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“General activities of observation, analysis and innovation”

Ulisse – Analysis and exchanges of good practices to retain students in the Education System Project

Final Scientific Report

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Preamble

Ulisse Project and the Lisbon Strategy

The Project “Ulisse – Analysis and exchange of good practices to retain students in the Education System” was co-funded by the European Commission within the Socrates Programme, Action 6.1.2 and 6.2 “General activities of observation, analysis and innovation” and it was implemented between October 2006 and February 2009.

The project aims at analysing measures and policies undertaken by educational authorities in Italy, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece and Portugal, to reduce the phenomenon of early school leavers and at sharing among teachers, school directors, professionals in the educational sector and policy makers experiences and best practices in this context.

The phenomenon of Early School leavers is one of the key issues addressed by the Lisbon Strategy.

The Lisbon Strategy was agreed in March 2000 within the European Council. A competitive, dynamic and knowledge based economy was envisaged for the enlarged European Union as a powerful engine for growth, competitiveness and jobs.

Integral parts of the strategy include:

“Every citizen must be equipped with the skills needed to live and work in this new information society. Different means of access must prevent info-exclusion. The combat against illiteracy must be reinforced. Special attention must be given to disabled people.”

“Europe's education and training systems need to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment. They will have to offer learning and training opportunities tailored to target groups at different stages of their lives: young people, unemployed adults and those in employment who are at risk of seeing their skills overtaken by rapid change. This new approach should have three main components: the development of local learning centres, the promotion of new basic skills, in particular in the information technologies, and increased transparency of qualifications.”

“The number of 18 to 24 year olds with only lower-secondary level education who are not in further education and training should be halved by 2010”

“Schools and training centres, all linked to the Internet, should be developed into multi-purpose local learning centres accessible to all, using the most appropriate methods to address a wide range of target groups; learning partnerships should be established between schools, training centres, firms and research facilities for their mutual benefit”

“A European framework should define the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning ...”

“The European Council asks the Council (Education) to undertake a general reflection on the concrete future objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns

and priorities while respecting national diversity, with a view to contributing to the Luxembourg and Cardiff processes and presenting a broader report to the European Council in the Spring of 2001”.

In the light of these challenges and developments, with the aim of contributing to the “new strategic goal” for Europe, the Ministers of Education have adopted the following concrete strategic objectives for the following ten years (2000 – 2010):

- ◆ Increasing the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union
- ◆ Facilitating the access of all to the education and training systems
- ◆ Opening up education and training systems to the wider world

These common objectives provide a basis for Member States to work together at European level over the following ten years (2000 – 2010) to contribute to the achievement of the goals set out by Lisbon, especially in the context of the Luxembourg and Cardiff processes.

Education and training systems have an important role in helping to sustain democratic societies in Europe. All citizens should have equal access to education and training. Member States need to take care of the needs of vulnerable groups, particularly people with disabilities and people with learning difficulties as well as those living in rural/remote areas or having problems in reconciling their work and family commitments. It cannot be accepted that substantial proportions of people drop out of learning prematurely, and miss essential basic skills and qualifications to participate actively in society, without accepting also the loss to society and the economy as a whole which their unfulfilled potential represents. Other aspects related to citizenship, equal opportunities and social cohesion are essential dimensions of education and training in their own right.

Key issues were identified, such as:

1. Ensuring that the learning of democratic values and democratic participation by all school partners is effectively promoted in order to prepare people for active citizenship
2. Integrating fully equal opportunity considerations in the objectives and functioning of education and training
3. Ensuring fair access to acquisition of skills for the less privileged or those currently less well served and motivating them to participate in learning

In 2003 a benchmark was identified in order to monitor and reduce the percentage of Early School Leavers in Europe. In this context a specific goal already agreed by the Member States according to the Lisbon conclusions is to **halve, by 2010, the number of 18 to 24 year olds with only lower secondary education** who are not in education and training.

A minimum knowledge base is required in order to take part in today’s knowledge based society.

Those without qualifications are consequently less likely to participate effectively in lifelong learning and are in danger of being left by the wayside in today's increasingly competitive societies.

Hence, diminishing the percentage of early school leavers is essential to ensure full employment and greater social cohesion.

Therefore, **by 2010, an EU average rate of no more than 10 % early school leavers should be achieved.**

The high number of **early school leavers is an obstacle to securing greater social cohesion** in the EU.

In 2004, almost 16% of young people aged 18-24 in the EU left school prematurely and were in danger of being on the fringes of the knowledge society. The Council has agreed to reduce this rate to 10% by 2010. Although some progress has been made, the majority of Member States need to increase their efforts in coming years to help reach the EU target. Best performing EU countries as regards the share of early school leavers are: Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Making Learning Attractive, looks at indicators relating to participation in education, based on the recognition that a minimum knowledge base is required in order to participate effectively in the knowledge society.

Indicator n°20-21 Participation in continuing vocational training

Indicator n°22 Participation rates in education

Indicator n°23 Early school leavers

The five European benchmarks:

Indicator n°4 - Completion of upper-secondary education

Indicator n°5 Low-achieving students in reading literacy

Indicator n°6-8 Performance in reading, mathematics and science

Indicator n°9 Participation in education or training of initially low qualified people.

adopted by the Council **in May 2003** still pose a serious challenge for EU education and training systems. In the fields of increasing participation in lifelong learning and decreasing the proportion of low achievers in school education, the EU has made little progress up to 2003, the last year for which data is available. In terms of early school leavers and completion of upper-secondary education, some progress has been registered, but Member States need to increase their efforts substantially if the benchmarks are to be achieved by 2010.

Early school leavers

That three of the five European benchmarks are closely related to issues of access to and participation in education clearly demonstrates the will of the Union to spread prosperity and increase social cohesion. Reducing the numbers of early school leavers is thus one of its foremost priorities. Encouraging young people to participate in post-compulsory education is vital for their social and labour-market integration, since those who leave school without qualifications are in danger of being left behind in today's increasingly competitive society.

The average rate of early school leaving in the EU is still high but decreasing steadily. There was an improvement in the average EU ratio of almost 1.5

percentage points over the period 2000-2003, bringing the latest figure to 15.9% (2004). However, this is still far in excess of the benchmark of a rate of early school leavers of only 10%. It will take considerable political action to achieve the benchmark in this area – the yearly decrease would have to triple to achieve the benchmark.

At the current rate of improvement, the ratio of **early school leavers** will reach approximately 14% by 2010.

In 2004, eight EU countries already had ratios of early school leavers below the European benchmark: the Czech Republic (6.1%), Denmark (8.1%), Lithuania (9.5%), Austria (9.2%), Poland (5.7%), Slovakia (7.1%), Finland (8.7%) and Sweden (8.6%).

In general, the new Member States perform particularly well in this area, with an average ratio of early school leavers of 7.5% - well below the European benchmark.

Girls have, in general, a lower rate of early school leaving than boys, and in some countries the difference is pronounced.

Towards **making learning more attractive**, the main **findings** are:

In 2004, the EU average rate of early school leavers was 15.9%, the same as in 2003 and still very much higher than the European benchmark for 2010 of 10%.

The European benchmark of a rate of early school leaving of no more than 10% was met in 2004 by the Czech Republic, Denmark, Lithuania, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden, and Norway.

Participation rates in post-compulsory education in the EU25 increased by 2.5 percentage points from 2000 to 2002 and reached almost 59% of young people (age 15-24). The rate in 2002 was more than 65% in Belgium, Lithuania, Poland, Finland and Sweden.

Learning should be attractive for the whole population, throughout life. At the moment, progress can be measured only in certain limited areas. The Commission has taken steps towards satisfying the urgent need for new indicators on adult education, including non-formal and informal learning, and on vocational education and training.

Achieving the benchmark of a ratio of early school leavers of 10% by 2010 will require substantial political action and sustained commitment. At European level initiatives like the "**second-chance school project**" have already served as inspiration for policy development.

Lessons can certainly also be learned from the practice of leading countries in this area, such as the new Member States, Denmark and Austria, which have already reached the 2010 benchmark adopted by the Council.

More attention should be paid to vocational education and training. As stressed in the Maastricht Communiqué, "priority should be given to the improvement of the scope, precision and reliability of VET statistics in order to enable evaluation of progress in making VET efficient, effective and attractive. Adequate data and indicators are the key to understanding what is happening in VET and what additional interventions and decision making are required by all parties involved".

Providing encouragement and momentum for a culture of lifelong learning requires greater recognition of non-formal and informal learning activities and the active participation of private enterprise. Private enterprises are among the main beneficiaries of a skilled work force and are also best placed to reach large numbers of the population after the end of formal education. As stated in the Kok report on the Lisbon strategy, incentives are needed to boost investment in training within individual companies and across sectors, in order to support employers in providing suitable access to learning.

Reaching the European benchmarks in the field of education would imply in 2010:

- 2 million fewer young people would have left school early
 - 2 million more would have graduated from upper secondary education
 - 200.000 less 15 years olds would be low performers in reading literacy
 - 4 million more adults would participate in lifelong learning
- All students leaving school would be able to communicate in two foreign languages.

In the EU, in 2005 about 6 million young people (18-24 years olds) have left education prematurely. Reaching the European benchmark of no more than 10% early school leavers would imply that 2 million more of these young people would have continued in education.

The high number of early school leavers is an obstacle to securing access to the knowledge based society and greater social cohesion in the EU. In 2005, almost 15% of young people aged 18-24 in the EU left school prematurely and were in danger of being on the fringes of the knowledge society. The Council has agreed to reduce this rate to no more than 10% by 2010. Although some progress has been made, the majority of Member States need to increase their efforts in coming years to help reach the EU target. Best performing EU countries as regards the share of early school leavers are: Poland (5.5%), Slovakia (5.8%) and the Czech Republic (6.4%).

But there is too little progress against the benchmarks related most closely to the knowledge based society and social inclusion. Unless significantly more efforts are made in the areas of early school leaving, completion of upper-secondary education, and key competences, a high proportion of the next generation will face social exclusion, at great cost to themselves, the economy and society.

Facilitating the access of all to education and training systems

This Strategic Objective of the “Education and Training 2010” programme, “Facilitating the access of all to education and training systems”, contains three objectives focused on open learning environment, making learning more attractive and supporting active citizenship, equal opportunities and social cohesion. It brings the issue of the equity of the education and training systems to the forefront.

According to this strategic objective, all citizens should have equal access to education and training. The needs of vulnerable groups, particularly people with disabilities and

people with learning difficulties, as well as those living in rural/remote areas or having problems in reconciling their work and family commitments should especially be addressed. The need to focus on these groups of the population was re-affirmed by both, 2004 and 2006 Joint Council/Commission reports on implementation of the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme.

The foundations for the participation in education and training, and therefore for successful personal development and professional life, are already set in early childhood. Participation in pre-primary education is crucial for those children who are at risk of being excluded due to various factors (for example low economic and educational status of their parents or special needs).

However, current demographic trends imply that Europe will need to rely not only on well educated younger generations, but also on older workers – it is imperative to increase the labour-market participation of older people, women, migrants and minority and raise overall employment levels. The integration (or re-integration) of these groups into the labour force will entail providing them with the skills and competencies they need to participate in a fast paced knowledge-based economy. Moreover, all citizens will need to up-date their skills and qualifications throughout life for continuing personal and professional development.

Young people who leave education without recognised qualifications are at a disadvantage in the labour market. Their personal and social development is curtailed and they are at increased risk of poverty and social exclusion. First of all certain groups of early school leavers are likely to experience greater disadvantage than others, in particular those who leave the system before completion of primary education.

The necessity of increasing particularly the participation of adults in lifelong learning and of reducing the number of young Europeans who leave the school with no more than lower secondary education has led the Council to establish benchmarks in these two areas towards the strategic objective of facilitating the access of all to education and training. Moreover, these two targets form together with a target to raise the educational attainments levels part of the European Employment Strategy since 2003. But the progress in these areas is rather slow.

Therefore, the European Council of 23-24 March 2006 itself has again stressed that efforts should be intensified to reach the agreed targets in reducing early school leaving and raising educational attainment levels.

Questions of citizenship, equal opportunities and social cohesion are essential dimensions of education and training. Learning democratic values and democratic participation by all school partners should be promoted to prepare people for active citizenship. However, the absence of internationally comparable data on active citizenship (as indeed, a standard definition of what active citizenship means or includes) hinders analysis in this area.

This part of the report is focused on participation of European population in education and training within a lifelong perspective as well as on issue of early school leaving.

Young people who leave education without recognised qualifications are less likely to participate in lifelong learning and face a disadvantage in the labour market in today's knowledge-based society. Their personal and social development is curtailed and they

are at increased risk of poverty and social exclusion. These facts led the Council to the adoption of a benchmark on early school leavers and to the inclusion of the target to reduce early school leaving in the European Employment Strategy in 2003.

In 2005, every sixth young person aged 18 to 24 had still left school in the EU with no more than lower secondary education and did not participate in any kind of education or training: 14.9% of this age group of young people were early school leavers.

On the other hand, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Lithuania, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden, and Norway, all have rates of early school leaving well below the European reference level (benchmark) for 2010 (no more than 10%). The new Member States, with the exception of Malta and Cyprus, generally perform much better than the EU25 average in the area of early school leavers.

As regards the gender dimension, in the majority of EU countries (except of the Czech Republic, Luxembourg and Austria) there were more male (17.1%) than female (12.7%) early school leavers.

There was an improvement in the average EU share of early school leavers in the period 2000-2005, bringing the latest figure to 14.9%. However, this is still far in excess of the European benchmark of a share of early school leavers of 10% in 2010. In order to achieve more progress, seven Member States leaving (Belgium, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain) have set quantified national targets on reducing early school in their Lisbon National Reform Programmes 2005.

A study prepared on early school leavers for the European Commission in 2005 has shown that there are series of factors that might influence the levels of early school leaving in individual countries.

Social origin is an important factor affecting young people's probability of continuing in education or dropping out of school early. Pupils tend to leave education without completing upper secondary education when their parents also have low levels of education (ISCED 1-2); this is however not the case in Finland. The most striking difference between individual countries is in the percentages of early school leavers among youth with parents with very low levels of education (ISCED 1-2) especially in the countries of Southern Europe (80% in Spain, 68% in Italy and 66% in Greece and comparatively low in Slovakia, Finland, Hungary, Sweden and Austria (below 30%). However, also the 3% to 11% of families in which at least one of the parents obtained university education are confronted with early school leaving. The same is valid for certain families with upper secondary education as highest educational attainment (2%-21% of families). Thus, although socio-economic background plays an important role, the phenomenon is much more complex and other variables intervene.

Secondly, pupils' experiences of school are also a significant predictor of early school leaving. This was again confirmed by the PISA survey 2003 which shows that there is a high correlation between early school leavers and students performing at the lowest levels of proficiency (level 1 and lower).

Thirdly, foreign/ethnic background is another factor influencing early school leaving. Early school leaving is according to the data available from Labour Force Survey (LFS) more than two times higher among non-nationals than among nationals (30.1% in contrast to 14.9%).

Nearly half of non –national pupils leave the school at an early age in Spain and 40 % and more in Greece, Cyprus and Portugal.

Early school leavers do not represent a homogenous group. They differ for example as regards the highest educational level attained, including intergenerational differences, as well as differences as regards the age when they left the school without reaching upper secondary educational attainment.

Comparing data on children's educational attainment and the attainment levels of their parents generation one notices a remarkable improvement that especially younger generations in Southern European countries have made. In all countries of the EU the percentages of young people with at least upper-secondary education is higher than the percentage of parents with the same level of education.

At present, already 77% of early school leavers have attained lower secondary education. However, in Luxembourg and Portugal there are more early school leavers with only primary education. It is notable also that in Bulgaria more than 10% of the early school leaver population has less than primary education.

Whereas for the majority of countries the share of people without formal education or below lower secondary level has decreased, it has slightly increased in Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia and the UK. Of the countries with the highest share of early school leavers, Malta and Spain now have much higher share of early school leavers who have attained lower secondary level instead of primary. In Portugal this share is still quite low but has increased.

The average age of young people leaving education without completing upper secondary education ranges from 14.5 (Greece) to 19.6 years (Denmark). Also in Italy, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Spain, young people start to leave education earlier than in other countries (at around the age of 15). In Nordic countries this age is higher mainly because it is more common for certain groups of young people in these countries to attend the courses within non-formal education rather than to be involved in formal education.

Generally, people avail of opportunities to obtain upper secondary education mainly until the age of 30; after this it is rather seldom.

Individual governments try to cope with the problem of early school leaving in their countries differently. In the majority of them, national reforms in the area of education and training are mostly targeted at secondary education (reforms of general and vocational education), the length of compulsory education, specific initiatives and programmes focused on various groups of early school leavers as well as on elimination of external negative factors influencing this phenomenon, including the availability of support and guidance mechanisms.

First of all, differentiating the content of post-compulsory educational programmes and especially offering a wide variety of choice might according to the majority of the governments increase young people's motivation to stay longer in education. There seems to be a tendency among governments to offer more vocational options in post-compulsory education to ensure that young people who are at risk of dropping out gain some kind of qualification and proof of skills. Moreover, the reform efforts undertaken

seem to be additionally targeted at better matching these vocational programmes to the needs of the labour market to increase the chances of finding a job afterwards.

Availability and easy access to 'second-chance' education positively influences the participation of young people who left school without completion of upper secondary education in education later in life in those countries that offer some form of organised second-chance education. It seems so that a longer compulsory education or a higher age when young people finish compulsory schooling alone does not necessarily mean that more young people will succeed in obtaining an upper-secondary qualification. The countries with the highest age when they finish compulsory schooling (18-19 years old, based on compulsory part-time education schemes), all have an early school leavers rate at around the 10% level. However, for all other countries there seems to be no strong link to the level of the early school leavers' rate.

It is difficult to measure the real impact of targeted interventions, but some specific measures implemented in the countries in which the rate of early school leavers is steadily decreasing seem to have a positive influence on retaining specific risk groups longer in education and helping them towards obtaining a qualification.

Main messages on early school leavers:

There has been continuous progress in recent years in reducing the number of early school leavers, but progress must be faster to reach the EU benchmark of 10% in 2010.

Progress within EU highly depends on the progress achieved by few countries which despite a considerable effort and improvement in recent years still remain far behind European benchmark. However, also in the countries with relative low rates of early school leavers much remains to be done regarding specific groups (for example families with low social-economic status, migrants, Roma).

People avail of opportunities to obtain formal education (upper secondary education) mainly up to the age of 30; after this age it is rather unusual.

Therefore, after this age efforts should be focused first of all on increase of their participation in non-formal education.

The extension of compulsory schooling for example up till the age of 18 might have certain positive impact on reducing early school leaving, but there are probably other factors influencing it even more.

The increasing of participation in pre-primary education of specific groups of children at risk of early school leaving due to family, ethnic and socio-economic background might contribute to higher progress in this area within EU.

2008 Progress towards the five benchmarks for 2010 within the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training

Education and training systems in the EU are generally improving. The EU benchmark on mathematics, science and technology graduates was already reached in 2005. Yet although there is broad progress, attaining the benchmarks on early school leaving, completion of upper secondary education and lifelong learning will need more effective national initiatives. Indeed, the situation is getting worse for reading literacy of young

people, the benchmark in the field of key competences.

EU progress and performance on the benchmark for Early school leavers (rates to be reduced to 10% by 2010) are stronger in some new Member States: Croatia, Slovenia, Poland, the Czech Republic and to a lesser degree Austria. Finland and Slovakia are also above the EU benchmark in performance but not progressing further and even have a decreasing performance in the field.

In order to enhance this benchmark indicator, the project Ulisse has worked with experts in 6 EU countries: Italy, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece and Portugal to analyse the phenomenon of Early School Leavers and identifying good practices to reduce the phenomenon.

The European Council of March 2008 confirmed the need to combat poverty and social exclusion within the Lisbon agenda and highlighted the challenges of low performance in reading, early school leaving, and learners with a migrant background or from disadvantaged groups.

1 Executive Summary

In March 2000 the **Lisbon Strategy** established that the European Union should, by 2010, become the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. The target date is approaching and a set of five benchmarks for Education were adopted at the European Council during the Greek presidency in May 2003, in order to measure the achievements towards this goal.

The five European education and training benchmarks for 2010 are:

1. no more than 10% early school leavers;
2. decrease of at least 20% in the percentage of low-achieving pupils in reading literacy;
3. at least 85% of young people should have completed upper secondary education;
4. increase of at least 15% in the number of tertiary graduates in Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST), with a simultaneous decrease in the gender imbalance;
5. 12.5% of the adult population should participate in lifelong learning.

Young people who leave school with only lower secondary education are at a disadvantage on the labour market in today's knowledge-based society.

Their personal and social development is in danger of being curtailed and they are at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

EU progress and performance on the benchmark for Early school leavers (rates to be reduced to 10% by 2010) are stronger in some new Member States: Croatia, Slovenia, Poland, the Czech Republic and to a lesser degree Austria. Finland and Slovakia are also above the EU benchmark in performance but not progressing further and even have a decreasing performance in the field.

In 2005, every sixth young persons aged 18 to 24 had still left school in the EU with no more than lower secondary education and did not participate in any kind of education or training: 14.9% of this age group of young people were early school leavers.

On the other hand, Czech Republic, Denmark, Lithuania, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden and Norway, all have rates of early school leaving well below the European reference level (benchmark) for 2010 (no more than 10%). The new Member States, with the exception of Malta and Cyprus, generally perform much better than the EU25 average in the area of early school leavers.

Concerning the gender dimension, in the majority of EU countries (except Czech Republic, Luxembourg and Austria) there were more male (17.1%) than female (12.7%) early school leavers.

There was an improvement in the average EU share of early school leavers in the period 2000-2005, bringing the latest figure to 14.9%. However, this is still far in excess of the European benchmark for early school leavers (10% in 2010). In order to achieve more progress, seven Member States leaving (Belgium, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, the

Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain) have set quantified national targets on reducing early school in their Lisbon National Reform Programmes 2005.

A study prepared on early school leavers for the European Commission in 2005 has shown that there is a series of factors that might influence the level of early school leaving in individual countries.

In order to enhance the Early School Leavers benchmark indicator, the project Ulisse has worked with experts in 6 EU countries: Italy, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece and Portugal to analyse the phenomenon of Early School Leavers and identifying good practices to reduce the phenomenon.

The project objectives have been reached through the following Actions:

- Production of a national report about existing policies and measures to reduce and contrast early school leaving. The written report will be published in English and in the national language (IT, BG, DE, EL, EE, PT);
- Production of a European report to compare the different policies and initiatives from partner countries and to draw recommendations for future national improvements. The comparative study will be published in English.
- Setting up country based networks involving the main stakeholders (teachers, school directors, professionals in the educational sectors, policies makers, local and national authorities) to sustain the collection of best practices and dissemination of project results;
- Organisation of 6 international seminars to exchange information and best practices about initiatives to contrast early school leaving.
- Implementation at national and international level of the dissemination strategy.
- Organisation of a final European conference to disseminate project results and to exchange best practices and experiences to contrast the phenomenon of early school leavers.
- Production of a DVD in the partner languages to disseminate the project results.
- Organisation of 6 transnational meetings among partner organisations for co-ordinating and evaluating the project implementation.

The project had involved organisations with different background in Italy (Università del Terzo Settore), Bulgaria (Health Care Association) , Estonia (Institute of Educational Research of Tallin University), Germany (EBG), Greece (Kek Kronos) and Portugal (Numena).

The **European Comparative Study methodology** had been based on National Reports analysis developed by each partner organisation. Among the partners an outline of Country based analysis and studies had been agreed including the following chapters:

- Introduction to the Country situation
- General information
- Description of the Education System
- Early School Leaving – statistics and reasons

- Regulations, laws in force at national, regional and local level
- Pros and cons of policies and measures
- Best practices to contrast Early School Leaving
- Conclusions
- Bibliography and references

The analysis in each country had been conducted mainly based on the literature review methodology.

The case studies had been identified through contacts of the experts and the partner organisations.

Progress of the work done had been monitored during each Partner meeting. At each meeting a chapter of the study was presented to the partnership and to a wider audience.

Each National Report and the European Report can be read as stand alone documents and are available in English and in each partner language.

The Bulgaria National Report

In Bulgaria live 7 973 671 inhabitants that belong to different religious faiths. After the important socio-economic transformations in the end 20th century, Bulgaria is rapidly becoming a free market based country and since 1st January 2007 is became an EU full member State. The economically active people between 15 and 64 years of age are 3.4 million and there are 308,900,000 unemployed persons (9% of the economically active population).

Education is compulsory for children from the age of 6 or 7 (at the discretion of the parents) up to the age of 16 for a maximum of 12 years. Compulsory education is composed by three cycles, Primary schools for children from 6/7 to 9/10 years of age; General lower secondary schools for children from 10/11 to 14/15 years of age and Upper secondary schools for students from 13/14 years of age. Technical/vocational Schools, Technical schools for students from 14/15 to 17/18 years of age. The majority of children with special needs attend special schools with similar structure to that of mainstream education. Almost all pupils (99.58%) attend public schools and early school leavers rate in 2007 was 16,6%.

The reasons for leaving school are social, economic, demographic and psychological. The majority of drop-out children come from socially disadvantaged, low income and low educated families, ethnic minorities, from small and remote municipalities. Often, they are connected with the reluctance of the pupils to continue their education (12%), or because they move abroad (about 24%), or are transferred without confirmation of their enrolment in other school (11%), or for prolonged illness (1.9%). A great part of the early leavers are of Roma origin and leave for social reasons (unemployed parents, many children in the families, lack of clothes and food. Data is for 1996). Dropping out is also related to the migration process of the population because many parents are not able to provide financial support to train their children outside of the place where they live. Finally, a big part of the drop outs do not have any motivation for education and professional qualification and for a future realization in the labour market.

In the last years the problem of the school drop outs became a subject of measures and policies for its prevention and to overcome the consequences. Concerning State activities, the National programme for development of the school and pre-school

education and training 2006 -2015 formulates the national objectives for development of the school education and the main measures for their achievement. Regarding drop out, those measures can be divided into three main groups: change in the educational structure, social actions, measures targeted at children which mother tongue is not Bulgarian and children with special educational needs. Concerning civil society activities, Caritas Europe and 7 main other organisations implemented a project to increase school attendance and career prospects for Roma Children called STEP IN (Studying Training and Educational Paths for the Integration of young Roma) and co-funded by the European Commission, DG for Education and Culture, Joint Actions, Leonardo, Socrates and Youth Programmes. The two goals of the project were to prevent drop-out through encouraging different approaches to education and to support social integration through professional training as well as through looking at employment opportunities. The core of the project was an educational model, which focused on a combination of three types of educational input: formal learning, non-formal learning and informal activities which included study support, artistic and manual activities, sports, and cultural activities.

The Estonia National Report

In Estonia compulsory education correspond to the basic education and students are subject to the obligation to attend school until they acquire basic education or are 17 years old, starting where children are 7 years old by 1 October of the current year. Basic education may be acquired in primary school (grades 1 to 6) basic school grades (1 to 9) or upper secondary school which also includes basic school grades. Basic school is divided into three stages of study: 1st stage of study - Grade 1 to 3; 2nd stage of study - Grade 4 to 6 and 3rd stage of study- Grade 7 to 9.

The number of those who leave school before completing basic education is increasing (14,3% of early school leavers in 2007), but there is a lack of research to explain why. The growing population of young people without a basic education includes individuals with different backgrounds and different reasons (social, health, behavioural, learning difficulties) for not fulfilling the compulsory education. In the last years, two main reasons for discontinuing studies emerged: expulsion due to the pupil's inappropriate behaviour or poor achievements in studies and other reasons as reaching the end of compulsory school age (17 years) and family reasons (marriage, pregnancy). The information about the share of dropouts because of fulfilling the compulsory school age (17 years) is directly linked to the grade repetition problems. It is estimated that in 2001 more than 20.000 people (in the 17-25 age group) had not completed basic education; or, they have a basic education but did not continue their studies to acquire skills required to enter labour market. This problem is especially serious for boys, which leads to increasing gender differences at higher levels of education.

According to the Development Plans for General Educational System for 2007 – 2013, to ensure the required level of education in the basic school, the following measures could be used: remedial groups giving assistance to the pupils with learning difficulties; separate classes for the pupils with behavioural problems; opportunity classes for the pupils with the learning difficulties; supplementary learning class for pupils with moderate learning disabilities; coping class for pupils with moderate and severe learning disabilities. More over, the pupil can perform compulsory school attendance by studying at home; can study according to the individual curriculum; has the right to assistance and counselling; the performance of the compulsory school attendance can be

postponed for a year and are created long day groups and school dormitories. Unfortunately, all the schools do not take advantage of the given opportunities because of a lack of attention and training. More over a Research and Development strategy was adopted for 2002-2006 by Parliament in 2001 and a Round Table of Education Policy was set up as an advisory body to the Minister of Education and Research.

A special project for drop-out prevention is the formation of “Tootsi classes”, targeted to students in the general education schools with behavioural disorders and risk of dropping out of school. These classes, funded by the local governments and authorized by the Ministry of Education and Research, are options that schools can choose to accommodate pupils with academic and behavioural problems in the regular classes. There is not a unique activity in the sphere of the school leaving prevention, in fact in 2007 the Tallinn Education Authority launched the project of European Social Fund: “SCHOOL SUPPORT –The better prevention of dropping out from basic school and the behavioural disorder through development of the support system in the schools for general education of Tallinn” targeted to the students of general education schools of Tallinn with behavioural disorder and risk of dropping out of school.

The Germany National Report

Germany is founding member of the European Union and with over 82 million inhabitants it has the largest population among the EU member states. Its economy is based mainly on the industrial and the service sector. Large areas are used agriculturally, but only 2-3% of all employees are working in agriculture. At the moment, the economy is characterized by a high unemployment rate, especially in East Germany.

Compulsory education is divided into full-time school attendance and vocational school attendance. Full-time school attendance is nine years in the majority of the states. Compulsory education is followed by vocational school attendance until the age of 18 which can be fulfilled by attending vocational training, being employed, attending the Gymnasium or an 11th year in school for vocational preparation. Special regulations apply for disabled children.

Annually, about 220,000 pupils leave school without sufficient education and between 80,000 and 90,000 adolescents do not have a school leaving certificate. Between early school leavers it is possible to distinguish 9.5 % of boys with German parentage, 19.7 % of boys with migrational background and 12.9 % of girls with migrational background.

Early school leaving is the result of individual, social and family problems. Individual factors are linked with problems in keeping path, health problems, difficult conditions in the family, as well as conflicts with other students. More and more families need support because they cannot fulfil their education mandate on their own. Many parents do not set a good example for their children as they do not have a structured every day life and do not communicate that obtaining a school leaving certificate is absolutely important. Finally, the lack of perspectives is another reason for leaving school.

The responsibility of the educational system is determined by the federal structure of the Federal Republic, but the overall educational system is supervised by the Länder that have the right of legislation for schools, universities, and adult education. Regulations concerning the collaboration between the Federation and the Länder are set in the Federation- Länder -Commission for educational planning and research promotion. The authorities can apply Academic, Cooperative and Compulsory measures for contrasting the early school leaving.

the support for early school leavers is working on two levels. The first level is the school, which focuses especially on knowledge transfer and the learning process of the student. The second level is the extracurricular sector which focuses on the personality of the student as well as the family and the social environment. Unfortunately, all methods and measures do not always result in the expected and wished success.

A German best practice to contrast early school leaving is a cooperative project between Youth Welfare Service and School called “Job – Education – Integration”. The task of this project was to address juveniles who despite compulsory schooling can not be reached by the responsible institutions, as they are/were truant. A general aim is to provide early school leavers with a competence to design their own lives as well as to give them assistance for their life planning. The aims and main points of the project were: training in the area of social competence; teaching of mechanical skills in the areas wood and metal; offering event and leisure facilities; learning shall be re-learned; lessons focusing on life practice; implementation of trainings in firms; integration of marginal people; reactivation and promotion of existing strengths, interests and skills; chance to serve social communities within the framework of different project works.

The Greece National Report

Greek economy is one of the fastest growing economies within the EU and in 2005 per capita GDP expressed in constant purchasing power units rose to 77,1% versus 75,5% in 2004. More over, according to the Labour Force Survey data, total employment increased in 2005 by 1,8% and the number of wage earners increased at a 1,7% rate thus causing unemployment to drop from an average of 10,5% in 2004 to 9,9% in 2005.

Education is compulsory for 6-15 years old children and it includes Primary (*Dimotiko*) and Lower Secondary (*Gymnasio*) Education. Attendance at Primary Education lasts for six years, and children are admitted at the age of 6. The Lower Secondary Education last for three years and children are admitted at the age of 12.

In the last 20 years, early school leaving is decreased because of numerous factor such as the change of attitude towards education, changes in social models, families, labour market and educational system, the general raise of the educational and economical level of the Greek population, the establishment of compulsory education to 9 years in 1975, the improvement of the country's roads, demographic factors and, finally, the contribution of EU. Despite this decrease, in 2007 Greek early school leavers were 14,7% and a research showed that this phenomenon is based on several factors that can be classified in two groups: the factors that are related to the family of the young person such as the low socio-economic situation of the family, the national identity, the family mobility, the lack of family support, the low parental training expectations, the negative attitude or indifference of parents to school, the instability of family environment; and the factors that are related to school and the experience of young person in it, such as the bad school performance, the absence from school, discipline problems, conflicts with other students or/ and teachers, the frequent change of school, the lack of interest, the repetition of classes. The extend of early school leaving is related also with several characteristics of schools, such as the size of school, the analogy between students and teachers, the discipline and evaluation systems, the quality of school environment, the study program, the extent that school supports and cares for students (behaviour or academic problems).

Concerning the prevention of early school leaving the following measures are implemented in Greece: financial incentives with the aim of enhancing and supporting

equal access to education and training; support systems which constitute the most successful measures and include support teaching, all day schools, evening education, inclusion classes, integration of special education in the regular system and, finally, more compensatory ways of dealing with early school leaving such as the Second chance schools as well as the Post –secondary vocational education and training.

Following initiative of the Greek Ministry of Education, the project EPEAEK (EPEAEK I and EPEAEK II), financed by the EU, was implemented in 1998 and in 2002 all over the country. Its main aims were the promotion of equal opportunities in education and especially for those facing social exclusion; the promotion of equal opportunities in labour market through education; to help working mothers through the statute of all day school; to help weak students through alternative ways of learning and to strengthen parents of special groups about the value of children education. During the project were carried out some research and were implemented actions such as the creation and implementation of assistance to weak students in special classes, the training of teachers to teach in these classes, the implementation of special didactic material, special schools for Gypsies and Economic refugees.

The Portugal National Report

Membership of the EEC, since 1986, has had a significant impact on the living conditions of the Portugal and on the development of infrastructures. However, economic indicators show that Portugal remains in a disadvantaged position regarding its European counterparts. The unemployment rate in Portugal reached 7.7% of the active population, slightly lower than the EU average (7.9%), but women are in a more unfavourable situation with an unemployment rate of 8.7%, whereas the men's stands at 6.7%.

In Portugal, basic education is universal, compulsory, free of charge and lasts 9 years, from 6 to 15 years of age. Basic education comprises three sequential and jointed cycles: the first cycle comprises the first 4 years of learning and it is aimed at children between 6 and 10 years old, the second cycle occurs between the fifth and six grades and it is aimed at children between 10 and 12 years old and the third cycle includes the 7th, 8th and 9th grades and it is aimed at teenagers between 12 and 15 years old and is organised in basic interdisciplinary areas, each with its own teacher.

The data concerning school dropouts corresponds to the percentage of individuals between the ages of 10 and 15 years at the time of the census who have not concluded the compulsory education and are not attending school. Although there has been an almost 10% reduction in dropout rates in recent years, the continued existence of a dropout rate of around 3% amongst students between the ages of 10 and 15 years is worrying, especially because this occurs during a period that corresponds to compulsory schooling. An analysis of the evolution according to age reveals that dropout rates worsen as the children get older. In comparison with the European panorama Portugal figures amongst the countries with the worst results in terms of dropout rates because early school leavers in 2007 were 36,3%, with 46,4% of boys and 31,8% of girls. Early school leaving is generally preceded by repeated failure and is also consists in the strong attraction for professional activities, accessible to unqualified youths.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for ensuring compulsory education, for preventing early school leaving and for promoting the qualifications of the general population, in the framework of equal opportunities, lifelong education and educational innovation. The most recent initiatives carried out have been the National System of

Recognition, Validation and Certification of Skills, created in 2001; the Adult Training and Education Courses, launched in 2001; the Education and Training Courses, created in ; the S@bER+ initiatives; the National Plan to Prevent Students from Dropping Out of School, presented in 2004, with the motto: “I Don’t Quit” and, finally, the initiative “New Opportunities”, presented in 2005. These measures and policies have achieved some results in decreasing dropout rates and this decrease was particularly noteworthy at high school level, where in 2007, for the first time, this rate was below 30%.

A Portugal best practice, called Network of Mediators for the Enablement of School Achievement, was implemented by EPIS Association - Empresários pela Inclusão Social (Entrepreneurs for Social Inclusion) with the aim to increase the quality of parental and non-parental support in order to achieve educational success and social inclusion. The mediators' network was composed by specialised and experienced professionals and its methodology consists of two phases: 1) a system to signal youths with an educational success risk factor and 2) a portfolio of enablement methods, some universal and others directed towards each risk profile, which allow for the design of individual plans of support.

The Italy National Report

Italy is a founding member of what is now the European Union and also a member of the G8 and the Council of Europe.

The average number of people employed in the first trimester of 2008 was equal to 23.170.000, with an increase of 324.000 units per year, equal to 1.4%. The increase has been registered for the male population (+0.6%) but, above all, for the female population (+2.7%). The employment increased in the central and in the northern regions, while the number of employees has decreased in the south.

Compulsory education lasts 8 years and can be accomplished in public or accredited private schools. It includes five years of primary school (6/11 years children) and three years of first grade secondary school (11/14years children). The situation will change very soon, as the law of 28 March 2003, no. 53 for the reform of the education and training system aims at widening and redefining the concept of compulsory education and compulsory training to guarantee rights and duties to education and training for all citizens for at least 12 years (within the compulsory education system), or up to the attainment of a qualification (within the vocational education and training system) within 18 years of age. The first step is to increase the compulsory education to 10 years of school, starting from the school year 2009/10.

Concerning early school leavers, in 2007 there was a visible improvement compared to the previous years and the percentage is now at 19,3%. But the situation changes is different in every Region: in fact in Sardinia and Sicily 30% of young people got only primary cycle degree and don't attend the secondary cycle and in Basilicata, Lazio, Toscana and Umbria the level of early school leavers is under 10%. The main problems are present in the suburbs of southern biggest cities, as Naples, Palermo, Bari and Catania, where poverty meets illegality and the situation is difficult also in the north of the country, where industry requires workers with no qualification and many families do not generally consider that education is important for finding a job.

The reasons of early school living can be found outside and inside the school: in the first case, pupils' choices are influenced by factors such as familiar cultures, quality of infrastructures (transports, libraries, and communications) and income. Many students are not encouraged to attend school if they live in a negative environment where cultural

life is not developed or they can't find appropriate means of transport (journeys can be long and stressful, particularly in the mountains).

The biggest problem is the gap of knowledge between the young living in the south and those living in the rest of Italy, that put them at a disadvantage. The National School Operative Plan, carried out in 2000-2006 for the southern Regions had the aims of improving the quality of the school system and reducing the drop-out. Many initiatives were implemented in order to make school more attractive and this Programme gave positive results in terms of contrasting the early school leaving.

The 2000- 2006 National Operational Programme "School for Development" promoted and sustained the development of projects aiming at preventing and fighting the early school leaving and, more generally, youth discomfort. Were created numerous Resource Centres as aggregation and socialization places, interrelated with the other schools in the neighbourhood and with other local cultural agencies, institutes, associations and companies with the aim to implementing education and training interventions and creating well-equipped environments, where young people can implement activities in addition to and supporting the scholastic ones.

The European Comparative Study

The final result of the project Ulisse, co-funded by the European Commission under the Socrates Programme, is a European report concerning the analysis of the phenomenon of early school leaving and best practices to retain students in the education system in the six countries participating in the project.

The European report is composed by 5 chapters: 1. Introduction to the country situation: definition of compulsory education, definition of early school leaving and reasons why; 2. Existing policies and regulations in force at national, regional, and local level. Approach of government and local authorities to the issue; 3. Pro and cons of policies and measures, monitoring and evaluation system in place; 4. Good practices. Examples of projects and initiatives at national, regional, local, and school level; 5. Key remarks for good policies on early school leaving.

In 2007 the average early school leavers' rate was 14.8% for EU-27. Progress is slow, and at the current rate of improvement, the benchmark of no more than 10% early school leavers will not be reached by 2010. There are numerous differences between the EU members and there is a big divide between northern, central and southern Europe. The percentage of early school leavers in 2007 varies from country to country: the worst is Portugal (36.3%), Bulgaria 26,6%, Estonia 14,3%, Germany 12,7%, Greece 14,7% and Italy 19,3%.

Not only statistics are different for the six partners countries, but also causes for dropping-out, even if common reasons can be found in family background, parental education and occupation, family structure and migrant or ethnic minority background, in the quality of the context, school, infrastructures, class, teachers, in which pupils are educated and in school failures. Another difference concerns the length of the compulsory education that last 8 years in Italy (from next year will be 10), 9 years in Estonia, Greece, Portugal and Germany (in some Länder are 10) and 12 years in Bulgaria.

These differences lead to different policies that every participating country has adopted in order to fight against and to prevent early school leaving. Bulgaria implemented a National programme for development of the school and pre-school education and training 2006 -2015; Estonia carried out numerous measures within the Development Plans for General Educational System for 2007 – 2013; Germany implemented academic, cooperative and compulsory measures; Greece introduced financial incentives and support systems; Italy extended and redefined the concept of compulsory education, Portugal launched numerous policies as the National Plan to Prevent Students from Dropping Out of School. The impact of these policies is different in the six participating countries. In Bulgaria the impact regards free access to the study material, continuation of the activities of the National programme to include the maximum number of students, providing free transport, binding of the social aid with the school attendance of the children. In Estonia the objectives are: every person must acquire basic education, quality secondary education must be provided in every region, lifelong learning opportunities are assured to every person, students are provided with opportunities to continue studies in their native language, teachers are competent and highly motivated, the novelties in the educational system are based on best quality research. In Germany the support for early school leavers works on two levels: the school, which focuses on knowledge transfer and the learning process of the student, and the extracurricular sector, which focuses on the personality of the student, on the family and on the social environment. In Greece there is a positive climate for reducing dropping-out, caused by: the change of attitude towards education, changes in social models, labour market, families and educational system, the general raise of the educational and economical level of the population, the improvement of the country's roads and demographic factors. In Italy there will be the strengthen of the schools autonomy, a diversification of school programmes, better links between school an work and implementation of the concept of right/duty to education. Finally, in Portugal, a particularly effective measure is the programme “A new opportunity for youths”, related to dropout prevention strategies that in 2007 allowed to 44.129 youths to have basic level double certification courses.

Concerning best practices implemented in the six participating countries, Bulgaria presents the project STEP IN (Studying Training and Educational Paths for the Integration of young Roma) that aims to early school leaving through encouraging different approaches to education and to support social integration through professional training as well as through looking at employment opportunities. Estonia illustrates the formation of Tootsi classes for students in the general education schools with behavioural disorders and risk of dropping out of school. Germany shows a project called “Job – Education – Integration”, addressed to the young who despite compulsory schooling can not be reached by the responsible institutions, as they are/were truant. Greece speaks about the project EPEAEK for the promotion of equal opportunities in education and in labour market through education. Italy presents the National Operational Programme “School for Development” that foresees the creation of Resources Centres for implementing education and training interventions and creating well-equipped environments. Portugal, introduces a “Network of Mediators for the Enablement of School Achievement” that consists in a system to signal youths with an educational success risk factor and in a portfolio of enablement methods.

Finally, the European report identifies some key remarks for good policies. In Estonia it is possible to see an improvement about statistic survey, more measures to promote compulsory school attendance and implementation of Tootsi classes. In Germany, there are factors such as more transparency and openness of the educational system, performance evaluation for teachers, expansion of full-time schools, schools not only as places for teaching knowledge, but also for teaching social competence and emotional intelligence, close cooperation between schools and parents, better and more intensive further education for teachers and promotion of the individual talents. In Greece, the main conclusions could be summarized in the following: every attempt to face the early school leaving phenomenon should start from the diagnosis of the problem. every student has its own characteristics, so a measure shouldn't be designed and adapted for all students in general, the measures should improve the life conditions in areas; families, neighbourhood, city, by involving more authorities, institutions, and partners and the selection of the teachers is very important. The improvement shown by Italy in reducing the number of early school leavers is certainly due to the implementation of National Operative Plan "School for Development", the establishment of Resource Centres in the Southern regions of Italy, the creation of local networks involving different actors in a given territory and the complete establishment of scholastic autonomy. In Portugal the innovative ideas are: policy decentralisation, allowing for a local diagnosis and prosecution of school dropout, taking into account, in an integrated perspective, the contexts, the actors, the resources, the community and the region as fundamental aspects of the students educational path, the awareness for integrated and sustained actions, in a proximity point of view, involves the family, the student and the school and the care in bringing the school and the community closer together.

Key Findings of the project

From all the national reports we can understand that there has been a considerable effort on the part of governments to encourage young people to return to, or to remain in, formal education. However, a holistic and integrated approach by all stakeholders is necessary; the school (formal education) alone cannot solve this problem.

From the educational point of view, there is evidence that **flexible scheduling, smaller classes and individualised educational plans** as well as supportive teachers and guidance personnel might be helpful in this connection.

Many governments tried to combat early school leaving by **extending compulsory education** to cover, in some cases, 1, 2 or even more years of upper secondary education. In some countries, so called partial compulsory education was introduced, which covers certain kinds of job related training (EURYDICE, 2005a).

VET is expected to provide a vital link between initial education and training. There is evidence that countries with high levels of participation in VET at upper secondary level usually have the lowest rates of early school leavers.

However, there are also many students, more than in the general stream of upper secondary education, who leave the vocational education and training system without completing the course, as shown by an example from Norway described in the box below.

There is evidence from large scale surveys (confirmed also by PISA 2006) that in countries with a larger number of distinct programme types, the socio-economic background of pupils tends to have a significantly greater impact on pupils' performance, suggesting stratification or tracking at the system level associated with segregation of pupils in various tracks based on their socioeconomic background. Although there was no correlation between the age of selection and country mean performance, the share of variation in pupils' performance between schools was much higher in countries where the pupils are streamed at an earlier age (OECD, 2007b).

However, the age when the tracking or streaming occurs is important. Data show that this impact is greater for younger pupils than for upper secondary students.

Making learning attractive means primarily making education and training more attractive to those who do not participate at full capacity at present: young people with only lower secondary education and not in education and training, disabled persons, and people who fulfil the general conditions for access to tertiary education but who may feel excluded from the system, for example socially disadvantaged groups, boys and women, and others.

Everyone should understand, from as early an age as possible, the importance of education and training in life and its potential to broaden personal and professional horizons. Education and training institutions naturally have an important role to play in communicating this message, but also families, local communities and employers are instrumental in fostering the desire to learn. If people do not appreciate the advantages of continuous learning, they will never make the effort needed to raise their skills levels.

A first building block is, as the Council (Ministers of Education) has underlined, the minimum knowledge base required in order fully to participate in today's knowledge-based society. Those without sufficient levels of knowledge, skills and competencies are less likely to participate effectively in lifelong learning and are in danger of being left behind.

Hence, reducing the number of early school leavers is essential for raising employment levels and increasing social cohesion. Young people in the knowledge society need to continue participating in education and training after compulsory schooling.

2. The context of Early School Leavers in Europe

Young people who leave school with only lower secondary education are at a disadvantage on the labour market in today's knowledge-based society.

Their personal and social development is in danger of being curtailed and they are at risk of a life of poverty and social exclusion. They are also less likely to get involved in lifelong learning.

The issue of early school leaving is becoming more complex as the labour market marginalisation of people leaving school with no qualifications grows.

Taking this into account, the same target for cutting early school leaving is included in the Employment Guidelines (2005/2008) for the revised Lisbon process (Council, 2005d).

The Lisbon strategy established that the European Union should, by 2010, become the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. The target date is approaching and a set of five benchmarks for Education were adopted at the European Council during the Greek presidency in May 2003, in order to measure the achievements towards this goal.

The five European education and training benchmarks for 2010 are:

1. no more than 10% early school leavers;
2. decrease of at least 20% in the percentage of low-achieving pupils in reading literacy;
3. at least 85% of young people should have completed upper secondary education;
4. increase of at least 15% in the number of tertiary graduates in Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST), with a simultaneous decrease in the gender imbalance;
5. 12.5% of the adult population should participate in lifelong learning.

The early school leavers' (18-24 years-old) benchmark set the target of having, by 2010, an European Union average rate of no more than 10% of early school leavers. In 2007 the average early school leavers' rate was 14.8% for the whole European Union, 2.8 percentage points lower than in 2000. Progress is slow and at the current rate of improvement, the benchmark of no more than 10% early school leavers will not be reached by 2010, so additional efforts need to be made to achieve this target.

Generally speaking, "early school leaving can be understood as young people leaving school before the legal school leaving age and/or leaving school with limited or no formal qualifications", but this concept implies a clarification. In fact it exists at least two definitions of dropout: the first one concerns those individuals who don't complete the education that the norms define as being good for them and for society and the second one regards those individuals that don't complete the education they have started. For compulsory education, those who leave school would be in both the first and the second categories while those who leave school at the tertiary level would only be in the second category.

More over, there is a range of definitions and concepts of early school leaving and each of the following criteria is relevant, to better understand the concept:

- failure to complete upper secondary education (or high school) and not attending further education or training;
- failure to complete compulsory schooling (i.e. prolonged or complete non attendance);
- failure to gain qualifications or school leaving certificates;
- failure to participate in education or training by those of school leaving age;
- failure to gain qualifications for participating in further education;
- failure to gain qualifications for accessing a wide range of labour market opportunities to sustain life chances.

Before speaking about statistics, it has to specify that, in almost every country, the quality and comparability of the data on early school leaving are affected by breaks in time series, small sample sizes or methodological changes in the surveys. But, as already explained above, according to the most recent statistics, in 2007 the average early school leavers rate was 14.8% in the 27 members of the European Union. So there is an improvement comparing to 2000, because the percentage is 2.8 points lower, but we are far from attaining the benchmark of no more than 10% early school leavers by 2010, as decided by the European Council in 2003.

The European average doesn't show the big differences between northern, central and southern Europe. Between the 27 members of the European Union, the best performers are the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Finland, that have early school leaving rates below the European reference benchmark for 2010. on the contrary, in 2007 Malta and Portugal still had the highest proportions of early school leavers in the EU, with 37.6% the first and 36.3% the second, but they are progressively improving. The situation is steadily improving in the majority of countries, in fact the percentage of early school leavers decreased between 2000 and 2007, especially in Malta, where early school leavers pass from 54.2% in 2000 to 37.6% in 2007. On the contrary in some countries, Denmark, Estonia, Austria, Slovakia, France and Spain, the percentage of early school leavers stagnate or increase slightly. The situation is particularly alarming in Spain because has one of the highest percentages of early school leavers in Europe.

The 84% of European early school leavers leave formal education after completing lower secondary education, that corresponds to compulsory education in the majority of the European countries. Only in three countries 6% of them achieved some kind of upper secondary education incorporating some vocational or pre-vocational training and somebody do short courses with a percentage of 50% in Luxembourg and the UK and 15% in Greece. Apart the situation described above, there are also very alarming data that say that 1% of early school leavers do not have any formal education and 9% of them completed only primary education. This problem regards above all southern Europe countries, in fact the proportion of early school leavers with only primary education is extremely high in Portugal (32%), Cyprus (28%) and Greece (23%), but also in Belgium, Bulgaria, Ireland, Spain and Poland there are 10% of pupils that leave school without achieving primary education.

Finally, concerning the whole European situation we have to say that early school leaving is a problem that concerns more the boys than the girls. In fact in 2007 male

early school leavers were 16.9%, while female leavers were 12.7%, with a stable gap that only slightly decreased between 2000 and 2007. This gender gap is changed during the years and there are important intergenerational differences: in 2004 between young people less than 24 years old the males accounted for 58% in contrast to 42% females, while between “older” young people more than 24 years old females represented 57% in contrast to 43% males.

Concerning the countries participating to the project Ulisse, it is possible to see different situations. In Bulgaria each year 2-3 % of the children in a school age leave school and in some school years this percentage increase and reaches up to 4-5%. In 2004/2005 school year approximately 2.9% of students have left the schools and the total of early school leavers in 2007 amounted to 26,6%. In some school years the percentage of the pupils dropping out is very low and in others considerable, but it cannot be said that there is a constant tendency. In Estonia early school leavers percentage in 2007 was of 14,3%, while in 2000 was of 14,2%. So, the number of those who leave school before completing basic education is increasing and it is impossible to know the reason for this phenomenon because of a lack of research. However, generally speaking, it is possible to affirm that the two main reasons (total from 65.4% to 70.7% of all) for discontinuing studies during the school year are the expulsion due to the pupil’s inappropriate behaviour or poor achievements in studies and other reasons. In Germany, annually, about 220,000 pupils leave school without sufficient education and between 80,000 and 90,000 adolescents do not have a school leaving certificate. Between early school leavers we can distinguish 9.5 % of boys with German parentage, 19.7 % of boys with migrational background and 12.9 % of girls with migrational background. In Greece, early school leavers in 2007 were 14,7% instead of 18,2% in 2000. So there is a decreasing trend and the current situation indicates that school leaving is decreased significant since the beginning of 1980, even if during the last years the decrease appears very slow, especially concerning secondary education. More over, school leaving in primary education has almost annihilated and it has to be mentioned only about very small percentages of children, coming mainly from disadvantaged social groups like gypsies, immigrants etc, never entered at school. In Italy, in 2007 the national percentage of early school leavers is at 19,3%. But the situation changes is different in every Region: in fact in Sardinia and Sicily 30% of young people got only primary cycle degree and don’t attend the secondary cycle and in Basilicata, Lazio, Toscana and Umbria the level of early school leavers is under 10%. The main problems are present in the suburbs of southern biggest cities, as Naples, Palermo, Bari and Catania, where poverty meets illegality and the situation is difficult also in the north of the country, where industry requires workers with no qualification and many families do not generally consider that education is important for finding a job. Finally, as we saw above, even if there was an improvement since 2000, Portugal is one the European countries with the highest early school leavers rate, with 36,3%, which 46,4% of boys and 31,8% of girls.

The consequences of early school leaving affect not only the individuals but the whole society. In fact, without the attainment of lower secondary at most, early school leavers do not meet the definition of an effective labour supply and the employment rates are significantly lower when compared to the higher educated part of the European active labour force. More over, pregnancy, crime, violence, alcohol and drug abuse and suicide

have been found to be higher among early school leavers; early school leavers have a life expectancy that is 9.2 years shorter than high school graduates; early school leavers are eight times more likely to be in jail or prison than high school graduates and, finally, only a quarter of early school leavers vote; while the corresponding proportion for high school graduates is one half, and for college graduates, three quarters.

To find a solution to this problem we have to look for the causes and all the numbers and data above suggest that those young people have lost interest in learning or, at least, in formal learning. But it is known that children are born learners and are very interested in finding out new things, so at some time during their school career something happens that obstructs this curiosity and impedes their will to learn within traditional school structures and subject areas.

Firstly it is known that the quality of the context, school, class, teachers, in which pupils are educated has a bearing on their progress. Secondly, family background, parental education, parental occupation, family structure or migrant background, are factors which significantly influence the achievement of pupils in schools in the European Union. Finally, a third of the variation in students performances is attributable to differences between schools, even if early school leaving is not just a problem of state schools because private schools have more freedom to respond individually and help more directly in cases of problems of the young people, but they are also more able to select or reject children and young people. The reasons for leaving education early are specific for the individual and there are a wide variety of determinants and a wide range of influential factors, even if we can distinguish seven groups of explanatory factors.

1. Individual characteristics

Pupils might have learning difficulties, health problems, poor knowledge of the teaching language, low self-esteem.

2. Education related reasons

Usually young people who left school early have found the school environment unsatisfactory because, for example, they usually had low achievements in the school, negative interaction with their teachers, and many of them were discouraged and disconnected from school, so the decision to leave school before completion of studies was usually a result of a period of experiencing failure in the school.

More over the rate of early school leavers depends on characteristics of schools, such as size, resources available and degree of support for students with academic or behavioural problems.

3. Job related reasons

Numerous students leave the school for a job. On the other side, there is also evidence that moderate levels of employment, between 10 and 15 hours of work per week, might have a protective effect and help reduce early school leaving.

4. Family related reasons

Families can have financial difficulties or negative attitudes to their children's education, not recognising the value of education, and often it can be with a family history of early school leaving. The family can also belong to ethnic or cultural minority

groups, and access to cultural and intellectual material (books, internet) and the availability of social capital in some families might be limited.

5. Peer effects

The friends, or rejection by friends, of young people at risk of early school leaving are factors which can have an impact on the decision to drop out from the school. Current and future early school leavers usually have friends who already left the school prematurely and more friends already working; they may have been rejected by their school peers, and perhaps they were not integrated into their school's social networks.

6. Early experiences and events

Early experiences and events have an ongoing and cumulative effect on outcomes, so behaviour, expectations of parents as regards the education of their children or commitment of pupils in the school, as well as the availability of social capital can paradoxically lead to early school leaving.

7. Discrimination in schools

The discrimination which still occurs in some schools, for example on the grounds of religion, sexual orientation and disability, frequently in the form of bullying, often leads to early dropping out of school.

8. Community effects

In some neighbourhoods there might be a problem with mobility and school accessibility.

The EU benchmark to achieve an EU average of no more than 10% early school leavers by 2010 is based on indicator which refers to persons aged 18 to 24 with highest level of education or training no more than upper secondary education (ISCED 0, 1, 2 or 3c short) declaring not having received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey.

In 2007 the average early school leavers rate was 14.8% for EU-27, 2.8 percentage points lower than in 2000. Progress is slow, and at the current rate of improvement, the benchmark of no more than 10% early school leavers will not be attained by 2010. Additional efforts need to be made to meet this target.

Data show a geographical divide between the higher performers in northern and central Europe and the lower performers in the south of the European Union.

The best performers — the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Finland, along with Norway — all have early school leaving rates below the European reference level (benchmark) for 2010 (not more than 10%). Slovenia and Croatia also belong to the best performers in this area, though recent data are unreliable for these countries because of the small sample size in the Labour Force Survey.

By contrast, in 2007 Malta and Portugal still had the highest proportions of early school leavers in the EU (37.6% and 36.3% respectively), but they are improving steadily. The new Member States which joined in 2007 – Romania and Bulgaria – also have relatively high proportions of early school leavers (19.2% and 16.6% respectively).

In the majority of countries the percentage of early school leavers decreased between 2000 and 2007, especially in Malta (down from 54.2% in 2000 to 37.6% in 2007). Only in Denmark, Estonia, Austria, Slovakia, France and Spain did the percentage of early school leavers stagnate or increase slightly. While the first four of these countries belong to the best performing countries within the EU, the situation in Spain, with one of the highest percentages of early school leavers, is alarming from this point of view. However, in almost every country the quality and comparability of the data on early school leaving over this period are affected by breaks in time series, small sample sizes or methodological changes in the surveys.

Despite all the progress, the latest (2007) figure for early school leavers in the EU (14.8%) is still far in excess of the European benchmark of 10% in 2010.

The national targets, combined with lessons learned from the peer learning activities on this subject (the cluster on “access and social inclusion in lifelong learning”) by the European Commission, have shown that equity in education, and especially the problems linked to early school leaving, are high on the policy agenda, not only in countries with a high proportion of early school leavers but also in the countries which have been quite successful in the past.

Moving on to gender, there were more male than female early school leavers in the EU. Slightly more female than male young people leave school before completing at least upper secondary education only in Bulgaria, as well as in Turkey with a significantly higher gender gap.

Factors with a significant impact on early school leaving

Considerable research has been carried out over the past few years at national and international level on early school leavers, and young people ‘at risk’ of leaving school after the age of compulsory schooling is reached, but before completing upper secondary education. There is evidence that early school leaving is a complex and multidimensional process influenced by a variety of school and out-of-school experiences, with broad social and cultural implications, rather than a single decision made at a specific moment in time (Ferguson, B et al., 2005).

Research has confirmed that pupils choose to leave school even though they know that education and training can increase their chances of getting better jobs and higher earnings in the future.

Highest educational level achieved before leaving school

The majority of European early school leavers — 84% of them — leave formal education after completing lower secondary education, i.e. after completing compulsory education in the majority of European countries.

6% of them achieved even some kind of upper secondary education (ISCED 3C short courses) incorporating some vocational or pre-vocational training. However, this concerns only three countries. More than 50% of early school leavers did ISCED 3C short courses in Luxembourg and the UK, and the ratio for Greece is 15%.

What is alarming is that 1% of early school leavers do not have any formal education and 9% of them completed only primary education. The proportion of early school

leavers with only primary education is still extremely high in Portugal (32%), Cyprus (28%) and Greece (23%), but also exceeds 10% in Belgium, Bulgaria, Ireland, Spain and Poland. In Turkey, this group accounts for nearly half of the total number of 18 to 24 years old (46%).

Early school leavers with migrant backgrounds

There is evidence that migrant pupils perform better where socio-economic status and educational achievement are less correlated, that means, those systems which strongly prioritise equity in education are likely to be most effective in responding to their particular needs.

Comprehensive strategies across all levels and strands of the system work best; partial measures may simply transfer problems of inequality or poor attainment from one segment of the system to another. Furthermore, policies to build equity in education work best within a broader framework to build an inclusive society, as recently stated in the Commission's Green Paper on education and migration (European Commission, 2008d).

When we look at the share of early school leavers from the aspect of nationality as defined in the Labour Force Survey, early school leaving is still a more common phenomenon among non nationals (30.1% of non-nationals in contrast to 13% of nationals in 2005). From 2005 to 2006 the percentage of early school leavers with migrant backgrounds even slightly increased (by 1.5 percentage points to 31.7% in 2006).

In some countries, the percentage of early school leavers among non-nationals is the double of the percentage observed among nationals (see data in 2007 Progress report).

As shown in the Chart 6.4, from 40% to nearly 50% of the total number of early school leavers have a migrant background in Italy, Greece, Spain and Malta, as well as in Island with a percentage more than 50%. On contrary, the immigration in the new Member States seems to be higher qualified – there were only 10% to 15% early school leavers with migrant background of the total number of early school leavers in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia, a share comparable to the UK with 11.3% of early school leavers with migrant background of the total number of early school leavers in the UK in 2006.

Employment status of early school leavers

More than half of early school leavers aged 18 to 24 (56%) in the EU are employed. The rest — nearly half of them — are outside the labour market. About 25% of early school leavers are inactive persons and nearly 20% of them are unemployed (actively looking for employment).

The situation in individual countries varies. In some countries, in particular in Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Malta, Spain, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Portugal, Island and Norway, there are favourable conditions for employment of early school leavers, ranging from about 70% to more than 80% in work (Malta and Island).

In contrast, the situation in some new Member States with very low percentages of early school leavers (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia) is really marginalised — the employment of these young people is extremely low, ranging from only 19% in

Slovakia to 32% in the Czech Republic. However, the general unemployment rate in Slovakia is very high.

Participation of population with low educational attainment in lifelong learning

The phenomenon of early school leaving needs to be seen in a broader context of lifelong learning. There is evidence that the participation of adults in education and training tends to be proportional to the level of prior education. In 2006 only 3.7% of the population aged 25-64 with less than upper secondary education participated in education and training in the four weeks prior to the survey, which is less than one third of the average over all levels of education and less than one seventh of the figure for those with high educational attainment.

Countries with a high general participation rate in lifelong learning (Denmark, Finland and the UK) also record relatively high participation rates by people with low educational attainment. The results for these countries ranged from 10.6% in Finland to 18.4% in Denmark in 2006. Of the remaining countries, only the Netherlands, Austria and Spain, along with Norway, had a participation rate exceeding 4% in 2006.

Countries with a high general participation rate in lifelong learning have relatively narrow gaps in participation between those with high and with low prior educational attainment levels, while countries with low overall participation rates have wider gaps.

More male than female early school leavers

Within the EU, early school leaving is more of a male phenomenon. In 2007, there were 12.7% female and 16.9% male early school leavers. The gap is stable, there being only a slight decrease between 2000 and 2007.

There are significant intergenerational differences in the ratio of females and males with only lower secondary education attainment (ISCED 2) and below. While in the younger generation (less than 24 years old) the males in 2004 accounted for 58% in contrast to 42% females, the opposite was true of the older generation (more than 24 years old, potential parents of present school population): females represented 57% in contrast to 43% males.

Thus in the majority of EU countries the gender gap increased in comparison with “older” (more than 24 years old) early school leavers, mostly in favour of the female population, except for Luxembourg where the majority of the “younger” (less than 24 years old) early school leavers were and still are women. The Czech Republic shows a narrowing gender gap but has a higher number of female early school leavers among the younger generation.

A similar situation exists in the USA. In 2006, there were 10.3% dropouts among men and only 8.3% among women.

3. The Project "Ulisse – Analysis and exchange of good practices to retain students in the Education System"

The project Ulisse had been co-funded by the European Commission within the Socrates Programme, Action 6.1.2 and 6.2 "General activities of observation, analysis and innovation" and it was implemented between October 2006 and February 2009.

The aim of the project "Ulisse" is to evaluate the measures and policies the educational authorities and institutions enforced in the Member States participating in the project, namely Italy, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece and Portugal, with the aim to reduce the phenomenon of early school leavers. The project intends also to exchange among teachers, school directors, professionals in the educational sector and policy makers experiences and best practices in this context.

The specific objectives are:

- To map and evaluate the existing policies and measures to reduce and contrast early school leaving in the Member States participating in the project;
- To compare the different National situations in order to draw recommendations for future national improvements;
- To enable the exchange and sharing of experiences and best practices on contrasting early school leaving among teachers, school directors, professionals in the educational sector, policies makers, and local and national authorities;
- To sustain the international co-operation among NGOs, educational institutions and authorities for implementing transnational actions to pursue an harmonious education – with no early leavers – for the development of knowledge-based societies.

The project Ulisse is addressed to teachers, school directors, professionals in the educational sectors, policies makers, local and national authorities of the countries participating in the project. The expected impact on them will be: to increase their awareness about the size of the early school leavers in their country and at European level; to actively motivate them to implement initiatives and measures to contrast the phenomenon of early school leavers, thanks to the exchange of good practices at European level; to increase their awareness about the consequences early school leavers have on the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy both at national and European level.

The **activities** implemented by the project Ulisse have been:

- Production of a national report about existing policies and measures to reduce and contrast early school leaving. The written report will be published in English and in the national language (IT, BG, DE, EL, EE, PT);
- Production of a European report to compare the different policies and initiatives from partner countries and to draw recommendations for future national improvements. The comparative study will be published in English.
- Setting up country based networks involving the main stakeholders (teachers, school directors, professionals in the educational sectors, policies makers, local and national

authorities) to sustain the collection of best practices and dissemination of project results;

- Organisation of 6 international seminars to exchange information and best practices about initiatives to contrast early school leaving.
- Implementation at national and international level of the dissemination strategy.
- Organisation of a final European conference to disseminate project results and to exchange best practices and experiences to contrast the phenomenon of early school leavers.
- Production of a DVD in the partner languages to disseminate the project results.
- Organisation of 6 transnational meetings among partner organisations for co-ordinating and evaluating the project implementation.

Partners

The project had involved organisations with different background in Italy, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece and Portugal.

Uni.TS – University of Third Sector – Italy. Promoter of the project. It is a private, non-governmental, not for profit training and research organisation. It was born in 1996 on an A.N.P.A.S. project in partnership with Local Authorities, Public Institutions and Private Companies. Uni.TS aims at strengthening the role and improving the efficiency of the Not-for-profit Sector in Italy through the development of research and high quality training for Not-for-profit Sector's operators.

Uni.TS expertise are in: Voluntary work Ethics; Social Communication and Service Marketing; Fund raising; Project management; Strategic, Managerial and Administrative Training for non profit Organisations' Managers; Voluntary work and the development of legislation on Voluntary organisations; Technical and Operative Training for social and sanitary emergency, transportation and civil protection; Training for Co-ordinators of Conscientious Objectors. Since 1996 Uni.TS has developed projects in the frame of the following programmes: ESF, Daphne, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth, Socrates, Equal.

Health Care Association – Bulgaria is an independent, non-profit organisation among health and social care professionals, working on wide social basis. Health Care Association is one of the best-recognised NGOs in Bulgaria. The main field of activities regards the promotion of young professionals' education and continuous training in the health and social care themes, as well as research and development in the area of quality of services and good practices identification in our main fields of expertise.

The Association team consists of highly qualified experts with considerable influence over decision-making processes and long term planning in vocational training. It has top level access to the National Health Insurance Fund, the Bulgarian Ministry of Health, all Bulgarian Medical Universities and colleges, many clinics, healthcare service providers in their various aspects, Bulgarian Red Cross and the Refugee Integration Centre. All this guarantees successful implementation of a wide range of sensitive projects directed to health and social cares. HCA continuously expands reach to sensitive and immediate projects, influenced by the realities of the European Union.

For the implementation of this project HCA will employ its expertise in identifying the needs of Bulgarian target group and the practise established at this time. Further on, we shall contribute to the development of the training course mainly, keeping in mind the country-specific needs reflected through a globalizing perspective. HCA will also take active part in ongoing project evaluation and successful completion of all assigned tasks.

Institute of Educational Research of Tallinn University – Estonia. The aim of our University is to offer highly qualified and modern education at the Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels, to facilitate high level research and to disseminate humanistic and democratic values in Estonian society.

TU has 6 faculties which for the academic year 2003 – 2004 together offer 43 degree programs on the undergraduate (Bachelor - BA) level and 72 degree programs on the graduate (Master -MA) level. Also there are postgraduate (PhD or doctoral) study programs.

The language of instruction is Estonian. There are subjects available in English. At the faculty of philology the subjects are mainly offered in the languages taught.

EBG Europäisches Bildungswerk für Beruf und Gesellschaft gGmbH – Germany, was founded in August 2001 as an independent institution working as a service and consultant partner for town councils, SMEs, training centres, schools, etc.

Provides English training courses for general and job-related English. It has a well-established network of experienced partners.

The Institut fuer Europaberatung is a SME, and can count with 2 permanent staff and network co-operation.

Mr Uwe Bismark, the founder of the Institute has been a teacher for 23 years himself and still works at schools part-time. All relevant partners so far have had an educational background. The Institute has been co-operating with lots of schools in the area for placement provisions. It is also in touch with all relevant town council authorities including the school authority for years as it has designed some further education courses for teachers. Uwe Bismark runs another firm dealing with private tuition for pupils at the bottom edge of education.

KEK KRONOS Ltd. – Greece, is a private Vocational training Centre founded in 1995. It is based in Psahna, Evia and it has 2 more facilities, one in Athens and one in Northern Greece.

The main aims of the organisation are: Implementation of Vocational Training Programs; Fighting Exclusion and Promoting Equal Opportunities; Participation in European Union Programs; Market Research; Feasibility Studies and Consulting; O.D.L. Solutions – Teleworking.

The main activities of KEK KRONOS include Continuous Professional Training, Development of Feasibility Studies, Support of Research Activities, Promotion of the Employment of the Unemployed, Disabled People, Disadvantaged People, and Members of Socially Excluded Isolated Communities.

KEK KRONOS employees a permanent staff of 12 persons and works in close co-operation with more than 50 associated experts in various fields.

KEK KRONOS has implemented to the moment more than 200 training programmes and more than 250.000 human hours of training. Additionally, KEK KRONOS has a wide experience in European Programs projects, with participation in more than 40 projects up to now.

The Ministry of Labour officially certified KEK KRONOS as a Vocational Training Centre. Only officially certified Centres have the right to train unemployed people and employees. Also some of these Centres have the right to do training combating exclusion from the labour market and training under EU. Initiatives. KEK KRONOS Ltd was officially certified with the highest degree among the peripheral VTCs (source EKEPIS, Ref. No. 4932/14-06-98), in both the above certifications.

KEK KRONOS is officially certified as a consultant of SMEs by E.O.M.M.E.X. (the Hellenic Association of SMEs and Handicraft in the county of Sterea Ellada). It is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, EEDE (Hellenic Association of Management), CEDEFOP (Member of the list for Restricted Calls for Tender), BENE (Business Education Network in Europe), ELSEKEK (Regional Network of Vocational Training Centres), STEREA (Regional Network of Vocational Training Centres – Central Mainland, Greece).

Numena – Portugal, is a Social Sciences and Humanities research centre established in 2001 as a non-profit scientific association. Since then, Númena has been the National Focal Point (NFP) of the Racism and Xenophobia Information Network (RAXEN) of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in Portugal. Númena's role as RAXEN NFP has fostered the participation of Númena on several other projects and, as a result, its research activities have been essentially focused on racial and ethnic discrimination, immigration and integration (e.g., participation in some INTI projects and partners of the National Contact Point of the European Migration Network). Nevertheless we have been also participating in national and European projects on the scope of different social domains, such as, religion, the environment, politics and social inclusion.

4. Methodology of the Study

One of the major deliverables of the project is a comparative EU study on the Early School Leaving phenomenon in Italy, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece and Portugal.

Among the partners an outline of Country based analysis and studies had been agreed including the following chapters:

- Introduction to the Country situation
- General information
- Description of the Education System
- Early School Leaving – statistics and reasons
- Regulations, laws in force at national, regional and local level
- Pros and cons of policies and measures
- Best practices to contrast Early School Leaving
- Conclusions
- Bibliography and references

The analysis in each country had been conducted mainly based on the literature review methodology.

The case studies had been identified through contacts of the experts and the partner organisations.

Progress of the work done had been monitored during each Partner meeting. At each meeting a chapter of the study was presented to the partnership and to a wider audience.

During the internal meetings the format and content of the chapter was discussed so to identify possible obstacles and to address possible problems. Solutions were identified and agreed upon, whenever necessary.

National seminars were organised at the same time of the meetings so to capitalise on the opportunity to have all the partners experts.

During the international seminars the major stakeholders were invited, such as teachers, School Directors, Professionals of the Education Sector, Policy Makers, NGOs representatives. Normally there were about 25 participants. Experts from the partner organisations presented the chapter related to their own country and the discussion was open to the floor.

Objective of the presentations were not just to transfer knowledge from a particular country, but mainly to review, when and if needed, the format of the chapter so to make it as clear as possible.

The Comparative European Study was done based on the results of the Country studies. Each chapter of the European Study was developed comparing the findings of the country reports. It was really a team effort. If the country reports were not as

comprehensive as agreed among the partners, the European Study could have not been implemented.

The European Study also includes a selection of the best practices identified at Country level. The European Study had been presented at the final International Conference organised by the leading partner in the South of Italy, in one of the regions mostly affected by the phenomenon of the Early School Leavers.

During the last International Conference results of the European Study were presented, but it was also asked to the participants to help to draw conclusions on how to best approach the phenomenon of Early School Leavers.

Each National Report and the European Comparative Study can be read as stand alone documents and as such have been included in the DVD, final product of the project.

5. Bulgaria - National Report

By Zhelyazko Zhelyazkov and Krassimira Stoeva

5.1 Introduction to the country situation

5.2 General information

Geography location:

Bulgaria is situated in Southeast Europe and occupies the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. To the north, it borders on Romania, to the west on the Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Serbia, to the east on the Black Sea, to the south on Greece and to the southeast on Turkey's European part.



Territory: 110 994 km²

Population: 7 973 671

Capital: Sofia

Official language: Bulgarian

Religion: Bulgarian Orthodox - 83,8%,

Muslim - 12,1%,

Roman Catholic - 1,7%,

Jewish - 0,1%,

Protestant, Gregorian-Armenian and other - 2,3%

Policy system: Parliamentary Republic

Geography and Nature

The nature of Bulgaria is very various and very impressive with a lot of beautiful high mountains, lakes, waterfalls, calm nature places, interesting rock phenomena. The longest mountain is Stara Planina, which cross the territory of the country from east to west border and divide Bulgaria in two parts - Southern and Northern. The other big and more popular mountains in Bulgaria are: Vitosha /near te capital city Sofia/, Rila - at south-west /with the highest peak on te Balkan Peninsula - Mussalla, 2925 m/, Pirin - at south-west, Rhodopes - at south, Strandja - at east, Sakar - at east. There are also other small mountains which are part of the bigger mountains. The whole east border of Bulgaria is going at coast of the Black Sea, and there are many attractive sea resorts at the coast of the Black sea. At north - the river Danube is northern border of the country. That is why the northern part of Bulgaria is named Danube lowland. The territory of Central Bulgaria situated between the mountaine Rhodopes and central Stara Planina is called Gorna Trakya lowland.

History and culture

The Thracians lived in what is now known as Bulgaria from about 3500 B.C. They were incorporated into the Roman Empire by the first century A.D. At the decline of the empire, the Goths, Huns, Bulgars, and Avars invaded. The Bulgars, who crossed the Danube from the north in 679, took control of the region. Although the country bears the name of the Bulgars, the Bulgar language and culture died out, replaced by a Slavic language, writing, and religion. In 865, Boris I adopted Orthodox Christianity. The Bulgars twice conquered most of the Balkan peninsula between 893 and 1280. But in 1396 they were invaded by the Ottoman Empire, which made Bulgaria a Turkish province until 1878. In 1878, Russia forced Turkey to give Bulgaria its independence after the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878). But the European powers, fearing Russia's and Bulgaria's dominance in the Balkans, intervened at the Congress of Berlin (1878), limiting Bulgaria's territory and fashioning it into a small principality ruled by Alexander of Battenburg, the nephew of the Russian czar. Alexander was succeeded in 1887 by Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, who declared a kingdom independent of the Ottoman Empire on Oct. 5, 1908. In the First Balkan War (1912–1913), Bulgaria and the other members of the Balkan League fought against Turkey to regain Balkan territory. Bulgaria fought on the side of the Nazis in World War II, but after Russia declared war on Bulgaria on Sept. 5, 1944, Bulgaria switched sides. Three days later, on Sept. 9, 1944, a Communist coalition took control of the country and set up a government under Kimon Georgiev. A Soviet-style People's Republic was established in 1947 and Bulgaria acquired the reputation of being the most slavishly loyal to Moscow of all the East European Communist countries. In Oct. 1991, the Union of Democratic Forces won, forming Bulgaria's first non-Communist government since 1946. Power shifted back and forth between the pro-Western Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) and the BSP during the 1990s. The economy continued to deteriorate amid growing concern over the spread of organized crime. A new UDF government, led by Prime Minister Ivan Kostov, was elected in 1997 to overhaul the economic system and institute reforms aimed at stemming corruption. Progress on both fronts remained slow. As a result, the UDF lost the July 2001 election to the former king of Bulgaria, leader of the Simeon II National Movement (SNM). The new prime minister, Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (Simeon II), had been dethroned 55 years earlier (at age nine) during the Communist takeover of the country. Bulgaria became a member of NATO in

2004. In 2005, the EU approved its membership for 2007, subject to the implementation of reforms, especially the cleaning up of corruption and organized crime.

After the socio-economic transformations in the end 20th century, Bulgaria gradually is becoming a stable and rapidly developing market economic country. Since 1st January 2007, the country became a regular EU member state. Bulgaria is a Parliamentary Republic and the basic power in the country is the legislative one. The Parliament (The National Assembly) exercises the legislative power, as well as the right to parliamentary control. The government (The Council of Ministers) is the main body of the executive power, headed by the Prime Minister. The Council of Ministers rules and conducts the internal and foreign policy of the state, secures the public order and the national security, exercises control over the public administration and the military forces. The President is the Head of State and is elected with direct elections once in every five years, for not more than two mandates. The President is the supreme commander of the military forces of the Republic of Bulgaria and Chairperson of the Consultative Council for national security.

Employment

The economically active population amounts 3.44 million, or nearly 52% of Bulgarians over 15. The economically active people between 15 and 64 years of age are 3.4 million. There are 308,900,000 unemployed persons, or 9% of the economically active population. The employed in the second quarter were 3.13 million, or 47% of Bulgarians over 15. The figure includes 1.6 million, or 53.1 per cent, males and 1.5 million, or 46.9% females. The majority of employed are hired under contract (86.7%), followed by self-employed persons (8.2%), non-paid family workers (1.3%) and employers (3.9%). The share of Bulgarians working in the private sector is 68.1%. Most of the employed are engaged in the service industry, 57.9%; 33.6% are in the industrial sector, and 8.5% in agriculture and forestry.

5.3 Description of education system

Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

Almost all pupils (99.58%) attend public-sector schools, which are directly controlled and administered by the public authorities, and funded by the State. The administration of education is organised at four levels, national, regional, municipal and school. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) lays down and applies national education policy, and plans and organises the development of education by putting together long-term programmes and operational projects. The municipal bodies in charge of education form part of the national structure, and take part in the implementation of municipal education policy. They are responsible *inter alia* for the compulsory education of pupils up to the age of 16, pre-school education and funding. The autonomy of schools has been considerably extended in recent years. The teaching council, the board of management and the head teachers are the administrative bodies of schools, and expected to meet the necessary conditions in the areas of teaching, organisation, methodology, administration and management. The inspection of education and its results are handled by the relevant authorities, namely the MES, the regional inspectorate, head teachers and their assistants.

Pre-primary education

Pre-school education is considered to be the first level of the school system and caters for children aged between 3 and 6 or 7. The majority of nursery schools, at which attendance is optional, are set up by the municipalities. An enrolment fee, which is considerably reduced for low income families, must be paid. In 1995/96, the attendance rate was 67.50%.

The adopted in 2006 National program for development of school education and pre-school education and preparation (2006 – 2015) introduces a new structure of the educational system. Below is presented the existing up to 2006 educational structure by stages of education and the envisaged changes according to the Programme for educational development. The changes are introduced already since school year 2006-2007 for the schoolchildren of 5th grade. The existing educational structure by educational grades and the envisaged changes according to the Programme for the development of education in Bulgaria is presented at Figure 1.

Table 1. Education system in Bulgaria – stages, age of students and type of schools

Grades	Stages	Age of the students	Type of schools
Primary education	Pre-primary	6-7	Nursery schools
	Primary 1-4 grade	6/7-9/10	General lower secondary
	Lower secondary 5-8 grade <i>5-7 grade /new program/</i>	10/11-14-15	General lower secondary
Diploma for primary education graduation after completed 8th grade <i>According to the new program -after 7th grade</i>			
Secondary education	Upper Secondary 8-12 grade 2 stages /new program/ 1st: 8-10 grade 2nd: 10-12 grade	14/15-18/19 years old	General lower secondary Language schools Sports Schools Art Schools Vocational Schools
	Degree for secondary education graduation, <i>According to the new program – Certificate after 1st stage/10th grade/ Diploma after 2nd stage/12th grade/</i>		
	Colleges	After secondary education 19- 22 years old	Vocational colleges Art colleges
Diploma for secondary education graduation and certificate for acquired 4th grade of professional qualification (ISCED 4)			
	Colleges	In the system of higher education	

children outside of the place where they live. A big part of the drop outs do not have motivation for education and professional qualification and for a future realization at the labour market.

5.5 Regulations, laws in force at national, regional and local level

The educational reform in Bulgaria includes measures as optimizing of the school network, increasing the quality of the education, improving the relationship between demand and supply at the labour market as well as actions targeted at solving the problem of “school leaving”.

For 5-6 years in Bulgaria the problem with the school drop outs is a subject of targeted measures and policies for its prevention and overcoming the consequences. In the last few years is a clear tendency of looking for complex approaches for solving the problem and multi-sectorial coordination of the efforts of the institutions from the educational system with those from the system of child protection and social care.

The present report aims to present and analyze the basic program documents and strategies related to solving the problem of early school leaving in Bulgaria. It will evaluate the current government policies regarding the drop outs in order to optimize the existing measures.

In 2006 the **National programme for development of the school and pre-school education and training 2006 -2015** aims to formulate the national objectives for development of the school education and to present the main measures for their achievement. The problem of early school leaving is discussed in the programme. The high number of drop out children mainly from the risk groups (Roma population) leads to large disproportions in the educational levels as the relatively compact groups remain in the periphery of the social life and their integration is additionally impeded.

The measures for decreasing the number of drop out schoolchildren included in the programme can be divided into three main groups: change in the educational structure, social actions, measures targeted at children which mother tongue language is not Bulgarian and children with special educational needs.

New educational structure

The introduction of a new educational structure is of significant importance for providing an equal access to education. This measure aims to overcome the main disadvantages of the present educational structure – the existing inequalities between the students in the different kinds of schools due to the different educational minimum the students acquire, lack of negotiability of the system; lack of guarantees for implementation of the constitutional requirement for compulsory education until 16 years of age in accordance to article No 53 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and the absence of a way out of the system before that age, insufficient conditions for development of the potential of each child and its interests, needs and abilities.

The new structure has to include:

- Finishing of elementary school after 7th grade;

- Dividing the secondary school in two levels – 1st Secondary Level (8-10 grade) and 2nd Secondary Level (11-12 grade);
- 8th grade – a year for intensive foreign language and computer training and/or vocational training for all students.

The new educational structure has several advantages:

- Equality of the students from one alumni at graduating the elementary school – all students graduate from elementary school, receive a certificate and continue to the next level of education in one and the same moment; all students can finish the elementary education without changing their school.
- Guarantying a constitutional requirement for a compulsory education until 16 years of age and providing an opportunity for leaving the system before that age.
- Acquiring an equal educational minimum for all kinds of schools until 10th grade. .
- Horizontal and vertical negotiability of the system.
- Opportunity for faster adapting of the vocational training to the dynamics of the labour market;
- Preserving of the traditional for the Bulgarian education class with intensive foreign language training, which has proven to give very good results;
- Providing an opportunity students with different abilities, needs and interests to find their place in the educational system;
- Increasing the motivation of the students to stay longer in the system of the school education.

In 2006 the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria accepted the **National Integrated plan for applying the convention of the United Nations for the children rights 2006 – 2009**. The plan is aimed at guarantying the wellbeing of the children in Bulgaria by uniting the national policies and strategies for children protection and present in a long term plan the roles and responsibilities of the institutions engaged in this field and the cooperation among them.

The plan is developed on the principles of the Child Protection Act which has been adopted in Bulgaria on the May 31 2000. His development is based on a practical approach for planning, which integrates the norms and standards of the international system for human rights protection. The plan is prepared with the special technical assistance of the UN Fund for the children UNICEF and with the broad participation of the state institutions engaged with the child protection in Bulgaria as well as Bulgarian and international non-governmental organizations. One of the main objectives which has been formulated in the plan is the decreasing with 10% of the number of the drop out children in a compulsory school age against their number for 2006.

For achieving this objective are envisaged the following actions:

- 1) Development and implementation of information campaigns for the value of education;
- 2) Development and implementation of a system for evaluation of the risk of school leaving;

- 3) Development and implementation of new interactive methods of education;
- 4) Training of teachers and school principals in interactive approaches and behaviour change models;
- 5) Capacity building for the planning and implementation of the budget of the local authorities regarding the children.

The plan includes the following tasks and expected results:

- 1) 50 % of the families which have not been enrolled in schools or are drop outs to motivate and encourage their children to attend school

Expected results

- Improving the effectiveness of the common work of the schools and the directions of social support communicating at local level with the families with regards to the issue of regular school attendance;
 - Trained leaders of the minority groups to encourage their families to send their children to school and to support their education.
- 2) Until 2009 50 % of the schools with the support of the local authorities to evaluate the risk of school leaving;

Expected results:

- Until 2008 developed and implemented system for evaluation of the risk of early school leaving;
- 3) Until 2009 at least 30 % of the schools are created with the active participation of the school board of trustees a stimulating study environment for the children by applying interactive forms of teaching during the study process;

Expected results:

- Provided until 2007 opportunities for continuing education for applying interactive methods of teaching.
4. To be developed a functioning system for covering of all children at school age.

Expected results:

- Improved local planning and assured access to the community places and transport for children with disabilities.

The joint memorandum for social inclusion of the Republic of Bulgaria outlines the main challenges related to the work for overcoming the poverty and social isolation, presents the main political measures, undertaken by the Bulgarian government in the light of the agreement for beginning of transferring the main objectives of the European commission in the national policies and identification of the main problems on a policy level, for the purpose of the future monitoring and review of the policy.

The memorandum ties the cases of early school leaving with the social and economic status of the families and determines that decreasing of the drop outs is an important prerequisite for achieving full employment and bigger social cohesion with the aim of developing an economy of knowledge.

The measures for prevention of the early school leaving envisaged in the memorandum include:

- Addressing of the problems related to the early school leavers, as well as with the access of the vulnerable ethnic minorities to education;
- Development of initiatives, incl. legislative steps, strategic political instruments and financial resources with the purpose of desegregating the groups with special educational needs in the schools.

The dropping out of schools of the Roma children is one of the main problems of the Bulgarian educational system. 20% of the Roma children drop out from school, while only 2 % of the Bulgarians leave school before the compulsory school age. Another problem is the formal school enlisting of the Roma children and the low attendance of the school classes for which there is no official data. The data shows that less than 10 % of the Roma people in Bulgaria finish secondary education.

The Strategy for educational integration of the children and students from the ethnic minorities approved by the Minister of education and science on 11 June 2004 is an integral part of the national project for educational system reform and providing of a qualitative education to all children in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The main priorities of the strategy are:

- Integration of the Roma children and students through desegregation of the kindergartens and schools in the Roma districts and creation of conditions for equal access to qualitative education;
- Optimization of the school network in the small and remote municipalities, including by supporting the secondary schools for guaranteeing of qualitative education
- With the strategy the Ministry of education and science sets the following strategic aims, related to the education and integration of the children and pupils from ethnic minorities:
- Guarantying the right for equal access to qualitative education of the children and pupils of ethnic minorities;
- Preserving and developing of the cultural identity of the children and pupils from the ethnic minorities;
- Creation of prerequisites for successful socialization of the children and young people from the ethnic minorities;
- Converting the cultural diversity into a source and factor for mutual acquaintance and spiritual development of the growing ups and creation of atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance and understanding.
- Forming of an appropriate social and psychological climate, favourable to the implementation of the strategy.

These main strategic objectives will be realized through a work in the following directions:

- Provision of legal guarantees for realization of the strategy through changes in the normative legislative order;
- Increasing the effectiveness of the management structures of the educational system through creation of adequate organizational and administrative

mechanism, providing horizontal and vertical coordination between the management structures.

- Providing the needed educational conditions and resources for realization of the process of integration of the children and pupils for development of their cultural identity, including through changes in the study programmes and curricula;
- Supporting the establishment of networks of schools with contemporary equipment in the small and remote municipalities and guaranteeing the qualitative education for the pupils attending them;
- Provision of the needed pedagogical and administrative personnel for the realization of programmes in intercultural education, human rights, principles and values of the civil society;
- Provision of effective financial mechanisms for realization of the realization of the strategy and establishment of a special fund “Educational integration of the children and pupils from the ethnic minorities”
- Including the school boards of trustees and civil organizations in the development, implementation and control of the educational integration programmes;
- Including the children and the students from the ethnic minorities in extra-school forms of education;
- Covering the children and pupils from the ethnic minorities being in a disadvantaged position in semi boarding school forms of teaching;
- Supporting the socially disadvantaged children and pupils, including books, study materials and supplies.

5.6 Pro and cons of policies and measures

The critical review of the program documentation related to the problem of early school leaving in Bulgaria reveals some specifics of the present policies for prevention and reduction of the drop out children. These weak places of the current policies should be a subject of special attention and should be elaborated by the responsible institutions.

Social activities

A big part of the reasons which lead to dropping out of the children in a compulsory school age can be overcome with active social measures. Special places among them have the following measures:

- Free access to the study material

In the period of the programme implementation there will be a practice of providing free books and study materials to the students from the primary schools (1-4th grade). Free books and study supplies should be provided to the children with special educational needs.

The free access to the study content will be assured through development of electronic study courses which will be available at the national educational portal.

- Continuation of the activities of the National programme for including maximum number of students in a compulsory school age, accepted by the 39th Bulgarian Parliament.

One of the measures of this programme is the provision of free snacks to the students of the first level of education (1-4th grade) which combined with other social measures can give good results in the attempt for keeping the children in the school. This measure should be further developed regarding the students from the higher grades providing them opportunities for school nutrition.

- Providing free transport and forms of halftime boarding school training.

The provision of transport combined with the development of halftime boarding school training has a double meaning in the educational policy. From one side, this measure facilitates the access of the children to education. On the other hand, it accompanies the measures for optimizing the school network and development of the system of the secondary schools. The Ministry of Education and science will continue in 2006 purchasing of busses and providing them to the municipalities for transportation of the children from the secondary schools. The aim is in the school year 2007/2008 each secondary school to possess at least one school bus/minibus/.

- Binding of the social aid with the school attendance of the children

Such binding exists in the present moment but the improvement of the control mechanisms would increase the effectiveness of the measure and will facilitate the coverage of the children in a school age.

Socializing the children, which mother language is not Bulgarian. Integration of the children with special educational needs

The need of special care for the socializing the children which mother language is not Bulgarian becomes apparent. The activities related to studying the Bulgarian language should be active especially during the period of the compulsory year before the 1st grade and to continue until reaching a level of language comparable with the other children. The additional training in Bulgarian of these children should be done following a specific methodology which takes into account their specific needs and encountered difficulties. Despite the different forms of additional pedagogical help, it is important for these children to be put in an environment that supports their integration – not allowing division on a language, ethno-cultural or other factors. The integration of children with special educational needs requires a series of measures aiming to create a supporting environment for their education including creation of an accessible physical environment and opportunity for training in individual programmes, providing special books and study materials and technical supplies, training of the pedagogical personnel for working with these children. Together with that there should be stopped the vicious practice of redirecting and placing these children in special schools, as their training does not require such an environment.

This practice impedes the training, education and development of the children with special educational needs as well as the children placed in the special schools by other social reasons. For this purpose, is needed a constant control of the activity of the diagnostic commissions for complex pedagogic evaluation to the regional educational inspectorates which implement the directing of those children to the special schools. There should be exercised control over the managers of the educational institutions,

which accept for training students without the needed direction by the diagnostic commissions.

The measures pointed up to this moment should be applied in one and the same time with measures for increasing the motivation and the interest of the children about school, targeted work with the children at risk of dropping out, including provision of a psychological support.

- **Unequal coverage of the different age groups of children at risk from school leaving by the special prevention measures**

The main part of the measures is directed to the children in the first level of education (6-11 years) which has the lowest drop-out indicators. These are measures such as compulsory pre-school training, free snacks, free books, free transport to schools, and financial aid for the pupils from the 1st grade, new study curricula answering better to the age specificities of the children, etc.

- **Unequally developed spectrum of measures and policies**

The measures are predominantly directed to the neutralizing of the economic reasons for school leaving. A small part of them – compulsory pre-school training and improvement of the study curricula are targeted at neutralizing of the educational reasons for dropping out and just separate projects with a very restricted timeline and coverage are directed towards the ethno-cultural reasons for dropping out, which are having an increasing effect especially in the groups of children aged over 11 years. Actually these children are not covered substantially by the present measures.

- **Insufficiently good public communication on the problem of early school leaving and the undertaken measures in this field**

The parents are well aware of the measures for prevention of early school leaving that has a form of direct material support – free books, snacks, monthly financial aid for a child, and one-time aid for a 1st grade child. In the same time they are unacquainted with the non-material educational measures, for example attending a preparatory group/class, full day form of training, boarding school training.

- **The observation and collection of information for the problem of the early school leaving is not sufficiently coordinated.**

The collected data is not effectively used due to mismatching of the criteria systems (definitions for a drop-out, definitions of the reasons, etc.), due to a lack of capacity for analysis of the information, as well as lack of a system for information exchange between the institutions. There is still missing a system for evaluation of the effectiveness of the different measures while some of them are already half way through their implementation.

The overall review of the available information sources for the activities of the public institutions targeted at prevention and reduction of the early school leaving allow the following recommendations to be made:

- There is a need of developing of a unified system for evaluation of the early school leaving risk. It should include all institutions engaged with education, child protection and social support, working in coordination between the different management levels – school, local, regional and national;

- It is absolutely needed, so that the measures for prevention and reduction of early school leaving to include the age groups in compulsory school age of 12 to 16 years.
- It is recommended to be developed targeted measures for prevention of early school leaving for each of the educational (targeted financing of full day training, diagnostic materials for early detecting of educational difficulties, early professional orientation and training, programmes stimulating the reading and studying of the Bulgarian language, etc.).
- It is of substantial value to be undertaken measures for reintegration of the drop-out children in two main directions: retrieving programmes for drop out pupils for a period of 1 year, who can still come back to the normal cycle of education and educational programmes for drop outs for more than 1 year for whom should be found other appropriate forms of educational services.
- The success of the public policies for prevention and reduction of early school leaving depends in a great extend from the attraction of a wide public support for them, for which the institutions should make targeted efforts in the field of communication, as well as in creation of conditions for public-private partnerships for implementation of effective measures at each management level.

5.7 Best practice to contrast Early School leaving

The Project STEPIN (Studying Training and Educational Paths for the Integration of young Roma)

Appalled by the abject poverty and social exclusion of many of Europe's Roma, Caritas Europa and 7 main other organisations devised a project to increase school attendance and career prospects for Roma Children. The project was co-funded by the European Commission, DG for Education and Culture, Joint Actions, Leonardo, Socrates and Youth Programmes. From the outset, the belief of the 14 partners in STEP IN was that education would be the most effective way to integrate young Roma into the local community, providing Roma with the same opportunities as their peers. The two goals of the project were:

- 1) to prevent early school leaving through encouraging different approaches to education and
- 2) to support social integration through professional training as well as through looking at employment opportunities

By the end of the project, participants agreed that the STEP IN project, with some modifications, could be considered as an example of good practice, which the EU should consult when programming education projects for Roma children. The two year project focused on children between the ages of 13 and 18.

Central to the project was an educational model, which focused on a combination of three types of educational input: formal learning, non-formal learning and informal activities. These activities included study support, artistic and manual activities, sports, and cultural activities. Having this wide array of activities proved to be successful. For example, non-formal activities, such as sports and art, helped to forge positive relationships between Roma groups and children from the majority population. An important aspect of the STEP IN project was that it allowed for flexibility between countries. The Roma situation was different in every participating country. For this reason, the necessary flexibility was built into the project design so that it would cater to specific needs arising in the different countries. The final conference of STEP IN brought together practical educational experience, academic analysis, knowledge of EU initiatives and expertise in social and educational policy on national and European level. In order to represent this unique combination of theory and practice clearly, the recommendations given in this document are divided into two strands:

- 1) Recommendations on a practical level, concerning the integration of Roma youngsters as a direct result of STEP-IN's implementation, followed by ideas for possible indicators as a follow-up for tracking youngsters involved in educational projects
- 2) Recommendations for future EU programming for Roma and Education followed by Policy recommendations.

Recommendations concerning the integration of Young Roma as a direct result of the project's implementation

1. Combine education support in formal, informal and non formal activities

1.1. Formal education activities:

- Should be planned with teachers, when necessary in consultation with parents and pupils.

- Are important to make up for basic learning gaps.

1.2. Informal education activities are important to:

- Involve young Roma people, capture their interest.

- Promote cooperative and non-conflictive relations and to establish in a playful way codes of conduct expected in schools.

- Reinforce Roma identity.

2. Involve parents in the preparation phase and throughout the project.

3. Start the activities with smaller children, preferably of Kindergarten age.

- The mother and child, who at this age have a strong bond can both be involved and be integrated in mainstream education from the start.

4. Promote the active involvement and participation of the Roma in projects:

- In the project design.

- As partners in implementation.

- In the evaluation.

5. Build a multidisciplinary, multi-sector partnership:

- Involving branches of local government, schools, community service providers, voluntary organisations, third sector organisations, Roma organisations etc.

6. Roma who have been successful in their educational career and/or their professional life to the young Roma, responding to every child's tendency to imitate their elders.

7. Develop projects based on long term working relationships, such as for instance with local authorities, local education institutes, local enterprise etc.

8. Recognise the need to provide material aids (school resources, such as stationary and school books) to promote school attendance in regular non-segregated schools.

9. Take into account:

- The living conditions of the Roma group, particularly when they are living in sub-standard accommodation.

- Take into account the status of Roma in the community, particularly when they are subject to isolation, segregation, social exclusion and discrimination by the majority population.

10. Depending on where the budgets for education are administered, lobby for integration in education, equal opportunities, improving the school curriculum, preschool education, creation of more friendly school environment, culturally designed education programmes, teacher training on how to work with minorities and general Roma education policy to:

- The Ministry of Education.

- The County School Inspectorate.

- The Department for Social Services and Child Protection.
- Legislative bodies.
- Municipal authorities responsible for education.

11. For a more open view towards diversity, promoting an integration of Roma culture (history and traditions) into the curriculum and into the training curriculum for teachers.

Recommendations concerning indicators as a follow-up for tracking young Roma people involved in educational projects of this kind.

Collaboration with schools and local authorities, to set up a data gathering system to follow the students after they have left school, looking at degrees of successful integration by:

- Monitoring access to third level or vocational schools.
- Monitoring access to work/work apprenticeship schemes.
- Monitoring the capacity to hold down a job for a longer time.
- Data on exit from the camp, finding other housing solutions in non-Roma areas, not as a break with the community but as agreed solutions.
- Degree of self-perception, self awareness and autonomy. Indicator would be the number of focus-groups trained per year on self-esteem and identity building.
- Data on participation in different activities, sharing of interests with non-Roma people (e.g. joining a football team).
- Data on number of pupils who decides to keep working for their own people in Roma organisations (active integration). Number of Leaders, trained trainers for their own group. Partnership with Roma NGO's and contacts with other Roma communities.
- Data on the extent of the involvement of a parents group in order to disseminate information about the opportunities provided by the project to the community.
- Data on number of trainings per year in diversity, for teachers, school officials and local administrators responsible for education.
- Data on racial discrimination cases to find out to what extent equal opportunity and discrimination-free policies are successful in a particular school or region.

Policy Recommendations for future EU programming for Roma and Education

1. General principle that should guide all projects: To actively promote de-segregated education, always with the aim to improve education. This should include granting projects specifically aiming at school desegregation.

2. To program longer term projects (up to 10 years) or else in the case of successful projects such as STEP IN, to allow for a follow-up, a second phase of the project.

This second phase should be based on an evaluation of the experiences and international exchanges that have taken place in the first phase of the project.

3. To create more possibilities for municipalities to be direct beneficiaries of EU funds, through micro projects such as were available under the PHARE programme, thereby showing more confidence in the practice and experience of local people (including Roma partners). Include joint control bodies, with Roma members, of EU funds.
4. To promote the compulsory participation of Roma NGO's as equal partners in the projects. To provide specific grants for capacity building of Roma / Non – Roma NGO's working with Roma issues.
5. To require a redefinition of certain rules and formats of programmes and projects (the strict age category of 13-18 formed a constraint in STEP IN). For projects with Roma people, the target group must be enlarged, e.g.; if one works with the young Roma, it is mandatory to work with their families too. The very young (3yrs and up) should be represented as much as possible in the target group.
6. To require project applicants for education projects to include educational and professional guidance of educators involved in teaching Roma children. The involvement of Roma mediators should also be a requirement in project applications.
7. Targeted at Roma and Non-Roma people: To consider funding more projects with a psycho-sociological content aiming at creating responsible citizenship and empowerment of small groups (like families, neighbourhood groups, etc.). To provide psycho-sociological guidance would engender a commitment on a personal level and help people to discover and develop their own potential in taking charge of improving their circumstances. Values such as tolerance of “the other” should be promoted in these projects.
8. To promote projects in anti-discrimination, tolerance, aimed at breaking down prejudice and stereotyping and diversity trainings targeting non Roma parents, local administrators, school administrators and teachers.
9. To develop a central data bank on Roma projects carried out in the EU. Record and disseminate recommendations to future applicants for EU funding for Roma and education.
10. To make the lessons learned from other projects available in a clear and accessible way.

Policy Recommendations to the EU for policy

Despite the EU's 273 Million EURO investment between 2001 and 2006 in Roma projects, the lack of integration into mainstream education for the Roma remains a stumbling block. The extremely ambitious goals of the Lisbon Council in the field of education (to name a few: No more than 10% of early school leavers, at least 85% of 22 year olds in the EU should have completed upper secondary education, the percentage of 15year old low achievers should have decreased by at least 20% compared to 2000) will work more as a threat than as an advantage to Roma youngsters. Roma youngsters are still very far behind in these statistics.

The risk is that policy makers will disregard negative outcomes for the Roma as they will distort a rosier view of Lisbon outcomes. A uniform programme conducted by the EU on the basis of a separate EU strategy for Roma and Education that must be implemented by the Member States, building a separate chapter of the Open Method of Coordination, targeted specifically at the issue of Roma and education, would be a step

in the right direction. This would equally give the basis for prioritising Roma education in anti-discrimination policies, social inclusion policies, equal opportunity initiatives etc. A structured effort at such an education strategy, that capitalizes on many lessons learned (but not shared), could lay the foundation for real improvement to the quality of life of many Roma children and their families. A longer term, more structured EU approach such as we advocate for here, would be a genuine EU initiative to reach the Lisbon goals for all of Europe's citizens.

6. Estonia – National Report

By Mai Normak and Krista Loogma

6.1 Introduction to the country situation



6.2 General information

Republic of Estonia is a country in Northern Europe. Estonia has land borders to the south with Latvia and to the east with Russia. It is separated from Finland in the north by the Gulf of Finland and from Sweden in the west by the Baltic Sea.

Linguistically, Estonian is closely related to the Finnish language. Estonians, as an ethnic group, are a Finnic people. Indigenous Estonian-speaking ethnic Estonians constitute nearly 70% of the total population of about 1.3 million people. First and second generation immigrants from various parts of the former Soviet Union (mainly Russia) comprise most of the remaining 30%. The latter, mostly Russian-speaking ethnic minorities reside predominantly in the capital city (Tallinn) and the industrial urban areas in northeastern Estonia (Ida-Virumaa county). There is also a small group of Finnish descent, mainly from Ingermanland (Ingria).

Social Developments in Estonia

Since the beginning of the 1990s, birth rates have significantly decreased.

In 2000 birth rate trends and characteristics began to resemble those prior to the 1990's. The number of abortions and infant mortality fell and the mean age a marriage and mother's age at childbirth grew. In 2000 more children were born than a year earlier and the growth in fertility that started in 1999 continued. The share of women who gave birth to a third or subsequent child grew. The share of boys among newborn children was the highest of the last decades – 1,094 boys per 1,000 girls. Only 46% of children were born to legally married couples. 117 abortions were induced per 100 live births (Estonian Statistical Office, "Yearbook", 2001).

The total number of students has after the rise in 1993-1997 declined. Number of students in general education generally has followed the same trend. The number of students of general education schools has declined by 18,6 % during the last five years. (Education and research, 2007). According to estimation of Ministry of Education and Research the number of students in general education will decrease by 39000 students for 2010.

On September 1, 2002 only 13,343 children were enrolled in grade 1, compared to 21,000 in 1997. While changes in enrollment rates will not affect economic activity in

the near future, it is important to consider these changes when planning the general and vocational education and training. The number of basic school graduates started quickly decrease in 2004/05 academic year.

Estonia has been a member of the European Union since 1 May 2004 and of NATO since 29 March 2004.

6.3 Description of the Education System

The Estonian Education System has been under constant change and reform since the beginning of the 1990's. The need to meet the demands of a changing society and build economic prosperity after the long Soviet occupation has been the driver of those changes. The 1992 "Constitution of the Republic of Estonia" (§37) provides everybody in Estonia with the right to an education. Since 1998, the Educational Structure has been changed three times due to new legislation. (Annus et al, 2005)

In recent years, approximately 8-9 billion Estonian kroons have been invested in education in Estonian. The sum forms ca 15 per cent of the state budget and local government budgets in total [i.e. state budget].

In the evaluation of the proportion of educational costs, its percentage of GOP is used as the main indicator. The cost of Estonian education as a percent of GOP has varied between 5.1-5.5 per cent. (Education and research, 2007)

Compulsory schooling is free of charge at state and municipal schools.

Policy making in the field of education has not been stable in post soviet times and till now there is no coherent education strategy embracing all education system.

Current education policy tends to follow the overall liberal economic and political approach. This approach has been dominant in the Estonian society for the last decade, paying much attention on issues such as privatization and municipalisation of schools, rationalization and cost-efficiency of education. Several initiatives in the period 1997-2000 ("Learning Estonia", "Education Scenarios 2010", "Tiger Leap Programme") focused on strategic thinking regarding the overall education system but also in a broader context of a global, knowledge- and IT-based economy. As a result, an important policy document (Education Strategy "Learning Estonia") was prepared by the Ministry of Education, (Ministry of Education and Research since 2003) and the task force of the "Education Forum" in 1999 - 2000 (involving social partners and Non Governmental Organizations).

The purpose of the strategy was to visualize the Estonian education system, develop a strategic plan, provide a foundation for reorganizing the education legislation, improve teachers' initial and complementary training and improve the education institutions administration and management. The Education system had to provide people with learning opportunities throughout their lives, ensure the development of the necessary institutions and support continuous development of the learning organizations and the whole society (Annus et al, 2005).

Even the document "Learning Estonia" was not officially approved in the Parliament it has influence on the further development of Development Plans in different parts of education system. Right now, even there is no overwhelming education strategy; there are Development Plans for different parts of education system. Currently, there exist

Development Plans for General Education, Vocational Education, Lifelong Learning and Higher Education.

The structure of Estonian education system is based on ISCED 97, which determines three basic levels of formal education and sublevels.

0 level – pre-primary education

I level

Basic education, lower level, (grades 1-6) – 1

Basic education, upper level, (grades 7-9) – 2A

II level, secondary level:

General secondary education – 3A

Vocational secondary education after basic education – 3B

Vocational secondary education after secondary general education – 4B

III level (tertiary education)

Bachelor study – 5A

Masters' study, main study in medicine, 1-year pedagogical training, integrated bachelor and master courses – 5A

Applied higher education, diploma courses – 5B

Doctors' study – 6A

In Estonia, enrolment in schools starts at the age of 7 years. According to the Law on Education, a child is obliged to enroll at school when turned seven, or will turn by October 1st, of the current year. Providing opportunities for children to receive pre-education is the legal responsibility of local governments and parents. Compulsory schooling lasts 9 years until the end of basic school (grades 1 – 9) or until the age of 17 (even if not graduated from basic school).

As our aim is to analyze the problem of drop out from the point of view of school attendance in the following section we will pay specific attention to the enrolment and drop-out analyze in pre-school education, basic education and vocational education.

6.4 Early School leaving – statistic and reasons

Pre-primary education is a set of knowledge, skills and rules of behaviors that creates prerequisites for successful progress in daily life and school. In pre-school childcare institutions the children acquire pre-school education, which creates the necessary requirements for successfully getting along with everyday life and at school. Both the upbringing and education are provided on the basis of the framework study curriculum of pre-school education.

Although 52% of all pre-school childcare institutions are located in towns such establishments provide places for 75% of all nursery school children. (Education and research, 2007)

Types of childcare institutions include:

Crèche - for children up to 3 years of age;

Nursery school - for children up to 7 years of age;

Special nursery school - for children with special needs up to 7 years of age;

A nursery school may be connected to a primary school (a nursery-primary school with the same management). Nursery schools are divided into municipal and private childcare institutions. If necessary, a rural municipality or city government may, upon a proposal of the manager of a childcare institution, form adaption groups, which consists of children with special needs and other children as well as special groups, which consist only of children with special needs.

Foundation and education license

A childcare institution is founded by a rural municipality or city government on the basis of a decision of the council of the local government and an education license issued by the Minister of Education and Research. The activities of municipal childcare institutions, private childcare institutions and private nurseries-elementary schools are regulated by the Pre-school Childcare Institutions Act, unless the Private Schools Act prescribes otherwise.

A childcare institution is financed:

from rural municipality or city budget;

state budget (pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Adult Education Act);

by parents;

from donations

The catering expenses of a child in a childcare institution are covered by parents. The daily catering costs of a child are established by the board of trustees and approved by the manager. Upon resolution of the rural municipality or city council, other costs (administration, staff, social tax and teaching aid costs) are partially covered by parents. The share covered by parents per child may not exceed 20 percent of the minimum wage level established by the Government of the Republic.

In the beginning of 2007 513 nursery schools and nurseries for children with special needs operated with the total of 52.109 children. There were 446 children in 10 crèches. In addition there are 19 nursery-primary schools and nursery-basic schools; the total of children studying on the level of preschool education is 2.952. (Education and research, 2007)

6.5 Regulations laws in force at national and local level

Basic and Secondary Education

Basic education is the minimum general education that is obligatory for everybody. Children who attain 7 years of age by 1 October of the current year are subject to the obligation to attend school. Students are subject to the obligation to attend school until they acquire basic education or attain 17 years of age. The main form of study at the basic level is daytime study.

The duration of study period is at least 175 school days (35 weeks): there are four school holidays.

Basic education is minimum compulsory general education. Basic education may be acquired in primary school (grades 1 to 6) basic school grades (1 to 9) or upper secondary school which also includes basic school grades.

Basic school is divided into three stages of study:

I stage of study - Grade 1 to 3;

II stage of study - Grade 4 to 6;

III stage of study- Grade 7 to 9.

Basic education from 1997/98-200/01 to 2004/05-2005/06

	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2004/05	2005/06
Number of preschools	667	670	668	647	601	609
Number of children in preschools	52466	50 362	50 247	49 852	52 894	54 560
Number of Preschool teachers	<i>No data</i>				6643	6 538
Number of Basic and Secondary schools	749	741	725	703	620	613
Number of pupils in Basic and Secondary schools	224086	223 660	222 200	218 555	190 879	180 963
Number of teachers in Basic and Secondary schools	16880	16 919	18 434	18 278	15 974	15 827
Number of teachers positions in Basic and Secondary schools	11984	12 960	14 324	14 050	13 864	13 690
Number of pupils for one teacher	13,3	13,2	12	12	12,4	11,4

In the academic year 2006/2007 there were approximately 164,000 students in general education schools, ca 12,000 of them in first grade. Due to the fact that the number of students reduced in comparison with last year, about 10,000 study places remained unoccupied.

In the academic year 2006/2007 121.899 students acquire basic education: 35.135 of them in I stage of study. 39.810 in II stage of study and 51.894 in III stage of study. (Education and research, 2007)

Pursuant to Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act the expenses of a school shall be covered by the manager of the school – i.e. mainly by local government. The establishment, reorganization and closure of general education schools are also in the area of competence of local governments. Local governments shall keep records of children who are subject to the compulsory school attendance, ensure the supervision of compulsory school attendance, arrange transportation to and from the educational facilities, provide school lunch during school hours, etc.

Based on the number of students in municipal schools, grants are allocated from the state budget to town and local municipality budgets every year. The support is provided in order to cover the expenses related to teachers' remuneration, social tax, in-service training costs, as well as for purchasing textbooks.

School lunch

From 2002 to 2006 school lunch allowance was provided to students in grades 1 to 4. However, as of January 1st, 2006, school lunch allowance is given to all students until they graduate from basic school. Since September 1st, 2006, free school lunches are also provided to students who enter into vocational training on the basis of basic school.

Boarding schools

In 2007, state supported places in boarding school facilities at 35 municipal schools have been created for more than 600 children, who come from families with difficulties in coping. In 2005, the state allocated 18 million kroons for the boarding schools programme (Education and research,2007).

Local governments have established service areas for all municipal schools. The school has to provide student places for all children, who live in its administrative region at the age of compulsory school attendance.

Persons who have passed the minimum permitted school-leaving age and have not acquired basic education may acquire education in the form of evening courses or distance learning, and graduate from school as external students.

Schooling and education objectives, bases of organisation of studies, mandatory and optional subjects, subject volumes and syllabi, requirements to school levels and for finishing schools of the basic level have been provided for in national curricula.

Parents have the opportunity to influence the development of schools through the board of trustees.

Basic education can be obtained on the basis of three different national curricula: national curricula of basic and upper secondary schools (pupils with normal intellect); supplementary learning curriculum (pupils with a slight learning disability; 1,4% of basic school pupils study on the basis of this curriculum;) national curriculum for students with a moderate and severe learning disability (0,4% of basic school pupils study on the basis of this curriculum). Each school prepares its curriculum on the basis of the national curriculum. Curricula of schools for children with special needs are prepared separately according go types of schools and they abide by the general objectives of the national curriculum for basic and upper secondary schools.

Pupils the support of the development of whom requires special attention have an individual curriculum prepared for them. The individual curriculum may slow down or speed up the pace for study and include one or several or all subjects.

In order to support the development of a child and overcome learning difficulties it is possible to:

receive remedial education;

form opportunity classes to provide instruction for children with permanent learning difficulties;

establish individual study programs for students with special educational needs;

form separate classes for students with behavior problems (*Tootsi classes*);

implement home schooling, speech therapy, etc;

form long day groups and establish boarding school facilities.

In order to graduate from basic school the students are required to complete the curriculum and successfully pass three basic school final examinations - in the Estonian Language and Literature or Estonian as a second language, Mathematics, and in one elective subject determined by the student.

Last Amendments to Acts in the area of general education:

Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, Private Schools Act, Vocational Educational Institutions Act and Pre-school Child Care Institutions Act Amendment Act. Amendment provides the basis for assessment of students, transfer to next grade, assign to supplementary study and repeat the study program of the grade. The basis for restructuring and reorganizing schools is specified.

Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, Private Schools Act, Amendment Act.

The teaching aids (textbooks, workbooks, work exercise-books, work sheets and other teaching materials used in the lessons) should be provided free of charge for students in basic schools and textbooks for all upper secondary school students to acquire the curricula.

Secondary education

After graduating from basic school there are several options for the acquisition of further education: to acquire general secondary education at an upper secondary school, secondary vocational education at vocational educational institution or to simply enter a profession.

In the table below average schooling rates (as rate of pupils/students studying in basic education / general education from the population number in the age group in 1999 – 2007) are presented.

Table. Average schooling rates

Basic education			
Age cohort	Men	Women	All
7	77,6%	83,6%	77,8%
8	98,7%	98,7%	98,5%
9	98,3%	98,5%	98,5%
10	98,0%	98,9%	97,9%
11	97,7%	98,5%	96,8%
12	98,4%	99,4%	95,5%
13	97,2%	97,4%	94,8%
14	94,95%	94,48%	92,94%
15	87,61%	83,04%	82,50%
16	40,08%	30,85%	36,85%
17	11,68%	5,58%	9,92%

Source: Ministry of Science and Education, EHIS; calculations by Institute of Estonian Demography, Tallinn University

Vocational training opportunities

The definition of vocational education covers all forms of vocational and professional training.

The vocational education opportunities offered in the framework of the formal education system are as follows (the changes instituted on the basis of the Vocational Education Development Plan for 2005-2008 have been marked with an asterisk):

Vocational education for people who do not have basic education and who have exceeded the age of compulsory school attendance;

Vocational education based on basic education (without acquiring upper secondary education);

Secondary vocational education on the basis of basic education;

Vocational training based on upper secondary education.

Secondary vocational education may be acquired after graduating from basic school. The acquisition of secondary vocational education on the basis of basic education lasts at least 3 years. Thereafter those interested can focus on preparing for state examinations for one year in order to take up studies in an institution of higher education.

Vocational education can be obtained by people who do not have basic education (have exceeded the age of compulsory school attendance) as well as by people who have basic education. In such an event the selection of professions and specialties would be narrower than in case of secondary vocational education, depending on the needs and

demands of employers. Vocational education based on secondary education is provided in professions and specialties, which require secondary education.

In the academic year of 2004/2005 13,828 students were admitted to vocational education institutions.

They included:

6,986 students acquiring secondary vocational education on the basis of basic education;

4,620 students acquiring secondary vocational education on the basis of upper secondary education;

2,222 students acquiring professional higher education.

(<http://vana.hm.ee/uus/hm/client/index.php?13526230132243926>)

At secondary education level there is a strong dominance of general education in Estonia. On completion of basic education approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of pupils go on to upper secondary general (gymnasium) and only $\frac{1}{4}$ to vocational secondary. In 2004/05 the share of basic school graduates that continued their studies on the VET track was 29%. (Thematic Review, 2006). In years 200-2004 total enrolment at the secondary level (ISCED 3) shows approximately 70% for general and 30% for vocational education. (Mägi, 2005).

After graduation of upper secondary general schools, the majority of students are entering higher education institutions (university academic and professional, or non-university applied higher education programmes) and post-secondary VET schools. According to SA Innove and Estonian Ministry of Education and Science (Mägi, 2005) in 2004 the share of student moved after the graduation in general secondary schools into university-type HE was 66% and share of students moved into the post-secondary vocational education was 22,9%.

Estonia's VET system is a school-based system, oriented at providing theoretical knowledge followed by primary practice in school workshops and later practice in companies. The Vocational Education Institutions Act (adopted in 1998) stipulated two levels of VET in Estonia: 1) vocational secondary education (ISCED 3B); and 2) vocational higher education (ISCED 5B).

A new pathway ("basic VET" - VET programs for people who do not have basic education and who have exceeded the age of compulsory school attendance) has been opened in 2001 (providing both work related skills and to motivate for further studies) as well as for gymnasium pupils (in order to acquire secondary VET in a shorter time). As well, VET programs based on basic education without acquiring upper secondary education has been open 2006/07.

The objective of a VET programme after basic school (ISCED 3B) is to prepare skilled workers or to prepare for studies at the higher vocational level. The objective of a VET programme after secondary general school (ISCED 3/4B) is to prepare students for more technically advanced work, service personnel and office administrators, as well as to prepare for studies at applied higher education. Upper secondary school graduates can complete this level in less time (1-2.5 years) and in some fields entry to a VET programme is possible only for gymnasium graduates (eg medicine, finance). "Post-

secondary” type of vocational education (for graduates from secondary general education, usually ISCED 4B) has been defined within the category of “secondary vocational education”.

The entrance requirement to the secondary vocational education is completed basic education or upper secondary general education, and the minimum age of enrolment is 15/16 years. The majority of secondary VET students are in the age range 16-20 years (those starting after basic education are mainly between 16-18, and those starting after graduation from gymnasium 18-20 years). Programmes last at least 3 years and at the end of the curriculum, students have to pass school-leaving examinations including national vocational examinations.* Successful students receive the secondary vocational education certificate, which gives access to the labour market and higher vocational education (since October 2002 applied higher education). Students can also pass voluntarily the national general examinations, which provide access to university type of higher education.

After graduation from vocational education schools the majority of young people are entering the labour market and only a small part is continuing with higher education. (Zelloth, 2003; OECD..., 2006). The share of students continuing studies after graduating in secondary vocational education in HE has varied from 3,5 % (2001) and 10,8 % (2004) (Mägi, 2005).

In addition to the one qualification level offered so far, new qualification levels are introduced in order to make transfers in the education system more flexible and reduce the number of drop-outs. Another important policy goal for VET is to ease the transfer from VET to HE by providing one year extra in order to prepare for state examinations.

Access to higher education is open to all who have fulfilled the requirements of secondary education. There are two general requirements for access to HE, a secondary school leaving certificate and a State Examination Certificate. Specific requirements (number of entrance examinations, average grade in a given subject etc.) depend on the HE institutions themselves. Graduates from VET schools who would like to continue at university level must pass the national examination for secondary general schools (gymnasium).

6.6 Pro and cons of policies and measures

From the time Estonia regained independence; human capital has been viewed as a necessity to compete in the global economy. Estonia is a small country with limited natural resources. The talents, skills and knowledgebase of the Estonian population are crucial for a strong knowledge-based economy. As a result, education is a central priority of the country. This has led to an ambitious scale of educational reforms as economic prosperity cannot be built on a work force that lacks a basic education unless circumstances are exceptional. The rising drop-out rates from basic education is a serious threat to future stability and growth of Estonia’s knowledge-based economy (Tilmanis, Annus, 2003).

* Since October 2002 there are no national vocational examinations. There are only school graduation examinations. In spring 2002, for the first time the graduation examinations were combined with the qualification examinations in 2 VET schools and the first qualification certificates were issued for the graduates who had passed the examinations

When analyzing the drop-outs issue the important question is if we have an accurate sense of how many young people are dropping out of basic education and the reasons why. The drop-out levels can be measured through the difference between the enrolment ratio at specific age and the cohort size. Another way is to calculate the share of pupils who don't complete lower secondary schools (basic education) or have completed less than an ISCED 3 level. The first comparison produces confusing results. For example, in the case of some age groups there are more children at school compared to the cohort size according to the population statistics. This situation is partly caused by inaccurate registration procedures, which do not yield the exact figures. The regulations for enrolment and registration are not very strict and there is the possibilities for people bypass registration all together. General school statistics were also used as an indicator of drop-out rates as they show: (1) how many of students were enrolled in the beginning of the school year; and (2) how many left school during the year and did not continue the same or following year.

Table. Discontinuers in general education by type of study, year, and sex

		Total		
		Boys and girls	Boys	Girls
Diurnal	1995	1 625	954	671
	1996	1 557	930	627
	1997	1 668	1 006	662
	1998	1 712	1 087	625
	1999	1 871	1 128	743
	2000	1 787	1 129	658
	2001	1 614	1 039	575
	2002	2 166	1 354	812
	2003	1 790	1 063	727
Evening and correspondence	1995	2 071	1 221	850
	1996	2 488	1 449	1 039
	1997	2 565	1 399	1 166
	1998	2 125	1 146	979
	1999	2 373	1 297	1 076
	2000	2 479	1 391	1 088
	2001	2 748	1 533	1 215
	2002	2 739	1 496	1 243
	2003	2 948	1 617	1 331

The year stands for the beginning of the academic year, discontinuers during the academic year.

Source: Statistical Office of Estonia. Latest update: 05.08.2005.

According to the statistics, the overall share of pupils who discontinued studies at basic school level during the 1998/99 school year to the percent of student who discontinued was 0.48%. During the 2000/01 school year the percent of student that discontinued was up to 0.57%. During 2001/02 there was slight improvement – “only” 0.52% of at basic school enrolled pupils discontinued studies during the year. Even though the percentage is low, the national total for a given year is equivalent to the student body at an average city school in Estonia.

Üldharidussüsteemi arengukava aastateks 2007-2013

(<http://www.hm.ee/index.php?popup=download&id=567>)

Reasons for Discontinuing Studies

As outlined in the introduction, the number of those who leave school before completing even basic education is increasing and there is the lack of research to explain why. From statistics of general education one can find the total number of those discontinuing studies before completing the 9th grade (compulsory according to the Law of Education), but to find out all the real reasons has been impossible thus far.

The growing population of young people without a basic education is comprised of individuals with different backgrounds and different reasons (social, health, behavioral, learning difficulties) for not fulfilling the compulsory education. There is a lack of research and statistics to explain and understand the reasons for high drop-out rates in Estonia. Dropouts are defined as individuals who did not complete their studies in basic school with graduation certificate.

Over the last years, two main reasons (total from 65.4% to 70.7% of all) for discontinuing studies during the school year emerged: (1) expulsion due to the pupil's inappropriate behavior or poor achievements in studies and (2) other reasons.

Using statistics from the school year 2002/03 it is possible to learn more about the ‘other reasons’ as the scale of collecting data was modified. The reason of expulsion named above, and the other reasons are indicated as: reaching the end of compulsory school age (17 years) and family reasons (marriage, pregnancy). The information about the share of dropouts because of fulfilling the compulsory school age (17 years) is directly linked to the grade repetition problems. It is estimated that in 2001 more than 20,000 people (in the 17-25 age group) had not completed basic education; or, they have a basic education but did not continue their studies to acquire skills required to enter labour market. This problem is especially serious for boys, which leads to increasing gender differences at higher levels of education (Tilmanis, Annus, 2003).

There is no single risk factor that can be used to accurately predict who is at risk of dropping out. From the literature we can find a variety of dropout factors that can be classified in four areas: individual, family, school, and community factors. Dropouts are not homogeneous group. Many subgroups of students can be identified based on when risk factors emerge, the combination of risk factors experienced, and how the factors influence them. Dropping out of school is often the result of a long process of disengagement that may begin before a child enters school.

Existing regulations and laws at the national, regional and local level to reduce and compact early school leaving

According to the Development Plans for General Educational System for 2007 – 2013 there are many problems that should be solved to reduce and compact early school leaving.

1. The data on the evaders of the compulsory school attendance is inadequate and the analysis of their reasons is insufficient.

At the moment there is no adequate data. The Statistical Office determines the number of the school evaders by the means of indirect calculations. They compare the number of school age population and the actual number of school going children. According to the Statistical Office during 2000/2001 the ratio of the population and the schoolchildren was approximately 3500. This ratio consists of three divisions:

Children with severe abnormality

Children living and studying abroad according to the temporary residence permit

Children who are evading the compulsory school attendance

The actual size of these groups is hard to determine, but the estimated number of the evaders should be the half of the abovementioned number /remark of the Statistical Office

2. There is no detailed data of the children that are interrupting their studies in the basic school and the relevant analysis of the reasons is insufficient.

The official statistics indicates the by the grades and the subdivisions by the reasons. In 1999/2000 the 998 children interrupted their studies, 313 of them were expelled, 16 fell ill, and 236 started working, 53 died and 380 had other reasons for interrupting their studies. The other reasons were not specified /not asked in the report of the Statistical Office/. However they cover a remarkable number of the interrupters.

The analysis by individual pupil would be necessary for determining the other reasons, expelled and work starting ones in order to get better judgments in the statistical matters as well as getting the better solutions. The questions asked for the pupils' register must be specified.

3. The pupils who would repeat the grade are most likely to interrupt their studies; the number of these pupils is huge. At the same time there is no bright-line data and the profound analysis of the reasons.

Approximately 5000 pupils repeat the grade annually.

Official observation data reveals that 83% of those repeating the grade have difficulties with the same subjects that they had the previous year. The repeating the grade is one of the problems that lead to the interruption of the studies. Although over the last years the number of the repeaters is diminished, the problems still exists

(<http://www.hm.ee/index.php?popup=download&id=5676>).

4. There is no analysis on the use and efficiency of the measures of the organisation of studies.

There is no doubt that the suitable organisation of studies would help to perform the school attendance and prevent the fear of dropping out. To adjust to the requirements of the pupils with special needs the number of possibilities is created over the last years. The basic education could be acquired on the basis of three national curriculums:

The basic and general secondary education national curriculum (for the pupils with the normal intellectual abilities);

The simplified national curriculum of the basic education (for the pupils with the slight learning disability, the 1,4 % of the basic school pupils are studying by that curriculum);

National curriculum for pupils with moderate and severe learning disabilities (for the pupils with moderate and profound leaning disability, the 0,4 % of the basic school pupils are studying by that curriculum).

For ensuring the level of the education in the basic school the following formations could be used:

Remedial groups (the size of the group is 6-8 pupils), that is designed giving assistance for the pupils with learning difficulties outside the learning hours in order to acquire the national curriculum.

Separate classes (12-16 pupils in a class) for the pupils with behavioural problems outside the learning hours in order to acquire the national curriculum.

Opportunity classes (up to 16 pupils in a class) for the pupils with the learning difficulties for acquiring the national curriculum.

Supplementary learning class (up to 16 pupils in a class) for pupils with moderate learning disabilities for acquiring the basic simplified national curriculum of the basic education.

Coping class (up to 7 pupils in a class) for acquiring the national curriculum national curriculum for pupils with moderate and severe learning disabilities.

The pupil can perform compulsory school attendance by studying at home.

The pupil can study according the individual curriculum which means the teachers' council must decide on the organisation of studies. The entire three national curriculums can be the basis of the study.

The pupil has the right to the assistance and counseling.

The performance of the compulsory school attendance can be postponed for the year.

Long day group.

School dormitory.

Unfortunately all the schools do not take advantage of the given possibilities. Out of the supervision reports of the 100 schools, the following conclusions are to be made:

The school management does not consider the work with the pupils with the learning difficulties important, and therefore does not explain the need for the additional funds for the local governments;

The don't have the necessary training for the work with the pupils with the special needs;

Indifferent attitude towards the pupil with the special needs.

5. The suitable curriculum that is within one's powers - suitable basic education, there must be no place for dead ends.

The decent education usually means the education gained by the regular basic school curriculum, the status curriculum and the future prospects of those who acquired the education in the supplementary learning classes and coping classes is confusing. There is a plan to analyse the differences of the levels in the official curriculum and to interlink their aims: to indicate the possibilities of transferring from one to the other and the chances of acquiring the professional skills.

The trends of the curriculum of the basic school and upper secondary schools – the emphasis on the reduction of the subject volumes and the integration, on the learning skills, on active learning methods, on the expansion of the choices – all that should excite the interest to the studying and contribute to the school attendance.

6. Teacher and the training

The essential problem has come forth - is the teacher training still too subject oriented, does it guarantee the development of the teacher competence required by the frame requirements that is necessary for the modern learning environment, allowing the teacher also to foster and develop the children with the different abilities and interests, as well as from the different nationalities, be able to deal with the children with special needs together with the normal children. The basic education and the in-service training should give the sufficient preparation for the work with the children with special needs; the extra attention should be drawn to the third grade, especially to the boys.

Current Areas of Educational Reform

The goal for reform in the Estonian educational system is to create preconditions that allow all students—throughout their lives—to acquire the knowledge, skills and experience that will help them succeed in society, their personal life and career. During the first half of 2001, the Development Strategy “Knowledge-based Estonia”, the Action Plan for Developing the Vocation Education, the Higher Education Reform Strategy and the National Development Strategy on Youth Work were approved by the Government. In the general education sector the biggest developments are tied to curriculum development efforts. A curriculum with more extensive changes will be prepared for the school year of 2007/08.

The Action Plan for the Development of Vocational Education outlines comprehensive measures for improving the quality of vocational education— ensuring its relevance to the labour market and broadening access to all age groups. Under the Action Plan, special emphasis is put on the development of the Regional Training Centers that provide primary training for students, retraining for adults, pre-training for students in general secondary education, and vocational education and training for people with special needs.

Challenges of the Estonian Education Sector

Estonia declared that human capital is an essential component to achieve a high quality life for all people living in Estonia. The Education Sector was the first to respond to the challenge, taking the following steps toward the creation of a Knowledge and Innovation Based Estonia: (1) a Research and Development strategy was adopted for 2002-2006 by Parliament in 2001; and, (2) a Round Table of Education Policy was set up as an advisory body to the Minister of Education and Research. The task of Round Table is to support the Ministry of Education and Research in finding solutions for urgent problems in education policy on consensus basis. Since the summer 2003, the Round Table has identified general aims of educational system including: to guarantee the high quality efficient education on all levels; to increase the adequacy of content of studies to the needs of individuals and society; to achieve the equal access to the high quality education to all people despite the regional; economical and gender differences; and, to sustain the Estonian culture and language in the world of rapid globalization.

More specifically the objectives for the Educational System are defined as follows:

- Every person in Estonia must acquire basic education;
- The quality secondary education must be provided in every region of Estonia;
- The reliability and quality of higher education system in Estonia is as high as in Europe;
- The lifelong learning possibilities are assured to every person according to the his/her abilities and needs;
- In areas where the primary language in schools is not Estonian, students are provided opportunities to continue studies in their native instructional language;
- Teachers at schools and pre-primary childcare institutions are competent and highly motivated; The tasks of state and local governments in administrating and developing of the educational system (institutions) are clearly defined;
- The infrastructure of schools supports the overall improvement of all pupils;
- The novelties in educational system are based on best quality research and databases;
- The share of educational expenditures of GDP will be on the same level as in Nordic Countries;
- The optimal school network is using the provided recourses to provide the high quality education. (Tilmanis, Annus, 2003)

6.7 Best practices to contrast Early School Leaving

Forming the Toots class

Pupils who are engaged with their school both socially and academically tend to experience positive outcomes. On the other hand, pupils who are estranged from their schools, either socially or academically tend to experience difficulties in either academic or behavioral domains or both.



Perhaps the first step in the process of alienation of the pupil from the school comes when the pupil experiences academic difficulties or behavioral problems and is either physically or socially isolated from higher performing peers. This is the case when pupils experiencing difficulty are formally or informally transferred from the basic educational program within the mainstream of the school to special classes or, in some cases, alternative school settings. This represents an institutionally initiated disconnect from the mainstream school population. From another perspective, if the instructional strategies and the context of the alternative setting to which students experiencing difficulties are moved provide an environment that allows the students to participate more actively in the process of education and one in which learning is more meaningfully connected to their lives, these students may become more connected with the process of learning and thus more connected to the mission of the school. However, should such environments be based on the same educational practices that were not successful for these pupils in the basic school program, the result can be a further isolation and distancing of these pupils from the mainstream population of the school.

In the Estonian basic school program, one form of alternative placement for pupils experiencing academic and behavioral difficulties is known as the *Tootsi* class. **These classes are targeted to the students of the of general education schools with the behavioral disorder and risk of dropping out of school.** This class is named after a character in a children's book, Toots, who is a young boy who, regardless of the absence of malevolent motives, usually ends up in trouble – *it just happened*.

These classes, authorized by the Ministry of Education and Research from 2004, are options schools can choose to accommodate pupils who experience academic and behavioral problems in their regular classes.

These classes are funded by the local governments.



The class(es) for the students with educational difficulties acquiring basic education are formed for those who do not follow general norms of behavior or the school regulations, who disregard the teachers' and parents' demands or who have either at school or outside school serious behavioral problems and who have repeated the class (Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, 2004, 91, 1425).

The class is compiled from the pupils of the 2.or 3.school level of one or several classes following the national curriculum of the basic and secondary school or the simplified

national (remedial education) curriculum of the basic school at the beginning of the school year. In exceptional cases the formation of such a class may take place at the beginning of the second term of the school year.

The maximum limit of class fulfillment is 12 students. The maximum limit of class fulfillment for the class compiled from the students of several classes is 10 students. A separate classroom is allotted to the formed class (Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act. 2004, 91, 1425).

The basis for accepting students to the class is the judgment passed by the juvenile commission or the teachers' council. The basis of the decision made by the teachers' council is the justified application of either the social worker of the local authority or the school accompanied by the consent of the parent or the parent's application (Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act 2004, 91, 1425).

Teachers are assigned to these classes based on decisions by school leaders and may or may not be placed in a *Tootsi* class based on their own preferences. There are no nationally recognized instructional or curricular alternatives for these classes, so the type of instructional strategies delivered in these classes is largely left up to the school and the teacher.



In academic year 2007/2008 47 schools have opened *Tootsi* classes with 680 pupils.

In school year 2006/2007 Tallinn University interviewed 14 boys from different *Tootsi* classes.

The objective of this study was to identify the relationship between connectedness of students in *Tootsi* classes to their schools and peers, and their school attendance and academic progress.

Why were you sent to the *Tootsi* class?

In 5th grade the teachers gave us a lot of homework and you have to do it all. My mother came home very late and I was not able to do homework by myself. Sometime she came home so late that I already went to sleep and next day I got a bad mark. And soon I did not understand anything what the teacher asked me to do. She told me that I am lazy and stupid. At the end I had in most subjects bad marks and I did not want to go to this school anymore.

I was not able to study in a regular class

I am a criminal and I did not bother to go to school

I did not go to school and when I was there I played fool in lessons

Why was it too difficult for you to study in the regular class?

There were 36 pupils in our class and teachers could not pay attention to every student. Very often I thought that a teacher would not ask me today and did not do my homework. Now the teachers pay attention to us and ask us all the time

The tempo was too rapid to me, we had some very smart and active pupils in our class and the teachers asked mostly them. The teachers asked me only when I was not prepared and, hence, the unsatisfactory marks.

What do you think about learning in the *Tootsi* class, is that a punishment or help for you?

At the beginning I thought that it was a punishment to me but then I understood that it is much better to study there.

It is help for me, because here I can and dare to ask help from the teachers and now I understand everything.

Is it easier for you to study in the *Tootsi* class than it was in the regular class? Why?

Yes, in that class I can easily concentrate and teachers ask every day so you can not go to school unprepared. There is less noise in the classroom and you can hear the teacher all the time.

Yes, because teachers ask you in every lesson and if you did not understand something, you can ask, because nobody will laugh at you.

What do you think, should the teachers assess the students of the *Tootsi* class milder than in the regular class? Give reasons.

No, if we get milder grades in this class then we might not manage in a regular class.

Maybe a little bit, I think that we are not very much interested in studying.

Would you want to go back to your previous class? Why?

Yes, all my childhood friends are there.

No, I have repeated classes many times and I was always the oldest in the class but not here.

Analysis of the research verified, that the teachers in urban school have not enough time and will to work with the problem behavior adolescent boys and bad relation between the pupils and the teachers are one of the adolescent boys` reason for dropping out of school.

There are some problems with opening *Tootsi* classes. Not in every school the school management does consider the work with the pupils with the learning difficulties important, and therefore does not explain the need for the additional funds for the local governments.

Best

practice

II



There is not a unique strategy and supportive activity in the sphere of the school drop out prevention that could be applied to aloof the problems, because the aspects of compulsory school attendance failure and behavioral disorder are diverse and needs therefore further and more specified analysis.

That is why in the year 2007 the Tallinn Education Authority launched the project of European Social Fund: “SCHOOL SUPPORT –The better prevention of the dropping out of basic school and the behavioral disorder through development of the support system in the schools for general education of Tallinn.”

The project includes nine pilot schools from the different city districts of Tallinn with the five member teams. The participants come from both schools – Estonian and Russian speaking.

The participants are the members of the support system from every pilot school, who would be the school psychologist, social worker, special education teacher, subject teacher, homeroom (class) teacher, hobby education manager, librarians, representatives of the board and supportive students.

The main partners for the schools of general education of the project would be Tallinn University and the National Examination and Qualification Centre.

The abovementioned project is targeted to the students of the of general education schools of Tallinn with the behavioral disorder and risk of dropping out of school. The project has been initiated to conclude the detailed and adequate analysis of the reasons for the compulsory school attendance failures, dropping out of the basic school and the behavioral problems in the schools of general education of Tallinn and to develop and rationalize the supports system that addresses the abovementioned problems.

The objectives of the project are:

To lower the level of the dropping out of school and **behavioral disorder by the year 2010.**

The determination of the freeze frame reasons for the dropping out of school and **behavioral disorder by the means of the Gallup and the analysis of the results.**

The more effective and proactive prevention of the dropping out of primary schools by the additional training of the support group members.

The creation of the model for the support system and the preparation of the manual (code of practice) for other schools general education.

The following activities are planned in the course of the project:

The development of the project briefing materials and the creation of the project Home Page with the intention of distributing the information about the project and involve the broader audiences in the problem solving process.

The Gallup is held in all the general education schools in Tallinn in order to map the current situation and the need for the supportive services. The aim of that would be the acquiring of the adequate information about the current situation and the analysis of the results.

The model of the support system for prevention of the dropping out of school and behavioral disorder would be created and applied in the pilot schools. The model will be created on the bases of the theoretical materials and Gallup and will be tested in the pilot schools. For that purpose the seminars of the cooperation will be held that results in the survey in:

the problems of the individual student and his/her drawbacks;

the descriptions of the duties and roles of the support system members;

the cooperation and data exchange of the support system members;
the factors that prevent the current cooperation of the support system.

Five seminars have been held by the current time for the members of the support systems. The collection of the duty descriptions of the support system member has been arranged. Three seminars for the supportive students have taken place. The project has been introduced to all the general education schools of Tallinn.

The training seminars and brainstorms will be arranged for the members of the support system and the supportive students.

The aim of the above-mentioned activities is:

The gaining of the new know-how;

The rationalization of the cooperation of the school support system;

The rationalization of the interschool experience based cooperation.

The manual for the schools of general education and other educational institutions will be compiled. The manual includes the descriptions of the support system model together with the cases studies of the pilot schools, the duties of the members of the support system, the practical problems brought out in the course of the project, support network and data exchange.

Based both on the theoretical and practical experiences, the advisory code of practice for prevention of behavioral disorder and the dropping out of school is provided. Also the factors that suggest the risk of developing the behavioral disorder that lead to the risk of dropping out of school would be described.

The manual will be presented for public in the closing seminar of the project and it will be sent to all the general education schools of Tallinn.

The BEST PRACTISE project will end in July 2008. By that time the following changes in schools for supporting the children with the problems must have been created as a result of the project:

The adequate data and analysis of the behavioral disorder and the school evading problems of must be presented.

The model of the support system is developed and is **accessible to all the** general education schools of Tallinn.

The manual with the individual examples and descriptions on the case studies of the problems that support the theoretical problem solving is published.

The members of the support system are capable to distribute the knowledge and share it with the colleagues from other schools.

The results of the project will extend to all the general education schools of Tallinn.

The results of the project will be the bases for rationalisation of the prevention work in the schools of Tallinn, along with the launching of the continuing project by the Tallinn Education Authority.

The materials that result from the project will be used as an input for developing the study programmes in University of Tallinn.

6.8 Conclusions

Each person counts in a country with low population– we can't allow to have school evaders. Unfortunately, one of the most important educational problems in Estonia in 1990ies (also today) was dropping out from compulsory school and redoing the same study year (especially in grades 7-9). A lot has been talked and written about compulsory school non-attendance, but the problem still exists. Actually, the facts show that the situation is worsening (Ruus 2006, 18). If we talk in numbers only, dropping out from school has a direct influence on economy. Based on the data from the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, in the period 1993 – 2005, 10.950 students left compulsory school and 10.704 left upper secondary school.

Today, educational policy documents foresee that inclusion and adaptation of learning according to child's needs shall be integrated. In June 2008 a manual *School Support* was completed. It describes support systems in project schools, case studies, descriptions of tasks for support personnel and “bottlenecks” seen in everyday practice. Based on theoretical and practical experience the manual offers suggestions for prevention of problem behaviour and school drop-out. In our view the project benefits are:

- Exists a manual where theoretical suggestions for problem-solving are supported by specific case descriptions and actions;
- Members of a support system are capable of transferring knowledge and skills acquired during the project to colleagues in other schools;
- The results of this project will be extended to all general educational schools in Tallinn;
- Based on the project results Tallinn Educational Board submits specific proposals and an action plan for further improvement of support system for prevention;
- Developed materials have an impact on curriculum development in Tallinn University;
- We hope that by 2010 dropping out from compulsory school and problem behaviour have decreased in Tallinn, because there is sufficient information and analysis of students' problem behaviour and school neglect.

In spring 2008 a study on students' academic emotions was conducted. The following research question guided our study: How do academic emotions of students in *Tootsi* class differ from emotions of students in regular classes? The sample consisted of 134 students (76 female, 58 male) from grades 6-9 from 7 schools.

In our research we asked our participants about their emotional experiences in academic settings - in class, studying, and taking tests. We measured students' enjoyment, hope, pride, anger, anxiety, shame, hopelessness, and boredom (Academic Emotions Questionnaire [AEQ] Pekrun, 2000).

In order to determine whether sex and grade level yield differences in enjoyment, pride, anger, anxiety, shame, hopelessness, and boredom in the test a two – way analysis of variance was conducted. The only effect obtaining significance was grade level. That

means, those in lower grades reported significantly greater positive emotions and less negative emotions than those in upper grades. There were no differences between *Tootsi* and regular classes. In our research there was only one significant difference between regular and *Tootsi* class. Students in *Tootsi* class have less hope than regular class students.

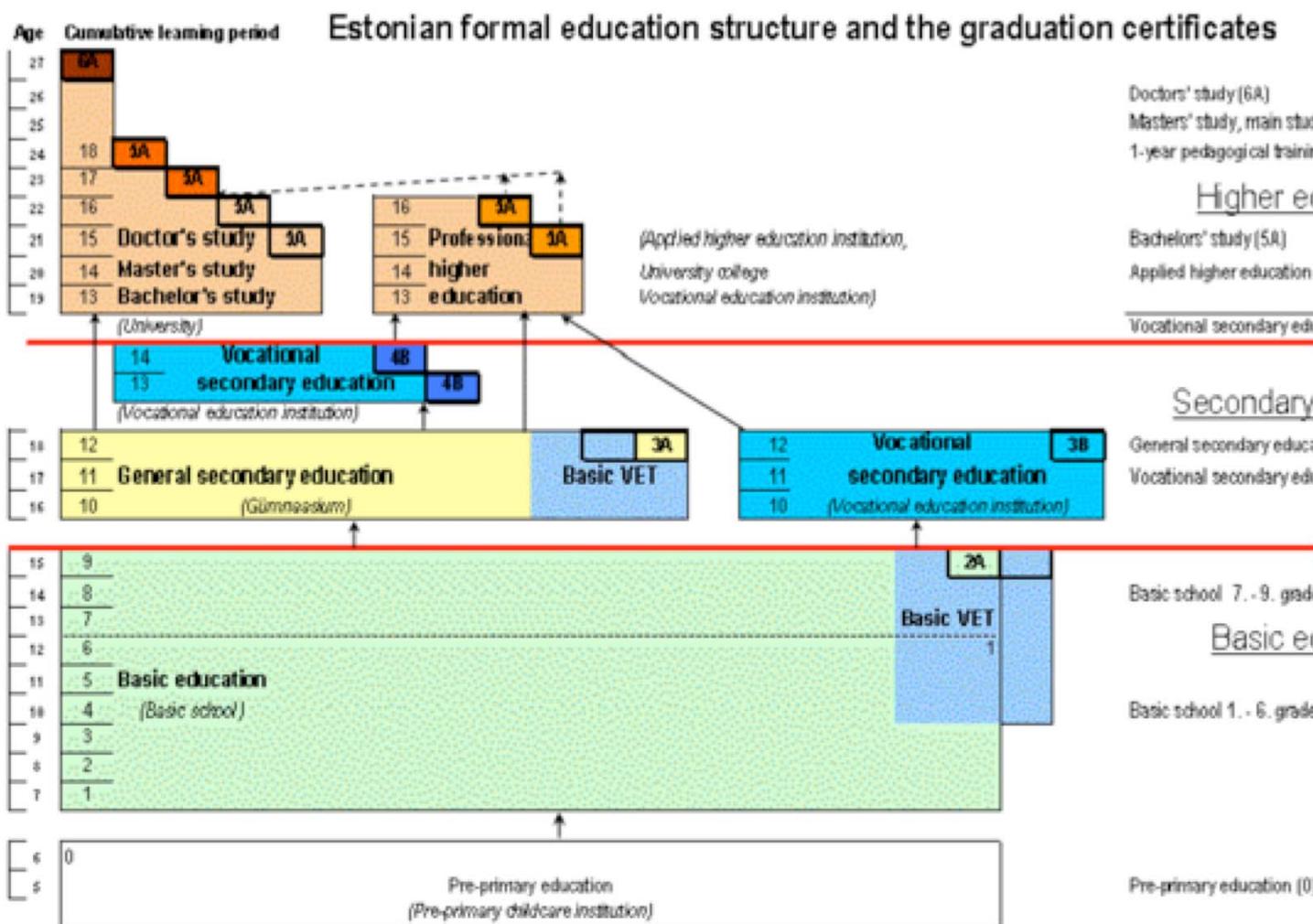
Based on this study we can conclude that *Tootsi* classes have been justified. Students with serious learning and behavioural problems have received help in these classes and feel as fine in a school as their peers.

In 2007 the National Audit Office carried out an audit on the activities of the Ministry of Education and Research in guaranteeing compulsory school attendance. Its aim was to evaluate what has been done to improve compulsory school attendance and whether implemented measures in schools have been efficient to guarantee compulsory school attendance.

Compared to the results of the National Audit Office audit in 2002 the Ministry of Education and Research has launched several activities, but the situation in compulsory school attendance has not improved. Most important remarks of the audit are the following:

- Still, the term compulsory school non-attendance and stakeholders' responsibilities have not been clearly defined.
- The Ministry of Education and Research has no clear overview of compulsory school attendance
- There are substantial deficiencies in compulsory school students record-keeping and therefore one can't be sure that all children in compulsory school age attend the school
- Missing studies has not decreased. Approximately 2% of students (3100 students) miss more than 20% of lessons with no reason, i.e. these children are enlisted in some school, but in reality do not fulfil their compulsory school attendance. As an average every student missed 3 weeks during an academic year, from that more than a week was with no reason.
- Many students have problems with academic progress and school drop-out rate is still high. The problem is the most serious in the 3rd school stage (grades 7-9), where almost one fifth of students have unsatisfactory half-term results and more than 7% of students have unsatisfactory annual results.
- More and more measures are implemented to improve compulsory school attendance
- The schools say that the most important measure concerning compulsory school attendance is opportunity classes. Boarding school facilities and special classes for students with behaviour problems were rated highly by schools. Also problematic children rated special classes as a good measure, but psychological or psychiatric counselling was rated the highest. At the same time schools did not rate counselling as high. The least efficient measure was considered to be transfer to juvenile committee.

- Even in years different measures have been implemented the indicators of compulsory school attendance (leaving school, missing classes) have not improved. Therefore, it can be said the state's actions in guaranteeing compulsory school attendance have not been effective. The state spends over 120mln EEK annually on measures, but the results are not systematically evaluated. The National Audit Office concludes that indicators in the general education action plan concerning drop-out and unsatisfactory annual results in the third school stage (grades 7-9) might not be achieved by 2013.



7. Germany – National Report

By Stefanie Karbe and Gabriele Kern

7.1 Introduction to the Country situation

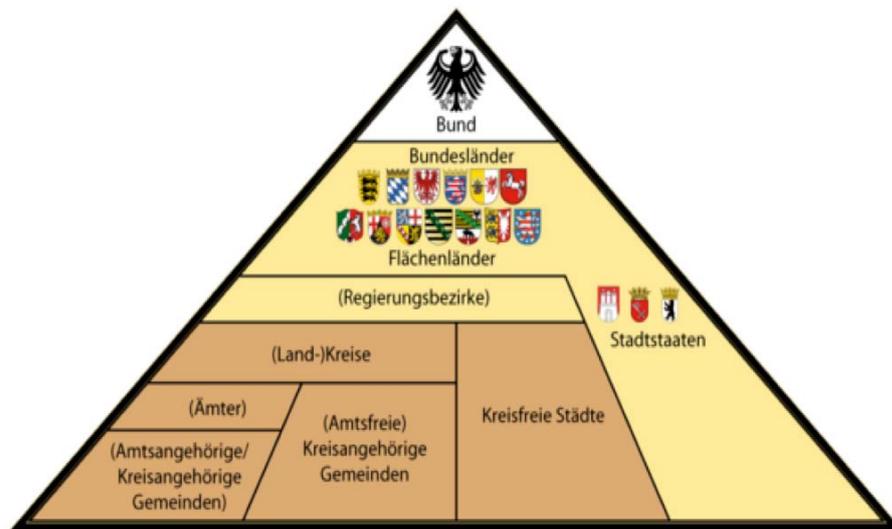


The Federal Republic of Germany is a federal state in western Central Europe that consists of 16 states. Capital city and seat of government is Berlin. Germany is founding member of the European Union and with over 82 million inhabitants it has the largest population among the EU member states.

The Federal Republic of Germany is member state of the United Nations as well as alliance member of the NATO and the G8. According to the gross domestic product it is the third largest national economy worldwide as well as export champion and second largest importer of commodities and goods.

Germany is a parliamentary republic with German as official language.

Head of State is the Federal President, currently Horst Köhler, Head of Government is the Federal Chancellor, currently Angela Merkel.



Population

Germany has 82,310.000 inhabitants (date 31st of December 2006) and an area of 357,050 km². Therefore, it is one of the most densely populated territorial states in the world. About 75 million people (91%) have the German citizenship, including seven million inhabitants with migration background which means that they are

- “re-settlers“ with German citizenship, most of them immigrating from the states of the former Soviet Union (51%) and called colloquially “German Russians” (Russlanddeutsche) or immigrating from Poland (34%), or
- former aliens who were born in Germany or have been living in Germany for a long period of time and were nationalized on their own request after the change in citizenship law.

Among the inhabitants with other citizenships than German the Turkish citizens form the largest group with about 1.76 million people.

The other inhabitants without German citizenship are mainly citizens from EU member states:

- Italians (about 540,800)
- Polish (about 326,600)
- Greek (about 309,900)

The share of European citizens from Non-EU countries (3.2 million) increased in the 1990's due to immigration from the states of the former Soviet Union and immigration of war refugees from former Yugoslavia (1.0 million).

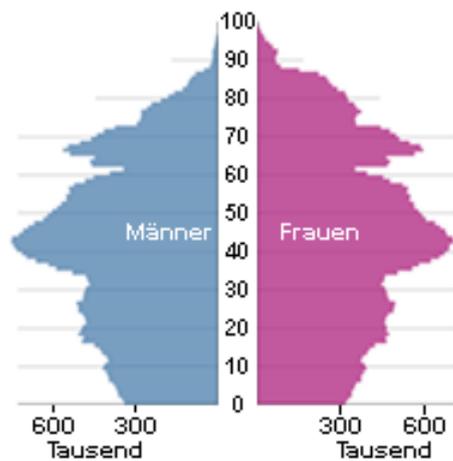
The total number of the Polish Diaspora in Germany is far beyond two million. However, most of them have been integrated into the domestic population for a long time.

Therefore, the total share of inhabitants with migration background is about 17 percent, which shows that the ethnic mixture of the population can no longer be determined by citizenship.

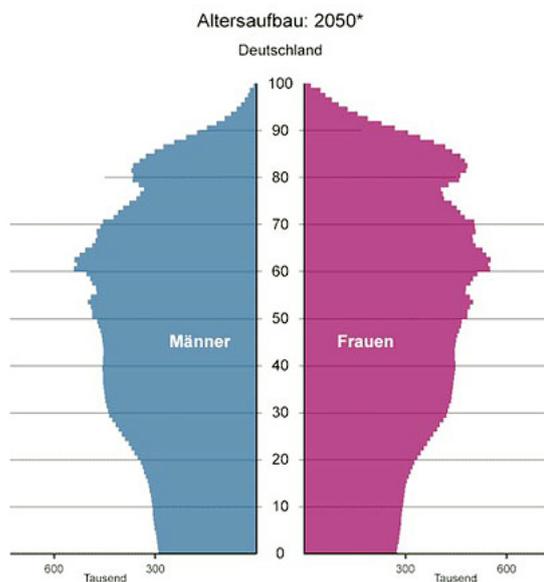
Up to a certain point immigration is wished from political side. This way social coverage of the population can be ensured although the birth rate is decreasing and demographic development is negative.

7.2 General information

Structure of German population in 2006



Estimated structure of population in 2050



Decreasing birth rates

In 1973 Germany was the first country in the world with a higher death than birth rate. After the peak of the birth rate in 1964 with nearly 1.2 million births the rate has been declining constantly to an estimate of 730,000 births nowadays. And it has not stopped yet – in 2050 presumably 560,000 children will be born in Germany. In 2001 the birth deficit was about 94,000. Until 2050 it will increase to an estimate of 580,000.

By then, only half as many people will be born as die per annum. For maintaining the number of inhabitants at a constant level 2.5 million more births would have been necessary during the last 30 years. Without the immigration of the last decades which brought in more than 165,000 people every year, the total population of Germany would have decreased already.

Most important possible consequences:

• Labour market:

The decrease of labour resources and increasing skills requirements may lead to an increase in the lack of skilled labour whereas on the other hand unemployment among low qualified workers is on the rise. The use of existing potential – especially by reducing unemployment, raising the pension age, increasing the number of working women and immigration of skilled workers – might mitigate that development, but cannot compensate it completely.

• Innovative ability:

The lower number of inhabitants and deficits in qualification might lower the human resources of Germany and by that decrease the international compatibility and attractiveness of Germany as site. To which extend creativity and training of older people as well as a better education of the younger – most of them will be immigrants or children from immigrant families – can compensate that is insecure. Especially the requirements of modern economy of more and more skilled employees will challenge the educational system although the number of students is declining.

• Social security systems:

Basically, the security systems were developed for a young and growing population. Nowadays, they have to fulfil the needs of a decisively aging population whereas the number of contributors is decreasing. It is uncertain how this can be solved by increasing the labour force participation rate, changing the financing from contribution to taxes, decreasing the level of benefits, and private retirement provisions.

• Public finances and taxes:

The decreasing number of tax contributors lowers ceteris paribus the income of the federation, the states and the communities. How a decrease of the current national debt, an improvement in efficiency of the tax system, and a modernization of the whole national order (federalism reform, decrease of bureaucracy, “slim state”) can be conciliated with growth and consolidation is not clear yet.

• Public infrastructure:

The decrease in population lowers the demand for infrastructure. Nevertheless, certain standards of existence provision and site quality have to be offered which will lead to more costs per capita. Which standards will be needed and to which extend technical progress (lower maintenance costs, internet) and new provision models (i.e. service centres, mobile components, complimentary operated bus line instead of public transport) can compensate this development is unclear.

• Family:

As many people today decide against having children and the number of families with more than two children is decreasing, the family care of older people, still the rule today, will be an exception for the baby boomer generation at latest. It is uncertain how new forms of living together with relatives or beyond generations can compensate that gap.

The consequences of the demographic change are not very obvious in everyday life yet. But the situation will change decisively when the baby boomers born between 1955 and 1965, from whose contributions we benefit today, retire.

General geographic data

The greater geographic regions from north to south are the northern German lowlands, the low mountain range, the pre-Alps, and the Alps.

Germany shares borders with nine different states: Denmark, Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

Germany offers a large variety of landscapes and can be divided into four regions: the northern German lowlands, the low mountain range, southern Germany, and the pre-Alps, situated in Bavaria. The North Sea coast with its banks and the broad wadden sea is situated in the west. The Baltic Sea coast is situated more towards the east and offers plain white sandy beaches as well as several limestone cliffs. Plain areas and many lakes characterize the northern lowlands. In the south of the lowlands, the Lüneburg heath with its swamplands is situated. Most of this area is used agriculturally. In the south of Germany the low middle range is situated which forms a natural border between northern and southern Germany and passes into the Alps. The Harz Mountains formerly represented the border between the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

Social and economic aspects



Skyline of Frankfurt/ Main
Financial centre of Germany

As Germany does not have many resources its economy is based mainly on the industrial and the service sector. Large areas are used agriculturally, but only two to three percent of all employees are working in agriculture.

At the moment, the German economy is characterized by a high unemployment rate, especially in East Germany. In 2006 the domestic demand rose, which resulted in an economic growth of 2.8 %. In addition, in winter 2006/ 2007 the unemployment rate did not rise as much as in former winters. Germany is still very successful in the field of foreign trade (exports in 2006: +23 %).



The plant of Volkswagen in Wolfsburg

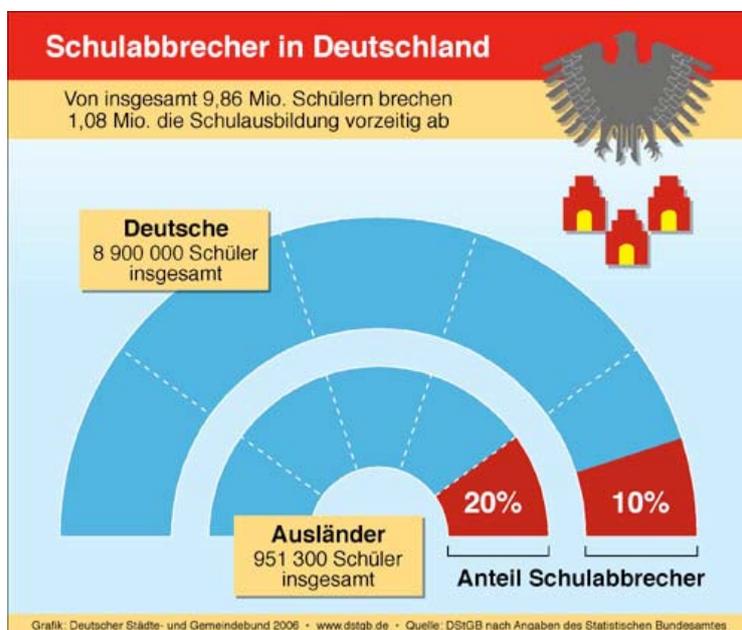
The quite high unemployment rate has different reasons:

- Very expanded welfare state that causes the reduction of employment
- Relocation of production to eastern European countries due to lower costs of labour
- Government purchases are partly financed by social contributions, whereby employment becomes more expensive

Germany has a highly developed social security system (unemployment, health and nursing insurance as well as annuity assurance) that is financed pro rata by employers and employees.

Nearly all inhabitants of Germany have a health insurance (88% in a compulsory insurance, nearly 12 % in a private insurance). Germany's total expenditures on health are with 11.1% (compared to the GDP) above the OECD average of 8.6%.

7.3 Description of the Education System



Annually, about 220,000 pupils leave school without sufficient education. Thereof, between 80,000 and 90,000 adolescents do not have a school leaving certificate. The “losers” of the German school system are male with a migrational background and come from socially disadvantaged families.

Early school leavers: - 9.5 % among boys with German parentage
- 19.7 % among boys with migrational background
- 12.9 % among girls with migrational background

- 60 % of all early school leavers attended Hauptschule*.

*Translator's comment:

The German educational system differs from the Anglo-Saxon system so that the German terms are maintained in the text.

After *Grundschule* (primary school from grade 1 to 4) students may attend three different types of school according to their abilities and their family's wishes: *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gymnasium*.

Hauptschule (grade 5 to 9): prepares for vocational school and apprenticeship training (similar to lower secondary school).

Realschule (grade 5 to 10): prepares students for higher vocational school or for attending *Gymnasium* (similar to secondary school).

Gymnasium (grade 7 to 12 or 13): graduates get *Abitur* which allows them to study at the university (similar to grammar school).

Sonderschule: school for weak students who need special care.

- Two third of all early school leavers are male.
- Three third of all pupils in Sonderschule are male.
- 56 % of all graduates from a Gymnasium are female.
- Most truants, repeaters, and pupils displaying behavioural problems are boys.
- Nearly no pupils with migrational background attend Gymnasium.
 - example: - every second Turk attends the Hauptschule, only every eighth attends the Gymnasium
- Failures of the German school system are connected to the following indicators:
 1. low social stratum of the parents
 2. ethnic belonging (migrational background)
 3. gender

Before leaving school completely, pupils usually skip lessons and later refuse to attend school at all. The youngest truants still attend Grundschule. The number of chronic truants who refuse attending school is specified with about 300,000 – 500,000 pupils per year. According to the German Youth Institute (DJI) meanwhile about 10-15 % of all pupils can be classified as at least being tired of school. Very often the consequence of chronic truancy is failure in school which means that educational aims cannot be reached.

Not reaching an educational aim might mean for an adolescent dropping out of the social milieu suitable for his/ her age.

Failing in school and therefore leaving school early have serious consequences for the young people like losing the academic reference group which might promote integration into a non-academic reference group. This might result in criminal behaviour.

But even without criminal results, the adolescents run the risk of being pushed to the edge of society and being excluded from the educational and labour market.

Definition of the term “school attendance”

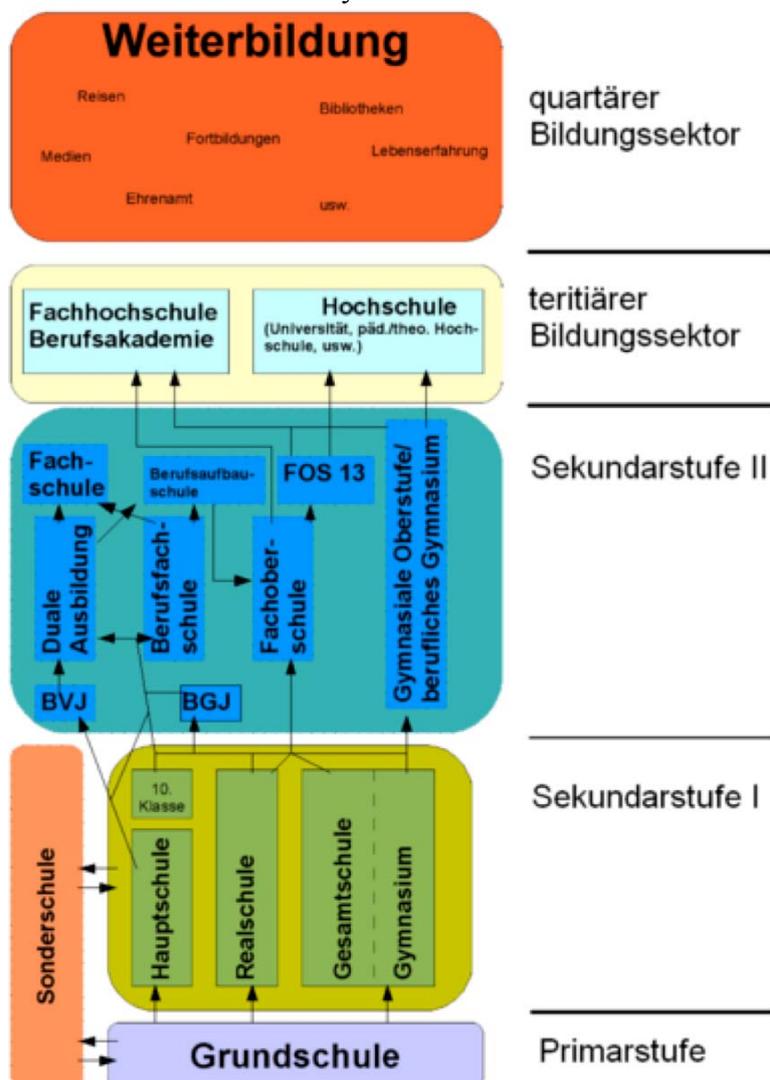
School attendance in Germany is divided into full-time school attendance and vocational school attendance. Full-time school attendance is nine years in most of the states except four states where it is ten years (Berlin and Brandenburg among them).

This is followed by vocational school attendance until the age of 18 which can be fulfilled by attending vocational training, being employed, attending the Gymnasium or an 11th year in school for vocational preparation.

Many states put forward the beginning of school attendance so that even five year old children have to attend school.

Special regulations apply for disabled children.

The German educational system



7.4 Early School leaving – statistic and reasons

For covering all different influences and reasons of early school leaving, Dr. R. Caspar, professor at the Regional Institute for Education and School in Stuttgart has collected different possible definitions which are presented below.

1. Early school leavers are school leavers who leave school without a school leaving certificate after having fulfilled full-time school attendance and vocational attendance and who refuse to participate in any further education.
2. Early school leavers are school leavers who abort school education at comprehensive or vocational schools without obtaining the originally desired school leaving certificate after having fulfilled full-time school attendance and vocational attendance and who refuse to participate in any further education (They do not have any certificate that qualifies them for employment).

3. Early school leavers are persons who do not have a general qualifying school leaving certificate and who do not attend education at school or university, serve their time or fulfil civil service.
4. Early school leavers are persons who do not have a general school leaving certificate that qualifies them for employment and who do not attend education at school or university, serve their time or fulfil civil service (no vocational or university education, no school leaving certificate from a vocational school).
5. Early school leavers are persons who do not attend any education or further education and have no higher school leaving certificate than from secondary school (leaving certificate from Hauptschule or Realschule, qualification for attending vocational school).

Reasons for early school leaving

Between 80,000 and 90,000 students leave school without any school leaving certificate every year. This is about 10 % of all students. In contrast to these early school leavers about 231,500 graduates from Gymnasium decide to work in industry instead of starting studies at the university. Even with a school leaving certificate from Hauptschule it is more and more difficult to find a place for vocational training or employment. In addition, many places of employment meant for graduates from Hauptschule were lost during the last years due to measures of economization. In other areas technical tasks have been replaced by most simple subworker's tasks.

The gap is widening between adolescents who do not manage the start into employment without help and companies who constantly increase the requirements for applicants.

A large share of school leavers without certificate is leaving Hauptschule. Especially in agglomeration areas students from socially and educationally disadvantaged families as well as children from immigrants decide more often to attend Hauptschule. The Hauptschule has the reputation of being a "remainder school" for those who are especially weak and not ready for education.

The lack of perspectives is one reason for leaving school. Why obtaining a school leaving certificate from Hauptschule if this document does not help at all in finding employment?

School tiredness, being the title for a stage in which adolescents slowly "drift away" from school, and temporary skipping of school are no sudden occurrences. This behaviour usually is shown already in Grundschule and consolidates at the age of 12. Early school leaving is the result of combined individual, social and family problems.

Individual factors are problems with keeping path, health problems, difficult conditions in the family, as well as conflicts with other students.

More and more families need support because they cannot fulfil their education mandate on their own. Many parents do not set a good example for their children as they do not have a structured every day life and do not communicate that obtaining a school leaving certificate is absolutely important.

Structural problems are among others repeating classes which leads to an "excess of age" (adolescents who are much older than their classmates due to repeating classes).

Another problem is that class organization is often still oriented towards the teacher as lone fighter. Therefore, it is much more difficult to focus on the total personality of a student (with all the potential and problems).

Other important factors that lead to truancy are fear of bullying or failure as well as a lacking sense of wrongdoing among the children and adolescents during the different phases that lead to early school leaving.

Often the students are trained to this behaviour by their parents, although mostly unconsciously. Parents who allow their child to stay at home due to minor problems of ill-feeling or existential orientation and excuse them with “illness” reports support later skipping of school.

At the moment, school tiredness and truancy are treated too late and the participants (teachers, parents, authorities, social workers) do not collaborate very well.

Girls and boys show different signs of truancy: while boys disturb lessons, girls quietly stop working in class and, later, attending class. Especially many young immigrants at school age drop out of the educational system as school and social workers are helplessly confronted with the problem of immigrant adolescents.

Importance and weighing of education within the family

The family is the decisive place that settles the bases for learning and education possibilities of children. Within the family children are prepared for school and the so called academic learning. Here, adolescents do their homework, consolidate the knowledge learned at school and prepare exams. The chances of children from educationally or socially disadvantaged families as well as from immigrant families are much lower:

- Support during homework depends on the educational level of the parents.
- Children from educationally weak or poor families as well as from immigrant families have less contact to children of their age than children from privileged families. This causes negative results for learning processes.
- Usually immigrants are not very familiar with the German educational system and cannot transfer own educationally relevant resources without difficulties. Often they are subject to language problems and cannot support the learning processes of their children.
- Socially disadvantaged families often cannot afford common activities with their children. Therefore the children are lacking learning experience besides school like music, sports, cinema, or theatre.

School is an important institution for socialisation and as such needs to react to developments within society and adapt to changed conditions. School has to prepare its students for social expectations and requirements by teaching them the necessary objective, emotional and social competence.

However, many parents and students experience school as a place of socialisation in a negative way as an institution that does not reflect their interests and needs. Classes often do not provide enough time for the individual student. Especially, when a student behaves weird, the existing structure in schools does not leave enough space for reacting adequately.

Significance of education and school within the family is closely connected to the social status of the parents.

Parents who have been unemployed and living from social benefits for years often have given up, suggesting their children, although sometimes unconsciously, that not even education and a school leaving certificate gives them a chance in life.

For families in which both parents are working, education and school leaving certificates usually are basic requirements for employment.

For stopping the downwards development of the combination of “educational poverty” and low social status the responsible persons urgently need to react on all levels of education and support. Here, increasing the chances for participation and education of immigrant children is of special interest.

Importance and weighing of education in the public

Never before people have been that well educated

The educational level of the population increased decisively during the last decades. Among the 60 years old and older about 15% do not have a school leaving certificate and about two third have a school leaving certificate from Hauptschule. This figure has already halved in the younger generation of the 30 to 39 years old. Only about 7% do not have a school leaving certificate and 36 % have a school leaving certificate from Hauptschule. In addition, the younger generation has more often a leaving certificate from Gymnasium than the older generation: 28% compared to 9%.

Especially the educational level among young women increased decisively. Younger women have three times more often a leaving certificate from Gymnasium than older women: 25 % compared to 6 %. However, the educational level of women and men according to higher education has not only equalled but the formerly existing gap in education between women and men has changed completely.

Nowadays, more girls than boys graduate from Gymnasium whereas more boys than girls leave school early or with a school leaving certificate from Hauptschule.

For the future, the constantly increasing educational level means that more people at the age of 60 or older will be highly qualified. Due to this higher qualification and a higher life expectancy the number of older people in employment will increase.

The higher the level of education of women the higher the rate of their full-time employment

In the south-west nearly every second female university graduate between 30 and 39 years is full-time employed. The number of full-time employed women at that age is much lower for those who graduated from Hauptschule. According to the results from family research FaFo at the Regional Statistics Authorities in Baden-Württemberg, the number of unemployed female university graduates at that age is much lower than the number of unemployed women with lower education.

This means that the share of full-time employed female university graduates at the age between 30 and 39 is still the same like 20 years ago. However, today less female university graduates are unemployed and more are employed part-time than 20 years ago.

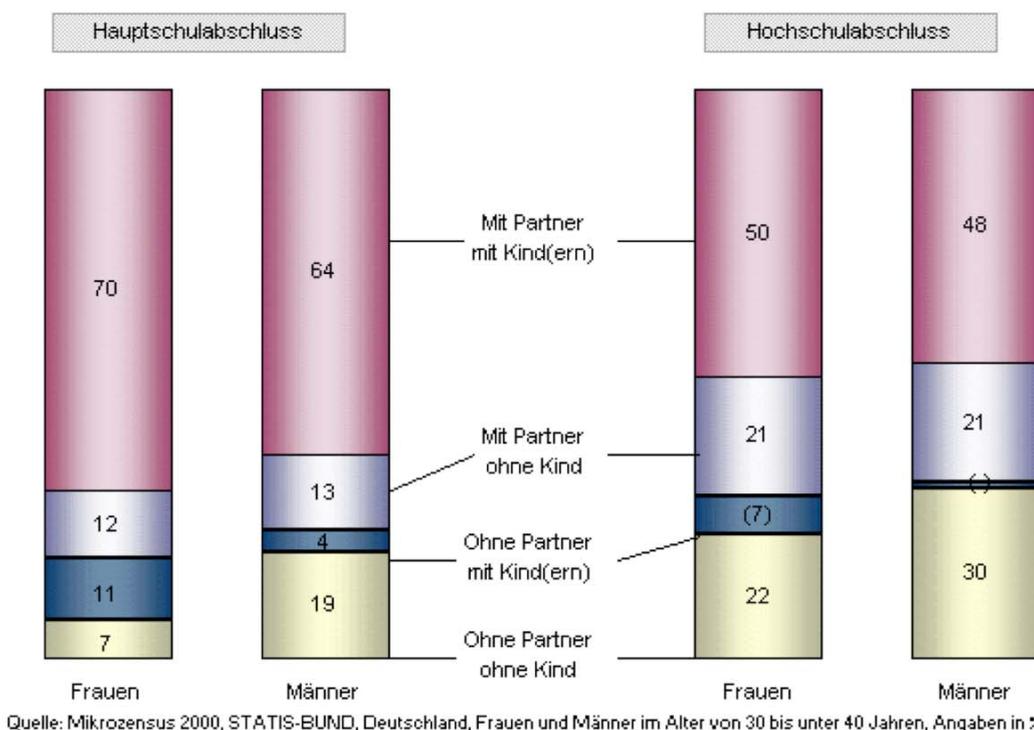
Young university graduates have less and less children

The share of female and male university graduates between 30 and 39 with children is much lower than that of female and male graduates from Hauptschule of the same age: 43% of women and even 51% of men who graduated from university do not have children or do not live together with children. Only 19% of women and 32% of men who attended Hauptschule have no children.

Women and men with lower education start a family more frequently

Much more female and male graduates from Hauptschule between 30 and 39 are living in a relationship and with one or more children than female and male university graduates of the same age: 70% of the women and 64% of men who attended Hauptschule have a family according to the Regional Statistics Authorities. But only 50% of female and 48% of male university graduates of the same age are living in a relationship or with children.

**Below an example how education influences the forms of living in a society:
Education and forms of living in Baden-Württemberg**



The family research FaFo at the Regional Statistics Authorities in Baden-Württemberg is convinced that these figures represent the tendency that more women and men with low education start a family. In the case of higher educated women and men starting a family is postponed or does not happen at all. In addition, female and male university graduates between 30 and 39 live more often alone. 22% of the women and 30% of the men live neither in a relationship nor with children. In comparison only 7% of the women and 19% of the men with lower education live alone and without children.

Strategies for the future

The Federal Secretary of Education Annette Schavan (CDU) plans to halve the number of early school leavers within the next five years by a common initiative of federation and states.

The Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs has officially handed in to the European Commission the overall federal programme based on the European Social Fund for the funding period 2007-2013. The so called operational programme describes Germany's economic development as well as its labour market.

The 252 pages focus on the difficult situation of many adolescents. The goal of the European Union that at least 85% of all 22 year old should have completed secondary school has been failed decisively in Germany.

Concerning the number of early school leavers something needs to be done in Germany, too.

Therefore, an urgent focal point of the programme are educational and vocational measures for "social participation and preservation of employability" of adolescents.

In addition, the paper includes considerable deficits on the apprenticeship training market. A current research of the Federal Ministry of Research and Technology shows that especially the situation of adolescents with migrational background is difficult.

Keeping the demographic change in mind, Germany cannot afford on a long-term base that every seventh student fails in school. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that the number of early school leavers is decreased permanently, that educational results and participation in education are increased, that adolescents that failed already get the chance for additional training, and that all-day care is extended. All-day care might contribute to avoid failing in school, especially of children of educationally disadvantaged or migrant families.

The priorities of the federal programme are mainly to use resources of skilled people and to increase the level of education in general. In accordance with the national reform programme, Germany follows a life-time approach focussing on adolescents.

Last years' research about avoiding early school leaving has shown that a high command of practical exercises and vocational working during classes motivates adolescents enormously. By means of fixed working days every week students get a competitive advantage. In many Hauptschulen this is already successful practise.

On the individual level it is necessary to watch the students closely to discover and fight school tiredness as early as possible. Good support means also that students are able to discover and improve their competences for developing a "competitive" profile. In addition, parents need to be convinced of cooperating with the schools, and ways of coordinating social workers, parents, teachers, and respective companies need to be found for developing suitable support offers. This means for Hauptschule teachers that their tasks change from pure "knowledge transfer" to more "development assistance".

Also, the time between school and employment is very important.

As soon as an adolescent leaves school without certificate he can choose between different measures. In many states it is compulsory to attend a vocational preparation year for those who do not have a school leaving certificate or those who graduated from Hauptschule, but are not yet integrated into employment. In addition to the possibility of getting a school leaving certificate, the adolescents get practical classes in the

vocational schools that are topped off by work placements. Although this sounds very good, in practice it often means nothing else but postponing existing problems and starting a “welfare career”. For making these measures more effective the vocational promotion of disadvantaged people has been modernized.

Individual promotion is much more successful if all parties involved are coordinated better. Therefore, local and regional cooperation networks are needed, consisting of schools, youth welfare, and social assistance office, employment centres, economic associations, and companies.

An interims management is supposed to guarantee individual support for adolescents in the time between school and employment. This means stating personal, social and mental capacities (competences) for later being able to express suitable personal goals for the adolescents adapted to their personal situation.



It is crucial that economy provides more apprenticeship training positions.

Whether the programme is successful or not does also depend on how well teachers are prepared for their additional tasks. Will the vocational preparation year remain an unwanted task of a vocational teacher who would rather prefer to teach specific knowledge to “normal” vocational students, as it is common practise in many schools? Or will well trained educationalists and sufficient additional social pedagogues have the necessary competence to do a high-quality and satisfying job?

The success of educational work is one thing. Offering vocational apprenticeship training positions and thereby giving “real” perspectives, however, still remains a task of the economy.

7.5 Regulation, laws in force at national, regional, and local level

The responsibility concerning the educational system of Germany is determined by the federal structure of the Federal Republic. The exercise of public authorities as well as the fulfilment of public duties is task of the States that is the fields of education, culture, and science. The educational system in total is supervised by the state. The individual states have the right of legislation for schools, universities, adult education as well as further education in the general field of education. Detailed regulations are available in

the constitution of the individual states. The highest state authorities are the ministries for education and the ministry of economics.

The competences of the federation within the educational system are regulated by the Fundamental Law. The Federal Republic is responsible for regulations in the following fields of education, science, and research:

- extracurricular training and further education
- basic competence for the general principles in higher education
- grants
- youth welfare service and others

Regulations concerning the collaboration of the Federation and the States are set in the **Federation-States-Commission** for educational planning and research promotion.

The legal regulations are fixed in the fundamental law of the Federal Republic of Germany, in the constitutions of the individual states as well as in the educational laws of the states of the Federal Republic.

Article 7, section 1 of the fundamental law of the Federal Republic states: "The complete educational system is supervised by the state." The federal constitution and the educational laws of the states of the Federal Republic differ in wording as well as in the order of the individual articles. That is why we present only two examples that shall be representative for all states of the Federal Republic.

Constitution of the state Baden - Wuerttemberg

Article 11 section 1: "Every young person has independent from his/her origin and economic situation the right to participate in education and training according to his/her abilities."

Article 12 section 2: "In their different areas of responsibility parents, the state, religious communities, the communities in general and the adolescents are responsible for education."

Article 14 section 1: "School attendance is compulsory."

Educational law of Baden- Wuerttemberg

§ 72 School attendance, duties of the students

- a) "Education is compulsory for all children and adolescents who live in or have their general domicile in Baden-Wuerttemberg."
- b) "School attendance means visiting classes and other compulsory activities on a regular basis."

§ 85 Responsibility for the fulfilment of school attendance and participation

- 1) "The parents have to make sure that the student is visiting classes regularly."

§ 86 Compulsory education

Students who are subject to school attendance and do not fulfil this duty can be forced to attend school.

This will be arranged by the police authorities responsible for the domicile.

Constitution of the state Saxony Anhalt

Education and school

Article 25 section 1: “Every young person has independent from his/her origin and economic situation the right to participate in education and training according to his/her abilities.”

Article 25 section 2: “School attendance is compulsory.”

Educational law Saxony Anhalt

§ 36

1. “Attending school is compulsory for all children and adolescents living in Saxony-Anhalt. (School attendance)”

§ 40

1. “School attendance ends twelve years after its beginning.”

§ 44 a Implementation of school attendance

“A person who is supposed to attend school and does not fulfil his/her obligations according to § 36 section 1 without any reason can be forced to attend school when further pedagogical remedies proved to be unsuccessful. These pedagogical remedies are especially personal consulting, information of the parents, the training supervisor and the employer of the person as well as involvement of the responsible youth welfare office. The person then can be forced to attend school by the administrative district or community-independent city responsible for the domicile.”

Methods and measures for reducing and fighting early school leaving, compulsory measures from the authorities

Academic measures:

- regular information of parents and teachers concerning the effective legal situation
- documentation of missing of students in the class-register
- taking care of the entries in the class-register, if necessary asking for medical attestation and talking to the parents
- talking about the problem with the student (documentation)
- informal information exchange among the teachers
- organizing a class conference (brief minutes with results and agreements)

- informing parents, if necessary house call, showing consequences, working on common agreements
- talks between school direction, parents, class teacher, and student

Cooperative measures

- involving school counsellor
- consulting cooperation teachers in special schools
- involving youth welfare office
- cooperation with public school authority/place of employment
- counselling support from information centres

Compulsory measures

- public policy authority, summary proceedings, ordering adolescents to fulfil working hours, arrest
- public policy authority, students are forced to attend classes by the police

7.6 Pros and cons of methods and measures

In general, the support for school deniers and early school leavers is working on two levels. The first level is the school, which focuses especially on knowledge transfer and the learning process of the student. The second level is the extracurricular sector which focuses on the personality of the student as well as the family and the social environment. All methods and measures do not always result in the expected and wished success. Fining students, making them fulfil working hours or arresting them are no effective methods for convincing students to attend classes, stop early school leaving or integrating students into the academic process. Preventive work at schools is as important as working with students who have already withdrawn from the educational process.

Critical reflection

Students who refuse to attend classes – on a short-term or a long-term base – are no longer an exception in the Federal Republic of Germany. In fact, the number of students not attending class increased decisively during the last years. That is why practise, politics, and science focus more and more on the refusal of attending classes and early school leaving. Our society is made insecure by alarming news of increasing numbers of students who are leaving school after school attendance without a school leaving certificate. Due to this increasing number of students who abandon school, refuse to attend school, and often leave school without leaving certificate, society is calling for explanations and remedies. The topic of early school leaving is not only treated by politicians and social scholars, but also especially by professional associations from school and youth welfare service as well as the schools themselves. This topic turned into a challenge for the society in total as the consequences of not attending classes and especially a lack of qualification are serious, not only for the individual. The share of early school leavers is especially high for Hauptschule.

According to the educational report 2004 only 40 % of school leavers with Hauptschule leaving certificate get a job training place within the dual system. 52 % end in waiting

loops and dead end roads. The situation is getting worse every year. Another problem is that about 10 % per year fail in the final exams and leave Hauptschule without certificate. The depressing result: although teachers give their best, although there is a number of special supporting programmes – since PISA we have known that Hauptschule does not support "according to ability" but that it discriminates young people by the pure fact that they are attending this school form. Since PISA we have also known that "statistic twins" of the same intelligence, same competence, and same social origin develop a gap in learning of 1.5 years at the age of 15 when one child attends Gymnasium and the other child Hauptschule. In fact, our schools neglect those who are already discriminated by their social origin in a doubled way, in this respect.

The result is disillusioning – not only for the adolescents who in general do not count for many chances – social workers at schools, teachers, and parents wish a higher number of job training positions for all school leavers, too. It is important to strengthen the self-confidence of the girls and boys and to constantly encourage them to hold on and not to give up.

Many school leavers do not have the necessary knowledge for starting job training. Often they do even lack basic knowledge in reading, writing, and calculating or simple social competences. PISA shows these deficits very clearly: About 20 % of the students are seen as risk group concerning fitness for job training and labour market. A lack of maturity in education becomes an enormous barrier for job training.

Possibilities of monitoring and evaluation

Analysing results and measuring the success of such a broad goal like decreasing the number of early school leavers is connected to special challenges and difficulties which have consequences for the methodological approach. These are for instance:

complexity caused by a variety of activity fields that are integrated into an activity approach

the multiple level character

process orientation which requires innovative approaches

the variety of approaches that cannot be standardized and a broad range of measure and projects

One example for a possible evaluation

	indicators	sources for indicators
basic aims		
project goals		
Results		
activities	mile stones	

Recommendations and conclusions

Refusal to attend school is a very complex phenomenon with a broad range of causes and effects that influence each other. For counteracting this fatal process we need integrated activity concepts that involve school, education authority, youth welfare office, psychological school service and others. Each of the named organizations and institutions has its own field of tasks and has specific experience. In addition, each

organisational unit influences the social living space of students. That is why activity concepts need to get started at the world of the children and adolescents.

Assuring educational success

The state government of Saxony-Anhalt wants to decrease the number of early school leavers decisively. The ministry of education and the ministry of social affairs have started a common programme with the title “Projects to avoid failure at school and for decreasing early school leaving”. About 59 million Euros from the support programme of the European Social Fund shall be used for this project. The aim is to decrease the number of early school leavers considerably.

The programme promotes support offers that should work preventively in an early phase as well as measures for effective intervention in the case of long-lasting difficulties. It consists of three columns of important working areas that influence each other. In the first place, the programme focuses on social work at school according to the need of the students. As a second aim, offers related to education from school and other associations shall be improved and increased. And finally, regional network points against failure at school will be built in the administrative district or community-independent city.

7.7 Best practice to contrast Early School leaving

Job – Education – Integration

A cooperative project between Youth Welfare Service and School

Operating period: 01.10.2003 – 31.08.2006

Project description

The task of the project is to address juveniles who despite compulsory schooling can not be reached by the responsible institutions, as they are/were truant. It concerns juveniles who due to their experiences feel restricted and demotivated by the formal, spatial environment of “school” alone, which tends to make traditional schooling measures for them rather counterproductive:

- Juveniles who dropped out or left school early
- Juveniles who finished the compulsory education but do not dispose of the necessary qualifications to keep up with an apprenticeship or other educational and qualifying measures
- Juveniles who due to their biographical preconditions require both a gradual approach for accumulating knowledge and assistance for a gradual disentanglement from their current milieu

Schooling failure or truancy is interpreted as a wrong development within the combination of school being perceived as an institution and individual desires, ideas and longings of the juveniles. Correcting this wrong development and giving the juveniles the chance to be able to become an accepted, self-confident and equal member of this society is aim and objective of this project. The early school leavers and truants shall be received in this low-threshold project, trying to give their personality more consistence.

A general aim is to provide them with a competence to design their own lives as well as to give them assistance for their life planning, i.e. the development of an independent life. In the focus of encouragement is the respective juvenile with their personality.

The aims and main points of the project can be summarized in short form as follows:

- Training in the area of social competence
- Teaching of mechanical skills in the areas wood and metal
- Offering event and leisure facilities
- Learning shall be re-learned
- Lessons focusing on life practice
- Implementation of trainings in firms
- Integration of marginal people
- Reactivation and promotion of existing strengths, interests and skills
- Chance to serve social communities within the framework of different project works

Realization of the project

The direct realization of the project involved several professions – one teacher, tutors with additional qualifications in pedagogic, one graduate in pedagogic, some volunteers for support lessons as well as freelancers for the workshops. Certain general conditions of the project were given due to the legal acts (in particular SGB VIII, Education Act of Saxony-Anhalt as well as the order "Werk-statt-Schule" provided by the Ministry of Culture.

For the participants the project was divided into several stages:

Stage	Focal Points	Period
1	Introduction and adaptation phase Motivational phase Working out the juvenile's state of knowledge One-on-one interviews Setup of a promotional plan	2 - 6 weeks
2	First working stage Basic knowledge in the metal and wood field Manufacture of small work pieces Increasing amount of German and mathematics Two-week training	5-7 months
3	Second working stage Increased reference to the company Further trainings Intensifying knowledge about wood and metal	4-10 months
4	Exit and examination Exam preparation (perhaps incl. further assistance)	

The entry of the juveniles to the project mostly occurred by mediation of the Faculty for Children, Youth and Family of the Federal Administration Office, Dept. School. Each

participant who had met the conditions, and who voluntarily wanted to make use of the project's offers had the chance to participate „on trial“ in the project for several days/weeks.

During stage 1 the main concern was taken by one-on-one interviews, the determination of the juveniles' state of knowledge (Are they able to read, write, calculate? Is there a learning disability? What kind of support does the juvenile need? Etc.) After the trial period an assistance and promotion plan was erected together with the juvenile and the persons involved in the helping process. This plan had been regarded as a framework for the further participation and the further assistance (see Diagram above).

During the entire period offers from other partners/institutions were taken up again and again to complete our contents.

The project was outlined for 12 juveniles. There was a fixed schedule for each of the juveniles, while the lessons were mostly held in groups of 4-6 juveniles. The practical work also comprised the same amount of people. At least once a month a contact to the parents had been established.

Experiences and results from the project

All in all 31 juveniles have taken up the offer during the mentioned project time.

- The average age when starting the project was 14.5 years
- The missed time of the juveniles in their schools was between 6 and 36 months
- The last successfully finished form was in most cases the 6th form
- A little more than a quarter stemmed from special schools (schools for children with learning disabilities, schools with handicap classes, IGS (integrated comprehensive schools))
- “only about 50% of the participants lived in needful communities according to the SGB II (Social Security Code)
- More than 80% did not live together with both their biological parents anymore. Mostly, there were single mothers without a new partner.
- 13 juveniles were able to achieve a school degree and started an apprenticeship or a vocational preparation measure via the Federal Employment Office
- Another 6 could fulfill their compulsory education and are now preparing for an apprenticeship
- 2 juveniles were mediated to other projects
- 4 juveniles were still in the project at the end of August 2006. These juveniles will participate in the new project.
- 6 juveniles have abandoned the project

The offers were received very well right from the beginning. We could notice that the need for alternative schooling and support measures was rising enormously. The following experiences and results also deemed important to us:

- The juveniles know about their deficits very well (because in many of the earlier interviews deficits had been mentioned) and this is reflected in their self-

- confidence. Therefore, a sense of achievement and encouragement are important factors for the self-esteem of and cooperation with the juveniles.
- Many juveniles lack male guiding persons; within the context of working together with male truants that also means for each team member to work out if one wants to be a kind of fatherly friend.
 - The parents and, especially, the mother are thankful for any support in this respect – despite their seeming to be rather disenchanted, they still have not given up their son.
 - Clear rules are necessary – and the common implementation of these rules.
 - As for the lessons and practical work, the following could be established: Groups of more than 4 persons are hard to handle, as the state of knowledge is often very different among the juveniles.
 - For practical work it proved well to take smaller tasks for non-profit institutions. The juveniles then see the sense of their work. In addition, funds for the co-financing can be brought in here.
 - An aftercare of the project has to be carried out by the team – even if only little time seems to be available for that. Further relationship breaks would only cause damage.
 - Right at the beginning of the project a contact to the Federal Employment Office has to be established, in order to enable a subsequent perspective.
 - Working with the parents is as important as working with the juveniles
 - Providing the opportunity for a school degree is necessary.

Cooperation/network process

Faculty for Children, Youth and Family	ASD (General Social Service), Juvenile Court Representative, clearing points
Other institutions of youth welfare service and schools	Regular meetings for exchanging experiences, setup of a regional network
Federal Youth Welfare Office	Close relation by means of participation in and organization of vocational trainings
Federal Employment Office / occupational counseling	Partners in the further mediation and qualification of the participants
DJI (German Youth Institute)	Member in the network school truancy, regular exchange with other projects there
DKJS (German Foundation for Children and Youth)	Children's hour – the DKJS could win over a firm that regularly supported our project
Internationaler Bund (International Association)	Cooperation with the project „D.a.S“ (The other School), project for female truanics

Sustainability

In cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, the Faculty for Children, Youth and Family and the Federal Youth Welfare Office we will be able to continue the project, based on our experiences over the last few years. However, there will be some completions and changes: Parent work will be more focused on as well as reserving offers for young people that are at risk to become school truanics (founding a mobile information centre for those juveniles). We will also intensify the network process (setup of a regional

network against school truancy), and will conduct parts of this project together with other institutions.

7.8 Conclusions

Approx. 10 % of all pupils of one age and even 20 % of all children of immigrants do not achieve a school leaving certificate.

Secondary general schools can not cope with the demands for quite some time now and turned into “residual schools” for the underprivileged.

The educational system in Germany is too time-consuming for its clients, children are late when it comes to starting a systematic educational process. As a result, children are often not ready at the beginning of their schooling process. A striking fact is the insufficient faculty of speech shown by immigrant children.

Education has to start very early. These are our recommendations in this area:

- ⤴ Legal claim for obtaining a full-time kindergarten place for all children
- ⤴ Compulsory pre-schooling for all children from 4 years on who do not attend the kindergarten
- ⤴ Better encouragement for early learning by revising the conceptions
- ⤴ Improving the access of children stemming from low-educated families to publicly promoted child care in order to achieve a certain level of equal opportunities

The number of pupils who skip school for hours, days or even longer is constantly increasing. Truants are becoming younger and younger. The requirements for starting an apprenticeship and, accordingly, a self-determined, financially independent life are not existent. The consequences are poverty and social isolation.

Education has to be continued together with upbringing in everyday school:

- ⤴ More transparency and openness of the educational system
- ⤴ Performance evaluation for teachers and efficiency tests
- ⤴ Supervision of the teachers during the lessons
- ⤴ Clear statement for extensive education in combination with upbringing, i.e. compensating deficits of the parents or in the family to provide the children with equal chances
- ⤴ Special promotion of groups who grow up in a low-educated environment, or who have highly unfavourable educational conditions
- ⤴ Expansion of full-time schools
- ⤴ Understanding schools as places of integration and cooperation
- ⤴ Schools not only as a place for teaching knowledge, but also for teaching social competence and emotional intelligence
- ⤴ Close cooperation between schools and parents

- ⤴ High motivation of the teachers and close cooperation among them as far as lesson preparation is concerned
- ⤴ Schools and their benefits must be focussed on their neighbourhood in order to cope with their different local and regional tasks (freedom of choice when selecting the school)
- ⤴ Better use of the time budget of pupils
- ⤴ Schools in competition with media and leisure options in terms of gaining the pupils' attentiveness and concentration
- ⤴ Lesser separation of pupils in separated schools, increased promotion of the individual talents in small groups in order to do justice to the different educational skills
- ⤴ Longer presence of the teachers in the schools, including in the afternoon (lesson preparation, experience exchange, contact person for pupils)
- ⤴ Better and more intensive further education for teachers
- ⤴ Better inter-cultural competences of the teachers

8. Greece – National Report

By Kiriakos Dimitriou Maria Alizoti

8.1. Introduction to the Country situation

Greece or Hellas, (Ελλάς), officially the Hellenic Republic is a country in South Eastern Europe, situated on the southern end of the Balkan Peninsula. The Aegean Sea lies to the east and south of mainland Greece, while the Ionian Sea lies to the west.

Greece lies at the juncture of Europe, Asia and Africa. It is heir to the heritages of ancient Greece, the Roman and Byzantine Empires and nearly four centuries of Ottoman rule. Greece is regarded as the birthplace of democracy, Western philosophy, the Olympic games, Western literature and historiography, political science, major scientific and mathematic principles, and Western drama including both tragedy and comedy.

Greece is a developed country, a member of the European Union since 1981, a member of the Economic and Monetary Union of the European Union since 2001, NATO since 1952, the OECD since 1961, the WEU (Western European Union) since 1995 and ESA (European Space Agency) since 2005. Athens is the capital.

Geography

Greece consists of a mountainous mainland jutting out into the sea at the southern end of the Balkans, the Peloponnesus peninsula (separated from the mainland by the canal of the Isthmus of Corinth), and numerous islands (around 2,000), including Crete, Euboea (where KEK KRONOS' headquarters are situated), Lesbos, Chios, the Dodecanese and the Cycladic groups of the Aegean Sea as well as the Ionian Sea islands. Greece has the tenth longest coastline in the world with 15,021 kilometres (9,246 mi); its land boundary is 1,181 kilometres (721 mi).

Four fifths of Greece consists of mountains or hills, making the country one of the most mountainous in Europe. Western Greece contains a number of lakes and wetlands and it is dominated by the Pindus mountain range. Pindus has a maximum elevation of 2,636 m (8,648 ft) and it is essentially a prolongation of the Dinaric Alps.

Demography

The official Statistical body of Greece is the National Statistical Service of Greece (NSSG). According to the NSSG, Greece's total population in 2001 was 10,964,020. That figure is divided into 5,427,682 males and 5,536,338 females. According to Eurostat estimation Greece's population in 2008 will be 11,216,708 inhabitants. Almost two-thirds of the Greek people live in urban areas. Greece's largest municipalities in 2001 were: Athens (3.894.573), Thessalonica (1.084.001), Patras (318.928), Iraklio (291.225), Larissa (282.156), and Mesologgi (219.092).

An interesting aspect of the demographic picture of Greece during the last years was the extended immigrant flow towards the country, which was started at the beginning of the

90's and refers more to economic immigrants coming from the Balkans, the former soviet democracies and generally the Eastern Europe. According to the 2001 census, immigrants amount to 761.813 inhabitants, most of them are living in urban areas.

Economy

According to the Ministry of National Economy and Finance and the European Union (EUROSTAT), Greek economy in 2004 (with a growth rate of 4.2%) is one of the fastest growing economies within the European Union (EU-15 mean 2.2% and EU-25 mean 2.3%). 2004 was the ninth year in a row that the economy had been growing faster than the average (of the 15 and 25 member States) of the European Union.

In 2005, Greek Economy despite the adverse forecasts predicting a significant slowdown in the growth rate to levels below 3%, the biggest rise in oil prices in recent years as well as the tough but successful effort to contain the excessive public deficit, remained strong; as a result, GDP growth rate amounted to 3.7%. Furthermore, per capita GDP expressed in constant purchasing power units (in the EU of the 15 member states =100) rose to 77.1% versus 75.5% in 2004. It should, also be stressed that the convergence pace towards the EU-15 average was faster in 2005, since the per capita GDP index rose by 2.3%, i.e. 1.1 million units faster than the median annual growth of the 1994-2004 period (1.2%).

In terms of inflation rate and in spite of the anti-inflationary effort reflected in the restriction of the core, there was an acceleration, from 3.3% in 2004 to 3.1% in 2005, mainly fuelled by the unexpectedly higher oil prices resulting in the General Consumer Price Index rising from 2.9% in 2004 to 3.5% in 2005.

According to the latest comparative data collected by EUROSTAT, the total price level of Greece compared to the EU – 25 = 100, price level amounted to 8.5% as against EU - 15=100 to 81.9%, i.e. the lowest level of the 15 member states of EU-15.

Since 1996, the rate of increase of total investment has been noticeably higher than the respective rate in the Eurozone countries (8% as against 4% in the years 1996-2000, 6,7% as against 2,3% in 2002). As for public investment funded by 2/3 by Hellenic sources and by 1/3 by community sources, it has been rapidly growing. Nevertheless, in spite of the continuous improvement of the main economic aggregates, foreign investment in Greece remains low.

Productivity in Greece, i.e. gross added value (in constant purchasing power units) per person employed compared to the Eurozone average attains 91.4%, whilst the real average gross salary attains 92.9% and per capita gross available household income totals 85.9%. It is noted that real gross salary increased by 2.9% in 2005 versus a stagnant real gross salary in the Eurozone and real gross available income of households increased by 3.2% respectively, compared to 0.7% in the Eurozone.

According to the Labour Force Survey data provided by the National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE), total employment increased in 2005 by 1.8% and the number of wage earners increased at a 1.7% rate thus causing unemployment to drop from an average of 10.5% in 2004 to 9.9% in 2005.

8.2 General information

Main macroeconomic aggregates

Gross Domestic Product, Gross Domestic Product Per Capita

Reference Year	GDP (at constant prices in € million)	Per Capita GDP (at current prices in €)
2003	148,930	13,984
2004	161,353	15,119
2005	220,671	20,587

Source: National Statistical Service of Greece (EΣYE/ESYE) 2006

Growth rate

Period	Annual GDP (in Million. €)	Change of Annual GDP
2000-2001	98,495	4.0%
2002-2003	102,297	3.9%
2003-2004	106,678	4.2%
2005		3.70%

Source: EΣYE/ESYE 2006

People employed per age group, gender and level of education in the years 2001-2002 for the whole of Greece (In thousands)

Level of Education	Years	Total		Up to the age of 19		20 - 24 years	
		Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem
Tertiary	2001	603.6	492.1	0.2	0.3	25.4	49.0
	2002	603.9	501.1	0.6	1.6	25.9	47.0
Secondary	2001	1,027.5	540.2	22.7	11.8	113.1	73.6
	2002	1072.7	555.2	21.0	10.6	118.1	69.9
Primary No school attendance	2001	800.3	453.9	11.3	5.5	26.4	8.5
	2002	765.9	450.1	11.1	4.6	24.6	8.3

Level of Education	Years	25 - 29 years		30 - 44 years		45 - 64 years		65 - years	
		Male	Fem.	Mal.	Fem.	Mal.	Fem.	Mal.	Fem
Tertiary	2001	74.8	99.1	291.5	250.9	203.4	92.1	8.4	0.8
	2002	76.4	98.7	284.9	250.4	204.9	102.0	11.1	1.5
Secondary	2001	172.2	84.1	449.9	256.4	260.0	111.1	9.7	3.2
	2002	175.3	80.5	470.6	274.9	277.3	116.4	10.4	2.8
Primary No school attendance	2001	38.5	10.4	203.7	125.8	466.1	276.9	54.3	26.8
	2002	33.8	11.5	195.3	125.8	446.5	275.1	54.6	24.8

Source: EΣYE/ESYE 2005

Number of unemployed per age group, gender and level of education in the years 2001-2002, for the whole of Greece

(In thousands)

Level of Education	Year	Total		Up to 19 years		20 – 24 years		25 – 29 years	
		Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.
Tertiary	2001	37.0	77.0	–	0.5	7.1	22.3	12.2	25.8
	2002	34.2	79.0	0.1	0.6	5.8	23.5	12.4	25.4
Secondary	2001	98.7	136.7	8.7	12.5	30.0	39.1	23.1	23.5
	2002	91.4	130.4	6.4	9.8	29.2	33.3	19.3	27.6
Primary No school attendance	2001	39.6	55.9	3.6	3.7	3.7	4.5	2.7	4.4
	2002	36.1	48.9	2.3	2.0	2.4	3.1	3.7	2.6

[table contd]

Level of Education	Years	30 – 44 years		45 – 64 years		65 and over	
		Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.
Tertiary	2001	12.4	24.2	5.1	4.2	0.2	–
	2002	11.6	24.9	4.2	4.6	0.1	–
Secondary	2001	25.8	50.1	10.7	11.5	0.4	–
	2002	24.6	50.9	11.7	8.8	0.3	–
Primary No school attendance	2001	8.8	21.8	20.1	21.5	0.7	–
	2002	9.4	19.4	17.8	21.8	0.5	–

Source: ΕΣΥΕ/ΕΣΥΕ 2004

Urban and rural population of Greece

There are now two rates distinguishing the population; urban and rural population.

2001 Census

	Population			Distribution %	
	Total	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
A	10,964,020	7,984,414	2,983,606	72.8	27.2
B	10,934,097	8,211,646	2,722,451	75.1	24.9

Source: ΕΣΥΕ/ΕΣΥΕ 2001 Census

NB: Data in line a refers to "de facto population"

Data in line b refers to "usual resident population"

1.7.6. Immigration: Foreigners in Greece

Total	762,191
Male	415,552
Female	346,639

Source: ΕΣΥΕ/ΕΣΥΕ, 2001 Census

NB: Data refers to "usual resident population".

8.3 Description of the Education System

Education population and language of instruction

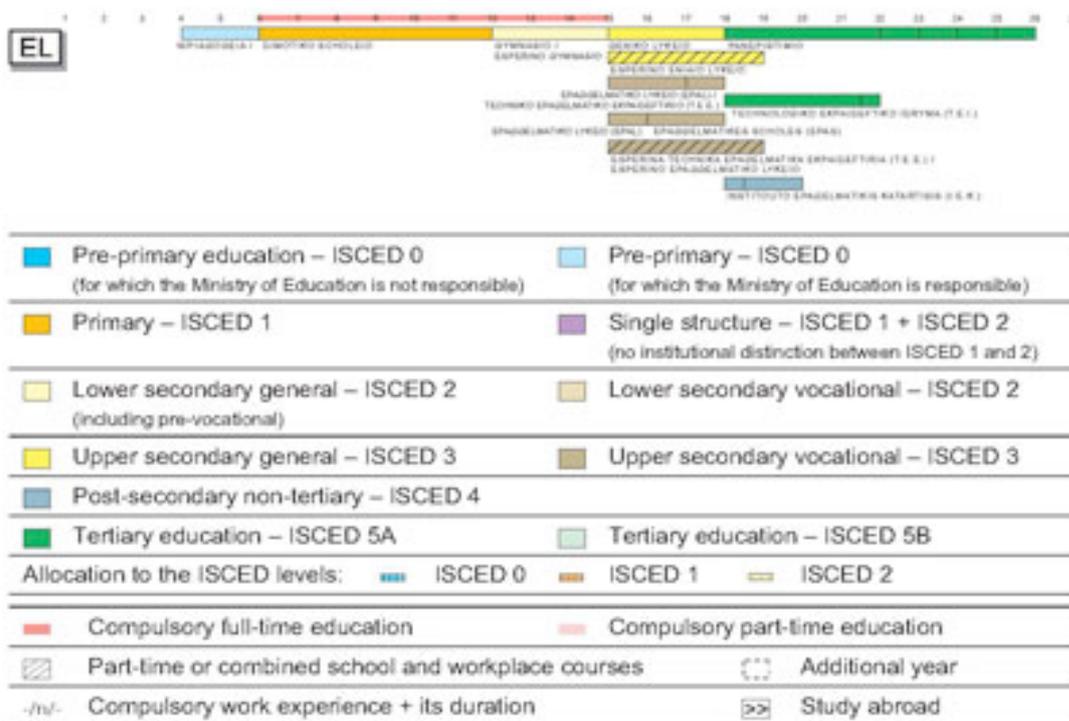
In 2004/05, 34.46 % of the population belonged in the 0-29 age cohort. Young people in the compulsory education age group numbered 1 126 652. The language of instruction is Greek.

Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

In 2004/05, 95.7 % of pupils attended public-sector schools and 4.3 % private non-grant-aided schools. Private primary and secondary schools are recognised as equivalent to state schools, and remain under the supervision and inspection of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. They are fully self-financed. There are also foreign private schools offering education to foreign nationals residing in Greece. There are no private higher education institutions.

The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs formulates and implements legislation, coordinates and evaluates regional services, administers financial support, approves primary and secondary school curricula and appoints teaching staff. The prefectures (or, in large prefectures, the education offices) supervise schools, facilitate co-ordination between schools and have responsibility for school buildings and equipment. The head teacher co-ordinates school activities and he is responsible for ensuring that the school satisfies legal requirements. Teachers' councils implement curricular regulations and monitor student attendance and discipline. School committees have administrative responsibilities and manage budgets for heating, lighting, school repairs and equipment. Higher education institutions are self-governing, under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. Prefectures and education offices are responsible for inspection. School advisers provide guidance to teachers. A new system of assessment is being phased in with law 2525/97 PEKESSES – Regional Centres to Support Educational Planning – and law 2986/02. According to this law, evaluation of the educational work of schools falls upon the Education Research Centre (KEE) and the Pedagogical Institute (PI).

Organisation of the education system in Greece, 2005/06



Source: Eurydice.

Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education lasts two years from the ages of 3 or 4 to 5 or 6, and is provided in kindergartens (*nipiagogeio*) that are either independent or part of a primary school. State-run kindergartens are free of charge; private kindergartens are fee-paying. The final year of pre-primary education belongs, now, in compulsory education.

Pre-school education belongs in primary education and its operation follows the same legislative regulations that are in force for primary schools.

During the school year 2004/05, 137 059 pupils attended public pre-primary education while 4,595 have attended private pre-primary.

Compulsory education

Education in Greece is compulsory for all children 6-15 years old; namely, it includes Primary (*Dimotiko*) and Lower Secondary (*Gymnasio*) Education. The school life of the students, however, can start from the age of 2.5 years (pre-school education) in institutions (private and public) called "*Vrefonipiakiokoi Paidikoi Stathmi*" (crèches). In some *Vrefonipiakiokoi Stathmoi* there are also *Nipiaka Tmimata* (nursery classes), which operate along with the *Nipiagogeia* (kindergartens).

Attendance at Primary Education (*Dimotiko*) lasts for six years, and children are admitted at the age of 6. Along with the regular kindergartens (*Nipiagogeia*) and the *Dimotika*, All-day primary schools are in operation, with an extended timetable and an enriched Curriculum.

Along with the mainstream schools of Primary and Secondary Education, Special *Nipagogeia* (kindergartens), *Dimotika*, *Gymnasia*, *Lykeia* and upper secondary classes are in operation, which admit students with special educational needs. Musical, Ecclesiastical and Physical Education *Gymnasia* and *Lykeia* are also in operation.

(i) Levels

Nipiagogeio (Kindergarten) 5-6 years of age

Dimotiko scholeio (primary education) 6-12 years of age

Gymnasio (lower secondary general) 12-15 years of age

Education is compulsory for the age cohort 5-15.

(ii) Admissions criteria

The possibility of attendance of a pupil in a public school of primary education depends on the pupil's residence region. Registration in secondary education schools takes place with no prerequisites. The only documentation required is a school-leaving certificate from primary school. Education in Greece for all levels of public education is provided free of charge and the expenses are covered by the state budget. As far as private education is concerned, the cost paid by the family in the form of tuition fees depends on the education level.

(iii) Length of school day/week/year

The days of courses during each school year are 175 and cover the period between September and June. Schools normally open five mornings a week for 35 weeks per year, and there are between 23 and 35 hours per week, increasing with age. Each lesson lasts 40 to 50 minutes. The number of taught hours for the two first grades of primary education is 25 per week reaching 30 hours in the other four grades. In all three grades of lower secondary education, the number of taught hours is 35.

(iv) Class size/student grouping

A Ministerial Decision stipulates that primary classes must have up to 25 students. Students are grouped by age, thus creating six age levels. At secondary level, another Ministerial Decision stipulates that classes must have up to 30 students. Primary classes have one teacher for all subjects, but teachers of relevant specialisation teach subjects such as physical education, foreign languages and arts studies. Secondary education students have separate teachers for each subject.

(v) Curriculum control and content

The curricula for primary and secondary education are drawn up by the Pedagogical Institute and approved by the Ministry. Compulsory subjects at primary level are religion, Greek language, mathematics, history, environmental studies, geography, physics, social and civics, music and arts, foreign language and physical education. These subjects (except environmental and arts studies) are compulsory throughout junior high school. Additional compulsory subjects at secondary education include ancient Greek, a second foreign language, chemistry, home economics, computer science, technology and school vocational guidance.

In 2003, the Single Curriculum Framework and the New Curricula, which adopt the inter-disciplinary approach of knowledge, were drawn up for compulsory education. The new schoolbooks written on the grounds of the SCF and the new curricula are to be gradually introduced in schools beginning from the school year 2006/07. Teachers are obliged to follow the curriculum. However, the method they use to approach the teaching goals is a matter of personal choice and certainly, a product of their own education and their further training. At the beginning of the school year, special

directions are dispatched to teachers of all specialisations by the Pedagogical Institute regarding the goals of the subjects they teach. Textbooks for pupils and teachers are based on the curricula.

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Primary-level assessment is continuous and for older pupils is partly assignment based. Promotion to the next grade is automatic, except in cases of insufficient attendance; students receive a certificate at the end of each year and the primary school leaving certificate (*Apolytirio Dimotikou*) ensures admission to junior high school. Assessment in junior high school is continuous and based on written tests, assignments and end-of-year examinations. Promotion is based on achievement. Students who pass the examination at the end of junior high school receive a school-leaving certificate (*Apolytirio Gymnasiou*), which grants access to senior high school. The examination for this certificate is organised at school level and can be re-taken without having to repeat classes.

8.4 Early School leaving – statistic and reasons

In educational language the term “school leaving” refers to young people who do not complete the education that is fixed from “norm” as the minimal necessary educational demand in the society where they live. “Norm” in this case is, at least in most countries of European Union, the completion of compulsory education. Compulsory education differs from country to country and usually lasts 9-10 years. It begins in the age of the 5-6 years and leads to the age of 15-16 years, and includes the primary education and the lower circle of secondary education. The skills - knowledge that acquire the individual in this educational circle are considered necessary for the continuation of study in the superior educational rung, for the attendance of vocational training programs but also for the incorporation in the labour market.

Causes

Research¹ showed that early school leaving is based in several factors and that school leaving is a long-term process of “disengagement” from the school and the training that often begins very early, already in the first classes of primary education. “Starting point” may be the precocious school failure that makes the child to dispute his faculties and weaken gradually his conjunction with the school. Another reason maybe also behaviour problems, the absence from school, the class repeat, the lack of participation during the class, etc

The causes of early school leaving could be grouped in two large categories:

a) The factors that are related to the family of the young person such as:

The low socio-economic situation of the family, the national identity, the bad school performance of brothers, the potential early school leaving of brothers, the family mobility, the lack of family support, the low parental training expectations, the negative attitude or indifference of parents to school, the instability of family environment, single parents, the unemployment, personal or family problems etc.

¹ «Η ΜΑΘΗΤΙΚΗ ΔΙΑΡΡΟΗ ΣΤΗ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΒΑΘΜΙΑ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ (ΓΥΜΝΑΣΙΟ, ΕΝΙΑΙΟ ΛΥΚΕΙΟ, ΤΕΕ)» - Ministry of National Education and Religious Pedagogical Institute, 2006

b) The factors that are related to school and the experience of young person in it, such as:

The bad school performance, the absence from school, the discipline problems, the conflicts with other students or/ and teachers, the former bad school performance, the often change of school, the lack of interest, the repeat of class etc, factors that appear usually right after the child enters into the school.

The extend of early school leaving is related also with several characteristics of schools, such as the size of school, the analogy between students and teachers, the discipline and evaluation systems, the quality of school environment, the school environment that encourage or discourage the appearance of anti-social behaviour, the study program, the extent that school supports and cares for students (behaviour or academic problems).

Concerning the family factors, the low socio-economic situation is the one that appears to be most important, while in school factors the low school performance is the most important.

Value of education in the family and the community – Consequences of early school leaving

Irrespectively the educational rung and the causes, school leaving has negative consequences, for the individual himself but also for the society. The young persons that leave school for any reason do not have the essential qualifications in order to face the difficulties of life. They are at risk of unemployment, but even if they are working in good conditions they do not earn as much as their colleagues, who have completed their education. They are at higher risk of the other social groups for being alcoholic and drug addicted and generally for infringing behaviour and it is more possible to depend on the social welfare. Usually, they are possessed by sentiments of failure, intense disappointment, loneliness and insecurity; they have lack of self-confidence and demonstrate hostile attitude and aggressiveness toward parents and schoolteachers. It could be said that if the transient period to the active life in general, has been changed for many young persons in a period of inactivity and uncertainty, for young persons that leave early school it is connected many times over with painful experiences.

These young persons who didn't go at school at all, or they didn't complete the compulsory education or they are graduates of compulsory education but without vocational training and they are threatened by underemployment, unemployment, marginalisation and social exclusion, they are presented in the relative bibliography as "disadvantaged young people" along with the persons with special needs, the immigrants, the refugees, the gipsies and other social groups in which lots of factors make difficult the "full accession" into the community.

All the risk factors that mentioned above (social / family / school) they could be useful, theoretically, in defining the young people that may leave school early, without though to compose safe criteria. Because they are cases of early school leaving that they don't exist risk factors, on the contrary, there are lots of cases of students in risk that remain at school and complete their education. In any case, the school leaving is a basic indicator that the young person who didn't succeed in school maybe at risk not to succeed in adult life, and that's why we have to emphasize in early diagnosis, prevention and confrontation.

The situation in Greece

Early school leaving is medium in Greece in the range between 10-20%, while among the other countries, Greece, has achieved a noticeable decline. It has to be mentioned though, that in order to achieve the goal according to the European Training Council (Brussels 2003) there is need, until 2010, the school leaving in Greece to be reduced at least 4%, which seems to be very difficult.

Most EU countries face the same problem, a fact that puts in danger the materialization of the goal in European level.

BENCHMARKS FOR EDUCATION [European Training Council – Brussels 2003]	
BENCHMARKS	INITIAL SITUATION AND GOALS
<p>Early school leaving By 2010, all Member States should have at least halved the rate of early school leavers compared with the rate in 2000, to achieve a European Union (EU) average rate of 10% or less</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> <small>The linked image cannot be displayed. The file may have been moved, renamed, or deleted. Verify that the link points to the correct file and location.</small></p>

School Leaving in Primary Education

School leaving in Primary Education has almost annihilated in Greece. It has to be mentioned though that a very small percentage of children never enter at school. These children are coming mainly from disadvantaged social groups like gypsies, immigrants etc

School Leaving in lower cycle of Secondary Education

From data research came up that school leaving in the lower cycle of Secondary Education is around 6,09% (2001). This rate is lower than the one that was measured in 2000 (6,98%) and even lower than the years before 2000. the current situation indicates that school leaving is decreased significant since the beginning of 1980, but during the last years the decrease appears very slow.

8.5 Regulation, laws in force at national, regional, and local level

Concerning the prevention of early school leaving the following measures are implemented in Greece:

- Financial incentives – introducing free meals and textbooks – with the aim of enhancing and supporting equal access to education and training. Moreover, financial assistance in education (as a motive to enrol in primary and secondary education) is being given to those ethnic minorities who declare annual income less than 3000 € (the amount received is 300 €)
- *Support systems* which constitute the most successful measures and include: Support teaching, All day schools, Evening education, Inclusion classes, Integration of special education in regular. In relation to minority populations there are special classes for the repatriated and foreign students (through the Directorate of Intercultural Education) and minority schools of all levels (teaching is conducted in both language, assistant teachers etc)
- More *compensatory ways* of dealing with early school leaving such as the Second chance schools allowing for making up with missed qualifications as well as the Post – secondary vocational education and training where young people who complete compulsory education and then drop out of school can achieve qualifications.

Laws in force

Fundamental objectives of educational policy of National Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (YPEPTH) are, on one side, to assure the right of each student, independently from sex and origin, to have unhindered and free access in knowledge and, on the other hand, the promotion of education as a “good” that all young persons can enjoy.

More specifically, YPEPTH has adopted a series of measures that it is considered that contribute in the prevention and confrontation of “early school leaving” phenomenon as follows:

Primary education

According to article 2, Law 1566/1985 and article 73, Law 3518/2006, the attendance of students in Primary Education is compulsory. The person who take care of the under age child and omits the registration at school is punished, according to the article 458 of the Penal Code. Moreover, according to Presidential Decree 161/2000, the Prefect has the responsibility to impose sanctions to the parents that do not register their children in school and neglect their regular study.

According to article 11 of 201/1998, when a student does not attend classes and the parents do not get in touch with the school, despite the notices from the school, then the Public or Police Authorities search for the family. In the cases where the family is not found, the absence from school is reported to the Training Supervisor or to the Primary Education Office. The Supervisor search for the student in all schools of the prefecture and further the Service in Charge of YPEPTH, search the student in all schools of the country.

Main objective of school is to enrol all students, according to their needs, in a united educational frame, capable to ensure the equality between students and to confront school failure, by upgrading the educational system.

This is achieved by:

The establishment of All-day Schools in Primary Education (Law 2525/97) with main objective:

- a) The strengthening of knowledge and skills that are taught students during the morning school
- b) The enrichment of morning school program with supplementary training subjects.

As it concerns students with special training needs, they have the opportunity in All-day schools, to plan a flexible training program and the implementation of an individual program according to the training needs of the students. They also operate Special Training Schools as All-day schools corresponding in the increasing training and social needs. (Encyclical Φ50/208/97293/Γ1/7-9-2007)

- c) The reinforcing teaching for best confrontation of training needs and students' reinforcement.

By the operation of:

- a) 13 schools of Cross-cultural Education
- b) Inclusion Classes
- c) Coaching Departments
- d) For minority populations there are special classes for the repatriated and foreign students (through the Directorate of Intercultural Education) and minority schools of all levels (teaching is conducted in both language, assistant teachers etc)

Secondary education

- According to article 2, Law 1566/85 is established the compulsory education in lower cycle of Secondary Education (Gymnasium).
- According to article 458 Penal Code, is penalized the non-registration of students in Gymnasium, with the punishment of the person who take care of the under age child and omits the registration at school. the Prefect has the responsibility to impose sanctions to the parents that do not register their children in school and neglect their regular study. (Δ.161/00 , ΦΕΚ 145, τ. Α'/23-06-2000).
- According to article 5, Law1566/85, they operate Afternoon Gymnasiums, in which students who are working may register, if they are above 14 years old. The attendance of students may characterized adequate with increasing the number of absences by 30 (Π185/90), recognizing the difficulties that students face because of their work.
- The program of Reinforcing Teaching for Gymnasium students who lack of certain knowledge sections. Main objective of this program is the enrolment of "weak" students in teaching procedure without surcharge for the families.

- The training program Cross- Cultural Education, with objective the enrolment into the school community of foreign students, immigrants' children, as also gypsies, as the lack of the Greek language is an obstacle to follow sufficient their courses and lead them to school leaving.
- According to Ministerial Decision Φ10/20/Γ1/708/07-09-1999, operate Coaching Departments and Inclusion Classes.
- All foreign students have access to these programs, without discrimination. Also the foreign students are discharged from the courses of the Ancient and Greek Literature for the first year and the oral examination in the other courses. These students have a different, lower, graduating base.
- The Diagnosis, Evaluation and Support Centres are extended and recruited for prompt diagnosis and confrontation of students' difficulties.

Generally, for decreasing the school leaving in Secondary Education, the YPEPTH, has adopted the following measures:

- It has established the "Transition Observatory" (Παρατηρητήριο –Μετάβασης), which operates in Pedagogical Institute with objective, between others, the research (collection and analysis of school leaving data) as also the detection of basic causes.
- As one of the main causes of school leaving is school failure, they are adopted special measures / activities in order to confront school failure such as better programs, books, etc. These measures decrease the training inequalities and they create the conditions for intellectual skills development, which are necessary for the successful school study, as they allow the development of basic skills (reading and mathematic skill, working in groups etc.). Also it helps to the reinforcement of self-esteem of the "weak" student, a fact that reinforces his "stay" at school.
- The "weak" students are supported through the implementation of reinforcing teaching and the extra teaching help, in order not to face their special educational problems and not to leave school.
- Second chance schools, allowing for making up with missed qualifications for the ones who left school early

8.6 Pro and cons of policies and measures

There are many questions arising before someone reaches to the point to draw and apply the suitable measures for preventing and confronting school leaving. For example how high should be the percentage of school leaving in a country or in a school in order to be considered as a problem and to be necessary to take measures? We have to mention that the society and the labour market raise higher and higher the benchmark of successful completion of training and they demand continuously more substantially and formal qualifications. How essential are the study degrees or essential qualifications are enough? Is it possible for a young person who leaves school early to acquire the desirable skills later, through alternative solutions, or should he have also the necessary certificates?

Is always early school leaving negative? It is interesting in a way, a heretic opinion, according to which the problem of school leaving, examined from the side of society,

the educational system, the school and the student, is a point of view subject. For example, it is possible, school leaving to be a problem for the system, but not for the school or the student, himself. And this is because in most developed countries the traditional model wishes for the student to be at school until his adult years (17-19 years old), otherwise the system should design alternative ways of “covering the educational gaps”, providing basic vocational training or skills certification.

From the other side, through life long learning it is ensured bigger flexibility into the training structures, the possible gaps may be covered and the early school leaving wouldn't be such a problem. The answer of course to this point of view is that the problem of early school leaving was, is and it will be important in the future “if we release the training from the pressing, close and finally deforming relation with the professional perspective and the employment” and if we face the problem as a “socialization factor”, then automatically the early school leaving is the beginning of a “deficit policy, social and cultural training....,problematic training that may have as consequences non integrated citizens, deficit social codes of behaviour and low personal and collective education”.

Other questions that should be answered: Why students are leaving school? Which obstacles they meet at school? In what degree is responsible the schools, parents and local community? What should the teachers do in order to help? Is it enough to act only the school? As it is not easy to define the students that will leave school, do we know to whom the programs are addressed? And is a training program addressed to the majority of students or it is just for few of them? Which authorities are responsible? Is it possible to refer to “symptoms” without knowing the real problems? In the case of coming back to school, should be done in the same school or in another?

In any case the first necessary step is “mapping” the problem. The following Authorities could be enrolled in the prevention, primary diagnosis and individual's observation of students and the ones who are at risk of school leaving:

- The system ensuring variety of choice to whom wishing to get back at school,
- The school by giving motives and means to be involved in the problems, and
- Organization of labour market by promoting them to play an active role e.g. by stimulating the young people to have a basic training / vocational training.

Evidences reflecting the decrease of early school leaving

The decrease of early school leaving in Greece is direct connected to the evolutions and the changes that occurred during the last 20 years.

In brief, we could mention the contribution of the following factors in the decrease of early school leaving:

1. The attitude change towards education: education is not considered anymore as a “luxury” but a pressing need as it is direct connected to the social and economical development.
2. The social model changes: nowadays is appeared more and more the model of the educated person. The Media present as the “ideal type” of person the one who is characterised for his high education level that reassures him a good job, high economical level, good life conditions, success in personal life etc.

3. The labour market changes: the inflow of foreign work force, the shrinking of the rural sector, the shutting down of factories, the reduction of family enterprises, had as a physical consequence the need reduction in unskilled workers. At the same time, sectors such as the tourism and the telecommunication are flourishing, while the use of New Technologies of all production procedures demand work force with high qualification that can adjust easily into the changes and the needs that may appear. It is worth to mention that in the developed countries of EU the rates of unemployment are reversing analogous to the education level. The participation of the unskilled and semi-skilled workers to the total of the active population has declined the last years from 40% to 25% while the percentage of the higher education level graduates has arise from 10% to 20%.
4. The family changes: the feminism movement, the changes in the traditional roles of men and women, the establishment of law that protect working women and reassures the participation of women to almost all working sectors, has as a consequence the raise of working women even to occupations that traditionally was considered as “male jobs”. In this way, in the contrary to the past, women have to have a high educational level.
5. The general raise of the educational and economical level of the Greek population.
6. The establishment of compulsory education to 9 years with the Constitution of 1975.
7. The changes to the educational system that are targeting to the support of students with low performance.
8. The improvement of the country’s roads.
9. Demographic factors: Since 1981 in Greece is noticed gradually reduction of births. In 1981, the overall birth factor was 2.9 births per mother while in 2004, just 1.31-percentage that is below the replacement limit of generation which is 2.1. According to records from the Greek gerontologist company in 2035 the elder people (above 65 years old) will be the 31.7% of the total population.
10. The contribution of EU: according to EU Agreements the educational policy is an internal affair of the member states. However, the last 20 years the EU has influence positive the Greek educational policy.

8.7 Best practices to contrast Early School leaving

Combat early school leaving with cause school failure – Greece

The project was an initiative of the Greek Ministry of Education. It was implemented all over the country (code EPEAEK). The proposal was first submitted in 1998 and again in June 2002 (EPEAEK-I and EPEAEK-II). It was co-financed 75% by the European Union (2nd and 3rd ESF period) and 25% by the Greek Government. The total cost of the project EPEAEK-II was 191.394.700 €.

The project was under column 1 of Lisbon strategy and its main aims were:

1. The promotion of equal opportunities in education and especially for those facing social exclusion.
2. The promotion of equal opportunities in labour market through education
3. To help working mothers through the statute of all day school.

4. To help of weak students through alternative ways of learning.
5. To strengthen parents of special groups about the value of children education.

In the framework of the project the following studies were carried

- Research of geographical areas with higher problems in the field.
- Study and research (quantity and quality) about early school leaving.
- Result that one of main reasons (more than 50%) was learning difficulties of students causing them to leave school.
- Adaptation of pilot project and study of the results.

Actions:

1. Creation and implementation of assistance to weak students in special classes, in all levels (primary – secondary).
2. Training of teachers to teach in these classes.
3. Implementation of special didactic material (teacher books and student books).
4. Taking of these actions in special schools for Gypsies and Economic refugees.
5. Emphasis in first classes of primary to prevent the phenomenon.
6. Linguistic training of teachers in primary, in the main language of mass refugees.

Combat early school leaving – Best Practice in the United States

A good practice in preventing early school leaving is the experience of the United States of America, where there is a big problem especially in students coming from Africa and Spain. It worth to mention some programs that are taken place since early 80's, some which are completed with systematic evaluation.

Independently of the length and the approach, these programs have a common objective; to help students to overcome personal, family and social obstacles that may block their stay at school and the successful completion of their studies.

Special aims are: to reduce their absences from school, to improve their performance, to develop their self-esteem, their ability to face difficulties and challenges, to gain positive experiences. The programs have as target group the school or the students and they are grouped in three categories:

- Supplementary services for students who are at risk of leaving school. Such services are the consultative (in a stable or occasional base), mentoring, tutoring (elder students supervising younger students for 45 minutes every day for 4 days per week), social support services (for students and parents), that operate during school hours or after school (e.g. free lunches, supported courses, medical care), etc
- Different ways of alternative education. Taking in mind that in older classes students are estranged, are indifferent and leave school more easily, these programs are addressed to students with low performance and the main objective is to create an educational environment more supportive and personalized, that will help them to feel more connected to school and overcome the risk factors. One way is to get the students of the program together at school, some hours every day and to “work” in small groups on their homework or to meet mentors.

Another way is the establishment inside the school of an alternative school (smaller, with little students, more teachers per student), a kind of vocational academy, that provide to these students general and vocational skills and prepares them for the next stage of their life, the profession or the training. Emphasis is given to the connection between school and labour, the gain of positive experiences and to the change of students' behaviour, who learn to respect their schoolmates, teachers and especially themselves.

Restructuring programs. They are adapted in schools with high percentages of school leaving and they have as main objective to reduce it through changes and initiatives (dividing school into smaller schools, changing the administration, grouping students and block scheduling, hiring advisors and mentors, etc)

The didactic method aims at helping students with low skills, students with skills but estranged at school or students unwilling to work. It worth to mention four approaches of the didactic method:

- The regular study program with the usual method but in classes with less students
- The regular study program but with more pressure to students, in order to cover their gaps and reach the level of the rest class
- Special study programs with new subjects that exercise the existing knowledge and focus in life subjects
- Special study programs, which are based in skills development and they apply individual teaching

So the school makes the diagnosis, they are examined the special characteristics of the student and based on these it is developed the appropriate approach by the school, or if the financing is poor, from another authority.

Of course after defining the problem and the design of the appropriate program, difficulties may arise. For example, in the case of alternative school there is difficulty in finding the students. As there isn't enough financing for advertisement (neither in traditional schools, -which they are seeing alternative schools competitively and they send the worst students-), the alternatives schools cannot convince parents and students that will succeed in the points where the regular school failed.

From the other side as they don't want to be the shelter of all bad students, they have selection criteria e.g. interview, to find out students' intentions, or a testing period of two weeks, in order to choose from the weak students the ones that have undeveloped potential.

The evaluation of these programs show that some have very positive results and other less impressive, they succeed small changes but for a while and very sensitive, where with the first change in the political scene they are cancelled. Improvement is ascertained mainly in the following factors: regular attending, behaviour, self-esteem, relation between parents and students and parents with the school.

8.8 Conclusions

The main conclusions could be summarized in the following:

- Every try of confronting the early school leaving should start from the diagnosis of the problem.
- Every student has its own characteristics, so a program shouldn't be designed and adapted for all students in general.
- The family affects in a large degree the student's school performance. So the programs should improve the life conditions in these areas; family, neighbourhood, city, by enrolling more authorities.
- The selection of the teachers is more important than the selection of the study program. Inspired and creative teachers or teachers who put students under pressure, but they were concerned for the students, succeeded in spite of the fact that they had the traditional training material, while initiative study programs were unsuccessful as the students were indifferent and uninvolved. The school succeeded when the students felt comfortable and connected to their teachers.
- It is necessary all the involved authorities to agree to the necessity of change, to accept it and believe on it. In order to do this, a discussion should take place in advance for examining the problem and to put the right questions. If the problem is not big schools, many students in one class and the lack of support services then the schools' financing for solving these problems won't have results.
- The diagnosis shouldn't stop in symptoms but to move on the understanding of the causes. For example, many absences shouldn't lead to extra control, automatic writing of absences and information of parents, but to put the question: why students do not come at school? Are they bored? Should the courses be more attractive? Why are they failing? Is the school very demanding? Do their parents need the money? Do they stay at home to take care a sick member of the family? etc
- In the changing plan teachers and the manager of school should be involved. If people that are not connected to school design the changing plan then it will fail.
- The prevention programs are more effective when they are applied in smaller classes.
- Factors such as the improvement of school environment and the relation between students and teachers contribute to the decrease of school leaving.
- The selection of the program should take in mind the school level. For example it is proved more effective to use mentors and tutors in primary classes, in lower secondary classes combined didactic methods, flexible program and working in groups, while in secondary level providing motives through several activities.

9 Italy – National Report

By Maria Luisa Pagano and Antonella Cardone

9.1 Introduction to the Country situation

Italy, officially the Italian Republic, is located on the Italian Peninsula shaped like a boot in Southern Europe, and on the two largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, Sicily and Sardinia. The independent states of San Marino and the Vatican City are enclaves within the Italian peninsula, while Campione d'Italia is an Italian exclave in Switzerland. Rome is the capital of the Italian Republic.

The Italian territory, with the exclusion of Republic of San Marino and Vatican City State, has an area of 301 333 square km with an average national population density of 192.1 inhabitants per square km. The population density varies much from one region to the other; it is due mainly to the many mountains and hills (76.83%) on the national territory.



Italy has been the home of many European cultures, such as the Etruscans and the Romans, and later was the birthplace of the movement of the Italian Renaissance. Italy's capital Rome has been the centre of Western Civilization, and is the centre of Roman Catholic Church.

Today, Italy is a **democratic republic**, and a developed country with the 7th-highest GDP and the 17th-highest Human Development Index rating in the world. It is a founding member of what is now the European Union (having signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957), and also a member of the G8, the Council of Europe, the

European Union, and the Central European Initiative. Beginning January 1, 2007, Italy became a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Also Italy is considered a Great power.

Population

Up to 31 December 2006, residents in Italy were 58 462 375. The birth rate is equal to 9.7 per thousand inhabitants. The estimate of the average number of children per woman is equal to 1.33, which is the highest number registered in Italy in the last 15 years. The ratio between old population aged 65 and over and population aged 0-14, was equal to 137.7% on the 1st of January 2005, with a steady increase compared with the previous years: 135.9% in 2004 and 133.8% in 2003. Taking into account

international data, Italy is the European country most concerned with the ageing of the population.

Employment

The average number of people employed in the first trimester of 2008 was equal to 23.170.000, with an increase of 324.000 units per year, equal to 1.4%. The increase of the labour force in 2008, compared to the same period in 2007, had been 529 000 units. The increase has been registered for the male population (+0.6%) but, above all, for the female population (+2.7%). The employment increase is +3.8% in the Central regions, in the Northern regions 1.4%, while the number of employees has decreased of 0.2% in the South. The increase of people searching for an employment has been marked in the South (+20.1%) and in the North-East (19.5%), but also in the North-West (+10.8%) and in the Centre (+12.6%) an increase has been registered. (Font: ISTAT 2008).

9.2 General information

The law of 28 March 2003, no. 53 for the reform of the education and training system aims at widening and redefining the concept of compulsory education and compulsory training to guarantee rights and duties (*diritto/dovere*) to education and training for all citizens for, at least, 12 years (within the compulsory education system), or up to the attainment of a qualification (within the vocational education and training system) within 18 years of age; the *rights and duties concept* will be gradually introduced in the new system based on two strands of the secondary cycle. The first step is to increase the compulsory education to 10 years of school, starting from the school year 2009/10.

At present, compulsory education lasts **8 years** and can be accomplished in public schools or accredited private schools (*scuole paritarie*). It includes five years of primary school and three years of first grade secondary school (*scuola secondaria di primo grado*). It can also be fulfilled through the family school (*scuola familiare*). In this case, pupils should pass through an exam, held in a public school or accredited private school, at the end of each school year of home education to pass to the following grade. However, the number of families applying for this kind of education is quite low.

9.3 Description of the Education System

At present the education system includes:

- Non-compulsory kinder garden for children between 3 and 6 years of age; enrolment can be anticipated at 2 years and 4 months of age;
- Primary education for children between 6 and 11 years of age; enrolment can be anticipated at 5 years and 4 months of age;
- First grade secondary school for children between 11 and 14 years of age;
- Second grade secondary school, made up of different kinds of schools and, generally, for students from 15 to 19 years of age.

Access to both university and non-university higher education is reserved for students after passing a State exam at the end of second grade secondary school.

Vocational training courses are run by local authorities and can be attended by people who have 15 years of age on.

Description of Italian Educational System

Age	Duration	School grade	Orientation	Follow-up
2.5/3-5 years old	3 years	Kinder garden	One obligatory	Primary cycle
5.5/6-13 years old	8 years	Primary cycle (primary school and secondary school of I grade)	One obligatory	State examination to enter Secondary cycle
14-18 years old	4 years	Secondary cycle of II grade obligatory	High school or vocational school	Certificate or qualification to enter either the high technical schools, the last year of secondary cycle or the labour market
18-19 years old	1 year	Secondary cycle of II grade optional	To deepen the knowledge of the chosen curriculum	State examination and access to university
from 18 years old	3 years	University or High technical schools	Different specialisations	Three years university degree or labour market
	2 years	University	Various faculties, specialisations, and PHD	Specialized degree or labour market
After university degree	depending	PHD, specialisations, and Master of I e II grade	Different specialisations	Labour market

9.4 Early School leaving – statistic and reasons

Early school leaving is a complex phenomenon that includes different aspects and all the school-training context. The big contribute of educational system to the cultural and professional training of young people and the increase of school attendance rate for secondary school in the last years, have as consequence the decrease in the rate of early school leaving in the last years, especially for the primary cycle. It is not the same for the secondary school of second grade where the rate of school leaving is still high.

Studying the causes of early school leaving, the accent is placed on a lot of variables - subjective and macro-economic -. Lot of analysis has demonstrated that the development rate of different areas of our country is an important factor for the

increase-decrease of early school leaving. The discrimination is not only between South and North of Italy, but also between different parts of the same region or quarters in big cities.

Limiting the analysis on the school field, the early school leaving problem is not the only one. There are a lot of connected problems as the irregular frequencies, failed exams, and interruptions of school attendance. From this point of view, the school leaving must be considered as an anomaly of educational processes that take shape from the combined effects of the different actors and school institutions who are not able to offer good answers to real problems. To this we should add the social, economical and cultural inequalities that influence as external causes the early school leaving problem.

The European dimension of early school leaving and the Italian situation

The Lisbon strategy states that the EU should by 2010 become the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, and the target date is fast-approaching. To measure achievements towards this goal, a set of five benchmarks were adopted at the European Council during the Greek presidency in May 2003.

They are “used to break down the overall ambition into manageable goals in different policy areas. In this sense indicators provide strategic guidance and steering for the Education and Training 2010 strategy – they function as the tools for evidence based policy at European level”, read the report.

The five European benchmarks for 2010 are:

No more than 10% early school leavers;

Decrease of at least 20% in the percentage of low-achieving pupils in reading literacy;

At least 85% of young people should have completed upper secondary education;

Increase of at least 15% in the number of tertiary graduates in Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST), with a simultaneous decrease in the gender imbalance;

12.5% of the adult population should participate in lifelong learning.

The early school leavers' (18-24 years-old) benchmark set the target of having by 2010, an EU average rate of no more than 10 per cent of early school leavers. In 2007 the average early school leavers' rate was 14.8% for EU-27, 2.8 percentage points lower than in 2000. Progress is slow, and at the current rate of improvement, the benchmark of no more than 10% early school leavers will not be attained by 2010. Additional efforts need to be made to meet this target.

Best performing EU countries as regards the share of early school leavers are: Slovenia (4.3%), Poland (5.0%) and the Czech Republic (5.5%). (2007)

As regard the rate of 10% prefixed, to be reached as objective within 2010, our country has over than 9 points to fill. Even if there are progresses from the 2000 situation, when school leavers where 25,3%, Italy is still far to reach the other European countries situations.

In **2007** there is a visible improvement as regard the previous years and the percentage is now at **19,3**. If we consider the percentages at regional levels, the objective of 10% results very difficult to reach for regions as Sardinia and Sicily where 30% of young

people got only primary cycle degree and don't attend the secondary cycle. Actually, any region can show a level of early school leavers under 10%.

The regions in better situations are Basilicata, Lazio, Toscana and Umbria where the percentage is not over 4 points as regard the percentage of 10. (Graf. 2)

The main problems are present especially in the suburbs of Southern biggest cities (Naples, Palermo, Bari, Catania) where poverty meets illegality.

The situation is difficult also in the North of the country, where industry requires workers with no qualification and many families do not generally consider that education is important for finding a work.

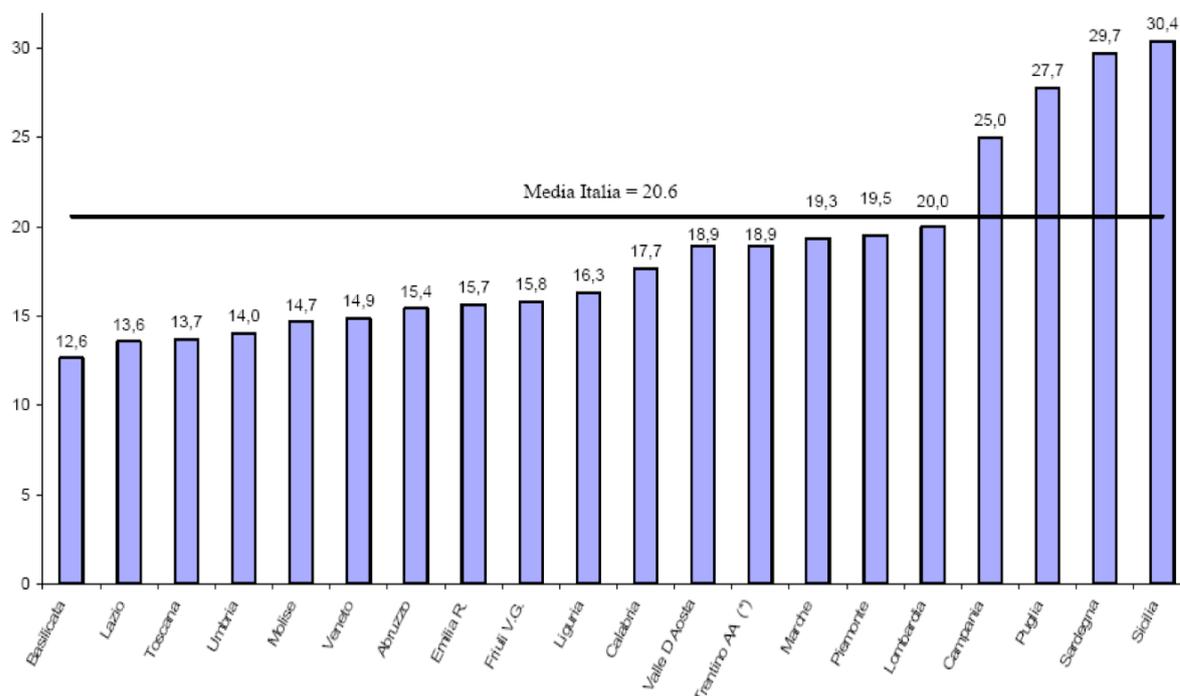
The reasons of early school living can be found outside and inside the school: in the first case, pupils' choices are influenced by factors such as familiar cultures, quality of infrastructures (transports, libraries, and communications) and income. Many students are not encouraged to attend school if they live in a negative environment (where cultural life is not developed) or they can't find appropriate means of transport (journeys can be long and stressful, in particular in the mountains).

A survey of the Lower House of Italian Parliament of 2001 criticises the excessive rigidity of pathways, the debasement of vocational education and the increase of bullying attitudes, and states that the approach to pupils' personality should be improved. According to the above-mentioned inquiry, there are too many women in the education system, and this can cause a lack of leadership model, especially for boys.

The Ministry of Education provides guidelines in this field and, occasionally, funds, and it delegates the planning and the management of projects to regions, local administrations and schools (according to their autonomy level). As from April 2005 the Ministry of Education decree n. 76 highlights the regulations related to the right to education, article n. 4 outlines actions for early school living prevention.

Measure n. 3 of the School National Operative Plan, co-financed by the European Social Fund and the European Fund for Regional Development, promotes strategies and projects in this field in southern regions.

Graf. 2 - 18-24 years old accomplished compulsory education and out of education and vocational training system, divided per Region – Year 2006



(*) The whole data referred to Trentino Alto Adige is the result of two completely different situations related to Trento and Bolzano. In Bolzano, particularly, early school leavers are 27,6%, while in Trento they are 9,5%.

Source: Istat – Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro

On the 29th June 2006 during an audition at the Lower House of the Italian Parliament, the Minister of Public Education, Giuseppe Fioroni, has defined the fight against early school leaving “the mother of all battles”: compulsory education attendance will be taken to 16 years old from the actual 15, regional and national offices of pupils’ statistics will be established, special courses for immigrants are suggested to encourage social inclusion and lifelong learning will be empowered.

The responsibility of regions in the framework of Education is also specified in Title V of the Constitution (reformed in 2000): programmes, management and funding of vocational schools and education are provided locally.

Despite all those efforts, reaching in time the Lisbon objectives seems for Italy a very difficult target.

The interruptions of attendance without justifications represent the basin where the early school leaving comes from. Compulsory attendance during the primary cycle results in almost no early school leaving, while in the secondary schools of second grade interruptions of attendance raise to 1,5%, and even more if we move to the South of Italy (2%) and to the big islands (2,9%). Pupils interrupting the attendance are mainly the ones of the first year. Also in this case, the South of Italy and the big islands are the areas with the highest rate (more than 4%).

The majority of interruptions occurs in vocational schools (7,2% of enrolments) and also in this case the southern regions are the more problematic (8% in the South and 9,9% on the islands). We shall highlight that while in the other Italian regions students leaving the vocational school motivate their choice, in the South and on the islands they interrupt the attendance without justification (5,3% in the South and 6,5% on the islands).

Graf.6 – Level of school interruption not notified during the first year of Secondary School of second grade, public and private – School year 2004/05



Note: the data from Valle d'Aosta are not available

The highest percentage of students with no grades, for all kinds of schools, is concentrated in the South and on the Islands. This result is influenced by the unjustified interruption of school attendance from the first year, as for the vocational schools. Also artistic and technical schools have potential unmotivated students.

In the high schools the phenomenon of early leaving is limited and the number of students interrupting without explanations is extremely low.

Failures in school career, together with the early school leaving, are the reasons why the final diploma is not reached by a significant quota of students.

Almost one third of students enrolled in the secondary cycle are unable to conclude positively the school career obtaining the diploma. In the school year 2004/2005 72,3% of students in the secondary cycle obtained the diploma. Confronting the performance of male and female students, the latter ones show higher performances (78,1% of female students obtained the diploma against the 67,1% of male students) in all schools, above

all in vocational and technical schools (56,5% of female against 41,5% of male students in vocational schools and 87,6% against 74,5% in technical schools).

The highest probability to obtain the diploma is reserved to the high schools students (85,6%), and this all over Italy. The interest of young people in concluding their school career is influenced both by the attraction of the school system as well as by the working possibilities after obtaining the final diploma. This can explain why technical schools in the North of Italy are less attractive than in other regions. The low percentage of students obtaining a diploma in vocational schools can be explained by the fact that many students prefer obtaining the lower qualification after three years of attendance.

Future strategies

Italy has endorsed and started implementing the process launched by the Lisbon European Council and the related agenda containing common objectives in the field of education and training.

To this end, Italy has adopted a set of measures within the framework of the five priority areas, with a view to ensuring a higher quality of education systems (document approved by the EU Education Council in May 2003).

Since its coming to power, the current Government has focused its action on initiatives aimed at achieving the Lisbon objectives. Indeed, under the Italian Presidency of the EU, it introduced some innovative elements that were then adopted by the Commission and other Member States, namely enhanced cooperation on issues of common interest and regular monitoring of the achievement of common objectives.

Under the Italian EU Presidency, Italy promoted a specific initiative on human capital, which is seen as a key factor for social cohesion and economic growth, on the basis of the following guidelines:

The definition of strategies and measures aimed at classifying financial support to education and training as investment expenditure;

The adoption of an innovative approach to analyse education and training needs, whose detection is based on the features of the demand. It will be thus possible to identify the segments of the population in which the gap is greatest between potential to contribute to the economic development and social stability of the country and what these segments actually contribute to the development and stability;

The definition of activities aimed at ensuring coherence and complementarity between education and training policies on the one hand, and social and employment policies on the other.

Likewise, Italy has reaffirmed the importance of making school, work environment and everyday life open spaces for learning, which are able to proactively face the pressures coming from young people and other contexts contributing to their personal and social growth (Council Resolution of 25.11.2003, C 295/02).

At the national level, improving the quality of education and training and ensuring a high level of social cohesion are the key objectives of Italian education and employment policies, which are thoroughly expressed in the Education Reform Act (n. 53/2003) and the Labour Market Reform Act (n. 30/2003).

It will be possible to achieve the abovementioned goals by integrating the following elements:

- The strengthening of school autonomy;
- The development of personalised study tracks, allowing students to choose more freely according to their aptitudes, talents, interests and aspirations;
- A wide diversification of the education and training tracks on offer, some being mainly academically-oriented, others mainly vocationally-oriented;
- The possibility for learners to move from one education path to the other, in line with the principle of combining education, training and work;
- A move away from the concept of compulsory school attendance till a required age to the principle of the right and obligation to receive education. Everybody is guaranteed the right to education and training for at least twelve years or until the learner obtains a qualification (by the age of 18) either in general education or in vocational education and training, with both systems enjoying equal status;
- The development of National Guidelines and Lines of action for initial and continuous guidance and counselling;
- The implementation of a national evaluation system to assess the quality of the school system;
- The active participation of parents in school life;
- The strengthening of the ties between education and the world of work.

Diminishing the percentage of early school leavers

Since guidance and counselling play a strategic role in the knowledge society, the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), in cooperation with the Welfare Ministry, local authorities and other stakeholders, has developed a proposal for a “National Guidance Plan – Guidelines and Lines of action”. The National Guidance Committee is in charge of defining the organisational and operational strategy of the Integrated National Guidance System, in line with local requirements and the needs of young people.

A number of cooperation projects have been launched between schools and enterprises which aim to produce models integrating school education and temporary work placement.

An important innovation is the enhancement of apprenticeship, which allows the young person to fulfil his/her right and obligation to education and training, while providing him/her with work experience.

These projects have helped to significantly reduce the number of young people leaving education and training before the age of 18.

The implementation of these initiatives has also been supported by a more effective use of the Structural Funds, and in particular the ESF – European Social Fund, within the framework of the 2000- 2006 National Operational Programme “School for Development”.

9.5 Regulation, laws in force at national, regional, and local level

Historical overview

The Italian education system developed as follows:

- A centralised organisation, from the constitution of the realm of Italy (1861) to the fall of Fascism (1943-45). In 1948, with the Republican Constitution, it started a process of decentralisation from the centre towards periphery; at the beginning, it affected only administration; now, according to recent provisions, some already approved, others under debate, there is a subdivision of responsibilities, also in the field of education, among state, regions, provinces and municipalities, but also among these bodies and schools which have gained a wide autonomy as for teaching, organisation, research and experimentation;
- The gradual passage from a neat separation between education paths offering mainly theoretical teaching contents, destined to the future ruling class, and paths aimed at an early professionalism, to a unitary system that tends to postpone the diversification into education and training paths;
- A gradual extension of compulsory education, from the first two years of primary level foreseen by Coppino Law of 1877 to at least 8 years, as foreseen by the Constitution of 1948, to the right and duty (*diritto/dovere*) to education and training up to 18 years of age, foreseen by the recent regulation;
- The passage from the state monopoly of education to the school pluralism, foreseen by article 33 of the Constitution (it guarantees either to the State or to legal entities the right to institute schools of every type and at every educational level), to the law on school equality;
- The passage from the old concept of school assistance to the concept of “right to study” that is the right for capable, deserving students without means to reach the higher study levels as well as the right to study for disabled students.

In 1859, before the unification of Italy, the Casati Law laid down the provisions for the organisation of state education. The main characteristics of the system were its centralised administration and a clear-cut division of upper secondary education between classical schools, involving the study of Latin and opening up the way to University education, and utilitarian schools, with no Latin courses and providing only the education needed for practical jobs.

The Law Coppino of 1887 supplemented the existing provisions with the introduction of compulsory attendance to lower primary education, a norm that, however, was followed only to a limited extent.

The rules governing the school system were radically changed by the Gentile reform introduced in 1923. This legislation divided education into two main streams, with different curricula at all levels: the humanities-oriented schools (*licei*), providing a grounding for the future managerial class, and utilitarian schools pursuing the aim of providing students with manual and practical skills.

Law of 1 July 1940, no. 899 (Bottai Law) introduced the 3-year secondary school (*scuola media*), after the 5-year primary school (*scuola elementare*).

The fall of the Fascist regime and the advent of the Republic brought several radical changes of the school system, based on the principles pointed out in the 1948 Constitution. The constitutional rules were gradually applied through several reforms of the organisation and curricula of the kinder garden (*scuola dell'infanzia*) and of compulsory and non-compulsory education.

The debate is actually focused on the reform of the educational and training system, from kinder garden (*scuola dell'infanzia*) to the university. After years of debates and proposals, a reform of school cycles (Law of 10 February 2000, no. 30 and Law of 28 March 2003, no. 53) was approved. It foresees a three-year non compulsory kinder garden (*scuola dell'infanzia*), a first cycle (*primo ciclo*) of education including five-year primary school and three-year secondary school of first grade (*scuola secondaria di primo grado*) and a second cycle (*secondo ciclo*) including the 5 years high schools system (*sistema dei licei*) and the system of vocational training and education (*sistema di istruzione e formazione professionale*). According to the above mentioned Law, the study path still lasts 16 years and is completed when students are 19 years old.

Fundamental principles and basic legislation

Italian school legislation has its foundations in a number of Articles of the Constitution of the Republican State. Articles 30, 33, 34 and 38 in particular lay down the principles on which legislation must be based. Basic principles which cannot be waived include the freedom of education, the duty of the state to provide a network of educational establishments of every type and level and open to everyone with no discrimination of any type, the right of the universities, academies and highly cultural institutions to lay down independently their own regulations; the right of private individuals to establish schools and educational establishments at no cost to the State, the right and duty (*diritto/dovere*) of parents to provide education for their children even if born outside the bonds of matrimony. If parents cannot do so, measures must be taken by law to help them to carry out their duties.

Appropriate measures must be taken to enable capable and deserving students to enter higher levels of education even if they lack financial resources. The education of citizens also includes the education and vocational training of disabled and citizens with fewer opportunities.

The fundamental principles of the Constitution were kept as a basis for all subsequent legislation, particularly with regard to compulsory education, teacher training, student assessment, the integration of disabled pupils, and vocational training.

General structure of education system

The education system includes at present what follows:

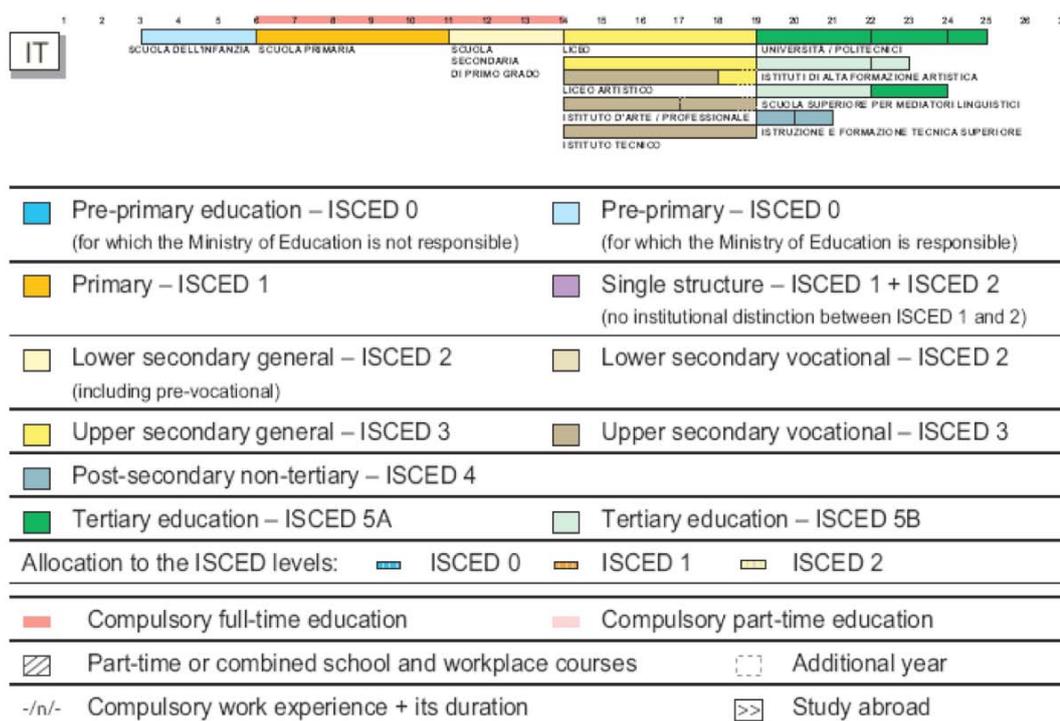
- Non-compulsory kinder garden (*scuola dell'infanzia*) for children between 3 and 6 years of age; enrolment can be anticipated at 2 years and 4 months of age;
- Primary education for children between 6 and 11 years of age; enrolment can be anticipated at 5 years and 4 months of age;
- Secondary school of first grade (*scuola secondaria di primo grado*) for children between 11 and 14 years of age;

- Secondary school of second grade (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*), made up of different kinds of schools and, generally, for students from 15 to 19 years of age.

Access to both university and non-university higher education is reserved for students after passing the State exam at the end of upper secondary school.

Vocational training courses are run by local authorities and can be attended by people who have reached 15 years of age.

Organisation of the education system in Italy, 2006/07



Source: Eurydice.

Compulsory education

Law of 28 March 2003, no. 53 for the reform of the education and training system rescinded the previous Law of 20 January 1999, no. 9 which extended gradually compulsory education from 8 to 10 years; however it aims at widening and redefining the concept of compulsory education and compulsory training to ensure the right and duty (*diritto/dovere*) to education and training to all citizens for at least 12 years (within the education system), or up to the attainment of a qualification (within the vocational education and training system) within 18 years of age; the *diritto/dovere concept* will be gradually introduced in accordance with the new system based on two strands of the secondary cycle.

From school year 2003-2004, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Welfare have drawn up an agreement with the Regions and the local authorities to launch projects on the right and duty concept in the system of vocational training and education (*sistema di istruzione e formazione professionale*). These projects are supposed to guarantee the continuity of the processes that have been started for the implementation of compulsory education and training. Regional projects resulting from

the agreement have a three-year duration, release a qualification, refer to training standards jointly established, and will be valid at national level.

At present, compulsory education lasts **8 years** and can be accomplished in state schools or recognised private schools (*scuole paritarie*). It includes five years of primary school and three years of *scuola secondaria di primo grado*. It can also be fulfilled through the family school (*scuola familiare*). In this case, pupils should pass through an exam, held in a state school or *scuola paritaria*, at the end of each school year of private education or *scuola familiare* to pass to the following grade. However, the number of families applying for this kind of education is quite low.

Rules for accomplishment of compulsory education can be summed up as follows:

- Children who have reached six years of age within 31 August should enrol in the first grade of primary school. However, enrolment is not compulsory for those who reach six years of age after the 1st of September. Furthermore, children who reach six years of age within 30 April of the current school year can enrol in the first grade.
- Parents or caregivers are responsible for the accomplishment of compulsory education;
- The Mayors of Municipalities where pupils reside and the school heads of every school types and levels supervise that pupils fulfil compulsory schooling;
- Within the month of December, the Municipalities where pupils reside prepare the list of pupils subject to compulsory schooling and gives information about it to all those concerned.

Parents are obliged to enrol their children in a state school or in a private school legally recognised (*scuola paritaria*); otherwise, they must provide education themselves (the so called private education or *scuola familiare*), making a special statement to the school head every year;

- The Heads of schools give information of enrolments in the first year of compulsory education to the Municipalities where pupils reside for inspection requirements within twenty days. As for pupils enrolled not in the first year, school heads are only obliged to give such information if drop-out occurs. As for pupils who change school, school heads have to send pupils' personal dossiers inclusive of school data and information about pupils to the new school. In case of verified breach, the municipalities admonish the persons in charge and notify it to the social assistance services to enable them to adopt the most suitable initiatives to favour compulsory school attendance;
- The Heads of schools are responsible to check pupils' attendance and, if unjustified absences are reiterated, they must take the most suitable initiatives to facilitate the attendance of compulsory schooling;
- Once compulsory schooling has been accomplished, pupils who don't prosecute their studies receive a certification attesting compulsory education fulfilment and competencies acquired; these latter constitute educational credits (*credito formativo*) for the attainment of any professional qualification;
- The same rules foreseen for Italian citizens and citizens of member states of the European Union apply also to foreigner minors from non-European countries. Legislative Decree 59/2004 has confirmed the sanctions foreseen for non attendance of the first cycle of education.

Compulsory training takes place after accomplishment of compulsory schooling; it requires attendance of integrated paths of education and training up to 18 years of age, attendance of the vocational training system managed by the Regions or the apprenticeship.

General administration

The Italian public administration has had a highly centralised organisation for a long time. Since the end of the 1950s, responsibilities and services have gradually been decentralised from the central authorities (Ministries) to the peripheral regional or provincial offices of the state administration.

A real reversal of trend has resulted from the Law 15th March 1997, no. 59 that granted Regions, Provinces, Municipalities, Mountain Communities all the roles and administrative tasks currently performed by the state bodies, with the exception of a number of responsibilities relating to specific areas (e.g. foreign affairs, defence, finance, public order, justice, scientific research, university education, school curriculum and regulations, general organisation of the school system and legal status of school personnel, etc.).

In brief, with the above mentioned law the Regions and other Local authorities now perform all administrative functions with the exception of those reserved to the State.

It must be pointed out that Law 15 March 1997, no. 59 is consistent with the Constitution in force at present; the federalist modifications of the Constitution, introduced according to the 2005 reform, imply a drastic shift of powers from the central to the peripheral level.

According to Law Decree no. 112 of 31 March 1998, in the field of education the State remains still responsible for the tasks and functions which concern the criteria and parameters for the organisation of the school system, its evaluation, the functions relating to the determination and allocation of financial resources debited to the State budget and for the allocation of staff to schools; in addition it remains responsible for functions concerning the Academy of music (*Conservatori di musica*), the Academy of arts (*Accademia di belle arti*), the High institutes for art industries (*Istituti Superiori per le Industrie Artistiche*), the National Academy of drama (*Accademia nazionale di arte drammatica*), the National Academy of dance (*Accademia nazionale di danza*) and for foreign schools and cultural institutions in Italy.

To the Regions instead is delegated the planning of the integrated formative offer, a combination of education and vocational training, the programming of the school network on the basis of provincial plans, the fixing of the school calendar, contributions to non state schools, and vocational training.

Finally, to the Provinces, in relation to upper secondary schools, and to the Municipalities, in relation to schools of lower levels, are delegated the functions concerning the establishment, the aggregation, the amalgamation and the closing down of schools, the suspension of lessons for serious and urgent reasons, the setting up of school collegiate councils, control and vigilance, over them, including their dissolution.

Autonomy regulations (approved with Presidential Decree no. 275 of 8 March 1999) have transferred to schools important administrative and managing functions of the educational service, as well as high responsibility tasks such as definition of curricula,

widening of the educational offer, organisation of school time and classes, etc., within the frame of general branches valid at national level.

School Autonomy

With Law 15 March 1997, no. 59, a redefinition of the old centralised school system, which had already reached a significant stage with the 1974 Delegate Decrees, is now finally completed. The above law and the subsequent regulations 8 March 1999, no. 275 for its application, grant to schools autonomy in teaching, administration, research activities, experimentation and development.

The statutory rule of the law concerning school autonomy defines schools as expression of functional autonomy aiming at determining and implementing the educational offer; it establishes that autonomy grants freedom in teaching and cultural pluralism taking on substantial form through planning and implementation of educational and training interventions aiming at the development of the human beings.

For this purpose, each school prepares the Plan of Educational Offer (*Piano dell'Offerta Formativa - POF*), which is the fundamental document of the cultural and planning identity of the school; it must be consistent with the general and educational objectives of the various kinds and branches of study established at national level. It must reflect cultural, social and economic requirements of the local reality, taking into consideration the local planning of the educational offer.

The *POF* includes the different methodological options, including those of minority-groups; it is devised by the Council of teachers (*Collegio dei docenti*) on the basis of general objectives defined by the Council of institute (*Consiglio di istituto*), taking into account proposals and advises of organisations and associations, even de facto, of parents associations and, as far as upper secondary schools are concerned also of students associations. It must be approved by the *Consiglio di istituto* and it is available to the public and given to students and their family on the point of the enrolment.

School autonomy includes:

1. Teaching autonomy. Schools carry out national objectives through educational paths leading to implement the right to learn and to the educational development of all pupils. For this purpose, schools organise school time and teaching time in the way which is better suited to the study and learning rhythms; therefore, they can adopt the flexibility required: in fact, the annual number of hours for any single subject can be organised into separate modules; teaching units can be not necessarily structured into teaching hours; groups of pupils of the same class or of different classes as well as of courses of different years can be arranged into modules; subjects can be grouped by subject areas.

2. Organisation autonomy. Schools are allowed to decide how to use their teaching resources and to adopt any kind of organisation which is expression of freedom in planning and consistent with the general and specific objectives of every kind and branch of study; schools can adjust the school calendar, established by the Regions, to the *POF*'s requirements; schools can organise in a flexible way the overall timetable for the curriculum and for any single subject even on the basis of multi-week planning, provided that lessons spread over a minimum of five days per week and that the prescribed annual, multi-annual or cycle number of hours for the single subjects is

complied with. Furthermore, teachers can be differently employed in the various classes and sections according to the methods and organisation featured by the *POF*.

3. Autonomy in research, experimentation and development is implemented as follows: through the planning of the educational offer and assessment research; through training and professional up-dating of the school personnel; through methodological and curricular innovation; through educational documentation, exchange of information, experiences and didactical material; through integration among the different sections of the school system including vocational training. If the research and innovation project requires structural changes beyond the curricular flexibility, acknowledgement of the Ministry of Education is required, upon opinion of the Higher Council for Education (*Consiglio Superiore della Pubblica Istruzione*).

School autonomy provides also that schools can adjust the curricular teaching time defined at national level, increase the educational offer with optional subjects and activities taking into consideration the local cultural, social and economic requirements. Autonomy allows schools to promote “network agreements” concerning didactical, research and experimental activities; purchase of goods and services; temporary exchange of consenting teachers. Furthermore, schools, individually or associated by means of a network, can draw up an agreement with public or private Universities, with organisations, associations or agencies operating on the territory; moreover, schools can also make special arrangements with voluntary associations and organisations of the private social sector.

Autonomy implies that schools are assigned administrative and accountancy functions which pertained to the Ministry and its local offices, with the exclusion of those relating to staff. Staff management, in fact, invests a territorial context that is wider than for which the individual school is responsible; in other terms, it requires particular guarantees in defence of the teaching freedom (for example: staff recruitment, mobility, recognition of foreign qualification, disciplinary sanctions, rolls for teaching appointment).

The possibility to draw up agreements and arrangements, to purchase goods and services is a consequence of the juridical personality granted to schools on the basis of school autonomy.

Autonomy can be granted only to schools with a certain number of pupils because, for this reason, they assure the best balance between application for enrolment and organisation of the educational offer. The optimal number, which should remain constant for at least five years, ranges from 500 to 900 pupils; in small islands, mountain municipalities and geographical areas with ethnic and linguistic peculiarities, the number can decrease to 300 pupils.

The Ministry of Education lays down a general frame to which school autonomy must refer, in order to assure the uniformity of the Italian educational system. In fact, it establishes the general objectives of the educational process; the specific objectives of learning (*obiettivi specifici di apprendimento*) relating to pupil skills; the subjects of the minimum national curriculum and their annual teaching hours; the total annual compulsory timetable of curricula; standards related to the service quality; general criteria for pupil assessment, for the recognition of study credits and for the recovery of educational debts (*debiti formativi*); general criteria for the organisation of study paths of adult education.

Special education support

In Italy, disabled pupils have been integrated in ordinary classes for more than 40 years; therefore, there is not a separate education system for these pupils. Integration started, on an experimental basis, first in kinder gardens (*scuole dell'infanzia*) and primary schools and was progressively extended to the secondary schools of first and second grade and universities.

Regulations are provided for the following subjects:

- Classification criteria for disabled pupils; Law of 5 February 1992, no. 104, defines as disabled persons those with a physical, psychic or sensorial disability which causes difficulties in learning, relationships or work integration and which determines social disadvantage or alienation;
- Composition of classes with disabled pupils; these classes can neither exceed the number of 20 pupils nor accept more than one disabled pupil;
- Support educational interventions (specialised teaching staff) and medical/assistance interventions;
- Interventions to adapt school buildings in order to remove all architectural barriers and to supply adequate technical equipments and teaching materials to schools.

A report presented by the Ministry of Education to the Parliament on the 22nd of October, 2002 outlined a first balance of the achievements: it pointed out that integration of disabled pupils/students at school is widely shared; furthermore, it took out many unsolved problems like the steady lack of specialised teachers, the need to grant teaching continuity, the danger to delegate the load of integration only to specialised teachers (*insegnanti di sostegno*).

In occasion of a seminar which has been organised at national level in November 2003, a document has been drawn up, which outlines analysis, needs and proposals coming from participants at the seminar (actors formally involved with problems related to school integration of pupils with special needs). This document has been disclosed to the Ministry of Education in 2004 and it will be taken into due consideration for a reform of legislation in this field.

9.6 Pro and cons of policies and measures

Recommendations

In September 2007 has been published the “Quaderno bianco sulla scuola” (White Book on School) promoted by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance with the aim of highlighting the actual Italian school situation and to put into evidence qualities and criticalities and foreshadow development scenarios and possible solutions for the founded problems.

One of the reasons of the delay of Italian school development is the big difference in terms of development in the Southern and the Central regions of Italy.

The difficulties of our country related to the quantity and the quality of education become in the South of Italy a bigger problem.

The gap of knowledge between young people living in the South of Italy and the young people living in the rest of Europe put them at a disadvantage. It is a vicious circle because without competences there isn't development and no development is the reason for bad competences.

To break this circle, in the South of Italy is necessary a stronger role of Institutions: to elevate the learning and to reach a certain level of knowledge for everybody is the aim to achieve. This is the choice of the Prodi Government, in agreement with the Regions, stated in the political action for 2007-2013.

About 5% of financial resources available (European and National funds for the South) have been addressed to this sector: 3.6 billion euros are for the Education Programme under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and 600 millions for Regional Programmes. The volume of resources addressed is 4 times higher than the last seven years. As regards the previous policies for school development, the Programme for 2007-2013 is clearly oriented to reach fast and considerable results in the following fields:

- (1) Achievement of high knowledge and competences;
- (2) Reduce and combat early school leaving starting from the results achieved in the previous programme 2000-2006;
- (3) Stronger role of school as moving cause for social inclusion and to contrast illegality;
- (4) Best quality of school service and education.

The achievement of these results implies:

- More targeted actions compared to the previous programmes, based on a more scientific diagnosis on each single school;
- Actions thought as a system instead of isolated actions;
- Strengthening the ordinary measures without replacing the old. This is an important point to not destabilize teachers and students.

This kind of activities must be thought as tasks with a term. Indeed after the end of the programme and the achievement of the objectives the school system should be self-sufficient.

The National School Operative Plan, carried out in the period 2000-2006 for Southern Regions (Campania, Basilicata, Calabria, Puglia, Sicilia and Sardinia), had the aims to improve the quality of the school system and reduce the early school leaving.

The methods of intervention were:

- Capillary measures carried out by the single schools, especially secondary schools, providing technological equipment, trainings for teachers, internship for students;
- Measures oriented to promote specific institutes able to be a reference frame for other schools and create network (Service and Resources Centres against the early school leaving);
- Measures for adults vocational trainings.

The activities promoted in the National Programme have involved 680.000 consumers. 32.000 projects have been realized and as most relevant for the early school leaving we can mention:

- The activities to reduce the early school leaving have involved in the years 2000-2004 over then 200.000 young people in difficult situations and about 20.000 parents;
- Activities in areas at risk of criminality;
- Training for the school system workers to achieve a higher quality of the education, research and organization of the school system (over then 50.000 teachers involved); the topics learned were about reducing early school leaving, training for adults, computer skills, monitoring and evaluation;
- The implementation of Service and Resources Centres against the early school leaving, able to networking with the other institutions of the relevant territories.

Many initiatives regarded activities outside the school curriculum, in order to make school more attractive for those students at risk of abandoning, but not necessary addressed to increasing the quality of the educational action. Nevertheless, the Programme gave positive results in terms of contracting the early school leaving, as an evaluation research on a specific target group showed.

The research started on September 2007 and finished on March 2007 has been implemented on 337 High Schools that realized 352 projects in the year 2005-2006 with the aim of detecting the impact of these actions on the early school leaving problem (less failed students, less absentee) and the changing of teachers school programs. 43.081 students have been monitoring and the effects of changing on the evaluations (maths, science and Italian) in the first and the second part of the school year have been verified. Making a comparison between the starting and the ending point of the programme we can observe a considerable improvement of the result of the students involved in the projects.

Monitoring and evaluation system in place

The failure in implementing the monitoring and evaluation system at national level is the strongest factor for the delay of the Italian school system. It has impoverished the instruments of the teachers to orient their activity; has private the Educational Institutions of the possibility to value the results of the system and fix standard of learning; It has hold up the adoption of innovative instruments to monitoring the improvement of schools; It took away a guide for students, families and the territory.

The efforts to build a national evaluation system in progress in the last 15 years didn't give any result. The reaction of the teachers didn't fail: especially in the North of Italy the realization of self-evaluation measures; the building of networks between schools, or the recourse to the OCSE-PISA has increased the educational offer. But these restricted experiences are not enough to reach national standards of learning. These weaknesses are the reason for the fragility of the Italian system.

Anyway, the Italian experience shows:

- The evaluation is demanded by the biggest part of teachers, although it exists a minority with opposite opinion who believes that the evaluation is a form of control instead a way to improve the educational system;
- In local experiences, where there is a need of implementing evaluation procedures, there is a big attention to the circulation of the results;
- The failure of the efforts of building a national system of evaluation is linked to the absence of clearness about the use;

There is the need of better information about the system of the evaluation: the results of the previous studies are not so accessible.

Proposals for a national evaluation system

Legislative Decree no. 286 of 2004 sets up the National Service for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System with the task to improve and harmonise progressively the quality of the education system, through the evaluation of its efficacy and efficiency also in the respect of the international context. The INVALSI (National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System) is entrusted with the national service.

In spite of the juridical decision, Italy is still lacking a homogeneous national evaluation system.

The proposal included in the White Book on School, based on national and international experiences, aims at gradually establishing an evaluation service that will be soon perceived by the different actors as credible and useful.

The proposal foresees:

- Implementation of the National evaluation system based on INVALSI with two functions: production of a national observation about the learning and a permanent programme to sustain schools for the evaluation and diagnosis.
- Revival of the educational research (in different places from INVALSI);
- Strengthening the exchange and sharing of experiences and best practices and evaluation networks of schools (self-evaluation);
- Strengthening the credibility of educational qualifications.

INVALSI should create an annual censorial analysis of the level of learning for the 5 educational levels (the years 2, 5, 8, 10 and 13 of the school life) and three educational areas.

On the base of the results of the censorial evaluation will start the action of national "support teams", made by experts with didactical and evaluation competences. Through

missions in the school they should: discuss and investigate the results of the national evaluation; promote the comparison between schools and promote the creation of school networks; elaborate an evaluation diagnosis; identify objectives and activities to contrast critical situations and improve the results. The knowledge acquired by single schools will be shared in a national contest to develop new technologies and methodologies and promote the research. In this way will be possible the consolidation of good practices indispensable for the school system.

Recommendations

Considering the complexity of the early school leaving phenomenon, caused by lots of variables, internal and external to the educational system, subjective and macro-economic, the recommendations we propose are addressed both to the educational system and the society in general.

Training of school heads and personnel

It has been underlined very often the importance of the human resources in the educational system involved in the fight against early school leaving. Enlarging and improving the methodological offer, implementation of complex pedagogical activities, promotion of specific projects in agreements with other institutions at local level. All these activities need a wide and regular training offer provided by the Ministry, in terms of direct and indirect polices, planning of activities and professional stimulus.

Teachers and heads of schools should be the target group of this training offer, as they play an important role in the fight against early school leaving.

Recruitment of personnel

Those difficult and delicate situations of Italian educational and training system, brings up the question of recruiting the teaching personnel.

Where the confrontation between school and social and urban environment becomes dramatic, where students and their families have special characteristics, demanding from teachers high social and professional competences, is not possible, and in some cases dangerous, to select teachers on the basis of their position in the pass list.

The substitution of teachers always implies problems in the relationship with students, or part of them. These problems can be emphasized if the new teacher doesn't have the relevant requisites and the adequate competences, in order to be successful in the new operational context.

Monitoring and verify the standards of intervention

It is opportune that the Ministry promotes a constant monitoring of those areas and schools where the achievements of educational scopes are difficult. It is also opportune that the Ministry promotes in those schools specific actions and projects that will have effects also in the social environment. This in light of the school autonomy, and the capacity of the single school of being pilot case, offering flexible standards of intervention that will suite the peculiarity of each situation.

Forms and levels of networking with institutions

The networks among institutions at local level are crucial for a coherent strategy to combat early school leaving. Cooperation and meeting between school and local school offices, local authorities, health care services, tribunal of minors, special police

departments, NGOs and, above all, the cooperation among schools of any grades, is a decisional factor for success or failure. We advice, as convenient, to define from a legislative point of view the minimum standard of cooperation among institutions, like districts networks, for the promotion of the educational success.

The school hour's structure

Among the reasons for early school leaving we can point out the structure and the dimension of school hours. This is more evident for the vocational schools. These schools in general are the ones enrolling students less motivated and less supported by social and family context. We can even say that through the years those schools get the majority of school population with high possibilities of failures. We recommend devoting to the problem, in view of increasing the compulsory education until 18 years old, efforts for long lasting planning.

The material resources

If it is true that well prepared and motivated teachers play a big role in reducing the early school leaving of disadvantaged students, it is also true that having enough material resources favours a virtuous climate able to produce exceptional results. It is demonstrated that competent and passionate teachers managing financial resources are able to increase the involvement of students, to diversify the learning methodologies, adapting them to the diverse personalities or interests of students.

The relationship with the labour market

The links between school and labour market are very important, mainly for the vocational schools, although school has an evident educational autonomy respects the demands coming from the labour market

Nevertheless, the perception of how attending school and getting a diploma can be important for getting a good job, can be relevant for motivate students and their families. This perception gains more weight when students have less cultural motivations or have a weak identification with the vital world of the school.

The cultural climate around school system

The effects of variables outside school can be reduced thanks to positive actions. But those variables are active in the general social context. A positive and effective action implies the elaboration of national strategies, coherent and complementary to those applied at local level.

Very welcomed are those initiatives aimed at increasing the social value of education and culture, including their preconditions such as the listening capacity and the inclination to reading.

We recommend implementing accompanying measures aimed at changing the general cultural processes, the value scales, and the common sense.

In conclusion, the educational system, in order to improve, needs to act in a sensitive environment, offering the basic conditions for its functioning.

9.7 Best practices to contrast Early School Leaving

The good practice illustrated in this chapter refers to the implementation of the Resource Centres, in the framework of the National Operational Programme “**School for Development**”.

The Resources Centres against early school leaving and youth discomfort

The 2000- 2006 National Operational Programme “School for Development”, in line with aims and strategies of nationals and communitarian polices, which are oriented at innovating and improving the quality of the Italian school system, found, as one of the priority action line, the realization of social cohesion objectives. To achieve this point, it promoted and sustained the development of ideas with the aim to prevent and fight the early school leaving and, more generally, youth discomfort connected to the issue in a cause-effect relation.

In this situation, the Resources Centres against early school leaving and youth unease were born and, in a framework which includes all the local schools and other local partners, they realise actions through European Social Fund specific measures. Their work is aimed at:

- to implement education and training interventions, which could prevent youth unease and help the recovery of boys and girls who leave the school or maybe who have a problematic scholastic path or who live in a socio-cultural neglecting situation, and have problems with their integration inside and outside the school;
- to create well-equipped environments, where young people can implement, in participated and, above all, shared ways, activities in addition to and supporting the scholastic ones, in order to promote socialisation and orientation opportunities, free time use, competences training.

We have to underline one of the most relevant aspects of the Centres existence and functioning. Omitting about the facilities and technologies sets they have been furnished with (an exceptional event in regard to our school standards), they have been characterized fundamentally by the fact to clearly become aggregation and socialization places, interrelated with the other schools in the territory and with other local cultural agencies, institutes, associations and companies. Indeed, the Resource Centres promote collaboration and support among all vital stakeholders in a territory: parents, local authorities, companies, juvenile prosecutor offices, police, medical care centres, voluntary associations.

These actors, Resource Centre’s partners, participate in programming the activities, they use the Centre’s structure, and found support to their action. The Resource Centre inside the single school is the way to promote didactic experimentation to motivate the disadvantaged young people, as well an opportunity for meeting, recreation, learning, orientation, training or vocational opportunities for young people, adult and women in the territory.

The Resource Centres against early school leaving institutions are in total 140: 2 in Basilicata, 17 in Calabria, 32 in Campania, 28 in Puglia, 21 in Sardegna, 40 in Sicilia.

They have been initiated by the Multifund Program 1994-99, consolidated during the last six years of National Operation Plan for School 2000/2006.

The costs claimed, a total amount of € 31.350.310,52, show us the massive institutional engagement to achieve the above mentioned purposes. In fact, inside the Resource Centres you can find sport facilities, housing spaces, game and media places, theatre, cinema and music labs, with new technologies and expert tutors, who also care about didactic innovation and employment potentialities of new professional actors, as well as they animate the zones which are characterized by illegality situations and socio-cultural isolation.

These Centres were born, not only to give to economically and socially disadvantaged schools (in towns as well as in mountain places and small island), a practical help with facilities, services, technologies and operatives opportunities, but above all to stimulate to play active roles to prevent and fight early school leaving and scholastic difficulties in all the territory where they are placed.

We are talking about a new way “to be school” compared to the past: no more limited inside the school building, linked to the official curriculum and the sectorial study with knowledge division, but open to new horizons experimentation, enlarged to the territory with a view of relations and changes, that can drive toward the birth and functioning of schools networks and networks with other actors interested in cultural research and social reorganisation.

The valorisation of cultural forms with different origin and dimension, the search for development linked with study and work, the encounter between environmental researches and global vision of problems, the integration of free and creative activities with the rigid application of rules and discipline, are all different aspects of this new subjectivity that is solicited and favoured by the Resource Centre.

The scenario which is possible to see in the future has, as condition for the existence, the complete affirmation of scholastic autonomy in its higher meaning, as technical and juridical instrument that, while it exalts the individual vocational competences and the spirit of initiative, uses the administrative freedom, both didactic and functional, in a responsible way, to achieve envisaged results at the higher level possible. At the centre of this system is placed, obviously, the human resource: the aware participation of network’s participants, from teachers to parents, from managers to public administrators, from school workers to the various operators of the non for-profit sector.

Technical and Commercial Institute “Einaudi” – Catanzaro, Calabria

The “Pit stop” Project

The Einaudi Institute is located in the precarious quarter of Gagliano, in Catanzaro, Calabria, with an average up to 30% of young unemployed and social deviance problems, which explode in illegality phenomenon or in mistrust against institutions and society, and in a 20% of early school leaving. Youth problems are also evident if we look at the number of suicides, 30 boys between 16 and 30 years old in the last 4 years.

The Gagliano social-economic delay is also a result of a secular isolation, also due to its geographical collocation, on a rock beyond the Fiumarella torrent, from which the school network, which implemented the present project, takes the name. The network effective work had a lot of obstacles to overcome like the initial diffidence of the

involved actors, problems linked to the difficulty to find teachers with the intention to commit themselves more than normal working hours.

Once the critical points have been resolved, the project team elaborated a needs map, in which emerged the need for deepening issues linked to youth interests, the need for a training approach different from the traditional one, the need for an active parents' involvement, the need to integrate the students oriented activities offered in the Resource Centre, with curricula activities foreseen by the school programme.

The project team worked and elaborated the "Pit stop" project, articulated in 14 modules, 1 for teachers, 10 for students in potential difficulty, 3 for parents to obtain relationship competencies.

There are stories of problems, stories of constrain, stories of people: people involved or not, convinced or to be convinced, stories of lost students that keep hanging on in the school yard, the arrogant look that hides the fear, the blank mind full of uncertainty and false values; there are strange or banal stories, happy end or lost stories, stories of motivated, sceptic or disappointed teachers, stories of parents sometime scared, inattentive, know it all. Stories like that of F. and C.

F. and C. belong to the medium-upper class of our area. They have university degree, a well paid and prestigious professional activity, very engaged in their work, less present at home and replaced with the children by baby sitter or nanny. Their daughter had a social disease that showed up with restlessness, lack of concentration, slow or almost no learning. The mother was the first participating in the module for parents, while the father, due to his work engagements did not. He also thought that the topics of the module were banal and uninteresting. He got interested step by step, while he came to pick the wife up. During the dialogue with the other parents, the young couple understood that their daughter's problems were linked to their absence and lack of parental role. They tried to be more present with the family and the daughter started changing the aggressive attitudes, and step by step she re-entered the school system with good results.

Stories like that of B., one of the boys interned in the juvenile prison that is an external partner of the project. B. is 18 years old and since two years sit in prison: he committed a severe offence. B. doesn't speak but look at the others with a derisory smile, he doesn't work with the groups but he attends the lessons. One day, on a piece of paper, he draws a rose for his young wife. He learned how to manipulate paper and on it he graves his own emotions: the inner anger he has for thinking of being victim of injustice, the loneliness of his days away from his archaic and violent world; the bitter sarcasm of who doesn't believe in values that never knew.

He created papier mache masks that represent and synthesize a mood and which, collected in a panel, glory and proud of this guy, tell us his history, his emotional and intellectual growth, the starting process toward the crumbling of the cement wall that took the soul's place.

Secondary school "F. C. Villareale" of Lavello (Potenza)**“Non uno di meno” Project**

School Year 2006/2007

Context:

Lavello municipality is an inner city with a mixed economy, located in the South of Italy, in the Basilicata Region. In the last ten years, the FIAT – SATA industry changed the local economy, with social repercussions easily to understand. In particular, we can see the rise of problems linked to the drugs market and drugs use, to the presence of workers that come from European and non-European Countries, and this situation created changes in mentality and in customs, the introduction of way of living more and more connected to consumerism, competition, social climbing and less inspired by solidarity.

In this context school responsibility increases and we have a change in the educational and formative objectives. Many students (significant the presence of immigrants and students with families with difficulties) are not adequately supported by their families, they are motivated by sport and game activities and are not attentive to cultural and environmental issues. Their reference point is the friends group and they identify themselves in television characters and in sports protagonists. A significant percentage of them don't frequent any kind of association and spend the free time in the street or in front of the TV or computer. On a scholastic level, they have difficulties in written and oral communication, they use linguistic structures that are a mix of Italian and local dialect and prefer to communicate by imagine.

Objectives:

- To regain motivation and interests by the mean of more stimulating learning situations;
- To convey psychophysical energies to the realization of a visible, useful and effective product;
- To experiment perceptive and movement situations aimed at the organization of the experience linked with verbal and non-verbal communication.

Methodologies:

We have privileged the direct observing, sensorial approach, emotional involvement. Students have been conducted, first, to discover the forest (At school of nature), then, the town and, at last, in the re-elaboration of the experience, through three labs: artistic, theatrical performance and multimedia.

Target:

- The project regarded the 20% of students that are 472 in total;
- The group was formed by disadvantaged students and support students (identified by class councils) from the first and second classes;
- 12 teachers were involved;
- Families participated only in the initial phase and during the final manifestation.

Results:

The youngsters prepared a play, realized the screenplay and product a CD, which have been distributed at the final event. The objectives have been reached in a satisfactory way, because we registered a reduction in the rate of repetition of class and an increase of their integration in the school community.

Funding:

The project has been realized with regional funds, destined to the realization of projects in areas at risk.

9.9 Conclusions

As already said in previous chapters, Italy, in order to achieve 10% of early school leavings within 2010, has more than 9 points to overcome. Progresses have been made since 2000 (in that year early school leavings were 25,3%) but Italy is still far from other European Countries situation.

In 2007, we registered a remarkable decrease with regard to previous years and the percentage is now at 19,3.

This better performance is certainly due to reforms and measures implementation that are aimed at fighting the early school leaving phenomenon.

1) The implementation of **National Operative Plan “School for Development”**, particularly the Measure 3, is aimed at preventing and recovering early school leaving and at implementing actions to reduce social exclusion. It wants to reinsert in the educational system all the actors in trouble, both the educated and the not-educated ones, recognising their needs and interests, valorising their intellectual, relational and operative resources, promoting skills for a better social, cultural and labour integration. Projects realized within this Measure are financed by European Social Fund.

2) The establishment of **Resource Centres** in the Southern regions of Italy, although they have to improve their local intervention, certainly contributed to change the school image in these territories and to better sustain students with learning and efficiency difficulties. The Resource Centres’ philosophy is based on an innovative approach. What we are talking about is a different way “to be school” compared to the past: no more limited into a building, bounded to official curriculum and to sector-based studies, but open to the experimentation of new methodologies, open up to the territory in a perspective of relationship and exchange that drive toward the setting up and running of networks involving schools and others actors interested in cultural research and social reorganization.

3) Creation of **local networks involving different actors** in a given territory to develop common strategies to fight early school leaving. The Resource Centres became, more and more clearly, aggregation and socialization places, in close interrelation with other schools of the territory and with different cultural agencies, institutes, associations and companies. In fact, the Resource Centres, promote collaboration and support among all the vital actors of a given area: parents, local authorities, companies, juvenile prosecutor offices, police offices, medical care centres, voluntary associations. These actors, the Resource Centres’ partners, participate in the activity planning, use the infrastructures, found support to their action.

4) The complete affirmation of **scholastic autonomy** in its higher meaning, as technical and juridical instrument that, while it exalts the individual vocational competences and the spirit of initiative, uses the administrative freedom, both didactic and functional, in a responsible way, to achieve envisaged results at the higher level possible.

We still have a long way to go in order to reach better results against early school leaving and to improve education quality in Italy.

Key objectives of Italian policies on education and employment, expressed in the reforming law of education (n. 53/2003) and in the reforming law of the labour market (n. 30/2003), are to improve the quality of education and vocational training and to ensure a high level of social cohesion. The achievement of these goals will be possible by integrating different elements:

- The strengthening of school autonomy;
- The development of personalised study tracks, allowing students to choose more freely according to their aptitudes, talents, interests and aspirations;
- A wide diversification of the education and training tracks on offer, some being mainly academically-oriented, others mainly vocationally-oriented;
- The possibility for learners to move from one education path to the other, in line with the principle of combining education, vocational training and work;
- A move away from the concept of compulsory school attendance till a required age to the principle of the right and obligation to receive education. Everybody is guaranteed the right to education and training for at least twelve years or until the learner obtains a qualification (by the age of 18) either in general education or in vocational education and training, with both systems enjoying equal status;
- The development of National Guidelines and Lines of action for initial and continuous guidance and counselling;
- The implementation of a national evaluation system to assess the quality of the school system;
- The active participation of parents in school life;
- The strengthening of the ties between education and the labour market.

10. Portugal – National Report

By Edite Rosario and Tiago Santos

10.1 Introduction to the Country situation

Geography

The Portuguese Republic is made up of Mainland Portugal and the Autonomous Regions of Azores and Madeira. The Mainland is located on the western tip of the European continent and is delimited by Spain on the North and East and the Atlantic Ocean, on the South and West. The archipelagos of Madeira and Azores are located in the Atlantic Ocean. The total surface of the country is 92,152 km² and the population density is 115,1 inhabitants per km². The territory is divided into 18 districts in the mainland and two autonomous regions. The country's capital is Lisbon.

Language

The official languages of the country are Portuguese and Mirandese, the later – recognised as an official language by the Law number 7/99, dated from January 29 - being spoken by very few people and only in some regions on the northern part of the country. The Portuguese language is spoken by over 200 million people, mostly the citizens of the eight countries where Portuguese is the official language - Angola, Brazil, Cape-Verde, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe and Timor - and immigrant communities. The existence of a common language, history and culture is a crucial aspect for the human flows between these countries. In what regards Portugal, 53% of its immigrants were born in this geographical historical and cultural setting (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras [SEF], 2006).

Political system

Portugal is currently a parliamentary democracy and there are four bodies of sovereignty: the President of the Republic, the Parliament, the Government and the Courts of Law. The President is elected by universal suffrage for a five year mandate. His powers are of a mainly moderator nature, but also executive. The current president is Aníbal Cavaco Silva, a former leader of the Social Democratic Party. The Parliament is elected every four years and it holds legislative power. The current members of Parliament represent six different parties: Left Bloc, Communist Party, Socialist Party (which has a absolute majority of seats), Social Democratic Party and Social Democratic Centre – Popular Party. The Government holds the executive power and it is chosen and headed by the Prime-Minister, who is usually the leader of the party which had the majority of votes in the legislative election. The current prime Minister is José Socrates, Secretary-General of the Socialist Party. The Courts of Law hold the



judicial power, administering justice on behalf of the people, defending the citizens' rights and interests, upholding democratic legality and solving the conflicts of interests that occur between parties.

Portugal is one of the founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation – NATO, of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – OECD and of the European Free Trade Association – EFTA. It became a member of the United Nations in 1955 and of the Economic European Community (EEC), currently European Union (EU) in 1986.

Demography

The number of inhabitants in Portugal was estimated by the National Statistical Institute to be of 10,599,095 individuals, on December 31 2006, of which 5,129,937 are male (48% of the population) and 5,469,158 female (52%) (INE, 2007, p. 7).

In the same year, the population growth rate, which has been slowing down since 2003, amounted to 0.28%, a value that is lower than the EU27 average, at 0.44% (INE, 2008, p. 10)?

This decrease in the growth rate of Portugal's residing population is mostly linked to the diminishing migratory growth rates (0.25% in 2006, lower than the 0.63% rate of 2001, the year of the latest population census), paired with the low natural growth rates (0.03% in 2006, which represents a decrease from the 2001 value of 0.07%) (INE, 2008, p. 10). If up until the 90's Portugal was an emigration country, from then on this trend was reversed and migratory balances became positive, a tendency that has persisted until 2006. At that point the immigrant population with a legal status of residency represented 3.9% of the population.

The birth rate has also diminished between 2001 and 2006, from 11.0 to 10.0 live births per thousand inhabitants, lower than the EU27 average in 2006 (10.6‰). In the same period the Synthetic Fertility Rate has gone down from 1.46 to 1.36 children per woman, the lowest value ever registered in Portugal (INE, 2008, p. 11).

The mortality rate has declined from 10.4 deaths per thousand inhabitants in 2001 to 9.6 in 2006, which is close to the EU27 average in the same year (9.5‰). The infant mortality rate has continued to decrease, reaching 3.3 deaths in children under 1 year of age for each thousand live births. These changes are reflected also in average life expectancy at birth, which in 2006 reached 75.2 years for men and 81.8 years for women (INE, 2008, p. 12).

These trends have lead to population ageing, which is also noticeable in the increase in the Total Dependency Index from 48 in 2001 to 49 in 2006 (INE, 2008, p. 24). In 2006, the weight of under 15 year-olds in the population was 15.5%, lower than in 2001 (15.9%). Senior cohorts, over 65 years of age, have expanded since the last Census, from 16.5% to 17.3% in 2006. Among active age groups (between 15 and 64 years old) two diverging trends are visible: young adults (between 15 and 24 years) are dwindling (from 13.8% in 2001 to 11.9% in 2006), whereas older adults (25 to 64 years) are increasing, from 53.8% to 55.4% in the same period.

In what regards regional variation, in 2006 the Azores were the region with the highest proportion of young people, whereas Alentejo had the lowest, as well as the highest

proportion of older inhabitants. In the North, Lisbon, Azores and Madeira the share of the active population was above the national average of 67.3%.

10.2 General information

Socio-economic background

Membership of the EEC has had a significant impact on the living conditions of the Portuguese and on the development of infrastructures. However, economic indicators show that Portugal remains in a disadvantaged position regarding its European counterparts. Such is the case of income distribution inequality or rate of persistent poverty risk, in which Portugal is the European country with the worst situation (Eurostat, quoted in DG Health and Consumer Protection [DGHCP], n.d.). Let us see other issues pertaining to the social and economical conditions of the population.

Work

In 2006 the total activity rate stood at 52.8% and the female activity rate at 47.7%. In the same year, out of the 5,587,300 active individuals, 5,159,500 were employed and 427,800 were unemployed. The unemployment rate in Portugal reached 7.7% of the active population, which is slightly lower than the EU27 average (7.9%). The breakdown by gender shows that women are in a more unfavourable situation, with an unemployment rate of 8.7%, whereas the men's stands at 6.7%. Another relevant indicator for this issue is the average age of leaving the labour market. According to Eurostat's Labour Survey, in 2005 the average age of leaving the labour market was 63.1 years old in Portugal, while the EU25 average was 60.9 (INE, 2007, p. 12).

In 2001 60% of the active population worked in the tertiary sector, 35% in the secondary sector and 5% in the primary sector (INE, 2003, p. 481). More recent data, from 2007, point to a re-valuation of agriculture, which concentrates 10% of the active population, whereas the industry has gone down to 30% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008).

Health

As seen above, in several indicators pertaining to the health conditions of the population, such as the mortality rate of the average life expectancy, Portuguese figures differ little from the EU averages. In terms of the resources allocated to the health sector the comparison is less favourable. Eurostat's social protection survey shows that health expenditures in 2004 reached 960,2 € per capita, substantially lower than the EU average of 1.635,7 € per capita (INE, 2007, p. 14). The number of hospital beds per 100 thousand inhabitants is also lower than the EU average: 365.1 beds in Portugal, 595.9 in the EU27 (Eurostat, quoted in DGHCP, n.d.). The number of physicians per 100 thousand inhabitants is also lower in Portugal (267.8) than in the EU27 average (304.5). The same can be said about the number of nurses: in 2004 there were around 472.2 nurses per 100 thousand inhabitants, whereas in Ireland, the EU15 country where this rate was higher, there were 1,500 (INE, quoted in Ministério da Saúde, 2008).

Education

Still in the setting of the social and economic conditions of this country – and before a more in depth analysis of the national education system – we will now present some indicators regarding education, in order to perform some comparisons with the European landscape.

According to Eurostat, public expenditure on education in 2004 amounted to 5.3% of GDP, a little over the EU27 average of 5.1%. Conversely, R&D expenditures reached only 0.81% of GDP, whereas the European average was 1.84% (INE, 2007).

The same data source indicates that in 2005 Portugal was the EU27 country with the lowest scores regarding the percentage of youngsters, between 20 and 24 years of age, who completed at least the final stage of secondary education. In Slovakia, the country at the top of the ranking, this value reached 91.8% but in Portugal it went no higher than 49% (Eurostat quoted in EUROPA, n.d.). As to the proportion of adult population (between 24 and 64 years of age) that took part in education or training actions in the four weeks preceding the survey in 2006, in Portugal the figure was 3.8% (provisional data), whereas the European average reached 9.6% (Council of the European Union, [CUE], 2008, p. 32).

However, these indicators must be interpreted against the backdrop of the national education system, which will be analysed in the next section.

10.3 Description of the Education System

Background and evolution

Despite its early definition, the implementation of Portugal's education system was extremely slow, lasting for over a century. It was only in the 50's of the 20th century that the overall majority of children under the age defined by law for compulsory schooling was in fact enrolled at school. This slowness placed Portugal among the least schooled and alphabetised countries in contemporary western world (Candeias, 2001, p. 41). In 1950 the literacy rate, estimated based on census, military surveys and wedding registers, for most European countries (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Scotland, France, the Netherlands, Hungary, England and Wales, Ireland, Nordic countries, Poland and Switzerland) stood at close to 98%, in the USSR reached almost 90%, in Bulgaria and Romania was close to 80%, in Greece and Yugoslavia was around 75% and it was just 55% in Portugal (Johansson, quoted in Graff, quoted in Candeias, 2001, p. 44).

In the mid-60's (Decree-Law n. 45 810, dated from July 9 1964), compulsory schooling in Portugal was increased from 4 to 6 years. This measure, aimed at all under 14s, should allow, in theory, to grant equal opportunities for all for 6 years of schooling. Education would proceed, after the first 4 years of primary school, in two ways: either at supplementary primary cycle (5th and 6th grade) or at preparatory cycle (2 years) before entering secondary education, either in person or via teleschool. In 1973 a Basic Law (Law n. 5/73, dated from July 25) was approved that would implement a reform of the educational system that would augment compulsory schooling from 6 to 8 years, 4 in primary school and 4 in preparatory school. However, although this law was only revoked in 1986, it was never put into practice and compulsory schooling remained at 6 years (DG Educação e Cultura [DGEC], 2007a, p. 9).

Despite the current legislation, data from the last Census (2001) shows that there is still 6% of the active population that has not finished any formal education. This is concentrated mainly in the over 45 years of age group, which corresponds to the cohort that would have been at school in the 60's.

Table 1– Active population by education level by age group

	≤24 years	24-34 years	35-44 years	≥45 years	Total	%
No education	16,258	42,896	62,691	194,610	316,455	6
1.st cycle	68,190	211,494	407,492	786,536	1,473,712	30
2.nd cycle	185,730	327,055	242,983	131,917	887,685	18
3.rd cycle	261,123	274,517	205,757	154,868	896,265	18
Secondary education	161,735	300,839	196,717	140,780	800,071	16
Higher education	37,192	239,628	165,645	173,555	616,020	12
Total	730,228	1,396,429	1,281,285	1,582,266	4,990,208	100

Source: INE, quoted in Filipe, 2007 .

The revolution in 1974 and the democratic regime changed significantly the national educational landscape. The 1976 Constitution of the Portuguese Republic defines a set of rights and obligations regarding education and teaching: “The harmonisation of the constitutional right to education, as well as the obligation of attending compulsory schooling, begins legally at this point” (Canavarro, Balão, Collot, Soares & Baptista, 2004, p. 77). The guiding principles of the Constitution allocate to the Government the responsibility of making education democratic, through school and other training means; defend the right of equal opportunity of access and success; warrant the creation of a network of public schools that covers the needs of the entire population (foreseeing also the creation of private and cooperative schools); and uphold non-confessional public education in which the Government is prevented from steering education and culture under any philosophical, aesthetical, political, ideological or religious guidance. “The dissemination of the population’s access to all levels of education was one of the challenges this country faced in the 70’s” (Gabinete de Informação e Avaliação do Sistema Educativo [GIASE], 2006a, p. 3) and the evolution of the skills of the Portuguese population shows just that.

Table 2 – Indicators of the evolution of skills in the Portuguese population

	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Illiteracy rate	33%	26%	19%	11%	9%
Higher education enrolment (pop. between 18-22 years)	4%	7%	11%	23%	53%
Population that completed medium or high education level	0,8%	1,6%	3,6%	6,3%	10%
School enrolment rate at 18 years	-	-	30%	45%	62%

Sources: INE and GIASE quoted in Filipe, 2007.

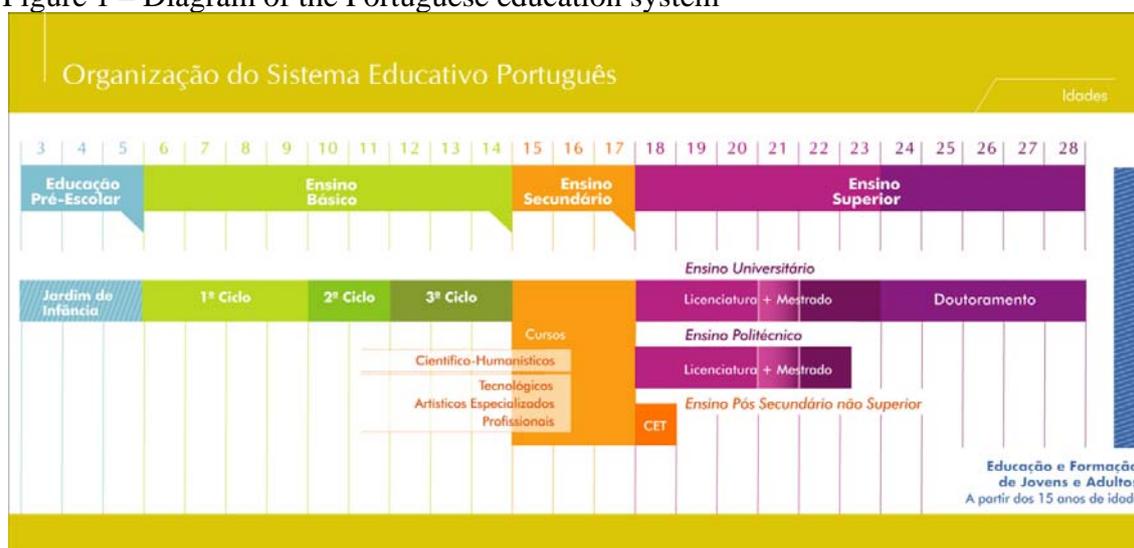
In the 80's the Basic Law of the Education System (LBSE, Law n. 46/86, dated from October 14) established the organisation rules for the national education system, stating that "Basic Education is universal, compulsory and free of charge, lasting 9 years" (article 6, n. 1) and the obligation to attend school ends at 15 years of age (article 6, n. 6) (Canavarro et al., 2004, p. 77). It is this Basic Law (modified by the Law n. 115/97, dated from September 19 and by the Law n. 49/2005, dated from August 30) that sets the basis for the structure of the National Education system. Over the years it has been readjusted in order to adapt to the needs in terms of education and teaching.

Organisation of the Education system

The Basic Law of the Education System is based on the following principles:

- To contribute to the defence of national and cultural identity, and at the same time to promote the respect for the growing interdependence and necessary solidarity between all peoples of the world
- To contribute to the fulfilment of the student by preparing him or her for a conscious reflection over the spiritual, aesthetical, moral and civic values and promoting a balanced physical development;
- To insure the civil and moral education of youngsters;
- To assure the right to be different;
- To develop the ability to work, based on solid general and specific training;
- To promote the participation in the community and creative learning;
- To decentralise and diversify the education structures and actions in order to provide a suitable adaptation to realities;
- To contribute to the correction of local and regional development asymmetries;
- To ensure a second opportunity for education to those who did not take advantage of it at a proper age, to those who seek the education system for professional or cultural reasons, due to reconversion or improvement needs caused by the evolution of scientific and technological knowledge;
- To ensure equal opportunities for both sexes;
- To contribute to the development of democratic spirit and practice, through the adoption of participatory structures and processes.

Figure 1 – Diagram of the Portuguese education system



Source: Ministry of Education (ME).

The national Education System comprises pre-school education, school education – with three levels, basic, secondary and higher, which integrate special modalities and include after school programmes – and out of school education, which are defined in the following sections.

Preschool education

Preschool education matches the educational role of the family, with which it works in close cooperation. Preschool education is not compulsory and it is aimed at over 3 year-olds. Because it deals with the early stages of the education path, preschool education has a fundamental role in assuring success throughout the education process and all over Europe the crucial importance of this level of education is recognised. In Portugal, setting up a preschool networks has been “a recent flagship endeavour of the education system” (Ministério do Trabalho e da Solidariedade Social [MTSS] and ME, n.d., p. 9) and this is reflected in the significant growth of pre-schooling rates. The gross rate of schooling is defined by the Education Statistical and Planning Office (GEPE) as the percentual relation between the total number of students enrolled in a certain cycle of education, regardless of age, and the residing population aged within the usual interval for attending this level of education (n.d.). Such data can be seen in the following table.

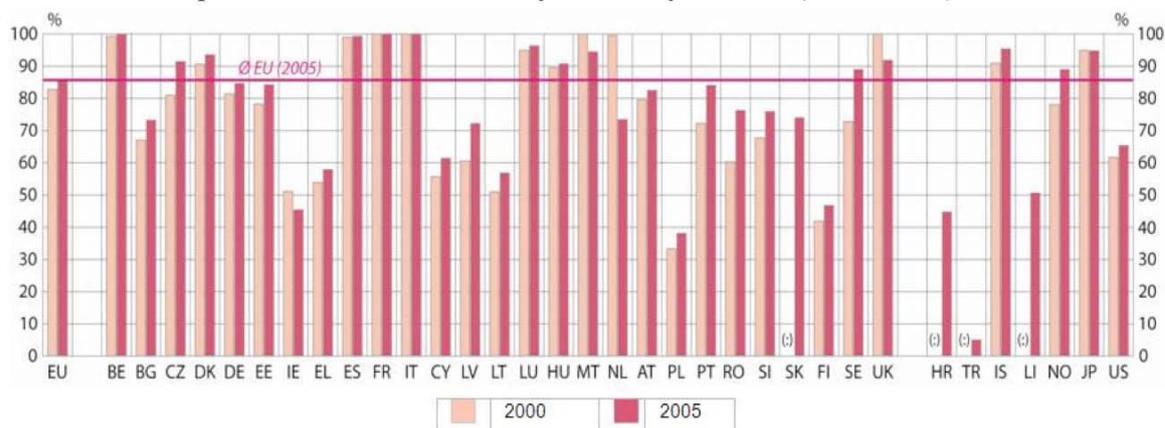
Table 3 – Gross Pre-schooling rates by academic year

1985/86	1995/96	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
29,3%	58,0%	75,6%	77,2%	77,3%	77,9%	78,3%	78,4%

Source: GEPE.

The comparison between the Portuguese situation and that of other countries shows how close national figures are to other EU counterparts. According to Eurostat, the average percentage of 4 year-olds attending preschool in the EU27 in 2005 was 85.6% and in Portugal was 84%.

Chart 1 –Participation in education rates by under 4 year-olds (2000-2005)



Source: CUE, 1998, p. 34.

School education – Basic education

Basic education is universal, compulsory, free of charge and it spans 9 years. Children enter basic education at 6 years of age, when their birthdays occur before September 16

(according to the n. 3 of the article 6 of the LBSE, children born between September 16 and December 31 can start basic education by request of their parents or guardians), and compulsory education ends at 15 years of age. Basic education comprises three sequential and jointed cycles:

- a) The first cycle comprises the first 4 years of learning and it is aimed at children between 6 and 10 years old. Comprehensive teaching is performed by only one teacher, that can be assisted other teachers in specialised areas, such as music, foreign languages, physical education.
- b) The second cycle occurs between the fifth and six grades and it is aimed at children between 10 and 12 years old. It is characterised by a unified curriculum, integrating several different areas of knowledge, taught by different teachers.
- c) The third cycle includes the 7th, 8th and 9th grades and it is aimed at teenagers between 12 and 15 years old. Teaching is organised in basic interdisciplinary areas, each with its own teacher.

By analysing Portugal's chronological statistical series between 1977 and 2006 it can be seen that the rates of schooling in basic education have risen substantially. In what regards the first cycle, 100% was reached in 1980/81. As to the second and third cycles, from starting rates of 34.3% and 27%, respectively, rates of 86.4% and 82.5% were attained at the end of the period. However, it should be noted that these rates have stabilised since 1996 (GIASE, 2006b).

Despite the growth that was registered in the past 30 years and the LBSE that was published in 1986, "data regarding the number of years of schooling of the adult population in OECD countries shows that we are still a long way away from the goal of recovering the degree of schooling of the Portuguese population" (MTSS and ME, n.d., p. 11).

Table 4 – Average number of years of schooling of adult population

Countries	Average	Countries	Average
Norway	13.8	France	11.5
Denmark	13.6	Greece	10.5
Germany	13.4	Spain	10.5
Luxemburg	13.4	Turkey	9.6
Finland	12.1	Mexico	8.7
OECD Average	12.0	Portugal	8.2

Source: OECD, quoted in MTSS e ME, n.d., p.11.

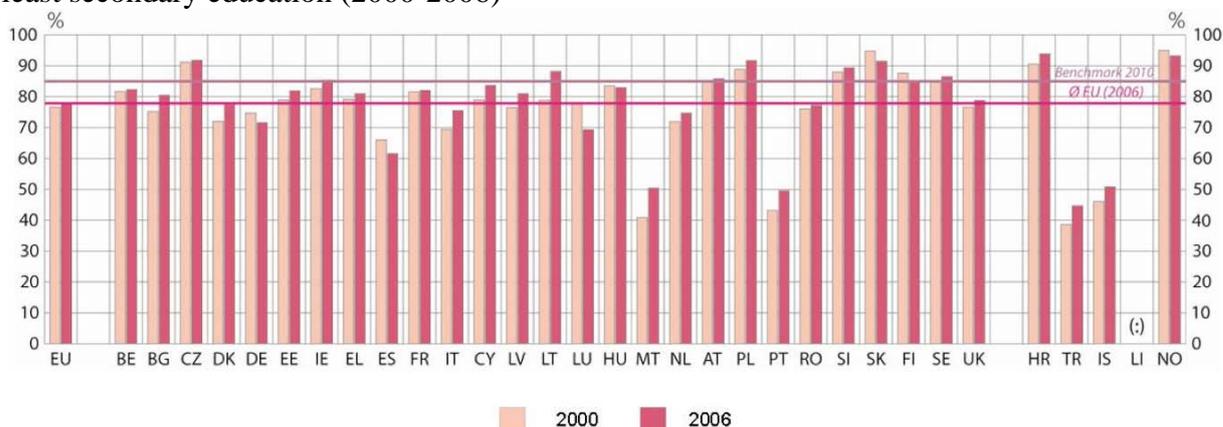
School education – Secondary education

Secondary education lasts three years. All who complete successfully basic education can have access to secondary education. This cycle is organised in different ways, comprising both courses oriented towards entering the labour market and towards pursuing further education, although the transition between the two must be assured. Secondary education comprises the 10th, 11th and 12th grades and it is usually aimed at 15 to 18 year-olds. There are four main variants in secondary education:

- a) Science and humanistic courses gather together 5 types of courses, aimed mainly at going on to higher education.
- b) Technological courses comprise 10 courses oriented towards entering the labour market, although they allow students to go on to post-secondary non higher education or higher education.
- c) Specialised artistic courses are divided into visual arts, audiovisual, dance and music and they aim to provide specialised artistic training, allowing the students both entry in the labour market and to go on to post-secondary non higher education or higher education.
- d) Occupation courses cover several different areas, are organised in modules and correspond to 3100 hours of training. They are oriented towards entry in the labour market, although they allow students to go on to post-secondary non higher education or higher education.

Between the academic years of 1977/78 and 2005/06 the schooling rate in secondary education has risen significantly, from 8.9% to 59.8%. “Nevertheless, despite this remarkable growth, catching up with European levels is far from being achieved” (GEPE, n.d.). The 2006 EU27 average rate of youngsters aged between 20 and 24 years who completed secondary education was 77.8%, whereas the value for Portugal was only 49.6%. In this indicator there is a clear gender gap: 58.6% of women aged between 20 and 24 years completed secondary education, while for men this value was only 40.8%. These figures, both for Portugal and for the EU are still far from the reference value set for 2010, which is 85% (CUE, 2008, p. 29).

Chart 2 – Percentage of the population aged between 20 and 24 years that completed at least secondary education (2000-2006)



Source: Eurostat, quoted in CUE, 2008, p. 29.

School education – Higher education

Higher education comprises university education and polytechnic education. For accessing higher education, completion of secondary education or an equivalent qualification is required, The final classification in secondary education is taken into consideration in admission procedures. Entry into higher education involves an assessment of the candidate’s educational history and national tests.

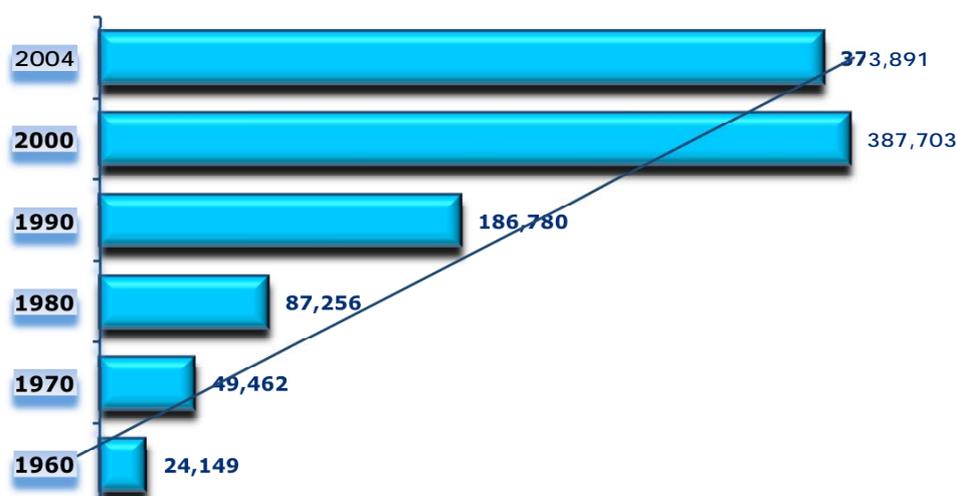
Table 5 – Higher Education

Type of education	Degrees	Age
University education	1st degree + master	18-23 years
	Doctorate	24-28 years
Polytechnic education	1st degree + master	18-22 years

Source: ME.

In 2004 the number of students enrolled in higher education was 15 times higher than in 1960. As can be seen in the following chart, the highest growth rates occurred from the 90's on.

Chart 3 – Number of students enrolled in Higher Education



Source: GIASE e OCES, quoted in MTSS e ME, n.d., p. 10.

10.4 Early School Leaving – statistics and reasons

According to the article 26 of the LBSE, out of school education aims to allow each individual to expand his/her knowledge and to develop his/her potential, in addition to school education or to replace it in its absence. Its main goals are to eliminate illiteracy and functional illiteracy, to contribute to equal educational and occupational opportunities of those who did not attend the regular school system or who left it prematurely (namely through adult education and literacy), to prepare for employment (through actions of occupational conversion or further training) those adults whose professional skills and training are inadequate in view of technological development, and to develop the technological skills and technical knowledge that are required for an adult to adapt to contemporary life.

Below, in the section pertaining to the strategies for remedying early school leave and for promoting young and adult training, we shall deal with the different types of education that grant school certificates or occupational skills certificates, as well as with post-secondary and higher education.

Responsibilities and funding

The Ministry of Education is in charge of designing national policies for preschool, basic and secondary education. In the Autonomous Regions of Madeira and Azores responsibility for the administration of education falls on the Regional Governments, through their Regional Education Offices. The Ministry of Education is responsible for ensuring compulsory education, for preventing early school leave and for promoting the qualifications of the general population, in the framework of equal opportunities, lifelong education and educational innovation.

Funding for education originates from the Government Budget and from local authorities. The Ministry of Education funds central and regional services of education, public schools (non higher education) and education welfare. Local authorities fund building and equipment expenses and some current expenses of pre-schools and first cycle basic education schools, as well as transport to schools and further and after school activities. Compulsory schooling is free of charge, but in public secondary education students pay an annual small tuition fee (DGEC, 2007b, p. 14).

The Ministry for Science Technology and Higher Education is in charge of designing national policies the higher education. Funding for higher education originates from the Government Budget, through the Ministry for Science Technology and Higher Education, in addition to the institutions' own revenues and tuition fees paid by the students (DGEC, 2007b, p. 15).

Overview of Dropout Rates in Portugal

The data concerning school dropouts published in Portugal corresponds to the percentage of individuals between the ages of 10 and 15 years at the time of the census who have not concluded the 3rd cycle of Basic Education (equivalent to compulsory schooling) and are not attending school. The figures are presented in the table below:

Table 6 – Dropout Rates According to Age, from 10 to 15 years

Age	1991	2001
10	3.5%	0.0%
11	4.2%	1.4%
12	5.0%	1.7%
13	9.9%	2.2%
14	19.5%	3.4%
15	29.2%	7.1%
Total 10-15	12.5%	2.7%

Source: Ministry of Education, as cited in Canavarro *et al*, 2004, p. 51.

Although there has been an almost 10% reduction in dropout rates in recent years, the continued existence of a dropout rate of around 3% amongst students between the ages of 10 and 15 years is worrying, especially because this occurs during a period that corresponds to compulsory schooling. An analysis of the evolution according to age reveals that dropout rates worsen as the children get older and that, “It is generally preceded by stories of repeated failure and is also manifested in the strong attraction of professional activities that are still accessible to unqualified youths” (Canavarro *et al*, 2004, p. 52).

Likewise, other indicators concerning school dropout rates – early dropout rates and precocious dropout rates – reveal that youths are staying longer within the educational system. The early dropout rate refers to the proportion of individuals between the age of 18 and 24 years who at the time of the census had not concluded the 3rd cycle of Basic Education and were not attending school. The precocious dropout rate is calculated on the basis of the same age group, but refers to individuals who abandoned their schooling before having concluded their secondary education.

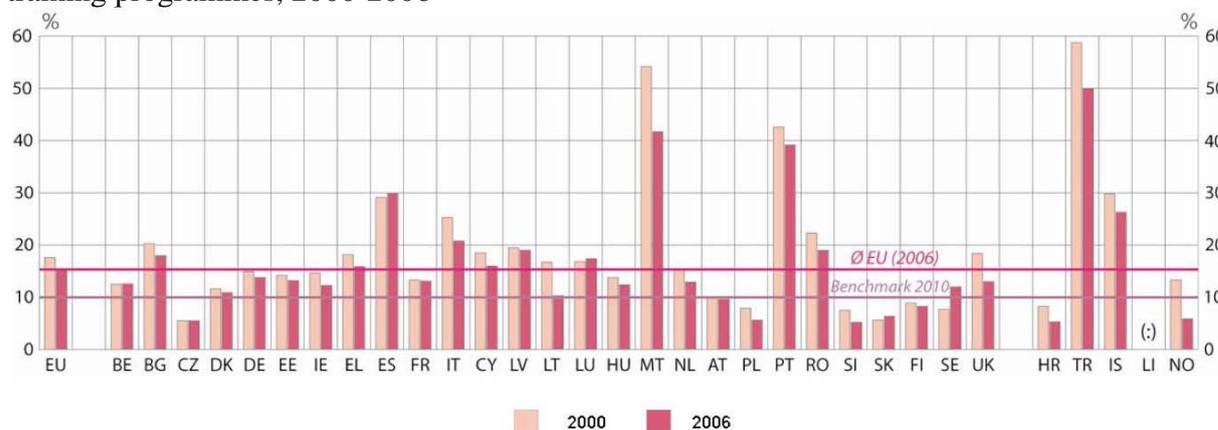
Table 7 – Early Dropout and Precocious Dropout Rates

	1991	2001
Early dropout rate	54.1%	24.6%
Precocious dropout rate	63.7%	44.8%

Source: ME/DAPP as cited in Canavarro *et al*, 2004, p. 51.

Despite the improvements reflected in these statistics in the national context, a comparison with the European panorama shows that Portugal figures amongst the countries with the worst results in terms of dropout rates. The comparative data compiled by Eurostat, regarding the number of youths between 18 and 24 years of age who left school before having concluded their lower secondary education reveals that Portugal has a dropout rate (39.2%, provisional data) that is far higher than the average recorded for EU27 nations (15.3%). Once again boys (46.4%) had worse results than girls (31.8%) and both sexes were a very long way from the EU reference value of 10% in 2010 (CUE, 2008, p. 28).

Graph 4 - Percentage of the population in the age group of 18-24 years who have only concluded their lower secondary education and no longer participate in educational or training programmes, 2000-2006



Source: Eurostat, as cited in CUE, 2008, p. 28.

10.5 Regulations, laws in force at national, regional and local level

An analysis of the positive evolution that has taken place in recent years in terms of education in Portugal – for example, the democratisation of the educational system, a rise in pre-schooling rates, reduction of illiteracy, an increase in the number of students in higher education, falling dropout rates, early dropout rates and precocious dropout

rates, reduction in the rates of failure and desisting – reveals the progress that has been achieved and reflects the “efforts, measures and programmes with a view to ensuring that the obligatory 9 years of schooling are successfully concluded, in a plan that is simultaneously diversified and integrated” (Canavarro et al, 2004, p. 78).

Over the course of recent years, since the LBSE was published in 1986, innumerable educational policies and measures have been developed in an effort to raise the qualifications of the people and counter the problem of dropouts. Some of them have been specifically entrusted to the Ministry of Education while others have been incorporated into broader social policies such as, for example, professional insertion. Given below is a brief summary of some of these measures, which serve as a backdrop for the policies that are currently in effect:

- a) The Inter-Ministerial Programme to Promote Educational Success, launched in 1987, with a duration of three academic years. Its main priority was combating scholastic failure rates, especially at the level of basic education and with a special emphasis on disadvantaged socio-cultural segments of the population.
- b) The Juridical Regime of School Autonomy, established in 1989. Gave official schools, from the 2nd and 3rd cycles of Basic and Secondary Education pedagogical autonomy (the capacity to prepare and implement educational projects to benefit students and projects with the participation of all the elements involved in the educational process) (Decree-Law No. 43/89, dated 3 February).
- c) The revival of Vocational Education, in 1989. In the wake of international and EU recommendations, this measure sought to respond to the nation’s needs in terms of training technical staff with intermediate professional qualifications. The primary objective of this teaching system is to “strengthen, via alternatives to the formal system of education, mechanisms that draw schools and the professional world closer... and to contribute towards the personal realisation of youths by providing adequate preparation for their professional lives” (Decree-Law No. 26/89, dated 21 January). “Over the course of the fourteen years of its existence, the successive adjustments to which this form of education has been subjected have always fomented mechanisms that bring educational establishments and economic, financial, professional, social or cultural institutions and associations from the local and regional context closer together” (ME, 2003, p. 7).
- d) The Apprenticeship System, created in 1984 and currently regulated by Decree-Law No. 205/96, dated 25 October. This comprises initiatives for providing alternative professional training and is an important means of raising levels of schooling and professional qualifications amongst Portuguese youths. It ensures scholastic and professional certification for those who successfully conclude the training plan implemented under this measure.
- e) Continued Education, which promotes educational opportunities amongst those who did not avail of them at the appropriate age, those who abandoned the educational system precociously and those who seek to return to school for cultural or professional reasons.

- f) Psychology and Guidance Services, created in 1991 with a view to ensuring that students are monitored psychologically over the course of the educational process.
- g) Teleschool Basic Education that, via Joint Order No. 48/SEAM/SERE/91, dated 20 April, succeeded the TV Preparatory Cycle that had been implemented in 1968.
- h) The Education for All Programme, launched in 1992. It focuses on ensuring 9 grades of compulsory schooling, in an initial phase, and generalised access to secondary education or an equivalent during a second phase.
- i) The creation of measures to support and complement education, in 1992, through Normative Order No. 98-A/92.
- j) The Priority Educational Areas, created in 1996. Amongst other objectives they sought to promote scholastic success, the articulation of educational levels and interaction between schools and the surrounding environment.
- k) The creation of alternative curricula, likewise in 1996. This seeks to adapt curricula for students enrolled in Basic Education who repeatedly fail at school and have problems integrating into the school environment, who are at risk of abandoning their basic education and face learning difficulties.
- l) The Youth Vocational Integration Programme. Created in 1997 and concluded in 2000. Amongst other measures, this programme promoted the implementation of educational and training courses with a view to increasing the training opportunities available to youths who had not concluded the 9th grade, ensuring an education that was equivalent to compulsory schooling and equipped them with professional qualifications.
- m) The Basic Professional Education and Training Courses (CEPI – 9th grade + 1), created within the framework of Joint Order No. 123/97, dated 7 July, which offered individuals who did not intend to further their studies immediately the chance to access professional training and qualifications. The courses were entrusted to the initiative of schools and could function in partnership with various entities, including the Institute for Employment and Professional Training.
- n) Plan to Eliminate the Exploitation of Child Labour (PEETI), created by Cabinet Resolution No. 75/98, whose main priorities are to remedy situations of child labour, prevent students from dropping out and avoid the precocious insertion of children into the labour market.
- o) The Integrated Training and Educational Programme, regulated by Joint Order No. 882/99, dated 15 October. Its main priority is scholastic reinsertion, by integrating students into regular scholastic channels or by creating alternative channels for education and training.
- p) Programme 15-18, created by Order No. 19971/99 and terminated in the meanwhile. It promoted flexibility in terms of the curricula on offer, with a view to ensuring compulsory schooling.

- q) Tenth grade with Professional Qualifications, created in 2001 with the main objective of providing professional qualifications for youths who, having concluded the 9th grade, do not intend to continue studying.
- r) Decree-Law No. 6/2001, which established the guiding principles of Basic Education and allowed the diversification of scholastic options as a way of ensuring compulsory schooling.

The National System of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Skills was created in 2001, by Ordinance No. 1082-A/2001, dated 5 September. This system enables individuals with low levels of formal schooling and both employed and unemployed individuals to have the various skills and knowledge they have acquired over the course of their lives, in the most diverse contexts, to be recognised, validated and certified. It is aimed at adults, over the age of 18, who have not completed the basic nine grades of schooling or have no secondary education.

The Adult Training and Education Courses that were launched in 2001 consist of an integrated range of education and training on offer, which confer dual scholastic and professional certifications. They are aimed at adults over the age of 18 who have not concluded their basic 9th grade schooling or secondary education, without professional qualifications. Such individuals can be either employed or unemployed, and must be enrolled at the Employment Centres of the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP) or those indicated by other entities such as companies, ministries, trade unions etc.

The Education and Training Courses that were created in 2002 seek to increase scholastic qualifications and the acquisition of professional skills, facilitating access to more qualified professional opportunities. They are aimed at youths aged 15 years or over who are at the risk of dropping out or who have already dropped out before concluding 12 grades of schooling. They are likewise aimed at youths who have concluded the 12th grade but do not have any professional qualifications and wish to obtain them.

The S@bER+ initiatives comprise a diverse set of short-term actions that seek to stimulate adult target audiences to acquire, develop or reinforce their personal, professional or scholastic skills. They are aimed at individuals over the age of 18, irrespective of their level of schooling or professional qualifications.

The National Plan to Prevent Students from Dropping Out of School was presented in 2004, with the motto: "I Don't Quit". The main proposals and recommendations that were presented were: 1) to integrate students into schools, support their development and successfully promote them; 2) to associate a sense of utility and vocation with schools; 3) to enhance the social value of schools and concluding the 12th grade; 4) to support a policy of broad inter-ministerial articulation and societal involvement to prevent students from dropping out of school, accentuating the social and youth aspects.

The initiative entitled *New Opportunities*, which was presented by the present constitutional government in 2005, is currently being implemented. Its objective is to accelerate the rate of progression in secondary schooling, reducing the time necessary to attain average European rates. This includes two axes for intervention.

The first axis, called *A New Opportunity for Youths*, entails a reinforcement of professional education that offers dual qualifications – scholastic and professional - "to

staunch the flow of youths who leave the systems of education and training without concluding their secondary education” (MTSS/ME, n.d., p. 15). There are various underlying guidelines, of which the most important ones are aimed at ensuring that youths stay in the educational system. This includes the “Implementation of plans to recover and monitor students as a key strategy to combat educational failures of students in basic education, allowing a growing number of youths to remain in school and achieve secondary education” (MTSS/ME, n.d., p. 16). Another key measure is to “Discourage youths under 22, who have not concluded their secondary education, from entering the labour market, ensuring access to dual certification, i.e. professional qualifications that allow them to conclude this level of schooling” (MTSS/ME, n.d., p. 16).

The *New Opportunities* initiative also entails a second axis of intervention, called *A New Opportunity for Adults*, whose main objective is to raise basic qualification levels amongst the adult population. These measures are aimed at individuals over the age of 18 who have not concluded the 9th grade or secondary schooling, in order to increase their basic qualifications. To this end, it is necessary to reinforce the processes of recognition, validation and the certification of acquired skills and the range of professional training available for adults with low levels of schooling (MTSS/ME, undated, p. 15).

The *New Opportunities* initiative has been developed within the framework of the National Plan for Employment and the Technological Plan and is financed by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity and Structural Funds.

10.6 Pro and cons of policies and measures

The measures and policies that have been used in the last few years have achieved some results in decreasing grade retention and dropout rates. This rate is calculated by the percentage of students registered in a given year that cannot pass to the next grade. This decrease was particularly noteworthy at high school level, where in 2007, and for the first time, this rate was under 30%.

Table 8 – Retention and dropout rates by year and academic level (BE= Basic Education; SE= Secondary education) %

	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07
B E	13,5	15	13,4	12,7	12,1	12,3	13,2	12,6	11,5	11,5	10,6	10,0
SE	33,3	35,9	35,5	36,0	37,0	39,5	37,3	33,6	33,6	31,9	30,4	24,6

Source: Portuguese Ministry of Education (ME).

Without neglecting the importance of the New Opportunities initiative directed towards improving adults' professional and academic qualifications, this analysis will focus on the results obtained, until now, through the intervention axis *A new opportunity for youths*, since it is the one that is related to dropout prevention strategies.

According to the report evaluating the implementation of the measures executed within the scope of this programme “The focus on diversifying the types of secondary level education and training, a trademark for the youth subdivision of the New Opportunities

Initiative, has allowed for an inversion of the tendency of losing students at secondary education, as well as a reduction of the retention rate and, therefore, prevention of early abandonment of the education system” (MTSS/ME, 2008, p. 14). In 2001 the selection of professional qualification options with education equivalents was 28,3% in Portugal, as opposed to an average of 47,2% for OECD countries. According to the report on education results for Secondary Education in 2006/07, the rate of youths in the professionalization route at secondary level is already 35,4% of the total number of students in that academic level, closer to the levels registered in other OECD countries, in which around 50% choose that path (ME, 2007).

Table 9 – Nr of youths in secondary level double certification courses

Courses	2005	2006	2007
Technological Courses	49.800	42.676	29.042
Professional Courses	33.341	44.466	62.996
Learning Courses	21.769	20.563	18.309
Youth Education and Training Courses (ME Network)	3.103	4.898	6.212
Youth Education and Training Courses (IEFP)	337	1.149	1.949
Specialised Artistic Education Course	2.063	2.256	2.256*
Total	110.413	116.008	120.764
New Opportunities Programming	110.000	115.000	120.000

*Estimated based on the result for 2006

Source: GEPE and IEFP, cit. in MTSS/ME, 2008, p. 14.

In 2007, 44.129 youths were enrolled in basic level double certification courses. This number grew significantly from 2005 due to the focus on Education and Training Courses (where more than 41.000 youths are enrolled) offered by public schools, Centres for Professional Training and private entities like Professional Schools. According to the Government, “The focus on this type of education has been a fundamental option in fighting early school dropout, with a significant number of youths that in addition to finishing basic education through this path, choose to pursue further studies in secondary education” (MTSS/ME, 2008, p. 15). The growing number of professional education classes created in secondary schools is an indicator of the increase of educational choices: there were 1.019 1st year classes in the school year of 2007/08, against 615 in 2006/07 and 85 in 2005/06. “At present, 73% of public schools with secondary education offer professional courses (the goal is 100% until 2010)” (MTSS/ME, 2008, p. 15).

Regarding early school dropout, which previously presented numbers very different from the EU27, there were also positive results. The percentage of 18 to 24-year-olds who did not complete their secondary education and were not enrolled in training and education classes (in the four weeks prior to the surveying) decreased 3 percentage points onto 36,3 percent (Eurostat and INE, cit. in ME, 2007). According to these values, 30 thousand more youths were kept in the system.

10.7 Best practices to contrast Early School Leaving

For this chapter, we selected a project by the EPIS Association - Empresários pela Inclusão Social (Entrepreneurs for Social Inclusion). This association was created in 2006 by a group of ten Portuguese managers and entrepreneurs to answer an appeal by the Portuguese President for a “civic commitment, a commitment to social inclusion, in order to sever oneself from the conformism and commodity of dismissing the solution for the problem to the State” (Silva, 2006). Thus, EPIS assumed Education as a priority, by establishing as the main purpose for their launching strategy “fighting school failure and dropout, by preventing and remediating risk factors, as well as promoting protection factors for students and families, and by inducing external success factors in school organisations” (EPIS, 2008). Based on this goal, EPIS selected as main target students from the 7th to the 9th grade, between 12 and 15 years of age, and launched the intervention project Network of Mediators for the Enablement of School Achievement. By offering new competencies to the traditional actors in the educational process – the family, school and community – this project intends to increase the quality of parental and non-parental support in order to achieve educational success and social inclusion. “Enablement” is here seen as every educational methodology that can be transmitted to the youths, their families, the schools and the community, and that will lead to positive and decisive practices towards educational success and youth social inclusion (EPIS, 2008, p. 2).

The mediators' network is composed by specialised and experienced professionals and its methodology consists of two phases: 1) a system to signal youths with an educational success risk factor and 2) a portfolio of enablement methods, some universal and others directed towards each risk profile, which allow for the design of individual plans of support in proximity and continuity.

At a first stage, named screening, a diagnosis based on the mediator's contact with the schools, the teachers and the students themselves, leads to conclusions regarding motivation (or lack of it) of the youths for the possibility of dropout. Factors like family, the school and the territory, the distance from home to school, relationship with peers, among others are weighed in. After this phase is concluded, the EPIS project continues with the mediators gathering more information from students that were signalled as being of risk for failure and dropout. This phase is called zooming. The third and last phase of this programme encompasses an individualised approach to each student and their family, in order to minimise risk factors related to educational failure and abandonment as well as induce success factors.

Acting through an enablement point of view, EPIS considers fundamental to transversally include in every phase of the project two dimensions: methodological excellence and a proximity dynamic. To achieve the first, a Scientific Counsel was created with university specialists and experienced ex-government members which was the genesis of the team that has been developing this unprecedented methodology in Portugal. Regarding the latter, the diagnosis of the techniques to fight educational failure and abandonment revealed a deficit in field proximity and therefore a different model for the network mediators was adopted: a low ratio of students per expert professional, a high frequency of visits, stability of relationship between the professional and the students and a continuity of intervention within a timeframe that

allows for measurement of concrete results for two or three school years, with potential support along the 7th, 8th and 9th grades (EPIS, 2008, p. 2).

The project Network of Mediators for the Enablement of School Achievement is carried through a partnership of EPIS with the Ministry of Education and 11 cities: Aljezur, Amadora, Lousada, Matosinhos, Odivelas, Paredes, Resende, Santarém, Setúbal, Tavira and Vila Franca de Xira. It is comprised of 57 experts dedicated exclusively to the project and serves around 88 schools that teach 7th to 9th grades.

Table 10 – Network of Mediators for the Enablement of School Achievement

Partnerships	City	Approximate Population	Schools with 7 th , 8 th and 9 th grade	Number of students covered	EPIS Mediators
With cities	Paredes	83.000	9	3.227	6
	Odivelas	134.000	13	3.780	8
	Resende	12.500	1	375	2
	Aljezur	5.400	1	168	1
	VFXira	133.200	11	3.455	8
	Matosinhos	167.000	16	5.030	10
	Lousada	45.000	5	1.859	5
With the ME	Tavira	24.300	2	660	3
	Amadora	176.000	13	4.411	5
	Santarém	64.000	7	1.509	5
	Setúbal	114.000	10	3.846	4
Total EPIS	11	958.400	88	28.320	57
Total Continent	276	10.110.271	1.076	350.841	-
Coverage	4.0%	9,5%	8,2%	81%	-

Source: EPIS.

EPIS predicts that by the end of the 2007/08 school year the projects will be at the enablement phase and that the first results mediation happens at the end of the 2008/09 school year.

10.8 Conclusions

The slow implementation of the national education system had fairly significant consequences in qualifying the Portuguese population. In the European context, Portugal still presents low levels of schooling, which has serious implications in professional insertion, since unemployment rates tend to decline as qualifications levels increase (DG EAC, 2005, p. 90).

Since the creation of the LBSE in 1986, many policies were created with the intention of improving the qualification and increasing the schooling of the Portuguese population, among which many different measures, specifically directed towards the fight against and prevention of school dropout and early exit from the school system

(curricular adaptations, school autonomy, reorientation of students' educational path, diversification of professionalizing paths, among others).

There is no doubt that the evolutions registered since then, although slow, have been positive. The majority of students enrolled in secondary level shows lower rates of retention and dropout, as well as of early exit. School dropout has decreased and the number of students enrolled in undergraduate studies has been increasing.

However, regarding schooling levels, although some indicators are converging, they are still far from the European numbers and it is urgent to act effectively over the causes of school dropout. The measures created should always be connected to understanding the phenomenon. In Portugal, existing data reveals a higher school dropout by male students (DG EAC, 2005, p. 99) and show strong inequalities when broken down to local and regional level, being the Northern region the one in which this phenomenon is more blatant. The Ministry of Education states that “When confronting the cartography of dropout rates with other socio-economic contextualization factors it is possible to link this phenomenon to early workforce opportunities and school failure” (2003b, p. 4). The analysis of the information at our disposal allows us also to conclude that school dropout is more related to age than to the school grade in which students more frequently dropout from (ME, 2003b, p. 4).

The choice of the project Network of Mediators for the Enablement of School Achievement as an example of best practice in fighting and preventing school dropout, is related to the fact that this particular project concentrates mainly on fighting school dropout, which is the focal point of this report, and for presenting a set of innovative ideas, namely:

- a) policy decentralisation, allowing for a local diagnosis and prosecution of school dropout;
- b) taking into account, in an integrated perspective, the contexts, the actors, the resources, the community and the region as fundamental aspects of the students educational path;
- c) awareness for integrated and sustained actions, in a proximity point of view, involves the family, the student and the school;
- d) care in bringing the school and the community closer together.

11. European Comparative Study

11.1 Introduction

Background

The present report is the final result of the project Ulisse co-funded by the European Commission under the Socrates Programme, Action 6.1.2 and 6.2. It is a comparative study based on the findings of six National Reports on the analysis of the phenomenon of early school leaving and best practices to retain students in the education system.

The report aims at giving the actual picture of a complex phenomenon with different aspects and implications that vary from country to country. It also aims at giving some examples of best practices applied in each national context.

Due to the complexity of the phenomenon the report can't be exhaustive; nevertheless it contains some conclusions that can be used as a basis to better approach the phenomenon and look for different solutions.

The partner organisations and the countries involved in the Ulisse project are:

Italy

UniTS – Università del Terzo Settore – Promoter

<http://www.uniterzosettore.it>

Bulgaria

HCA – Health Care Association

<http://hca.burgasnet.com/index>

Estonia

Institute of Educational Research of Tallinn University

<http://www.tlu.ee>

Germany

EBG – Europäisches Bildungswerk für Beruf und Gesellschaft gGmbH

<http://www.ebg.de/>

Greece

KekKronos

<http://www.kek-kronos.gr/>

Portugal

Numena

<http://www.numena.org.pt>

The aim of the project Ulisse is to evaluate measures and policies that the educational authorities and institutions enforced in the six Member States participating in the project to reduce and combat the phenomenon of early school leavers. The project also intends to exchange experiences and best practices on the theme among teachers, school directors, professionals in the educational sector, and policy makers.

The specific objectives are:

- To map and evaluate the existing policies and measures to reduce and combat early school leaving in the six Member States participating in the project;
- To compare the different National situations in order to draw recommendations for future national improvements;
- To enable the exchange and sharing of experiences and best practices on contrasting early school leaving among teachers, school directors, professionals in the educational sector, policies makers, and local and national authorities;
- To sustain the international co-operation among NGOs, educational institutions and authorities for implementing transnational actions to pursue a harmonious education – with no early leavers – for the development of knowledge-based societies.

The project Ulisse is addressed to teachers, school directors, professionals in the educational sectors, policies makers, local and national authorities to increase their awareness on the size of the phenomenon of early school leavers in their country and at European level, to actively motivate them to implement initiatives and measures to contrast the phenomenon of early school leavers, thanks to the exchange of good practices at European level, and to increase their awareness on the consequences early school leaving has on the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy both at national and European level.

In order to reach those objectives, the following activities have been implemented:

- Production of six national reports about existing policies and measures to reduce and combat early school leaving. The written reports are published in English and in the national languages (IT, BG, DE, EL, EE, PT);
- Production of a European report to compare the different policies and initiatives from partner countries and to draw recommendations for future national improvements. The comparative study is published in English.
- Setting up six country based networks involving the main stakeholders (teachers, school directors, professionals in the educational sectors, policies makers, local and national authorities) to collect best practices and support the dissemination of the project results;
- Organisation of six international seminars to exchange information and best practices on different initiatives to contrast early school leaving.
- Organisation of a final European conference to disseminate the project results and to exchange best practices and experiences to contrast the phenomenon of early school leavers.
- Production of a DVD in English and in the partners' languages to disseminate the project findings and results.

The National Reports

The present European Report is based on six National Reports that have been elaborated by experts appointed by each partner organisation and thus follow a common template

agreed among the partners during the first transnational meeting, hold in Varna (Bulgaria) in March 2007.

Each report is composed by five chapters, as follows:

- 1) Introduction to the country situation. Definition of compulsory education, definition of early school leaving and reasons why, some statistics, country background (population, geography, demography, social and economical aspects). Future strategy.
- 2) Regulations, laws in force at national, regional and local level regarding early school leaving. Existing policies and measures to reduce and combat early school leaving. Approach of government and local authorities to the issue.
- 3) Pro and cons of policies and measures, critical reflections, monitoring and evaluation system in place, evidences reflecting the decrease of early school leaving.
- 4) Good practices. Examples of projects, initiatives at national, regional, local and school level.
- 5) Key remarks, evidence-based key points for good policies on early school leaving, conclusions

The reports have been produced both in English and in the national language. They can be downloaded from the partners' web sites and are included in the Ulisse DVD that can be requested from UniTS, the project promoter and from each partner organisation.

Brief descriptions of the project partners

UniTS (IT) is a private, non governmental, Not-for-Profit training and research organisation. It was born in 1996 on an A.N.P.A.S. (one of the biggest Voluntary organisations in Italy: 1.200.000 members, 850 local associations and 100.000 volunteers) project in partnership with Local Authorities, Public Institutions and Private Companies. Among UniTS' members there is the biggest Italian elderly people voluntary organisation, AUSER, with its 1.000 local associations, 60.000 volunteers and 200.000 members.

UniTS aims at strengthening the role and improving the efficiency of the Not-for-profit Sector in Italy through the development of research and high quality training for Not-for-profit Sector's operators.

HCA (BG) Health Care Association is an independent, non-profit organization among health and social care professionals, working on wide social basis. Health Care Association is one of the best-recognised NGOs in Bulgaria. The main field of activities regards the promotion of young professionals' education and continuous training in the health and social care themes, as well as research and development in the area of quality of services and good practices identification in our main fields of expertise.

Institute of Educational Sciences of Tallinn University (EE) Tallinn University is the third largest university in Estonia, consisting of 17 institutes and 4 colleges. It has more than 8500 students as well as more than 400 faculty members and research fellows. Tallinn University is a public institution of higher education. Its main strengths lie in the fields of humanities and social sciences, but it also has a strong and constantly growing

component of natural and exact sciences, as well as a notable tradition of teacher training and educational research.

EBG (DE) The **European Association for Vocational and Social Education** is an independent and non-profit association. It is presently active in the German federal states of Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt (North), Saxony-Anhalt (South), Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia and Berlin. The present 31 training centres in Germany and other European countries offer an extensive spectrum of training programs. Technical colleges offer programs for national official qualifications. EBG is involved in the training of a wide range of different target groups in general through its services for the German labour administration. Qualification topics are among others: conventional and CNC machining processes, control engineering and quality assurance, welding procedures, programmable logic controllers, flexible assembly systems and electronics. Since 1994 EBG has been the supporter of technical colleges in the field of old peoples' care, remedial education, curative educational nursing and occupational therapy. Its 350 employees are dealing with adult and young learners in a great variety (Youth, Teachers, Management Personnel, and educational Staff). Qualified trainers, state-of-the-art computer labs and training facilities guarantee an efficient learning environment and high-quality training programs. With the objectives of development of employment and equal opportunities we actively took and take part in miscellaneous European programs (ADAPT, NOW, HORIZON, RESIDER, LEADER, LEONARDO DA VINCI, SOCRATES).

KEK KRONOS Ltd. (GR) is a private Vocational training Centre for life long learning, founded in 1995. It is based in Psahna, Evia and it has 2 more facilities, one in Athens and one in Agrinio, Western Greece. The main aims of the organization are: Implementation of Vocational Training Programs; Fighting Exclusion and Promoting Equal Opportunities; Participation in European Union Programs; Market Research; Feasibility Studies and Consulting; O.D.L. Solutions – Tele-working. The main activities of KEK KRONOS include Continuous Professional Training, Development of Feasibility Studies, Support of Research Activities, Promotion of the Employment of the Unemployed, Disabled People, Disadvantaged People, and Members of Socially Excluded Isolated Communities.

Numena (PT) is a Social Sciences and Humanities research centre established in 2001 as a non-profit scientific association. Since then, Númena has been the National Focal Point (NFP) of the Racism and Xenophobia Information Network (RAXEN) of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in Portugal. Númena's role as RAXEN NFP has fostered the participation of Númena on several other projects and, as a result, its research activities have been essentially focused on racial and ethnic discrimination, immigration and integration (e.g., participation in some INTI projects and partners of the National Contact Point of the European Migration Network). Nevertheless we have been also participating in national and European projects on the scope of different social domains, such as, religion, the environment, politics and social inclusion.

The European dimension of early school leaving

The Lisbon strategy states that the European Union should, by 2010, become the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, and the target date is fast-approaching. To measure the achievements towards this goal, a set of five benchmarks for Education were adopted at the European Council during the Greek presidency in May 2003.

They are “used to break down the overall ambition into manageable goals in different policy areas. In this sense indicators provide strategic guidance and steering for the Education and Training 2010 strategy – they function as the tools for evidence based policy at European level”, reads the report.

The five European education and training benchmarks for 2010 are:

1. No more than 10% early school leavers;
2. Decrease of at least 20% in the percentage of low-achieving pupils in reading literacy;
3. At least 85% of young people should have completed upper secondary education;
4. Increase of at least 15% in the number of tertiary graduates in Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST), with a simultaneous decrease in the gender imbalance;
5. 12.5% of the adult population should participate in lifelong learning.

The early school leavers’ (18-24 years-old) benchmark set the target of having, by 2010, an European Union average rate of no more than 10 per cent of early school leavers. In 2007 the average early school leavers’ rate was 14.8% for EU-27, 2.8 percentage points lower than in 2000. Progress is slow, and at the current rate of improvement, the benchmark of no more than 10% early school leavers will not be reached by 2010. Additional efforts need to be made to meet this target.

Data show a geographical divide between the higher performers in northern and central Europe and the lower performers in the south of the European Union.

Best performing EU countries as regards the share of early school leavers are: Slovenia (4.3%), Poland (5.0%) and the Czech Republic (5.5%). (2007)

The best performers — the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Finland, along with Norway — all have early school leaving rates below the European reference level (benchmark) for 2010 (not more than 10%). Slovenia and Croatia also belong to the best performers in this area.

By contrast, in 2007 Malta and Portugal still had the highest proportions of early school leavers in the EU (37.6% and 36.3% respectively), but they are improving steadily. The new Member States which joined in 2007 – Romania and Bulgaria – also have relatively high proportions of early school leavers (19.2% and 16.6% respectively).

“Early school leaving can be understood as young people leaving school before the legal school leaving age and/or leaving school with limited or no formal qualifications”.

There is a range of definitions and concepts of Early School Leaving. Each of the following criteria is relevant, to better understand the concept:

- Failure to complete upper secondary education (or high school) and not attending further education or training.
- Failure to complete compulsory schooling (i.e. prolonged or complete non attendance).
- Failure to gain qualifications or school leaving certificates.
- Failure to participate in education or training by those of school leaving age
- Failure to gain qualifications for participating in further education
- Failure to gain qualifications for accessing a wide range of labour market opportunities to sustain life chances.

The present report intends to give an overview on the status of the phenomenon in the six countries participating in the project, on how they are approaching it and on what kind of responses they give to it.

Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with less than upper secondary education and not in education or training, 2000 and 2007

2000	2007	Country	2000	2007	Country
17.6	14.8	EU-27	18.4	13.0	United Kingdom
7.5	4.3	Slovenia	14.2	14.3	Estonia
7.9	5.0	Poland	18.2	14.7	Greece
5.5	5.5	Czech Republic	16.8	15.1	Luxembourg
5.6	7.2	Slovakia	19.5	16.0	Latvia
8.9	7.9	Finland	20.3	16.6	Bulgaria
16.7	8.7	Lithuania	22.3	19.2	Romania
10.2	10.9	Austria	25.3	19.3	Italy
13.8	10.9	Hungary	29.1	31.0	Spain
14.7	11.5	Ireland	42.6	36.3	Portugal
7.7	12.0	Sweden	54.2	37.6	Malta
15.5	12.0	Netherlands	8.3	3.9	Croatia
12.5	12.3	Belgium	:	:	FYR Macedonia
11.6	12.4	Denmark	58.8	47.6	Turkey
18.5	12.6	Cyprus	29.8	29.8	Iceland
13.3	12.7	France	:	:	Liechtenstein
14.9	12.7	Germany	13.3	5.9	Norway

Data source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey), 2007

Additional notes:

Provisional 2007 data for Latvia, Portugal and Finland

Unreliable data for Slovenia and Croatia because of the small sample size.

Break in series for Finland (2000) and Denmark (2007)

Cyprus: Students studying abroad are not covered by the survey; this indicator is therefore overestimated.

Czech Republic and Croatia: 2000 data refer to 2002

11.2 Introduction to the country situation: definition of compulsory education, definition of early school leaving and reasons why

The countries participating in the project differs for size, number of population, historical and social development, and economical situation. What they have in common is the high percentage of early school leavers. According to the latest statistics published by the European Commission in 2008, the percentage of early school leaving in the countries participating in the project is the following: Bulgaria 16,6%, Estonia 14,3%, Germany 12,7%, Greece 14,7%, Italy 19,3%, Portugal 36,3%.

The reasons for such high percentages vary from country to country.

In Bulgaria the reasons for leaving school are different - social, economic, demographic, psychological. The majority of drop-out children come from socially disadvantaged, low income and low educated families, ethnic minorities, from small and remote municipalities. Most often, they are connected with the reluctance of the pupils to continue their education (12%), or because the move abroad (about 24%), or are transferred without confirmation of their enrolment in other school (11%), or for prolonged illness (1.9%), etc.

A great part of the pupils dropping out are of Roma origin and leave for social reasons (unemployed parents, many children in the families, lack of clothing, shoes, food. Data is for 1996) Many schools collect donations for these pupils (clothing, shoes), organize, through sponsorship, free feeding in schools, look for support from non-governmental organizations, from school boards of trustees, but these are incidental cares. Extremely insufficient are the financial possibilities of the schools to organize a systematic supporting activity for the needing pupils, in order to retain them.

The dropping out is also related to the migration process of the population. Many parents are not able to provide financial support to train their children outside of the place where they live. A big part of the drop outs do not have any motivation for education and professional qualification and for a future realization in the labour market.

In Estonia, the number of those who leave school before completing even basic education is increasing and there is the lack of research to explain why. From statistics of general education, one can find the total number of those discontinuing studies before completing the 9th grade (compulsory according to the Law of Education), but to find out all the real reasons has been impossible, so far.

The growing population of young people without a basic education is comprised of individuals with different backgrounds and different reasons (social, health, behavioural, learning difficulties) for not fulfilling the compulsory education. There is a lack of research and statistics to explain and understand the reasons for high drop-out rates in Estonia. Dropouts are defined as individuals who did not complete their studies in basic school with graduation certificate.

Over the last years, two main reasons (total from 65.4% to 70.7% of all) for discontinuing studies during the school year emerged: (1) expulsion due to the pupil's inappropriate behaviour or poor achievements in studies and (2) other reasons.

Using statistics from the school year 2002/03 it is possible to learn more about the 'other reasons' as the scale of collecting data was modified. The reason of expulsion named above, and the other reasons are indicated as: reaching the end of compulsory school age (17 years) and family reasons (marriage, pregnancy). The information about the share of dropouts because of fulfilling the compulsory school age (17 years) is directly linked to the grade repetition problems. It is estimated that in 2001 more than 20.000 people (in the 17-25 age group) had not completed basic education; or, they have a basic education but did not continue their studies to acquire skills required to enter labour market. This problem is especially serious for boys, which leads to increasing gender differences at higher levels of education (Tilmanis, Annus, 2003).

In Germany annually, about 220.000 pupils leave school without sufficient education. Thereof, between 80.000 and 90.000 adolescents do not have a school leaving certificate.

The "losers" of the German school system are male with a migrant background and come from socially disadvantaged families.

Before leaving school completely, pupils usually skip lessons and later refuse to attend school at all. The number of chronic truants who refuse attending school is specified with about 300.000 – 500.000 pupils per year. According to the German Youth Institute (DJI) meanwhile about 10-15 % of all pupils can be classified as at least being tired of school. Very often the consequence of chronic truancy is failure in school which means that educational aims cannot be reached.

Not reaching an educational aim might mean for an adolescent dropping out of the social milieu suitable for his/ her age, and running the risk of being pushed to the edge of society and being excluded from the educational and labour market.

The lack of perspectives is one reason for leaving school. Why obtaining a school leaving certificate from Hauptschule (Secondary school) if this document does not help at all in finding employment?

School tiredness is the starting point for adolescents slowly to "drift away" from school, and temporary skipping of school are no sudden occurrences. This behaviour usually is shown already in Grundschule (Primary school) and consolidates at the age of 12. Early school leaving is the result of combined individual, social and family problems.

Individual factors are linked with problems in keeping path, health problems, difficult conditions in the family, as well as conflicts with other students.

More and more families need support because they cannot fulfil their education mandate on their own. Many parents do not set a good example for their children as they do not have a structured every day life and do not communicate that obtaining a school leaving certificate is absolutely important.

The structural problems are, among others, repeating classes which lead to an "excess of age" (adolescents who are much older than their classmates, due to repeating classes). Another problem is that class organization is often still oriented towards the teacher as lone fighter. Therefore, it is much more difficult to focus on the total personality of a student (with all the potential and problems).

Other important factors that lead to truancy are fear of bullying or failure as well as a lacking sense of wrongdoing among the children and adolescents during the different phases that lead to early school leaving.

Often the students are trained to this behaviour by their parents, although mostly unconsciously. Parents who allow their child to stay at home due to minor problems of ill-feeling or existential orientation and excuse them with “illness” reports support later skipping of school.

At the moment, school tiredness and truancy are treated too late and the persons involved (teachers, parents, authorities, social workers) do not collaborate very well.

Girls and boys show different signs of truancy: while boys disturb lessons, girls quietly stop working in class and, later, attending class. Especially many young immigrants at school age drop out of the educational system as school and social workers are helplessly confronted with the problem of immigrant adolescents.

In **Greece**, a research² carried out in 2006 showed that early school leaving is based on several factors and that school leaving is a long-term process of “disengagement” from the school and the training that often begins very early, already in the first classes of primary education. “Starting point” may be the precocious school failure that makes the child to dispute his faculties and weaken gradually his conjunction with the school. Another reason can be also behaviour problems, the absence from school, the class repeat, the lack of participation during the class, etc

The causes of early school leaving could be grouped in two large categories:

a) The factors that are related to the family of the young person such as:

The low socio-economic situation of the family, the national identity, the bad school performance of brothers, the potential early school leaving of brothers, the family mobility, the lack of family support, the low parental training expectations, the negative attitude or indifference of parents to school, the instability of family environment, single parents, the unemployment, personal or family problems etc.

b) The factors that are related to school and the experience of young person in it, such as:

The bad school performance, the absence from school, the discipline problems, the conflicts with other students or/ and teachers, the former bad school performance, the often change of school, the lack of interest, the repeat of class etc, factors that appear usually right after the child enters into the school.

The extend of early school leaving is related also with several characteristics of schools, such as the size of school, the analogy between students and teachers, the discipline and evaluation systems, the quality of school environment, the school environment that encourage or discourage the appearance of anti-social behaviour, the study program, the extent that school supports and cares for students (behaviour or academic problems).

Concerning the family factors, the low socio-economic situation is the one that appears to be most important, while in school factors the low school performance is the most important.

² «Η ΜΑΘΗΤΙΚΗ ΔΙΑΠΡΟΗ ΣΤΗ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΒΑΘΜΙΑ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ (ΓΥΜΝΑΣΙΟ, ΕΝΙΑΙΟ ΛΥΚΕΙΟ, ΤΕΕ)» - Ministry of National Education and Religious Pedagogical Institute, 2006

In Italy, the country has more than 9 points to fill, in order to reach the benchmark set for 2010. Even if there are progresses from the 2000 situation, when school leavers where 25,3%, Italy is still far to reach the other European countries.

In **2007** there is a visible improvement compared to the previous years and the percentage is now at **19,3**. The phenomenon varies a lot from region to region. If we consider the percentage at regional level, the objective of 10% results very difficult to reach for regions as Sardinia and Sicily, where 30% of young people got only primary cycle degree and don't attend the secondary cycle. Actually, any region in Italy can show a level of early school leavers under 10%.

The regions in a better shape are Basilicata, Lazio, Toscana and Umbria where the percentage is no more than 4 points over the percentage of 10. The suburbs of Southern biggest cities (Naples, Palermo, Bari, Catania), where poverty meets illegality, presents the major problems.

The situation is difficult also in the North of the country, where industry requires workers with no qualification and many families do not generally consider education to be important for finding a job.

The reasons of early school living can be found outside and inside the school: in the first case, pupils' choices are influenced by factors such as familiar cultures, quality of infrastructures (transports, libraries, and communications) and income. Many students are not encouraged to attend school if they live in a negative environment (where cultural life is not developed) or they can't find appropriate means of transport (journeys can be long and stressful, particularly in the mountains).

In 2001 a survey of the Lower House of the Italian Parliament criticises the excessive rigidity of pathways, the debasement of vocational education and the increase of bullying attitudes, and states that the teachers' approach to pupils' personality should be improved. According to the above-mentioned studies, there are too many women employed in the education system, and this can cause a lack of leadership model, especially for boys.

The data concerning school dropouts published **in Portugal** corresponds to the percentage of individuals between the ages of 10 and 15 years at the time of the census who have not concluded the 3rd cycle of Basic Education (equivalent to compulsory schooling) and are not attending school. The figures are presented in the table below:

Table 11 – Dropout Rates According to Age, from 10 to 15 years

Age	1991	2001
10	3.5%	0.0%
11	4.2%	1.4%
12	5.0%	1.7%
13	9.9%	2.2%
14	19.5%	3.4%
15	29.2%	7.1%
Total 10-15	12.5%	2.7%

Source: Ministry of Education, as cited in Canavarro *et al*, 2004, p. 51.

Although there has been an almost 10% reduction in dropout rates in recent years, the continued existence of a dropout rate of around 3% amongst students between the ages of 10 and 15 years is worrying, especially because this occurs during a period that corresponds to compulsory schooling. An analysis of the evolution according to age reveals that dropout rates worsen as the children get older and that, “It is generally preceded by stories of repeated failure and is also manifested in the strong attraction of professional activities that are still accessible to unqualified youths” (Canavarro *et al*, 2004, p. 52).

Likewise, other indicators concerning school dropout rates – early dropout rates and precocious dropout rates – reveal that youths are staying longer within the educational system. The early dropout rate refers to the proportion of individuals between the age of 18 and 24 years who at the time of the census had not concluded the 3rd cycle of Basic Education and were not attending school. The precocious dropout rate is calculated on the basis of the same age group, but refers to individuals who abandoned their schooling before having concluded their secondary education.

Despite the improvements reflected in these statistics in the national context, a comparison with the European panorama shows that Portugal figures amongst the countries with the worst results in terms of dropout rates. The comparative data compiled by Eurostat, regarding the number of youths between 18 and 24 years of age who left school before having concluded their lower secondary education reveals that Portugal has a dropout rate (39.2%, provisional data) that is far higher than the average recorded for EU27 nations (15.3%). Once again boys (46.4%) had worse results than girls (31.8%) and both sexes were a very long way from the EU reference value of 10% in 2010 (CUE, 2008, p. 28).

Early school leaving appears to be a phenomenon that affects the **compulsory education system**, but this is a concept that differs from country to country. Compulsory education is enforced in all partner countries but with differences in duration.

In Bulgaria education is compulsory for children from the age of 6 or 7 (at the discretion of the parents) up to the age of 16 for a maximum of 12 years. Children complete their compulsory education in upper secondary schools.

Compulsory education is composed by three cycles:

- a. Primary schools for children from 6/7 to 9/10 years of age
- b. General lower secondary schools for children from 10/11 to 14/15 years of age
- c. Upper secondary schools for students from 13/14 years of age. Technical/vocational Schools, Technical schools for students from 14/15 to 17/18 years of age.

In Estonia, basic education is the minimum general education that is obligatory for everybody. Children who are 7 years old by 1 October of the current year are subject to the obligation to attend school. Students are subject to the obligation to attend school until they acquire basic education or are 17 years old. The main form of study at the basic level is day time study.

Basic education is minimum compulsory general education. Basic education may be acquired in primary school (grades 1 to 6) basic school grades (1 to 9) or upper secondary school which also includes basic school grades.

Basic school is divided into three stages of study:

- I stage of study - Grade 1 to 3;
- II stage of study - Grade 4 to 6;
- III stage of study- Grade 7 to 9.

In Germany, compulsory education is divided into full-time school attendance and vocational school attendance. Full-time school attendance is nine years in most of the states. Only in four states it is ten years (Berlin and Brandenburg among them).

Compulsory education is followed by vocational school attendance until the age of 18 which can be fulfilled by attending vocational training, being employed, attending the Gymnasium or an 11th year in school for vocational preparation.

Many states put forward the beginning of school attendance so that even five year old children have to attend school. Special regulations apply for disabled children.

Education **in Greece** is compulsory for all children 6-15 years old; namely, it includes Primary (*Dimotiko*) and Lower Secondary (*Gymnasio*) Education. Attendance at Primary Education (*Dimotiko*) lasts for six years, and children are admitted at the age of 6. All-day primary schools are in operation, with an extended timetable and an enriched Curriculum.

The Lower Secondary Education (*Gymnasio*) last for three years and children are admitted at the age of 12.

In Italy, at present, compulsory education lasts **8 years** and can be accomplished in public schools or accredited private schools. It includes five years of primary school (for children between 6 and 11 years of age) and three years of first grade secondary school (for children between 11 and 14 years of age).

The situation will change very soon, as the law of 28 March 2003, no. 53 for the reform of the education and training system aims at widening and redefining the concept of compulsory education and compulsory training to guarantee rights and duties (*diritto/dovere*) to education and training for all citizens for at least 12 years (within the compulsory education system), or up to the attainment of a qualification (within the vocational education and training system) within 18 years of age; the *rights and duties concept* will be gradually introduced in the new system based on two strands of the secondary cycle. The first step is to increase the compulsory education to 10 years of school, starting from the school year 2009/10.

In Portugal, basic education is universal, compulsory, free of charge and it spans 9 years. Children enter basic education at 6 years of age, and compulsory education ends at 15 years of age. Basic education comprises three sequential and jointed cycles:

- a) The first cycle comprises the first 4 years of learning and it is aimed at children between 6 and 10 years old. Comprehensive teaching is performed by only one teacher that can be assisted by other teachers in specialised areas, such as music, foreign languages, and physical education.

- b) The second cycle occurs between the fifth and six grades and it is aimed at children between 10 and 12 years old. It is characterised by a unified curriculum, integrating several different areas of knowledge, taught by different teachers.
- c) The third cycle includes the 7th, 8th and 9th grades and it is aimed at teenagers between 12 and 15 years old. Teaching is organised in basic interdisciplinary areas, each with its own teacher.

11.3 Existing policies and regulations in force at national, regional, and local level. Approach of government and local authorities to the issue.

The reform of the educational system **in Bulgaria** includes measures such as optimizing the school network, increasing the quality of the education, improving the relationship between demand and supply of the labour market, as well as actions targeted at solving the problem of “school leaving”.

Since the last 5-6 years in Bulgaria the problem of the school drop outs is a subject of targeted measures and policies for its prevention and to overcome the consequences. In the last few years, there is a clear tendency to look for complex approaches to solve the problem, and multi-sector coordination of the efforts of the institutions from the educational system with those from the system of child protection and social care.

The **National programme for development of the school and pre-school education and training 2006 -2015** aims at formulating the national objectives for development of the school education and at presenting the main measures for their achievement. The problem of early school leaving is discussed in the programme. The high number of drop out children mainly from the risk groups (Roma population) leads to large disproportions in the educational levels as the relatively compact groups remain in the periphery of the social life and their integration is additionally impeded.

The measures for decreasing the number of drop out school children included in the programme can be divided into three main groups: change in the educational structure, social actions, measures targeted at children which mother tongue is not Bulgarian and children with special educational needs.

In Estonia, according to the Development Plans for General Educational System for 2007 – 2013 there are many problems that should be solved to reduce and combat early school leaving:

1. The data on the evaders of the compulsory school attendance is inadequate and the analysis of their reasons is insufficient.
2. There is no detailed data of the children that are interrupting their studies in the basic school and the relevant analysis of the reasons is insufficient.
3. The pupils who would repeat the grade are most likely to interrupt their studies; the number of these pupils is huge. At the same time there is no bright-line data and the profound analysis of the reasons.
4. There is no analysis on the use and efficiency of the measures of the organisation of studies.
5. Teacher and training

To ensure the required level of education in the basic school, the **following measures** could be used:

- Remedial groups (the size of the group is 6-8 pupils), giving assistance to the pupils with learning difficulties outside the learning hours in order to acquire the national curriculum.

- Separate classes (12-16 pupils in a class) for the pupils with behavioural problems outside the learning hours in order to acquire the national curriculum.
- Opportunity classes (up to 16 pupils in a class) for the pupils with the learning difficulties for acquiring the national curriculum.
- Supplementary learning class (up to 16 pupils in a class) for pupils with moderate learning disabilities for acquiring the basic simplified national curriculum of the basic education.
- Coping class (up to 7 pupils in a class) for acquiring the national curriculum for pupils with moderate and severe learning disabilities.
- The pupil can perform compulsory school attendance by studying at home.
- The pupil can study according to the individual curriculum, which means the teachers' council must decide on the organisation of studies. The entire three national curricula can be the basis of the study.
- The pupil has the right to assistance and counselling.
- The performance of the compulsory school attendance can be postponed for a year.
- Long day group.
- School dormitory.

Unfortunately, all the schools do not take advantage of the given opportunities. Out of a supervision report of 100 schools (2007), the following conclusions are to be made:

- ✓ The school management does not consider the work with pupils with learning difficulties important, and therefore does not present the need for additional funds to the local governments;
- ✓ They don't have the necessary training to work with pupils with special needs;
- ✓ There is an indifferent attitude towards pupil, with special needs.

The responsibility of the educational system **in Germany** is determined by the federal structure of the Federal Republic. The overall educational system is supervised by the state. The individual states have the right of legislation for schools, universities, and adult education. Detailed regulations are available in the constitution of the individual states. The highest state authorities are the ministries for education and the ministry of economics.

The competences of the federation within the educational system are regulated by the Fundamental Law. The Federal Republic is responsible for regulations in the following fields of education, science, and research:

- extracurricular training and further education
- welfare service

Regulations concerning the collaboration of the Federation and the States are set in the **Federation-States-Commission** for educational planning and research promotion.

The following compulsory measures are applied by the authorities for contrasting the early school leaving:

Academic measures:

- regular information to parents and teachers concerning the actual legal situation
- documentation of missing students in the class-register
- taking care of the class-register, and if necessary, ask for medical attestation and talk to parents
- talk about the problem with the student (documentation)
- informal information exchange among the teachers
- organize a class conference (brief minutes with results and agreements)
- inform parents, if necessary, house call, show consequences, working on common agreements
- talks between school directors, parents, class teachers, and students

Cooperative measures

- involving school counsellor
- consulting cooperation teachers in special schools
- involving youth welfare office
- cooperation with public school authority/place of employment
- counselling support from information centres

Compulsory measures

- public policy authority, summary proceedings, ordering adolescents to fulfil working hours, arrest
- public policy authority, students are forced to attend classes by the police

In Greece, the fundamental objectives of the educational policy of the National Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (YPEPTH) are, on one side, to guarantee the right of each student, independently from gender and origin, to have unhindered and free access to knowledge and, on the other hand, to promote the education as a “good” that all young persons can enjoy.

Concerning the prevention of early school leaving the following measures are implemented in Greece:

- *Financial incentives* – introducing free meals and textbooks – with the aim of enhancing and supporting equal access to education and training. Moreover, financial assistance in education (as a motivation to enrol in primary and secondary education) has been given to those ethnic minorities who declare annual income less than 3.000 € (the amount received is 300 €)
- *Support systems* which constitute the most successful measures and include: Support teaching, All day schools, Evening education, Inclusion classes, Integration of special education in the regular system. In relation to minorities there are special classes for the repatriated and foreign students (through the Directorate of Intercultural Education) and minority schools of all levels (teaching is conducted in two languages, assistant teachers, etc.)

- More *compensatory ways* of dealing with early school leaving such as the Second chance schools allowing to make up with missed qualifications as well as the Post – secondary vocational education and training, where young people, who didn't complete compulsory education and then drop out school, can achieve qualifications.

The Italian school legislation has its foundations in a number of Articles of the Constitution of the Republican State. Articles 30, 33, 34 and 38 specifically lay down the principles on which the legislation must be based. Basic principles, which cannot be waived, include the freedom of education, the duty of the State to provide a network of educational establishments of every type and level and open to everyone with no discrimination of any type, the right of the universities, academies and highly cultural institutions to lay down independently their own regulations; the right of private individuals to establish schools and educational establishments at no cost to the State, the right and duty (*diritto/dovere*) of parents to provide education for their children even if born outside the bonds of matrimony. If parents cannot do so, measures must be taken by law to help them to carry out their duties.

Appropriate measures must be taken to enable capable and deserving students to enter higher levels of education even if they lack financial resources. The education of citizens also includes the education and vocational training of disabled and citizens with fewer opportunities.

The fundamental principles of the Constitution were kept as a basis for all subsequent legislation, particularly for compulsory education, teacher training, student assessment, integration of disabled pupils, and vocational training.

Rules for accomplishment of compulsory education can be summed up as follows:

- Children who have reached six years of age within 31 August should enrol in the first grade of primary school.
- Parents or caregivers are responsible for the accomplishment of compulsory education;
- The Mayors of Municipalities where pupils reside and the school heads of every school types and levels supervise that pupils fulfil compulsory schooling;
- Within the month of December, the Municipalities where pupils reside prepare the list of pupils subject to compulsory schooling and inform about it to all those responsible.
- The Heads of schools inform of enrolments in the first year of compulsory education the Municipalities where pupils reside for inspection requirements within twenty days.
- The Heads of schools are responsible to check pupils' attendance and, if unjustified absences are reiterated, they must take the most suitable initiatives to facilitate the attendance of compulsory schooling;
- Once compulsory schooling has been accomplished, pupils who don't prosecute their studies receive a certification attesting the compulsory education fulfilment and the competencies acquired; these latter constitute educational credits (*credito formativo*) for any professional qualification;
- The same rules foreseen for Italian citizens and citizens of Member States of the European Union apply also to foreigner minors from non-European countries. The legislative decree 59/2004 has confirmed the sanctions foreseen for non attendance of the first cycle of education.

Compulsory training takes place after the accomplishment of compulsory schooling. It requires attendance of integrated paths of education and training up to 18 years of age, and attendance of the vocational training system managed by the Regions or the apprenticeship.

In Portugal, the Ministry of Education is in charge of designing national policies for preschool, basic and secondary education. In the Autonomous Regions of Madeira and Azores responsibility for the administration of education falls on the Regional Governments, through their Regional Education Offices. The Ministry of Education is responsible for ensuring compulsory education, for preventing early school leave and for promoting the qualifications of the general population, in the framework of equal opportunities, lifelong education and educational innovation.

Funding for education originates from the Government Budget and from local authorities. The Ministry of Education funds central and regional services of education, public schools (non higher education) and education welfare. Local authorities fund building and equipment expenses and some current expenses of pre-schools and first cycle basic education schools, as well as transport to schools and further and after school activities. Compulsory schooling is free of charge, but in public secondary education students pay an annual small tuition fee (DGEC, 2007b, p. 14).

An analysis of the positive evolution that has taken place in recent years in terms of education in Portugal – for example, the democratisation of the educational system, a rise in pre-schooling rates, reduction of illiteracy, an increase in the number of students in higher education, falling dropout rates, early dropout rates and precocious dropout rates, reduction in the rates of failure and desisting – reveals the progress that has been achieved and reflects the “efforts, measures and programmes with a view to ensuring that the obligatory 9 years of schooling are successfully concluded, in a plan that is simultaneously diversified and integrated” (Canavarro et al, 2004, p. 78).

Given below is a brief summary of the most recent measures, which serve as a backdrop for the policies that are currently in effect:

- **The National System of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Skills** was created in 2001, by Ordinance No. 1082-A/2001, dated 5 September. This system enables individuals with low levels of formal schooling and both employed and unemployed individuals to have the various skills and knowledge they have acquired over the course of their lives, in the most diverse contexts, to be recognised, validated and certified.
- **The Adult Training and Education Courses** that were launched in 2001 consist of an integrated range of education and training on offer, which confer dual scholastic and professional certifications.
- **The Education and Training Courses** that were created in 2002 seek to increase scholastic qualifications and the acquisition of professional skills, facilitating access to more qualified professional opportunities.
- **The S@bER+** initiatives comprise a diverse set of short-term actions that seek to stimulate adult target audiences to acquire, develop or reinforce their personal, professional or scholastic skills.
- **The National Plan to Prevent Students from Dropping Out of School** was presented in 2004, with the motto: “I Don’t Quit”. The main proposals and

recommendations that were presented were: 1) to integrate students into schools, support their development and successfully promote them; 2) to associate a sense of utility and vocation with schools; 3) to enhance the social value of schools and concluding the 12th grade; 4) to support a policy of broad inter-ministerial articulation and societal involvement to prevent students from dropping out of school, accentuating the social and youth aspects.

- The initiative entitled *New Opportunities*, which was presented by the present constitutional government in 2005, is currently being implemented. Its objective is to accelerate the rate of progression in secondary schooling, reducing the time necessary to attain average European rates. This includes two axes for intervention. The first axis, called *A New Opportunity for Youths*, and the second axis called *A New Opportunity for Adults*.

11.4 Pro and cons of policies and measures, monitoring and evaluation system in place.

The critical review of the programme related to the problem of early school leaving **in Bulgaria**, reveals some specifics of the present policies for prevention and reduction of the drop out children. These weak places of the current policies should be a subject of special attention and should be elaborated by the responsible institutions.

A big part of the reasons which lead to dropping out of the children in a compulsory school age can be overcome with active social measures. Special places among them have the following measures:

- Free access to the study material
- Continuation of the activities of the National programme to include the maximum number of students in a compulsory school age, accepted by the 39th Bulgarian Parliament.
- Providing free transport and forms of halftime boarding school training.
- Binding of the social aid with the school attendance of the children

The need of special care for children which mother tongue is not Bulgarian becomes important. The activities related to study the Bulgarian language should be activated especially during the period of the compulsory year before the 1st grade and to continue until reaching a level of comprehension comparable with the other children. The additional training in Bulgarian of these children should be done following a specific methodology which takes into account their specific needs and difficulties.

The measures are predominantly directed to the neutralization of the economic reasons for school leaving. A small part of them – compulsory pre-school training and improvement of the study curricula are targeted at neutralising the educational reasons for dropping out and just separate projects with a very restricted timeline and coverage are directed towards the ethno-cultural reasons for dropping out, which are having an increasing effect especially in the groups of children aged over 11 years. Actually these children are not covered substantially by the present measures.

The collected data is not effectively used due to mismatching of the criteria systems (definitions of drop-out, definitions of the reasons, etc.), due to a lack of capacity to analyse the information, as well as lack of a system to exchange information among the different institutions. There is still missing a system to evaluate the effectiveness of the different measures while some of them are already half way through their implementation.

Estonia declared that human capital is an essential component to achieve a high quality life for all people living in Estonia. The Education Sector was the first to respond to the challenge, taking the following steps toward the creation of a Knowledge and Innovation Based Estonia: (1) a Research and Development strategy was adopted for 2002-2006 by Parliament in 2001; and, (2) a Round Table of Education Policy was set up as an advisory body to the Minister of Education and Research. The task of Round Table is to support the Ministry of Education and Research in finding solutions for urgent problems in education policy on consensus basis. Since the summer 2003, the

Round Table has identified general aims of the educational system including: to guarantee high quality efficient education at all levels; to increase the adequacy of curricula's content to the needs of individuals and society; to achieve equal access to high quality education for all people despite the regional, the economical and gender differences; and, to sustain the Estonian culture and language in the world of rapid globalization.

More specifically the objectives for the Educational System are defined as follows:

- Every person in Estonia must acquire basic education;
- Quality secondary education must be provided in every region of Estonia;
- The reliability and quality of the higher education system in Estonia is as high as in Europe;
- Lifelong learning opportunities are assured to every person according to his/her abilities and needs;
- In areas where the primary language in schools is not Estonian, students are provided with opportunities to continue studies in their native language;
- Teachers at schools and pre-primary childcare institutions are competent and highly motivated.
- The tasks of state and local governments in administrating and developing the educational system (institutions) are clearly defined;
- The infrastructure of schools supports the overall improvement of all pupils;
- The novelties in the educational system are based on best quality research and databases;
- The share of educational expenditures of GDP will be on the same level as in Nordic Countries;
- The optimal school network is using the given recourses to provide high quality education. (Tilmanis, Annus, 2003)

In Germany, in general, the support for school deniers and early school leavers is working on two levels. The first level is the school, which focuses especially on knowledge transfer and the learning process of the student. The second level is the extracurricular sector which focuses on the personality of the student as well as the family and the social environment. All methods and measures do not always result in the expected and wished success. Fining students, making them fulfil working hours or arresting them are no effective methods for convincing students to attend classes, stop early school leaving or integrating students into the academic process. Preventive work at schools is as important as working with students who have already withdrawn from the educational process.

The German society is affected by the alarming news of increasing number of students who are leaving school even after school attendance without a school leaving certificate. Due to this increasing number of students who abandon school, refuse to attend school, and often leave school without leaving certificate, people are calling for explanations and remedies. Early school leaving is not only treated by politicians and social workers, but also by professional associations, by school and youth welfare services, as well as the schools themselves. This topic turned into a challenge for the society as a whole, as

the consequences of not attending classes and especially a lack of qualification are serious, not only for the individual. The share of early school leavers is especially high for Hauptschule (lower secondary school).

According to the educational report in 2004 only 40% of school leavers with Hauptschule leaving certificate got a job training place within the dual system. 52% end in waiting loops and dead end roads. The situation is getting worse every year. Another problem is that about 10% per year fail in the final exams and leave Hauptschule without certificate. The depressing result is evident although teachers give their best, and although there is a number of special supporting programmes. Since PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) has been implemented, we have known that Hauptschule does not support "according to ability" but that it discriminates young people by the pure fact that they are attending this school form. Since PISA we have also known that "statistic twins" of the same intelligence, same competence, and same social origin develop a gap in learning of 1.5 years at the age of 15 when one child attends Gymnasium and the other child Hauptschule. In fact, our schools neglect those who are already discriminated by their social origin in a doubled way, in this respect.

The decrease of early school leaving **in Greece** is directly connected to the evolutions and the changes that occurred during the past 20 years.

In brief, the following factors have contributed to decrease early school leaving:

1. The change of attitude towards education: education is not considered anymore as a "luxury" but a pressing need as it is directly connected to the social and economical development.
2. Social model changes: nowadays is more and more appealing the model of the educated person. The media present as the "ideal type" of person the one who is characterised for his high education level that guarantees a good job, high economical level, good life conditions, success in personal life, etc.
3. Labour market changes: the inflow of foreign work force, the shrinking of the rural sector, the shutting down of factories, the reduction of family enterprises, had as a physical consequence the need to reduce the unskilled workers. At the same time, sectors such as the tourism and the telecommunication are flourishing, while the use of New Technologies in all production processes demands work force with high qualification that can adjust easily to the changing world. It is worth to mention that in the developed countries of EU the rates of unemployment are reversing likewise the education level. Unskilled and semi-skilled workers have declined in the last years from 40% to 25%, while the percentage of the higher education level graduates has arise from 10% to 20%.
4. Family changes: the feminism movement, the changes in the traditional roles of men and women, the establishment of laws that protect working women and guarantee the participation of women to almost all working sectors, has as a consequence, the raise of working women even in occupations that were traditionally considered as "male jobs". In this context, women have to have a high educational level.
5. The general raise of the educational and economical level of the Greek population.
6. The establishment of compulsory education to 9 years with the Constitution of 1975.
7. The changes to the educational system that are targeting to support students with low performance.
8. The improvement of the country's roads.

9. Demographic factors: Since 1981 in Greece is noticed a gradual reduction of births. In 1981, the overall birth rate was 2.9 births per mother while in 2004, just 1.31-percentage that is below the replacement limit of generation which is 2.1. According to records from the Greek gerontologist institute, in 2035 31.7% of the total population will be over 65 years old.
10. The contribution of EU: according to EU Agreements the educational policy is an internal affair of the Member States. However, over the last 20 years, the EU has influenced positively the Greek educational system.

In Italy, the National School Operative Plan, carried out in 2000-2006 for the Southern Regions (Campania, Basilicata, Calabria, Puglia, Sicilia and Sardinia), had the aims of improving the quality of the school system and reducing the early school leaving.

Many initiatives were implemented involving activities outside the school curriculum, in order to make school more attractive to those students at risk of abandoning, but not necessarily addressed to increase the quality of the educational action. Nevertheless, the Programme gave positive results in terms of contrasting the early school leaving, as an evaluation research on a specific target group showed.

The research, started in September 2007 and finished in March 2007, has been implemented on 337 High Schools that realized 352 projects in the year 2005-2006 with the aim of detecting the impact of these actions on the early school leaving problem (less failed students, less absentee) and the changing of school programs implemented by teachers. 43.081 students have been monitoring and the effects of changing on the evaluations (maths, science and Italian) in the first and the second part of the school year have been verified. Making a comparison between the starting and the ending point of the programme, we can observe a considerable improvement of the result of the students involved in the projects.

In September 2007 has been published the “Quaderno bianco sulla scuola” (White Book on School) promoted by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance with the aim of highlighting the actual Italian school situation and to put into evidence qualities and criticalities and to foresee development scenarios and possible solutions for the founded problems.

One of the reasons of the delay of Italian school development is the big difference in terms of development between the Southern and the Central regions of Italy.

The gap of knowledge between young people living in the South of Italy and the young people living in the rest of Europe put them at a disadvantage. It is a vicious circle because without competences there isn't development and no development is the reason for bad competences.

To break this circle, in the South of Italy a stronger role of the institutions is necessary: the aim to achieve is to elevate the learning standards and to reach a certain level of knowledge for everybody.

In Portugal, the measures and policies that have been used in the last few years have achieved some results in decreasing grade retention and dropout rates. This rate is calculated by the percentage of students registered in a given year that cannot pass to the next grade. This decrease was particularly noteworthy at high school level, where in 2007, and for the first time, this rate was below 30%.

One measure that has been particularly effective is the intervention programme *A new opportunity for youths*, that is related to dropout prevention strategies.

According to the report evaluating the implementation of the measures executed within the scope of this programme “The focus on diversifying the types of secondary level education and training, a trademark for the youth subdivision of the New Opportunities Initiative, has allowed for an inversion of the tendency of losing students at secondary education, as well as a reduction of the retention rate and, therefore, prevention of early abandonment of the education system” (MTSS/ME, 2008, p. 14).

In 2007, 44.129 youths were enrolled in basic level double certification courses. This number grew significantly from 2005 due to the focus on Education and Training Courses (where more than 41.000 youths are enrolled) offered by public schools, Centres for Professional Training and private entities like Professional Schools. According to the Government, “The focus on this type of education has been a fundamental option in fighting early school dropout, with a significant number of youths that in addition to finishing basic education through this path, choose to pursue further studies in secondary education” (MTSS/ME, 2008, p. 15).

11.5 Good practices³. Examples of projects and initiatives at national, regional, local, and school level.

Best practice from Bulgaria

By Krassimira Stoeva - HCA

The Project STEP IN (Studying Training and Educational Paths for the Integration of young Roma)

Appalled by the abject poverty and social exclusion of many of Europe's Roma, Caritas Europe and 7 main other organisations devised a project to increase school attendance and career prospects for Roma Children. The project was co-funded by the European Commission, DG for Education and Culture, Joint Actions, Leonardo, Socrates and Youth Programmes. From the outset, the belief of the 14 partners in STEP IN was that education would be the most effective way to integrate young Roma into the local community, providing Roma with the same opportunities as their peers. The two goals of the project were:

- 1) To prevent early school leaving through encouraging different approaches to education and
- 2) To support social integration through professional training as well as through looking at employment opportunities

By the end of the project, participants agreed that the STEP IN project, with some modifications, could be considered as an example of good practice, which the EU should consult when programming education projects for Roma children. The two year project focused on children between the ages of 13 and 18.

Central to the project was an educational model, which focused on a combination of three types of educational input: formal learning, non-formal learning and informal activities. These activities included study support, artistic and manual activities, sports, and cultural activities. Having this wide array of activities proved to be successful. For example, non-formal activities, such as sports and art, helped to forge positive relationships between Roma groups and children from the majority population. An important aspect of the STEP IN project was that it allowed for flexibility between countries. The Roma situation was different in every participating country. For this reason, the necessary flexibility was built into the project design so that it would cater to specific needs arising in the different countries.

³ Detailed information about the best practices can be found on the Ulisse DVD and in each National Report.

Good practices from Estonia

By Mai Normak – University of Tallinn

Forming the Tootsi class

Pupils who are engaged with their school both socially and academically tend to experience positive outcomes. On the other hand, pupils who are estranged from their schools, either socially or academically tend to experience difficulties in either academic or behavioural domains or both.

In the Estonian basic school program, one form of alternative placement for pupils experiencing academic and behavioural difficulties is known as the *Tootsi* class. These classes are targeted to students in the **general education schools with behavioural disorders and risk of dropping out of school**. This class is named after a character in a children's book, Toots, who is a young boy who, regardless of the absence of malevolent motivations, usually ends up in trouble – *it just happened*.

These classes, authorized by the Ministry of Education and Research since 2004, are options that schools can choose to accommodate pupils who experience academic and behavioural problems in their regular classes. These classes are funded by the local governments.

The class(es) for the students with educational difficulties acquiring basic education are formed for those who do not follow general norms of behaviour or the school regulations, who disregard the teachers' and parents' demands or who have either at school or outside school serious behavioural problems and who have repeated the class (Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, 2004, 91, 1425).

The class is compiled from the pupils of the 2nd or 3rd school level of one or several classes following the national curriculum of the basic and secondary school or the simplified national (remedial education) curriculum of the basic school at the beginning of the school year. In exceptional cases the formation of such a class may take place at the beginning of the second term of the school year.

The maximum limit of class fulfilment is 12 students. The maximum limit of class fulfilment for the class compiled from the students of several classes is 10 students. A separate classroom is allotted to the formed class (Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act. 2004, 91, 1425).

The basis for accepting students to the class is the judgment passed by the juvenile commission or the teachers' council.

Teachers are assigned to these classes based on decisions by school leaders and may or may not be placed in a *Tootsi* class based on their own preferences.

In academic year 2007/2008 47 schools have opened *Tootsi* classes with 680 pupils.

SCHOOL SUPPORT –The better prevention of dropping out from basic school and the behavioural disorder through development of the support system in the schools for general education of Tallinn

There is not a unique strategy and supportive activity in the sphere of the school drop out prevention that could be applied to all the problems, because the aspects of compulsory school attendance failure and behavioural disorder are diverse and needs therefore further and more specified analysis.

That is why in the year 2007 the Tallinn Education Authority launched the project of European Social Fund: “SCHOOL SUPPORT –The better prevention of dropping out from basic school and the behavioural disorder through development of the support system in the schools for general education of Tallinn.”

The project includes nine pilot schools from the different city districts of Tallinn with the five member teams. The participants come from both schools – Estonian and Russian speaking.

The participants are the members of the support system from every pilot school, who would be the school psychologist, social worker, special education teacher, subject teacher, class teacher, hobby education manager, librarians, representatives of the board and supportive students.

The main partners for the schools of general education of the project would be Tallinn University and the National Examination and Qualification Centre.

The abovementioned project is targeted to the students of the of general education schools of Tallinn with the behavioural disorder and risk of dropping out of school. The project has been initiated to conclude the detailed and adequate analysis of the reasons for the compulsory school attendance failures, dropping out of the basic school and the behavioural problems in the schools of general education of Tallinn and to develop and rationalize the supports system that addresses the abovementioned problems.

The objectives of the project are:

- To lower the level of the dropping out of school and behavioural disorder by the year 2010.
- The determination of the freeze frame reasons for the dropping out of school and behavioural disorder by the means of the Gallup and the analysis of the results.
- The more effective and proactive prevention of the dropping out of primary schools by the additional training of the support group members.
- The creation of the model for the support system and the preparation of the manual (code of practice) for other schools general education.

The School Support project will end in July 2008.

Best practice from Germany

By Gabriele Kern - EBG

Job – Education – Integration

A cooperative project between Youth Welfare Service and School

Operating period: 01.10.2003 – 31.08.2006

The task of the project is to address juveniles who despite compulsory schooling can not be reached by the responsible institutions, as they are/were truant. It concerns juveniles who due to their experiences feel restricted and demotivated by the formal, spatial environment of “school” alone, which tends to make traditional schooling measures for them rather counterproductive:

- Juveniles who dropped out or left school early
- Juveniles who finished the compulsory education but do not dispose of the necessary qualifications to keep up with an apprenticeship or other educational and qualifying measures
- Juveniles who due to their biographical preconditions require both a gradual approach for accumulating knowledge and assistance for a gradual disentanglement from their current milieu

Schooling failure or truancy is interpreted as a wrong development within the combination of school being perceived as an institution and individual desires, ideas and longings of the juveniles. Correcting this wrong development and giving the juveniles the chance to be able to become an accepted, self-confident and equal member of this society is aim and objective of this project. The early school leavers and truants shall be received in this low-threshold project, trying to improve their personality.

A general aim is to provide them with a competence to design their own lives as well as to give them assistance for their life planning, i.e. the development of an independent life. In the focus of encouragement is the respective juvenile with their personality.

The aims and main points of the project can be summarized in short form as follows:

- Training in the area of social competence
- Teaching of mechanical skills in the areas wood and metal
- Offering event and leisure facilities
- Learning shall be re-learned
- Lessons focusing on life practice
- Implementation of trainings in firms
- Integration of marginal people
- Reactivation and promotion of existing strengths, interests and skills
- Chance to serve social communities within the framework of different project works.

Best practice from Greece

By Kiriakos Dimitriou – Kek Kronos

The project was an initiative of the Greek Ministry of Education. It was implemented all over the country (code EPEAEK). The proposal was first submitted in 1998 and again in June 2002 (EPEAEK-I and EPEAEK-II). It was co-financed 75% by the European Union (2nd and 3rd ESF period) and 25% by the Greek Government. The total cost of the project EPEAEK-II was 191.394.700 €.

The project was under column 1 of Lisbon strategy and its main aims were:

1. The promotion of equal opportunities in education and especially for those facing social exclusion.
2. The promotion of equal opportunities in labour market through education
3. To help working mothers through the statute of all day school.
4. To help weak students through alternative ways of learning.
5. To strengthen parents of special groups about the value of children education.

In the framework of the project the following studies were carried

- Research of geographical areas with higher problems in the field.
- Study and research (quantity and quality) about early school leaving.
- Result that one of main reasons (more than 50%) was learning difficulties of students causing them to leave school.
- Adaptation of pilot project and study of the results.

Actions:

1. Creation and implementation of assistance to weak students in special classes, in all levels (primary – secondary).
2. Training of teachers to teach in these classes.
3. Implementation of special didactic material (teacher books and student books).
4. Taking of these actions in special schools for Gypsies and Economic refugees.
5. Emphasis in first classes of primary to prevent the phenomenon.
6. Linguistic training of teachers in primary school, in the main language of mass refugees.

Best practice from Italy

By Maria Luisa Pagano - UniTS

The Resources Centres against early school leaving and youth discomfort

The 2000- 2006 National Operational Programme “**School for Development**”, in line with aims and strategies of national and European Union policies, which are oriented at innovating and improving the quality of the Italian school system, financed, as one of the priority action line, the realization of social cohesion objectives. To achieve this objective, the programme promoted and sustained the development of projects aiming at preventing and fighting the early school leaving and, more generally, youth discomfort.

In this context, the Resources Centres against early school leaving and youth unease were established and, in a framework which includes all the local schools and other local partners, they realise actions through European Social Fund specific measures. Their work is aimed at:

- Implementing education and training interventions, which could prevent youth unease and help the recovery of boys and girls who leave the school or maybe who have a problematic scholastic path or who live in a socio-cultural neglecting situation, and have problems with their integration inside and outside the school;
- Creating well-equipped environments, where young people can implement, in participated and, above all, shared ways, activities in addition to and supporting the scholastic ones, in order to promote socialisation and orientation opportunities, the use of free time, competences, and training.

The Centres have been characterized fundamentally by clearly becoming aggregation and socialization places, interrelated with the other schools in the neighbourhood and with other local cultural agencies, institutes, associations and companies. Indeed, the Resource Centres promote collaboration and support among all vital stakeholders in a given neighbourhood: parents, local authorities, companies, juvenile prosecutor offices, police, medical care centres, and voluntary associations.

The Resource Centres against early school leaving are in total 140: 2 in Basilicata, 17 in Calabria, 32 in Campania, 28 in Puglia, 21 in Sardinia, 40 in Sicily.

They have been initiated by the Multi-fund Program 1994-99, consolidated during the last six years of National Operation Plan for School 2000/2006.

These Centres were born, not only to give to economically and socially disadvantaged schools (in towns as well as in mountain places and small islands), a practical help with facilities, services, technologies and operational opportunities, but above all, to stimulate to play active roles to prevent and fight early school leaving and scholastic difficulties in all the neighbourhood where they are placed.

We are talking about a new way “to be school” compared to the past: no more limited inside the school building, linked to the official curriculum and the sectorial study with knowledge division, but open to new horizons of experimentation, enlarged to the neighbourhood with a view of relations and changes that can drive towards the birth and functioning of school networks and networks with other actors interested in cultural research and social reorganisation.

Best practice from Portugal

Network of Mediators for the Enablement of School Achievement

EPIS Association - Empresários pela Inclusão Social (Entrepreneurs for Social Inclusion). assumed Education as a priority, by establishing as the main purpose for their launching strategy “fighting school failure and dropout, by preventing and remediating risk factors, as well as promoting protection factors for students and families, and by inducing external success factors in school organisations” (EPIS, 2008). Based on this goal, EPIS selected as main target students from the 7th to the 9th grade, between 12 and 15 years of age, and launched the intervention project Network of Mediators for the Enablement of School Achievement. By offering new competencies to the traditional actors in the educational process – the family, school and community – this project intends to increase the quality of parental and non-parental support in order to achieve educational success and social inclusion. “Enablement” is here seen as every educational methodology that can be transmitted to the youths, their families, the schools and the community, and that will lead to positive and decisive practices towards educational success and youth social inclusion (EPIS, 2008, p. 2).

The mediators' network is composed by specialised and experienced professionals and its methodology consists of two phases: 1) a system to signal youths with an educational success risk factor and 2) a portfolio of enablement methods, some universal and others directed towards each risk profile, which allow for the design of individual plans of support in proximity and continuity.

The project Network of Mediators for the Enablement of School Achievement is carried through a partnership of EPIS with the Ministry of Education and 11 cities: Aljezur, Amadora, Lousada, Matosinhos, Odivelas, Paredes, Resende, Santarém, Setúbal, Tavira and Vila Franca de Xira. It is comprised of 57 experts dedicated exclusively to the project and serves around 88 schools that teach 7th to 9th grades.

EPIS predicts that by the end of the 2007/08 school year the projects will be at the enablement phase and that the first results mediation happens at the end of the 2008/09 school year.

11.6 Key remarks for good policies on early school leaving

In Estonia, a lot has been said and written about compulsory school non-attendance, but the problem still exists. Actually, the facts show that the situation is worsening (Ruus 2006, 18).

Nevertheless, two positive approaches have been confirmed being effective:

1. In spring 2008 a study on students' academic emotions, attending *Tootsi* classes was conducted. Based on this study we can conclude that *Tootsi* classes have been justified. Students with serious learning and behavioural problems have received help in these classes and feel as fine in a school as their peers.
2. In June 2008 a manual *School Support* was completed. It describes support systems in project schools, case studies, descriptions of tasks to support personnel and "bottlenecks" seen in everyday practice. Based on theoretical and practical experience the manual offers suggestions to prevent behavioural problems and school drop-out.

However, lots of work has to be done to reach the goals set for the year 2010.

In 2007 the National Audit Office carried out an audit on the activities of the Ministry of Education and Research to guarantee compulsory school attendance. Its aim was to evaluate what had been done to improve compulsory school attendance and whether measures implemented in schools have been efficient to guarantee compulsory school attendance.

Compared to the results of the National Audit Office in 2002 the Ministry of Education and Research has launched several activities, but the situation in compulsory school attendance has not improved. The most important remarks of the audit are the following:

- The term compulsory school non-attendance and stakeholders' responsibilities have not been clearly defined, yet.
- The Ministry of Education and Research has no clear overview of compulsory school attendance
- There are substantial deficiencies in compulsory school students record-keeping and therefore one can't be sure that all children in compulsory school age attend the school
- Missing classes has not decreased. Approximately 2% of students (3100 students) miss more than 20% of lessons with no reason, i.e. these children are enlisted in some school, but in reality do not fulfil their compulsory school attendance. As an average every student missed 3 weeks during an academic year, of which more than a week was with no reason.
- Many students have problems with academic progress and school drop-out rate is still high. The problem is most serious in the 3rd school stage (grades 7-9), where almost one fifth of students have unsatisfactory half-term results and more than 7% of students have unsatisfactory annual results.
- More and more measures are implemented to improve compulsory school attendance

- The schools say that the most important measure concerning compulsory school attendance is the “opportunity classes”. Boarding school facilities and special classes for students with behavioural problems were rated highly by schools. Also problematic children rated special classes as a good measure, but psychological or psychiatric counselling was rated the highest. At the same time schools did not rate counselling as high. The least efficient measure was considered to transfer young drop-outs to juvenile committee.
 - Although in the past years different measures have been implemented, the indicators of compulsory school attendance (leaving school, missing classes) have not improved. Therefore, it can be said the State’s actions to guarantee compulsory school attendance have not been effective. The State spends over 120mln EEK annually on measures, but the results are not systematically evaluated. The National Audit Office concludes that indicators in the general education action plan concerning drop-out and unsatisfactory annual results in the third school stage (grades 7-9) might **not be achieved** by 2013.

In Germany, lower secondary schools (Hauptschule) cannot cope with the demands for quite some time now and turned into “residual schools” for the underprivileged. Education has to start early enough for all children, in order to make equal progress in their educational path.

The number of pupils, who skip school for hours, days or even longer, is constantly increasing. Truants are becoming younger and younger. The requirements to start an apprenticeship and, accordingly, a self-determined, financially independent life are not there. The consequence is poverty and social isolation.

Education has to be provided by providing in everyday school:

- More transparency and openness of the educational system
- Performance evaluation for teachers and efficiency tests
- Supervision of the teachers during the lessons
- Clear statement for extensive education in combination with upbringing, i.e. compensating deficits of the parents or in the family to provide the children with equal chances
- Special promotion of groups who grow up in a low-educated environment, or who have highly unfavourable educational conditions
- Expansion of full-time schools
- Considering schools as places of integration and cooperation
- Schools not only as places for teaching knowledge, but also for teaching social competence and emotional intelligence
- Close cooperation between schools and parents
- High motivation of the teachers and close cooperation among them as far as lesson preparation is concerned
- Schools and their benefits must be focussed on their neighbourhood in order to cope with their different local and regional tasks (freedom of choice when selecting the school)

- Better use of the time budget of pupils
- Schools in competition with media and leisure options in terms of gaining the pupils' attentiveness and concentration
- Less isolation of pupils in separated schools, increased promotion of the individual talents in small groups in order to valorise different educational skills
- Longer presence of the teachers in the schools, including in the afternoon (lesson preparation, experience exchange, contact person for pupils)
- Better and more intensive further education for teachers
- Better inter-cultural competences of teachers.

In Greece, the main conclusions could be summarized in the following:

- Every attempt to face the early school leaving phenomenon should start from the diagnosis of the problem.
- Every student has its own characteristics, so a measure shouldn't be designed and adapted for all students in general.
- The family widely affects in a large degree the student's school performance. So the measures should improve the life conditions in these areas; family, neighbourhood, city, by involving more authorities, institutions, and partners.
- The selection of the teachers is more important than the selection of the study program. Inspired and creative teachers or teachers who put students under pressure, but they were concerned for the students, succeeded in spite of the fact that they had the traditional training material, while traditional study programs were unsuccessful as the students were indifferent and uninvolved. The school succeeded when the students felt comfortable and connected to their teachers.
- It is necessary to involve all the authorities to agree on the necessity of change, to accept it and believe on it. In order to do this, a discussion should take place in advance to analyze the problem and to put the right questions.
- The diagnosis shouldn't stop at the symptoms but should move on the understanding of the causes. For example, many absences shouldn't lead to extra control, automatic writing of absences and information of parents, but to address the question: why students do not come to school? Are they bored? Should the courses be more attractive? Why are they failing? Is the school very demanding? Do their parents need money? Do they stay at home to take care of a sick member of the family?
- In the changing plan, teachers and school's managers should be involved. If people that are not connected to school design the changing plan, then it will fail.
- The prevention programs are more effective when they are applied in smaller classes.
- Factors such as the improvement of school environment and the relation between students and teachers contribute to the decrease of school leaving.
- The selection of the program should consider the school level. For example it is

proved to be more effective to use mentors and tutors in primary classes, in lower secondary classes combined didactic methods, flexible program and working in groups, while in secondary level providing motivation through several activities.

In Portugal, since 1986, many policies were created with the intention of improving the qualification and increasing the schooling of the Portuguese population. There is no doubt that the evolutions registered since then, although slow, have been positive. The majority of students enrolled in secondary level shows lower rates of retention and dropout, as well as of early exit. School dropout has decreased and the number of students enrolled in undergraduate studies has been increasing.

However, regarding schooling levels, although some indicators are converging, they are still far from the European numbers and it is urgent to act effectively over the causes of school dropout. The measures created should always be connected to understanding the phenomenon.

The set of innovative ideas, supported by the project Network of Mediators for the Enablement of School Achievement, will be fundamental for improving the actual situation regarding the number of early school leavers in Portugal, namely:

- a) Policy decentralisation, allowing for a local diagnosis and prosecution of school dropout;
- b) Taking into account, in an integrated perspective, the contexts, the actors, the resources, the community and the region as fundamental aspects of the students educational path;
- c) Awareness for integrated and sustained actions, in a proximity point of view, involves the family, the student and the school;
- d) Care in bringing the school and the community closer together.

The improvement shown **by Italy** in reducing the number of early school leavers is certainly due to reforms and measures implemented over the years, and aimed at fighting the early school leaving phenomenon, such as:

- 1) The implementation of **National Operative Plan “School for Development”**, particularly the Measure 3, is aimed at preventing and recovering early school leaving and at implementing actions to reduce social exclusion.
- 2) The establishment of **Resource Centres** in the Southern regions of Italy, although they have to improve their local intervention, certainly contributed to change the school image in these areas and to better sustain students with learning and behavioural difficulties.
- 3) Creation of **local networks involving different actors** in a given territory to develop common strategies to fight early school leaving.
- 4) The complete establishment **of scholastic autonomy** in its higher meaning, as technical and juridical instrument.

However, there is still along way to go, in order to reach better results and to improve the quality of education in Italy.

Key objectives of Italian policies on education and employment, expressed in the reform law of education (n. 53/2003) and in the reform law of the labour market (n. 30/2003), are to improve the quality of education and vocational training and to ensure a high level of social cohesion. The achievement of these goals will be possible by integrating different elements:

- The strengthening of school autonomy;
- The development of personalised study paths, allowing students to choose more freely according to their aptitudes, talents, interests and aspirations;
- A wide diversification of the education and training paths on offer, some being mainly academically-oriented, others mainly vocationally-oriented;
- The possibility for learners to move from one education path to the other, in line with the principle of combining education, vocational training and work;
- A move away from the concept of compulsory school attendance till a required age to the principle of the right and obligation to receive education. Everybody is guaranteed the right to education and training for at least twelve years or until the learner obtains a qualification (by the age of 18) either in general education or in vocational education and training, with both systems enjoying equal status;
- The development of National Guidelines and Lines of action for initial and continuous guidance and counselling;
- The implementation of a national evaluation system to assess the quality of the school system;
- The active participation of parents in school life;
- The strengthening of the ties between education and the labour market.

12. Key findings

From all the national reports we can understand that there has been a considerable effort on the part of governments to encourage young people to return to, or to remain in, formal education. However, a holistic and integrated approach by all stakeholders is necessary; the school (formal education) alone cannot solve this problem.

From the educational point of view, there is evidence that **flexible scheduling, smaller classes and individualised educational plans** as well as supportive teachers and guidance personnel might be helpful in this connection.

The introduction of various academically less demanding **vocationally oriented training schemes** at upper secondary education level, in some countries covered by partial compulsory schooling organised in firms, has been quite a success.

The concept of **Second Chance Education** has been developed to combat the social exclusion of – especially – young people who have left school without sufficient skills to get fully integrated in society and on the labour market. The aim is to reintegrate these people socially and professionally by offering them a wide range of education and training opportunities that are tailor-made to their individual needs.

These initiatives were especially successful in certain countries and in particular in relation to certain adult groups.

The teaching methods, attitudes and other examples of good practice developed within second chance education might be useful and could be widely practised in formal education too as a preventive measure to avoid or reduce early school leaving, especially for pupils who feel ill at ease in school and are at risk of leaving prematurely. In the USA similar approaches to low achieving and educationally de-motivated young people have been applied in the so-called “**Accelerated schools**”; but also the opportunity to obtain GED (General Education Diplomas) without regular and full attendance at school is well used by young people who left high school without completing their courses.

There are also many initiatives focused on **alternative educational environments** for students who do not feel well in regular classrooms. They operate within existing schools or outside schools.

The alternative schools are usually smaller with a higher number of teachers per pupil and providing more personalised teaching, sometimes offering also some kind of vocational training.

This alternative is relevant in particular in countries with a long tradition in providing this type of education not only to adults but also to youngsters. For example in Nordic countries, the percentage of young people who left formal education and are in some kind of non-formal education is much higher than in other European countries.

Many governments tried to combat early school leaving by **extending compulsory education** to cover, in some cases, 1, 2 or even more years of upper secondary

education. In some countries, so called partial compulsory education was introduced, which covers certain kinds of job related training (EURYDICE, 2005a). Recent initiatives of **the UK government** focusing on extending compulsory schooling, including penalties for not attending the courses, fall under this category of governmental initiatives.

In **Norway**, young people who have completed primary and lower secondary education, or the equivalent, have a right to three years' upper secondary education and training leading either to admission to higher education, to vocational qualifications or to basic skills (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2007).

However, the most important factor positively influencing early school leaving, in particular at a local level, is how various sectors (for example employment, social affairs, formal and non-formal education), institutions, agencies and families work together and are able to reach all students at risk of early school leaving.

Vocational education and training and early school leaving

VET is expected to provide a vital link between initial education and training. There is evidence that countries with high levels of participation in VET at upper secondary level usually have the lowest rates of early school leavers.

However, there are also many students, more than in the general stream of upper secondary education, who leave the vocational education and training system without completing the course, as shown by an example from Norway described in the box below.

School tracking and equity

There is evidence from large scale surveys (confirmed also by PISA 2006) that in countries with a larger number of distinct programme types, the socio-economic background of pupils tends to have a significantly greater impact on pupils' performance, suggesting stratification or tracking at the system level associated with segregation of pupils in various tracks based on their socioeconomic background. Although there was no correlation between the age of selection and country mean performance, the share of variation in pupils' performance between schools was much higher in countries where the pupils are streamed at an earlier age (OECD, 2007b).

However, the age when the tracking or streaming occurs is important. Data show that this impact is greater for younger pupils than for upper secondary students.

Brunello and Chechi investigated school tracking at the level of (upper) secondary education, looking at such outcomes as literacy, drop out rates, college enrolment, employability and earnings. They found that in the countries investigated, the curricula offered in vocational schools seem to be more effective in promoting further training and adult competencies (the specialisation effect), thereby reducing the impact of parental background on these two outcomes (Brunello, G. and D. Chechi, 2007).

Therefore, reducing the extent of student tracking, either by raising the age of first selection or by reducing the number of educational programmes available, may be appropriate for reducing intergenerational effects in educational attainment between parents and their children, but may increase social exclusion for students with disadvantaged backgrounds.

However, there are no longitudinal studies at the international level to confirm the above findings.

At present, in many countries there are growing concerns about the group of young people aged 16 to 18 years who are neither in education or training nor in employment — the “Neet” group.

According to recent data there were 206 000 Neets, aged 16 to 18, in England (2006). Other sources estimate that 10% of all 16 to 18 year olds in England are Neets (Statistical First Release (SFR), 2007).

However, data also show that the Neet group in England is not static but rather a rapidly changing group — most young people do not spend long periods as Neets. It was estimated that only around 1% of 16-18 year olds are ‘long term Neet’ — that is, not doing anything at each of the three survey points at the ages of 16, 17 and 18 years old. Internationally, there is little evidence about this population group. Some research has been done and governmental strategies focused on “Neets” have been developed in particular in the UK and Japan. Government sources in Japan have estimated that there are some 640 000 Neets in Japan (Ken, Y-N., 2006) but also the 2.5 million so-called FREETERS, covering young people not permanently on the labour market, are viewed as a risk group.

Among other characteristics of this diverse group of Neets, persistent absentees are seven times more likely to be doing nothing at age 16 than those who have had regular school attendance. Also those with learning difficulties are twice as likely to be Neets. The Welsh government set up in 2006 a new strategy and a quantitative target for reducing the number of Neets and increasing the percentage of 16 to 18 year olds in education, employment or training to 93% by 2010.

13. Conclusions

As already mentioned, in order to face effectively the Early School Leavers phenomenon in Europe and reach the 2010/2020 benchmark, an holistic approach is necessary among educational institutions, policy makers and the employment setting.

In June 2008 in **Estonia** a manual “*School Support*” was completed. It describes support systems in schools, case studies and tasks to help staff and to face “bottlenecks” experienced in everyday practice. Based on theoretical and practical experience the manual offers suggestions to prevent behavioural problems and school drop-out.

In 2007 the National Audit Office in Estonia carried out an audit on the activities of the Ministry of Education and Research to guarantee compulsory school attendance. The most important remarks of the audit are the following:

- The term compulsory school non-attendance and stakeholders’ responsibilities have not been clearly defined, yet.
- The Ministry of Education and Research has no clear overview of compulsory school attendance
- Missing classes has not decreased. Approximately 2% of students (3100 students) miss more than 20% of lessons with no reason.
- Many students have problems with academic progress and school drop-out rate is still high. The problem is most serious in the 3rd school stage (grades 7-9), where almost one fifth of students have unsatisfactory half-term results and more than 7% of students have unsatisfactory annual results.
- More and more measures are implemented to improve compulsory school attendance
- The schools say that the most important measure concerning compulsory school attendance is the “opportunity classes”. Boarding school facilities and special classes for students with behavioural problems were rated highly by schools. Also problematic children rated special classes as a good measure, but psychological or psychiatric counselling was rated the highest.
- Although in the past years different measures have been implemented, the indicators of compulsory school attendance (leaving school, missing classes) have not improved. Therefore, it can be said the State’s actions to guarantee compulsory school attendance have not been effective. The National Audit Office concludes that indicators in the general education action plan concerning drop-out and unsatisfactory annual results in the third school stage (grades 7-9) might **not be achieved** by 2013.

In Germany, lower secondary schools (Hauptschule) turned into “residual schools” for the underprivileged.

Education has to be accessible to all and should provide:

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- Performance evaluation for teachers and effective/efficient tests
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However, regarding schooling levels, although some indicators are converging, they are still far from the European numbers and it is urgent to act effectively over the causes of school dropout. The measures created should always be connected to understanding the phenomenon.

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The improvement shown in **Italy** in reducing the number of early school leavers is certainly due to reforms and measures implemented over the years, and aimed at fighting the early school leaving phenomenon, such as:

- 5) The implementation of **National Operative Plan "School for Development"**, particularly the Measure 3, is aimed at preventing and recovering early school leaving and at implementing actions to reduce social exclusion.

- 6) The establishment of **Resource Centres** in the Southern Regions of Italy, although they have to improve their local intervention, certainly contributed to change the school image in these areas and to better sustain students with learning and behavioural difficulties.
- 7) Creation of **local networks involving different actors** in a given territory to develop common strategies to fight early school leaving.
- 8) The complete establishment of **scholastic autonomy** in its higher meaning, as technical and juridical instrument.

However, there is still a long way to go, in order to reach better results and to improve the quality of education in Italy.

Some good results have been achieved in the countries involved in the project Ulisse. However, lots of work has still to be made to reach the goals set for the year 2010 by the Lisbon Agenda.

Making learning attractive means primarily making education and training more attractive to those who do not participate at full capacity at present: young people with only lower secondary education and not in education and training, disabled persons, and people who fulfil the general conditions for access to tertiary education but who may feel excluded from the system, for example socially disadvantaged groups, boys and women, and others.

Everyone should understand, from as early an age as possible, the importance of education and training in life and its potential to broaden personal and professional horizons. Education and training institutions naturally have an important role to play in communicating this message, but also families, local communities and employers are instrumental in fostering the desire to learn. If people do not appreciate the advantages of continuous learning, they will never make the effort needed to raise their skills levels. A first building block is, as the Council (Ministers of Education) has underlined, the minimum knowledge base required in order fully to participate in today's knowledge-based society. Those without sufficient levels of knowledge, skills and competencies are less likely to participate effectively in lifelong learning and are in danger of being left behind.

Hence, reducing the number of early school leavers is essential for raising employment levels and increasing social cohesion. Young people in the knowledge society need to continue participating in education and training after compulsory schooling.

Pupils may leave education and training early because of low levels of proficiency in foundation skills such as reading literacy and numeracy. There is a high correlation between early school leavers and students performing at the lowest levels of proficiency (level 1 and lower of the PISA survey). Early school leavers are therefore likely to experience serious difficulties when dealing with written information and thus even with the most basic activities associated with lifelong learning in the knowledge society. However, participating in formal education is not enough. Promoting a culture of lifelong learning will entail giving greater recognition to non-formal and informal learning activities, allowing more flexibility and transferability of qualifications,

providing more guidance and counselling, and encouraging the active participation of private enterprise.

Indicators for monitoring performance and progress

Four indicators are used for measuring progress in the area of making learning more attractive:

- *Share of the population aged 18-24 with only lower-secondary education and not in education or training*
- *Participation rates in education by age and by level of education.*
- *Hours in continuing vocational training (CVT) courses per 1000 working hours (only enterprises with CVT courses), by NACE*
- *Hours in continuing vocational training CVT courses per 1000 working hours (all enterprises), by NACE*

These four indicators are of direct relevance for the key issues identified in the Detailed Work Programme, among them “encouraging young people to remain in education or training after the end of compulsory education, and motivating and enabling adults to participate in learning through later life.” They allow us to identify the countries which seem to have established a culture of learning within the formal education system, and assess the extent to which education and training are promoted beyond this point.

Performance and progress in the field of making learning more attractive show that in 2004, the EU average ratio of early school leavers (people aged 18-24 who have left school with only lower-secondary education) was 15.9%, the same as in 2003.

At the current rate of improvement, the ratio of early school leavers will reach approximately 14% in 2010 – meaning that the benchmark of 10% will be not reached by 2010.

It is clear that achieving the benchmark on early school leavers will require political action and sustained commitment in most EU countries. At the same time, although levels of early school leaving in the EU are relatively high, a substantial and increasing proportion of 15-24 year-olds participate in education. Since upper secondary participation rates did not change much, this increase was caused primarily by a substantial increase in tertiary participation rates. The obvious limitation of the indicator on participation of 15-24-year-olds in education is that it does not provide information on drop-out rates or on successful completion.

As education level increases, participation rates decline and, more significantly, the participation gap between socio-demographic groups increases. In order to see if education could not be made more attractive for a wider range of the population, it might be more useful to look at the socio-demographic background of students in tertiary education than of those in compulsory education.

Unfortunately, only very limited data is currently available on an international level. An analysis carried out for Austria, Ireland, the UK and Norway, using information on parental occupation, showed a general decline in inequality between 1998 and 2002. There was a slight increase in inequality in Austria in 1999, followed by an improvement, and a slight improvement in Ireland since the early 1990s. The tuition

fees introduced in Austria and Ireland (then abolished in Ireland in the late 1990s) seemed to have little impact on this trend.

In Norway inequality declined steadily between 1999 and 2002. In the UK there was a decline in the period 2002-2003.

Participation in education is also of paramount importance at later stages in life. One way of acquiring relevant knowledge and skills is through vocational training courses organised by enterprises. Therefore, hours spent in continuing training courses as a proportion of total working hours is an important indicator for assessing the overall effort devoted to continuing vocational training in enterprises.

Following the Communication from the Commission, in November 2008 the Council adopted conclusions on “Preparing young people for the 21st century: an agenda for European cooperation on schools”.

The document reaffirms the essential contribution made by education and training to the future growth and the long term competitiveness of the Union. Higher skills and better education are crucial for social cohesion, as well. It is noted that the progress towards the 2010 benchmark on Early School Leavers are still insufficient. The Council invites States, with the support of the Commission, to focus cooperation on reducing early school leaving.

Progress towards the 2010 benchmark has been slow. In the latest Progress Report EU average for 2007 was 14.8%, still quite far from the objective of 10%. Even though some countries show a very good performance (less than 8%) in others the process aiming to substantially diminish the rate of ESL is still undergoing. Initiatives taken to involve ESL in further educational and training programmes have not fully succeeded and the ESL rate is still over 19 percent (Romania, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Malta).

Therefore, the proposal for 2020 is to maintain the same benchmark (10% early school leavers among young people). The proposed objective has already been reached by some countries, but it is an ambitious objective, anyway, at European level as it asks for more effective actions from several countries. In fact, at current trends the proposed benchmarks will be achieved in EU only in 2023.

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