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eArly warning Platform to Prevent youth from dropping out of schooL Education

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National report: Key findings of desk research and interviews with educators and stakeholders in Spain

IO1 – Capacity Building Seminars for Educators

Abstract

The research has shown the different existing perspectives about absenteeism and early school drop-out. In the desk research, the theoretical concepts and situation have been addressed, showing concern by the Spanish authorities for the phenomenon and approaching it with best practices as formal or informal workshops. The empirical research has evidenced different opinions, highlighting the clear lack of necessary tools to address the problem. Although the schools put in practice the existing ones, there are not enough to deal with the reality of the situation and one of the most important concerns is the lack of implication by the state and local authorities.

The reports have been very useful to cross the official information given and promoted publicly by the authorities with the professionals' opinions and realities. The used methodology has been focused on the use of quantitative and qualitative means and tools to achieve the highest quality results. Literary papers as well as policy recommendations, laws and regulations, action plans and official press have been used for the research. Face-to-face, as well as online interviews, have been carried out both with educators and experiences stakeholders.

The most important findings rely on the differences between the perspectives of the different professionals in comparison with the state sources. The lack of efficient tools for the teachers to address these situations has been the most surprising and important result of this report, as all of them are truly concerned with the phenomenon and see it as common (most common than in the general opinion's beliefs). They demand the development of a general toolkit for the prevention of the cases.

Contents

1 Introduction: Spanish national context

Spain is a highly diverse country divided into 17 Autonomous Communities; autonomous administrative territories that, in the framework of the Spanish legal system, enjoy certain autonomy regarding legislative power, with own representatives as well as certain executive and administrative competences and own languages. The educational competence is transferred from the state to the Autonomous Communities because these are able to assess the necessities of the students. However, the state has a common educational framework that must be accomplished and all the autonomous communities have to adequate their programmes and tools for all educational systems to the general one. The desk research will be carried out including information of all the Spanish territory, and the empirical research has been carried out in the Valencian Community, although all the interviewees have been asked for the general practices carried out in other autonomous communities and in general in the country.

The framework in which Spain has drafted its educational laws and programmes has been one of the eight indicators defined for the monitoring of the objectives of the Strategy Europe 2020 is that the youth population continue their studies beyond the basic education. For all the European countries and for Spain as well, this is also one of the concerns, and that's the reason why the Government has developed a system to control this phenomenon.

This objective is part of the Sustainable Development Indicators published by Eurostat (Objective 4). Quality of Education, the Eurostat Gender Equality Indicators, the Europe 2020 Education Indicators and the Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) strategic framework. One of the priority objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy is that the value of this indicator should not exceed 10% in the year 2020.

In 2014, the Spanish Government established the new National Classification of Education (CNED-2014), based on the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED-2011), which guarantees comparability with the results of other countries.

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The education levels according to the CNED-2014 are the following:

- Level 0-2: preschool, primary and 1st stage of secondary education.
- Level 3-4: 2nd stage of secondary education and post-secondary non-higher education.
- Level 5-8: 1st and 2nd cycle of higher education and doctorate.

Based on the Economically Active Population Survey, early drop-out from education and training is the percentage of persons aged 18-24 years old who haven't completed the second stage secondary education and who haven't followed any type of education and training in the four weeks prior to the interview. Their highest level of education is the level (0-2) of the CNED-2014 and they don't receive any education or training.
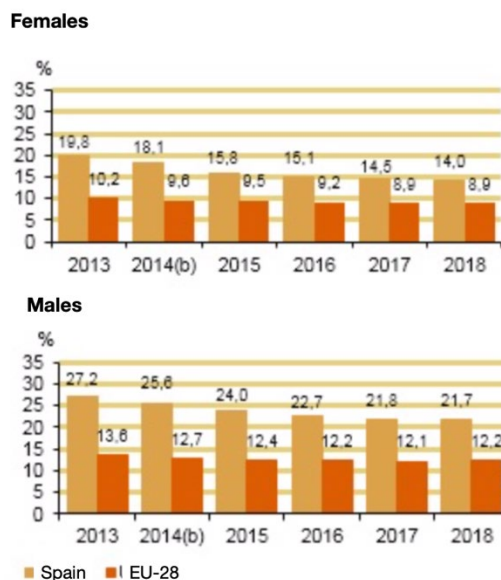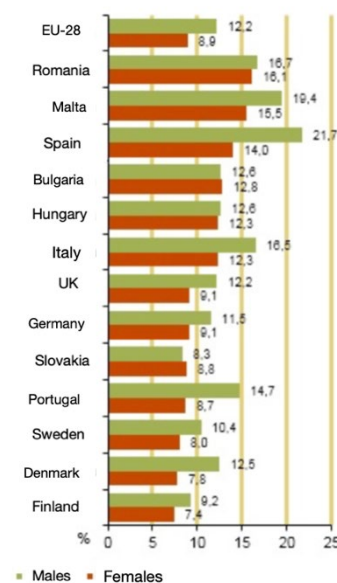
Source: Indicators Europe 2020. Eurostat

In the year 2018 in Spain, the early drop-out rate from education and training reached 21.7% for men and 14.0% for women. Early dropout from education and training has always been higher among men. In recent years, this figure has decreased, with a value for men of 24.0% in the year

2015, 22.7% in the year 2016 and 21.8% in 2017. For women, it reached a value of 15.8% in the year 2015, 15.1% in the year 2016 and 14.5% in the year 2017.

The improvement in the figures for 2018 is due to the increase in the population that has reached the level of second stage secondary education.

In 2018 the figure for early school leavers in Spain for men is the highest of all EU countries and almost double the figure for the EU-28 (12.2%).

For women, the figure for Spain (14.0%) by 2018 is also higher than the figure for the EU-28 (8.9%), with Spain also having one of the highest values for early school leaving, only surpassed by Malta (15.5%) and Romania (16.1%).[1]

As the statistic shows, in Spain, the early drop-out school is higher than in the rest of EU countries being the males the most likely to leave it. This report will show real information about the situation in Spain, both from the literary perspective and the point of view of the professionals that face daily the reality of the educational system.

The objective of the project for Spain will be to tackle the high amount of school drop-out and to help the educators to develop soft skills and tools to prevent and try to stop this situation. The project will be especially interesting for Spain taking into account the high percentage of this phenomenon. In the next sections, the specific concerns and needs of the professionals in the field of education will be explained and in the final conclusions, the objective of the project will be assessed again for the Spanish country.

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[1] More information at the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (https://www.ine.es/ss/Satellite?L=es_ES&c=INESeccion_C&cid=1259925480602&p=1254735110672&pagename=ProductosYServicios%2FPYSLayout&param1=PYSDetalle&param3=1259924822888) and Eurostat (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/29305.pdf)

2 Methodology

The methodology used to conduct the research with the professionals was based interviews to the selected educators and stakeholders, pre-identified questionnaires and literature provided by the Spanish Government as well as Valencia Community, national and local laws and procedures available at the official websites. The means were both quantitative and enough and qualitative, focused on obtaining the highest quality of the samples.

The interviewees were selected according to different criteria; the educators were selected from different areas of the Valencian Community (some more depressed than others) and the experience of each one was important too, as we wanted to cross the information between those who had just finished their studies and had entered recently into the educational institutions and those with wide experience. This is a positive aspect because we can have data from the most experienced teachers and from the ones that have already started and can assess the necessities of the schools and students comparing the theory learned in the universities and the real practices from a fresh and innovative perspective, without being influenced.

Regarding the stakeholders, we tried to reach one of the most important institutions in the Valencian Community, the Youth Council who is in charge of the educational as well as inclusive programmes for the young population. These Councils are in all the Spanish's autonomous communities, and they develop all kind of educational programmes, workshops and activities, keeping the young population's needs always into account, so their testimony was essential for the Spanish report. The Cultural Association Go Europe was interviewed also, due to their extensive activities with youth people and knowledge of the field. The other stakeholders were schoolmasters with a lot of experience and interest in the project.

There were carried out 10 interviews in total; 5 made to educators and 5 made to stakeholders.

All the educators thought in public schools and were mostly women (only one man was interviewed). About their ages, they are very diverse; the women were aged from 25 to 60 years old, and the men were between 40-50 years old. Some of them have a lot of experience in the field (both as educators and educational psychologists) and two of them are less experienced, they have finished their studies and started working in public schools some years ago, after

practising in different high schools. One of the women is also the headmaster of the school, so it was interviewed also as a stakeholder due to her wide experience.

The stakeholders were from diverse institutions, ages and gender. There were interviewed three men and two women; the men were all between 30 and 40 years old, and the women were aged approximately 50-60 years old. Two of the men were working in private companies boosting the youth inclusion and participation in the school and the other one was Technician of the Valencian Community Youth Council. Both women were headmasters of public schools and high schools in Valencia and its surroundings, with wide knowledge about the school's direction and students in difficult situations.

3 Key findings of the desk research

3.1 Existing practices and tools for the prevention of early school leaving

Some of the most relevant best practices that are already being used in the different Spanish territories will be detailed in the following pages:

- Strategies and levels of intervention with families[2]
  These strategies include: transit programs between stages and educational centres, Educational Awareness Programs, open days, formalization of contracts with families, information and advice on aid and resources, elaboration and diffusion of schooling campaign, welcome plans, information campaign son school absenteeism for citizens, family-school coordination and communication tutorials action plans, talks and debates on the importance of participation in the life of the centre, dynamization of the PTAs[3], establishing a reference point that acts as a link between the educational

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[2] General Directorate for Family and Minors (2016) *Family Support Strategy for the Community of Madrid (2016-2021*) General Directorate for Family and Minors, Community of Madrid https://www.comunidad.madrid/transparencia/sites/default/files/plan/document/40_716_estrategia_de_apoyo_a_la_familia_version_digital_0.pdf

[3] Parent-Teacher Associations

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centre and the families, interviews with families and home visits, adoption of intervention agreements between the entities working on prevention, workshops from the districts, statistical studies. etc.

These tools have been successful and have achieved a reduction in the absenteeism and school dropping in the communities that have applied them, as the Community of Madrid.

- ### Strategies for working with children
  These strategies include the following: the promotion before the educational authorities so that in the annual plans of the centres, programmes, projects and participation of external agents are incorporated, especially from the social field, which complements the limitations of the educational administration at the level of family compensation, socio-cultural and labour projection, (secondary centres) as well as the promotion of the creation of the figure of the intercultural mediator in the school environment.

  These tools have been applied not always successful because they are not always mandatory for the schools to be done or to attend if they are driven by external entities. This reduces its effectivity and would be necessary to be imposed mandatorily.

- ### Workshops for the reduction of the absenteeism
  Driven by the schools themselves, City Councils or NGOs[4], in these workshops they try to address common aspects in the classrooms as the following ones: de-motivation, passivity in the face of academic tasks, history of failure; lack of knowledge of effective study techniques; family environment, lack of control, absence of rules, of limits; social environment, without participation in organizations and projects of leisure and culture, of values of personal and social growth; lack of expectations in the school context,

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[4] Some workshops have been developed by Public High School IES Alquerías in Murcia (https://diversidad.murciaeduca.es/publicaciones/claves/doc/mgil2.pdf), City Council of Alicante, Valencian Community (https://www.alicante.es/sites/default/files/documentos/documentos/absentismo-escolar/cuaderno-actividades-cas.pdf), City Council of Getafe, Madrid (https://www.getafe.es/wp-content/uploads/CAMPAÑA-PREVENCION-Y-SENSIBILIZACION.pdf)

disorientation and discouragement, etc. The workshops are divided according to the academic level (according to the CNED-2014).

For the 1st stage of secondary education (level 0-2) the topics that are tackled are those concerning effective techniques for intellectual work, training sessions to improve work planning and organization skills, as well as to develop time management habits for study are addressed. The aim is to promote personal autonomy as well as social skills, self-concept and self-esteem.

For the 2nd stage of secondary education and post-secondary non-higher education (level 3-4), they work with different topics, as the previous ones are taken for granted. The work done with the students is focused on academic and professional orientation, learning to learn, personal growth, emotional intelligence, development of strengths, virtues and effective thinking strategies. This work is framed in the scientific field of positive psychology. All this with the aim of encouraging students to acquire skills and attitudes that allow them to adequately manage their emotions and to have a greater capacity to relate to others.

The students' opinions show that they are engaged with the workshops and the learning process, as they refer to the formation to be <<very useful and enriching>>.

In other workshops, the content is more theoretical, directed to create a high impact on the students regarding their obligation to finish, at least, the secondary school and the social and criminal consequences of their lack of assistance both for them and their families. The participating speakers were from the Local and National Police, social educators and mediators, educational psychologist, students commissions and associations, etc.

These tools have failed, as both families and students perceived them as aggressive and lacking the necessary sensitivity for dealing with this topic. More constructive and positive approaches were proven more efficient.

Other workshops were focused in didactic activities (stories, real cases, alphabet soups, Q&A exercises, open exercises, etc.) to highlight the importance of the school and

education for young people in a game format. The workshops were divided in different sessions trying to approach as many values as possible. The values that were being developed through this system was mainly, the school as a second home for developing the potential of students, the interculturality in the classroom, the personal growth, the impact of the theoretical concepts in the future of the students' lives and the soft skills (socialization, comradeship, solidarity, friendship, communication, etc.).

The impact of these tools was highly positive, as it was proved that after several sessions and individualised students' attention by the educational psychologists, some students that seemed to have lost their interest in school activities started to be more active and raise their academic grades also.

- ▪ **Workshops of the SERES Foundation (Valencia)[5]**

This Foundation develops monthly workshops and talks for families and young students promoting the integration in the educational system and the creation of social awareness of the importance of learning. It informs also about the social helps for scholarships and social services. They focus their activities in the most social and economically depressed areas of the Valencian Community in order to give support to the most conflictive cases. It has also a team of educational psychologist and social workers that support their activities.

It enhances the participation of the youngest in the activities, the social integration through the improvement of the families' knowledge and life's quality and innovation tools also for the prevention of early school drop-out.

- ▪ **Formal education provided by the CEFIRE[6]**
CEFIRE is the Spanish National Centre for Training, Innovation and Resources for teachers, in charge of all the formal courses and programmes for the professionals.

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[5] https://www.fundacionseres.org/Paginas/Campus/Proyectos.aspx?IDp=371

[6] Centro de Formación, Innovación y Recursos para el Profesorado – Spanish Centre for Training, Innovation and Resources for Teachers http://cefire.edu.gva.es/course/view.php?id=937

They have mandatory and optional courses and formation tackling the prevention of absenteeism and school drop-out also.

- **Programme "student assistants"[7]**

This is a common practice through the Spanish schools and high schools. Due to the diverse background, ethnicity, languages and cultures inside the classrooms, the so-called cooperative learning has become an essential tool to be used for the integration and engagement in the class. The aim is to promote shared responsibility and involvement in the improvement of the community's emotional climate. Some of the specific objectives of the programme are the following:

- To promote collaboration, knowledge and the search for solutions to interpersonal problems in the school environment.
- To reduce cases of bullying among students.
- To reduce conflicts and, therefore, the application of sanctioning measures.
- Encourage direct student participation in the resolution of school conflicts.
- Create channels of communication and mutual knowledge between educators and students, improving the self-esteem of all the participants in the program.
- Establish a specific school organization to address the violent ways of dealing with conflicts.
- Increasing the values of students through accountability.

3.2 Needs of educators

The needs of the educators can be diverse according to the situation of the schools and their location also, being the ones allocated in the most depressed areas more needed than the ones

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[7] More information can be obtained in the following link that contains the guide o fone of the programmes, implemented by the Community of Andalucía. http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/portals/delegate/content/d2ea674b-8d21-45a8-be3c-efa4174d6287

allocated in better ones. However, the needs can be summarised in the following ideas, according to Spanish policy recommendations as well as national reports:

- Need for higher participation in events and formation directed to know how to deal with the absenteeism and drop-out from school effectively; to promote active participation in prevention
- Need for National and European intervention with actions directed to the prevention in the first years of scholarship, that enhance the feeling of integration and self-esteem. To agree on common and coordinated actions with the different institutions and social agents related to absenteeism: establish coordination protocols and collaboration between educational institutions that are effective.
- Need for specific strategies and tools for early prevention; to identify and prevent the causes of absenteeism and early school leaving.
- Need for specific strategies and tools for communicating and working with problematic cases focusing on soft skills.
- Need for specific tools to know how to deal with families that don't support a scholarship for their children. <<Problematic families are sometimes for the teachers more difficult to deal with than the students themselves, and the communication between families and schools is essential for the future development of the students>>[8].
- Need for more integrated work of the different Administrations and areas involved, favouring the establishment of links between different professionals to allow the exchange of ideas, experiences and opinions. Awareness raising and training of the professionals involved.
- Need for more individualisation; person-centred intervention, with actions aimed at prevention in the first years of schooling that promote a sense of belonging and the consolidation of early learning.
- Need for more promotion and articulation of measures to achieve the integration and permanence in the centre of the absent students.

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[8] Extracted from the report "*Education, a two-way street: school and family*" made by the educational expert Sofía Domínguez Martínez in the scope of the Spanish Federation of Education of Andalucía's Autonomous Community. https://www.feandalucia.ccoo.es/docu/p5sd7214.pdf

- Need for a specific toolkit including the following tools:
    - Actions to attend families and absent students.
    - Favouring the contact and implication of families in the educational process of their children with joint interventions of the school and the social services.
    - Articulation of measures to achieve the permanence in the centre of the absent students.
    - Training to know how to stimulate and motivate students to continue their studies when they finish secondary education.
    - Specific tool for the detection and follow-up of cases or groups of students that require some type of more complex intervention so that they receive the attention of other social programs.

3.3   Needs of education stakeholders

3.3.1   What are their needs in order to provide support to educators?

The stakeholders' role in the educational system is essential, as they are the ones promoting workshops, support and giving policy recommendations to the state and the autonomous communities' city councils. Their needs arise from the necessity of unification and homogeneity in the legal policies regarding absenteeism and school early drop-out, as there are diverse tools and procedures followed in the territories and the schools. The specific needs can be summarised in the following ideas:

- Need to establish coordinated strategies to achieve the return of students who have an early exit from the education system and achieve integration and permanence of absenteeism in the school.
- Need to make available to the municipalities a guide of actions for the prevention of absenteeism and dropout.
- Need to promote the development of regulations that promote the prevention, control and monitoring of absenteeism and school dropout from the socio-educational intervention.

- Need to favour the contact and involvement of families in the educational process of their children: interventions of the management team, guidance service tutors and scheduled visits of social agents.
- Need to promote and articulate measures to achieve the integration and permanence in the centre of the absent students.
- Need or more promotion and articulation of measures to achieve the integration and permanence in the centre of the absent students.

i. Do they face any difficulties on the development and/or implementation of such practices/programmes/tools?

According to the available information, the most important difficulty that they have to deal with is the passivity of the state regarding the school drop-out, as it's seen as a second-class problem, which only materialises in isolated and exceptional cases.

Moreover, the lack of a homogeneous policy making both from the Spanish country and the European Union make very difficult the dealing with the situation, being Spain the country with more school drop-out within the Union, as seen in the first section of the report 1) Introduction: Spanish National Context.

4 Key findings of the empirical research

4.1 Findings of the interviews with educators

i. Difficulties faced by the educators

The main problems that educators and teachers face are the following:

- School absenteeism is a common practice in the public schools in Spain, as there are families that do not trust in the importance of education for their children and teenagers and prefer them working in familiar businesses instead of going to school.

- Lack of implication of the families is a common problem, having the teachers in most of the cases to try to work with the parents too, apart with from the students in order

to explain them the importance of a good formation in the school. The families that do not find value in the school or the teachers' role conform to a great problem for the educators. Most of the interviewed teachers, as well as stakeholders, have referred this same situation as a negative factor affecting their daily activities.

- Students that end leaving the school because of the great number of failed subjects that they have. This is a problem for the teachers sometimes because they try to be flexible with the students before a lack of adequate existing tools to face these specific situations.

- In the cases in which the students have some kind of disability, the teachers need to make a greater effort to give them support. The state provides of teachers for these cases for reinforcement in the classroom, but the reality is different; there are too many students to attend in the classrooms and the reinforcement teachers are not enough to cover all the cases. Moreover, in the cases in which the disability is very mild (for instance, attention deficit disorder), the reinforcement teachers and educational psychologists team of the school do not attend them, as the situation is not serious enough.

- There's a generalised disappointment due to the lack of visibility given to this problem, that leads the state and Autonomous Communities in Spain to assign a low budget to it.

- Sometimes the students with less economic possibilities, although they want to study and try to do it, cannot even afford to buy the necessary materials, books, etc. Sometimes the families try to make an effort too, but they have a lot of children and not enough state helps.

ii. Methods used to prevent early school dropping

In this point, we have to take into account that the Spanish Government has transferred the competencies of the education to the Autonomous Communities (territorial divisions of Spain). Each Autonomous Community has its own plan to prevent the early school dropping as well as specific procedures and methods. Then, each school has its own additional methods and tools, depending on the

relevance of that phenomenon in the institution. The methods referred by the interviewed educators in Spain are the following:

- Most of the teachers refer to sensitisation courses or workshops for families, as this is one of the most important problems that they have to face.
- Workshops for educators to teach them how to face these situations with good communication skills.
- Workshops and conferences with the students to show them the importance of the school.

iii.   Existing practices and tools that contribute to the prevention of the phenomenon

- <u>The Education Ministry obliges the schools to control the assistance of the students</u> to the classes and to follow the cases in which there are evidences of conflicts with families or any kind of uncommon situation. They are more centred in families with low incomes, families living in problematic areas or problematic background. This procedure is made by an educational module called "Ítaca", where the teachers register daily the assistance of the students to the classes. When the student misses 4 classes without justification given, the educational centre informs his or her family, that has a personal meeting with the director and the student's tutor to assess the situation. In the meeting is decided if the school will inform the social services or not.

- <u>Special and reduced groups for students with specific necessities that have difficulties with some subjects</u>. Some teachers specify that most of the courses are given in the last Primary courses (11-12 years old) to prevent the school dropping in the next years and reinforce the self-esteem of the students too. In these courses the subjects are practised in a less theoretical and more practical way to try to engage the students more.

iv.   Training needs and necessary skills

- Reinforcement of soft skills and implication with the most disfavoured students to help them to reach the minimum standards required by the state.

- Individualisation with each learning process and progress of the students.

- Deep knowledge of the students to be able to assess their individual necessities.

- Deep knowledge of specific tools to be able to detect and prevent the early dropping cases.

v. Training recommendations

The overall perception of the interviewed educators is that there's a general lack of economic and technical means and tools for the schools to face this situation. As expressed in previous parts of the analysis, there's a lack of concerning about this problem in Spain by the authorities, as the early school dropping is perceived as an exceptional situation that occurs in very few cases.

Moreover, the lack of concern by the Government leads to a lack of activities provided to the schools, workshops, tools, formation, etc.
The schools only provide the basic information to the educators that are so far scarce and poor, they need more implication and tools that help them to be able to help as well to the students.

- More creation of social consciousness and sensibility. It's needed a higher impact about the importance of the school for the children both for developing soft skills and theoretical aspects. The families should have more information regarding this topic.

- There's a general lack of formal education for teachers about how to deal with these cases.

- Practical and pedagogical exercises for the students to keep them engaged when they start to lose interest in school.

- How to use soft skills and create empathy in these cases. Deep knowledge of soft skills and specific tools to talk with the students in these situations.

- Workshops to help the students to increase their self-esteem, as this is a key factor for their success.

b) Findings of the interviews with education stakeholders

i. Difficulties faced by the educators from the stakeholders' point of view

The educators face different problems according to the stakeholders' point of view. Some of the most important ones are the following:

- Lack of concern by the state for these problems, because they are perceived as exceptional and occasional.

- Due to the previous point, there's a lack of qualitative and quantitative materials for facing the situations (i.e. lack of enough reinforcement teachers and educational psychologists, lack of courses and formation, lack of modern tools to assess the problems). The schools accomplish with the minimum required by the state and do not try to implement innovative ways of engaging the students. The existing ones are too much traditional according to the stakeholders' opinion.

- Lack of concern by the families of some students. The most usual is that the families that are more economically depressed or have to face problematic background do not support enough the children to continue their studies. In a lot of cases, the families prefer that the children work in familiar businesses when they reach a certain age instead of continuing with their studies and acceding to superior ones.

ii. Methods used to prevent early school dropping

In this question, the stakeholders talked about the methods used at national and Valencian Autonomous Community's level. The referred ones were the following:

- Absenteeism Programme of the Valencian Community in order to control the attendance to the classes. In case of lack of attendance for a determined amount of days, the families will be informed of the situation and in the worst scenario, the social services.

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- Canteen scholarships for the families with less economic resources to help them to be able to pay the other required materials (for instance notebooks or stationary) and avoiding the perception of the school as an unnecessary expense by the families with less concern for the education.
- School scholarships are available both in the national and local level[9], for the families with the lowest incomes. These scholarships cover the whole academic year, including materials, tuitions, transport, etc.
- National courses and workshops for diversification and reinforcement for the teachers dealing with students with more difficulties with learning (retarded in some courses, learning disabilities, background problems or behavioural conflicts). Then, the teachers work with the students in small groups. They referred that, according to their knowledge, these groups were mixed; all the students with different learning necessities joined the same group in which the educational psychologist s or teacher had to assign different tasks to the students depending on the necessity of each one. They explained that there were not separate groups in the schools and high schools because these situations are punctual, not common.
- In the most conflictive areas, social educators have developed a plan by which they visit the families in the morning to take care of the child, wake him up and take him to school.
- Social mediators appointed to mediate between schools and parents in exceptional situations in which the background of the family is highly problematic.

iii. Existing practices and tools that contribute to the prevention of the phenomenon

The stakeholders explained for this question different practices and tools that they are familiar with in practice by the educations in schools.

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[9] These scholarships are called "Becas MEC" and they can be obtained every year according to the annual personal income tax of the family. They are applicable both for public and private schools for secondary, tertiary and higher education, always taking into account the aforementioned tax.

- Workshops for families driven by the schools. The aim is to try to create concern in the parents and the idea of supporting their children is essential for their educational development.
- More practical classes for students with learning difficulties.
- Individualised tutors for students with learning difficulties. A tutor is assigned only to that student and supervises all the work and assists him. This may not be the most usual practice, but in some centres, there is evidence of their use.
- The association YMCA (Valencia) develops individualised training for families in risk of social exclusion to guarantee the access of the children of these families to the educational system.
- Assign the children higher responsibilities (for instance, being delegates, represent the class in public events or school visits, engagement in competitions, etc.).

iv. Training recommendations

These were the recommendations from the stakeholders to be included in the plan of absenteeism and the national framework as well:

- Development of workshops to explain to the educators specific tools for soft skills and communication with students and families.
- Quality of the information provided inside and outside of the schools to ensure better integration. The traditional perception shown by the social media of children coming from Roma Communities (ethnic minority predominant in Spain) as example of bad students with difficulties in learning or lack of integration is negative. Workshops for integration would be one of the best forms of eradicating it.
- More engagement of the educators for this topic instead of focusing more on the students with fewer difficulties.
- More promotion of the workshops offered because sometimes there's no enough information and the educators are not enough formed.

c) Characteristics of young people at risk of early school leaving

According to the preidentified questionnaires and interviews carried out with educators and stakeholders, the results are in some aspects very similar and others uneven. All of the interviewees worked with youth students in the risk of early school dropping and most of them had been doing it for a long time and or even not working in the field (stakeholders), their post was similar and they had usual connections with young students in the risk of leaving the school.

The first questions were about specific information about the names of the institutions and positions that the interviewees held, and it won't be tackled in this section as it was explained in section 2) Methodology.

The next section of the survey's parameters to be tested were those about gender and age of the average number of young people at risk of early school leaving, agreeing almost all of them in the masculine gender as the predominant one in school dropping. Regarding the ages, between 14 and 16 years old was the most repeated answer and 20% approximately for the average number of school drop-outs.

However, an interesting fact was that a lot of interviewees didn't know exactly about this part of the statistical data or tried to guess it, and this shows clearly the low public concern and lack of visibility of the topic.

About the last open question of the statistical section of the survey about the groups at special risk of early school dropping, a lot of social groups were named. The most repeated ones were the families with low economic profile, the ethnic background (Roma communities was mentioned by almost all the professionals), the family negative aspects (lack of concern or support, encouragement, criminal background, etc.) and the students with mild or more serious psychological problems or mental illnesses (from attention deficit disorders, autism spectrum disorders, a serious breach of conduct due to mental conditions, learning disabilities and emotional disorders, etc.). There were other mentioned groups as the migrants, the students being retarded one or more grades or the ones with low interest in school.

The last section about the characteristics and factors driving the school drop-outs contained 6 multiple-choice questions that will be developed one by one.

1. Regarding the first one, the aspects that influence the most the early school leaving, all of them were selected by both educators and stakeholders. <u>The most important ones for the teachers were the familiar and economic background of the students' families and for the stakeholders the familiar aspects</u>. The only parameter that wasn't selected by any participant was the school qualities, which proves that the perception of Spanish education is high among professionals.

2. In the second question about the school qualities factors influencing the early school leaving, the answers were diverse as well. All the options were selected by someone, but the most repeated ones were <u>for teachers the low academic achievement and the lower cognitive abilities, while for the stakeholders the most important were the frequent school transfers or long-term absenteeism and being retarded in one or more school years</u>. However, all the aspects were important according to the opinion of the professionals and were able to influence the school drop-out.

3. For the third question about school qualities, the answers were more homogeneous, agreeing all the participants in the <u>higher importance of the administrative or instructional leadership as determining factor having an impact in early school leaving.</u> The standards of conduct and physical performance were discarded by all the participants.

4. The professionals' answers for the personal background's influences in the early school leaving answers were also common for the teachers and stakeholders, being <u>ethnic background the most important factor joint with the cultural one</u>.

5. In the family context's question, all the possible answers were marked by someone of the interviewees also. The consensus was high in the selection of the aspect that influences the most the early school leaving; the <u>lack of family encouragement and support.</u> This problem is shown also widely at the interviews, where the educators explained in numerous occasions the normality of these situations in which the parents are the ones that refuse to help the children or prefer that they don't attend to the

schools regularly. The lack of individualised attention towards children was also commented by a lot of professionals.

6. The last question about the groups that face a higher risk of early school leaving was similar to the pen question of the first section, as in both the most common answer has been the <u>children and youth from Roma communities as well as the students facing mental illnesses, learning disabilities or emotional or behavioural disorders</u>. The less selected one by the professional was the students from linguistic minorities.

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5 Conclusions

During the development of the analysis, different results have arisen from both the desk research and the empirical one. The discrepancies between the official sources and the practice of the professionals have provided the report with rich and useful data.

Regarding the best practices, the most used ones are the formal courses and programmes, as well as the workshops for teachers and students, given by City Councils, NGO's or the schools themselves. The Programme Student-Assistant is very interesting as well and the reduced groups with the most disadvantaged students with learning disabilities are proven to be useful also.

However, these practices don't seem to have an impact enough, maybe because there's no common framework of promoted practices by the state. The fragmentation into smaller territories with own competences to act limits the action of the authorities, having, as a result, an also fragmented educational programme for coping with these situations.

Regarding the needs of educators and stakeholders, there's one aspect in common; the lack of a homogeneous framework (national and European), making it very difficult to the schools to be able to decide which procedures should they apply when these cases appear. Moreover, the lack of promotion of the problem and state implication makes difficult the actions of the educational stakeholders.

The needs of the educators are more specific and reside mainly in the necessity of having a specific toolkit including detailed strategies that help them to talk with the families as well as with the absent students. Soft skills are demanded to be implemented in the classrooms to know more how to establish effective communication with the students as well as exercises and techniques to work inside the classroom.

The interculturality and high differences amongst the students make necessary specific actions to address the needs of all the students and be able to guarantee the integration inside the classroom to avoid the prejudices against Roma communities, ethnic minorities, students with a problematic or economic depressed background or environment, etc.

The APPLE project would be the perfect tool for providing the Spanish educational system with a training module combining different methodologies to prevent the school from dropping, including the soft skills to work in the classroom.

The educational system demands tools and help from the state and the European Union to diminish the impact that this problem has in the state to be able to guarantee for all the students a qualitative and equal school for everyone.

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