and did not utilise parents. The Dutch Programme, which was designed to take about 10 minutes a day, five days a week for 14 weeks, led to moderate literacy gains in children. Importantly, the programme appeared to be readily implementable by parents. (pp.121-22)

Carpentieri et al.'s (2011) review also highlighted a strategic gap in European policy in finding a range of different family literacy approaches to meet different complex needs of children and families: At the level of national or regional policy, they did not find evidence that family literacy initiatives were coordinated. In other words, governments did not appear to actively seek to facilitate the existence of a range of purposefully complementary programme types.

It is important for municipalities to recognise that families' needs are complex and change according to the age and number of children. They may also require childcare costs to assist low income families to participate in family learning programmes.

C1.3 Lifelong Learning – Community Lifelong Learning Centres as Outreach

Promotion and Selected Prevention

Community based lifelong learning centres build on strengths of adults and are part of a promotion of lifelong learning across all ages. They are also part of a selected prevention approach targeting groups at risk of social exclusion. One avenue is to treat the local school as a community based lifelong learning centre, given that lifelong learning stretches from the cradle to old age. This raises the question for municipalities of opening school building doors after school hours and on weekends and in the summer to local community groups for classes and other cultural activities.

The municipalities responded to this issue as follows:

Table 7. Availability of School Site After School Hours for Lifelong Learning Classes

Country	On a scale of 1-3 where 3 means at least 80% of schools in your municipality open their doors after school hours for lifelong learning classes and 2 means at least 30% of schools do so and 1 means less than 30% of schools do so – which number best describes the situation in your municipality?
The Hague	3
Gijon	3
Tallinn	2
Stockholm	2
Antwerp	1
Usti	1
Munich	1
Nantes	1
Sofia	1

Table 8. Illustrative Responses from Municipalities on Availability of School Site After School Hours for Lifelong Learning Classes

The Hague: 'Almost all our schools already open their doors after opening hours for various learning classes, like language courses for parents'
Nantes: 'Institutional and psychological deadlock with teachers. Even if buildings are owned by "Départements" for secondary schools and "Communes" for elementary with a complete theoretical autonomy to do what they want with the kind of use they would like after school time(of course in a certain way compatible with the general use), most of the teachers have the feeling that schools are their home. That's why we now have dedicated spaces for parents in new schools recently built up.'
Antwerp: 'The city promotes the shared use of buildings (like school and other locations). The website 'zaalzoeker' (location search) helps citizens to find an appropriate location in a city district for a meeting, sport, party, …Sleuteldragers 'Key responsibles' are employed by social economy and are responsible to open/lock doors, sometimes they take care of the coffee'
Tallinn: 'Obstacles: - Lack of interest by parents, their other interests, busy with several jobs - School is not attractive (no special activities) for parents - Lack of interest by school Opportunities: - The school makes the first step to start systematic lifelong learning activities for parents after school hours'
Usti: 'the schools, regarding the educations, are full concentrated on students, not on the parents; even if we wanted to change it, some obstacles would be in the way – due to the limited budget, each increase operating costs of the building when opened longer, each increase of staff costs etc. is very restrictive'
Gijon: 'Our schools are open but only for children or in some cases the buildings are used for lifelong learning, but not specifically parents'.

Stockholm: 'It depends on the definition of "Lifelong learning classes". There are options to join voluntary learning in study circles but they are not connected to specific schools or to the matter involving parents. It costs money and are not so common in our district as in other parts of the city and in the country. Sweden has a long tradition of popular adult education and it is organised by voluntary clubs. One of them is expanding in our area because they have had a popular study circle about "being a parent in a new country".

The obstacle other vice is money. You have to have a janitor employed to lock up the building and to pay for a teacher in the long life learning classes.' 'Lifelong learning courses is not done by or in schools here, but we have several study associations for adult education and they have their own places. Or if they need to be in schools they "get in" but have to pay for it.'

Munich: 'What obstacles (-) and opportunities (+) exist for opening school buildings for lifelong learning classes for parents after schoolhours?

- (+) "Room" for learning// Most school buildings/ rooms are not occupied after school hours
- (+) Co-operative learning// Integration of student-parent cooperation into regular timetable (during school hours) for certain classes (focus on transitions pre-school => primary education => secondary general/ vocational education => university/ work); not reality so far
- (-) Lack of workforce//
  - o Teachers/ instructors are not available; they're needed/ have contracts for "regular" teaching
  - o No staff (facility managers, cleaning workers etc.)
- Lifelong learning classes for parents are partly organised by NGOs (adult education centre; German Volkshochschule) and city-driven institutions (BildungsLokale), however, outside school'

It is evident that many schools are open in municipalities for lifelong learning classes after school hours. This highlights that obstacles noted above are surmountable in a wide number of contexts. Similar obstacles were described in a 12 country study on access to education in Europe:

The obstacles to such a practice appear to be the need for a caretaker on the premises and insurance issues, as well as in at least some institutions a conception of territoriality. Some attitudinal resistance in educational institutions towards opening access to the school or university building is manifested through an argument for institutional autonomy. A way to overcome such an argument is to recognise

firstly that these institutions usually receive state funding, and many are in state ownership. Secondly, incentives could be provided to institutions to facilitate such opening of access, including through performance agreements between Education Ministries, on the one hand, and...schools, on the other hand. (Downes 2014, p.128).

A complementary or alternative approach to making the local school a focal point of community education, to engage marginalised parents, is to develop community lifelong learning centres. These may be more attractive to many parents who have previously had unhappy experiences in the school system (Maunsell 2011). A key issue here is that the neighbourhood location of the centre is both accessible and on a 'neutral' community territory where many different groups in the community can feel comfortable. There are numerous examples of such community lifelong learning centres across Europe (Downes 2011a; 2014).

For lifelong learning classes to be attractive to parents, they need to be based on their interests and needs in a welcoming, approachable environment. Dialogue at a local level is needed to ask the target group of parents what courses might be of most interest for them. Such courses need to be affordable, ideally free of charge, and at a time that is suitable for parents, such as evening classes. One obvious starting point is courses that help parents in their parenting skills and approaches to parents. Nonformal education classes, i.e., without an exam or accreditation focus, may be more inviting and less threatening initially for marginalised groups. They can also be a pathway to other formal accredited courses located on the school site after school hours.

A Scottish report by HMIE on inspection and review 2005-2008 (HMIE 2009) provided the following conclusions on community learning approaches:

Community and Learning Development experiences typically engender great enthusiasm and motivation for learning amongst adult learners. Staff are particularly effective in developing confidence and self-esteem in the majority of learners who are returning to learning, often following negative experiences of formal education. Overall, youth workers and adult tutors develop very positive relationships with the people with whom they are in contact. They generally show a high degree of responsiveness to the needs and preferences of young people and adults and create environments which are sympathetic and supportive. Examples of best practice in the sector demonstrate the effectiveness of the work with particularly

disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups.

The Balkan Sunflowers' four Community Learning Centres in Fushë Kosova, Gracanica, Plemetina and Shtime respectively support the development of 450-500 children from Roma, Ashkanli and Egyptian communities. Their project work involves a school preparatory programme for ages 5-7 and a language club for ages 7-9. For adults, in 2009-2010, women's literacy programmes were initiated in two centres. A parenting life skills programme has also been developed, which is in addition to the regular meetings with parents and home visits. Each community receives at least 4 programmes during the year inviting parents to participate in parenting skills exchanges. These discussions employ audio visual materials around questions of children support: role models, discipline, supporting school attendance, nutrition, hygiene, care, attention and neglect, etc.

Tutors and facilitators undergo a two-week training across all four Centres.According to figures from Balkan Sunflowers NGO in Fushë Kosova, early school leaving rates over the two years of the Learning Centre operation decreased dramatically, from 120 in 2007-2008 to 14 in 2009-2010. Primary school enrolment hasmore than tripled in Gracanica since the Centre's opening in 2004 from 25 to 85 children. None of the children attending Gracanica Learning Centre dropped out of primary school in 2010, while only one child in Plemetina dropped out of school that year. 75% of all registered Roma children in Plemetina attend the Learning Centre, while girls'school attendance has increased and there are currently 58 girls in primary school (Downes 2011a). It has recently launched a new centre in Plemetina/Plementinë Social Housing Buildings in Obiliq/Obilić municipality. Programs are conducted in Albanian and Serbian languages and are facilitated by trained staff and volunteers mostly belonging to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. The Learning Centers serve more than 100,000 hot meals to children annually. Children receive hundreds of school books. Between 450-500 children come daily to the Centers for preschool, language club, homework help, enjoyment and support, lunch, school materials.

Outreach to marginalised groups is a strong feature of Citizienne, Brussels. Within communities, according to the staff interviewees, it is critical to ensure various learning opportunities as close as possible to the adults. Both interviewees accentuate that one cannot expect all participants to come into a classroom. The educational activities should be 'home delivered'. Therefore the organisation makes efforts in providing education within thecommunities, decentralised all over Brussels (in mosques, sports clubs, pubs, etc.) (Vermeersch & Vandenbroucke 2010).

A lack of partnership with parents is highlighted by Nicaise et al., (2005) in the Swedish context, which implies a strategic need for commitment to community lifelong learning centres both for active citizenship and social inclusion concerns, and to engage marginalized parents and adults as part of this strategy:

Swedish schools do not seem to have a strong tradition of partnership with parents. Formal tools for communication and participation do exist (parents' evenings, membership of school boards etc.) but they are not really suited to encourage participation of disadvantaged groups. Nor can we expect that the six monthly individual 'development discussions' between teachers, parents and pupils, introduced in the context of the Quality Programme, will suffice to guarantee equal participation of all parents in school matters.

On the basis of a European review of community lifelong learning centres in Downes (2011a), the following features of such centres emerge:

> As mediating structures between marginalized individuals, communities and the 'system', community based lifelong learning centres invite a strategic focus across government departments not only of education, but also of health and justice. They also invite a focus on the important role of the arts in engaging with the experiences and motivations of those on the margins, building on current practices. Key features of good practice in community based lifelong learning centres include:
>
> - a welcoming, supportive, nonhierarchical environment for the nontraditional learner, with a personalized learning focus,
>
> - a proactive outreach strategy to engage those on the margins,
>
> - a commitment to both leadership development within the organization and to fostering community leaders for communities experiencing marginalization,
>
> - a commitment to democratic engagement with the voices and real needs of the learner, as part of a learner-centred focus and commitment (p.27).

A serious commitment by municipalities to promote parental involvement in education for helping to prevent their children from leaving school early needs to address a systemic commitment to promoting lifelong learning opportunities for the parents. Community based lifelong learning centres can offer a mix of both nonformal and formal education opportunities (Downes 2014). As a welcoming and safe space for marginalised parents to build their confidence, leadership capacities, social networks and educational learning, it plays a key strategic role for parental involvement in their children's education more generally. The further question arises for municipalities as to how to promote bridges between such community lifelong learning centres and schools in their area.

The Munich municipality's *BildungsLokale* (Local Education Centres) offer a potential base for expansion of these centres into being genuine community lifelong learning centres. *BildungsLokale* seek empowerment of city districts by education to define the city district not only as social but also as educational environment as an education improvement district. The strategic aim is the creation of local educational landscapes and learning environments with cooperation structures of the local stakeholders of all different kinds of

education institutions oriented on a lifelong learning process with cooperation structures which include all responsible kinds of administration and politicians and society. They seek at a personal level for empowerment of persons by education as a social integration strategy, as part of a strategic aim of improvement of educational, vocational and life chances in a lifelong and holistic way. They seek to do this through promoting early education, parents' education, learning and language support - basic education for adults promoting institutions in intercultural learning, parents inclusion and other additional projects, in developing all-day schools and organising vacation care, in working together with other institutions promoting neighborhood engagement (mentoring) and the creation of cooperation structures of all educational stakeholders.

The *BildungsLokale* could expand through provision of both nonformal and formal education classes[10], through clear expression of the cultural identities of various groups in the physical environment of these centres - and possibly also combined with multidisciplinary teams, in at least some of the *BildungsLokale,* to include a holistic focus on emotional and mental health support needs. Attention could also be given to employing people from the relevant communities in these centres, as well as to including them in the overall management committees of these *BildungsLokale*.

It is to be emphasised that a community based lifelong learning centre and an approach to opening schools after hours to the community for lifelong learning could be *complementary* approaches to be located in *different* areas of a municipality. The strengths and weaknesses of both approaches for a given municipality could be contrasted through complementary initiatives on this theme. Additionally, depending on suitability of the location, an argument could be made for including the family support community outreach centre for emotional support and mental health as part of the same centre as a community lifelong learning one – as part of a 'one stop shop' approach. However, it is key that the target groups for this centre find such a place easy and welcome to access and that their cultural identity is clearly expressed in the physical environment of such centres.

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[10] Formal education is intentional from the learner's point of view. It leads to certification which may lead to the next educational level. Non-formal education It does not directly involve certification or assessment. Organised and sustained educational activities which may take place both within and outside educational institutions and cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of school children, life-skills, work-skills and general culture. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the 'ladder' system and may have a differing duration (UNESCO 1997)

Cultural Bridges and Identity in School Systems

Festivals involving the arts are an innovative outreach strategy going well beyond mere informational approaches that can foster that sense of assumed connection between an educational institution and a target group that has traditionally been detached from such institution. The Hague municipality illustrates one example of a festival as bridge building to parents through involving children in music and dance in a space where parents can also access groups offering support for their children regarding transition to postprimary school. Such festivals to build bridges to local communities, especially those traditionally socio-economically excluded and marginalised, can play an important role in opening up community spaces, whether schools or community lifelong learning centres that seek to be engaging for parents. These festivals and cultural activities also offer a chance for parents experiencing social marginalization to expand their social networks and meet new people.

Another important example of the role of the arts to engage parents is the Catania municipality's *Music at School* project. This opens up schools to citizens by involving teachers, young people and families in music and cultural activities. It is a pilot municipal model for social integration, which uses the universal language of music as social link. The idea of *Music at School* is to open the school as a physical place for the use and understanding of the whole community. The project aims to diffuse a social use and meaning of musical instruments and concerto moment, as a link between family (especially parents, but not just them) and schools.

This need for cultural bridges to parents emerges from this account of Stockholm municipality:

> The PREVENT project in Stockholm is taking place in an immigrant area where most teachers and headmasters are educated "old swedes" and many parents are uneducated, unemployed "new swedes". Involving parents in this area is something else than involving parents in another part of the town and should have more focus on such matter than it gets right now. The obstacle that was pinpointed in our ULSG gives a hint about that. Teachers and headmasters are doing a great job in the area but do not often reflect enough on what or why things are doing well some times and bad some other times. Parents' involvement ought to be more discussed in school, what does school mean with parents involvement, what should be the outcome of it, what is there to gain for pupils, teachers, parents and the school on the whole.

Furthermore, as an illustrative example, Munich municipality recognises that it does not have clear representations of cultural identity of specific groups in shared physical spaces like schools and communities, such as through festivals or a clear outreach strategy to reach marginalized groups. It also recognises that it does not currently have a strategy to develop community leaders from marginalized groups. Such a community leadership strategy could include initially helping with organisation of festivals to give expression to cultural identities in public spaces of traditionally marginalised groups.

Community outreach approaches based on making the educational institution culturally relevant, socially meaningful and engaged with marginalised groups' narratives include the following examples from Slovenia and Belgium:

Peoples' universities were among the first which embraced the idea of Lifelong Learning Week and formed in the very first years of the festival the majority of organisations participating in the event. (Ivančič et al. 2010)

Open School has a tradition in reaching out to other non-profit organisations, association sand communities (e.g. organising courses in community centres). According to the interviewees, it is important – in any outreach project – to make sure that the theme and content of courses are linked to what the target group is really interested in: health, food, budgeting and money, etc. Another key aspect is the use of the key biographic moments and lived experiences of the participants in the learning process. (Vermeersch and Vandenbrouke 2010)

Another underutilised bridge to engage socio-economically excluded parents is the area of the visual voices (Luttrell 2010) of photography. This can be both the photos by the children and young people, and displays of parents' photography in school, as a nonthreatening way of communication between school and home (Pasternak 2014); in photography there is no right or wrong answer so that can facilitate cultural expression in a safe space for parents who are not used to engaging with 'the system'. Again this aspect could also be integrated as part of a festivals approach, as well as being adopted for art exhibitions in the school environment.

C2. Health

In the US context, Freudenberg & Ruglis (2007) strongly advocate the importance of interpreting early school leaving as a health related issue:

> Although evidence shows that education is an important determinant of
> health and that changes in school policy can improve educational
> outcomes, public health professionals have seldom made improving
> school completion rates a health priority…With a few important
> exceptions, health providers have not developed lasting partnerships
> with schools, nor have researchers provided the evidence needed to

improve or replicate health programmes that can reduce school dropout

rates (p. 3).

Downes & Gilligan (2007) have also emphasised the need to address policy gaps and department structures that split mental health and educational issues for early school leaving prevention; bridges need to be made between departments of health and education for integrated strategic policy making, whether at national or municipality level. It has already been highlighted that the Commission and Council (2011) documents on early school leaving take a holistic approach to parental involvement that includes the whole area of family support. Furthermore, the first signed statement of Deputy Mayors for the PREVENT project, in The Hague, November 2013, commits to a *cross-sectoral* approach at a local level.

In the words of Stockholm municipality:

Look at ESL and NEET [those not in education or training] in a holistic way. The challenges are not a specific school problem, for them to solve. The surrounding areas, socio-economic status, level of adults unemployment, criminality, families cramped for space, children's chances to join spare-time activities among other things are making a big impact on how schools are reaching good results or not. Institutions handling these issues must cooperate on different levels operatively, structural and economic wise. Social innovation and cooperation on local operative level does

function more often but as soon new decisions and money must be taken to action cooperation get stuck on higher levels.

C2.1 Sleep Difficulties of Pupils

<p style="text-align:center;color:blue;">Universal and Selected Prevention</p>

Taras & Potts-Datema (2005) note that most children need at least 9 hours of restful sleep each night and conclude that:

> The preponderance of literature that recognises the detrimental effects of sleep disorders is astounding and perhaps not fully appreciated among many primary care providers, school health professionals and educators (p.254)

Other research has shown that adolescents require at least 8.5 hours of sleep per night and more appropriately 9.25 hours of sleep (Carskadon et al., 1980). A review by Blunden et al (2001) of 13 articles demonstrated that reduced attention, memory, intelligence and increased problematic behaviour resulted from sleep-related obstructive breathing. These findings are resonant with a more recent review by Everhart (2011) which highlighted the link between negative consequences on academic performance due to inadequate or interrupted sleep affecting cognitive functioning and behaviour.

In a study of 309 mothers in Norway (Boe et al., 2012), it was found that children in the lowest social classes had higher rates of sleep problems, such as daytime tiredness and awakenings during the night, than children from higher social classes. The authors suggested that poor sleep health may be a mechanism through which low socio-economic status is translated into mental health problems. In Irish school contexts of high social exclusion, Downes & Maunsell (2007) found that over 15% of later primary school pupils went to bed at or after midnight on a schoolday, in four out of seven schools.

A recent Canadian study demonstrated that there is considerable evidence that higher duration or quality of sleep is linked to enhanced cognitive performance in children aged 1-4 years (Bernier et al., 2013). Other international studies have shown a relationship between insufficient sleep and lowered academic performance (Allen, 1992; Kowalski & Allen, 1995; Schuller, 1994; Wolfson & Carskadon, 1996, 1998). Fallone's (2005) research monitored 74 healthy, academically successful children between the ages of 6 and 12 for a three-week long period. During the first week of the study, they slept their normal amount. For the second two

weeks, they went to bed a little earlier one week and much later than normal the other. Their teachers rated their academic performance and behaviour at the end of each week. Results showed significantly lower ratings for academic performance and attention during the week that they slept fewer hours, despite the fact that teachers were not told which sleep schedule the kids were on. However, Fallone et al (2002) reviewed a number of studies and concluded that varying definitions of "good" versus "poor" sleep limit the ability to compare studies.

Hardagon (2014) developed a school curricular and home based intervention for improving sleep patterns in later primary pupils in an Irish school context of high social exclusion. This brief 5 week, albeit small scale intervention, involving parents as well as pupils, brought notable changes in reported sleep behaviour and attitudes to sleep. It also involved a focus on use of electronic media before sleeping as well as of drinking stimulants before sleep. Cooper's (2014, personal communication) study of 720 students, including responses by 27 teachers across schools in Hong Kong and UK, found that teachers' perceptions of students' attitude towards and engagement with school are positively correlated with sleep problems, with both students and staff identifying tiredness as a significant factor in classroom functioning, especially in Hong Kong. Overall in Cooper's (2014) study, sleep deprivation problems were positively correlated with student emotional problems, hyperactivity/inattention and conduct problems.

It is important to recognise that an issue such as sleep patterns on schooldays may be highly variably culturally across Europe, not only between countries but also within subcultures in a given country. The emphasis given here to the issue of sleep loss is a dual one. Firstly, it is an issue that directly bears on the role of parents in their engagement with their children and it is a potentially malleable pattern of behaviour. Secondly, sleep loss exerts a real influence on a range of issues central to early school leaving prevention and school performance – it affects children and young people's concentration, learning, motivation, memory, mental health, as well as interaction and behaviour with both peers and teachers. At a strategic level, it is an issue that needs to be addressed, to interrogate the relevance and scale of this issue as a problem in a given municipality. Once identified as a problem, through surveys of children and young people, both parents and schools can play key roles as part of integrated strategic interventions to address this issue.

C2.2 Alternatives to Suspension/Expulsion from School: From Structures of Exclusion to Multidisciplinary Mental Health Supports

It is a contradiction at a systemic level to have, on the one hand, a range of State support services seeking to keep children and young people in the school system, together with an EU20202 headline target of early school leaving prevention, and on the other hand, policies and practices that suspend and expel students from school. This is clearly an issue relevant to early school leaving prevention (see Downes 2013). The argument here is not to prevent a student displaying highly disruptive and aggressive behaviour from being removed from a classroom for a period of time – it is the removal from the school environment that must be questioned in some countries' practices. The approach in Sweden to this issue is a progressive one that is not a structure of exclusion. As reported by the Stockholm municipality:

> Schools in Sweden are not allowed to suspend a pupil between 0 – 15 years old taking place in a community pre-school or school. Pupils and parents could depend on education in some form in the regular school or in alternative schools suited for the pupils need. In some cases a pupil could be individually taught by a teacher in an alternative place during a short period while dealing with problems connected to the ordinary situation.

The complexity of a student's needs may require a multidisciplinary response to engaging with them, one that goes beyond simply relying on response of an individual teacher. It is evident that there are a number of individual initiatives across municipalities seeking to engage with the issue of violence and aggression in school. These include as follows:

Table 9. Examples of Supportive Systems as Alternatives to Suspension in Municipalities for Engaging with Children and Young People Displaying Aggression and Violence

Sofia: 'Pilot: Breaking the cycle of violence Capacity building process to prevent risk behaviour and promote social inclusion Pilot municipal model for prevention of risk behaviour through capacity building, scaling up activities, field work/community

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involvement and parents' activities/and institutional support in order to create conditions for social inclusion. Target group: students aged 9 to 18 from all regions of Sofia'.

Tallinn: 'The school reconciliation model – round table talks. An alternative intervention method between school, parents and the young. A conciliator (broker) helps in solving conflicts and truancy issues Round table talks with specialists – an alternative intervention method that could be used in addressing and solving conflicts and truancy situations.
Target groups: Students, teachers and parents'.

Gijon: 'There is an official procedure with no alternative to suspension but every school try to find their own alternatives. As a general example there is an association funded by the municipality called "Educative mornings" for attending children with suspension. They are educators and they follow the same curriculum than the school and keep tight contact with the teachers of the students during the suspension period'.

Hague: 'Suspension is a last-resort in The Hague. Nevertheless, we have the means to do so as a municipality and sometimes it is the only approach that is taken seriously.,. We prefer working on a project in the municipality where parents are addressed when children drop out. We visit parents at home and coach, inform and/or support them in playing a positive role in their child's school career, with the aim to ensure a child does not drop out.
Other approaches other than suspensions are different trajectories, where children are given a special program each day, which may include school lessons like maths and language, cooking classes, but also sessions with a psychologist/aid worker to address personal issues. One example is 'sleutelen met jongeren' (Repairing with youngsters), where youngsters are given work in a garage in repairing cars. At the same time, those who run the garage spend time with the youngsters and attempt to address issues like how to socially interact, issues relating to violence, sexual health, etc. Attempts are made to involve parents, although this is not always possible'.

Antwerp: 'A Central Help Desk (Centraal Meldpunt) and a coaching network support schools and parents in dealing with pupils showing truancy and defiant behaviour. The city also created a setting for the brokerage of ideas and research results of internationally

acclaimed researchers by setting up an "academic Chair for education reform and cooperation within the urban context" 4 within the Association of university and university colleges of Antwerp (Auha).

-Centraal Meldpunt voor Risicojongeren (CMP) (Central Point of Access) and the truancy officer: Centraal Meldpunt voor Risicojongeren is an umbrella CLB structure that works to minimize school dropouts. The 'complaints office' (Point of Access) has an important hub function in Antwerp education policy within a broad network. Students without a school and young people with behavioral and truancy problems are reported to CMP, which looks to obtain personalized assistance for the young person in association with all stakeholders. Furthermore, following projects are running:

Young people coaching network coordinator: The network coordinator's job is to set up a coaching network

Samen Werken Aan Toekomst (SWAT) (Working Together on the future): SWAT is a cross-network reception structure for young people with serious but short-term behavioural problems and who are temporarily excluded from school. SWAT is the Centraal Meldpunt's hub and is open to secondary school students in Antwerpen, regardless of education form.

Crisis support for schools'.

Both Usti and Munich municipalities report having no alternatives to suspension approaches in place.

A dialogue process between school and student on this issue must also involve parents. It is far from clear that there is a transparent dialogue process and procedure in place across municipalities and schools that engage both students and parents in conversation with the school about agreed steps forward to address issues of problematic behaviour. If alternative strategies are to be put in place, they need ownership by the student and also by parents' of the student. Ownership requires dialogue. Such steps may require systemic changes at school level and not simply at individual student level. This is an issue for multidisciplinary teams in and around schools (Edwards & Downes 2013; Downes 2011) to engage with complex psychological and language needs of some students who are externalising their problems through aggressive behaviour.

C2.3 First-Language Problems of Pupils

Indicated Prevention

The need for a multi/interdisciplinary team to engage in targeted early intervention for oral language development emerges from international research regarding language impairment as a risk factor for correlates of early school leaving, such as engagement in disruptive behaviour. Eigsti and Cicchetti (2004) found that preschool aged children who had experienced maltreatment prior to age 2 exhibited language delays in vocabulary and language complexity. The mothers of these maltreated children directed fewer utterances to their children and produced a smaller number of overall utterances compared to mothers of non-maltreated children, with a significant association between maternal utterances and child language variables. Rates of language impairment reach 24% to 65% in samples of children identified as exhibiting disruptive behaviours (Benasich, Curtiss, & Tallal, 1993),and 59% to 80% of preschool- and school-age children identified as exhibiting disruptive behaviours also exhibit language delays (Beitchman, Nair, Clegg, Ferguson, & Patel, 1996; Brinton & Fujiki, 1993; Stevenson, Richman, & Graham, 1985). Language development is clearly a mental health related issue.

Locke et al., (2002) identify a strong association between children reared in poverty and risk of developing language problems. In Britain, parental involvement in early intervention programmes for children with developmental difficulties is now in widespread practice (Guralnick 1997). In the words of Glogowska & Campbell (2000):

> Speech and language therapists working with children routinely deliver treatments using parents and carers, transferring skills and knowledge to equip them to deliver therapy at home (p.391-2).

Citing Ward (1994) and Gibbard (1998), they observe that some speech and language therapy services in Britain are specifically targeting their resources at teaching parents the language facilitation techniques to implement with their children. Similar developments have also occurred in the US where a movement has occurred from an individualized, isolated service delivery model in the clinic or treatment room to client-based intervention taking place in a wider variety of settings involving not only the clinician and the child but others in the child's environment or social system, i.e., family members and other professionals (Downes 2004). In the words of Kelly (1995) in the US context:

The impetus for this change has come, at least in part, from our realization and acceptance that others are impacted by and have impact on the child's development.The desired changes in speech, language and fluency behaviors are best served by expanding our treatment teams beyond the clinician-client partnership (p.101)

Glogowska & Campbell's (2000) review of the fears of parents in their initial meetings with speech therapists offers a guide for good practice in overcoming such fears but also the implication that such fears are arguably even greater in the context of parents with low levels of education. Glogowska & Campbell note the needs of some parents:

– to have an opportunity to discuss their ideas with the speech therapist especially during the early phase of their involvement

– to be actively involved in intervention with their own child rather than simply in assessment; they cite the complaint of one parent "'But we didn't really ever do anything…'cos I didn't have any set things that I was supposed to be doing with him'" (p.400)

– for ongoing support from the speech therapist or professional, so that the parent would not simply feel left to 'get on with it' without ongoing guidance

– for adequate time and suggestions about activities to accomplish the large role in treatment to be given to parents prior to their intervention role

– for the speech therapist to communicate explicitly to the parents their active role in the speech therapy of the child

– for more information about what progress entails, about appropriate communication levels with regard to their child's age.

Other lessons from the A.P.P.L.E model in Clondalkin, Dublin (1999) and Familiscope, Ballyfermot, Dublin (Downes 2011) which would be important to incorporate within an oral language programme involving parental intervention include:

– developing a programme specifically for young mothers where there is a high concentration of young, first time single parents

– train more parent co-workers

– run the parents groups at convenient times for the parents i.e. not the mornings and to include evening times

– design promotional materials which are accessible to people with a low level of literacy.

The Familiscope (Downes 2011) and Tallaght CDI (Hayes et al., 2012) models in Dublin, Ireland, focus mainly on language development issues (rather than speech issues) for pupils in contexts of high socio-economic exclusion. The issue of a language development dimension is not simply to target those at the level of a clinical speech and language disorder. Both of these models targeted areas and schools with pupils at high risk of nonattendance and early school leaving using a child and family centred approach for children in preschool and school settings. This included collaboration between speech and language therapists and early years practitioners and primary teachers. A number of teacher observed improvements in children's use of language were documented.

It is important to firmly distinguish language difference from linguistic and cognitive deficit (Grainger & Jones 2013), so that professionals are attuned to cultural and social class variation in language (Cregan 2007; Grainger 2013). It is also to be emphasised that this focus on early years language development difficulties and speech and language therapists' role for early intervention is for the context of first-language development difficulties, not second-language issues.

C3. DEMOCRACY – Inclusive Systems as Emotional-Relational Communicative Systems

C 3.1 Communication between Parents and Teachers, including Parental Involvement in School Policy Making

Promotion, Universal, Selected and Indicated Prevention

A focus on communication is illustrated in a health context, by the words of Kirkpatrick et al., (2007), '...where there is dissatisfaction [by parents] this often focuses on difficulties in establishing meaningful communication' (p.43). Day's (2013) interviews with parents in a UK context contrasted a new school head as 'open, friendly and noncondescending' with the following account:

> One described an incident of a parent being publicly humiliated by a teacher
> discussing their child's difficulties in front of other parents. She stated, "Parents hate

the way teachers talk to them" and emphasised the importance of, "How teachers speak to parents not what they say". Unapproachable and condescending verbal and non-verbal communication was also identified by parents in another focus group (p.46)

This account highlights the importance of a relational approach by teachers with parents rather than a hierarchical and alienating one. A relational school climate requires a flexibility to move from a hierarchical institutional culture to a more democratic network of care relations. Gatt et al., (2011) working on the INCLUDED project, refer 'globally' to 'a culture of education that leaves little room for families' where 'it is difficult to decentralise the power that is very often monopolised by education professionals' (p.35). Their Learning Communities approach, started in Spain in 1978, gives central emphasis to dialogue, to dialogical learning (Gatt et al., 2011).

In the words of a UNESCO report (1995):

Different interest groups each have their own legitimate 'rationality' for understanding and responding to an educational initiative. Rather than perfecting the 'correct' reform to be implemented by obedient managers, and converting the public to the unitary reality, it is certainly more productive in the long run, to seek to understand the processes through which trade-offs are accomplished among the interests underlying the various rationalities relevant to a given policy choice (p.72)

Applied to the context of parental education, this highlights the need to engage in a process of dialogue with relevant actors in the system regarding such unofficial realities and needs. A starting point here is documentation of voices of students to hear their experiences, especially those students at risk of early school leaving. After this dialogue process (through pupil and student questionnaires and focus groups), it would provide a context for parents to comment on their interactions with the school and on how to progress the needs of students raised in the first wave of dialogue. Similarly, it would be important to get on the record the unofficial thoughts and perspectives of teachers and principals across different areas of a municipality to see what their real concerns are here. Only after the relevant issues and responses have been brought to the fore can they be addressed in part through further dialogue between groups. Each local municipality can play a key role here in facilitating these phases of the dialogue process, as well as with a view to developing appropriate system level policy and

practice responses to addressing the common ground and strengths, as well as problems, emerging from this process.

Anticipated problems might include: student bullying, negative interactions with individual teacher, behavioural difficulties of student, learning problems of student, questioning of quality of teaching instruction. Communicative processes need to be put in place to address these conflicts – these are system issues and not simply individual parent concerns.

For parental involvement to be a priority as a pervasive feature cutting across central aspects of school life, there needs to be clarity on people's roles in the school and municipality systems for promoting parental involvement. It is far from evident that there are specific roles allocated to promote parental involvement in many schools and municipalities across the 10 participating municipalities and across the EU[11] .

Table 10.1 Illustrative Responses from Municipalities Regarding Specific Key Workers in Schools for Parental Involvement and their relation to Teams for Holistic Parental Involvement

Questions	Munich	Gijon	Tallinn	Nantes	The Hague
Are there specific key workers in a significant numbers of schools in your municipality with a concrete role to engage with parents? Yes/No	NO -Parental work in schools not significant. But projects in schools with external partners (paid for by City of Munich)	YES -There are guidance teachers and psychologist to engage parents and children as well	YES There are teachers and school staff in schools to engage parents	NO [not] directly **in** the schools	YES -g5%
If yes, are these key workers part of teams of professionals from other disciplines? Yes/No	NO -Is intended to be done	YES -They are part of multi-professional	YES They are part of professional	NO	YES -If they are professional workers then

[11] Based on the EU Commissions's spider graph regarding parental involvement, cited above.

| | | teams | teams | | they are from other disciplines |

Table 10.2 Illustrative Responses from Municipalities Regarding Specific Key Workers in Schools for Parental Involvement and their relation to Teams for Holistic Parental Involvement

Questions	Usti nad Labem	Stockholm	Sofia	Antwerp
Are there specific key workers in a significant numbers of schools in your municipality with a concrete role to engage with parents? Yes/No	NO	NO -It depends on how you define engaging parents. We need to be clearer about the responsibility of our current staff to engage parents. It is important to decide how and why we engage parents. Festive activities is not engaging parents	YES -In three pilot schools from NGO Association "Parents"	YES
If yes, are these key workers part of teams of professionals from other disciplines? Yes/No	------------	NO	YES -They are part of Local Support Group	YES

In the words of Stockholm municipality:

Appoint a specific key worker in each school with a concrete role to engage parents and develop the schools strategy to involve parents. The appointed person must have headmasters mandate and have at least teachers' status to guide colleagues and develop new ideas within the curricula. Building network with useful stakeholders, social servants, volunteers and other schools to bring in resources and find good examples are other issues for the specific person. Who also should be interested in mapping the needs of parents together with them and other stakeholders. To appoint a specific key worker means that the school looks upon the issue seriously and make it as important as developing any other subject. The appointed person will also be of service to all teachers and parents in the school and will strengthen the confidence between the school and the parents.
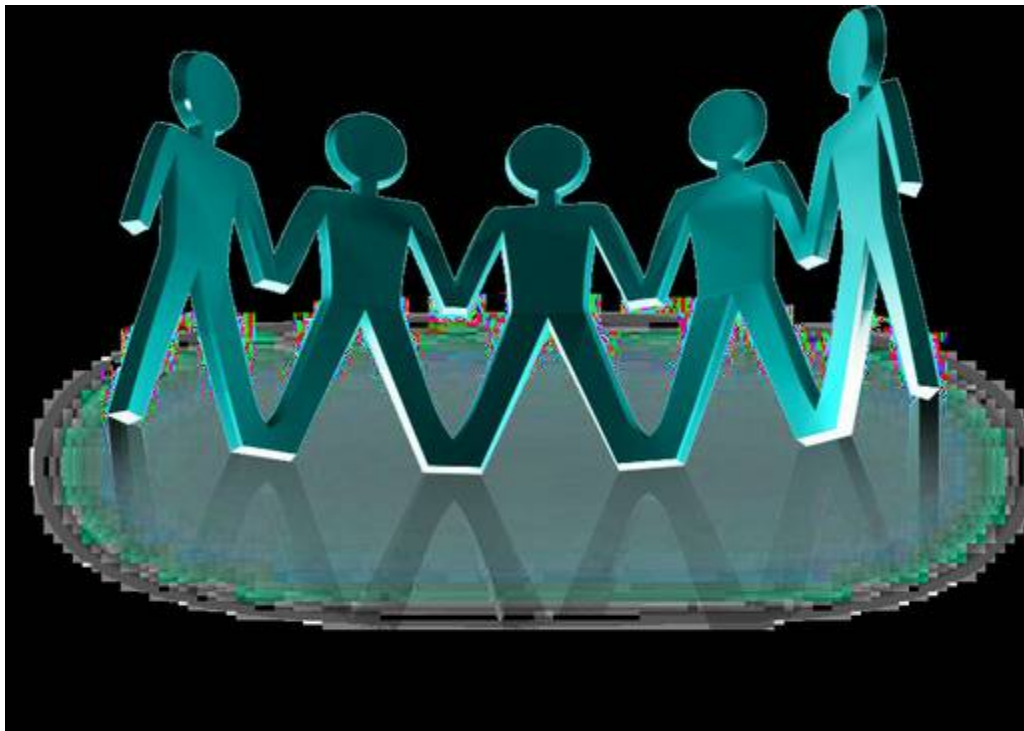
Discussions with the PREVENT consortium of municipalities also brought to the fore the role ambiguity of parental involvement for teachers. Teachers may not see its importance or accept it as being central to their role of education for their pupils. Parental involvement becomes a perpetual 'Cinderella' issue, relegated to the margins of competing priorities for teachers' time and energies. This raises the further question as to whether parental involvement is a feature of teachers' contracts, of promotional posts, of whole school planning (O'Reilly 2012) and of external Inspectorate reviews. The system ambiguity with

regard to the teachers' roles requires addressing at a systemic level rather than in *ad hoc* fashion. The issue of teachers' roles also pertains to the need for incentives to be put in place at system level to ensure that parental involvement is perceived and treated in reality as a central feature of teaching.

Change to communicative practices between teachers and parents in schools and municipalities, especially to engage socio-economically marginalised parents, needs however to go further than simply roles and incentives to examine issues of trust, communication and conflict. In the words of Stockholm municipality:

> Parents do not feel welcomed. Parents feel unsecure. Language problems. Parents do not understand that they are important and do not know what to do. School and parent have different expectations about what to do and who does what. Parents feel criticised. Lack of confidence between school and parents. Parents have many children – meetings in school feel the same but in different classes. Parents have too little time or are too tired.

> Teachers feel uncomfortable an insecure in meetings with parents. Teachers do not see "involving parents" as an important or a prioritised issue among other issues. Parents meetings does not improve teachers ordinary work and feels meaningless. School has a problem to sort out important information and "shovels out" all kind of information unsorted. School gives signal to parents that they can compensate parents' role – Parents let themselves be compensated.

Trust issues require school and municipality system responses to the issue of privacy and confidentiality. Resonant with Downes (2004), Mellin et al's (2011) findings have already been seen above to highlight confidentiality in school and community settings as a key concern of marginalised parents. This issue is also emphasised by Stockholm municipality:

> The relation between school/teachers and parents are supposed to be confidential but reflections about how that confidence is built up are rarely ever discussed or planned for, not in School of Education or in the schools. If or when schools lack of parents confidence it is an issue that the school or the education system try to solve on its own. Almost never are parents or municipality involved in such a process. Often individual teachers gain confidence among parents and pupils on his/her own way.

How and why they succeed is hardly ever investigated, spread and used as good examples in a structured way.

The Stockholm municipality response for this report continues:

Connections between involving parents to pupil's progression and results must be set on the agenda by politicians at national and district level and be looked upon as a challenge to build democracy. This means that it will be prioritized at school of education and in schools as a development area to be followed up. This also means that school has to create their own way of doing it, connected to the surrounding living area. That could lead to involving parents in planning and performing suitable activities. Activities that could bring in other resources and stakeholders for cooperation together with or within the school.

Another issue relating to trust between parents and the school include physical spaces and the times school is available for parents. This highlights the need for availability of parents rooms in schools and that a message of exclusion is not communicated to parents where they are forced to wait outside the school gate with their children before school in the mornings.

Table 11. Key Issues in Communication between Parents and Schools

*Physical spaces and times school is available for parents – availability of parents rooms in schools, parents not forced to wait outside school gate in the mornings
*Beyond discussion of parental involvement for school policy in the abstract

*Focus on concrete issues of school policy that matter to students and parents
* Issues that require school system change (including to hierarchy of communication)
*Issues of conflict, specific problems with school actors, policies
*Anticipated problems might include: bullying, negative interactions with individual teacher, behavioural difficulties of student, learning problems of student, questioning of quality of teaching instruction
*Communicative processes need to be put in place to address these conflicts – these are system issues and not simply individual parent concerns
*Reframing of Parental Involvement - This communication also needs to be as part of the *student* voices' communication process – parental involvement is both part of respect of the right of the child to be heard and part of an active citizenship process
*Schools will need incentives from municipalities to participate in such system change processes
*Can municipalities foster dialogue processes ? Questionnaires in school, interviews, focus groups in a neutral space...

C 3.2 Communication between Students and Teachers

Promotion, Universal, Selected and Indicated Prevention

Following on from its Lithuanian EU Presidency Conference on Early School Leaving in November 2013, the European Network of Education Councils (EUNEC) has issued an agreed position statement on early school leaving. The statement 'considers early school leaving from a holistic perspective' recognizing the need to 'improve school climate, class climate' and to 'support pupils to deal with social problems, emotional and mental health'. It acknowledges the need for 'a warm and supportive relationship between teachers and pupils', as well as 'collaboration' between schools and 'family and social services' which

recognize the respective boundaries between each'. 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. The Commission and Council documents (2011) on early school leaving have already been cited regarding supports for teachers in coping with difficult teaching situations and in their diversity awareness. The EU Commission Thematic Working Group on early school leaving report (2013) goes further to state:

> Ensure children and young people are at the centre of all policies aimed at reducing ESL. Ensure their voices are taken into account when developing and implementing such policies.

Key results observed in TALIS (OECD 2009) include that one teacher in four, in most countries, loses at least 30% of the lesson time, and some lose more than half, in disruptions and administrative tasks – and this is closely associated with classroom disciplinary climate, which varies more among individual teachers than among schools. The World Health Organisation report (2012) on children and young people's wellbeing recommends 'modifications' in school systems. It states that 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.

This is an issue relevant to early school leaving prevention and it is also a theme for parental voice and involvement. Furthermore, dialogue with children and young people on their school experiences is a human right, based on Article 12 (1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which declares: 'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'. Parental involvement in education includes their role in facilitating students' voices in the school setting. This reframing of parental involvement involves

recognition that parental involvement is both part of respect of the right of the child to be heard and part of an active citizenship process.

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). A positive school climate can be created at classroom and school levels. In the classroom, teachers must be adequately prepared and motivated to meet students' needs through sensitive and responsive pedagogical interactions (Danielsen et al 2010). Strategies and approaches to achieve a positive developmental atmosphere in schools are recommended for pre- and in-service teacher training (Jourdan et al. 2008) and again recently for pre-servive training for early childhood education and care settings in a report for the EU Commission (Dumcius et al., 2014).

Illustrative examples of the need to address this problem of authoritarian teaching among some teachers that tends to alienate students from school are as follows from a European context. Cefai & Cooper (2010), review of qualitative research in Malta concludes:

> 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. (p.188)

In Finland, Pyhältö et al.'s (2010) research on 518 students, in 9th grade, across 6 schools similarly observed 'unjustified and authoritarian behaviour that undermined pupil's agency was considered as a source of burden, anxiety, and anger' (see also Downes et al., 2006, 2007 for comparable findings in Irish school contexts).

In Poland (CBOS 2006), a national survey of 3,085 students, 900 teachers and 554 parents, across 150 schools, experience of school violence from teachers towards students was reported directly as being hit or knocked over by 6% of students with 13% reporting having observed this occur for others. Teachers' use of offensive language towards students was reported by 16% as having been experienced directly individually and 28% as observed

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towards other students. Concerning conflict with teachers, a clear difference between primary and postprimary students emerged. 33% of students had at least one conflict with a teacher in a school year in primary school, 52% in gymnasium and 54% post-gymnasium.

A school principal from an Estonian national report states, *"schools can create circumstances where unwanted students feel that they have to leave… and they do..."* (Tamm & Saar 2010, in Downes 2013). 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 2013). A review of this area in Downes (2013) emphasises:

> The danger exists that it is precisely those teachers who may be most resistant to professional development for conflict resolution skills who need them most; this applies *a fortiori* if there is no specific requirement or incentive provided to do so...It is important to emphasise that it is not a matter of shifting blame from student to teacher; it is about going beyond an individual blame type of focus to a systemic one (p.354).

A constructive, caring pattern of communicative relations between students and teachers is central to early school leaving prevention. A prerequisite for this is a basically democratic communicative environment in school. In other words, the issue of students voices being heard in the school system is intrinsically related to the issue of parents voices in the school system. Avenues for their voices need to be created so that both groups are fully heard in the school. This may require system change in some schools. Furthermore, there is a double silence that needs to be addressed, not only the need for students' and parents' voices in general but specifically for the voices of students from lower socio-economic groups or from ethnic minorities, in contexts where these groups are more at risk of nonattendance at school and of early school leaving. The challenge for municipalities and schools here is to create systemic structures and processes for dialogue that includes the hidden voices of the socio-economically marginalised students and parents in particular.

These systemic structures need to go beyond formalistic ones like parents' councils and students' councils which do not tend to attract parents and students from marginalised backgrounds. In the words of Stockholm municipality's submission for this report:

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Involving parents in school usually means cooperation with parents to be transparent and cooperative with parents in general and to parents who have a fairly successful school background, or to please "demanding" parents. That means schools have good action plans for general information and routines for conversations about the child's school result. It is somewhat understood that parents should have an understanding for what makes education successful for a child and how responsibilities' is shared between teacher/school and parents/home.

This issue of communicative conflict needs not simply a universal prevention approach. It must target those most marginalised as part of a selected (group) and indicated (individual, high need) prevention levels for strategic intervention.

The task is to engage these groups' concerns and to create *incentives* and *roles* for system actors in schools and municipalities to engage with these groups in a relational fashion. Yet this relational issue needs to go beyond specific individual roles and system incentives to be or become a pervasive feature of the institutional culture or school climate. On the specific issue of communicative problems between students and teachers, it is to be recognised that this is a sensitive issue and that conflict on these issues needs to be addressed and resolved in a structural fashion.

C 3.3 Bullying

Promotion, Universal, Selected and Indicated Prevention

As seen above, the EU Commission and Council (2011) documents on early school leaving recognise the issue of bullying in school as affecting motivation of students to leave the school environment. 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). 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, Farringon, Lösel,& Loeber, 2011). Bullying and trauma are directly linked with early school leaving (Downes 2004; Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education Report 2010). Swearer et al (2010) conclude from their international review that:

Bullying will be reduced and/or stopped when prevention and intervention programs target the complexity of individual, peer, school, family, and community contexts in which bullying unfolds. (p.43)

In a recent US study, Cornell et al. (2013) found that 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. (p.145)

Cornell et al. (2013) continue:

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. (p.146)

Cornell et al. (2013) highlight bullying as an issue of communication and trust, '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' (p.147).

The relevance of the role parents can play for bullying prevention and intervention is firstly at the level of their contribution to the development of school policy in this area. They also have a key role to play as part of a systematic communication process between school and home both for student victims of bullying in school and for perpetrators. An individual plan or behaviour contract for engaging with students who are bullying needs to involve parents as part of this process. The wider issue of developing improved communicative relations across the school climate is part of a democratic agenda for the school system and is one that requires systematic communication processes targeting parents of students at risk of early school leaving, as well as parents more generally.

D. Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has identified the three areas of Outreach (community and individual family), Health and Democratic Systems in School as central to a holistic, differentiated and systemic focus on parental involvement in education specifically for early school leaving prevention. Going beyond Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systems approach to interrogate system blockage or displacement (Downes 2014), distinct kinds of system blockage for parental

involvement can be seen to emerge. The outreach and democratic systems issues highlight a *system blockage in communication*. The need to promote more democratic systems in schools also requires addressing *system resistance* to change, where unofficial realities need to be brought to the fore through a dialogue process. A further example of system blockage has been identified as *structures of exclusion*. Examples of structures of exclusion are where there is a lack of alternatives to suspension or expulsion from school, or where physical location of centres are not in community spaces that are accessible either due to distance issues or also because of splits in an area, where different groups have different territories and the centre location is not in a 'neutral' community space.

A further system blockage highlighted by the PREVENT network is that of *system fragmentation*. This can take place where there is a diffusion of responsibility across different agencies in a municipality about who is the lead person responsible for organising a strategy of engagement with families and children experiencing social marginalisation. There is a need to go beyond a fragmented approach of endless referrals across services that are 'passing on bits of the child' (Edwards & Downes 2013) and family. This system fragmentation can also occur at a school level if there is not a key worker in the school with specific responsibility for parental involvement and for collaborating with the rest of the teachers and principal on this issue. In some municipalities where there is such a key worker, it is not always evident that this person is part of a team; a multidisciplinary team based approach is needed especially for highly complex needs of children and families at the level of indicated prevention (highest, chronic needs).

A key theme in this report in response to challenging such issues of system fragmentation is to focus on development of *centres*, of accessible community based centres as a 'one stop shop' for family support, as well as centres for lifelong learning (both nonformal and formal). Another level of system fragmentation that may need to be addressed is for more cross-department strategies and funding strands, for example, between health and education. A less obvious example of fragmentation is a proliferation of pilot projects and small scale initiatives to address a systemic problem in a municipality. The danger is that these offer insufficient systemic intensity to bring enduring change. While small scale pilot projects offer less risk of failure and less need for investment, a focus on a more largescale strategy of community centres, for family support and lifelong learning, if sensitive to the needs and identities of a local area, can bring more substantial change. This is not to argue against pilot projects. They are useful in an initial phase of a new initiative, for example, as

an intervention to improve sleep patterns in children through classroom based approaches and engagement with parents by the schools. Yet a systemic approach that goes beyond *ad hoc* responses dependent on local personalities is required as part of mainstreaming the successful pilot projects across a municipality or country.

As different municipalities have different starting points in terms of existing services, level of influence with schools, funding availability and levels of need of children and young people at risk of social exclusion and early school leaving, it is not the role of this report to recommend which of the issues described in it are of priority for any given municipality. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that the recommended process of phased, semi-structured, dialogue to promote democratic systems in schools is not an expensive commitment and is central to a strategic commitment to parental involvement in schools. This is one of the major recommendations of this report for all municipalities to undertake. They are in an ideal position as a mediating space between schools, parents and students. Such a phased dialogue, targeting schools especially in areas of high poverty, nonattendance and early school leaving, may commence with a limited number of volunteer schools initially, before widening this process. This would include student surveys of their needs and school experiences, including open-ended questions and also focus groups of students and parents. It is recommended that municipalities develop a 'Quality Mark for Democratic School Systems for Parent and Student Voices' for participating schools, as an incentive to participate in this process.

The other major recommendations in the report are with regard to local community centre based initiatives. These are for a) 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 and b) community based lifelong learning centres, with both nonformal and formal education classes, targeting areas of highest social marginalization. As discussed earlier, such community lifelong learning centres may also include the complementary approach of school building locations, as part of a strategy of opening the school up to the local community after school hours. There are many examples of this already occurring in schools in a number of the participating municipalities; it is not only an economically efficient pathway to lifelong learning, it is also key to a community development vision of parental involvement and cultural bridges between a school and parents traditionally marginalised from the education system.

It is to be emphasised that community based, multidisciplinary teams for family support (centred on children's needs) linked with schools require a clear framework of goals and desired outcomes to unite the different disciplinary approaches to engaging with needs of children and families. Without these, the danger of fragmentation of response and territories will recur. The municipality can play a leading role in ensuring these frameworks of goals and outcomes for multidisciplinary teams are in place, as a condition of funding.

Table 12. How can the EU help such democratization of school culture ?

EU Commission Quality Mark for Children and Young People's Voices and Democratic Communication to be heard in school together with a similar Quality Mark for Parental Involvement
- *EU Quality Mark for Children and Young People's Voices and Democratic Communication to be heard in school*
- *EU Quality Mark for Parents' Voices and Democratic Communication to be heard in school*
- Ensure transparent process for documenting students experiences in school across different age groups, with a focus on those at highest risk of early school leaving and specific local area contexts to highlight concrete issues in local school contexts
- This process needs to include questionnaires, focus groups including with open questions to allow students' stories to be heard
- EU could link with municipalities to implement these processes – they must be external to the school for honest responses

It is recommended that part of an EU Quality Mark for Children and Young People's Voices - and Parents' Voices – for Democratic Communication to be heard in school be not only at an individual school level but also at a national level. Here the focus needs to be on the quality of teacher preservice training and professional development engagement in conflict resolution skills for teachers.

Table 13. Inclusive Systems as Overcoming System Blockage

System Blockage as Communication Barriers
System Blockage as Fragmentation
System Blockage as Structures of Exclusion
System Blockage as Resistance

Table 14. Summary of System Blockages hindering Inclusive Systems across Education, Health and Social Services for Parental Involvement for Early School Leaving Prevention in Europe

Communication Blockages in System:
-Socio-economically marginalised students' and parents' voices are hidden in the school system
-Lack of accountability and professional development system for teachers' conflict resolution skills
-Need neutral mediating spaces for communication with socio-economically marginalised parents
-Physical location of services in neutral community spaces
-Confidentiality vagueness leading to distrust of schools and multidisciplinary teams
-Teacher role confusion about parental involvement
-Need for systemic commitment to emotional supports for students at risk of early school leaving and their families
-Insufficient active outreach for family support for children at risk of nonattendance and early school leaving

Blockage as Fragmentation in System:
-Too many agencies with territories that are not multidisciplinary teams
-Passing on bits of the child and family, diffusion of leadership and responsibility
-Need for shared goals in multidisciplinary teams and between agencies and schools
-There is a need to go beyond pilot projects to mainstreamed systemic initiatives as structural features of each municipality system and its schools
System Blockage as Structure of Exclusion:
- Need clear policy commitment to alternatives to suspension/expulsion across EU
- Where the centre location is not in a 'neutral' community space
- Where physical location of centres are not in community spaces that are accessible due to distance issues

An emphasis of this report is on systemic approaches between municipalities and schools that address incentives, roles and relationships. It seeks mainstreaming of parental involvement in school processes so that it is not peripheral and so that it engages those parents with children at risk of nonattendance and early school leaving. Part of this also includes commitment to a culture of reflective practice in schools and municipalities, reflective practice generally and also specifically regarding parental involvement for early school leaving prevention. A structural indicators reflective practice tool, based on the issues of this report, can be developed, such as the one below.

It is recommended that municipalities seeking a holistic, differentiated approach to parental involvement for early school leaving prevention seriously engage with the structural indicators identified below. This can guide self-evaluation of a municipality or school, as well as comparative evaluation of efforts being made across different municipalities or countries. Such tools to aid strategic direction are important.

It is to be accentuated that for parents, especially in contexts of high socio-economic exclusion, the most important ingredient in their interaction with schools is a relational one –

a welcoming, open relational response to their needs, interests and concerns is a core principle and precondition for all of the initiatives to be meaningful and effective. For inclusive systems for parental involvement to breathe, they require the oxygen of relational approaches to engage parents.

Recommended Structural Indicators for Holistic and Differentiated Parental Involvement: Municipality Level

Outreach Structural Indicators

Outreach strategy to individual families in home for child-centred support at high levels of need (indicated prevention, high nonattendance at school) YES/NO
Community outreach strategy through centres for lifelong learning (nonformal and formal) YES/NO
At least 80% of schools opening doors after school hours for lifelong learning courses for parents/adults YES/NO
At least 30% of schools opening doors after school hours for lifelong learning courses for parents/adults YES/NO
Community outreach strategy through multidisciplinary 'one stop shop' centres for family support YES/NO
Clear bridges between schools and multidisciplinary community 'one stop shop' centres for family support YES/NO
Community centre in a convenient physical location for target groups to access YES/NO
Community centre in a neutral space in the community so

psychologically/culturally accessible for target groups YES/NO
Cultural identities of target groups clearly visible in physical environment of community centres YES/NO
Representativeness principle in place in community centres to employ members of target groups YES/NO
Specific key workers in school for parental involvement YES/NO
Specific key workers in school for parental involvement are part of a wider multidisciplinary team YES/NO
Family literacy initiatives in place across targeted areas of municipality YES/NO
Festivals organised by parents from target groups for bridge building with schools YES/NO
An arts strategy (visual arts, photography, music, drama, dance) to build bridges between socio-economically marginalised parents and schools in a nonthreatening environment YES/NO

Health Structural Indicators

Primary and Postprimary student survey to include focus on sleep patterns to identify scale of issue of sleep loss YES/NO
Awareness programmes (with school and/or municipality) for parents and students on issue of sleep needs YES/NO
Alternatives to suspension/expulsion in school with a multidisciplinary

approach to address complex needs in a holistic way YES/NO
Transparent dialogue process and procedures in place that engage both students and their parents in conversation with the school about agreed strategy for change to problematic behaviour YES/NO
Strategy for active intervention of parents in their child's language development with speech and language therapists for first language development problems YES/NO
Supports for parental intervention in first language development available at suitable times for parents YES/NO

Structural Indicators for Promoting Democratic Systems in School – Inclusive Systems as Emotional-Relational Communicative Systems

Promoting dialogue process through anonymous pupil questionnaires and focus groups (in school but by external agency to school) at late primary level, including a focus on pupils at risk of nonattendance and early school leaving YES/NO
Promoting dialogue process through anonymous student questionnaires and focus groups (in school but by external agency to school) at different ages of postprimary school, including a focus on students at risk of nonattendance and early school leaving YES/NO
Providing neutral mediating spaces in the municipality for parents to be aware of pupils'/students' responses and to actively respond to school policy issues based on the pupil/student responses YES/NO
Clear focus on centrally involving marginalised parents in these neutral mediating spaces in the municipality for dialogue with the school YES/NO

Anonymous recording (questionnaires, interviews) of teachers' unofficial perspectives on parental involvement in a given municipality YES/NO
Anonymous recording (questionnaires, interviews) of school principals' unofficial perspectives on parental involvement in a given municipality YES/NO
Parental involvement in formulation and review of school antibullying policies and practices YES/NO
Process for parental involvement in their child's individual behavioural contract/education plan for bullying prevention YES/NO
National/Municipal Quality Mark on democracy for schools regarding pupils'/students' voices and holistic parental involvement YES/NO

Overcoming System Blockage for Inclusive Systems: Structural Indicators

Clarity of roles in school on levels of responsibility for parental involvement YES/NO
Parental involvement embedded in whole school planning YES/NO
External inspection of schools includes a focus on parental involvement for marginalised groups YES/NO
Parental involvement in new teachers' contracts as a core part of role YES/NO
Parental involvement in contracts for teachers' promotional posts as a core part of role YES/NO

Clear confidentiality protocols in place for schools and communication of these to parents YES/NO
Clear confidentiality protocols in place for multidisciplinary teams and communication of these to parents YES/NO
Shared framework for goals and outcomes of multidisciplinary teams and a process in place to achieve this YES/NO
Clarity on who is leading a multidisciplinary team or cross-agency response to avoid diffusion of responsibility YES/NO

Integrated data systems on school nonattendance and early school leaving available to municipality to inform strategic planning and targeting of resources YES/NO
System interventions beyond pilot projects YES/NO
Clarity on incentives offered by municipality to schools to increase parental involvement for marginalised parents YES/NO

Recommended Structural Indicators for Holistic and Differentiated Parental Involvement: EU Level

EU Quality Mark on democracy for schools regarding pupils'/students' voices and holistic parental involvement YES/NO
EU Policy communication on alternatives to suspension/expulsion YES/NO
EU level shared framework on goals and outcomes for multidisciplinary teams as part of a distinct funding strand to support multidisciplinary teams for early school leaving prevention YES/NO
EU Policy communication and funding strand to promote community lifelong

learning centres with both nonformal and formal education courses YES/NO
EU Policy communication and funding strand to incentivise opening schools after school hours for lifelong learning courses for parents and adults from marginalised communities YES/NO
Promote shared experiences and learning of municipalities across EU in response to the overall framework of structural indicators for holistic and differentiated parental involvement YES/NO

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Appendix A

PREVENT's core structural indicators* across different system levels

– including municipality level and individual project level

Dr Paul Downes, Thematic expert

Mr Ulf Hägglund, Lead expert

Two kinds of indicators well known in all kinds of developmental work

Outcome Indicators

Outcome indicators measure the broader results achieved through the provision of goods and services. Outcome indicators will often be used in conjunction with benchmarks or targets to measure change over time. Area rates of early school leaving is an example of an outcome indicator. There are a number of limitations to outcome indicators. They do not explain why phenomena occur nor how they could be changed, nor obstacles to their change.

Process Indicators

'Process indicators measure programme, activities and interventions. They measure, as it were, State effort', whereas outcome indicators will often be used in conjunction with benchmarks or targets to measure change over time'.

This offers a focus on change over time dimensions and is a focus on degree/intensity of effort/participation.

Process indicators address two limitations of outcome indicators. That is, process indicators provide a better picture of the quality of services and better information for programme improvement.

Introducing Structural Indicators*

Structural indicators SI's); yes and no questions, something that can be changed laws, spaces, roles and responsibilities, key guiding principles, potentially malleable dimensions to a school and/or community system). SI's can operate flexibly at different levels of a system and at different levels of concreteness and abstraction i.e., physical spaces and designated jobs, guiding principles for action/strategy etc.)

Structural indicators could be set up as physical structures, roles as structures in an organisation or as enduring key principles structurally underpinning the intervention.

Using structural indicators will help PREVENT network cities to understand if necessary key structures and mechanisms are in place to really combat ESL, and more specific, to involve parents in the process. Whereas outcome indicators in the Prevent context could be 'reduced rates of ESL' and 'increased school attendance' (i.e., evidence of effects), structural indicators are key conditions and/or enablers for system success, enduring features of a system that are malleable, thus going beyond the traditional qualitative/quantitative distinction. The SI's will focus on aspects like the level of ESL prevention in a city (universal, selected or indicated), on the level of collaboration with core target groups from (information to real co-production), on level of systemic change individual, school, family, community).Goal of structural indicators is firstly for comparison of the cities' own progress over time compared with itself, and secondly to compare with other cities.

***Core structural indicators (SI's)- shared by all cities in the PREVENT network**

A structural indicators approach is already used by the UN concerning its international right to health.

Key Questions for your Municipality

– Agreed core structural indicators as part of a strategic systemic approach to overcome gaps

Guiding principles as Structural Indicators:

- Active involvement of target groups in design   YES OR NO

- Active involvement of target groups in delivery   YES OR NO

- Building on strengths of target groups– not framing them simply in terms of deficits
                                                                                    YES OR NO

- Cultural awareness of staff (including in schools)   YES OR NO

- Empowerment, not dependency of parents   YES OR NO

- Prevention and early intervention focus   YES OR NO

Roles in organizational structures as Structural Indicators:

- Services provided are consistent with objectives	YES OR NO
- Intervention of sufficient intensity to bring change	YES OR NO
- System change focus and not simply individual change focus	YES OR NO
- Clear focus on level of prevention– universal, selected and/or indicated	YES OR NO
- Distinct age cohort focus	YES OR NO
- Clear outreach strategy to reach marginalised groups	YES OR NO
- Strategy to develop community leaders from marginalised groups	YES OR NO
- Employment of members of marginalised groups in the team	YES OR NO
- Clear leadership responsibility with and between agencies for achieving	YES OR NO
- Specific goal– not diffusion of responsibility	YES OR NO
- Clear feedback paths from parents	YES OR NO
- Clear feedback paths from students	YES OR NO
- Continuum of supports across ages	YES OR NO
- Bridging health and education	YES OR NO
- Targeting malleable risk and protective factors	YES OR NO
- Multiple domains	YES OR NO
- Confidentiality/Privacy Protocols	YES OR NO
- Alternatives to Suspension	YES OR NO

Physical spaces as Structural Indicators

- Specific space in school building for parents to meet	YES OR NO
- Clear representations of cultural identity of specific groups in shared	
Physical spaces such as schools and communities, (such as through festivals)	YES OR NO
- Common spaces for overcoming hierarchies (e.g., common eating spaces)	YES OR NO

Optional indicators for municipalities

a) Specific/thematic structural indicators- local needs, peer/critical friends, strengths/weaknesses with a minimum of 2 cities though ideally a cluster

b) Holistic structural indicators– all relevant ones that cities recognise are important and will address in the future if successful case for additional funding is made. These allow for recognition of gaps in current services for parental engagement and early school leaving prevention

(see next page for examples)

Some Key Themes for Consideration as Local Cluster or Holistic Structural Indicator Levels:

- Preventing pupil hunger in school (frequently underestimated) through parent support: cooking classes, availability of food, school kitchens

- Preventing pupil/students loss of sleep affecting concentration, behaviour, motivation, academic performance etc. through parent support to address adequate structured sleep– 9 hours a night recommended by international research

- Preventing bullying in school leading to ESL– parental involvement to provide supports/feedback for both bullies and victims, as part of a wider bullying prevention strategy

- Early intervention for language development– Parents' reading classes for children, storytelling, musical beginnings

- Early intervention for attachment bonding processes– Family supports for bonding, feeding, relational parenting styles, sensory stimulation of children

- Bridge Building A: Outreach supports to parents' homes for their children's school attendance as empowerment supports rather than social control

- Bridge Building B: Education outreach supports for parents in community lifelong learning centres (Downes2011a), other community sites (Parent cafes, shops, churches, mosques, pubs)

- Bridge Building C: Parent peer support approaches– for young children's language development, for mutual advice for their adolescents

- Bridge Building D: Recognise social dimension to parents' motivation to be involved– to meet new people etc., – a feature increasingly recognised in adults' motivation to attend lifelong learning classes

- Building on strengths of communities– festivals approach

Appendix B

Another part of a differentiated approach is the need for a culturally responsive one, not only responsive to different cultural contexts across the EU but also to different cultural contexts within a given municipality. There is a need to go beyond a model of seeking to make parents engage in a role of cultural assimilation to a dominant culture. On this point, an important questioning has been made of generic, one size fits all approaches to parental

involvement in education: this questioning asks how approaches apply to communitarian in contrast with more individualistic liberal democratic understandings of parents in society (Ravn 2005). These perspectives need not necessarily be pitted against each other in diametric oppositional fashion. From the liberal democratic model, communal engagement can develop incrementally from individuals' experiences and practices over time. Neither in a communitarian nor in a liberal democratic approach would compulsion be an element of such engagement. Furthermore, built into the framework of universal, selected and indicated prevention is an approach that accommodates a strategic engagement of groups (the selected level) with one that recognises the need for intensive work with some individuals or an individual family (indicated prevention); the universal dimension can give expression additionally to a communal aspect. A genuinely differentiated focus on parental involvement for early school leaving prevention is thus potentially appropriate for both communitarian and liberal, collectivist and individualist cultures (while recognising that these terms are often matters of degree rather than to be treated in absolutist fashion).