VII. Policy initiatives and 'good practices' in reducing early school leaving

The countries' reports organised their views on EU influence on policy initiatives and 'good practices' in reducing ESL based on the following three perspectives: i) external influence of the EU; ii) relationship with particular EU recommendations and programs; iii) sporadic or no references to EU recommendations.

In general, 'good practices' are described as on going, or recently completed and examined by academic researchers or by agencies. The unawareness regarding their impact, if any, is also mentioned due to lack of systematic assessment. Critical perspectives are mobilised in their analysis. The practices' actual contribution or willpower to combat ESL is reported, taking into consideration prevention, remediation and compensation measures. Notably in the Netherlands, but also in other countries, the close collaboration between different stakeholders was mentioned as an important contextual factor with positive impact on the implementation of 'good practices' in ESL, both by making early signalling and prevention of drop out more feasible and in finding remediation and compensation responses.

Three general guidelines predominate in the design and objectives of policy initiatives and 'good practices' in the country partners: *academic orientation* to provide compulsory and post compulsory education; *labour market orientation* to provide labour market integration, and *social integration/inclusion*. Regardless of their orientation, these 'good practices' project the general objective to raise the educational level and the level of professional qualifications and skills to ensure integration into the labour market, under the rationale of the articulation between education and labour. Even if manifold, policy initiatives and 'good practices' reveal different drivers: **educational** - academic orientation, academic success, **economic** - labour market orientation, and **social** - social integration and inclusion, in response to ESL causes and symptoms.

Whereas several examples of policy initiatives and 'good practices' were provided in countries reports, we can only present an illustrative selection.

Economic goals/'drivers'

The relationship between education and the labour market is also used as a guideline by a number of policy initiatives and 'good practices'. Young people categorized as NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) are particularly targeted. The return to education and the integration in the workplace are on the basis of the design of these 'good practices'. This is the case, for example, with *A Ray of Hope* – The children's program of the National Public Foundation for Employment (Hungary); apprenticeship training guarantee, coaching for apprentices, production schools, supra-company apprenticeships (Austria); the *OKO-Trajectories* (Belgium); or the apprenticeship programmes led by industrial and entrepreneurial organisations (in Portugal).

Helping young people return to any kind of education or training and their insertion in apprenticeship in the work place are the concerns underlying practices - besides the ones just pointed out above - such as the local programme The Barnet Skills, Employment and Enterprise Action Plan (UK); Employment Market Qualified Assistant Training (Netherlands); New Perspectives (Poland); Joves per L'ocupació – Sumat (Catalonia); and some features of the reform of upper secondary schools in diverse countries (notably in Sweden) with an amplified connection to the labour market by means of increased training and apprenticeship activities.

Social goals/'drivers'

Other 'good practices' are more focused on the social dimensions: dealing with young people's problematic relationships with schooling (leavers or at risk of leaving), pursuing goals that focus either on getting compulsory education or in getting non mandatory educational degrees. Good examples of a preventive type are Stay on Track (Antwerp, BE); reception classes (Netherlands); programme for the Roma Community (Poland, Portugal); support to schools and to young people at risk of being excluded from schools (UK); mentorship to support pupils at risk of year repetition (Sweden). Good compensatory examples are CVOs (Second Chance Adult Education Centres, in Belgium), POSA-T'HI (Take Over, Spain); and apprenticeship courses with upper secondary school leaving certificate (Austria). Some remediation measures also incorporating the 'good practices' should be mentioned. Dobbantó (spring-board), a Hungarian adaptation of the "First Things First' US program, and other programmes providing education for young people excluded from schools (notably in the UK).

The reinforcement of social bounds is also on the basis of some 'good practices'. This is the case of teachers that drive and pick pupils up when they do not show up at school (Sweden); Truancy Phone/School Phone (Ghent); Social Work in Schools and Youth Coaching (Austria). Other examples aimed at enacting the construction of institutional networks are the Smooth Transition (in Netherlands) and the Preventative NEET programmes (in the UK): young people identified as NEETs are visited at home by representatives of the local councils in 'door-knocking sessions' in order to re-engage them in education or training. Still others, directed at the provision of services that ensure school attendance and attainment are the full-day care in schools and the New Secondary School (in Austria), 'Wings' (Poland), and the enlargement of preschool provision by private non-profit organizations (in Portugal).

For analytical reasons, the 'good practices' have been organised into three main categories to incorporate the educational, economic and social emphasis in response to ESL. Moreover, we tried to accentuate these practices' prevention, remediation and compensation nature. However, it is important to highlight that there are overlaps in these categories and that the illustrative selection does not manage to encompass the great diversity of 'good practices' promoted by the participating partner countries.