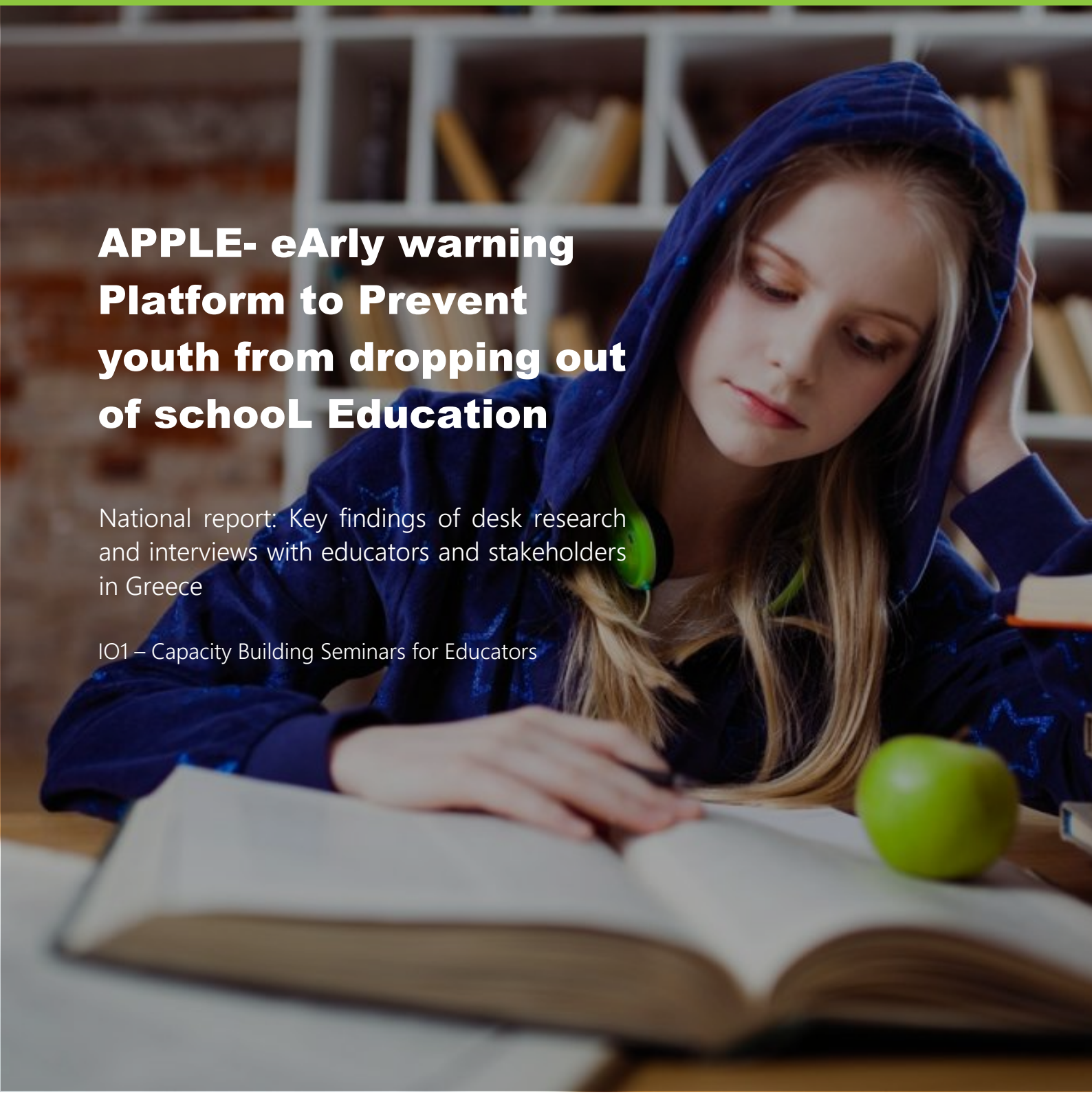
APPLE
eArly warning Platform to Prevent youth from dropping out of schooL Education



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

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

IO1 – Capacity Building Seminars for Educators

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

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1 Introduction

Education is a human right founded by international, European and national organizations (UN: 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and others). Greece has ratified these conventions, constituting an integral part of the Greek legal order. The right to education is enshrined in article 16 of the Greek Constitution, which provides as follows:

- the right to free education to all Greeks at all levels in public educational institutions
- education is mandatory for the first nine years
- the state assists those students who excel as well those who are in financial need or in need of special protection, according to their abilities

In European level, reducing the size of early school leaving remains a top priority. In this context, the European Council intends to reduce the proportion of school dropout by young people below 10% and the European Commission summarises the phenomenon of early school leaving by young people as the main risk factor in case of unemployment and the precarious social position. One of the challenges in dealing with early school leaving at eEuropean level is that there is no common understanding across Europe concerning the definition of it (Early School Leaving and Lifelong Guidance, 2014). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2002 defines a "dropout" as a student who leaves a specific level of education system without achieving first qualification, but for UNESCO "dropping out" or "early school leaving" means leaving school education without completing the started cycle or program (Kyridis et all, 2011). The definition of 'early school leaving' used at EU level refers to the young people who leave education and training with only lower secondary education or less, and who are no longer in education and training' (Council of Ministers, 2011). For Eurostat statistical purposes, an **early leaver from education** is defined as **a person aged 18 -24 recorded in the Labour Force Survey with the following two conditions**:

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- whose highest level of education or training attained is at lower secondary education. At lower secondary education refers to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 level 0-2 for data from 2014 onwards and to ISCED 1997 level 0-3C short for data up to 2013;
- who received no education (neither formal nor non-formal) in the four weeks preceding the LFS survey[1]

Recently, the European Commission distinguished the early school leaving from the term 'school dropout', since the latter is referred to those who discontinue an ongoing-course during a school term (European Commission, 2013). At national level, governments of EU member states, very often, apply different yardsticks (Early School Leaving and Lifelong Guidance, 2014). Although, the situation varies in different EU states, the social phenomenon of early school leaving follows certain patterns. According to European Commission, the early school leaving is linked to unemployment, social exclusion, poverty and poor health. Sometimes, early school leavers lack basic skills to ever make it into the labour market, risking dependence on social benefits or other kinds of support schemes (Early school leaving in Europe, 2011). Additionally, there are many reasons why some young people give up education prematurely such as personal or family problems, learning difficulties, a fragile socio-economic situation or even the way the education system is set up, school climate and teacher-pupil relations are also important factors (Europa, 2020). The main drivers of early school leaving can best be categorised in terms of three levels: the individual level drivers, the system level drivers, and national level drivers. The basic findings at European Level during 2000's, regarding the individual level drivers have not changed much over time, but they appear to be quite common across the EU Member States (van der Graaf, Vroonhof, Roullis and Velli, 2019) (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Cedefop. "Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures''). To describe the extent of the phenomenon of early school leaving by young people at European

[1] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/support-measures-learners-early-childhood-and-school-education-27_en

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level we present below some statistics provided by Eurostat in 2019, after the release of its annual report.

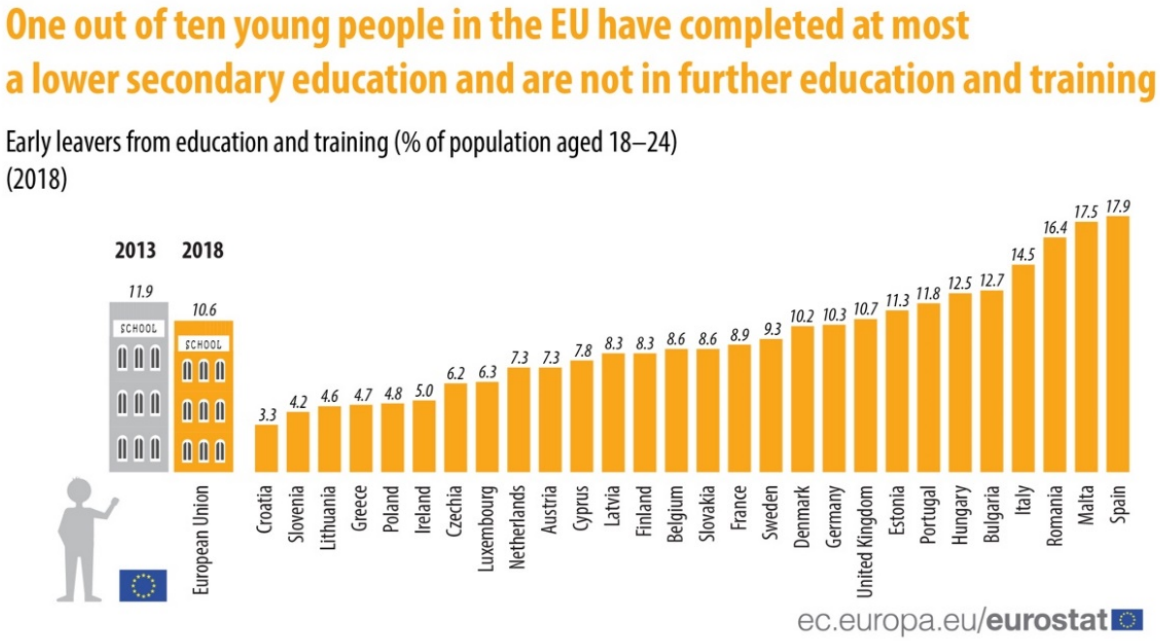

Figure 1. The average early school leaving rate for 2018 in EU countries compared to the average of 2013

In the Figure 1, the overall share of early leavers from education and training fell in the EU by 1.3 %.

In particular, 10.6 % of the 18-24 olds in the EU counties in 2018 had completed at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training ('early leavers') compared to the 11.9% of the 18-24 olds in the EU in 2013 who had managed to complete at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training (Eurostat, 2019). The proportion of early leavers from education and training ranged from 3.3 % in Croatia (low) to 17.9 % in Spain (high) (Eurostat, 2019). In terms of gender proportion, for 2018, 12.2 % of young men and 8.9 % of young women in EU were early leavers from education and training. Against this cross-European trend, it was only Slovakia (0.5 %) and Bulgaria (0.2%) that young women exceeded young men in early school leaving. In terms of the degree of urbanisation, in 2018, the lowest proportion of early leavers in the EU was reported in cities (just under 1/10 young people) compared to towns and rural areas (Eurostat, 2019).

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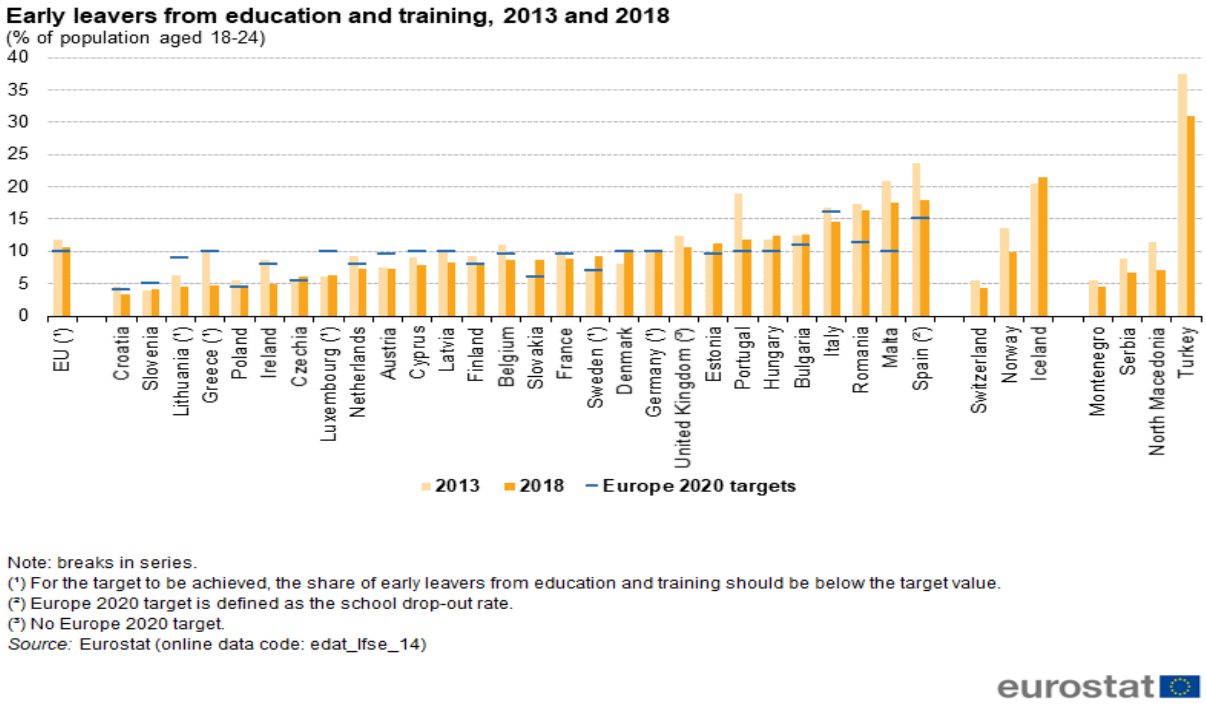

Figure 2. The average early school leaving rate for the years 2013 and 2018 in EU countries, compared to Europe 2020 targets

In the Figure 2, the overall share of early leavers from education and training in EU (2013, 2018 & the national targets)

As part of the Europe 2020 strategy, the majority of EU Member States have adopted national targets for the early school leaving (ESL) indicator. Among the EU Member States

- Early leaving from education and training average has been falling continuously in the EU since 2002, for both men and women. The fall from 17.0 % in 2002 to 10.6 % in 2018 represents steady progress towards the Europe 2020 target of 10 % (Eurostat, 2019)
- The largest reductions (in percentage point terms) were recorded for **Greece**, Portugal and Spain, each reporting a fall in excess of 5.0 points.
- The largest increases were recorded for Slovakia, Sweden and Denmark (up 2.2 percentage points each) and Estonia (1.6 points).
- The other six Member States (Czech, Hungary, Germany, Slovenia, Luxembourg and Bulgaria) recorded an increase of less than 1.0 points.

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- By 2018, the proportion of early leavers was already below the national target in 13 of the Member States, but remained above the national target for 14 of the Member States (Eurostat, 2019).
- The higher proportion of early leavers documented in towns and suburbs and a lower proportion in cities
- Greece, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Croatia, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden, recorded the highest proportion of early leavers in rural area

2 Setting the Scene

2.1 Greek Educational System at a Glance

The Greek education system is under the central responsibility and supervision of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (MofERRA). The levels of education are divided as follows: Primary Education (Primary schools), Lower Secondary Education (Gymnasiums-day and evening classes); Upper Secondary (General Lyceums and Vocational schools: EPAL, EPAS) and Tertiary Education (Universities and Technological Educational Institutions). Greece has nine years of obligatory schooling, six of which are spent in primary education and three in junior secondary school. Grade repetition is low, and student tracking starts at age 15 at the end of Gymnasium, when students choose between vocational schools or academic tracks. The enrolment in vocational programmes is relatively low since in 2014, only 15% of 15-19-year-olds were enrolled in such programmes so the rest of the population attends the regular General Lyceums. Since 2011, there have been a number of education reforms across primary, secondary and tertiary education. At the secondary level, the Greek education system underwent significant rationalisation between 2011 and 2014. Apart from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the Law 4547/2018 established new structures for the support of the educational work and in particular the early school leaving phenomenon, such as the following institutions: Regional Centres for Educational Planning – PEKES, Educational and Counselling Support Centres – KESY, School Networks of Educational Support – SDEY, Committees of Multidisciplinary Educational

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Evaluation and Support – EDEAY and the Environmental Education Centres – KPE (Eurydice, 2019)(OECD Library)

The Greek education system, in the secondary level, is supposed to provide general skills with particular emphasis on humanities, but in a way that it's not contributing to the acquisition of practical or vocational skills, playing a minimal role in spurring economic growth in Greece. The upper secondary education is primarily viewed as a means to enter the tertiary level and bears little relation to the needs of the national economy and the VET Lyceums have reputedly lower quality of education (Tsakloglou and Cholezas, 2005) and the liberalisation of the educational system has been achieved via the support of the shadow education with the form of after-school private classes, funded privately (Giavrimis; Eleftherakis; Koustourakis, 2011). As Panitsides (2014) mentions characteristically ''the progress of educational reforms in Greece is characterized by serious delays and shortcomings, as a large number of reform acts have either not been implemented or proven ineffective mainly due to fragmentation and lack of coordination''.

2.2 Measurement of Early School Leaving in Greece

The measurement of Early School Leaving phenomenon in Greece is systematically carried out by the following two authorities:

- The Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) and particularly the Transition Observatory in Education and the Secondary Education Student Labour Market. IEP is using the ''the cohort methodology'' which describes the phenomenon of school dropout in the context of special research carried out on the basis of a specially designed Table of Student Dropout Distribution that is distributed in all schools in the territory.
- National Statistical Authority (Education Statistics) and the European Community Statistical Office (EUROSTAT) calculates school dropouts each year for the EU as a whole by taking into account the indicator of early school leaving (ESL) in accordance to the results of the Labour Force Survey conducted by the EU on a quarterly basis (Institute of Educational Policy, 2017)

2.3 Early School Leaving in Greece

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According to the European Parliament research of CULT Committee on how to tackle early school leaving in the EU, the drivers of early school leaving are often categorised into three levels: **individual level factors**, which affect the individual student directly (socio-economic background of a student and their family, geographic element, gender and nationality); **institutional level factors**, which are related to the school or VET institution environment, the educational practices, and teachers; **national macro level factors** that focus on **contextual factors** affecting early school leaving. The socio-economic factor and the case of national macro level apply simultaneously to the case of Greece, which experiences austerity measures as an outcome of the economic crisis started in 2008. After 2011, the effects of the economic crisis, high unemployment rates and the conditions in labour markets may exercise different push and pull forces on students. This driver and the effect of the unemployment rate on the decision to leave school early interacts with each individual's socio-economic background. Skills mismatches are the highest in the EU (43.3 % in 2016) and the percentage of tertiary graduates working in jobs that do not require a higher education qualification was higher than elsewhere in the EU. For the same reasons as those recorded at an international level, young people in Greece give up education due to: personal or family problems (single parent families, abuse, child neglect); learning difficulties; a fragile socio-economic situation (poverty, number of children in the each family etc)(ASPAITE, 2007); the way the education system is set up, teacher-pupil relations; families' negative predisposition towards schooling; teachers' prejudicial attitudes towards minority groups (Greece: Education and Employment Commission, 2017-2018); the geographical factor concerning the student's place of residence and the distance to be covered from a student's house to and from the school, the remote rural or island regions.

According to the EC report on Early School Leaving (2018) in **all educational levels**, in Greece, students who are born abroad, tend to record higher ESL rates in comparison to students born in the country of residence (35,7% compared to the 7.5% of leavers). ESL rates in secondary education are lower in urban areas than suburban and rural areas. Boys in lower secondary, general upper secondary and in VET, throughout all geographical areas present higher ESL rates compared to girls (Hellenic Pedagogical Institute, 2006). Overall, the highest ESL rates appear in regions with special socio-economic features, e.g. with large population groups that are more likely to present dropout incidents like Roma students, minority and immigrant students, and students from rural areas (Rousseas Vretakou/Hellenic Pedagogical Institute, 2006) (Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Cedefop, 2018). The research of Pedagogical Institute presents the percentage of school dropout (high, medium, low) at each educational level. Giving special

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attention to the dropout rates in General Lyceum (Γενικό Λύκειο) we have reached to the following findings:

i. Regions with a high school dropout rate ranging between 4.4% -5.76%: Crete-South Aegean (4.4% -5.76%)
ii. Regions with an average school dropout rate ranging between 3.04% -4.4%: Attica and Western Greece
iii. Giving special attention to the dropout rates in Gymnasium or Junior Secondary School (Γυμνάσιο) we have reached to the following findings:
iv. Regions with a high school dropout rate ranging between 7.34% -9.64%: Crete, East Macedonia & Thrace
v. Regions with an average school dropout rate ranging between 5.03% -7.34%: Peloponnese, Ionian islands, South Aegean, Attica, Western Greece, North Aegean, Central Macedonia (IPE, 2007)

According to the Pedagogical Institute research team and the above categorizations, we can conclude that the level of school dropout only in secondary education (compulsory and non-compulsory) has the characteristics:

- Crete presents the most unfavourable picture at the national level, recording higher school dropout rates than the corresponding national average in all educational levels and school types.
- The situation prevailing in the South Aegean, Ionian Islands and Western Greece at least in terms of general education schools is unfavourable as well.
- The situation in Eastern Macedonia & Thrace is characterized as peculiar, where the highest student outflow in secondary education (9.64%) and the lowest in the general high school (2.36%) at the national level is recorded.
- In Attica, where 1/3 of the secondary school population lives, school dropouts are at levels close to the national average (IPE, 2007)

According to EC report for Greece in 2018, the dropout rates in **all educational levels** are persistently higher in rural areas, but there are significant regional differences: about 60% of all

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ESLs are concentrated in these 3 regions: **Attica, Central and Eastern Macedonia & Thrace**. It is worth noted that Attica has the highest number of dropouts in the country (30%) in all educational levels. This is not surprising, since 1/3 of Greece's student population is concentrated in the capital Athens. Central and Eastern Macedonia & Thrace, regions with significant minorities and migrant populations, records the highest dropout rates in primary, lower secondary and vocational upper secondary schools (EPAL) (Greece: Education and Employment Commission, 2018).

Kyridis, Tsakiridou, Zagkos, Koutouzis and Tziamtzi, in 2011, developed a research methodology in order to classify the drop out phenomenon in Greece. The paper validates the drop out results of each of the 54 administrative units (nomoi) of Greece in 6 clusters/classifications. The highest school dropout rates recorded at the sixth cluster which consists only of the regional section of **West Attica of Athens and Piraeus**, where there was the higher **school dropout percentage (7.89%)** of the country and is separated from the rest of all the solutions of the cluster analysis. The second largest rates, recorded at the fifth cluster, at which school dropout varies from **5.91% to 6.79%** in the following 4 regional sections: **Evritania (5.91%), Xanthi (5.91%), Rodopi (6.47%), Lefkada (6.79%)**. Lastly, the fourth cluster at which the drop outs rates varies from **4.58% to 5.41%** is recorded in the following 7 regional sections: **the Dodecanese (4.58%), Evros (4.68%), Lasithi (4.84%), Rethymno (4.9%), Ilia (5.16%), Heraklion (5.22%) and Karditsa (5.41%)**.

2.4 European Policies for Early School Leaving

In 2010, a new strategic framework for European cooperation namely "Education and Training 2020" (ET 2020) began building on its predecessor, the ET 2010 work programme. ET 2020 provides common strategic objectives for EU member countries, including a set of principles for achieving these objectives, as well as common working methods for Member States. The framework addresses the following four strategic objectives:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training,
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship,
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

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- About the early leavers from education and training it is very important that by 2020, the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10% (Eurostat, 2019)

In the eve of the 21st century, the **European Council** held a special meeting in Lisbon to agree a new strategic goal for the Union in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy. EU set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade '*to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*' (Lisbon European Council, March 2000). The innovative actions suggested in the Lisbon European Council, were discussed in the Commission of the European Communities and approved by the Stockholm European Council in 2011. The **2011 Recommendation of the Council of the EU** on policy measures to tackle ESL are based upon three pillars: prevention, intervention and compensation and must be integrated in the national systems of the member states. (Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving, 2019). Same year, the European Commission adopted a **Communication** titled '**Tackling ESL: a key contribution to the Europe 2020 agenda**', outlining the reasons why students decide to leave school early — including for example, learning difficulties, social factors, or a lack of motivation, guidance or support — and gave an overview of existing and planned measures to tackle this issue across the EU (Eurostat, 2019)[2]

In 2017, the European Commission presented its new strategy to support the modernisation of school and higher education. In the Communication 'School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life' three areas are identified. Additionally, the development of the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** as a common European tool for education and training is encouraging reforms at a national level. For early school leavers, this could function as a preventive tool, giving the opportunity for students at risk of early school leaving to undertake tailored learning and fill the gaps in their knowledge (Reducing Early School Leaving in the EU, 2011).

[2]https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Early_leavers_from_education_and_training

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Lastly, the issue of combating ESL is reflected in several frameworks and actions such as the **European Employment Strategy (EES)**, **European Social Fund** and the **Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)** by recognising the need the Commission as well as the member states to modernise their educational systems and curricula (Reducing Early School Leaving in the EU, 2011). The paper accompanies and complements the **'European Toolkit for Schools'** which promotes a whole school approach to improve **inclusiveness** and **prevents** early school leaving by helping school heads, teachers and others identify the needs in prevention of early school leaving and by finding suitable solutions, evidence, documents and good practices of collaborative approaches in and around schools that can be implemented, in different school contexts (Schools policy: A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving, 2014)

2.5 Policies to prevent Early School Leaving in Greece

Since 2000, Greece has made several efforts to implement measures to prevent early school leaving by targeting the factors that affect mostly the school attendance. The factors are not limited to the educational, economic and social capital of the family, but are also related to Greece's geographic and religious specificities (Nikolaou S., Papa, M., Gogou, L., 2018). Greece has addressed through major educational and compensatory programmes the problem of reducing social and educational inequalities by supporting equal access of vulnerable student groups to education instead of implementing a targeted framework to reduce the levels of school drop outs. After 2000, the Ministry of Education developed supportive Teaching Programmes aiming to enhance language understanding and further the 'socio-emotional development' of students, such as the National programme (2014-2020) "Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning. According to the programme, a collaborative team of three institutions aimed at addressing and reducing ESL and it was set up as well: the **DIOFANTOS CTI** to measure ESL by rationalizing the results of the students' database in a national, regional, provincial, local and unit level, through the **MySchool Information System** and the **Institute for Educational Policy (IEP)** along with **the Transition Observatory** (European Parliament research of CULT Committee on how to tackle early school leaving in the EU, 2019)

The following series of measures have reinforced curricula by reception classes, innovative learning material and staff in compliance with the varied social conditions (OECD Project: Overcoming School Failure, 2011):

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Educational Priority Zones (ZEP), established under law 3879/2010, are all the Regional Directorates of primary and secondary education that can accommodate ZEP reception classes (TY or taxeis ypodochis). In this initiative, the ZEP refers to geographical areas where social and educational indicators show that an additional intervention or a systematic intervention by the state is needed (OECD Project: Overcoming School Failure, 2011). The programmes aim to direct resources to students and regions in order to enhance active participation and effective learning for primary and secondary education students who do not hold the required level of attainment in Greek (Roma populations, foreign, repatriate, refugee, other vulnerable group students) (Eurydice, 2020). Under the ZEP scheme, the Law 4547/2018 provides a legislative framework for regulating educational services for refugees' children in Greece and the "Inclusion of Vulnerable Social Groups (EKOs) in Schools - Reception Classes" enacted recently to combat the early school leaving of students from vulnerable social groups or with a different cultural and religious background (Eurydice, 2020).

Cross-cultural Education in the mainstream schools (scholeia diapolitismikis ekpaidefsis), established under the law 4415/2016, which operate in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, aim at the educational and social inclusion of vulnerable group students to Greek schools, by respecting students' cultural identity and avoiding negative discrimination (Eurydice, 2020). These programmes are established in regions with a high population density of foreign, repatriated and with particular attention to Roma pupil regions. The Cross-cultural schools have the following targets:

- providing equal educational opportunities
- taking corrective measures that contribute to creating a climate of equity
- recognizing students' particularities and diversity and cultivating mutual acceptance
- encouraging a positive attitude toward learning by: utilizing the cultural and language wealth that pupils bring

The members of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace have received a centralized bilingual education for the past 70 years, but their young members today are still suffering from underachievement and high drop-out rates. Minority schools across Thrace for the resident Muslim minority is a necessary policy. The minority education system and the minority schools curricula are bilingual, both in the Greek and Turkish language, which are being taught equally in terms of teaching hours and teaching material with simultaneous emphasis on the

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maintenance, and promotion of the language and cultural background of the minority students (The case of Western Thrace Turks, 2008). The first major institutionalised intervention in Western Thrace, was introduced by the Ministry of Education as part of the European Union policy against social exclusion. The **1997–2004 Project for Reform in the Education of Muslim Children (PEM)** is considered as a turning point in the relations between the Muslim minority and the Greek government and it gave way to promising reforms (Dragonas & Fragkoudaki, 2006). PEM was a specifically educational project undertaking the following activities at the secondary school:

- development of new educational materials that were used in connection with existing ones for Greek as a second language, literature, history, mathematics, physics, and geography.
- extended **Teaching Programme** (extra teaching hours) in nineteen secondary schools in the prefectures of **Xanthi and Komotini in Thrace** for the benefit of nearly 1000 students.
- training of Teachers (Dragonas & Fragkoudaki, 2006)

According to Dragonas & Fragkoudaki (2006) for the very first time in the history of minority education in Greece, the teachers were selected from both the majority and minority background and were trained together for an average of 100 hours per year. The training curricula focused on didactic and pedagogic skills, use of the new academic materials and identity/cultural issues. It is worth mentioning that in 1997, drop-out rates from compulsory education in this community were obviously high, but there was a lack of exact figures. The implementation of the PEM revealed that almost half of the children with minority background who finished primary school did not enrol in the secondary education (Gymnasium) with the drop-out rate rocketing to almost 65%, compared with the national mean of 7% (Dragonas & Fragkoudaki, 2006) (Eurydice, 2020)

Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Greek Roma: In 2009, a new policy Framework put into force based upon the lessons-learned from the implementation of the previous "Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Greek Roma" (IAP 2002-2008). The new framework emphasized on implementing actions in the fields of housing, education, employment and health, while new management mechanisms were put in place in order to improve coordination and effectiveness of these actions. Also, the **Framework Human Resources**

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Development for 2007-2013, has introduced a series of planned activities in which Roma can be beneficiaries: actions for the promotion of entrepreneurship, the development of social economy, local integrated employment interventions, counselling and training of unemployed and employed and Local actions for the social integration Roma people, including operation of Socio-medical centres (Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma, 2011)

Remedial Teaching Programmes & Additional Teaching Support Programmes: Even though, low achievers are not considered as students with special educational needs, there is a correlation between school failure and the early school leaving as a social phenomenon. The teaching staff of lower secondary schools (Gymnasio) and upper secondary schools (Lykeio) identify students lagging behind, as a result of various external factors, such as language barriers or cultural particularities, and they provide special learning support services. Special learning support services provided at the levels of lower secondary and upper secondary schools through the Remedial Teaching programmes (Ενισχυτική Διδασκαλία (E.D.) and the Additional Teaching Support Programmes (Πρόσθετη Διδακτική Στήριξη) respectively (OECD Project: Overcoming School Failure, 2011)

2.6 Policies for Educators to prevent Early School Leaving in Greece

The Greek education system already had some challenges before the crisis, and the crisis itself along with budget cuts and high youth unemployment, has exacerbated them. Reforming the education system with the aim to support the teachers to deal with the early school leaving phenomenon is a difficult but an essential task. The Institute of Educational Policy designs and implements the In-Service Education and Training of Teachers (INSET, 2016) with the aim to provide training opportunities for teachers in the new curricula, new learning tools with the use of ICT, refugees' education, descriptive evaluation, vocational education and training (VET) apprenticeship and differentiated teaching. Training opportunities are co-funded by the European Social Fund (Institute of Educational Policy, 2019) (OECD Education Policy Outlook, 2019). Furthermore, in 2019 the National Centre for Teacher Training (EKEPE) was established within the Hellenic Open University with the aim to improve education policy. Also, the Greek government established, among others, the Committee for National Social Dialogue for Education (2015), involving many stakeholders in the system, with a mandate to

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begin developing a new national action plan for education (OECD Education Policy Outlook, 2019).

2.7 Researches documented views and proposals regarding Early SchooL Leaving in Greece

The first researches on school dropout recorded in Greece in the mid-1980s. The data was collected from various agencies. The first researches may be distinguished in three categories by time period:

- The 1980s **fragmented researches** focusing on the findings at the local-regional level (such as in Piraeus or other groups of students in VET schools).
- Researches by obtaining **primary data**: the 1990s drop out researches were systematised and assigned to the staff of the Pedagogical Institute. The Observatory of Transition in Education and the Labour Market of Secondary Education Students were established to prepare series of researches with undergraduate and mainly secondary students. There have been three major consecutive census surveys: 1994, 2000-2001 and 2000-2001. At a slightly different level, the National Statistics Authority (ELSTAT) implements quarterly a research entitled: "Special Research on the Transition from Education to the Labour Market" with the aim to produce reliable and comparable data with similar European record (IEP, 2015)
- Researches with **secondary processing of existing data**: The Institute of Labour of the Confederation of Labour in Greece (GSEE), is investigating the school's dropouts rates based on primary education data, as it is obtained by ELSTAT, and using a slightly different indicator, the Index of Retention among Student Population. Also, the study conducted by the University of Peloponnese entitled: "Political and economic implications of school dropout at the local level: Issues of participation in political institutions and integration into the labour market", contains a brief report on the issue of school dropout and examines the role of the Second Chance School (IEP, 2015)

2.7.1 Surveys recording the Educators' needs in Greece

Education professionals are missing an overall strategy for education. A three-year education plan was passed in 2017, outlining the guidelines and proposals in a range of

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priority areas for 2017-2019, including measures targeted to improve teacher's performance, school leadership, and school quality through self-evaluation; updates to the curriculum; all-day school provision; and other actions targeted to the different levels of education (early childhood education, primary, secondary education, and tertiary education). The three-year plan also pointed to the need for education policies to recognise and take into account the geographical specificities of Greece, including islands, isolated mountainous areas, and sparsely populated villages across the country.

- Survey for teacher's opinions about the challenges in the national educational system, Greece (2018)

  According to OECD, a survey amongst 1.248 educators and administrators from all education levels conducted in 2018 in Greece, has revealed that a lack of overall strategic planning is considered as one of the decisive problems of the Greek education system (71 %), followed by underfunding (66 %) and lack of evaluation (44%). The participants, also, think the following: (76%) believe the teachers should be evaluated, but when evaluation results may be linked to salary development, opinions are divided (45% pro vs 48% against). Other worth-mentioning outcomes related to the needs of teachers are issues linked to the economic crisis, such as poor infrastructure (92 %) or cancelled classes due to lack of personnel (78 %), others are structural issues, such as the need for better organisation in classrooms (80%) and the overload of teaching content (66%) (Education and Training Monitor Country analysis, 2018). As the statistics show, 14% of the teacher population work under limited contracts in terms of duration of the school year and non-renewable for the same school, issue that undermine the continuity and sustainability for students and the educational process. The substitute teachers shoulder a large part of school education (Education and Training Monitor Country analysis, 2018). Reform options for substitute teachers presented by the OECD in its recent review on education in Greece include: (i) creation of a specific employment status that offers stable and lifelong, employment; or (ii) extending the induction period and adding a contractual period prior to obtaining public official status (OECD, 2018).

- Study about educators' beliefs and needs on special inclusive education, Greece (2006)

  The research conducted by Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou in 2006 to explore the Greek teachers' beliefs about disability and the responsive special-inclusive education. The

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insights offered in the analysis of a particular national case, the sample consisted of 641 general education teachers (38.8% males and 61.2% females) employed in pre-school (21.2%), primary (42.5%) and secondary education (36.4%), which was drawn from ten (10) different regions, both urban and rural of the South, North, East and Western parts of Greece. The inclusion as a mean of combating early school leaving, was perceived as a challenge to them, which according to 69.8% of the sample, would increase their volume of work as well as the already existing pressure. As far as inclusive education was concerned, teachers believed that inclusion must involve the adaption of the existing curricula to children needs (48.7%), small class size (55.1%), in-classroom support (37.2%), remedial support (25.4%) as well as the existence of parallel classrooms (20.9%). A number of specialists were believed to be responsible for the implementation of inclusive education with the major emphasis to be placed on the role special educators (87.6%), psychologists (65.4%), speech–therapists (34.3%) and only half of the participants believed that in addition to the above specialists, ordinary teachers were to be responsible for the education/inclusion of disabled pupils. According to teachers' responses, the inclusion of disabled pupils and students with other learning difficulties in their classrooms would not hinder their work (83.8%) (Zoniou-Sideri & Vlachou, 2006)

- Study for the ELS in Achaia prefecture, Greece (2017)

The following study was based upon the interviews with stakeholders in education, principals, teachers, students and parents. The stakeholders participated in the interview are senior bureaucrats working at the Directorate of Secondary Education of Achaia prefecture, Greece. The study's research findings were based upon 4 pillars: factors of ESL (related to school environment), factors influencing students to remain at school, the stereotypical roadmap towards early school leaving and the main reasons of ESL. The basic findings are noted:

Educators

- The majority of educators, stressed out that the appropriate response for cases ESL is firstly the good communication between teacher and student at risk and second with the family in order all sides to collaborate, protect and prevent the vulnerable person to drop out.
- 7 out of 10 interviewees reported that children who dropped out school came from rural areas because they need to pursue the profession of farmer or rancher.

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- 9 out of 10 participants agreed that they have never attended training seminars on this topic
- The ''school counsellor '', the only responsible institutionalised contact for the monitoring and proper response to the ESL phenomenon at the school unit level advised them to attend capacity building seminars of totally different nature.
- They tend to be unfairly lenient when grading students at risk to ESL and avoid to apply the school policy of class repetition to students with low performance.
- They stressed out the necessity of the role of social workers' within the school unit because the expert can intervene at multiple stages for the benefit of the students at risk to ESL; apply prevention treatment; mediate gently in family affairs; connect family with school unit, especially in areas with social and geographical specificities.

Stakeholders and Principals

- They stressed out the necessity of the role of social workers' within the school unit because the expert can intervene at multiple stages for the benefit of the students at risk to ESL; apply prevention treatment; mediate gently in family affairs; connect family with school unit, especially in areas with social and geographical specificities (Galani & Michou, 2013)

2.7.2 Surveys recording the Stakeholders' opinions

- Study for the ELS in Heraklion, Crete (2017)

In 2017, a regional study investigates the phenomenon of ESL in the prefecture of Heraklion, in Crete by focusing on the views and attitudes of the school principals of the local secondary schools. The qualitative survey presents amongst others the current state of the phenomenon, the main causes but also the role of the principals and the teachers in the recognition, prevention and the adaptation of compensatory measures to the peculiarities of the local community. School principals express the general belief that they are able to recognize whether or not a student is at risk of early school leaving so as to try implement prevention strategies.

According to the survey, preventing tools and practices coincide with the response measures in dealing with ESL such as the following: communication with parents,

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teacher's training, friendly environment, teachers' cooperation and collaboration, school units to participate in Erasmus programs, the cooperation with ΕΔΕΑΥ and ΚΕΔΔΥ (national institutions offering social support). Measures to combat ESL may be: the foundation of ''integration'' classes lasting all year long, capacity building seminars addressed to both teachers and parents, extensive and deepened cooperation with ΕΔΕΑΥ and ΚΕΔΔΥ (national institutions offering social services) (Bitsakos, 2017).

The survey reveals as necessity for school units to adopt additional measures. Indicative proposals for dealing with the phenomenon in the prefecture of Heraklion in Crete have been the following: the creation of a regional communication network amongst school principals for exchanging views on how to carry out actions against ESL collectively; the development of an official communication network with the participation of principals and parents/carers of students at risk of ESL. It is also suggested by the interviewers the systemic training of the teaching staff, the recruitment of qualified personnel and phycologists (Bitsakos, 2017)

► Study to Combat Early School Leaving, Greece (2007)

The "Study to Combat ESL" belonging to the Measure 6 of "Studies for development and preparation of the fourth programmatic period" of the "Education and Initial Vocational Training" for 2000-2006, was co-financed by Greece and the EU under the 3rd Community Support Framework (CSF)and it presented the views of educational stakeholders. In an effort to balance the study's outcome, the research included the analysis of the individual interviews with executives of the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs and other bodies directly involved in the implementation of actions aiming at reducing ESL in Greece (e.g. National Kapodistrian University of Athens, national and local CSOs and NGOs). The research identified the main parameters that compose the phenomenon of ESL, as well as the proposals for the fight against the ESL via interviewing 12 stakeholders (3 national educational policy-making bodies; 4 Universities; 5 NGOs that have developed relevant action). The basic findings are noted:

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- Most organizations have limited or fragmented actions and correspondingly lack of knowledge of the dimensions of the phenomenon in Greece, due to either lack of access to information or lack of dissemination of relevant surveys
- National educational decision-making bodies and NGOs haven't been able to make a specific assessment regarding the dimensions of ESL in Greece.
- Ignorance of the premature school dropout rate and lack of documentation on behalf of the responsible agencies for formulating educational policy suggests a serious lack of awareness regarding the phenomenon of ESL (Planet, 2007)

Public Educational Agencies

- All national educational agencies were not able to cite examples of systematic cooperation with other agencies or other individual services and bodies of the public sector.
- There is a confirmed lack of reliable data -mainly quantitative data - in relation to the phenomenon of school dropouts in Greece.
- Interviews showed that almost none of the educational stakeholders have ever conducted a research about the phenomenon, except for the National Kapodistrian University of Athens.
- The measures of the Directorates of the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs as well as its supervised bodies focus on the individual responsibilities assigned to them. These are activities that have designed and evaluated to improve the education system holistically such as the All-Day School or population-based teaching support (Muslim and Roma children, foreigners and repatriates)
- Ministerial agencies have received a lot of criticism for their incomplete response to requests raised by those involved in ESL, as well as the Ministry's inability to plan activities to prevent and suppress ESL for the benefit of the most vulnerable groups. Indicatively, for the implementation of capacity building and integration programmes with the aim to support Roma children, there was an unchanged precondition regarding the high number of beneficiaries (Planet, 2007)
- *NGOs and CSOs*
- Most NGOs stated that they have occasionally collaborated with social actors, national and supranational organizations, and school units in order to implement effectively the planned activities. However, they characterized any attempt to cooperate with the involved services of the Ministry of Education and the other

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public bodies (Ministry of Labour) responsible to combat ESL as fragmentary and inefficient.

- Most NGOs have not developed research in relation to school dropouts, but many of the respondents stated that they have in mind some relevant study / research / analysis, etc., which includes quantitative data
- The services NGOs provide in the fight against school dropout are mainly related to the counselling of parents and children in matters of family health and career orientation, remedial teaching, learning programs in Greek for vulnerable social groups (Planet, 2007)

3 Key findings of the Empirical Research

3.1 Findings of the interviews with educators

For the purpose of the empirical research, a total of 5 professionals were interviewed 5 females. Targeted professionals are educators in secondary education (lower secondary, upper secondary education, general special secondary school). The educators have working experience in suburban areas of Athens, Piraeus, Peloponnese region (rural and urban environment).

3.1.1 Difficulties faced by the educators

Analysing the question *"Do you face any difficulties in your work with youth at risk of early school leaving? Would you like to give us some examples?"* The majority of the interviewed educators say they face difficulties in their work because students at risk to drop out tend to destabilise the educational process, not to attend classes' regularly, show disrespect and aggressiveness towards peers and educators/teachers, they are occasionally involved in violent outbreaks. They have no interest to the educational process and are de-motivated. One educator, stressed out the disrespectful behaviour of some students at risk to drop out who were systematically provoking her during the class work in order to draw the attention. Also, many of these early leavers are refugees who do not know the language, which is generally deterrent. One educator said characteristically that many of the teens who drop out face psychological problems, and are regularly absent.

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In some other cases, due to socioeconomic issues of the families and other cultural specificities, students at risk to drop out, who finally give up school remain calm, though their performance is low. Some of the participants explained that families were not cooperative and stayed unaware by choice. Not less important, some teachers mentioned cases of school drop outs due to migration to a foreign country, while one teacher mentioned that some students gradually ended up dropping out because the special programme for refugees and migrants lacked reception and preparatory classes (taxeis upodohis)

3.1.2 Methods used to prevent early school leaving

Analysing the question *"Do you use any methodologies that can/could contribute to the prevention of early school leaving?"* 100% from the interviewed teachers answered that they deal with the students at risk to drop out individually, offering special support by using tailored communicational skills. All ''unofficial '' and'' irregular'' practices that are personal initiatives are based upon the relation of each school unit, each member of the teaching stuff and each principal with the local communities. One teacher gave a lot of emphasis to the creative practices inside the class in order to boost the self-esteem of the student at risk and to motivate her/him to carry on. All mentioned practices include a sense of mentoring and tutoring assistance, good communication on behalf of the teaching personnel. Practical ideas on preventing ESL are the following:

- Friendly schooling environment and communication between teachers and teens (80%)
- Introduction of workshops and activities with non-academic content, student hangout, theatre groups in schools, targeted educational visits, participation at student festivals and contests (e.g. film festivals)
- Participation and implementation of Erasmus programmes in each school unit
- Organisation of visiting lectures with experts/specialists of areas suggested by students
- Life coaching: passing the message that learning at school will benefit person's capabilities in decision making for a lifetime.
- Grace and tolerance when dealing with cases of ESL

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3.1.3 Existing practices and tools that contribute to the prevention of the phenomenon

Analysing the question *"Are you aware of any existing practices or tools for the prevention of early school leaving? "*100% of the participants, surprisingly enough, mentioned that there is not an official institutionalised effort introduced by the Ministry of Education and Religious affairs for preventing Early School Leaving phenomenon at the upper secondary education. Only one teacher dealing with many students at risk in her lengthy professional experience mentioned there is a legal process for early leavers in the lower secondary education, but it has never been activated. All interviewed teachers stressed out the good communication and trustful relation between student and school. Moreover, a few teachers recognise the role of social workers in preventing ESL at school, trained educational personnel. These ''practices'' have no impact on the enrolment of students with Roma background, because as they said school is not strong enough to break the cultural traditions of early marriages and child labour that last for centuries.

3.1.4 Training needs and necessary skills

Analysing the question *"Do you feel sufficiently trained for working with young people who are at risk of early school leaving? "*100% of the participants said they have never attended specific training on ESL or any training to enhance their knowledge on how to work with youth who are at risk of dropout out. Three participants stated that training will not change their efficiency in dealing with these cases, because capacities are evolving with professional experience and everyday practicing.

Analysing the question *"What skills do you find necessary for an educator to possess in order to identify young people who are at risk of early school leaving? "During* the interview, it was noted that a teachers/educator should possess the following characteristics to identify people at risk of dropping out: ability to be patient, ability to build empathy, to work with determination, and devotion to duty. They also recognise the need someone to work on the following skills: Ability to build good communications and trustful relations with both students and parents (80% from the participants), ability to offer individual support, tailored teaching to adjust to the needs of students at risk to drop out due to their low performance. Also, teachers involved in this field should be aware that they will make a great effort, possibly with little effect, as they will not be able to change the social conditions that produce

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the risk of dropping out of school. One participant added that educators are missing trainings and free time to improve their levels of capacities.

Training recommendations

Analysing the question "*Would you be willing to participate in relevant trainings, in order to acquire new skills on innovate pedagogical methodologies, that could contribute to the prevention of such phenomena? If yes, what would you like this training to include?* "The majority of interviewed teachers/educators stated that they are interested in participating in trainings to gain additional skills and knowledge in dealing with the ESL phenomenon. One participant believes that no matter how well-equipped the educators might be, there will always be a group of students from minority background (Roma) that will drop out. The key findings lead to the following proposals and recommendations:

- 70% of the participants were positive to receive special trainings including the examination of case studies, seminars with intercultural and cross-cultural content in order the educational staff to increase existing knowledge on Roma and minority's social issues;
- Exchange of positive practices and cooperation with specialists experienced on this topic;
- Communication and motivation skills in order to prevent early dropout;

3.2 Findings of the interviews with education stakeholders

For the purposes of this part of the analysis, a total of 5 professionals were interviewed, four females and one male. One is the Principal of the Secondary School titled "4th Lyceum of the Municipality of Alimos in Athens, and former advisor of the Mayor of Alimos on schooling and educational affairs. The rest of the participants are experienced educators who are currently working in the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (Unit of General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning).

Analysing the question *"Do you work with educators who are in contact with young people who are at risk of early school leaving? Would you like to give us some examples?"* Out of five professionals, one professional answered that he is not cooperating at the moment with educators who are in direct contact with young people at risk of early dropout because he is

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leading various activities in a middle to high class area. The other four are currently working or have had worked and cooperated indirectly with young people at risk of dropout since they are assisting the implementation of Lifelong Learning projects that apply to the needs of the most vulnerable groups of Greek society such as people who have already abandoned school.

Analysing the question *"Are you aware of any existing practices or tools for the prevention of the phenomenon? "*Out of five participants, one listed practices or tools that exist to deal with the phenomenon at multiple levels. In particular, municipalities offer the 'Vocational Guidance and Counselling Centres'' and the ''institutions of Prevention Centres''. The latter provide either psychological support at individual or at the class level. They help students in managing stress, advocating on inclusion issues and other forms of problems that take them away from school. School unites, the last few years have developed the action of School Mediation dealing with school violence and rejection juvenile delinquency and exclusion. Furthermore, schools nowadays may conduct various extracurricular activities such as projects in collaboration with other schools, aiming at improving he social skills of the participant student groups. Another interviewed stakeholder mentioned the activities of Pedagogical Institute (IEP) against school dropout. Four of four participants mentioned that there are no tools in schools to deal with the phenomenon, so they have suggested the following ideas:

- Adaption of an educational framework from a model system such as the French one in which the student at risk to drop out is supervised by an assigned educator from the Ministry of Education
- Provision of School Social Workers, trained mental health professionals who can assist with mental health concerns, behavioural concerns, academic, and classroom support, consultation with teachers, parents, and administrators as well as provide individual counselling
- Continuous advancement of education by offering trainings on ESL to all educators
- Implementation of the programmes to combat poverty at schools (e.g. serving meals)
- Establishment of Roma Education Mediators and Providing tutoring support to secondary Roma students

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- Analysing the question "*Are you aware of any practices used by the educators to prevent and combat early school leaving?* "Out of five, one professional stated that since 1985 the educational system puts a lot of emphasis to the intrapersonal relation of the educator and the student. The educators don't seem to be aware of any particular practice and tools, but they were able to list those that are known by teachers/educators for the prevention of school dropout phenomenon:
- Continuous advancement of education by offering trainings on ESL to all educators, whose curricula must be designed by the Ministry of Education
- Implementation of the programmes to combat poverty at schools (e.g. serving meals)
- External activities indirectly help students to remain at school

Analysing the question *"Are there any results of the practices used? "*It can be said that one out of five professionals mentioned that the institutional initiatives at a regional level along with the increased role of intrapersonal relations between teacher and students are strongly effective. We can also conclude the following findings:

- The role of school as a collective function strengthens the role of each teacher to successfully prevent ESL phenomenon.
- Existing tools and practices are considered outdated

Also it was mentioned by one participant that effectiveness of the teacher to prevent and combat these phenomena finds obstacles the recent years. School has been affected by the effects of the economic crisis and teachers are being pushed towards the so-called "Business Professional Identity", which in times of intense competition doesn't give time for the staff to be developed. The top-down imposition of strict administrative measures to schools and the compliance to this as an outcome of the austerity measures prevents and dominates the essential relationship with the students.

According to the interviews of the participants on the question "Does your organisation provide any training(s) to educators who work with youth at risk of early school leaving? "the answers of the respondents are different. One participant mentioned that there no trainings at a school unit level, but these programmes might be offered at a regional or ministerial level without been able to elaborate on this. The rest of the participants seem not to have a complete picture of the

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prevention tools because the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is focusing on the compensatory measures (life learning programmes for those who have already dropped out school. One interviewer said that the programmes will be successful if they accommodate the following characteristics:

- Designed to combat the root causes of ESL and school dropout (socioeconomic or institutional factors fuelling the social phenomenon)
- Absorb additional funding targeting at School unit level in order the latter to be well equipped to implement successfully these programmes.
- Educators shall attend systematic trainings on ESL, on an annual basis, which may include pedagogical practices and other relevant psychological topics in resemblance to the rest of other countries' successful educational systems

All participants said that this type of training and coaching is needed for teachers to be able to identify timely the students who are at risk of dropping out of education as well as skills to work with students and families to prevent student's drop-out.

Regarding to the question *"Would you be willing to support educators for the prevention and tackling of early school leaving?"* All professionals express their willingness to support teachers in the process of preventing early school leaving. Below are mentioned some suggestions on how teachers/educators can be further supported:

- Providing additional training programmes for teachers/educators, aiming to increase social awareness on students at risk to drop out (80%)
- Implementing a national strategy for teachers/educators with the aim to deal ESL (60%)
- Raising awareness amongst parents and improving the communication between family members and schools (80%)
- Strengthening the role of parents 'associations (e.g. supportive role in organizing seminars for parents' schools by the centres for lifelong learning of municipalities)
- Emphasising on the role of student counselling on a permanent basis
- Design and implementation of seminars/info days for informing the local and regional stakeholders such as municipalities, associations of educators etc

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- Reforms: Compensational educational opportunities on upper secondary level
- Improving the dialogue between the Ministry of Education and Religious affairs and the teaching staff
- Establishing a special institution/Working group for the prevention of ESL since the teaching staff may not take full responsibility for the management of these cases
- Training should be compulsory and not optional
- Positive correlation of career progress and salary payables with the gained qualifications and each educator's performance
- Introduction of monitoring and evaluation processes for the performance of the teaching staff as well as the effectiveness of existing tools and practices.
- Full mapping of the ESL and school dropout phenomenon

Improving the role and the value of education in the consciousness of the citizens, since it has dropped significantly the years of the crisis. Giving attention to the cases where sstudents (and parents) treating school as a compulsory presence, and many graduates are functionally illiterate. In this environment, the school, without being responsible, is unable to fulfil its social role.

3.3 Characteristics of young people at risk of early school leaving

Educators and Stakeholders have filled information on the identified questionnaire with the following interesting results:

STATISTICAL DATA OF YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

To the question "*What is the average number of school drop-outs in Greece?"* Both stakeholders and education staff seemed reluctant to answer this question. The majority of the respondents from both sides believed that the percentage of school drop outs range from 5% to 1%. While one educator mentioned that the percentage on young at risk reaches 20%. All participants seem to have different understanding or even no understanding on the information and data around the topic.

In regard to the question *"What is the average number of young people at risk of early school leaving in Greece "*both stakeholders and teaching staff seemed again reluctant to answer this

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question and those who finally managed to answer it have used the same data with the average number of schools drop-outs in Greece the majority of the respondents from both sides believed that the percentage of school drop outs range from 5% to 1%.

*"What is their average age? "*more than 80% answered that the average age of students at risk of dropping out of school is in range from age 14 to 16, only few exceptions said that the average age of drop outs is probably 13 since they have dealt in the past with Roma young students who tend to leave school during the Lower Secondary level (Gymnasium or Γυμνάσιο)

While to the question *"What is their gender? "*All stakeholders as well as educators have answered that males are at higher risk of dropping out of school. It should be noted, that there were few comments about the young students, members of the Roma communities who tend to drop out school due to early marriages.

"Based on your knowledge, do you think that certain students belonging in minorities are more prone to drop out of school? "All respondents agreed that students from minority background are more likely to dropout. Further to the question *"If yes, please mention three (3) groups that you think might be associated with higher drop-outs? "*100% of stakeholders agreed on listing the Roma community, ethnic, linguistic, religious and other minority groups, young migrants and refugees. Furthermore, approximately 80% of educators have selected youth with learning disabilities and difficulties and children from deprived and rural areas, since they have to work in agriculture activities or become farmers and shepherds. The educators, on the other hand agreed by 100% on selecting the Roma community, ethnic, linguistic, religious and other minority groups, young migrants and refugees, students with learning disabilities as well as children from families dealing with socio-economic problems. Only one educator mentioned as an additional category the teens with mental health issues, and other addictions.

CHARACTERISTICS AND DRIVERS OF SCHOOL DROP-OUTS

Concerning the question "*In your opinion, could one or more of the following aspects have an impact on early school leaving? "*100% of the respondents from both backgrounds gave the answer that economic factor, family qualities and cultural/ethnic background affects early school leaving rates. It was also added the need to develop a framework, since there is a lack of national centralised strategy on combating and preventing ESL

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To the question "*In your opinion, could one or more of the following factors, related to academic qualities, have an impact on early school leaving?*"Low interest of school was selected by 90% of respondents but it was also stated that irregular/low attendance, low academic achievement, age (being older than other in the same grade) and being retained in one or more grades, were selected by 60-80% of the respondents as decisive factors on the students' drop-out from the educational process.

To the question "*In your opinion, could one or more of the following factors, related to school qualities, have an impact on early school leaving? "*For both educators and stakeholders the administrative/instructional leadership and standards of conduct have a great Impact on the dropout of students. On the other hand there were just a few answers targeting the teacher performance as a reason fuelling the ESL phenomenon

According the question "*In your opinion, could one or more of the following factors, related to personal background, have an impact on early school leaving? "*Social class, was reported as a significant factor affecting ESL in Greece by 80% of the participants. Ethnic background follows in the survey.

According to the question *"In your opinion, could one or more of the following factors, related to the family context, have an impact on early school leaving?"* respondents from both categories agreed on resulting that the lack of family encouragement seem to be the most impactful factor on ESL by approximately more than 80% The second most significant factors are distinguished into: the less individual attention towards children which 70% of the respondents have selected, the Intergenerational dropout patterns, traumatic experiences and economic issues.

According to the collective respondents' answers to the question *"In your experience, do any of the following groups face higher risk of early school leaving? "As* most group at-risk for early dropout are children and youth from Roma communities, young refugees and migrants as well as those of minority background which 90% of respondents have selected. The second in line are students with physical disabilities and learning disabilities and emotional or behavioural disorders as well the students from low-income families and deprived rural areas by 80% of respondents have selected.

4 Conclusions

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According to the findings of the educators and stakeholders in the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the school units lack an appropriate system for monitoring of students' early school leaving as well as a broader prevention plan which is not based on the individual efforts of few teaching staff within the school unit. It is necessary for schools under the guidance and supervision of a specific institution, office or unit such as the School Counsellor of the Ministry of Education and Religious affairs to develop a system for monitoring and preventing students at risk of dropping out upper secondary school. All policies and frameworks place emphasis on the educational inclusion but there are no specific practical measures to prevent students' dropout within the school unit's level, especially when it comes for students with minority background where the early marriages and the culture of underaged labour is widespread

The findings of this analysis confirm the fact that the largest dropout in lower secondary education and the first classes of upper secondary education occurs either among Roma students or students from deprived families in rural areas. The latter group of students tend to leave school to work in the primary sector of production (agriculture, farming) as farmers, shepherds and other similar occupations. In most of cases they follow the family model of work and/or the tradition of early school leaving. Although many activities and measures with the form of national plans/strategies have been introducing and launching since the middle 1990's in Greece to strengthen the concept of Roma integration and schooling, in reality the educators/teachers during the interviews stressed out their inability to intervene in each family's management for combating ESL. Educators and principals could not raise awareness to Roma parents as well as the local communities about the necessity of education, since there are no holistic, institutionalized measures and campaigns to back their cause. If parents and careers do not provide sufficient support to their children and devaluate the role of education, almost never get counselling assistance from appropriate social services and never face legal consequences for cases of deterring children to attend mandatory education. It is required from multiple voices, the significance of developing a heathy relation in the triangle parent – child – school as an inseparable link in the education process.

The findings of the analysis confirm that the educational system in Greece is based upon the extensive but simultaneously personalized role of educators in creating trustful relations with the students in each school unit while dealing with social issues on a daily basis such as school dropout, violence and bullying. For this reason, the lack of systemic trainings for teachers/educators and principles regarding the prevention of early school leaving as well as issues on vulnerability, integration and profiling of groups at risk of drop out was detected as

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one of greatest gaps in the educational process. Schools in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Religious affairs and the Bureau for Lifelong Learning should develop periodic mandatory capacity building seminars to strengthen the capacities of teachers/educators in a more practical manner. It has been confirmed that the teachers/educators receive only a few invitations to attend trainings on other topics. At the moment, teachers and educators are gradually working with the newly-introduced educational methods and techniques that may have a leave a positive footprint on the inclusion dialogue (e.g., distance learning tutoring, schools with preparatory classes for migrant and refugee children, implementation of reformed curricula and classes in heterogeneous groups in order to prevent ESL.)

Equally important with the continuous lifelong learning activities for the educators is the participation of school social workers in the general lower and upper secondary education. They can provide staff with essential information to better understand factors (cultural, societal, economic, familial, health, etc.), affecting a student's performance and behavior, assisting teaching staff with behavior management. Furthermore, social workers are able to help students in the development of intervention strategies enabling them to increase academic success, and to develop appropriate social interaction skills. Social workers and social services may work close with parents to facilitate their support in their children's school adjustment, helping the family to alleviate stress, to counsel parents to access programs for kids with special needs or learning difficulties. In general, the role of trained social workers, may help to promote equality for all students in school, reduce and eliminate discrimination, stereotyping and stigma towards children with disabilities and other marginalized ethnic community.

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