



European  
Commission

# Preventing Early School Leaving in Europe – Lessons Learned from Second Chance Education



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Publications Office of the European Union

NC-03-13-487-EN-N  
ISBN 978-92-79-32650-9  
doi: 10.2766/61898

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## **Acknowledgements:**

The team responsible for this report would like to thank all the interviewees, experts and the officials in the European Commission, Member State organisations and stakeholders who contributed their time, expertise and assistance to us during the research and writing of this report.

### **Contractor:**



## Glossary

AT – Austria

BE – Belgium

BG – Bulgaria

CY – Cyprus

CZ – Czech Republic

DE – Germany

DG EAC – Directorate General for  
Education and Culture

DK – Denmark

EE – Estonia

EL – Greece

ES – Spain

ESL – Early School Leaving

EU – European Union

FETAC - The Further Education and  
Training Awards Council in Ireland

FI – Finland

FR – France

HU – Hungary

IE – Ireland

IT – Italy

LT – Lithuania

LU - Luxembourg

LV – Latvia

MT – Malta

NEET – Young person not in  
education, employment or training

NESSE - The Network of Experts in  
Social Sciences of Education and  
Training

NGO – Non-governmental  
organisation

NL – Netherlands

OECD - The Organisation for  
Economic Co-operation and  
Development

OHP – Voluntary Labour Corps in  
Poland

PES – Public Employment Service

PL – Poland

PT – Portugal

RO – Romania

RVCC – Recognition, validation and  
certification of competencies in  
Portugal

SE – Sweden

SI – Slovenia

SK – Slovakia

ToR – Terms of Reference

UK – United Kingdom

VET – Vocational education and  
training

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.0 Introduction .....</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Study Aims and Research Questions .....	10
1.2 Study Background.....	11
1.3 Methodology .....	12
1.4 Sampling Framework .....	14
1.5 Overview of schemes .....	18
1.6 Report Structure .....	24
<b>2.0 Study Context, Motivation and Engagement .....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1 Early school leaving in Europe .....	25
2.2 Understanding “motivation” .....	34
2.3 Approaches to re-engaging learners .....	36
<b>3.0 Key Features of Second Chance Education .....</b>	<b>41</b>
3.1 Planning and organisation .....	41
3.1.1 Governance.....	41
3.1.2 Partnership working between second chance and initial education .....	46
3.1.3 Multi-professional Working .....	49
3.1.4 Institutional Climate .....	53
3.2 Teaching and learning.....	54
3.2.1 Curricula .....	55
3.2.2 Learning environments .....	59
3.2.3 Pedagogy .....	61
3.2.4 Social and Emotional Support .....	64
3.3 Assessment and progression .....	66
3.4 Summary – lessons learned .....	69
<b>4.0 Transferability .....</b>	<b>71</b>
4.1 Second chance models and approaches – their transferability potential .....	72
4.1.1 Option 1: Replicating second chance schemes .....	73
4.1.2 Option 2: Remodelling mainstream provision .....	75
4.1.3 Option 3: Developing alternative pathways .....	76
4.1.4 Adopting the second chance ethos and key principles .....	79
4.2 Towards a ‘systems’ approach .....	79
4.3 Tailoring provision to initial education settings .....	81
4.3.1 Putting transfer into action – the levers and processes for change .....	83

<b>4.4</b>	<b>Challenges and solutions for achieving transferability .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>4.4.1</b>	<b>Basic conditions for transferring schemes .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Conclusions and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>What helps young people in second chance education to re-gain confidence in their learning capacity and the benefits of learning?.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Which of the methods used successfully in second chance education could be transferred to initial education and training? .....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>5.2.1</b>	<b>Learning from second chance?.....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>5.2.2</b>	<b>Critical success factors for second chance .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>5.2.3</b>	<b>Specific core characteristics and key indicators .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>5.3</b>	<b>How could such a transfer be facilitated? .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>5.3.1</b>	<b>Replicating second chance schemes .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>5.3.2</b>	<b>Remodelling mainstream provision .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>5.3.3</b>	<b>Development of alternative education provision .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>5.3.4</b>	<b>Adopting the second chance ethos and key principles .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>What are basic conditions for implementing these second chance methods in mainstream schools? .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>5.5</b>	<b>What are the limits of transferability? .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>5.6</b>	<b>In which ways can initial education and second chance education profit from cooperation and exchange of experiences and good practices? .....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>5.7</b>	<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>98</b>

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## Executive Summary

Ecorys was commissioned by the European Commission DG Education and Culture in January 2012, to undertake a study on the theme of: **Preventing Early School Leaving in Europe – Lessons Learned from second Chance Education**. The overall purpose of was to undertake research to identify good practices in second chance education, their success factors, and their transferability into initial education and training. The work was commissioned against a backdrop of growing recognition of the scale of the challenge presented by Early School Leaving (ESL) in Europe, as enshrined in the target to reduce ESL by 10% Europe-wide within the EU 2020 strategy, and reinforced by the 2011 Communication on ESL.

### Method Summary

The study methodology included the following tasks:

- **Quantitative data analysis:** to establish key trends for ESL, drawing upon Eurostat, OECD, Eurydice data;
- **Literature review;** a focussed review of policy and research literature.
- **European level interviews:** with representatives from TWG members and other educational specialists.
- **Qualitative interviews and fact finding visits:** 15 second chance education schemes across 10 countries, comprising of qualitative interviews with students, teachers, management and support staff (see also below).
- **Workshops with practitioners:** in Budapest, London and Paris with organisations working on prevention, intervention and compensation measures related to ESL, experts, NGOs and some initial education schools; and,
- **Workshops with high-level experts:** two expert workshops to shape the conclusions and recommendations.

### Sampling Framework

A systematic approach to the was adopted for the sampling of countries, with a focus on the section of 10 countries based on: a) the scale of early school leaving; and b) the degree of development of the formal education and training system after the initial phase (proxy: the rate of participation in formal education and training by 25-34 year olds).

The sampling of the 15 individual examples of second chance schemes was clustered within the 10 selected countries, taking into account a) educational phase – a mix of pre- and post-compulsory school leaving age); and b) scheme objectives – a mix of schemes providing upper-secondary qualifications and those preparing young people for VET.

## Study Context, Motivation and Engagement

*The study examined what we know about the profile of early school leavers; including the contextual and motivational factors influencing ESL. It then went on to look at the factors that encourage students' re-engagement in second chance education.*

### European trends for ESL

Eurostat data shows that there has been a **downwards overall trend** for ESL rates across Europe for almost all Member States since 2000, but that levels have **started to rise again in recent years in some Member States**, with 2011-12 increases experienced for Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden. Just under half of Member States (n=12) are currently on track to achieve the Europe 2020 targets. Variations in ESL rates also exist within individual Member States, and some Federal States (Spain in particular) have substantial regional variations. The structural factors affecting ESL are relatively complex, and include: the prevailing cultural and social conditions; industrial profile, economic and fiscal policies, and different national education systems. Local labour markets can serve **as both a 'push' and 'pull' for learners, according to the availability of unskilled employment.**

With regard to socio-demographic criteria; **gender** emerges as being a significant factor for ESL. Young men across Europe are consistently more likely to leave school early than **young women. This picture is part of a wider historical trend of girls' increasing** success at school in higher education in recent decades, even in countries such as Portugal where in previous generations girls had little access to school, and higher levels of illiteracy. Many **ethnic minorities** are also at particularly high risk of ESL, including Roma and Traveller groups, for example in Ireland, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Lithuania. However, it is apparent that ethnicity interacts with other factors such as poverty, unemployment, housing, school catchment areas, host country language skills, and degree of social cohesion between communities. Member States achieving greater progress with the inclusion of migrant children have focussed on avoiding school segregation, improving quality in schools with dispersal policies, and developing pathways to higher level learning opportunities.

### Understanding 'Motivation'

There are various theoretical interpretations of 'motivation' within the research literature, but these understandings have rarely been applied in a systematic way to mainstream teaching practice. A seminal OECD review of lifelong learning distinguishes between 'intrinsic' motivation – self-directed to fulfil personal interests, and 'extrinsic' motivation – driven by external sanctions or rewards. **These forms of motivation are closely-inter-related in the context of ESL**, wherein fear of failure can be a way of protecting self-esteem rather than necessarily a disinterest in education.

It is evident that measures to prevent or compensate for ESL must tackle the loss of intrinsic motivation, stemming from feelings of inadequacy, failure and low self-esteem. Successful measures must therefore **have a value** to the potential participants, and give learners **a sense of empowerment** and control over their learning. The challenge lies in realising these objectives within mainstream initial education, where attendance is **obligatory, and school leavers are often 'left behind' by the system. The motivations of** young adults aged 18-24 can differ from those of school age learners in that their motivation to re-engage is influenced by the personal development that has taken place since leaving school, and the impact of having experienced the negative consequences of leaving early, for example through reduced employment prospects.

## Re-engagement – what works?

Second chance schemes have typically achieved the most success where they emphasise their **distinctiveness from mainstream schools**. Schemes have generally been careful to avoid negative associations with initial education, whilst at the same time ensuring that the learning opportunities are presented as a credible pathway (which might include gaining a formal qualification). Examples of positive features include: promoting a **'student-centred' approach, emphasising the respect shown by teachers and other educationalists towards the students, and having strong associations with the adult world. In this respect, second chance schemes have sometimes managed to create a 'university' feel.** This has proven to be a potentially very effective way of counteracting negative stereotypes of alternative education amongst the general public.

A key aspect of re-engaging learners is to first identify and track those who have left the system. Second chance schemes have found that having **roots in the local community** and being able to **raise awareness and communicate via social networks** is important in this context. Engagement is often the most effective where it involves a range of professionals who come into contact with those who have disengaged from learning, including social and healthcare workers and guidance practitioners, who often have more routine opportunities to engage with young people outside of the education system. Practitioners from second chance schemes consulted from the study described **the need for a 'softly' approach at first, which could then be escalated through telephone calls and contact with family members.** Persistence and building trust were valued as two **essential qualities.** Many schemes have also used a **'rights-based' approach to support re-engagement, with an emphasis on entitlements to learn.** In a minority of countries, such as Denmark, this is further reinforced with reference to legal duties imposed on local authorities to ensure that young adults are engaged in education or training.

## Key Lessons from Second Chance Education

*The study sought to map and identify the key characteristics of second chance education; to identify 'good practices' in this field, and to explore the critical success factors for second chance schemes.*

### Planning and Organisation

The second chance schemes visited during the study had usually evolved through very specific local circumstances within their host country. All had involved **a significant degree of experimentalism** from teachers and other educationalists with a commitment to develop an alternative offer for young people (or young adults), but all had found ways to **engage with more formal institutional frameworks** to ensure their survival. The schemes had diverse governance structures, with some being run by local schools, and others by local or national authorities, public employment service providers, or NGOs. Others still had been established as a joint venture between more than one institution. Very few of the schemes had reached a stage of being entirely financially independent, and most relied to some extent on national or local government **funding streams alongside more ad hoc applications for 'special grants'.** The time limited and often small scale of the schemes meant that they were typically quite vulnerable to policy reform, as was found to be the case in Hungary as a result of the recent centralisation of the education system, and in Portugal following the cessation of the New Opportunities Scheme.

The **relationship between second chance and initial education** was a key area of interest for the study, and in most instances these links were found to be relatively well developed; albeit in a fairly ad hoc way. Most of the case study schemes had developed referral networks with local mainstream schools, and a smaller number had linked with schools in their local area for the purpose of awarding qualifications or providing staff secondments. The strongest examples of cooperation were found in France (Micro Lycee); Hungary (Dobbanto Project), and Romania (Second Chance Programme), where second chance provision has been co-located within mainstream schools. In the French and Hungarian examples, the provision is overseen by the same Head-teacher, with opportunities for teachers to gain experience in both settings.

The site visits and wider research literature reinforce that second chance schemes are often characterised by a more **prominent role for multi-professional working** than can be found within most mainstream schools. They routinely bring together expertise from different sectors such as health, employment, housing, legal aid and social support, with the school providing a hub for the delivery of this support to learners – many of whom have complex needs. The fact finding visits would seem to indicate that it is often the inclusion of therapeutic support, including counselling and mental health, and enhanced forms of coaching or mentoring, which particularly distinguish second chance **provision in this respect. The use of a 'social pedagogy' model of teaching, coaching, guidance and counselling** has been adopted by some schemes, to provide a fully integrated team-based context for supporting learners. Employer engagement is a further aspect of multi-professional working, and indeed local employers sometimes provide a role in the delivery of careers advice and guidance and contextualising such advice to the realities of the local labour market. Students who were interviewed particularly commented on the more relevant and tailored nature of this type of interaction with employers.

### **Teaching and Learning**

The research literature and the fact finding visits each demonstrated the importance of **positive relationships between teachers and students**. Students who were interviewed for the study consistently distinguished their experiences of second chance education in terms of the support and respect they were afforded by staff. They often contrasted this with the more frustrating or combative relationships with their school teachers. The fact finding visits showed that schemes were typically organised in such a way as to provide opportunities for this type of interaction. The key conditions included: having shared spaces for students and teachers to interact (such as shared meal times, opportunities for socialisation during the school day); sports and cultural trips off-site **where students and teachers can interact outside of a 'formal' learning environment; having an 'open doors' policy for students to approach staff, and ensuring that students are able to participate in decision-making, and dialogue with teachers in relation to school policies (such as for discipline or tackling bullying).**

More widely than this, **social and emotional support** was usually afforded a higher profile within second chance schemes than within initial education settings – both therapeutic and non-therapeutic. By providing enhanced capacity for the provision of such supports; such as through the funding of multi-professional teams, a number of the second chance schemes were able to offer support to students beyond the regular school day. Staff and students alike discussed how this was valued highly, given that many of the students experienced problems outside of a school setting when they would otherwise lack access to professional support.

The approaches to **curriculum** development and delivery were found to vary significantly between the visited schemes. The schemes can largely be distinguished between those that provide initial education certificates and teach according to the mainstream curriculum, and those that offer an alternative pathway, focussing on vocational learning, work experience, life skills, and basic skills. Schemes offering initial educational certificates were often demand-led, with students seeking to re-engage to enhance their future employment or learning prospects. The delivery arrangements typically involved a more flexible timetable – for example on a part time basis coupled with other vocational or practical activities during the course of the week (Second Chance Schools in Poland), or through the tailoring of mainstream curricula to better suit the learning styles of the students (Youth Schools in Lithuania). Students and staff alike who were interviewed commented on the importance of this greater flexibility in being able to access education around other commitments in their lives.

Other key characteristics of the learning environment and organisation of school life **within second chance provision have a focus on accommodating individual learners' needs**. They include: smaller class sizes; the **flexible organisation** of the week so that learners can catch-up with classes; modularisation of courses, and the use of distance learning to provide access outside of the working day and school environment. **Learning outside of the classroom**, and particularly place-based programmes with an emphasis on local history and culture were also regularly encountered within second chance schemes. Second chance schemes were found to make extensive use of **arts and sport** as a basis of developing key skills and communication skills, and in embedding personal and social education within the wider curriculum.

### **Assessment and Progression**

**Individual learner assessment** emerged as being a central aspect of second chance education, was often found to have added real value in supporting learners who might have previous negative educational experiences, by focussing on strengths and to supporting learners to set and review their own goals. Most of the visited schemes included some kind of participatory assessment of this kind. Some common characteristics of this type of approach included that: assessment is used as a tool to build self-esteem (through the use of motivational interviewing, for example), and it provides a wider review of non-educational needs and circumstances, including out-of-school needs (family and community related). Conversely, inappropriate or unrealistic assessment and goal-setting is well documented within the literature as a risk factor for ESL.

The **validation of learner progress and outcomes** was found to be an often challenging aspect of second chance education; particularly when seeking to provide alternative curricula that might not have the same kudos with students, parents or teachers. This issue has been tackled in a number of ways, with some schools such as the Micro Lycees in France seeking to ensure that students graduate with the equivalent qualifications to their initial education counterparts, and others seeking to deliver alternative forms of accreditation. In Denmark, the portfolio-based accreditation for Studio Schools took many years to achieve mainstream recognition, but the expansion of **the programme and its adaptation elsewhere** – including in Germany and Austria have helped to reinforce the credibility of the programme as a viable pathway for students. Other second chance schools have encountered greater difficulties with achieving similar recognition. This has particular been an issue in relation to the low profile afforded to vocational education and training in some Member States.

## Transferability

*Having considered the elements of second chance education that have proven successful for re-engaging and supporting young people and young adults, the transferability of these schemes was then explored.*

### Transferability Potential of Second Chance Schemes

Based on the evidence, four main approaches were highlighted, through which second chance approaches might be transferred to benefit initial education. These are briefly summarised below, and expanded upon within the main report.

**The replication of second chance schemes** – this would involve re-creating schemes that have proven their effectiveness in their original form (usually with 18-24 year olds). The approach requires an understanding of what makes these schemes effective in the first instance, to ensure that these elements are not lost in translation. The approach would require further testing and experimentation, as good practices are not necessarily guaranteed to travel well between country contexts or educational settings. However, three broad 'models' are suggested:

- **Model A – A fully integrated model**, drawing upon the learning from schemes such as the Matosinhos Second Chance School and Dobbanto scheme (HU) to replicate some of the conditions of second chance education within mainstream schools (small groups of 10-15 learners; flexible timetable; mixed accreditation profile; diverse sporting, cultural and life skills activities). This would require sufficient freedoms within the national curriculum for schools to experiment, and strong backing from governors and the wider school community.
- **Model B – A co-located second chance model**, drawing upon the learning from schemes such as the Micro Lycees (FR), whereby a mini-education centre is established on site within initial education schools, with a shared management and governance structure. The model is conducive to the delivery of an upper secondary qualification using an alternative project-based setting with small groups. The approach would require effective school leadership and substantial adjustments to existing training and staffing structures.
- **Model C – An 'alternative pathway' model**, drawing upon learning from schemes such as Youthreach and An Cosan (IE) to provide a separate vocational pathway that does not (necessarily) result in an upper secondary qualification and is based separately from mainstream schools in a community location. The model is conducive to forging strong community and family links – possibly within an area with high levels of socio-economic deprivation, and offering pathways to vocational courses, work-based learning or volunteering.

**The re-modelling of existing mainstream educational provision** – this would involve more selectively adapting effective elements of schemes, to incorporate them within mainstream schools, but where the end result might look different to the original scheme. The approach was generally considered the most readily achievable by the stakeholders who were consulted for the study, due to the greater flexibility for schools to innovate and the lower reliance on following a specific blueprint. A menu of key characteristics is identified within the main report, to provide schools with guidance (Figure 5.1).

**The development of alternative educational provision, based on second chance** – this would involve selectively adapting elements of schemes to run in parallel to initial education schools, where an alternative setting is more appropriate than continuing within a mainstream school environment. The main focus would be on offering **alternative education as a ‘positive choice’ and tackling any potential stigma that might be encountered**, ensuring that links are maintained with mainstream schools so that this is **not entirely ‘separate’ provision, and stimulating the marketplace for alternative provision** by encouraging a more diverse range of NGOs and independent providers to develop schemes. The Vocational Schools (HU) and Studio Schools (UK) were found to offer two similar models that are already being piloted within Europe.

**The adoption of good practice approaches or principles from second chance** – this would involve learning from some of the wider policies that are found within second chance schools, such as promoting positive teacher-pupil relationships; developing proactive policies for tackling bullying and discrimination within schools, and developing effective structures to ensure pupil participation in decision-making. Although these were considered to be highly important features of second chance education, the stakeholders who were consulted for the study generally considered that they can already be found within the best mainstream schools in Europe, and that more radical systems change is needed. However, it was thought that exchanges of good practice between schools would help to ensure greater visibility for existing good practice.

The study raises a number of further considerations for the idea of ‘transferring’ approaches from second chance to initial education. The first is to **ensure that the learner is positioned at the centre** – becoming focussed on structural change can too easily mean losing sight of the experiences that stand to most directly motivate and support learners. These inter-**relationships between ‘proximal’ factors directly experienced by the learner (such as the interaction with professionals, assessment and social supports), and ‘distal’ factors that make them possible (the necessary local learning infrastructure, professional development and support structures)** are further illustrated within the main body of the report (Figure .2). The study also considered **issues of scale**, and found that solutions for working with whole populations of students within a given school (universal) might differ to those designed at working with students at a higher level of risk of ESL / need (targeted). The principle holds that any kind of investment is most cost effectively targeted in earlier intervention. .

### **Challenges and Necessary Conditions for Achieving Transferability**

A number of challenges present themselves for transferring good practices. Notably, these include the need to better understand the critical dependencies of some schemes – what makes them work, and how or whether their evidence base is sufficiently robust to warrant introducing them to initial education settings. A **lack of longitudinal research evidence** to support the case of individual schemes was found to be a particular challenge in this respect, as very few schemes have had the resources or capability to **monitor students’ destinations over a longer period** of time. The challenge of **scaling-up to work greater numbers of students** also presents a challenge for more resource intensive schemes, whilst funding instability and **limited flexibility for schools and teachers** within some educational systems must also be considered.

Some of the basic conditions for transferring schemes were thought by the study respondents to include:

**Creating a conducive regulatory and funding environment:**

- coordination and consistency in educational policy across national ministries
- funding stability and long-term change programmes that allow for real investment
- national school leadership associations engaging with ESL issues
- greater school accountability for ESL as a phenomenon, and sharing data
- value added performance criteria – **taking the learners' starting point into account** within performance tables, to incentivise schools to tackle the risk factors for ESL

**Developing the infrastructure:**

- municipal leadership, brokerage and coordination
- multi-professional partnerships (employers and social partners)
- stronger models of school confederacy (pooled budgets)
- school governance reform
- initial teacher training and CPD
- public acceptance / culture change
- funding stability

**Developing and disseminating the evidence base:**

- establishing the long-term impact and outcomes of second chance provision - added value, learner destinations and future employment and learning
- **the 'business case' for investment (cost-benefit analysis)**
- validation of specific programmes and approaches (benchmarks / quality criteria)
- raising awareness of the benefits of second chance education amongst schools
- raising public awareness of alternative educational approaches, and their effectiveness, with a particular emphasis on raising the profile of vocational education

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that there is much to be learned from second chance education, and that the opportunities presented by these schemes for vocational training, life skills and personal and social development hold real currency – especially when viewed in the **context of rising youth unemployment across Europe**. Whilst the traditional associations of second chance provision are with 18-24 year olds, the study underlined that many schemes already run in parallel to initial education for younger age groups and provide a 'bridge' back into education. Furthermore, the expert group for the study called **for a more fluid interpretation of 'second chance'**, so that it does not detract from an understanding of lifelong learning as a *process*.

The study explored whether there a 'hierarchy' of second chance characteristics can be identified, and whether specific features are more important than the others. In practice, however, the study did not find evidence suggesting that this is the case. The relative importance of different second chance characteristics was found to vary according to the views and experiences of those who were interviewed, and indeed it would seem that it is **the cumulative effect of the different second features of second chance that make them effective**. These findings reinforce the importance of building schemes that are multi-faceted and responsive to learners' individual needs.

In seeking closer cooperation between second chance and initial education settings, the study concludes that it is important for knowledge exchange to take place at all levels – from senior management to grassroots teaching practices. This might include management and head-teacher or teacher exchanges; joint training and development of teachers and support staff; twinning between second chance and initial education schools, and co-location and shared management structures to ensure that cooperation is fully embedded.

### **Recommendations**

The main recommendations of the study were as follows (see Chapter 5.0 for full details):

- **Recommendation 1:** For the European Commission to provide a platform for transnational dialogue and exchange on the theme of “learning from second chance education to prevent Early School Leaving”
- **Recommendation 2:** For the European Commission to consider the merits of a new funding call, underpinned by a quality framework, to support the active transfer of good practices from second chance to initial education
- **Recommendation 3:** For the European Commission to consider funding a new pan-European longitudinal comparative study, to build the evidence base for the impact and outcomes of different types of schemes for preventing ESL
- **Recommendation 4:** For schools, local authorities and partner organisations to review the good practices identified through this study (Section 3 and Figure 5.1) and consider how they could be best implemented in everyday teaching and learning

## 1.0 Introduction

Ecorys is pleased to present this final report to the European Commission DG Education and Culture, for a study titled: *Preventing early school leaving in Europe - lessons learned from second chance education*. The overall purpose of the study was to undertake research to identify good practices in second chance education, their success factors, and to assess their potential transferability into initial education and training settings. The research was carried out by Ecorys between January 2012 and July 2013.

### 1.1 Study Aims and Research Questions

Two **Specific Objectives (SOs)** were identified in the Terms of Reference as follows (p.6):

1. To identify good practice in second chance education for young people and analyse its success factors; and,
2. To assess transferability of good practices to initial education and training and forms of cooperation between initial education and second chance schools

A number of more specific **Research Questions (RQs)** were also proposed by the European Commission:

1. What motivates young people to continue their education in second chance programmes after failing in initial education and training?
2. What helps young people in second chance education to re-gain confidence in their learning capacity and in the benefits of learning? Which support is crucial for them?
3. What approaches in teaching and learning do make a difference to them?
4. Which of the methods used successfully in second chance education could be transferred to initial education and training? How could such a transfer be facilitated?
5. What are basic conditions for implementing these methods in mainstream schools?
6. Where are the limits of their transferability?
7. In which way can initial education and second chance education profit from cooperation and exchange of experiences and good practices?

The study aimed to extend the existing knowledge base regarding 'good practice' in second chance education for 18-24 year olds who have disengaged with their education and training, and who do not hold the equivalent of upper secondary qualifications, which is widely considered to be the minimum standard to ensure fair and equitable opportunities within the labour market. Drawing upon promising findings from evaluations of second chance initiatives, including the original European Commission pilot project for second chance schools (1996-1999)<sup>1</sup> and on-going second chance schemes, it sought to examine the extent to which it is possible to learn from "what works" in motivating young people to re-engage in second chance, and to apply these methods in the context of initial education.

<sup>1</sup> *European Commission (2001) Second Chance Schools: The Results of a European Pilot Project.*  
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/51383314/SECOND-CHANCE-SCHOOLS-The-Results-of-an-European-Pilot-Project>

The study was commissioned against a backdrop of growing recognition of the scale of the challenge presented by Early School Leaving (ESL) in Europe, as enshrined in the target to reduce ESL by 10% Europe-wide within the EU 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth<sup>2</sup>, and reinforced by the 2011 Communication on ESL<sup>3</sup>, and the proposal for a Council Recommendation on effective ESL policies<sup>4</sup>.

For the purpose of this study we will use the definition provided in the European Commission Staff Working Paper on Reducing Early School leaving. It highlights that early school leavers are those who have only achieved pre-primary, primary, lower secondary or a short upper secondary education of less than 2 years (ISCED 0, 1, 2 or 3c short), and include those who have only a pre-vocational or vocational education which did not lead to an upper secondary certification.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2 Study Background

The research literature widely recognises the importance of education in increasing likelihood for young people to enter and remain in labour market and enjoy opportunities for a higher quality of life. Yet still 12.8% of young people between 18-24 year old in Europe left school last year without upper secondary education. This poses significant social and economic challenges for the EU<sup>6</sup>. Individuals who receive lower education levels are more likely to be unemployed, be in precarious jobs, be reliant on social welfare systems, partake in criminal activities, suffer from social breakdown and experience poor health.

Early school leaving is a complex issue that is a result of variety often interconnected factors related among others to personal experiences, family situation, social and economic context as well as school environment. Moreover, education systems are often not equipped and not able to deal with the complex situations affecting young people which contribute to ESL. There are a large number of second chance schemes in Europe which are successful in re-engaging young people in learning at later stage and to address both the educational needs as well as wider issues that young person experiences. Such schemes have extensive experience in motivating young people, developing their confidence in learning and providing tailored support addressing their diverse learning needs and personal, family and work commitments. Although most of such schemes operates in very specific local contexts and provide education at much smaller scale when compared to mainstream education, the study aims to identify elements of second chance education that could be beneficial for wider education systems in Europe.

<sup>2</sup> *Conclusions of the European Council, 17 June 2010; see also: <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020>*

<sup>3</sup> *Commission Communication [COM (2011)18] "Tackling early school leaving. A key contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda", [http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc2268\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc2268_en.htm)*

<sup>4</sup> *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving [COM(2011)19]*

<sup>5</sup> *Commission Staff Working Paper (2011), Reducing early school leaving, [SEC(2011)96], 26 January 2011. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/earlywp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/earlywp_en.pdf)*

<sup>6</sup> *NESSE (2009).*

The study contributes to the Commission initiatives to support Member States in their efforts to reduce early school leaving (ESL) through providing a detailed overview of a number of good practices in second chance education and developing evidence base for their potential to benefit wider education systems especially in preventing ESL. Reducing early school leaving is one of the key priorities of the European education and training policies as well as in achieving strategic European objectives of ensuring smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Reducing ESL to 10% is one of headline targets of Europe 2020 strategy as well as a benchmark indicator defined in *Strategic Framework for Cooperation in Education and Training 2020* (ET2020)<sup>7</sup>.

Fulfilment of this objective is not only vitally important in itself; it is also a prerequisite for fulfilling a number of the other objectives of Europe 2020. Most notably, a reduction in ESL through second chance education is likely to facilitate the achievement of the other headline target related to educational attainment: at least 40% of 30-34 year-olds with third level education (or equivalent). Second chance education can also be expected, in time, to contribute to the other EU targets for inclusive growth: 75% employment rates for women and men aged 20-64, and at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion. It also supports some of the Europe 2020 flagship initiatives, notably: "*Youth on the Move*" by equipping young people better for the job market; the "*Agenda for new skills and jobs*" by helping people acquire skills; and the European Platform Against Poverty, by contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

### 1.3 Methodology

A mixed methods design has been used including collection of primary qualitative data and analysis of secondary research literature. The overview of key tasks undertaken to develop the evidence base for the study is presented below:

- Quantitative data analysis; including review Eurostat, OECD, Eurydice data on early school leaving, participation in education, attainment levels and lifelong learning in order to gather contextual organisation for each country. This was of key importance in selecting the 10 countries for the study.
- Literature review; the key European policy documents, international comparative research reports and academic literature were reviewed during the course of the study. These were essential in developing knowledge base on the early school leaving in different European countries; key contributory factors and rationale for leaving. In addition, the study team collected and analysed research and evaluation data from each case study, thereby providing background information for each second chance scheme.
- European level interviews; were undertaken with the members of Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, experts and practitioners working in the field of ESL and second chance education. These interviews aimed to further test and develop the key findings from the desk research; especially regarding the approaches and success elements of the second chance education.
- Qualitative interviews and fact finding visits; the study team analysed a total of 15 second chance education schemes, selected from 10 countries. Each case study

<sup>7</sup> Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020), OJ 2009/C 119/02.

included a fact finding visit with up to 8 qualitative interviews. The visits aimed to provide a voice for students, teachers, management and support staff regarding the key strengths of second chance schemes, and to provide insights to their transferability. Interviews with initial education teachers and management staff were also undertaken to examine these issues from the perspective of schools that might stand to benefit from a potential transfer of good practices.

- Workshops with practitioners; three workshops were organised in Budapest, London and Paris with organisations working on prevention, intervention and compensation measures related to ESL, experts, third sector organisations and some initial education school representatives. These were of key importance to discuss the issues related to transferability of lessons learned into initial education.
- Workshops with experts; the study was supported by the high level academic experts who contributed to the development of the study framework, comparative analysis, and development of overall conclusions and recommendations of the study.
- The research tools used for the study allow us to develop robust conclusions and recommendations. However, some caveats are presented below, regarding the methodological approach:
- Whilst the study makes it possible to identify a number of good practices in second chance education; further longitudinal research would be needed to establish how or whether these approaches make a lasting difference **for young people's** employment, education and social and emotional wellbeing as they progress through their adult lives.
- The study included a large number of stakeholder interviews; especially those representing second chance schemes. Although some of the initial education school representatives were interviewed and took part in our workshops, they proved more challenging to engage and are therefore less well represented within the evidence that was reviewed whilst preparing this report.
- The evidence gathered allows us to develop a theoretical model for the transferability of good practices from second chance education. However, an action research project would be needed to test the suggested approaches in practice and therefore to observe the results.

## 1.4 Sampling Framework

A systematic approach to the **country** selection was adopted during the study in order to ensure that different educational traditions as well as institutional settings are represented among the countries selected. In order to achieve this our preferred approach was to ensure that the sample of Member States are representative to some degree of the most important dimensions relating to second chance education whilst also being geographically balanced and covering the range of different education systems. With this in mind, two principal criteria informed the selection:

- the scale of early school leaving; and
- the degree of development of the formal education and training system after the initial phase.

As there is no ready-made data set to categorise countries according to the degree of institutionalisation in adult education, we took as a proxy indicator the rate of participation in formal education and training by 25-34 year olds. Clearly this dataset indicates the number of people participating but it also reflects the availability of opportunities and hence the extent to which a formal system is developed.

Eurostat data was used for cross-matching these variables, as shown below.

**Figure 1.1 EU Member State performance in ESL and participation in formal education and training**

<b>Rate of early school leaving**</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>CY, CZ, EE, LV, SK, LT, PL</b>	<b>AT BE, DE, DK, FI, PT, SE, SI, NL</b>
	<b>High</b>	<b>BG, EL, ES, IT, MT, RO, IE, FR, HU</b>	<b>UK</b>
		<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Participation by 25-34 year olds in formal education and training (in 12 months prior to survey)*</b>			

\*High = above EU27 average; Low = below EU27 average

\*\*High = above Europe 2020 target; Low = below Europe 2020 target

Source: Eurostat data extracted on 17/07/2012

In addition, for the selection of countries it was of key importance to ensure geographical representation which also reflect some key differences of the education systems in Europe. Based on this sampling framework we identified the following 10 countries for this study:

**Table 1.1 Proposed sample frame for detailed country-level analysis**

Member State	Rate of ESL	Adult participation in ET
<b>Austria</b>	Low	High
<b>France</b>	High	Low
<b>Hungary</b>	High	Low
<b>Lithuania</b>	Low	Low
<b>Poland</b>	Low	Low
<b>Sweden</b>	Low	High
<b>Portugal</b>	High	High
<b>Romania</b>	High	Low
<b>Ireland</b>	High	Low
<b>UK (England)</b>	High	High

Source: Eurostat data extracted on 17/07/2012

The sampling of the 15 individual examples of **second chance schemes** started with the mapping of second chance schemes across the 10 Member States and was then followed by two tier approach. **The first step was to group the 'mapped' schemes** within a matrix, based on the following key variables:

- 1. Educational phase** – the review of second chance schemes suggests that there is a key distinction between:
  - i. second chance provision for school leavers of compulsory school age; and,
  - ii. second chance provision for young adults who have elected to re-engage with their education at a later date.

This is an important distinction – both in terms of how and where the provision is organized (settings and sources of funding), and the motivational drivers. By including examples of schemes from both phases, we can observe the extent to which 'success factors' for engaging 18-24 year olds are similar or different to those for engaging for 13-16 year olds (or even younger). This helps with validating some of the judgments that we make about the likely transferability of second chance approaches to initial education.

- 2. Scheme objectives** - A second key distinction exists in relation to the objectives of second chance schemes. Although most aim to provide personal, social and vocational development of some kind, they often differ in the relative emphasis that is given to:
  - i. Providing a second opportunity to gain formal upper-secondary qualifications (a stepping stone to mainstream re-engagement); and,
  - ii. Preparing young people for VET or employment routes (an alternative pathway)

In many cases, both routes are offered within the same individual scheme, and the distinction is more of a 'continuum', based on the strength of the vocational element. However, there is a contrast between the different ends of the scale; ranging from the Micro Lycee model in France, where the objective is for young adults to return to a school environment and gain the formal degree qualification, to the Matosinhos Second Chance School in Portugal, which aim to avoid replicating a mainstream educational experience, and centre around work experience and life skills.

The second step of the sampling consisted of more detailed appraisal of pre-selected schemes; to consider their characteristics and approach. The maximum variation approach to sampling individual schemes was applied in order to review wide range of schemes available for young people. The experts provided their own perspective on the shortlisting at the workshop, and the selection was further refined by the core study team at a follow-up meeting. This allowed us to be more explicit about selecting schemes that exhibit the different 'hallmarks' of good practice from the second chance education literature (flexible hours, modular learning, personalized support, etc.), and to purposively select individual schemes that closely match the study aims.

**Figure 2.3** (overleaf) shows the 15 schemes that were selected for the study using this approach, and the criteria that informed the selection. A final 'quality check' was undertaken, prior to finalizing the selection. In some cases this involved short telephone calls to scheme representatives (or to country experts within the Thematic Networking Group), to check that the details of each scheme were correct and up-to-date, and to ensure that it will be possible to access a sufficient depth of evidence to include the scheme within the study.

**Figure 1.2 Shortlisted schemes for the fieldwork, and their characteristics**

Criteria / dimensions	AT1	AT2	FR1	FR2	HU1	HU2	IE1	IE2	LT1	PL1	PT1	RO1	SE1	SE2	UK1
<b>Target groups</b>															
Compulsory school-age learners >18 yrs	√					√	√	√	√			√			√
Post-compulsory (young adults) 18-24 yrs		√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		√	√	√
Vulnerable groups (Roma, LDD)	√						√	√							√
<b>Scheme objectives</b>															
Mainstream route (re-engagement)	√		√			√			√	√					
Alternative learner pathways		√		√	√		√	√			√		√	√	√
VET / crafts-based		√		√											
<b>Structural characteristics</b>															
Multi-agency / multi-site		√		√											√
Community education centres							√	√							
Distance learning															√
Mainstream school			√			√			√			√	√		
Dedicated education institution				√	√					√	√				
<b>Pedagogic/curricula approaches</b>															
Modularization / personalization	√	√	√	√	√		√		√		√	√		√	√
Focus on literacy development								√							
Arts, culture, or sport-based	√										√				
Practical and life skills / work experience	√	√		√		√	√				√		√	√	
Therapeutic / mental health	√				√		√	√							√

**Key**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AT1: Project Schlangenfuss</li> <li>▪ AT2: Chancen-Pool ("Opportunities Pool")</li> <li>▪ FR1: Micro-lycees</li> <li>▪ FR2: Second Chance Schools</li> <li>▪ HU1: Belvarosi Tanoda Secondary School</li> <li>▪ HU2: Dobbanto (Springboard) Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IE1: YouthReach</li> <li>▪ IE2: An Cosan</li> <li>▪ LT1: Youth Schools</li> <li>▪ PL1: Second Chance Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PT1: Matosinhos Second Chance School</li> <li>▪ RO1: Second Chance Programmes</li> <li>▪ SE1: Folk High Schools</li> <li>▪ SE2: Municipal second chance education in Gothenburg</li> <li>▪ UK1: Fairbridge Centres</li> </ul>
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## 1.5 Overview of schemes

As indicated above the maximum variation sampling criteria was used to select the schemes for the study. Therefore, the schemes selected varies significantly from each other. The overview of each scheme including the key features, target groups, geographical coverage and key quantitative indicators for each scheme are presented in the table below.

**Table 1.2 Overview of selected schemes**

Title	Short Description	Target group	Geographical coverage	Quality criteria
Schlangenfuß, Vienna <b>(AT)</b>	Aims to reintegrate students who refuse to go to school and to help them achieve mainstream qualifications. The secondary modern school curriculum is taught during the project. The focus is on teaching approaches which develop social skills and self-esteem. Experience based teaching plays a large role, because it reduces anxiety disorders.	11 to 15 year olds who suffer from school phobia, anxiety disorders or depression.	Unique in Austria	<p><b>Average data for last 5 years:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>76% graduated successfully</li> <li>24% left the project early</li> </ul> <p><b>Graduates:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>22% went on to an upper secondary school</li> <li>32% started an apprenticeship</li> <li>22% took part in further courses and training</li> </ul>
Chancen-Pool ("Opportunities Pool"), Vorarlberg <b>(AT)</b>	It is a comprehensive counselling and support system for students who do not receive place in academic or vocational schools. Project helps young people on the Chancen-Pool register to find a place in further education by offering them career counselling, advice on education options, coaching or a place on one of the training programmes run by the Public Employment Service.	15 to 20 year olds who do not have a place in further education at the end of compulsory schooling or who have dropped out and lack career orientation.	Regional initiative in Austrian province of Vorarlberg	<p><b>2011 annual report:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>822 participants in total</li> <li>388 entered an apprenticeship</li> <li>11 took up employment</li> <li>77 continue with their education in the school system</li> <li>57 gained an additional qualification through a PES</li> <li>47 rejected further support</li> <li>156 could not be reached</li> <li>86 remain on the programme</li> </ul>
Micro-lycee 93, Paris <b>(FR)</b>	The micro-lycee is a scheme providing opportunity to obtain upper secondary school leaving certificate (baccalaureat). It is co-located within the premises of mainstream	16-25 year olds who dropped out of school during last three years of baccalaureat.	4 micro-lycee are in place in academie de Creteil. Similar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10-15% drop-out rate</li> <li>Around 70% graduates attain the degree (very similar to mainstream school levels)</li> </ul>

Title	Short Description	Target group	Geographical coverage	Quality criteria
	secondary school, with a common headship, and backed with a mix of local and national funding. Co-location allows for common headship, but with more specialist staffing accommodating the particular needs of the learners through smaller, group-based setting, with intensive learner support and more flexible learning methods.		other initiatives are in place in other parts of the country.	
Second chance school, Champagne-Ardenne <b>(FR)</b>	The aim of second chance schools in France provides practical training for young people who dropped out from school early. School belonging to a national network of Second Chance Schools. Significant attention is given to individualised learning path and practical work experience in enterprises which can constitute up to 50% of training time.	16-25 year olds without any diploma or qualification who have left school for more than a year.	National programme with 42 schools operating in around 100 sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not available</li> </ul>
Belvárosi Tanoda Secondary School, Budapest <b>(HU)</b>	Complex youth care service integrating education and care for young people into a unique provision based on person centred approach. It is providing general secondary school education as a second chance educational provision, and prepares students for graduation. The school has created the opportunity to run certain secondary level vocational courses, but at present there is not such a course being taken up.	16 to 25 year olds for full time study and 16 to 35 year olds for part time or distance based study. Students often have mental health problems, that prevent them from taking part at regular schools.	Unique in Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 30-35 students graduating every year.</li> <li>▪ 20% drop out rate but it is very hard to tell the accurate number because some stop and restart.</li> <li>▪ The majority of students enter the labour market or continue with vocational education after graduation.</li> <li>▪ A few students continue with higher education studies after graduation.</li> </ul>
Dobbantó Project, Gyula <b>(HU)</b>	Dobbanto is a year long re-integration and preparation course before entering mainstream vocational education school. It is a personal development programme implemented at mainstream vocational education schools with dedicated space available for Dobbanto students. Important	15-24 year olds who have been so far unable to complete secondary school or obtain a vocational qualification due to learning and behavioural difficulties.	National programme with 15 schools taking part in the pilot project.	<p><b>2010/11 school year:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 185 students starting at the beginning of school year</li> <li>▪ 44 students joining during the year</li> <li>▪ 25 students leaving the programme before the end of</li> </ul>

Title	Short Description	Target group	Geographical coverage	Quality criteria
	<p>role is given to developing self-confidence, understanding certain professions and career guidance. Teachers are encouraged to work in multidisciplinary teams. Continuous professional development support is provided for teachers and head teachers through mentors.</p>			<p>the year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 203 students completed the year</li> <li>▪ 185 continued education</li> <li>▪ 9 entered employment</li> <li>▪ 9 none continuing education nor entering employment</li> </ul>
<p>Youthreach, Ballymun <b>(IE)</b></p>	<p>Youthreach helps young people return to learning and prepare for employment and adult life, and provides opportunities to gain certified qualifications. Operates from dedicated vocational centres in local communities.</p>	<p>16-20 year olds often having history of drugs or substance misuse, chaotic family background, live in residential care.</p>	<p>National programme implemented through 108 centres.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not available</li> </ul>
<p>An Cosán, Dublin <b>(IE)</b></p>	<p>Now the largest independent community-based education centre in Ireland, offering a range of community education programmes. Three strand curriculum, enabling adults to progress from basic to intermediate education, and then onto training programmes for work and /or diploma courses in preparation for third level education and degrees. Provides a transformational education model, designed to support the learner spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually. The centre is based in a severely disadvantaged area of Dublin, with high levels of unemployment, poverty, and substance misuse.</p>	<p>Students vary in age from 17 to 84, with most students being over the age of 23. Around 90% of students are early school leavers, and 90% are women.</p>	<p>Unique in Ireland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some past students have gone on to third level colleges and universities, gaining certificates, diplomas and degrees.</li> </ul>
<p>Jonas Ivaškevičius Youth School, Vilnius <b>(LT)</b></p>	<p>The school provide opportunity to receive lower secondary education certificate for young people who lack motivation or did not adapt to the general education schools. The school provides an opportunity to take part in vocational courses in addition to general education curricula.</p>	<p>12-17 year olds who dropped out from school without gaining lower secondary education qualification.</p>	<p>National programme with over 20 schools in the country</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Majority of graduates continue their education in vocational education schools</li> </ul>

Title	Short Description	Target group	Geographical coverage	Quality criteria
Second Chance School, Warsaw <b>(PL)</b>	Second Chance School offers classes three days a week and prepares for completion of general education diploma. Under 18 year olds attend vocational training for the rest of the week. Knowledge is tested quite frequently through monthly or twice yearly exams. The key difference from initial education schools is that students are treated differently, like adults at CKU which creates a positive institutional climate.	Most students aged 19-25 but range from 18-50 years old.	National programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Drop out rates are approximately 50% at the lower secondary level, and 30% at the upper secondary level.</li> <li>▪ Of those students who reach the second year of upper secondary level usually (about 80%) are able to graduate.</li> </ul>
Second Chance School, Matosinhos <b>(PT)</b>	Offers vocational subjects with an emphasis on creative and practical skills. Flexible timetable of up to 6 hours per day. Contrast with mainstream school culture, curriculum and pedagogy. Adopted holistic flexible approach to curriculum content and delivery with project based learning being at the core of pedagogical approaches. Students feel like it is their space and they belong there. Different expectations of behaviour – less rigid, with support from the youth mediator role.	15 to 25 year olds who have left school without qualifications and do not have a place anywhere else.	Unique in Portugal	<p><b>2008/11 data based on 120 students:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Certification (50%);</li> <li>▪ Continuing towards certification (23%);</li> <li>▪ Progression to further education (29%) and employment (12%);</li> <li>▪ Drop-out rates (10-20%);</li> <li>▪ Attendance (75-80%)</li> </ul>
Nicolae Iorga School, Cluj <b>(RO)</b>	Programme provides primary and lower secondary education, covering years 1- 4 and years 5-10 of the mainstream education system respectively. Offers a professional education certificate. Programme may be offered in Romanian or one of the national <b>minorities' languages (Hungarian, Romani)</b> . The curricula is specially designed, fulfilling the learning objectives of the national curricula but organised differently and is structured in modules.	People who have either never entered the school system or left it at primary or lower secondary levels. 70% are Roma. Ages 14-54 but no upper age limit, and 30% are aged 14-25.	National programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In 2008 – 2011, between 87 and 89 percent of the students enrolled in the second chance programme at Nicolae Iorga school successfully completed their studies for the respective school year.</li> </ul>
Study motivation course, People's	The programme includes courses to assist orientation and motivation. Teaching needs to be flexible as there are huge variations in	People who do not have full grades from elementary school or	National programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On average about 23-24% of participants go back to education and 15% go into</li> </ul>

Title	Short Description	Target group	Geographical coverage	Quality criteria
High School, Stockholm <b>(SE)</b>	terms of previous skills (some are still at middle school level, whilst others are at upper secondary school level). For example, no text books are used and the teachers act more like coaches. Furthermore the learning methods cuts across subject areas.	upper secondary school.		<p>employment. A study carried out by Folkbildningsrådet in 2012 shows that 24% of the learners have continued to further education and 17% have found employment. It also showed that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 70% of the learners thought that they had received good support from their teacher.</li> <li>▪ 62% thought that the group had been an friendly environment</li> <li>▪ 52% felt that they were recognised</li> <li>▪ 52% thought that the programme had helped them believe that education is a way to find work.</li> </ul>
Municipal second chance education, Gothenburg <b>(SE)</b>	Municipal adult education (Komvux) provides basic adult education and upper secondary school education. Learning Centre is a flexible and individualised upper secondary school education. The content and structure is customised to needs and circumstances of the students and can be undertaken from distance or online. The aim is to get a full secondary education Kickstart (Navigatorcentrum) which is a 6 week course, laying the foundations for education and employment. Induction programmes (IM) – the five different programmes allow ineligible students new opportunities. Digital learning platform ('Hjarntorget') – digital interaction with teachers, course material	Introduction programmes are targeted at those aged 16-19 year olds that are not eligible for upper secondary education, whilst adult education is targeted at those aged 20 and over.	Implemented nationally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In 2011, over 70% completed their adult education studies, whilst around 17% left early. The remaining share of participants continued their adult education studies into the next year.</li> <li>▪ Evidence from the City of Gothenburg suggests that around 45% of participants are in employment six months after completing their studies, with a further 14% are participating in higher education.</li> <li>▪ Notably, the proportion of</li> </ul>

Title	Short Description	Target group	Geographical coverage	Quality criteria
	uploaded together with tasks.			participants in employment after their studies is showing a slightly increasing trend over the last few years – from 40% in 2005 to 45% in 2012.
Fairbridge Centre, Middlesborough (UK)	<p>Centre provides a tailored personal development programme for the most hard to reach groups of young people. The project offers support for two cohorts 13-16 year olds and 16+, who are either NEETs, educational underachievers or potential NEETs. Presenting needs groupings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of offending</li> <li>• History of drug/alcohol/substance misuse</li> <li>• Victim of crime/bullying/abuse</li> <li>• Temp. mental health/low self esteem</li> <li>• Physical or mental disability</li> <li>• Looked after history/child protection register</li> <li>• Parent/carer</li> <li>• Literacy or numeracy help required</li> </ul>	13 to 25 year olds who are viewed to be lacking the motivation, self confidence and skills they need to change their life.	National programme with 16 centres across the country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fairbridge has a high success rate, in the past 12 months 85% of participants went on to achieve something tangible, this means they may have got a job, gone on to do a training course, stayed in education or reduced their alcohol or drug activity. For other young people success can mean engaging in basic skills support for the first time or increasing their self esteem, so they are better equipped to find work or return to education.</li> <li>▪ At the Middlesbrough centre the retention rate on their Access course over the past 4 years was around 85% and 80% on the longer term – follow on programme.</li> </ul>

## 1.6 Report Structure

We present the findings of the study thematically, with the fieldwork evidence analysed in conjunction with the findings from the desk research. This approach **enables a more detailed consideration of the issue of 'transferability' of second chance approaches to mainstream schools**, which is not extensively documented within the research literature.

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- **Section Two** presents a synthesis of the desk research and fieldwork, to explore what contributes to early school leaving and what motivates young people and adults to re-engage in second chance education, and the effectiveness of different methods of identifying and supporting them.
- **Section Three** reviews key characteristics of reviewed schemes especially in terms of the experiences of planning and delivering second chance provision in Europe, with attention to planning and organisation, teaching and learning, and measures for assessment and progression.
- **Section Four** considers the findings with regard to the transferability of these approaches between second chance and initial education, and the extent of existing cooperation between them; and,
- **Section Five** identifies the main conclusions and recommendations that are drawn from the analysis presented in the remainder of the report.

We have presented supplementary information within the report annexes, which includes the following: mapping of second chance education schemes, case study descriptions, overview of quantitative data, up-dated guidance note for fact finding visit, list of interviewees and key data sources used.

## 2.0 Study Context, Motivation and Engagement

This chapter explores the profile of early school leavers; the contextual and motivational factors that result in early school leaving, and factors that facilitate **students' re-engagement** into education. It starts with an overview of ESL in Europe and the key contributory factors documented within policy and research literature. It goes on to develop a theoretical overview of motivation and engagement issues. We conclude this chapter with an overview of how the schemes analysed for the study engaged and motivated their students.

### 2.1 Early school leaving in Europe

According to the Eurostat data, the average rates of ESL were 12.8% in 2012, but with significant differences were recorded across the EU27, and between males and females. Although the ESL rate has decreased in almost all Member States during the period since 2000, with the exception of Sweden, there have been recent increases from 2011 to 2012 in several Member States.<sup>8</sup> The data available for 2012 shows that the level of ESL ranged from a low of 4% in Slovenia and Croatia to a high of over 20% in Malta, Portugal and Spain.<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> Ireland has reduced its ESL rate to less than 10%, taking the number of Member States that have met the Europe 2020 target to 12.<sup>11</sup> Figure 2.1 shows how the 2012 ESL rate varies by Member State and how this compares to the national and EU targets.

<sup>8</sup>The ESL rate has increased from 2011 to 2012 in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden

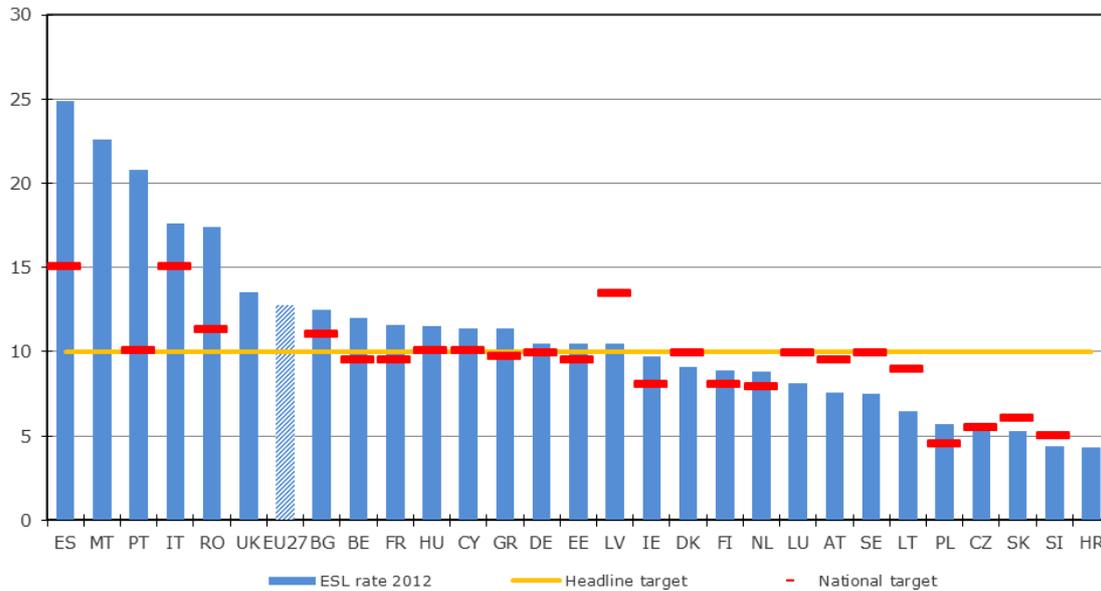
<sup>9</sup> Eurostat (2012), Europe 2020 indicators. Available at:

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcod=e=t2020\\_40](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcod=e=t2020_40)<sup>10</sup> The Maltese series on early leavers from education and training have been revised. The revision concerns the classification of certain qualifications at secondary level. Further explanations are available on Eurostat's website.

<sup>10</sup> The Maltese series on early leavers from education and training have been revised. The revision concerns the classification of certain qualifications at secondary level. Further explanations are available on Eurostat's website.

<sup>11</sup> Progress in tackling early school leaving and raising higher education attainment - but males are increasingly left behind (2013) Available at: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-324\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-324_en.htm)

**Figure 2.1 ESL rate 2012, Europe 2020 target and national targets**



**Source:** Eurostat (Labour Force Survey) <sup>12</sup>

There are many different reasons for young people's disengagement from school, which typically occurs as a cumulative process rather than a sudden decision to leave, with more than one factor occurring at once. There is therefore no single profile of early school leavers, although some groups are more at risk, which differs between regions and countries. Knowledge about at-risk groups and reasons for ESL can help to improve the development of targeted measures. Particularly vulnerable groups include care leavers, teenage mothers, disabled young people and those with special needs, as well as migrants and ethnic minorities.

An overview of statistical data on the situation of ESL is presented in the table below, while key factors are explored in the next section.

<sup>12</sup> EUROPE 2020 TARGET: EARLY LEAVERS FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING (2013) Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/themes/29\\_early\\_school\\_leaving.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/themes/29_early_school_leaving.pdf)

**Table 2.1 Some headline statistical data on ESL in Europe**

**Early School Leavers in Europe**

- In 2009 over 70% of early school leavers in the EU complete only lower secondary education;
- 18% of early school leavers in the EU have completed only primary education in 2009. The levels are highest in Bulgaria (38%) and Portugal (40%);
- In 2012, 57% of early school leavers in the EU were either unemployed or inactive; their unemployment rate is 40%, compared to 22.8% overall youth unemployment in Europe.<sup>13</sup>
- In 2009 the largest number of early school leavers who are unemployed or inactive are in Slovakia (80%), in Bulgaria (73%) and in Hungary (71%)
- Young people from migrant backgrounds are more likely to be early school leavers than native young people (25.6% vs. 11.6%). This trend is highest in Greece, Spain and Italy where those born abroad are at least three times more likely to leave school early. However in Portugal and UK the number of early school leavers is lower for the migrant population. This is seen as showing that this target group can achieve higher attainment if properly supported.

**Source:** Eurostat (Labour Force Survey), 2009 and 2012<sup>14</sup>

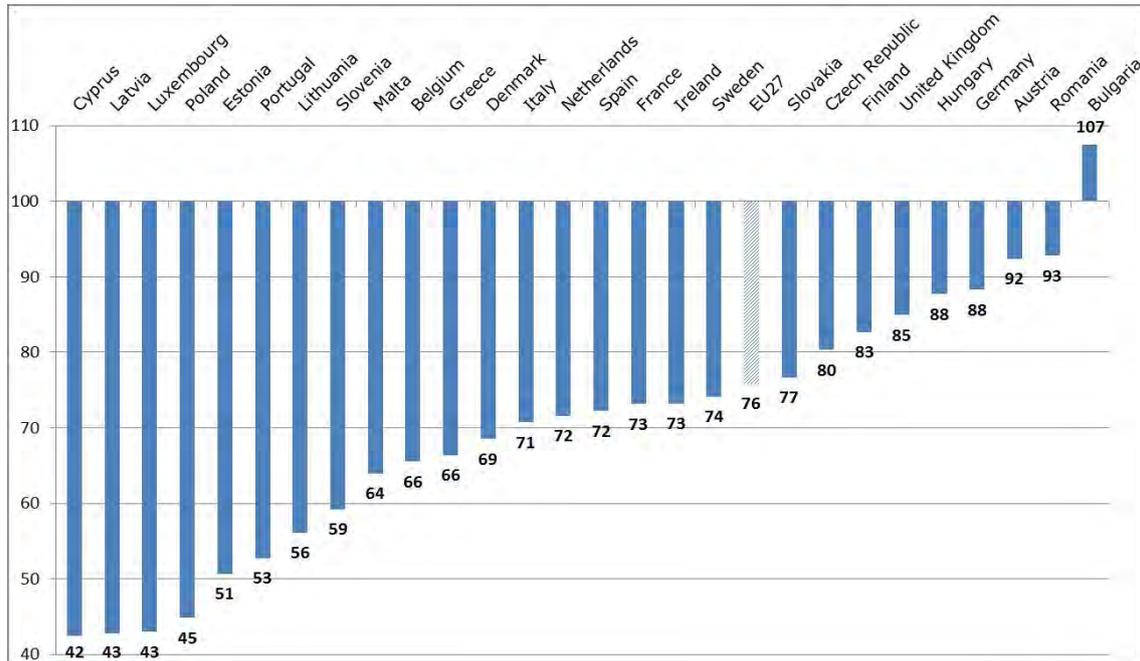
Eurostat (LFS) data shows that the rates of ESL have been consistently higher among male students compared to females (except in Romania and Bulgaria), and that the gender gap has remained fairly constant since 2000.<sup>15</sup> Although data collected at national level in Ireland indicate that recently the situation is starting to change with some more girls leaving school early. At EU27 level there are only 76 girls for every 100 boys who are early school leavers, so young women are 24% less likely to leave early, although there is significant variation among Member States, as shown in Figure 2.2 overleaf. The greatest disparity is in Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg and Poland, where young men are more than twice as likely as young women to drop out. Reasons for gender differences are discussed overleaf.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Commission Staff Working Paper (2011), *Reducing early school leaving*, [SEC(2011)96], 26 January 2011. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/earlywp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/earlywp_en.pdf)

**Figure 2.2 Gender difference in early school leaving EU-27, boys = 100**



**Source:** Eurostat (Labour Force Survey) 2013<sup>16</sup>

There is also considerable variation in the gender split among the second chance education schemes visited during this study, which does not always correlate with the national rates. This suggests that the profile of students engaged in the schemes does not necessarily reflect the equivalent profile of early school leavers nationally. For example, at the French Micro-Lycée, the gender split among students was 39% male to 61% female, although Figure 2.2 shows that there are more male than female early school leavers in France. A possible explanation may be that female school leavers could be more likely to access the provision than males, because it has an academic focus on preparation for further education, reflecting the fact that females are generally more likely to access further and higher education.

In contrast, at the Matosinhos Second Chance school, the gender split among students was estimated to be around 75% male to 25% female, which is more in line to the national average. As illustrated in the figure 2.2, male students are almost two times more likely to be early school leavers than females. In addition, male early school leavers are more likely to engage with the scheme than females. This could possibly be linked with the practical emphasis, and links with employers in male dominated trades. There may also be an interplay between gender and ethnicity, as the proportion of Roma students (approximately 5%) reflects the national population, despite the fact that early school leaving is higher among Roma young people, especially young women. Both these findings would imply that white and male school leavers are more likely to access the provision than those who are Roma and female, which fits in with the wider picture of Portuguese Roma young women as a group facing particular social exclusion.

<sup>16</sup> *Progress in tackling early school leaving and raising higher education attainment - but males are increasingly left behind* (2013) Available at: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-324\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-324_en.htm)

Geographical patterns are often visible at a sub-national level within individual Member States, linked to economic development as well as the cultural and social conditions, industrial profile and educational investment. Such disparities are particularly noticeable across Spain, for example. While some Member States show higher ESL levels in large urban centres, others have higher rates in rural areas where there may be a need to work in agriculture, as is the case in Bulgaria.

## Factors contributing to ESL

The research literature identifies a number of predictive factors for ESL, whilst underlining that the inter-relationships between them are often complex and highly situational. ESL reflects a combination of individual **students' needs** (e.g. disability, mental problems, underachievement at school); **socio-economic background** (e.g. migrant background, workless households) and **school based factors** (e.g. lack of resources, lack of guidance and support, inappropriate teaching methods<sup>17</sup>). Often, learners at risk of dropping out from initial education systems are suffering from multiple disadvantages. In this respect, the contributory factors can relate as much to the school's failure to deal with issues that occur outside of mainstream education systems, as they do to any shortfall in the quality of teaching and learning.

Structural aspects of **education policy** contributing towards ESL include the requirement for repetition of the school year. For example, this was identified as a reason for ESL by 88% of early school leavers in one Spanish study.<sup>18</sup> Other research has cited a (perceived) overemphasis on testing and examination in creating pressure and stigmatisation of underachievers; particularly in France, the UK, Ireland and Spain. Despite policies aiming to combat segregation, some schools also have high proportions of known risk groups such as Roma children, as is the case in the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary and Slovakia.

Other factors related to the **structure of the education system** are important. Transition from one stage of the education system to another is a factor in ESL; for example from more learner-centred teaching at the primary education stage, to subject-centred teaching within lower secondary schooling. ESL rates are typically higher in VET institutions, where students are more likely to have lower previous academic performance and higher levels of disadvantage. In Greece, France and Finland, ESL occurs especially in the first few months of upper secondary vocational education, when students' expectations are not met or where they realise in hindsight that they have made a wrong decision. For example, a Dutch survey of 1700 people who had left education without a qualification, found that the majority had left upper secondary vocational schools, mainly because they felt they had chosen the wrong educational pathway.<sup>19</sup> A restrictive curriculum focusing more on knowledge than skills is also seen as contributing to ESL in several countries.

<sup>17</sup> GHK (2005), NESSE (2009), OECD, *Overcoming School Failure: Policies That Work Project*.

<sup>18</sup> Mena Martínez, L., Fernández Enguita, M. y Riviére Gómez, J. (2009), *Desenganchados de la educación:*

*procesos, experiencias, motivaciones y estrategias del abandono y del fracaso escolar, Revista de Educación,*

*número extraordinario 2010, pp. 119-145, cited in GHK (2011)*

<sup>19</sup> *Survey conducted by Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA) at the University of*

*Maastricht. Cited in GHK (2011)*

**Individual schools and teachers** play an important role in the decision to leave school, including peer relationships and bullying, as well as students' experiences of relationships with teachers and of teachers' attitudes, professional competences and teaching styles. A Dutch study found that 'non-native' early school leavers were more likely to identify problems with teachers as the reason for leaving, and young men were four times more likely than their female peers to do so.<sup>20</sup> A research study from the UK concluded that teachers do not always show understanding towards young people from diverse ethnic groups or deprived backgrounds, and that prejudice is sometimes a contributory factor to learners deciding to drop-out of school<sup>21</sup>. These findings may reflect cultural and social class bias among educational institutions.

**Sociologist Basil Bernstein's theory** concerns how children from different socio-economic backgrounds develop different codes and forms of speech, which impacts on their academic performance, as schools are more likely to easily understand and **accommodate middle class children's ways of expressing themselves**. Similarly, in the Irish context it is recognised that because Irish Travellers face discrimination in society, it cannot be presumed that educators are free from bias, as set out in the National Traveller Education Strategy (2006). It is recommended that representatives of the Travelling community are involved not only in initial trials of methods for initial skills checks (or assessments), but in the design of these methods, to check that content is culturally appropriate<sup>22</sup>.

**Gender** is a significant factor as illustrated in the figure 2.2 above, as young men across most of Europe are more likely to leave school early than young women<sup>23</sup>. This picture is part of a wider historical trend of girls' increasing success at school and in higher education in recent decades, even in countries such as Portugal where previous generations of girls had little access to school and high levels of illiteracy. A classic explanation portrays girls as 'good students' because they have learned traditional gender stereotypes of better behaviour, self-discipline, obedience, perseverance, listening and empathy skills, which contribute to successful learning styles which are particularly valued by their largely female teaching staff.<sup>24</sup> As well being seen as having more difficulties with these skills, boys in some families are also traditionally more likely to be expected to leave school earlier in order to begin earning.<sup>25</sup> Boys have been found to be more engaged and motivated through activity based approaches rather than predominantly verbal ones,<sup>26</sup> and therefore disadvantaged

<sup>20</sup> ROA research cited in the Dutch Ministry of education, Culture and Science (2009), Key figures 2004-2008. Cited in GHK (2011)

<sup>21</sup> Dhillon, Jagroop (2007), ReStart. Innovative approaches to early school leaving in England and Wales. Olmec. Cited in GHK (2011)

<sup>22</sup> Carrigan, J; Downes, P (2010) *Is there more than what's the score? Exploring needs and skills checking for literacy as part of a holistic initial assessment process in a lifelong learning society*. Educational Disadvantage Centre, Dublin

<sup>23</sup> Although the difference ranges between 7% and 58% (Eurostat, 2013)

<sup>24</sup> Arnot, Madeleine; David, Miriam e Weiner, Gaby (1999), *Closing the Gender Gap – postwar education and social change*, Cambridge, Polity; Baudelot e Establet (1998), *Allez les filles!*, Paris, Seuil, cited in Almeida, Ana Nunes de (2005) *O que as famílias fazem à escola... pistas para um debate*, *Análise Social* 176, 579-593

<sup>25</sup> Ferrão, J. (coord.), et al. (2001), *Saída Prematura do Sistema Educativo: Aspectos da Situação, Causas e Perspectivas em Termos de Emprego e Formação*, Lisboa, Observatório do Emprego e Formação Profissional, cited in Almeida, Ana Nunes de (2005) *O que as famílias fazem à escola... pistas para um debate*, *Análise Social* 176, 579-593

<sup>26</sup> Byrne, M. (2007). *Health for all*. In *Beyond educational disadvantage* (Downes, P. & Gilligan, A. L.) (Eds.) pp. 343-354. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration

because school assessment tends to rely more upon linguistic skills, valuing linguistic and logical intelligence over kinaesthetic, musical and other forms of intelligence.<sup>27</sup> However, these differences in learning styles are not the only explanation, in view of changes in expectations and gender relations at home as well as in the public spheres of education and work. Many girls have working mothers as role models and many **parents now have similar expectations of sons' and daughters' achievements.**<sup>28</sup> Although girls are less likely to leave school early, their higher school completion rates and academic achievement, do not necessarily equate with wider empowerment, nor prepare them for equality in the workplace, where male dominance has yet to be eroded<sup>29</sup>. It is equally important to remember that girls are not a homogenous group, and in some socio-economic and ethnic groups of girls face particular social exclusion.<sup>30</sup>

Many **ethnic minorities** are at particular risk of ESL, including Roma and Traveller groups, for example, in Ireland, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Lithuania. However, there is considerable variation among different ethnic groups. In the UK, for example, young people from Indian and Chinese backgrounds have lower rates of ESL than White British students, while those from African, Caribbean and Pakistani backgrounds are more at risk.<sup>31</sup> Different ethnic groups succeed differently within the same educational framework, as ethnicity interacts with other factors such as poverty, unemployment, housing, catchment areas, host country language skills, how recently a community has settled in the Member State, and whether young people themselves were born abroad. Early school leavers are more likely to be from lower socio-economic backgrounds and vulnerable or at-risk groups, and immigrants also fall into these categories more often than native populations, so ethnicity per se is not necessarily the main cause of educational underperformance in schools.<sup>32</sup> The lower ESL rate in the migrant population in Portugal and UK is interesting, and may show that this target group can achieve higher attainment if properly supported, or it may reflect a strong work ethic among certain groups.

Essential factors for the inclusion of migrant children (and therefore contributing towards the prevention of ESL) include the following<sup>33</sup>:

<sup>27</sup> Gardner, Howard, (1999) *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century*, New York, Basic Books

<sup>28</sup> Duru-Bellat, M., Kieffer, A., e Marry, C. (2001), «La dynamique des scolarités des filles: le double handicap questionné», in *Revue française de sociologie* (42-2), pp. 251-280

<sup>29</sup> Ivinson, Gabrielle; Arnot, Madeleine; Araújo, Helena; Delyanni, Kiki e Tomé, Amparo (2000), «Student teachers' representations of citizenship – a comparative perspective», in M. Arnot e J-A Dillabough (orgs.), *Challenging Democracy – international perspectives on Gender, Education and Citizenship*, London/New York, Routledge/Falmer, 138-160; Ferreira, Virgínia (2007), *Gender mainstreaming in Portugal: an analysis of employment policies from a gender perspective*, Faculdade de Economia, Universidade de Coimbra (mimeo)

<sup>30</sup> Araújo, Helena C. (2010) *Escola e construção da igualdade no trabalho e no emprego in Virgínia Ferreira (org,) A Igualdade de Mulheres e Homens no trabalho e no emprego em Portugal - Políticas e circunstâncias*, Lisboa: CITE, Comissão para a Igualdade no trabalho e no Emprego, 217-245

<sup>31</sup> Coles et al (2010), *Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training*. Cited in GHK (2011)

<sup>32</sup> Public Policy and Management Institute (2013) *Study on educational support for newly arrived migrant children*, European Union

<sup>33</sup> Public Policy and Management Institute (2013) *Study on educational support for newly arrived migrant children*, European Union

- i. avoiding school segregation by supporting immigrant parents with school choices,
- ii. improving quality in schools with migrants and dispersal policies; and
- iii. ensuring equal opportunities by allowing children to access higher level streams once they overcome initial disadvantages of language and skills.

Research from across Europe shows that countries focusing on developing comprehensive educational support systems addressing all kinds of individual need among underachieving students are often more inclusive and beneficial for migrants than specific targeted approaches. This is partly because the effectiveness of targeted measures can be undermined by unsupportive school environments and / or a lack of understanding and empathy amongst other students and staff. The study recommends that the prevention of ESL and provision of re-integration programmes should be part of a package of support available that is tailored to local circumstances, including linguistic and academic support, parental and community involvement and intercultural education.

**Socio-economic disadvantage** can act as a negative factor in relation to school completion in complex ways. For example, some individuals fear that success will lead to alienation from their community, and the loss of identity and loss of overall sense of belonging within their culture. **Participants'** in one study found that fear was rooted in the perceived "*consequences of success*", as participants occupied a "*trade-off mindset*", as success meant leaving their family, friends, community and culture behind, and they were anxious about losing this "*connection*" and sense of belonging.<sup>34</sup> Of course fear of failure<sup>35</sup> can also play its part in discouraging young people from continuing at school, when they lack confidence, as can a sense of fatalism and the feeling that they cannot do anything to change their social exclusion.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Ivers, J. & Downes, P (2012). *A phenomenological reinterpretation of Horner's fear of success in terms of social class*. European Journal of Psychology of Education, Vol 27, Number 3, 369-388

<sup>35</sup> Jimerson, S. (1999). *On the failure of failure: Examining the association of early grade retention and late adolescent education and employment outcomes*. Journal of School Psychology, 37, 243-272

<sup>36</sup> Downes, P. (2003). *Living with heroin: HIV, Identity and Social Exclusion among the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia*. Legal Information Centre for Human Rights, Tallinn, Estonia

**Hunger** is one aspect of child poverty which affects students' ability to concentrate at school, when nutritional needs are not being met. A study in four Irish schools reported that 18% of pupils were either often, very often or every day too hungry to do their work in school, highlighting the need for more consistent access to breakfast clubs<sup>37</sup> as well as wider measures to address poverty. A study of individual and environmental factors that mitigate against school completion identifies other physical and **health issues** including problematic sleep patterns among pupils often due to anxiety, substance abuse, inadequate sex and relationships education and suicide risk.<sup>38</sup>

The **labour market** can act as a 'pull' for learners to leave school early to enter paid employment where there are opportunities for low skilled workers, in countries such as Ireland, Greece, Spain and the Netherlands, unlike in France where there are few opportunities for unqualified people. In Ireland, school pupils working more than ten hours per week are more likely to leave school early. However, in Poland high youth unemployment and lack of unemployment benefits discourage early school leaving, as does the traditional high regard for formal qualifications; part of the Communist legacy. In some countries, such as Spain, high levels of unemployment among well qualified young people reduce motivations to stay in school. These differences can potentially necessitate very different strategies for motivating learners to remain in their education.

**Peer relationships** play a role in terms of habits such as antisocial behaviour and drug misuse as well as aspirations, peer pressure and bullying. This is particularly found to have been the case for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) young people<sup>39</sup>. Personal relationships and an emotionally supportive environment are key for engagement with school and ensuring that students have the motivation to stay on.<sup>40</sup> <sup>41</sup>. Finally, significant factors relating to **family** include socio-economic background, employment status and educational attainment, as well as lifestyle and stability of relationships.

<sup>37</sup>Paul Downes, Catherine Maunsell & Jo-Hanna Ivers (2006) *A Holistic Approach to Early School Leaving and School Retention in Blanchardstown: Current Issues and Future Steps*, Blanchardstown Area Partnership. Available at: <http://www.spd.dcu.ie/site/edc/documents/blanchardstownreportreprint2010.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Paul Downes, Catherine Maunsell (2007) *Count us in. Tackling early school leaving in South West Inner City Dublin: an integrated response*, South Inner City Community Development Association and Local Drugs Taskforce

<sup>39</sup> Takács, Judit. *Social Exclusion of LGBT youth in Europe*, ILGA-Europe and IGLYO publication, 2006. Available at [www.ilga-europe.org/europe/publications/non\\_periodical/](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/publications/non_periodical/); Dennell, Brandi Lee and Paterson, Esther (2011) *Challenging homophobia together Research report*, LGBT Youth Scotland, Legebitra and European Commission, DG Justice, Fundamental Rights & Citizenship Programme

<sup>40</sup> Desjardins, R. (2008). *Researching the links between education and well-being*, European Journal of Education, 43, 1, 23-35.

<sup>41</sup> Kuperminc, G. P., Leadbeater, B. J., Emmons, C., and Blatt, S. J. (1997). *Perceived school climate and difficulties in the social adjustment of middle school students*. Applied Developmental Science, 1(2),76-88

## 2.2 Understanding “motivation”

The OECD<sup>42</sup> has drawn attention to the need to understand different forms of motivation. Two broad types can be identified:

- intrinsic motivation which stems from the need to satisfy personal desires or needs; and
- extrinsic motivation which stems from a desire for reward or to avoid sanctions or punishment.

Applied to education and training, intrinsic motivation involves a desire to learn for its own sake, for personal enjoyment/fulfilment. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is less about education and training per se and more about the positive or negative results that flow from it. However, as the OECD points out, understanding motivation is notoriously complex and these types of motivation are not mutually exclusive. Thus, disengaging from education for fear of failure can be a way of protecting self-esteem, rather than disinterest in education itself. McCombs and Pope have concluded that individuals are naturally motivated to learn when they do not have to fear failure, when learning is perceived as being personally meaningful and relevant, and when they are in respectful and supportive relationships with teachers.

Despite such insights, the OECD has noted that *“psychological research into motivation has made relatively little impact on classroom practice”* (p. 26). Our fact-finding visits would not contradict this. The application of concepts such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation do not spontaneously arise in discussions about second chance education and we did not find any evidence for their direct application in practice. This does not prevent successful intervention of course. The dominant approach is for interventions to take into account individual circumstances. But it is important to at least ask the question whether the application of sophisticated theoretical understandings of motivation would assist in the delivery of more successful interventions more often.

Both the type (intrinsic/extrinsic) and level of motivation will vary in different and complex ways across these categories. The brief for the current study does not include unpacking this in-depth. However, it is evident that in many cases the intrinsic motivation to learn for its own sake will, for a variety of reasons, have either been lost completely or at least pushed into the background through force of circumstance for those individuals who are likely to be the subject of second chance education. Early school leavers will have suffered demotivation through feelings of inadequacy, failure, and low self-esteem, reinforced in school. Evidence from our fact-finding visits shows that pupils may blame themselves; they are stuck in a negative cycle of blame, self-doubt and underachievement. Further, we picked up a variety of negative comments **from respondents to the effect that schools don’t necessarily deal well with students’ social, family and/or psychological problems.** On the contrary, schools can actually make them worse. A number of respondents commented that teacher education did not adequately prepare teachers to address such issues.

<sup>42</sup> OECD (2000) *What works in innovation in education. Motivating students for lifelong learning.*

Another factor to take into account is that young adults aged 18 to 24 are likely to be in a different position with respect to motivation than when they left school. The motivation of young adults to continue with their education is likely to be strongly influenced by other forms of personal development that has taken place since leaving school, such as improved social skills, and also by having experienced first-hand the negative consequences of leaving school early, for example through reduced employment prospects. The influence of such **“social learning” in the development of attitudes and behaviours** should not be underestimated<sup>43</sup>. We therefore need to be careful to take into account that the motivational drivers affecting school age pupils will be different to those affecting young adults.

**If we combine these factors, we can see that the “trajectories” of different groups of early school leavers will vary in complex ways, with shifting propensities to (be) re-engage(d).** That said, it is evident that two factors are especially important in the process of re-engaging people in education and training. Firstly, learning has to have a value to the potential participants. This can either be in the form of learning having value in itself, although this seems unlikely in the case of early school leavers, or by being linked to a clear purpose such as employment and the opportunity for a better quality-of-life. It needs to be noted, however, that such motivational drivers can have a negative character, at least in the early stages of engagement. Fear of the future (ending up in **dead-end jobs, of being unable to provide adequately for one’s children** etc.) can be a strong negative motivator for many individuals returning to education and training. Successful interventions are characterised by their ability to turn such negative extrinsic motivations into positive ones.

The second factor to take into account as important in motivating people to re-engage is giving learners a sense of empowerment, of control over their education and training. In school, attendance is obligatory and, rather than being encouraged by schooling, early school leavers are often left behind by the system, sometimes literally where they repeatedly fail to reach the grade required for progression. Learners have no control over what they are learning or the pace at which they are supposed to learn it. A recurring theme of our fact-finding visits is the motivation that follows from involving second chance learners in planning their own learning.

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<sup>43</sup> Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. New York: General Learning Press

## 2.3 Approaches to re-engaging learners

There are a number of aspects influencing re-engagement of learners into education. This section focus on approaches to initial engagement of learner and initial exchanges developed by the visited schemes and literature, and we discuss different aspects in turn.

### *Promotion and communication*

Overall, second chance education needs to find the right ways of promoting itself to potential participants. There are two aspects to this. First of all, successful interventions are characterised by identifying those aspects of provision which are particularly motivating. This often involves highlighting the differences with mainstream schools. When setting up the second chance schools pilot there was a worry that this might have negative effects in undermining compulsory nature of initial education.<sup>44</sup> Depending on the circumstances, whilst it may be important to play down the linkages with mainstream education while promoting the programme, so as not to alienate a potential client group, such linkages may in reality be important in order to allow re-entry by students to mainstream provision if appropriate.

Frequently, the promotion of second chance education has to take place in the context of negative local perceptions. The majority of stakeholders who were interviewed considered that negative attitudes prevail in most of the countries included in the study, towards alternative educational pathways. For example, the workshop participants in the UK emphasised that prevailing social attitudes towards vocational education present a particular barrier for developing pathways that are alternative to academic learning. This can represent an important challenge, having to develop a positive image whilst fighting against prejudice. Second chance provision thus often emphasises **its "student friendly" nature, the respect shown by teachers towards students (not treating them as "losers"), and the fact that students are treated as adults.** In our Polish case study, for example, the school is more like a university in style. The Youthreach project in Ireland highlights its **"warmth, respect and order"**.

The second aspect of promotion concerns finding the right channels of communication. This can involve friends, parents, relatives, as well as professionals in social care and education. Parents can be important in motivating young people, especially amongst **minority communities and "looked after" children.** The interviews with scheme representatives suggest that word-of-mouth is often important, alongside more formal channels such as advertising in local media. Tapping into local social networks is **critical, and is part and parcel of becoming part of the local "community fabric" which** is an important element of success. Respondents in our fact-finding visits often stressed the fact that **they had "open door" policies.**

Practical means of communication mentioned during the interviews included publicly **celebrating the success of previous learners on the basis that "if I can do it, so can you"; and demonstrating links with employers in order to show that provision provided routes into work.**

<sup>44</sup> European Commission (2001), *Second Chance Schools: the Results of a European Pilot Project*. March 2001

### *Identification and initial contact*

A key aspect of re-engagement is of course being able to identify who has dropped out and to keep track of them. This can be a difficult exercise for early school leavers who have become highly alienated from education. Being part of the local community and being able to use information obtained from social networks can be important in this context. In the case of Denmark, making municipalities responsible for enforcing the right of individuals to an education has been an additional stimulus to making sure that individuals who have left school early can be tracked effectively<sup>45</sup>.

Effective engagement needs to involve a range of professionals including social and health care workers, teachers and guidance professionals. For example, guidance workers are one example of a notable role of support staff, at least in the Danish context. The lessons from Danish youth guidance counsellors highlight the need for them to be sensitive and unintrusive but also persistent. These councillors help municipalities to enforce their duty to re-engage under 25s in education and training, **a "rights basis" which has proved to be a powerful tool in their work.** Initial approaches to disengaged young people can be quite gentle, using Facebook or text messaging for example. This can then be escalated using phone calls and contact with other family members. Once contact has been made, it is important that councillors are knowledgeable about the various options available to young people<sup>46</sup>. It is important that guidance is about more than just employment, and focuses on the individuals themselves in their particular needs and circumstances. Providing guidance can take place through a number of avenues, not just face-to-face but also online.

### *Initial validation of competences*

As part of an initial assessment process, some second chance provision involves the **validation of participants' competences.** Most commonly, this appears to involve **"formative" validation in which competences are recorded, rather than "summative" validation** in which formal certification takes place. Formative validation is reported to help young people reflect on the competences they have acquired outside school, to unpack what they have learnt and, on this basis, determine what their future options may be. It is linked closely into the idea of young people taking ownership of their career management. The use of such validation processes has been shown to work best with help from a third party: young people need help to identify in a systematic way competencies they might have acquired. At the same time, it needs to be an open dialogue which places emphasis on the young person making a self-assessment. Examples include ProfilPASS in Germany, **the "attestation des compétences" used in Luxembourg** (devised by the Federation of Scouts and the Ministry of Youth), and the recreational activity study book developed by the Finnish Youth Academy<sup>47</sup>.

### *Relationships between students and teachers*

The literature and fieldwork highlight relationships between students and teachers as one of the most important factors that make difference in second chance education institutions. McCombs and Pope cite the quality of relationships between learners and adults as possibly the single most important factor driving levels of engagement for 'hard to reach' learners. They identify the necessary personal qualities of adults who

<sup>45</sup> GHK (2010) *Guiding at-risk youth through learning to work: Lessons from across Europe.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

are seeking to engage with the hard to reach as being "*consistently upbeat and unafraid*", and having a "*consistently empathic regard*" for the young people in their charge.<sup>48</sup>

There was a common message from stakeholders interviewed for the study that good relationships and trust between students and teachers is a key success factor for second chance education. The key factors important for building good links between students and teachers were:

- Small classes, which make it easier to know each student;
- Working with parents and developing positive relationships;
- Providing emotional support and security to students;
- Socialization between staff and students: they eat together, have tea and often talk during the breaks;
- It is important for students to know that teachers care about them and about their achievements;
- Mutual respect;
- Openness to talk not only about school but also about other issues;
- Having an open doors policy, so that students know teachers are available to help;
- Not hierarchical relations but more friendly, based on partnership relations;
- In some cases students can bring their children to school.

To illustrate the above, some of the comments by young people in Fairbridge programme in the UK were; "*they are like your mates*", "*you can have a laugh with them*", "*they understand me*", "*I can talk to them*", "*I know they will help me*", "*they let me make my own choices*". The positive relationship between the staff and the young people was very clear to see and the difference between the relationships they have now at the Fairbridge programme and that which they had with staff in the mainstream school was **also obvious**. The young people said "*the teachers at school didn't like me,*" "*they didn't understand me*".

All of the communication methods highlighted above are based on openness, respect, availability to help and provide emotional support and advice. These were qualities that students often felt to be missing from their previous school and sometimes from their family. Students very often highlighted that the teachers in previous school did not understand them or listen to them. Accounts of alienation from formal secondary schooling from those involved in alternative provision highlights the need for interventions at a systemic level to improve student-teacher relations within the classroom, not just from extra support services, for example alternatives to suspension, a holistic approach to behavioural issues and early intervention with speech and language and emotional support.<sup>49</sup>

Some stakeholders highlighted that disagreements with teachers can be one of the main reasons for dropping out from school. This echoes findings about the long lasting **and significant effect on pupils' schooling of negative critical incidents involving teacher-pupil interaction**, causing anxiety, stress, anger and emotional burden, particularly when pupils perceived **teachers'** behaviour as unjustified, authoritarian and failing to resolve social conflicts. Pupils in a Finnish study identified characteristics of positive incidents as being when teachers used collaborative and empowering methods to resolve problems, offered emotional support and constructive feedback

<sup>48</sup> McCombs, B.L and Pope, J.E (1994) *Motivating Hard to Reach Students*. American Psychological Association.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

and promoted pupils' sense of active agency and belonging in the class and school community.<sup>50</sup>

The other aspect that is of significant importance in developing positive relationships between staff and students is socialising together. In Youth School in Lithuania students and teachers emphasise that they regularly have tea together. It allows for less formal exchanges and to get to know students better. Often young people and teachers eat together during the breaks and some interviews emphasised cooking and eating together. For example, according to teachers in Schlangenfuss project young people are encouraged to cook together outside formal learning environment.

The development of the personal relations between teachers and students in Youthreach programme in Ireland is presented in the text box below.

### **Youthreach, IE, Personal relationships**

Students are able to develop personal relationships between tutors and staff in Youthreach in a way they wouldn't be able to in school:

*"We are on first name terms, there's no Sir or Mrs...we all sit down together at the table for our lunch, we play football...it's a great leveller...you could be kicked, you could be tackled...it's a great leveller, we just get involved with them, so they can see you as an individual, not just a teacher or authority figure".*

They play football on a Wednesday afternoon. These approaches would not be possible in mainstream school. So the informal activities are really important in engaging with learners,

*"You may talk over the pool table, just ask about something going on at home over a game of pool".*

They also do outdoor pursuits once every six weeks – hill walking. Teachers have to earn the students respect:

*"That's a far better grounding than 'I'm a teacher you have to give me respect, it doesn't work that way, you have to earn it'".*

The teacher also does some mentoring, which is one-to-one support, for 2 hours a week. He tries to meet as many students as possible, some could be just for 5 minutes, other might need an hour. It is student led, but sometimes the mentor will call them in. It is important because *"they get the feeling that we take the time to listen to them because they are important, and any issues they raise are confidential"*. They would only report issues if they might harm themselves or another individual. The mentor writes up an action plan of actions agreed at the meeting, focusing on personal issues rather than learning goals. The mentoring is focused on the web wheel, split into 16 sections – attendance, substance abuse, crime.

<sup>50</sup>Pyhältö, K., Soini, T. and Pietarinen, J. (2010) Pupils' pedagogical well-being in comprehensive school—significant positive and negative school experiences of Finnish ninth graders *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 25:207–221

The examples presented above demonstrate that second chance teachers generally perceive their role to be much wider than transferring academic knowledge to students. Teachers tend to provide advice, guidance, mentoring on the issues that are related to personal development, issues that are not directly related to learning, such as personal relations or issues that young people face outside school environment. Teachers also tend to engage with young people outside the lessons throughout the time spent within the provision such as eating, socialising together. This approach was observed in a large majority of the schemes visited and is a distinctive feature of second chance education.

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## 3.0 Key Features of Second Chance Education

This chapter of the report reviews the findings from the desk research and fact-finding visits regarding the characteristics of second chance educational provision. It draws out some of the hallmarks of second chance education, and considers those aspects that distinguish it from mainstream education. We consider the main similarities and differences in how these schemes are planned and organised; their arrangements for teaching and learning, and how achievement is measured and recognised. Finally, we draw together and conclude upon some good practice characteristics that might stand to benefit initial education.

### 3.1 Planning and organisation

#### 3.1.1 Governance

The second chance schemes visited during the study went through very particular, often very locally specific, development processes; resulting in significant differences among schemes not only amongst countries but sometimes within the same country. As the evaluation of European second chance schools pilot highlighted:

*"...schools are products of very different constitutional, social, cultural, historical and educational circumstances within each Member State, with local or regional specifics sometimes intensifying this diversity".<sup>51</sup>*

The schemes reviewed are run by local, national authorities, schools, public employment service providers, third sector organisations and/or others. In some cases they are set up as collaborative initiatives between more than one institution. An overview of key governance characteristics is presented in the table 3.1 below.

<sup>51</sup> European Commission (2001), *Second Chance Schools: the Results of a European Pilot Project*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home_en.html)

**Table 3.1 Governance Arrangements**

Country	Title	Governance characteristics	Co-location with mainstream school	Wider stakeholder involvement in governance <sup>52</sup>
AT	Schlangenfuß, Vienna	The Schlangenfuß project is implemented by a Special Education Centre.		
AT	Chancen-Pool ("Opportunities Pool"), Vorarlberg	Chancen-Pool register is <b>managed by a "State Career Guidance Coordinator"</b> . The initiative aims to link different service providers and the cooperation with schools, public employment service (PES), community, youth workers is of key importance in delivering the project.	<b>x</b>	
FR	Micro-lycee 93, Paris	Micro-lycee 93 is based in the mainstream school (lycee Jacques Brel). Micro-lycee was a <b>teachers' initiative</b> supported by local educational authority.	<b>x</b>	
FR	Second chance school, Champagne-Ardenne	The second chance school Champagne-Ardenne is one of the three components of the Centre Alfor, a training organisation created in 1976 by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Champagne-Ardenne. The Centre Alfor is composed of trade associations and trade unions, which form the board of directors. The General Director of the Centre is also the President of the national Network of Second Chance Schools.		<b>x</b>
HU	Belvárosi Tanoda Secondary School, Budapest	Belvárosi Tanoda Foundation is a non-profit private foundation that runs the school.		<b>x</b>
HU	Dobbantó Project, Gyula	The Public Foundation for Equal Opportunities of Disabled Persons (FSZK) is a third sector organisation responsible for implementation of Dobbantó programme nationally. The funding for the implementation	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>

<sup>52</sup> Including NGOs, trade unions and employer associations.

Country	Title	Governance characteristics	Co-location with mainstream school	Wider stakeholder involvement in governance <sup>52</sup>
		of the project was provided by the Ministry of Education. The project is implemented in 15 mainstream vocation education schools.		
<b>IE</b>	Youthreach, Ballymun	Youthreach is a joint programme funded by the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. It is delivered through Youthreach centres and FÁS Community Training Centres.		<b>x</b>
<b>IE</b>	An Cosán, Dublin	An Cosán is a community education centre. It is owned by Tallaght West community and run by the Board.		<b>x</b>
<b>LT</b>	Jonas Ivaškevičius Youth School, Vilnius	<b>Jonas Ivaškevičius Youth School</b> is a public education institution established by Vilnius City Municipality.		
<b>PL</b>	Second Chance School, Warsaw	The school is dedicated institution based in the Continuing Education Centre (CKU). The Centre is set up as part of national initiative run by the Ministry of National Education. It is funded by the Ministry and local authority.		
<b>PT</b>	Second Chance School, Matosinhos	Partnership between NGO (Association for Second Chance Education), local authority (provides site) and education ministry (provides teachers). Mainstream school involved in setting it up but now independent.		<b>x</b>
<b>RO</b>	Nicolae Iorga School, Cluj	Set up within the mainstream educational system, and in the case of the Nicolae Iorga school within the school premises. Management has shifted from school level, to the School <b>Inspectorate, Teachers' Association,</b> Ministry of	<b>x</b>	

Country	Title	Governance characteristics	Co-location with mainstream school	Wider stakeholder involvement in governance <sup>52</sup>
		Education and partly also remained in the individual school.		
<b>SE</b>	Study motivation course, People's High School, Stockholm	This was a temporary Government initiative from 2010, implemented by Public Employment Service (PES) and Folkbildningsrådet. It was set up within Folk High Schools but not under the direction of the headmaster and school but as a separate initiative.		
<b>SE</b>	Municipal second chance education, Gothenburg	Gothenburg City Council has an adult education committee, which offers guidance services for students before they are admitted to a course. Municipalities have a legal responsibility to follow up young people (aged 16-19 years) that have left compulsory school but not started or left upper secondary school education. The provision is regulated by the framework contracts agreed between the municipalities and the providers.		
<b>UK</b>	Fairbridge Centre, Middlesbrough	Fairbridge since 2011 are managed by the Princes Trust which is a national charity.		<b>x</b>

As indicated within the table at 3.1, organisations and institutions that are responsible for **managing**, funding and setting up second chance education schemes vary from national government to wide range non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In most cases, a mix of stakeholders is involved in the governance and management of second chance schemes. For example, Matosinhos second chance school opened as a partnership between the Association for Second Chance Education (AE20, a local NGO), the local authority which provides the site, and the government education ministry. The Dobbanto Programme was initiated by the national ministry and is being implemented by a public foundation within the mainstream vocational education schools. The success in setting up and delivering the micro-lycee model in France is **linked to the fact that teachers' initiatives were linked to the policy priorities, and were thus supported by national, regional and local decision makers.** As a teacher explains:

*“first the idea was developed as teachers pedagogical initiative that received support from institutions and from this energy the first micro-lycee was established in 2008 followed by other two that were set up in the following years in the Créteil Academy.”*

Social partners play a key role in implementing around half of the second chance education schemes reviewed. Some of these schemes are implemented as national initiatives across number of sites in the country (e.g. Fairbridge Centres in the UK, second chance schools in France, Youthreach in Ireland, Dobbanto in Hungary) others are unique to a specific location (e.g. An Cosan in Ireland or Matosinhos Second Chance School in Portugal). The detailed overview of the scale of the provision is presented in the case study compendium.

The **funding** for second chance education is often linked to national and local government funding streams related to education and/or employment. For example, the Youthreach programme (Ireland) is funded mainly from national sources including both the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. However, financial sustainability is often one of the key factors for functioning of many second chance initiatives. A number of factors influence the funding constraints for schools, including pressures on public funding which is of particular importance in the current financial climate in most of the countries covered by the study, changing national or institutional priorities (New Opportunity Centres in Portugal are being reorganised) and reducing number of students coming to schools due to demographic changes (this has been identified by large majority of school representatives interviewed in Lithuania).

The financial challenges to support second chance programmes tend to be of key importance for both publicly run and third sector organisations. The interviews with the management teams identified that it costs on average £2,400 to put a young person through Fairbridge. The team try and get the school or the probation service or social services or the Pupil Referral Unit to at least fund some of the cost, as a contribution, but often they have to pay for the young person themselves– they do not turn young people away because the agencies don't fund them.

For example, the Matosinhos second chance school (Portugal) faces significant challenges related to availability of funding. More information on financial challenges in the latter school is presented in the text box overleaf.

### **Matosinhos second chance school (Portugal)**

The school is currently funded by local and national authorities. The former provide the premises for the school, which have been of critical importance to the school's survival. The latter provides teachers through the Northern Regional Directorate for Education, as it does for mainstream schools, although there were serious problems with not enough teachers being funded in 2011-12, which delayed the opening of the school in the autumn term.

In the first year of opening in 2008-9, almost all costs other than the site and teachers were covered by European funding through the Operational Programme for Human Potential, which was not available in the second year in 2009-10, was reduced to 20% in 2010-11, and covers a part of the curriculum for 2011-12. This meant that in 2009-10 some staff had to be made redundant and the school applied for funding through international projects, which helped, but often covered little more than flight costs for exchange visits. Last year the school developed an alternative model for sustainability, going beyond annual grant applications to integrate new partnerships, such as the one with the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) which funds the sewing classes, and with the Social Security office, which funds some of the psychological and social support. In the school's current fourth year of existence, the government had changed and the school had to open late because of a lack of resources including teachers. One staff member from Bulgaria is funded by the European Grundtvig programme on a year-long assistantship in 2011-12.

Financial survival remains a major challenge for the school. The school is facing difficulties opening after Easter 2012 because of a new law preventing indebted local authorities from taking on new financial commitments, which means the local authority cannot currently transfer the funds which they had promised to the school (20% of the functioning costs).

#### **3.1.2 Partnership working between second chance and initial education**

The literature review and interviews completed during the study identified that most of second chance schemes covered in the study developed beneficial relations with mainstream schools in their local area. The original pilot Second Chance Schools Scheme that was delivered between 1996 and 1999 in 11 Member States<sup>53</sup> provides some useful insights. At the outset, the European Commission was concerned about the impact of establishing an alternative pathway for learners of school age. These concerns related to the possible unintended effects of "undermining" the compulsory nature of mainstream education, or resulting in the displacement of teaching staff<sup>54</sup>. Pre-empting this issue, a minimum age limit was imposed, based on compulsory school leaving age within the respective Member States. However, an evaluation of the Scheme showed that these negative effects were not realized in practice.

<sup>53</sup> Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and the UK

<sup>54</sup> European Commission (2001) *Second Chance Schools: The Results of a European Pilot Project*.

*"[Links] tended to be organised on a 'need to be involved' basis, as and when necessary for teacher recruitment, recognition of qualifications, and the meeting of certain criteria in the definition of the curriculum. Whilst relationships are thus mostly formalistic, there is no competition with or avoidance of the formal education system"*

(European Commission,  
2001, p.14)

The evaluation of the pilot scheme is also useful in demonstrating the highly diverse nature of second chance schemes within different institutional frameworks, and their flexibility in responding to the dynamics of the local labour market within which they were established. One of the key findings was that the Member States (and in some instances individual municipalities) were at varying stages in creating pathways back into education or employment for Early School Leavers. The relative positioning of the second chance schemes to the formal education system therefore reflected this wider educational offer. The schemes generally evolved to **complement** mainstream options rather than competing with them directly, and their relative emphasis on formal or non-formal approaches largely reflected local patterns or supply and demand for alternative education, and the **"constitutional, social, cultural, historical and educational"** circumstances within each Member State (p.7).

The study highlighted some examples of second chance schemes that are co-located with the mainstream schools and are in very close collaboration. Such examples include Micro-lycee in France, Dobbanto project in Hungary, Second Chance Programme in Nicolae Iorga School (Cluj) in Romania and to some extent Chancen-Pool initiative in Austria. For example, three micro-lycees (FR) in Paris are based in initial education schools with the Head Teacher of the school also overseeing the micro-lycee. When possible, the micro-lycee shares the same building as the initial education school and teaching is managed according to the same curricula as within the mainstream schools. Most teachers in Micro-lycee 93 (FR) teach also in the initial education schools. As one teacher emphasised:

*"We established this micro-lycee with institution [mainstream school] where almost all teachers choose to keep working at mainstream schools with 30-35 pupils in the classroom and who look for solutions [on how to address ESL] within the mainstream school".*

The core objective of the micro-lycee is to develop innovative approaches within the mainstream education system so that it becomes more inclusive and responds to the needs of young people. The Dobbanto programme in Hungary adopted similar approach and is implemented within the mainstream vocational education schools with the same Headteacher and teachers working in both mainstream school and Dobbanto classes.

Some second chance schemes evolve out of a more mainstream schooling model, which indicate that there is the scope for schools to take on these characteristics over time. In Romania, the second chance programme in Cluj county was described by the project coordinator as initially being **"...quite school-like... both in terms of curriculum and also attendance"** when it was first launched in 1999 through the Education 2000+ programme and with Ministry of Education backing. Now, after more than ten years, the scheme has expanded to include adult-learning particularities, cross-subject themes, flexible schedules and an initial assessment before entering the programme. A lesson learned was that such a transformation took a considerable period of time and required a culture change in terms of interactions between the school and the wider community. It was not possible to engineer this change through a curricular

solution alone. Other schemes that were visited reported a similar pattern of needing to build credibility with local partner organisations over a period of time to secure the necessary infrastructure to offer a 'second chance' offer of vocational, personal and cultural learning.

The close cooperation with initial education schools takes place through such initiatives as awarding qualifications and student referrals. For example, Matosinhos Second Chance School in Portugal provides the qualifications to their students through a local mainstream education school. The student referral in some case is informal or is developed through structured agreements. The latter is the case in the Youthreach scheme in Ireland, where students who decided to drop out from school are given application forms. Similarly Chancen-Pool initiative in Austria established formal reporting process when students who are at risk of ESL are reported by school to Chancen-Pool coordinator.

The study also uncovered some examples of direct cross-fertilisation of methods and approaches between second chance schemes and mainstream schools. Whilst small scale; these exchanges allow us to consider the 'portability' of second chance provision. At a basic level, there were examples of attempts by enthusiastic school staff to introduce learning materials that had been developed in a second chance setting, and to re-apply them with pupils in mainstream schools. This approach experienced mixed success. The more ad hoc or selective use of second chance provision was generally less effective because so much of the impact of the original scheme derived from the alternative ethos and environment of the second chance institution. There were some more promising examples, however, where a systematic approach was undertaken to 'remodel' second chance provision for schools, with attention to quality frameworks, teacher training and accreditation. The Lithuanian **"Alternative Education"** project provides an example of how this has been approached within a recent programme.

### **“Alternative Education” Project (Lithuania)<sup>55</sup>**

The project is implemented by Education Supply Centre together with number of partner organisations and it is funded by ESF. It is implemented between 2009 and 2015. The aim of the project was to develop and test alternative education methods for Lithuanian schools. It involved adapting a legal framework, teacher training, dissemination of information about alternative education and changing prevailing negative public perceptions. Some three alternative education approaches are being developed during the project namely productive learning, School networking and cooperation with social partners model and communication model.

The productive learning method draws upon pedagogical approaches developed in second chance education, with particular focus on practical work experience. Learners spend around 60% of their learning time in a work placement. This model is currently being tested with young people between 15-16 years old who are taking part in lower secondary education programmes. Project staff considered that there would be challenges for a large-scale rollout, because the model centres on just four specialist subjects, with all other curriculum subjects taught through practical activities. However, it could offer an alternative pathway for some learners. One of the main challenges is to raise awareness of the alternative education and accreditation system that is used, and to encourage learners as well as their parents to trust this route.

Some schemes have less formalised links to initial education. For example, Youth Schools in Lithuania are set up as separate schools. They teach the same curricula as initial education school and award the same school leaving certificates, but function as separate entities. The Youth School visited during the fact-finding visit has number of cooperation agreements with some initial education institution. However, cooperation **is often based on participation in each other’s events and extra-curricula activities**, and strongly depends on senior management initiatives. The staff who were interviewed identified that of the barriers for further cooperation is the significant competition among schools for students, which prevents schools from cooperating and sharing good practice. This was sometimes found to be related to the funding arrangements at a national level (e.g. ‘per pupil’ funding formulae) and the decline in learner numbers due to demographic changes.

#### **3.1.3 Multi-professional Working**

Partnership with the community organisations is recognised as a key success factor from a number of information sources. A recent report emphasises the importance of multi-professional working in addressing complex challenges related to educational disadvantages:

*“Schools cannot work alone to disrupt intergenerational cycles of deprivation and tackle educational disadvantage. A combination of factors beyond schools limits educational opportunities and life chances.”<sup>56</sup>*

<sup>55</sup> The project is not one of the 15 case studies visited but provides interesting example of an attempt to remodel mainstream education based on second chance methods.

<sup>56</sup> Anne Edwards and Paul Downes (2012), *Alliances for Inclusion: cross-sector policy synergies and interprofessional collaboration in and around schools*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/neset/report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/neset/report_en.pdf)

The report not only emphasises the importance of bringing together the services offered in different sectors such as health, employment, housing, justice, social support but also concludes that school should be at the centre of such cooperation bringing different services together.<sup>57</sup>

An OECD report analysing what works in motivating young people to work emphasise that the relationship between schools and their local communities is of central importance for re-engagement of young people.<sup>58</sup> The evaluation of the European second chance schools pilot also recognises the importance of local partnerships with authorities, employment agencies, enterprises, educational establishments, research centres and universities, as well as youth/neighbourhood workers and NGOs for success of second chance education.<sup>59</sup> It helps among other things to provide wide range of services, to gain visibility within and support from wider community, to **recruit volunteers and to attract learners' interest.**

The importance of cooperation with employers is also emphasised within the research literature. The benefits of such cooperation range from provision of suitable placements, practical experience, to in some cases financial support for learning provision. The cooperation with employers sometimes also extends to a role for employers within the governance structures; whether in a 'mobilizing' role via local economic partnerships, or where local employers were co-founders of the scheme. For **example, the second chance school in Cologne was established as a 'foundation',** of which the Chambers of Commerce and the Labour Office were members.<sup>60</sup>

Even though such cooperation is beneficial for the schemes, a number of barriers exist in most countries. A report analysing schemes that provide training opportunities for young people at risk of social exclusion concludes; inter-agency coordination, strategic planning and long-term funding have not been forthcoming in many countries within Europe, and there has been too much reliance on time-limited "projects", which are rarely sustainable.<sup>61</sup>

Each scheme visited during the field work so far has cooperated with number of local and national stakeholders in relation to expanding their education offer. Their contribution has ranged from providing access to cultural activities, sports, career development, sexual health education; psychological counselling, catering; and support for pursuing their education and/or entering employment. The overview of key cooperation partners of the schemes covered by the study is presented in the table below.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> OECD (2000), *What works in innovation in education. Motivating students for lifelong learning.* Available at:

<http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?lang=en&sf1=DI&st1=5LMQCR2K8QKL>

<sup>59</sup> European Commission (2001), *Second Chance Schools: the Results of a European Pilot Project.* Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home_en.html)

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> GHK (2010), *Guiding at-risk youth through learning to work: Lessons from across Europe.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

**Table 3.2 Multiprofessional cooperation**

Country	Title	Established cooperation
AT	Schlangenfuß, Vienna	Parents, medical professionals, psychiatric hospitals, youth and family services (MA 11), psychologists and therapists, job coaches and other experts.
AT	Chancen-Pool ("Opportunities Pool"), Vorarlberg	Local councils, schools, school authorities, the PES, the apprenticeship bureaux at the chambers of commerce and labour, open youth and street work services, social services and clearing offices.
FR	Micro-lycee 93, Paris	Local cultural centre, universities, schools, other micro-lycee.
FR	Second chance school, Champagne-Ardenne	At national level: Assembly of French Chambers of Commerce and Industry; Ministry of Equality of the Territories and Housing. At local level: institutions (European Commission, State, Regions, etc.); private sector companies; regional, national and European networks of Second Chance Schools.
HU	Belvárosi Tanoda Secondary School, Budapest	Agencies working with ex-offenders and prison inmates, drug addicts in day care or inpatient care; national and international associations and professional bodies to strengthen and disseminate Tanoda approach; Foundation has accredited teacher training courses to share the Tanoda approach with teachers from mainstream schools.
HU	Dobbantó Project, Gyula	Local authorities, social centres, child and youth protection agencies, initial education schools.
IE	Youthreach, Ballymun	Member of an interagency network, collaborating with the Health Service Executive, the local Education department, the Drugs Task Force, the Jobcentre, regional youth organisations, the Police, the Probation Service, the after school project, Dublin City Council, and the Ballymun Schools Completion programme. The cooperation also established with local Equal Youth scheme, the local University (DCU) and the local secondary school.
IE	An Cosán, Dublin	Third level college, the Institute of Technology Carlow, national and local community projects, benefits agencies, the local authority and support services.
LT	Jonas Ivaškevičius Youth School, Vilnius	Initial education schools, parents, police, health organisations, child rights protection and adoption services, social workers.
PL	Second Chance School, Warsaw	Practical Education Centre, Psychological Counseling Center, Social Care Institutions, probation officers.
PT	Second Chance School, Matosinhos	Formal education system through Centre for New Opportunities and mainstream school, local Social Development Network, Local Council for Social Action.

Country	Title	Established cooperation
RO	Nicolae Iorga School, Cluj	Technical College, local NGOs (Save the Children, ProTIn foundation), Day Care centre.
SE	Study motivation course, People's High School, Stockholm	Public employment service.
SE	Municipal second chance education, Gothenburg	Social services, public employment services, other EU funded projects.
UK	Fairbridge Centre, Middlesbrough	MY Place providing youth services and youth club.

The table above demonstrates the breadth of institutional partners that second chance schemes are working with. It includes community cooperation to establish **outreach activities**. For example: the Public Employment Service in Sweden refers young people to take part in study motivation courses at the Folk high schools (Folkhögskolesatsningen) after the completion of the scheme; and some second chance education initiatives aim to further support students after they complete the studies. The Head Teacher of microlycee 93 (FR) has initiated agreements with universities for the initial education school, and at the same time has also negotiated support for microlycee graduates.

Interestingly, the Chancen Pool scheme in Austria works with students to identify their needs and links them to the appropriate service provider that include education and training courses, career guidance services or other support that is needed for students to be able to continue their education. The overview of the scheme is presented in the text box below.

### Chancen-Pool Project (Austria)

The Chancen-Pool (literally: "Opportunities Pool") project was established six years ago in the state of Vorarlberg. Its goal is to establish a central register of all young people who do not already have a place in further education at the end of compulsory schooling or who have dropped out of further education or an apprenticeship. The project helps young people register to find a place in further education by offering them career counselling, advice on education options, coaching or a place on one of the training programmes run by the Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS). Chancen-Pool covers the whole of Vorarlberg (inhabitants: 372,590, March 31 2012) and plays a pioneering role in this sector in Austria.

Education and career counselling is provided either directly in schools or in Chancen-Pool advice centres. In exceptional cases, clients are also provided with access to additional, external career counsellors. These work with the young person to draw up a clearly structured individual plan of action which contains detailed daily and weekly schedules with targets, arrangements for internships or work experience, interview coaching and preparation in dealing with rejections. Further support is provided by community officers and volunteers, who serve as mentors and provide young people with local support and information. These community officers have specific knowledge in this field and contacts to the job market.

Chancen-Pool works in close cooperation with secondary moderns, new secondary schools and polytechnics. All secondary modern and new secondary schools have a dedicated member of staff on site to coordinate career guidance.

These coordinators are also responsible for providing career guidance classes and forwarding the details of at risk pupils to the Chancen-Pool state coordinator. The state coordinator collects the data, enters it in the Chancen-Pool register and plans the next steps needed to provide each client with optimal support.

The external cooperation is also of significant importance in teacher professional development and team working within the scheme. For example, the Dobbanto programme allocated professional mentors to continuously work with teachers and **"edu-coaches" to support Headteachers during the pilot phase. Teachers were also encouraged to work as a multidisciplinary team for at least 40% of the total teaching time.** Teachers and coordinators emphasised the importance of this approach both in terms of the success of the programme and as a potential factor for transferability.

### 3.1.4 Institutional Climate

The successful approaches highlighted in the literature in support for the development of institutional climate emphasise the need to actively involve learners in decision making about all the aspects related to their learning including organisation, content and code of conduct. For example, staff from the Second Chance School in Marseille claim that decisions about all aspects of the daily life at school are taken with students.<sup>62</sup>

Based on an international review, an OECD report emphasises that amongst the **students' intellectual and emotional needs** are often neglected within the school organisation and curricula. The report concludes that important features of the school environment which help to motivate students to learn are: the importance of peer learning through group-based problem-solving; avoiding "social comparisons of achievement" by moving towards self-assessment, and building self-management and time management skills.<sup>63</sup>

Most of the second chance schemes visited encouraged active **participation** of students in school life, making decisions about school rules, how they learn and what they learn. The extent to which students are involved in decision making varies from scheme to scheme. It is more common to involve them in planning their own individual learning, then for students to participate in wider decision-making about issues relating to the scheme. In the Centre for Continuous Education (PL), students organised social events and trips, but it was the mostly teachers who initiated and motivated them. This would rate as somewhere in the middle of a scale distinguishing between levels of participation ranging from consultation to young people led decision-making. According to the municipal adult education representative in Sweden, students are able to determine the length of the course (normally up to 20 weeks, but this can be done in 10 or 15 weeks).

<sup>62</sup> European Commission (2001), *Second Chance Schools: the Results of a European Pilot Project*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home_en.html)

<sup>63</sup> OECD (2000), *What works in innovation in education. Motivating students for lifelong learning*. Available at: <http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?lang=en&sf1=DI&st1=5LMQCR2K8QKL>

Teachers emphasised that in Matosinhos second chance school, students are supported to determine their timetable and combination of subjects. Young people emphasised that choosing the subjects that they like such as music, drama, carnival was a very positive experience. The objective is for students to eventually attend for six hours of training each day, but most begin with a shorter timetable that they can increase. They may begin at any point in the school year, and stay for one year, which is important as it can avoid them having to wait for months with nothing to do if they leave mainstream school part way through the year.

The **relationships with peers** were also mentioned by students as an important aspect differentiating the second chance from initial education schools. This was facilitated by smaller class sizes and different age groups of students taking part in the programme. The students in second chance school in Poland mentioned that having older students (40-50 year olds) mixed in classes with people 18-24 year olds create effective learning teams. This leads to learn respect and understand each other. The importance of personal relations with peers also depends on student motivations to join the scheme. Those who take part only to gain diploma are not engaged in the development of the friendships with their peers.

### 3.2 Teaching and learning

For the purpose of this study, the teaching and learning approaches explored focused on curricula development, learning environments, pedagogy, social and emotional support and approaches to assessment. A number of features in each of these areas were identified during the field work and desk research as having contributed towards the success of the second chance schemes. The overview of such features is presented at Table 3.3. below and a more detailed outline is given in the remainder of the section.

**Table 3.3 Overview of characteristics of second chance schemes**

Theme	Features of second chance schemes
Curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initial assessment and planning;</li> <li>▪ Employer involvement in curricula development;</li> <li>▪ Arts and sports in curricula.</li> </ul>
Learning Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Physical environment;</li> <li>▪ Organisation of the day.</li> </ul>
Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Personalised learning;</li> <li>▪ Tutor/mentor role;</li> <li>▪ Learning outside classroom environment;</li> <li>▪ Use of active learning methods;</li> <li>▪ Formal and non-formal education.</li> </ul>
Social and Emotional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emotional support;</li> <li>▪ Social support;</li> <li>▪ Multidisciplinary team working.</li> </ul>
Assessment and Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Awarding mainstream qualifications;</li> <li>▪ Alternative forms of assessment.</li> </ul>

As mentioned above; second chance schemes operate in very specific national and local contexts and their success in providing training and learning depends on the combination of different aspects of the provision that are appropriate to a specific situation. Therefore, this chapter does not aim to identify which of the above mentioned features are more important than others. Instead it aims to provide an overview of combination of different approaches used in second chance education schemes which contributed to positive outcomes to learners within their specific context and the relative importance might vary in different schemes and situations.

### 3.2.1 Curricula

The approach to curricula development varies significantly between the schemes visited. Some of them provide mainstream certificates and therefore teach according to initial education curricula (France, Lithuania, Poland, Romania). However, there are some key differences between the second chance schemes and mainstream education. For example, Youth Schools (Lithuania) provide mainstream compulsory education leaving certificates. However, learners can adjust up to 40% of the content to meet their specific learning needs. Jonas Ivaskevicius Youth School provides an opportunity to obtain basic vocational training, which is not possible in initial general education schools. Similarly, Second Chance School in Poland teach mainstream curricula, but the classes are only from Monday to Wednesday. This was found to have been much appreciated by students because they could develop their hobbies, take part in vocational education courses, combine learning and work and/or family commitments during the rest of the week. Learners especially who dropped out from lower secondary education tend to take part in vocational training courses organised by Voluntary Labor Corps (OHP) during the rest of the week. In addition to shorter time spent in classroom there is a flexibility to change the schedule depending on the situation of learner and to take part in the classes only during the weekends if this is necessary.

The other programmes focus more on vocational learning, work experience, practical learning, preparing for the labour market and gaining basic skills. The Youthreach programme (Ireland) focus its curricula around vocational subjects such as Woodwork, Metalwork, Cooking, Art, computers and developing basic Maths, English and Communication skills and applying these to vocational subjects. A similar approach is being implemented in Matosintos Second Chance School (Portugal). The others focus on personal development, literacy and life skills.

An important component of re-engaging individuals is their **initial assessment** and the associated processes of developing objectives and drawing up action plans. The attention given to establishing the relationships, getting to know the programme, development of personal development plans contributes to engagement and motivation for learning. These are perhaps most effective when conceived as a single coherent package.

Successful interventions stress the importance of initial assessment being a positive experience for the individual being assessed. Participants arrive with negative perceptions of education and their experiences within it, so assessment needs to **emphasise individual's strengths as much as their weaknesses. A wide range of** profiling tools are used. One particularly **informative example is the "Richter scale"** motivational assessment and evaluation tool used in the Moving On Up initiative. This uses motivational interviewing techniques to raise self-awareness and build self-esteem. **It covers all aspects of a person's life, not just education and training but also** their family/home life. Like many assessment tools, it is used also to review progress. This fits in with an international study of initial assessment tools in the adult literacy

field. Downes recommends that an “*initial needs and skills check*” should be part of a humanistic, learner centred approach, using “*strengths based dialogue which is also realistic about identifying needs*”, in a semi-structured informal interview in a supportive setting, rather than a mechanistic, institution-centred tool for initial “testing” and “screening”. International research advocates avoiding using a standardised test with learners when they first begin a programme, particularly at the lowest levels and for those from the most marginalised backgrounds, because they may be frightened and nervous and therefore their abilities may be underestimated, and failure at the first hurdle may deter them from accessing courses.<sup>64</sup>

It is important that the assessment process is linked to the setting of objectives and the development of action plans. Goals can then be developed based on capitalising on **individuals’ strengths and tackling their weaknesses**. A point emphasised in our fact-finding visits was the need for goals to be realistic. Perhaps paradoxically, it was commented that sometimes young people have unrealistic expectations. It was also noted that, although well-meaning, guidance staff can make the mistake of giving young people unrealistic ambitions which can lead to dropping out when they fail to achieve them.

In relation to the development of action plans, it is important that the individual learner is empowered with ownership of their own plan. Involving participants in their choice of activities, and also of their mentors, is commonly seen as vital for success. In Slovenia, Project Learning for Young Adults involves participants choosing their own project theme and how they will learn, which is reported to increase motivation.

#### *Dobbanto Programme, Hungary*

For the first three weeks each student is in an introductory phase: getting used to the place, fellows, new environment and working style. It is also very important to get to know the members of the Dobbanto team. By the end of the three weeks each student proposes who she/he wants to become their supporting partner, which then has to be mutually agreed. Also **at this time, participants’ competences are measured and they learn how to work out their personal objectives, and how to make an agreement on them.**

The evaluation of European second chance schools pilot concluded that **employer involvement** in developing as well as delivering of curricula was beneficial for some second chance schools. Depending on the characteristics of the local area in some cases “flagship” employers in the area were involved while in others (e.g. rural areas in Catania, Sicily) engaged with small businesses. This cooperation brings learning closer to local employment situation; better reflects needs of young person, and provides opportunity to incorporate work experience.<sup>65</sup>

The need to contextualise learning and relate it to the local employment situation was emphasised during the workshop in London. Significant attention to this is given by the second chance school network in France whose mission is very strongly linked to

<sup>64</sup> Carrigan, J; Downes, P (2010) *Is there more than what’s the score? Exploring needs and skills checking for literacy as part of a holistic initial assessment process in a lifelong learning society*. Educational Disadvantage Centre, Dublin

<sup>65</sup> European Commission (2001), *Second Chance Schools: the Results of a European Pilot Project*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home_en.html)

providing opportunities for young people to enter labour market. The second chance school of Champagne-Ardenne have very strong links between local employers and the school with around 50% of the time learners spend in the work placement. Students appreciate opportunities to undertake internships with employers and emphasised during the interviews: *"I had the opportunity to do several internships of secretarial work in different companies, enabling me to fine-tune my professional project"*. Management staff and teachers see the cooperation with employers as one of the most important success factors of the school.

The evaluation of second chance school pilot found that it was beneficial to draw upon academic expertise to develop the course content - for example, in Athens Second Chance School, each of the nine aspects of the curriculum was designed by a high profile academic specialist. This added kudos to the school and raised the profile of the provision. It also found that the qualities of the curricular cited by learners as being most valued included: *"impartial, realistic, tailored and responsive information, advice and guidance"*.<sup>66</sup> The academic knowledge of core staff members was of key importance for development of Dobbanto programme in Hungary.

**Arts and sport** plays an important role within the curricula of some of the schemes included in the study. The above mentioned example of the Portuguese second chance school provides a very interesting example of teaching basic skills and profession through embedded learning. For example, young people through preparing for a school event such as Christmas celebration or carnival not only learn professional skills such as sewing but also basic skills. These school events provide an opportunity to celebrate the achievements with the school community, family and friends. Interviews with teachers and staff identified that celebration of the achievements together with the whole school community contributes to increasing **learners'** motivation and is a very strong part of school life.

The outdoor activities, learning outside the classroom plays an important role in some schemes that were visited. For example, this is significant feature of the Fairbridge programme in the UK. All young people who contributed to the case study emphasised outdoor pursuits as something they liked and have enjoyed, the residential was also a highlight in terms of life experience and achievement. Sports and outdoor pursuits play an important role during access course that takes place first week after joining the programme. The activities can be tailored to the individual and as a minimum help to establish a routine before individuals move on to explicitly educational activities. They emphasise the multi-professional character of the type provision that is needed in second chance education.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

### *Access Course, Fairbridge Centre, Middlesbrough, England*

For the first week all young people must complete an Access course, which are run once a month for under 16's and over 16s. There are 12 places on each course. The course demonstrates to young people what the Fairbridge Programme is about and provides a chance for the young people to get to know each other. When the young person arrives at the centre for the first time they are also assigned an outreach development worker who will stay with them throughout their journey at the centre. Furthermore, young people themselves influence the choice of activities on the Access course and the main programme. Activities/support are provided for 6 hours a day. In the first week participants undertake many outdoor activities in order to build trust, confidence and to stretch themselves, e.g. abseiling, rock climbing, gorge walking. Then they go on a residential trip in a stone hut or tent to the Lake District.

Once the young people have completed this course, they move onto the Programme, which continues their personal development, and challenges their self belief and self awareness. So they may have a rock climb all about the risks of drug taking for example. Young people are able to stay on the course as long as they like. For some it takes 6 weeks to be ready to move on; others stay on the programme for years.

The whole approach is based on choice theory: participants are not forced to do anything. As it says on the website: "***it is your choice to join the programme, it is your choice to stay on it, and you will not be made to do anything you don't want to.***" The goals, activities and involvement in the programme is developed together with young person during one-to-one meetings that start during the access course and continue until young person is ready to move on. As a result of this process Personal Development Plans are prepared for each learner. The evaluation of the programme showed that programme ethos is one of the factors contributing to its success.<sup>67</sup>

Arts and sport is particularly important in the curricula because it helps for young person to learn about themselves, who they are as a person. It plays an important part of personal development, building self-esteem and self-confidence. The Schlangenfuß project in Austria plays significant attention for group activities outside formal learning environment in order to motivate students and support development of their confidence, trust in their abilities and socialising with their peers. Such group activities include cooking together or outdoor activities such as climbing.

Personal and social education is part of the curriculum in some schemes visited; either as a separate subject or as a cross-cutting theme within the other subjects. It is one of the key characteristics of second chance education, which was emphasised in the literature review and confirmed during the field work. For example, in Matosinhos Second Chance Education School (PT) personal and social education is a distinct subject but it is also taught in a cross cutting way through different media, in response to issues that arise within a group, individual or family setting. Staff sometimes work on personal issues with students and their families, who are often part of complicated issues that influence a student's progress.

<sup>67</sup> Barry Knight (2010), *Back from the Brink: How Fairbridge transforms the lives of disadvantaged young people*. Available at: <http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/pdf/Fairbridge%20Back%20From%20the%20Brink%20June10.pdf>

### 3.2.2 Learning environments

The physical environment **and structure of the day contributes to learners' wellbeing, motivation and achievements.** The OECD report highlighted that learning environments and school design can be important factors for learners' access to resources, timetabling and class sizes. It emphasized the importance of students having their own space within the school, and the diversity of services provided:

*"Cyber-cafes are becoming as necessary as sports facilities, accommodation for guidance and counselling services as important as libraries, professional workshops and conference rooms as important as lounges".<sup>68</sup>*

The schemes visited during the fieldwork placed an emphasis on creating a **safe yet stimulating environment, with easy access.** The Youth School in Lithuania and Second Chance School in Poland identified for example that the premises would be closely monitored by teaching staff or by dedicated staff. Most of second chance provision has some space for students to relax; the layout is different from a traditional classroom layout; the students and teachers space is not separated, they eat together, and often significant attention is given for development of learning infrastructure (e.g. accessibility of learning materials, access to internet). The requirements for the classroom setting for Dobbanto Programme are presented below:

- own classroom/room;
- mobile desks + tables;
- access to school library and, where possible, reference books, resource materials, toys and games and software supporting learning/development in the room;
- at least 3 computers and Internet access, printer and, where possible, copier in the room;
- audio-visual equipment (CD and DVD player, TV set, VCR, or projector, etc.), musical instruments;
- shelves and cabinets for storing CDs, DVDs, student portfolios, etc.;
- **shelves and glass cabinets for displaying the students' works;**
- chat (cosy) corner with carpets, cushions, bookshelves, beanbags, etc.;
- full-body mirror (showing the whole body);
- cork strips and notice board on the wall;
- toys, sports equipment;
- many plants and, where possible, an aquarium;
- tea kitchen (table, chairs, kitchen furniture and, where possible, a microwave oven or a cooker, etc.)

The field work in Lithuania and Poland showed that students often appreciate it when their learning environment is more similar to what might be expected at university than initial education schools. This is because:

- the physical environment was more linked to the adult world. As one of the students interviewed during the visit put it *"the building is more like a university rather than a school"*;
- learners felt like they were being treated seriously; and
- there were fewer negative associations with their experience at mainstream school.

<sup>68</sup> OECD (2000), *What works in innovation in education. Motivating students for lifelong learning.* Available at:  
<http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?lang=en&sf1=DI&st1=5LMQCR2K8QKL>

The smaller class sizes was emphasised by young people in most of the schemes visited as distinctive feature of second chance education that contributes to their success. The interviewees of the Swedish scheme mentioned that in initial school education the classes are too big – difficult for teachers to provide everyone with the **support required. Easy for a minority of ‘problem’ pupils to fall of the radar. Too noisy** in the classrooms with 30+ pupils – difficult to concentrate. Difficult to develop good teacher-pupil relationships at initial education – teachers too are stressed and there is less interaction between teachers and other staff.

The flexible **organisation of the day** and school week tend to be more flexible and reflect students personal needs and/or other commitments. The different approaches used include shorter hours spent at school combined with increased learning individually outside a school environment, learning opportunities during weekends and differences in scheduling between morning and the afternoon. The approach for organisation of the day in Matosinhos Second Chance Education School (PT) and Dobbanto scheme (HU) is presented in the text box below.

### **Matosinhos Second Chance Education School (PT): organisation of the day**

Each morning there are vocational training workshops on ICT and media, cookery, electricity, carpentry and sewing in groups of 10-15, also offering additional support with literacy, numeracy and certification. Students have the opportunity to put together portfolios of work to gain certification equivalent to the sixth school year or to the ninth and final year of compulsory education (usually completed at age 12 and 15 respectively). They also create products to sell, giving the students a sense of satisfaction and social usefulness as well as understanding of the need for high standards.

The sewing workshops, for example, that take place in the mornings cover a range of subjects such as the fashion industry and classification of textiles, as well as hands on skills, which are integrated with different subjects and focused on events, such as Christmas, Carnival in February and a local festival in March. Afternoons are freer, with a range of artistic workshops focused on different skills including dance, music, drama, graffiti and visual arts, as well as cultural activities, sports, health and hygiene and international youth exchanges.

### **Dobbanto (HU): organisation of the timetable**

The days and weeks are also structured in a special way. There is a starting and closing discussion every day. 1.5-2 hours blocks are planned for module based learning during the day. At noon there is practical or sport activity included into the day.

3 days per week, learning is structured around basic competences required by national curricula (communication, maths, foreign languages, nature sciences, etc.). 1 day of the week is focused on carrier building, and life strategies. One more day each week is for getting to know vocations and professions, or gaining some basic experience in a work environment.

### **3.2.3 Pedagogy**

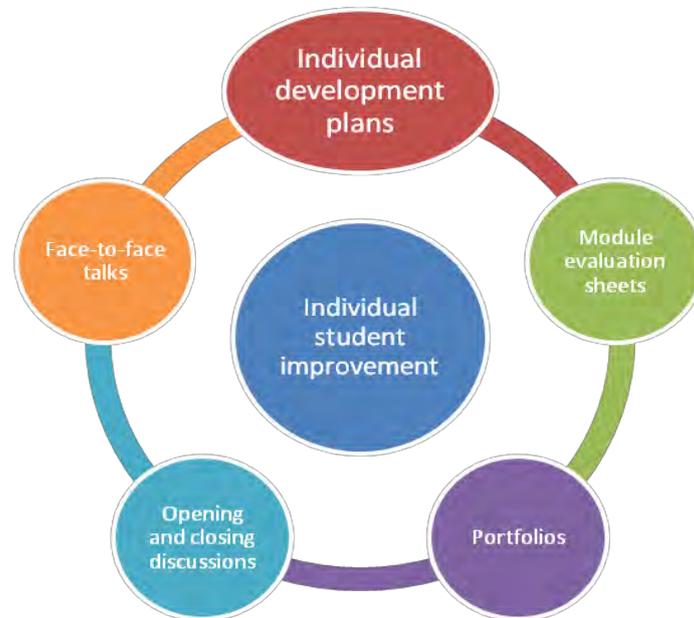
**Personalised learning** was part of pedagogical approaches in majority of the schemes visited. The interviews with students during the fact finding visits as well as the workshops emphasised the importance of one person who young person can come to when they have any issues within and/or outside classroom. The field work identified that such support is provided through mentors, key workers, youth workers, progression coaches and other forms. The role of such person is to develop trust, build relationships and to support the young person throughout their journey within the provision. As the participants in the London workshop emphasised it ensures that young person is very clear who they approach when they have any problems related to learning, peer, teacher relations, personal life, family issues or any other areas that young person wants to discuss.

In microlycee 93, for example, each student has a teacher mentor who they meet regularly (this depends on the individual student and teacher, but most of the time the meetings take place once a week). Learners emphasised that mentoring is very important for them and it was one of the key things that they suggested for initial education schools, along with individualised learning and the use of student-led individual learning plans. The students in Irish case study also provide very positive feedback about the importance of key workers for their learning "*If you have any problems you can go to your key worker...for new people coming in, it's great at the start*". The young people taking part in Swedish study motivation course stressed that "*staff are available all day every day*" which was seen as an important factor to make them feel comfortable and safe within the provision.

A number of different examples of how this works in different schemes across the UK were mentioned during the workshop in London. For example, studio schools have a '**personal coach**' whom a young person can contact with any issues that he/she might have. The coach does not have to be a teacher – it could be a youth worker or volunteer; anyone with the right skills to engage with young people, build their trust and advise them on issues relating to academic and personal life. Similarly, second chance schools have '**progression coaches**', who fulfil a very similar role. At Kids Company, it is the key worker who performs this role. Their remit is to develop trusted one-to-one targeted relationships with individual young people, and to provide **continuous encouragement and advice 'around-the-clock'** to ensure that they remain engaged. **Too often it is the mainstream school's institutional boundaries that break this continuity** – teachers can only be flexible within the school day. The school is only one part of the support network, and this network might also include family, youth workers, community members and other '**significant adults**'.

The Dobbanto programme introduced individual learning plans which tend to be more used within some of the education systems, while present an innovative approach within the others. The approach taken for developing individual learning plans in the Dobbanto Programme is presented below.

**Figure 3.1 Approach to individual learning in Dobbanto Programme**



*Source: information provided by coordinator of Dobbanto Programme*

The methods based on **active learner engagement** tend to form a part of pedagogical approaches used in second chance education. As the students in the Polish Second Chance School put it *"classes are interesting because they are based on discussion between teacher and students"*. Contextualisation of learning within the local employment context and practical experiences was highlighted as an important aspect of learning by both young people during the field work and workshops with practitioners.

The evaluation of the European second chance pilot found that 'innovation' in learning was key to the second chance ethos was of significant importance for schools. This approach was activated via 'learning through doing', and by making learning relevant through everyday surroundings and the built environment outside of the local school, alongside modularisation and the use of new technologies.<sup>69</sup> The above mentioned Darlington Education Village (UK) provides outdoor learning to avoid learners disengaging, and to make learning relevant to the curriculum. A main aim is: *"to develop a sense of self-esteem and self-discipline, allied to a positive ethos of community involvement"*. The scheme includes a leadership programme where learners can become peer mentors.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> European Commission (2001), *Second Chance Schools: the Results of a European Pilot Project*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home_en.html)

<sup>70</sup> GHK Consulting (2009), *Identifying Effective Practice in Raising Young People's Aspirations*. Available at: [http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/national/nat-raising\\_aspirations-re-24sep2009-v1-1.pdf](http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/national/nat-raising_aspirations-re-24sep2009-v1-1.pdf)

The provision of **formal and/or non-formal education** is one of the other key characteristics of the second chance initiatives. The evaluation of the European second chance schools pilot found that the relative positioning of schemes on the formal / non-formal continuum had implications for schools' capacity, teacher qualifications and the institutional links that were required.<sup>71</sup> Some initiatives take the view that the school is not suitable for all, and there is a need for a truly different approach to learning, which has very different approach to the school. For example, Fairbridge Centres provide learning through outdoor, practical activities rather than classroom learning. Such initiatives have very different aims to support personal development, and are often less qualifications-driven than their mainstream equivalents.

### **Fairbridge Centre in Middlesbrough (UK)**

Fairbridge Centres provide an individually tailored personal development programme **for the 'hardest to reach' young people. Their offer includes** one-to-one support and group activities. All of the learning undertaken at the centre is **'embedded'**, through the use of practical activities such as mountain biking, fishing, canoeing, cooking to teach maths or communications skills. Young people are motivated to re-engage because they have a choice in their selection of activities, and the teachers and support staff embed the learning into the activities the young people have suggested.

**'Learning by doing' is very important, and** kinaesthetic learning<sup>72</sup> is therefore one of the main methods of teaching in Fairbridge Programme. Many of the young people have some form of dyslexia and low skills. The outdoor pursuit activities support this kind of learning by providing an environment to follow instructions, and also use sequential vocabulary, listening, communication and team working. Teaching does not take place in a classroom setting. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught through other activities such as cooking, art or building a hovercraft. Teachers work on individual needs - for example, some young people want to be able to read to their children or count their change, whereas other want help with writing their CV or spelling.

The programme continues for as long as the young person needs it and is prepared to make a positive step or outcome. It does not prepare students for specific qualifications. The focus of the programme is to build self-confidence, personal and life skills.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Individuals that are kinaesthetic learn best with and active "hands-on" approach. These learners favour interaction with the physical world. Most of the time kinaesthetic learners have a difficult time staying on target and can become unfocused effortlessly (Ldpride,n.d.). More information available at: <http://www.ipedr.com/vol5/no2/104-H10249.pdf>*

Other schemes are based on principle that young people who dropped-out from school for different reasons want to come back to education later on and receive the same qualifications as others, thus allowing them either to pursue their studies or enter employment. For example, in micro-lycee 93, the aim is to provide the opportunity to obtain the school leaving certificate, which would allow young people to enter university and to pursue their studies of interest. As a teacher indicates:

*"Provision of general education qualifications is one of the particularities of the micro-lycee. Here we do not offer studies that lead towards professional education or integration into the labour market but we offer general school leaving certificate providing an opportunity to continue higher education studies".*

Lithuanian Youth Schools aim to provide an opportunity for young people to complete their compulsory education and offer basic professional training as a bridge towards further studies in vocational education institutions.

### **3.2.4 Social and Emotional Support**

The provision of social and emotional support is strongly interlined with above presented institutional climate, curricula and pedagogy. As mentioned above, often support and guidance is provided as part of the curriculum and/or in addition to teacher support and guidance. A GHK study (2010) further concluded that support was made more relevant to learners by joining-up teaching with information, advice and guidance:

*"parental involvement together with competent teachers, guidance practitioners, youth and social workers, and health care providers, is the backbone of support in the young person's transition process"<sup>73</sup>.*

The study emphasized the importance of professional development of staff who provide support for learners, importance of holistic approach to guidance, 'natural' and 'formal' mentoring.

Importance of emotional support in preventing early school leaving is highlighted by Paul Downes. He stresses the importance of cooperation between schools and other community services in order to provide wide range of support that students at risk of dropping out from school need:

*"Networking with actors outside school enables schools to support pupils better and tackle a range of problems that put children in difficulty, which can include drug or alcohol use, sleep deficits, physical abuse and trauma."<sup>74</sup>*

The fieldwork identified a number of practices in providing emotional support for learners to help them to deal with complex personal situations. Most of the schemes

<sup>73</sup> GHK (2010), *Guiding at-risk youth through learning to work: Lessons from across Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.*

<sup>74</sup> Paul Downes (2011), *A Systems Level Focus on Access to Education for Traditionally Marginalised Groups in Europe: Comparing Strategies, Policy and Practice in Twelve European Countries. Working paper no 59. This Working Paper is published in the Working Paper Series of an international research project "Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: the Contribution of the Education System" (acronym LLL2010) to reflect state of the art results of the research still in progress. Available at: <http://LLL2010.tlu.ee>*

that were visited had a psychologist, social worker, and/or social pedagogue available. Teachers and other staff also played a key role in providing emotional support for students especially through above mentioned mentoring and/or coaching; interlinked with specialist support. In some schemes, emotional support staff are based in second chance provision, whereas in others they reach-in / out. For example:

- A social worker and psychologist spend some hours in the Micro-lycee 93 (FR);
- In the Youth School (LT), there is cooperation with social workers at local level, and child rights protection and adoption services, and police for specific situations.
- The Fairbridge Centre (UK) cooperated with a new local centre, which provides youth services and a youth club under one roof. As well as referring young people to the Fairbridge centre, they also provide direct support at the centre.
- The second chance programme in Cluj (RO) works together with a Psychological Counseling Center, Social Care Institutions, and probation officers. In addition they receive support from Save the Children, who offer study materials for lower secondary education learners.

The staff working in Schlangenfuß project emphasised that students receive any professional support they need e.g. therapy, which is of key importance for pupils experiencing school phobia; teachers also pick up students from home if needed especially this is important for students who have fear of being in public transport. The specialist support is provided both through the team of professionals working with young people and in cooperation with medical professionals, psychiatric hospitals, youth and family services (MA 11), psychologists and therapists.

The students needs for social support also varies significantly between individual persons and different schemes approach it in different ways. Students who contributed to the study emphasised the importance of such support to enable them to take part. The An Cosan centre in Ireland has a crèche based in the same facilities as the education courses which is a major support mechanism. As students put it ***"they are very good and will get the parent if their children are upset", "you know they are looked after, it's great"***. The information related to health, healthy eating, exercises and other social issues are provided for study motivation course participants in Sweden together with introduction courses on core subjects.

Some schemes included in the study provide support in approaching other public institutions (Swedish study motivation course) or support in engaging with potential employers (career counselling is provided by almost all the schemes visited). Youthreach participants receive help to apply for college and jobs. Student rate highly such support ***"that helps a lot, if people had to do it themselves they wouldn't do it", "She helps you prepare for an interview, which helps a lot...does tests to see what jobs you'd be good for"***.

Engaging with parents and involving them in the learning process can be of significant importance. Parents were often invited regularly to visit the schemes in order to **discuss learners' progress, to identify issues and to identify ways of addressing them** both in and outside of school. However, the schemes often reported encountering difficulties in engaging with parents. The issues mentioned during the fieldwork include negative previous experience of visiting school, and the weak links of learners and their families; especially as the second chance learners tended to be older and more independent.

### 3.3 Assessment and progression

The assessment of learning outcomes, measuring progress and gaining accreditation were found to be challenging for second chance schemes; especially for those not leading to a mainstream qualification but instead having a focus on employment and integration. As highlighted in the evaluation of European second chance pilot:

*"Most schools emphasise that their real strength is in fields where certification is hardest, such as training in life skills, social, psychological and professional guidance, and work on the self-confidence and self-respect of pupils."<sup>75</sup>*

While many schemes assess formal learning outcomes through various forms of certification, discussed below, progress must also be measured in term of **soft outcomes**. The main aim of some schemes is to re-engage learners, by improving confidence, motivation, personal organisation and basic skills, to prepare them for later steps into more formal education or employment. Therefore the quantitative data on certification rates for the proportion of students who are ready to take national diplomas does not show the whole picture. Case study visits provide rich data on the earlier stages of learners' progression. A teacher from the Second Chance School in Portugal described the context of some learners' personal journeys:

*"Our main job is integration, not certification... This school is last chance education, rather than second chance. It is about engaging the students and taking them away from the streets and lifestyles where some were involved in crime and drugs. It can arm students for the future and work, or act as a trampoline, by preparing them for other training opportunities, at the job centre or other training centre."*

At the other end of the spectrum, staff at some schemes discussed measuring learners progression in terms of certification that would permit entrance to university, for example at the French micro-lycée. There an interviewee explained that their students aim high:

*"The aim for micro-lycée is to prove that a student who left school can be very successful and that they can receive mainstream school leaving certificate."*

Part of this variation in the levels of certification and achievement may be explained by the diversity of students in terms of reasons for ESL and socio-economic background, as discussed above.

The flexibility of assessment tools was one of the key issues highlighted during the interviews, as well as their use for recognising learners' achievements, and encouraging a sense of pride and motivation, rather than more punitive use of assessment. For example, in the Romanian case study scheme, the assessment of the learning outcomes is formulated in a positive way. The students reported that this helps them to relax during self-assessment. For early school leavers who did not achieve good grades in initial education, assessment may have been part of their negative experience of an institutional culture where there was a perceived focus on highlighting an individual's failings, rather than their abilities.

<sup>75</sup> European Commission (2001), *Second Chance Schools: the Results of a European Pilot Project*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/archive/2chance/home_en.html)

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A Polish interviewee also commented on this contrast between second chance and some initial education providers:

*"In many schools, the teachers treat the students too rigorously. They are unable to point out their strengths, only the weaknesses."*

### **Awarding mainstream qualifications**

As mentioned, such schemes as Microlycee (FR), and the Youth Schools (LT) prepare students for mainstream qualifications with the view for pursuing their studies within initial general or vocational education.

The validation of learning outcomes is also linked to regulatory or curricular reforms, to provide recognition for informal or non-formal learning. This can also include the validation of prior learning, where evidence can be provided (e.g. gained through volunteering). In Portugal, the national RVCC system (Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences) has been implemented via the national network of New Opportunities Centres, and provides options for young people and young adults to gain basic or lower secondary level qualifications, or professional qualifications. There is a three-step process of "recognition, validation and certification". Almost 90,000 people eligible for the scheme gained a recognised certificate between 2000 and 2006, with evidence that the system has also played a role in boosting levels of self-confidence. The availability of such schemes is particularly important for "high potential drop-outs", who lack the confidence to engage with mainstream education but nonetheless have clear potential to learn.<sup>76</sup> However, cuts have since been threatening to close half of these centres. In the Portuguese case study, the Second Chance School collaborates with the local New Opportunities Centre to offer national qualifications.

In initial education, it is usually compulsory for students to be entered for certificates, whereas in some second chance schemes, students focus on informal learning that is not certified, and some may opt not to take diplomas. An interviewee in the Polish case study suggested that it would therefore be unfair to directly compare pass rates with initial education providers where all students are entered for certificates, and **called for assessment of value added learning to take account of students' progress** from the level they were at when they entered the scheme.

<sup>76</sup> GHK (2010), *Guiding at-risk youth through learning to work: Lessons from across Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

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## Alternative forms of assessment

A number of schemes offer alternative forms of assessment, instead of or alongside opportunities to complete national certificates. Key elements of these alternatives include:

- Portfolio based learning;
- Evaluation of skills that has credit with employers;
- Assessment against goals set in personal learning plans on a session by session basis or a longer term basis.

Other schemes offer portfolio-based learning e.g. Youthreach (IE), with a curriculum that has been designed to enable students to progress from level three to five within the centre, which successfully motivates students. For example they run a framing craft enterprise where learners have to have level 4 to get into the enterprise, so this gives them something to work towards. One staff member commented, *"So they would see it as progression and aim for that... They like it here, they will stay at all cost."* For those who stay on to achieve FETAC Level 5 qualifications, the certificate is *"like an ordinary Leaving Certificate, it is a step up"*. The certification accredited by FETAC is similar to the 'Leaving Certificate Applied', which is also more portfolio based and was introduced for young people who were failing at the usual Leaving Certificate. Learners gave very positive feedback about the scheme's assessment methods:

*"The way the learning is set out here, you understand it all the more, rather than just sitting an exam. If you sit an exam, you forget everything you've learnt a month later. In here you keep going over it...its much easier, there is a lot of pressure taken off your shoulders".*

*"Exams are too hard as you have to remember things from 3 years ago." (Although there was some portfolio work at school). "Schools could really learn from the Youthreach approach."*

In the Hungarian case study scheme, teachers together with students and, if possible, parents identify realistic pathways to progress with education after their Dobbanto year. Schools can offer the opportunity to take exams and comply with the requirement of a certain grade if students show significant progress during the year, as class groups are heterogeneous in relation to age, educational background, difficulties and progress. Later in the school year it is important to make decisions about goals of the year, and if necessary prepare students for exams related to mainstream qualification. Many learners fear that future teachers will pay attention to their background of ESL and at Dobbanto. It is therefore important to build bridges towards future head-teachers as well. Portfolios are a great tool to make progress of a student visible to himself/herself and to future teachers as well.

At a Second Chance School in the French case study, in each module, there is a system of evaluation of competences that can be transferred to the professional domain. For instance, by working on the renovation of a residence for children, students get practical skills and competences that could be used in a professional environment. These acquired competences are assessed by the referral-trainers as learning outcomes at the end of each activity.

**In the Hungarian Dobbanto case study, students' assessment is based upon three month long personal development plans, developed by the student, parents and professionals as a team, that stands as an agreement and sets out responsibilities. A**

similar principle is applied in UK Fairbridge scheme, where young people all set personal goals for the daily activities which are evaluated at the end of each session.

### 3.4 Summary – lessons learned

Reflecting on the practices that we have discussed within this chapter, there are a number of key learning points that can be singled-out and summarised. This is done at Table 3.4. below. We go on to examine the question of transferability of such practices in the following report chapter.

**Table 3.4 Second chance education – key learning points**

#### ***Governance***

- Involvement of a mix of stakeholders in management and governance systems is important, including public authorities at national, regional or local level, third sector organisations and private companies.
- Funding for second chance education schemes is strongly linked to public funding available through education and/or employment related initiatives.
- Financial sustainability is challenging for most of the schemes visited due to constraints on public funding, changing political priorities and/or reducing number of students linked to demographic changes.

#### ***Partnerships between second chance and initial education***

- The most intense cooperation identified during the field work is co-location of second chance schemes in initial education schools. Such initiatives benefit from common senior management, teaching and other staff with majority of them working in both environments.
- The other forms of cooperation include awarding qualifications through initial education schools, student referrals, exchanges of experience and training.

#### ***Multiprofessionalworking***

- Multiprofessionalcooperation is essential in addressing complex challenges related to re-engaging young people into education.
- The scope and extent to which the support is provided varies significantly between the schemes and tend to include career guidance and employment support, health and emotional support, social care institutions and cultural organisations.

#### ***Institutional climate***

- Student involvement in making decisions about their learning is very important for developing a stimulating institutional climate.
- Small class sizes were majority of second chance schemes visited by the study team. This can make it easier for young people to adapt to such learning environment, develop positive relationships with their peers, teachers and staff.

#### ***Curricula***

- Initial assessment focusing on **learners'** strengths, allowing the time for young person to adapt to new environment, creating positive experience and empowering to take ownership of personal learning plans contributes to development of self-esteem and confidence in learning.
- Bringing learning closer to local employment situation, contextualising learning and providing opportunities for work experience during the learning experience provides an alternative to more academic learning pathways.
- Introducing arts and sports in the curricula allows students to undertake activities that are related to different ways of expressing themselves, understanding who

### **Table 3.4 Second chance education – key learning points**

they are as a person and testing their skills in different situation. In addition, it provides possibilities to learn basic skills or vocation through engagement into arts activities.

- Personal and social education is often part of curricula in second chance education and is taught either as separate subject or as a cross-cutting theme.

#### ***Learning environments***

- Establishing a safe and stimulating environment with opportunities to socialise as well as learn as well as lack of boundaries between the space for learners, teachers and staff are valued and appreciated by young people who contributed to the study.
- Flexibility in organising the day that allows taking into account family and work commitments as well as personal needs facilitates participation and contributes to increasing performance.

#### ***Pedagogy***

- The need for personalised learning and individual attention was recognised in all the schemes visited. The role of one person who is available at any time to discuss learning related questions and issues that young person phase outside school environment is crucial for building trust, personal relations and support.
- Use of active learning methods based on participation, learning outside classroom and group activities avoid disengagement of young people from education.

#### ***Social and emotional support***

- Provision of social and emotional support is crucial in second chance education and recognises that young people taking part face complex personal situations outside the school that affects their learning.

#### ***Assessment and progression***

- The differences in assessment models reflect the different objectives of the schemes. The achievement of academic qualifications is important for schemes following similar assessment models as in mainstream schools. Personal development, motivation and engagement or integration into employment is the key objectives of the other schemes which tend to develop differed assessment models that recognise the achievements in relation to these areas.

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## 4.0 Transferability

In the previous chapter we considered those elements of second chance provision that the desk research and fact finding visits have proven successful for re-engaging young people and young adults who have dropped out of education, and have helped them to regain confidence in their learning capacity.

In this chapter we go on to provide an assessment of the transferability of these approaches; from their origins in second chance to initial education settings across the EU. The chapter is structured as follows:

- First, we consider which aspects of second chance provision might have the strongest potential for transfer to initial education settings, and how this might be achieved. We examine four main options, which range from replicating individual schemes, to adopting the wider principles of second chance provision. We draw upon the feedback from the fact-finding visits, desk research and country workshop to consider what these good practice elements might look like in an initial education context, and how different this would be from what is already offered by schools in Europe.
- Next, we turn our attention to the 'hosting' side of the transferability question, to look at the different contexts into which second chance might be incorporated, and with which groups of learners. We look at the different entry points for second chance provision, including more targeted work with learners at the greatest risk of ESL, and universal provision for whole populations of learners within mainstream schools, and the implications in terms of the likely scale and costs of provision.
- Finally, we turn to consider the conditions that would be necessary to provide the best chances of success – **including 'macro' level policy and legislative conditions**, and wider social and cultural ones. We also review the barriers that have prevented a larger scale transfer of second chance provision to date, and how they might be overcome; with reference to practical examples drawn from the study wherever possible.

## 4.1 Second chance models and approaches – their transferability potential

At least four approaches can be identified, for managing the transfer of second chance education. These are summarised in the Figure 4.1 below.

### Figure 4.1 Learning from second chance – potential options

- a. **The 'replication' of second chance schemes** - This is the most literal interpretation, and would involve re-creating schemes that are already tried-and-tested, and have proven effective in their original form. It requires an understanding of what makes such schemes effective in the first instance (**success factors**). There is potentially a 'double' transfer involved – different modes of education (second chance and initial education), and between different country contexts<sup>77</sup>.
- b. **The re-modelling of existing mainstream educational provision** - This would involve selectively adapting effective elements of schemes, as considered within Chapter 4, to incorporate within mainstream schools, but where the end result might look different to the original scheme. This is a transformative approach and would require a certain level of adaptation of the school system.
- c. **The development of alternative educational provision, based on second chance** - This would involve selectively adapting effective elements of schemes, to run in parallel to mainstream schools; perhaps acknowledging that the original model could not be created in its entirety, or would be incompatible with mainstream schooling. Some examples might include: alternative education centres, employer-based provision, or community / family learning centres<sup>78</sup>.
- d. **The adoption of good practice approaches or principles from second chance** - This is concerned more with what makes second chance distinctive in terms of its educational values, rather than seeking to recreate specific schemes. Some examples might include: having pro-active policies for tackling bullying and discrimination, pupil participation in decision-making about whole school policies, and memoranda of understanding between learners and teachers. None of these features in isolation represent a radical departure from mainstream schooling (and to some extent, this represents a softer alternative to approach b, listed above).

These broad approaches are now considered further in turn.

<sup>77</sup> Danish production schools have already proven successful in a modified form within Austria and Germany, for example, but the challenge would be to recreate the same core elements for younger learners at risk of ESL.

<sup>78</sup> Schools as an intergenerational resource to promote social cohesion and integration, multiculturalism and to boost literacy and language skills; all of which are known success factors for tackling ESL

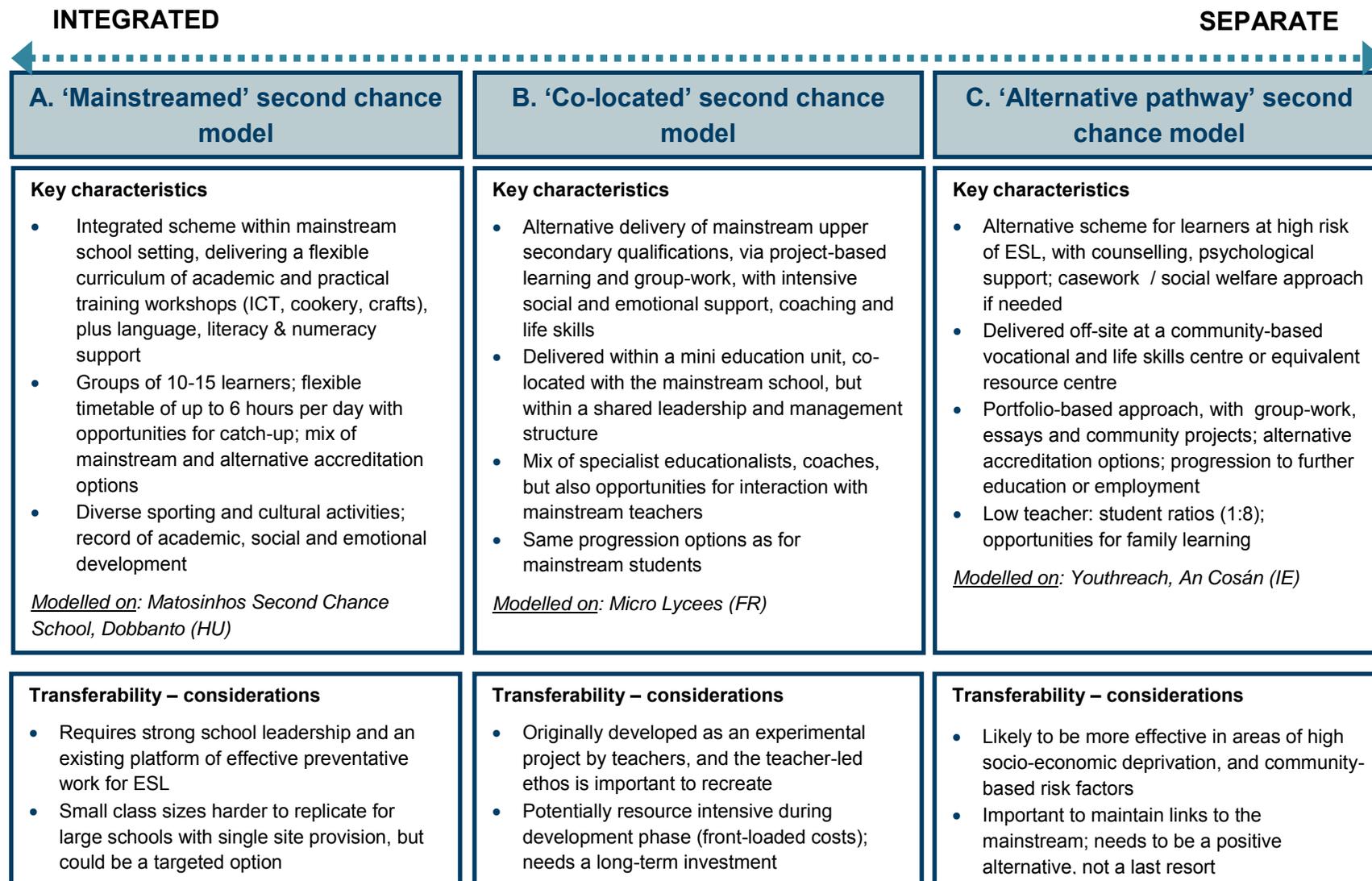
#### 4.1.1 Option 1: Replicating second chance schemes

The first transferability option (**replication**) is the most difficult to assess without undertaking a pilot programme of some kind, as many of the second chance schemes within the case study sample were originally set-up as a distinctive model for 18-24 year olds, and not all have been tested within initial education settings. Previous research has shown that good practices do not always travel well, and that success in one given local context does not guarantee the same results elsewhere.

However, it is possible to suggest some core components of these individual schemes that give them their distinctiveness, which might form the building blocks of an equivalent model within mainstream schools. As Figure 4.2 (overleaf) highlights; it is possible to identify three principal approaches on this basis, which are now summarised.

- **Model A:** a fully 'integrated' model – this would entail replicating the conditions within second chance institutions within mainstream schools. It would be achieved in this example, by drawing upon the core characteristics of the Matosinhos Second Chance School and Dobbanto scheme (HU). As the diagram shows, this would require some fairly radical adjustments to the organisation of the school day, curricula and models of learner support, but would not include any *inherent* structural barriers to piloting within mainstream schools. It would nevertheless require a significant commitment in terms of school leadership to bring about change, and would be more problematic within educational systems where there is limited local discretion for schools to develop their own programmes of study. It **might, therefore, need to be applied more selectively by 'champion' schools that have already developed excellent practices for preventing ESL.**

Figure 4.2. Replicating second chance schemes – some models for consideration



- **Model B:** a 'co-located' model – this approach represents something of a 'halfway house' between more traditional forms of initial educational provision and second chance schemes. It would be achieved in this example by drawing upon the characteristics of the Micro Lycee scheme (FR), whereby a more specialist education unit is established on site within mainstream schools and within a shared management and governance structure. As we have discussed in the report, the Micro Lycee has benefited from considerable support at a national policy level and is one of the best evidenced schemes within the case study sample. The key distinction would be to offer the scheme as a 'positive choice' alternative to mainstream school, for learners of compulsory school age, rather than in its present context as a re-entry scheme for 18-24 year olds. The approach would also require strong school leadership and a willingness to reform existing training and staffing structures, but the co-located approach would require less of a fundamental change to the curricula and assessment frameworks within the mainstream school.
- **Model C:** an 'alternative pathway' model – this model provides an alternative to re-engagement with the mainstream, and is more consistent with the second chance schemes that offer a separate vocational pathway and do not result in the attainment of an upper secondary qualification. The challenge would be to develop such an option as a positive choice for learners who were not ready or willing to pursue a mainstream school route. The example given would draw upon the Youthreach and An Cosán schemes (IE) – two schemes that operate from a community location and offer pathways to vocational courses at further education colleges, employment, or volunteering and work experience. The study revealed that there are mixed views on the viability of developing an entirely parallel track for learners of compulsory school age, and indeed it was feared that this approach might create perverse incentives by encouraging learners to leave mainstream education that resulted in the 18-24 age banding for the original Second Chance Schools pilot. However, some stakeholders considered that a strong alternative pathway is a missing component in many education systems and should now be developed.

The three models have the advantage of offering options that could be adapted to **different national education systems, whilst retaining some of the 'hallmarks'** of the second chance schemes upon which they are based. There would clearly be a need to pilot and evaluate their effectiveness, given that there might be unforeseen challenges from working with learners of compulsory school age, but in each case there is sufficient evidence from second chance education to show that positive outcomes (personal, social and learning outcomes, retention and progression) are achievable. In our recommendations we suggest that a new EU funding call might provide the conditions and incentive for this piloting to take place, alongside other measures to build capacity for transferring good practices.

#### **4.1.2 Option 2: Remodelling mainstream provision**

The second method of transferring good practices; the **re-modelling of mainstream provision** was generally considered to be the most readily achievable by the stakeholders who were consulted for the study. This is due to the greater flexibility for **schools to innovate, and the lower reliance on following a specific 'model' scheme.** There was a widespread view that second chance provision derives much of its **effectiveness from a combination of good practices to transform learners' experiences** and motivations, and that success is dependent on the ability to offer these features at a sufficient scale and intensity.

Table 4.1 (below) includes a more detailed consideration of the transferability of **different individual 'second chance' characteristics, drawing upon the fact-**finding visits and country workshops. Within the workshop setting (UK, France and Hungary), the participants were also asked to examine the range of characteristics presented from the mapping phase and to consider the extent to which these can already be found within mainstream schools; the nature of the gaps or challenges where this is not yet widespread, and how these characteristics might look if they were successfully transferred.

As might be expected, the views on the 'hierarchy' of key characteristics to transfer from second chance education varied considerably amongst the stakeholders who were consulted for the study. However, the themes of teacher training and professional development; multi-professional organisation of teaching, coaching and other forms of specialist support; employer engagement; pupil participation in decisions about their learning and school policies, and emotional support and wellbeing consistently emerged as being a high priority within different Member States.

#### **4.1.3 Option 3: Developing alternative pathways**

Whilst most considered that the characteristics of second chance provision should be available to all young people within mainstream settings, there was also a view that mainstream schooling is not universally appropriate for young people, and that there will always be a need for high quality **alternative educational settings** (whether in a 'bridging' role to prevent ESL, or as a full alternative pathway). Much good quality educational provision was already thought to exist in the countries covered by the workshops, but there was a common message that this is quite dispersed at present – provided by different organisations, with different sources of funding, and uneven geographical coverage.

With regard to learning from second chance education, the main changes in approach for alternative education at compulsory school age were thought to include the following.

- **Focussing on alternative educational settings that offer a 'positive choice'** - to counteract that alternative routes too often have 'punitive' connotations (for example, Pupil Referral Units in the UK offer an alternative primarily for pupils who have been excluded or have behavioural problems);
- **Ensuring synergies with mainstream schools** – for example, by offering shared staffing or training structures, qualification equivalences, and pathways to / from the mainstream; and
- **Stimulating the marketplace for alternative provision** – the groups suggested a need for some initial investment to encourage greater diversity in the range of available alternative provision. Making this provision more demand-led, with learners empowered to identify the provision that best meets their needs, was thought to be an important dimension in bringing about change.

**Table 4.1 Appraising the transferability of second chance characteristics – country workshop findings (HU, UK and FR)**

Second chance characteristics	Existing mainstream educational context – what are the issues and challenges?	Transferability – what might good practice look like in a mainstream setting?
<b>Governance</b> - <i>Mix of stakeholders in governance and management</i> - <i>School collaboration and confederacy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 'Orthodoxy' within school management and leadership cultures can stifle creativity; school administration is not always suited to multi-professional collaborative working</li> <li>▪ Despite rhetoric about school confederacy or collegiate arrangements, strong models of inter-school collaboration are comparatively rare. Points of collaboration between schools are not always conducive to affecting change – e.g. ad hoc teacher exchanges rather than a 'whole school' agenda involving senior management teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National school leadership associations engaging with issues of ESL and building effective practices from second chance into leadership programmes</li> <li>▪ Stronger models of school confederacy and collaboration, to pool resources, intelligence, expertise and training for supporting pupils at risk of ESL.</li> <li>▪ 'Champion' schools identified to support others, on the basis of success in tackling ESL.</li> </ul>
<b>External cooperation</b> - <i>Multi-professional team teaching</i> - <i>Strong models of employer engagement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cooperation between mainstream schools and other local partner organisations (e.g. NGOs) is variable, and often contingent on local historical and political factors</li> <li>▪ Schools tend to outsource provision only when there are gaps in expertise; a more pro-active culture of external collaboration would be beneficial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Municipal authorities assuming a stronger enabling and coordination role, to mobilise information about local services (directories of extended provision; brokerage)</li> <li>▪ Schools pooling budgets to cost effectively access specialist services, e.g. counselling, psychological support, sexual health</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional climate</b> - <i>Pupil participation in setting and reviewing school policies</i> - <i>Flexible organisation of the school day / week</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Widespread examples of pupils taking a role in shaping the physical school environment, in most progressive schools (e.g. co-design of school buildings and spaces)</li> <li>▪ Pupil's influence over core curricular and timetabling issues was thought to be much less common – this is more challenging in terms of meeting curriculum objectives and school targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pupils taking an active role in school decision making and governance, with transparency and visibility in the results; participation in setting learning themes / topics, and selecting course materials or learning modules</li> <li>▪ More opportunities for flexible study, and targeted support to ensure that pupils who have the need to catch-up are able to do so (roll on / off learning provision), linked to arrangements for providing individual support (see below)</li> </ul>
<b>Mental health and wellbeing</b> - <i>Personal development and life skills</i> - <i>Counselling and emotional support</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On balance, many schools lack sufficient support or resources for personal development; life skills are often less prominent within the curriculum and school climate, and the emphasis on subject specialism can serve to down-grade the importance afforded to pastoral programmes</li> <li>▪ Some known examples of schools providing one-to-one counselling or group-based life skills support, but this is significantly stronger within second chance schemes</li> <li>▪ More specialist mental health and psychological support often beyond the purchasing power of individual schools, and sometimes unclear issues of accountability (i.e. seen as a social care agenda rather than an educational one)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Re-balancing of curriculum to introduce a stronger life skills and personal development element</li> <li>▪ Clearer accountability for pupils' wellbeing, through key worker or personal coaching arrangements; a hands-on approach to follow-up with pupils who are at risk of ESL and to 'do what it takes' to support them to re-engage</li> <li>▪ Schools working collaboratively and with NGOs and municipalities to widen access to non-traditional forms of support, such as financial capability, support with finding accommodation, stress management, childcare, etc.</li> <li>▪ Individual pupil budgets, to ensure that resources follow the pupil and that they are central to decisions about accessing wider support, rather than being contingent on individual school decisions regarding</li> </ul>

Second chance characteristics	Existing mainstream educational context – what are the issues and challenges?	Transferability – what might good practice look like in a mainstream setting?
<p><b>Curricula and assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Holistic learner self-assessment</i></li> <li>- <i>Portfolio-based learning</i></li> <li>- <i>Embedded literacy and numeracy</i></li> <li>- <i>Unitised accreditation</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Numerous examples of project-based or portfolio-based schemes each of the three countries, but more so in Hungary as a legacy of a devolved educational system. Some alternative curriculum programmes have also been accredited and delivered within mainstream schools.</li> <li>▪ Existing programmes have usually been developed with time-limited funding, as has the accompanying training for staff, resulting in a lack of continuity and limited time to embed. This has also been an issue for evaluation.</li> <li>▪ Low profile within the curriculum for art and sport – especially within the UK</li> </ul>	<p>finance for external support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employer involvement in career advice.</li> <li>▪ More holistic learner assessment and review, including personal, <b>social and health dimensions of the learners’ experience</b>, and motivational interviewing in addition to academic credentials. Formative validation as a tool to reflect on the acquisition of a wide range of competences.</li> <li>▪ Employer and wider professional engagement in adapting curriculum materials and integrating work-based and vocational themes to programmes of study</li> <li>▪ Personalised learning and individual tailored pathways for learners, with active participation in setting personal objectives and selecting programmes of study, including citizenship and work experience-based activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pedagogy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Social pedagogy model</i></li> <li>- <i>Mixed teaching and coaching</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social pedagogy approaches are not covered within mainstream initial teacher training.</li> <li>▪ Multi-professional and team-based approaches are generally under-developed within mainstream schools. Teaching and sports, arts or youth development activities tend to be delivered separately, rather than within an integrated model.</li> <li>▪ There is often too much onus on individual teachers to manage classes of pupils with complex needs, with the acquisition of core <b>competences by ‘trial and error’</b> rather than through systematic training and peer learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mixed views within the workshops regarding how far change is needed– the workshop in France showed general support for traditional methods, if learner support is strengthened.</li> <li>▪ The UK and Hungarian workshops pointed towards coaching as a specific area for development. There was a call for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A significant investment in coaching and pastoral support (in UK second chance schools, there are more coaches than subject teaching staff)</li> <li>- All pupils to have a personal coach or mentor assigned, to best match with their personal and academic profile; not necessarily a member of teaching staff</li> <li>- More flexible access to support around – and outside of – the school day, with coaching models delivered as part of the wider support system for each pupil (including family, youth workers and community members)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

The closest equivalents for pupils of compulsory school are were cited as Vocational Schools in Hungary and Studio Schools in the UK. Each has a strong vocational emphasis:

- In the case of Vocational Schools, an **Alternative Labour Market Service** is provided to pupils, which combines coaching, motivational interviewing and labour market preparatory activities. This was thought to be the closest to a social pedagogy model in the Hungarian education system for pupils of compulsory school age.
- In the UK, the **Studio Schools** programme was set up by the Young Foundation, with the ethos of providing different ways of learning for everyone, and not just those directly at risk of ESL. Studio schools teach national curriculum subjects to 14-19 year olds, but deliver them almost entirely through project-based learning. Every young person is linked to an employer and all students have a job at age 14 alongside their studies. The enterprise assignments are funded by local businesses and provide genuine vocational experience. The programme is relatively new and not yet fully evaluated, but it represents a genuine alternative to mainstream school at age 14.

#### 4.1.4 Adopting the second chance ethos and key principles

It was with regard to the adoption of good practice approaches or principles that the respondents for the study generally identified the greatest blurring of boundaries with approaches that are offered within the best mainstream schools. In effect, it was thought that the best schools across Europe are *already* implementing pro-active policies for tackling bullying and discrimination; promoting positive teacher-pupil relationships and providing decision making structures that empower pupils in decision-making. The priority in this respect might therefore be to encourage greater exchanges of practice between schools.

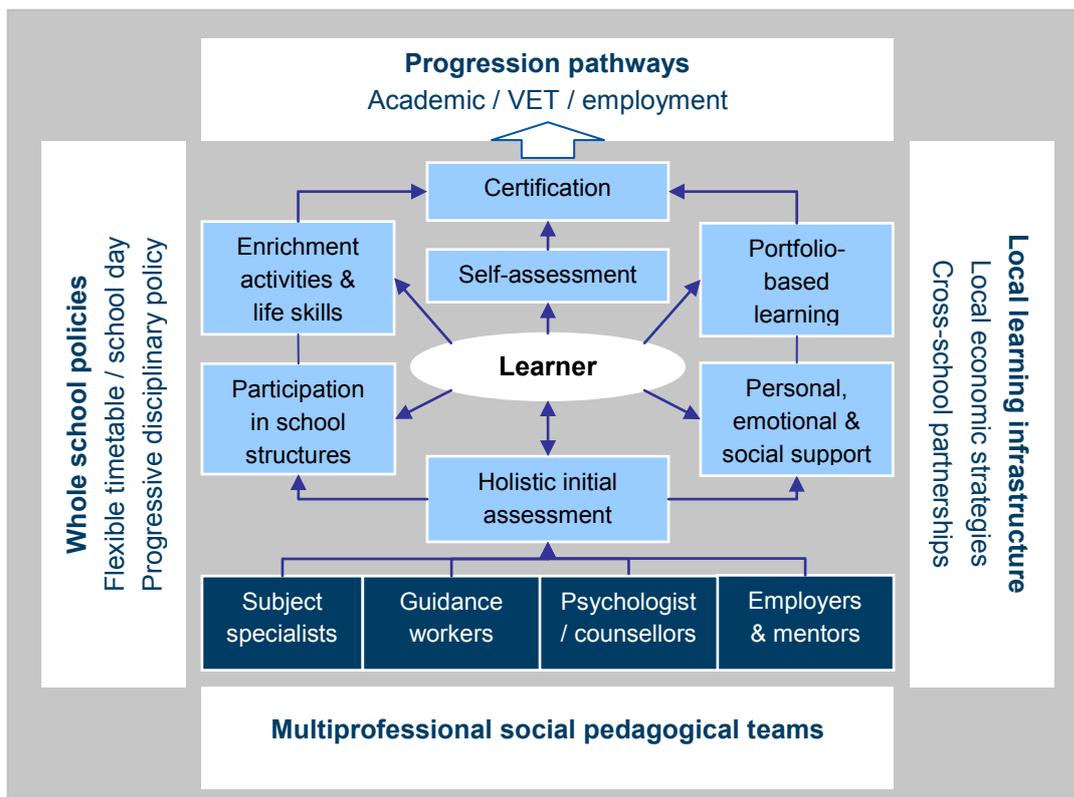
## 4.2 Towards a 'systems' approach

The interviews and workshops emphasised that positive outcomes for learners in second chance education are achieved through a comprehensive support structures and the interaction of different features of the provision, rather than some individual elements of the schemes. Here we explore the links between different elements and how they support the learner as a system. **The reality of selecting 'good practice'** elements of second chance is likely to be far more complex than such categorisations could hope to achieve. The literature underlines that ESL is a product of "*... the interaction between features of initial education that are experienced negatively by the learner, and individual socio-economic and motivational factors*"<sup>79</sup>. If second chance education is to succeed then it must have the capacity to alter these interactions according to the needs of individual learners.

<sup>79</sup> GHK (2005), NESSE (2009), OECD, *Overcoming School Failure: Policies That Work Project*

Figure 4.2 presents a visual representation of how these different elements might look if organised within a system, with the learner at the centre. The diagram highlights the concentricity of this type of model, with an immediate tier of factors that are experienced directly by the learner, and a further outlying tier of factors that are concerned more with the school's organisation and infrastructure, but which nonetheless have a direct bearing on what the school is able to offer to individuals within the system.

**Figure 4.2 Learning from second chance – “the learner at the centre”**



As the diagram above illustrates, the education provision needs to put the learner at the centre and ensure that there is a comprehensive support available for him/her to be able to successfully complete their education and pursue further educational or professional pathways. In addition, the figure demonstrates that there are some obvious synergies between different second chance good approaches, which might be clustered to achieve reinforcing positive effects. For example:

- Access to a breadth of formal and non-formal learning opportunities that often are available when taking part in portfolio based learning programmes especially those that provide opportunities to combine class room education and work placements is only possible with the corresponding structural dimensions in terms of effective links between the school and local economic partnerships and NGOs. For example, a second chance school in France visited during the case study has very strong links with local employer networks and thus is able to provide large number of work placements for young people.;
- Young people's participation in decisions about school organisation has implications for school disciplinary policies and for teacher-learner relationships. Therefore, the whole school policies need to enable learners' voice to be heard which in result has

positive effect in terms of strengthening young people's wellbeing and self-esteem (For example, a recent report on learning and well-being highlights importance of empowering and considering that children are competent partners to nurture personal responsibility more than compliance<sup>80</sup>); and,

- There are also other obvious synergies between continuous holistic assessment as well as modularisation, personalized learning, flexible timetabling and the need for support with learning as well as issues that are related to other aspects of young persons life ; **all of which form part of a 'cluster' that is concerned with making school education more adaptive to learners with complex lives who are otherwise at risk of falling behind and becoming demotivated.**

### 4.3 Tailoring provision to initial education settings

The second key dimension to consider is the '**receiving**' side of the transfer process, within the second chance education systems or schools that are to host the good practices. Here we are concerned with:

- the context into which the good practices are to be transferred,
- the target population(s) of learners, and
- the scale at which the transfer is to be undertaken.

The European Commission's categorisation of measures to tackle ESL into prevention, intervention and compensation is very useful in this respect<sup>81</sup>. When levels of need<sup>82</sup> or risk are also taken into account, might anticipate that at the early preventative end of this scale, the measures would be more likely to be *universal* in nature, concerning whole populations of learners within schools. This might include whole school disciplinary policies, multiculturalism and lighter-touch engagement activities aiming **to build all young people's resilience. Moving up the scale towards intervention, it** would be fair to anticipate that the measures assume a more *targeted* nature, concerning learners who have already shown signs of being at greater risk of ESL, whether defined by their socio-demographic background, circumstances and behaviours, or a combination of these factors.

In allocating expenditure, schools will inevitably bear a higher 'per pupil' cost when tackling educational disadvantage at the more targeted end of the scale, whilst in overall expenditure terms seeking to tip the balance towards early intervention, where the social returns are known to be much greater<sup>83</sup>. Therefore, it is likely to be more cost-effective to ensure that high quality and comprehensive support should be available for all young people in order to prevent ESL at the first place and reduce the demand for more targeted provision.

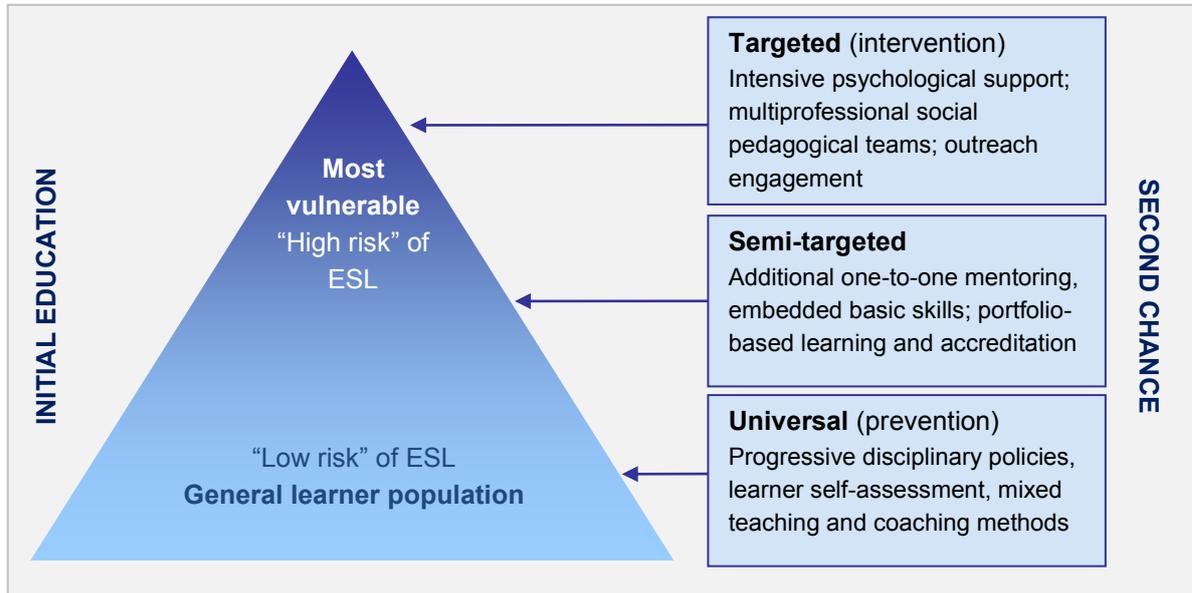
<sup>80</sup> Kickbusch I., Gordon J. and O'Toole L. (2012), *Learning for Well -being: A Policy Priority for Children and Youth in Europe*.

<sup>81</sup> *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving [COM(2011)19]*

<sup>82</sup> Hardiker, P., Exton, K., and Barker, M. (1991) *Policies and Practices in Preventative Child Care*. Aldershot: Avebury.

<sup>83</sup> Heckman, J. and Masterov, D. V. (2004). *The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children*. In: *Working Paper 5*. Chicago: Invest in Kids Working Group, Committee for Economic Development.

**Figure 4.3 Learning from second chance – potential ‘entry points’**



As Figure 4.3 illustrates, many of the pedagogical and learner support dimensions of second chance education have a greater affinity with **intervention**, at the higher end of the scale. The characteristics of a ‘strong’ second chance offer such as small class sizes, team-based teaching and intensive psychological support tend to be available as part of more targeted provision. However, as demonstrated earlier in the report it brings significant benefits to young people in terms of development teacher-pupil relationships, peer relationships and supportive institutional climate and would be beneficial to all the learners. Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that more specialised support would be available for those young people who need further support in continuing their education. Such measures are likely to be more resource intensive but could prove to be cost effective if used in a more targeted way with smaller numbers of learners who have already demonstrated early signs of being ‘at risk’ of ESL. This is especially the case where this provision is organised on a multi-professional basis and the school is therefore able to access expertise from specialist partners at key points in time.

In contrast, the second chance provision starts to lose much of its distinctiveness in moving towards the **preventative** end of the scale. When working with whole populations of pupils and within the constraints of large class sizes, rigid funding formulae and traditional school environments, there is arguably less room for pedagogical innovation. **Here, the fully 'transferred' model of second chance runs** the risk of looking much like any other early preventative measures that are routinely applied within mainstream schools across Europe (e.g. work experience, personal and social education, mentoring). Again, we encounter the paradox that second chance at its most effective is often characterised by the ability to offer a **strong alternative pathway** that maintains a critical distance from mainstream institutional schooling, whilst performing a key role in joining-up life skills, academic and vocational provision. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the lessons from second chance education at this phase is likely to be most effective in terms of reducing number of young people who decide to leave school early and therefore they are likely to have the highest impact for learners.

#### 4.3.1 Putting transfer into action – the levers and processes for change

Finally, there is also the question of **how** to transfer good practices. One of the observations from the study to date is that stakeholders from both second chance and initial education are often acutely aware of what would be necessary to make a **difference for 'at risk' learners (the small group work, kinaesthetic learning, intensive mentoring, transition support, etc.)**, and yet this shift has not occurred on any significant scale. This is one of the real challenges – **to offer a 'road map' for transferring schemes**, with a corresponding set of process indicators for schools and public authorities to benchmark their progress.

Again, there are numerous options to consider. **Perhaps the 'gold standard' is to generate sufficient backing at a national government level to achieve legislative reform.** We have seen how in Norway, the legal duty for local authorities to track and offer pathways back into employment for learning for young people up to the age of 25 has acted as a catalyst for the development of local networks of public authorities, NGOs and employers to fulfil this duty. Similarly in Portugal, we have considered how the RVCC national system for has given considerable weight to alternative curriculum pathways, by validating learning to lower secondary level. Equivalent validation at upper secondary level might give second chance schemes the weight that is necessary to broaden the educational marketplace for school leavers, and yet compulsory school leaving qualifications are often so ingrained to institutional frameworks that such a shift would constitute a huge paradigm shift in many European countries.

At a step-down from legislative reform, there are other options that might require a combination of:

- mapping second chance schemes against different national qualifications systems at compulsory level, to establish their strategic fit within individual EU Member States;
- expanding programmes of initial teacher training and continuous professional development to integrate mainstream and alternative teaching methods;
- strengthening confederacy arrangements between schools and employers, to achieve the economies of scale required for more flexible and personalised learning; and,
- developing comprehensive pedagogical frameworks and learning materials of the **type currently being developed by the 'Alternative Education' scheme in Lithuania.**

We have seen how many of the strongest second chance schemes are borne from genuine grassroots teacher-led experimentation and creativity, and that harnessing this knowledge and expertise is of the utmost importance. This is an area where the contribution of transnational cooperation is perhaps the greatest, and where the Commission might have a role to play. The interviews also highlight, however, that **“room for innovation” must be created within busy school regimes and teacher workloads**, and that raising the profile of second chance will also require parity in professional status and pay.

#### 4.4 Challenges and solutions for achieving transferability

The concept of ‘transferring’ good practices from one system to another presents a number of challenges that must be fully acknowledged by the study.

- **Understanding critical dependencies** - At a practical level, some elements of second chance education are inevitably more difficult to replicate within initial education. This might include where the model is dependent on a specific context (such as in-company training for employees), or where certain vocational options pose a challenge for school pupils due to the need for prolonged work experience. However, an early understanding of the world of work and opportunities to gain meaningful experience in vocational settings are also potential strengths of second chance. There must be some onus on schools to clear space within the timetable to allow for work placements and learning in the community. Although this is a challenge for many schools some European countries developed successful initiatives of cooperation between schools and businesses. One of such initiatives is Youth and Technology Network (JET-NET) in the Netherlands. The network is set up as an initiative between schools and businesses in order to increase young **people’s interest in science** and improve understanding of their future career opportunities. A variety of activities are implemented that are targeted to different age groups including profile choice information sessions, workshop@the company, workshop@school, career guidance, company assisted research and meet the boss.<sup>84</sup>
- **Maintaining the effectiveness of the model(s)** - The question of ‘*implementation fidelity*’ is also an important one – whether the intended effects of an individual programme can be preserved through its adjustment to a new context(s)<sup>85</sup>. There is no guarantee that what works in one country or regional context can be re-applied with the same results in another. Here it is particularly important to be mindful of the substantial variation between Member State education and training systems and stages within initial education leading to an upper secondary qualification. Furthermore, some individual schemes can reflect on the skills and qualities of the people who design and operate them. Without having a clearer set of criteria for appraising different models of second chance provision, schools are unlikely to take the risk of investing in what is an unknown quantity.
- **Achieving scale** - much of the success of second chance schemes rests with the ability to make them work on a sustainable scale, and to share good practices

<sup>84</sup> Jet-Net website. Available at: <http://www.jet-net.nl/?pid=76>

<sup>85</sup> Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M. & Wallace, F. (2005).

*Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida*

more widely. The NESSE report highlighted a perennial difficulty of second chance provision that there are *"Many relatively small scale interventions but rarely there are attempts to join them up in the comprehensive programmes<sup>86</sup>"*.

- **Funding** - cost implications for replicating some features of second chance within mainstream schools (individualized support, smaller class sizes, etc.), where unit costs might be prohibitive within local school's fiscal constraints. There was recognition amongst the second chance schemes reviewed for the study of their proportionately higher costs when compared with mainstream educational provision. In some instances, such as the Fairbridge programme in the UK, the costs of support must be viewed in the context of working with young people with very high levels of need, including child protection issues, domestic violence, homelessness and mental health issues.
- **School autonomy** – the second chance education initiatives tend to have a significant autonomy to develop their own working methods and support structures. This allows to develop support structures that are most appropriate for learners needs. The autonomy of schools although varies in all the countries covered by the study tended to be more limited and thus is likely to constitute a barrier for introducing some of the lessons learned.

#### 4.4.1 Basic conditions for transferring schemes

The desk research and fact-finding visits highlight a number of common learning points with regard to the basic conditions that might be necessary to pave the way for an effective transfer of practices.

**Political will for change** has been a feature of many of the larger-scale national programmes, and these conditions are likely to be required if second chance provision is to be introduced on a significant scale within mainstream educational systems in Europe. In Portugal, for example, the national programme of New Opportunities Centres for 18+ year olds responded to a public outcry at the high rates of Early School Leaving and youth unemployment. Somewhat ironically, therefore, it was the experience of a failing system that provided much of the momentum to introduce radical change. Such changes are less easy to implement in a situation of status quo or inertia within the educational system.

The local workshops showed how shifts in national educational policy can have quite a **direct impact on school's freedoms to innovate and to offer alternative pathways for learners**. However, the effects were often found to have been quite ambivalent, with no simple formula for creating ideal conditions for second chance provision to flourish. The contrast between the UK and Hungary is an interesting example in this respect:

- In the UK, the most recent policy shift has been away from a centralised education system towards one of *decentralisation and 'localism'*. Coupled with measures to raise the participation age in education and training from 16, to 18 by 2015, these changes potentially offer a climate for schools to innovate, and a greater incentive to source high quality provision for learners who do not wish to pursue an academic route at age 16. At the same time, however, national qualifications reform has seen a considerable reduction in the number and range of qualifications that count towards school performance tables, There has been a move away from a unitised system of qualifications for 14 to 18 year olds, following criticisms that

<sup>86</sup> NESSE (2009), *Early School Leaving – Lessons from Research to Policy Makers*.

units were offered by schools to accumulate points (and therefore funding) without providing a viable learner pathways. These changes have served to create a very specific set of conditions for schools, which provide a backdrop to their work in tackling ESL.

- In Hungary, the overall policy trend is almost the opposite of the UK. The Public Education Act has seen greater **centralisation** in the curriculum, school management, teacher employment and training, and a reduction in the compulsory school leaving age from 18/19 to age 16. The participants in the country workshop expressed some anxieties that this climate is less conducive to local innovation, and that second chance schemes would be more difficult to replicate due to the onus on meeting curricular guidelines. Specifically, the group expressed concerns about existing schemes such as the Janos Arany programme aimed at developing talented Roma students, which has proven difficult to align with the new qualifications system. Again, however, positives were also identified. The workshop participants noted that greater centralisation stands to ensure more equal access for learners, better developed educational pathways, and less intra-school competition for local funding.

We can see, therefore, that national policy reforms within two quite contrasting educational systems can simultaneously present both opportunities and threats to mainstreaming second chance provision. Overall, the prevailing view was that decisions taken at the individual school level will always exert a significant influence, despite the backdrop of national policy change. There was a common view that the combination of effective leadership by Head-teachers, strong governance arrangements and a progressive institutional climate can usually militate against most negative effects of national policy making; as demonstrated by the individual examples of good practice mainstream schools within most countries.

**Public acceptance and recognition** is also a key consideration. In Lithuania, Youth Schools were set up in 1993 to provide alternative education for students more interested in practical experience rather than the academic pathways. Nearly 20 years later, the initiative still attracts stigma amongst parents and pupils – particularly so within rural areas and smaller communities, where the juxtaposition with the socio-economic background of mainstream school pupils is more pronounced. One of the managers of a different second chance scheme commented that public awareness of ESL has receded in recent years, and that there is now a popular perception that this is no longer a problem except for minority ethnic and Roma families. These examples highlight the need to challenge preconceptions, and suggest that a programme of awareness raising and consumer education is necessary to pave the way for transfer from second chance to avoid further stigma. This is potentially one of the strong arguments for an integrated model rather than developing second chance in parallel to the mainstream, which potentially carries greater risks of stigmatising the students.

**Pedagogical expertise** is a very deep rooted challenge for offering second chance provision in different contexts. The schemes that were visited through the case study visits generally found that there was a limited pool of teachers skilled in alternative or emancipatory techniques, with very few channels for teachers to acquire these skills (for example through Initial Teacher Training) or to update them through their continuous professional development. Interestingly, the better integrated examples of second chance schemes were able to go some way towards cascading their knowledge to mainstream schools within the locale. This was the case on an informal basis in Portugal, where the Second Chance School had gained a reputation as a source of ad

hoc advice and training for other teachers. This was largely sustained by the goodwill and educational objectives of those involved with the scheme. In France, a semi-formal basis for peer exchange between teachers has emerged through the Micro-lycee infrastructure. Being a **teachers'** initiative at the first place it is based on exchanges among teachers on the gaps within education system and the desire to do something in order to change it. Nevertheless, exchanges among micro-lycee and mainstream school teachers remains very challenging even in such context. The question of how to achieve a combination of teacher training, professional development, and opportunities for peer learning is an important one for the study.

**Municipal and school leadership** is a recurring characteristic of successful second chance schemes. Some of the better established schemes had been assisted greatly by support from within the council. In one instance, a head-teacher described how the local council had developed *"...a very interesting pedagogical offer, which goes beyond the legal requirements of its role"*. This included an ESL project with a team of nine full time psychologists working with schools across the borough. In Romania, the second chance programme included an action to provide training and support to local second chance **'champions' within each municipality where it was delivered. Elsewhere, some schemes originated at a school level but were able to expand by developing local networks, as the following example illustrates.**

#### **Case study: Developing strong local leadership and multi-professionalsupport Project: (Portugal)**

In Portugal, a Second Chance Programme in the borough of Matosinhos was set up by a group of education workers, whose professional experience led them to believe that the mainstream system was failing to fulfil the constitutional right of education for all. **Although the initiative was "born from within" the local secondary school, it has since gained independent NGO status and is delivered in partnership with the local authority which provides the site, and the government education ministry.**

**A success factor was that the school's founder and director had worked for decades in the local area in adult education and as a head teacher. Key personnel in adult education, the local authority education department and the regional body respected the school's director and sympathised with his project.**

**Funding stability** is another consideration and is both one of the key challenges for transferability as well as necessary condition. As indicated above any transfer of good practice into initial education will incur the costs for education system. However, the cost implications are likely to be varying on the scope and scale of the changes introduced. For example, introducing of the lessons learned related to structural change in the education system such as smaller class sizes or ensuring personalised support is likely to have significant financial implications on the whole education system. Nevertheless, such measures are likely to be of significant benefits in terms of reducing ESL and in turn reducing the cost that is required to support early school leavers later on in life. Such changes as public celebration of success or eating together are less likely to have funding implications and could readily be implemented in schools across Europe.

Financial stability of second chance schemes tend to be challenging. Financial struggle is the reality for many second chance schemes, with a reliance on time-limited grant funding to subsidise provision, including from European programmes such as European Social Fund and Lifelong Learning Programme. Such funding has often come with a degree of uncertainty that makes long-term planning difficult. Other schemes have managed to secure funding contributions from NGOs and local partner agencies; often on the basis of having demonstrated positive results, and sometimes with an 'in kind' or reciprocal element building on trusted relationships and a shared interest in doing what is best to meet the needs of vulnerable young people within the locality. This type of funding model would be less viable for supporting much larger numbers of young people within an initial education setting, and a more strategic approach would be necessary; perhaps offset against the funding formulae that are prescribed to mainstream schools within the individual Member States.

## 5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This report has provided the draft findings from a study for the European Commission on the theme of: *Preventing early school leaving in Europe - lessons learned from second chance education*. In the previous chapters, we first presented and explained the study background, objectives and methodological framework (Chapters 1), before **going on to consider the question of 'motivation'** – both in relation to ESL and second chance schemes (Chapter 2). We then went on to consider the different aspects of the planning, organisation and delivery of second chance schemes; comparing the evidence from the mapping and case studies with previous research (Chapter 3), before considering the challenges and opportunities that are presented for **'transferring' good practices from second chance to initial education settings** (Chapter 4).

In this final chapter, we reflect upon the learning from the study to present the overall conclusions. We also go on to present a series of recommendations for the European Commission, and for schools, municipal authorities and their partner organisations. The study provides a good overall indication that it is worthwhile for the European Commission to consider options for supporting the transfer of good practices from second chance education on a transnational basis, including the provision of a common platform; a potential project funding stream, and investment in longitudinal comparative research.

### 5.1 What helps young people in second chance education to re-gain confidence in their learning capacity and the benefits of learning?

The schemes that were analysed for the study deployed a variety of approaches to help young people re-engage with their learning and to rebuild their confidence. Perhaps one of the defining characteristics of second chance schemes is their voluntary or participatory nature; with learners simultaneously empowered to exercise greater choice over how and what they learn, whilst also being required to demonstrate commitment and responsibility (some schemes are accessed on the basis of an interview). Whilst this might seem incompatible with compulsory education, where such flexibility and choice is not always possible, there is a core learning point about strengthening participation in decision-making as a preventative measure to build motivation and self-esteem. This message was reinforced by the literature review, which underlined that learners nearly always respond positively where provision nurtures their intrinsic motivations, and where it counteracts negative associations that might have been built up over time (such as language difficulties or fear of failure).

It is also apparent that these motivational issues cannot be considered in isolation from the wider socio-economic context within which the schemes are being delivered. With significant challenges of youth unemployment and poverty in many EU Member States, gaining meaningful qualifications and finding sustainable employment are also primary considerations for transferring good practices from second chance to initial education, and indeed many second chance schemes involve active levels of involvement from employers in developing their provision, with pathways into the local labour market.

## 5.2 Which of the methods used successfully in second chance education could be transferred to initial education and training?

A central aim of the study was to explore the extent to which second chance education provides transferable approaches that could be used to help prevent ESL at an earlier stage in young people's education. The theoretical basis of the study was therefore to examine whether 'compensatory' measures can provide a source of evidence for 'prevention' (and potentially 'intervention' as well). These concepts are central to the Council Recommendation on policies to reduce ESL [COM(2011)19].

### 5.2.1 Learning from second chance?

Overall, the findings from the research indicate that there is strong potential to learn from second chance education. Indeed, a key message from the desk research and fact-finding visits is that many of the hallmarks of second chance education *already* exist within the best mainstream schools across Europe. Furthermore, numerous second chance 'experiments' have been mainstreamed on a smaller scale within initial education settings. This phenomenon has occurred both organically, through the influence of successful schemes over schools within their locality (as is the case with Matosinhos Second Chance School in PT, and Youthreach in IE), and through policy design, as is the case with Studio Schools in the UK, which is a high profile and nationally funded alternative pathway for 14-25 year olds.

The study has demonstrated that the value of studying second chance provision is to **allow this range of good practices to be observed in their more 'concentrated' form.** This is made possible due to the typically lower numbers of learners within second chance schemes, and the greater prevalence of complex needs compared with the general population. In the best examples, therefore, second chance schemes provide a showcase for the social, emotional and learning supports that are possible to build **confidence and motivation for learners at the highest end of the ESL 'risk' spectrum.** Much of the challenge for initial education schools in adopting these types of practices rests with two issues:

- The first is a question of *scale* - too often individual schemes are locked within a particular local context and sustained by the know-how of particular individuals or groups of teachers, and have lacked a systematic or coordinated approach at a national level.
- The second is a question of *context* – the uniqueness of second chance education was described by one stakeholder as resting with its "*experimental, non-institutional*" ethos. **It is precisely this challenge of harnessing non-institutional approaches to support the achievement of formal qualifications that has provided the focus of schemes such as the Micro Lycee in France.**

Whilst the term 'second chance' is widely cited within research and policy documents, **it's close association with provision for 18-24 year olds is perhaps misleading, as the study encountered a wide range of schemes; a number of which run in parallel to compulsory schooling or provide a 'bridging' function for young people who would otherwise leave the educational system at an earlier stage.** The expert advisory group for the study recommended that the debate should focus on inclusive educational practices in a wider sense, to emphasise the importance of lifelong learning as continuous process.

### **5.2.2 Critical success factors for second chance**

The case studies and workshops sought to explore whether a 'hierarchy' of second chance characteristics can be identified, and whether particular features (e.g. personalised learning or flexible forms of accreditation) are consistently valued more highly by learners and institutions. In practice, however, the study did not find any evidence to suggest this is the case. The relative importance of different second chance characteristics was found to vary according to the views and experiences of those who were interviewed. Initial teacher training was commonly cited as a key success factor for scaling-up good practices from second chance and improving the **quality and consistency of teacher's competencies for supporting learners with complex needs**. However, the learner interviews equally underlined the importance of positive teacher-learner relationships, mental health supports, and choice, flexibility and relevance within the curriculum, including activities with a sense of social meaning (whether linked to the local community, family life, or perceived as being relevant in the context of future employment).

These different perspectives on the success factors for second chance education underline the importance of building schemes that are multi-faceted and responsive to **individual learners' needs**. Indeed, the majority of stakeholders who were interviewed for the study considered that it is the cumulative effect of the different features of second chance that makes them effective. This would seem to suggest that a certain '**critical mass**' of good practice characteristics is required to bring about the intended results. Further longitudinal research would be needed to test this hypothesis, and to better understand how leavers from second chance schemes fare in comparison with their peers who take an alternative pathway (this issue is picked-up again within the recommendations at Section 5.7).

Second chance schemes go beyond purely structural considerations, however, and their ethos was thought to be equally important amongst the learners and staff who were interviewed during the study. Second chance schemes invariably place the learner at the centre, and use this principle to determine the most appropriate institutional arrangements that follow.

### **5.2.3 Specific core characteristics and key indicators**

A number of more specific characteristics of second chance provision were identified through the mapping exercise, and were subsequently refined through the case studies and country workshops. Figure 5.1 below presents an outline framework, to compile and summarise these characteristics.

This exercise is by no means intended as exhaustive, and indeed would benefit from wider discussion and debate between second chance and initial education sectors. However, it serves as a checklist for schools to compare their existing strategies for preventing ESL with those from second chance.

**Figure 5.1. Characteristics of second chance provision – towards a framework**

<b>Second chance themes</b>	<b>Core characteristics / key indicators of second chance education</b>
<b>1. Governance and external partnerships</b>	<p>A cluster of good practices / key indicators relating to schools' governance structures and external partnership arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 strong models of school confederacy and collaboration, including pooled resources, expertise, training and ESL data between schools</li> <li>1.2 multiprofessional involvement in school governance structures, including representation from community organisations, employers and health / family support services</li> <li>1.3 learner participation in school governance structures</li> </ul>
<b>2. Institutional climate</b>	<p>A cluster of good practices / key indicators relating to the wider school climate, and particularly the spaces for children's participation in decision-making within this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 opportunities for socialisation between staff and learners, such as shared mealtimes, communal spaces and summer school or residential schemes</li> <li>2.2 alternative disciplinary policies to prevent the unnecessary use of exclusions</li> <li>2.3 learner participation in the development of school policies, such as codes of behaviour, to be drawn up as a contract with adults</li> <li>2.4 learners exercising choice over programmes of study and non-curricular activities such as summer school programmes and residential trips</li> </ul>
<b>3. Social and emotional wellbeing</b>	<p>A cluster of good practices / key indicators relating to learners' self-esteem and mental health. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 widened access to personal coaching or key worker arrangements, with greater personalisation and choice in relation to pastoral support</li> <li>3.2 continuity in support provided within and outside of school, so that <b>learners' wider social and emotional needs are taken into account</b></li> <li>3.3 inclusive policies towards bullying, including open discussion between learners and staff, and strategies for learners to deal with bullying issues where they arise</li> <li>3.4 rebalancing academic and pastoral aspects of the curriculum, with greater prominence for citizenship, personal and social education</li> <li>3.5 public celebrations of success; awards ceremonies and events</li> </ul>
<b>4. Curricula, assessment and learner pathways</b>	<p>A cluster of good practices / key indicators relating to the curriculum and assessment frameworks that are set in place. These include:</p> <p>Learner assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1 motivational strengths-based approaches towards learner assessment; formative assessment as a tool for confidence-building</li> <li>4.2 validating competencies acquired both within and outside of school, as evidence of individual progress</li> </ul> <p>Structuring learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.3 flexibility to start at different times of the year, and to catch-up if needed</li> <li>4.4 flexible organisation of the school day and week</li> <li>4.5 distance learning and weekend study arrangements</li> <li>4.6 access to childcare and specialist support</li> </ul>

Second chance themes	Core characteristics / key indicators of second chance education
	Curriculum development 4.7 employer engagement in curriculum development 4.8 arts and sports as a core activity within the curriculum 4.9 place-based study topics and projects  Progression / learner pathways 4.10 contextualised careers advice and coaching 4.11 clear and meaningful vocational pathways, linked to the local labour market
<b>5. Pedagogy</b>	A cluster of good practices / key indicators relating to the pedagogical methods that are deployed, and the staffing structures that support them. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1 multi-professional social pedagogical teams, including psychologists, youth workers and health and social care staff working alongside teachers; to provide a more tailored academic, vocational and life skills offer to learners</li> <li>5.2 team teaching as mainstream practice, to provide opportunities for peer learning and assessment between teachers and to transfer expertise for working with learners who have complex needs</li> <li>5.3 low teacher to pupil ratios</li> <li>5.4 action learning methods – practical and project-based alternatives for working towards the attainment of mainstream qualifications</li> <li>5.5 social and peer learning – potentially including talks by young adults who left school early, to raise awareness of the consequences</li> </ul>
<b>6. Learning environments</b>	A cluster of good practices / key indicators relating to the physical learning environment within the school. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6.1 multi-site planning and organisation of learning, with delivery at different school, work-based learning, arts and community locations</li> <li>6.2 ergonomic design: school spaces designed around learner; integration of social and learning spaces, innovative use of ICTs; tacking negative connotations of the traditional school environment and buildings</li> </ul>

Although many of these characteristics are already well documented within previous research, the expert meeting helped to identify a number of practical measures that would be relatively straightforward for schools to implement as ‘quick wins’. These include:

- **Opportunities for positive dialogue and interaction between learners and teachers** - simple measures such as timetabling for shared mealtimes between learners and staff, shared spaces for socialisation, and participation in non-formal activities such as summer schools and residential trips, were found to be a much overlooked aspect of school life in many initial education institutions, but one that has real potential for building trust and cooperation.
- **Learning outside of the school environment** – whilst not representing a novel concept in its own right, the extensive use of local places and spaces to support learning was very apparent from the study, with some second chance schemes having almost a ‘campus’ feel through the division of time between school-based, employer-based, and community-based activities. Given that the school environment and routines were consistently described as factors influencing early school leaving by second chance learners, this ‘opening-up’ of the school as a learning space might have particular value for early prevention.

### 5.3 How could such a transfer be facilitated?

A further study objective was to consider *how* it might be possible to transfer good practices from second chance – the mechanisms and processes for doing so, and their feasibility for schools, municipalities and other educational institutions. At least four main options were identified as a result of the mapping and country case studies, which were discussed at the country workshops in HU, UK and FR. These include:

- a) The replication of second chance schemes
- b) The re-modelling of existing mainstream educational provision, based on a more selective application of good practice characteristics from second chance;
- c) The development of alternative educational provision, based on second chance; and,
- d) The adoption of the ethos and key principles of second chance education

We now return to conclude on the viability of each of these options in turn.

#### 5.3.1 Replicating second chance schemes

The first transferability option (**replication**) presents the most direct means of recreating the essential conditions of second chance education within an initial education context. The main advantages of this approach are to ensure that there is not a **'dilution' of the elements that make the original scheme effective** – as we discussed in the previous chapter, it is often a combination of these effective practices that would seem to achieve the desired results in re-engaging and supporting students. One of the challenges for replication is that many of the schemes considered for the study were originally piloted with 18-24 year olds, and / or have only been tested in one specific country or locality. The transferability potential of individual schemes might therefore be assessed by considering a) whether they are effective in their existing context (i.e. as a second chance scheme), using both qualitative and quantitative measures of success; b) whether they have been replicated within their **country of origin (an indicator of whether the scheme "travels well")**, and c) whether they have been replicated in more than one country (as is the case with the production schools concept, and the emergence of similar models to the original in Austria and Germany).

A true test of replicability would be to undertake a piloting exercise of some kind, and as we discussed in the previous chapter this might best be conceptualised in terms of **three broad models that capture the 'essence' of the main different types of second chance schemes**. These might include a **'fully integrated' model**, whereby the conditions of second chance schemes are embedded directly within mainstream systems (drawing upon the core characteristics of the Matosinhos Second Chance School and Dobbanto scheme (HU) for inspiration); a **'co-located' model**, whereby second chance provision is delivered alongside mainstream schooling, but with synergies between the two with regard to management, staff training and development (drawing upon the Micro Lycee scheme in FR for inspiration), and an **'alternative pathway' model**, whereby learners at greatest risk of ESL or those with the most complex needs are supported in separate settings – potentially community, employer or distance learning oriented, but with an emphasis on developing this route as a viable pathway to vocational or pre-employment training rather than a **'last resort' or punitive option** (drawing upon the Youthreach and An Cosan schemes in IE for inspiration).

### 5.3.2 Remodelling mainstream provision

The second method of transferring good practices; the **re-modelling of mainstream provision** based on the characteristics of second chance, potentially offers more flexibility for schools to experiment, and is less contingent on reproducing the conditions of the original schemes. As we identified in Section 4.2, above, the study has mapped the key characteristics that contribute towards the success of second chance schemes (Figure 4.2). The study has also underlined the importance of adopting a systems approach, and schools might use this framework to strengthen their existing preventative work, by considering the indicators that are shown under the six 'domains' (governance, pedagogy, and so on).

### 5.3.3 Development of alternative education provision

The third model accepts that there is a need for development of credible alternative education pathways and accepts that mainstream school is not going to be suitable for all young people. As it is presented in the section 4.1.3 there are already examples of such provision developed in all three countries where the workshops were held, however, such provision tend to be quite dispersed, with limited funding and uneven geographical coverage. This method acknowledges the need for further effort to develop alternative provision which would be a positive choice for young people, maintaining synergies with mainstream schools and is demand led when learners are able to identify the provision that best meets their needs.

### 5.3.4 Adopting the second chance ethos and key principles

Finally, the study has shown that second chance education offers much for initial education with regard to the **ethos and principles** that underpin the different schemes. There are lessons to be learned from the approach of placing the learner at the centre, supporting individual and collective participation in decision-making processes, and adopting more inclusive approaches towards assessment and learner support.

## 5.4 What are basic conditions for implementing these second chance methods in mainstream schools?

The study makes it possible to identify a number of conditions that are conducive (or in some instances necessary) for supporting the transfer of good practices from second chance education. Whilst it is not feasible for the European Commission to exert an influence over national policy contexts, Figure 5.2 below summarises some of the key issues that were identified in this respect through the study.

### Figure 5.2 Conditions for achieving change

#### 2) Creating a conducive regulatory and funding environment:

A first set of conditions relate to the policy and funding climate within which good practices are to be adopted. As we have seen in the main chapters, it is often the successive changes to national policy, and the relative lack of stability that act as a barrier to sustaining effective schemes. Key conditions include:

- coordination and consistency in educational policy across national ministries
- funding stability and long-term change programmes that allow for real investment
- national school leadership associations engaging with ESL issues
- greater school accountability for ESL as a phenomenon, and sharing data
- value added performance criteria – taking the **learners' starting point into account** within performance tables, to incentivise schools to tackle the risk factors for ESL

#### 3) Developing the infrastructure:

A second set of conditions relating to the readiness of the local infrastructure to support models of second chance provision, and to help make them sustainable:

- municipal leadership, brokerage and coordination
- multi-professional partnerships (employers and social partners)
- stronger models of school confederacy (pooled budgets)
- school governance reform
- initial teacher training and CPD
- public acceptance / culture change
- funding stability

## Figure 5.2 Conditions for achieving change

### 4) Developing and disseminating the evidence base:

A third set of conditions relating to the visibility and profile of second chance education, its currency with funders, policy-makers and the general public, and the supporting evidence for its effectiveness:

- establishing the long-term impact and outcomes of second chance provision - added value, learner destinations and future employment and learning
- the 'business case' for investment (cost-benefit analysis)
- validation of specific programmes and approaches (benchmarks / quality criteria)
- raising awareness of the benefits of second chance education amongst schools
- raising public awareness of alternative educational approaches, and their effectiveness, with a particular emphasis on raising the profile of vocational education

## 5.5 What are the limits of transferability?

The study found that there are clear limitations to transferring some models of second chance in their entirety. As we discussed in the previous chapter, a key distinction **must be made between 'universal' and 'targeted' provision, with the latter often** entailing more intensive supports that would simply not be cost effective (or necessary) if offered to whole populations of learners within mainstream schools. Moreover, the study touched on a wider issue of the different motivations and experiences of young adults aged 18-24 when compared with learners of compulsory school age. In some instances, second chance learners reported that the principal reason for returning to education was having experienced the consequences of having left school without an upper secondary qualification. These motivations are harder to re-engineer within a preventative programme for younger learners on the cusp of school leaving, although peer mentoring programmes offer a potential option for raising their awareness.

## 5.6 In which ways can initial education and second chance education profit from cooperation and exchange of experiences and good practices?

Second chance schemes have co-existed with mainstream schools within Europe for many years, and the case study research highlighted a variety of ways in which cooperation has taken place; from a straightforward referral of learners, to information-sharing, and some joint delivery of programmes. In a climate of scarce resources and funding, however, some second chance schemes have reported a greater degree of competition between local schools, which has not always been constructive.

The study concludes that for synergies between second chance and initial education to be successful, it is important that knowledge exchange takes place at all levels – from senior management to grassroots teaching practices. Furthermore, this engagement must be on a sufficient scale to raise awareness of the benefits of second chance education. A 'sliding scale' of cooperation might include the following:

- a. Management / head-teacher and teacher exchanges
- b. Joint training and development for teachers and support staff, acquisition and validation of new competences for working with learners who have complex needs
- c. Twinning between second chance and initial education schools
- d. Co-location and shared management structures

We pick up on this issue under the recommendations section, below.

## 5.7 Recommendations

A number of recommendations are proposed for the **European Commission**, to ensure that the learning from the study is put to good effect, and to implement the various forms of transfer and exchange between second chance and initial education sectors, which were identified as being potentially beneficial for preventing ESL.

### **Recommendation 1:**

#### **To provide a platform for transnational dialogue and exchange on the theme of "learning from second chance education to prevent Early School Leaving"**

This exchange might take the form of a structured consultation exercise; both *within the second chance 'sector'*, and *between* the second chance sector and initial education schools across Europe. As there is already a Thematic Networking Group on ESL, any new activity would add the most value if it reaches a significantly greater number and range of schools and educational institutions across the EU28. A 'Delphi' consultation exercise would be conducive for this purpose. This could be used to disseminate the findings from the study and to build consensus for action through a series of consultations. This might include:

- Structured dialogue between initial education institutions and second chance / alternative educational institutions across the EU28
- Structured dialogue involving young people, across the EU28

- A final, inter-generational dialogue between the above

### **Recommendation 2:**

#### **To consider the merits of a new funding call, underpinned by a quality framework, to support the active transfer of good practices from second chance to initial education**

There would be merit in providing a targeted funding stream to support the transfer of good practices from second chance to initial education, supported by a quality framework (based on the study findings). The need for a dedicated funding stream can be illustrated with reference to the difficulties encountered by schools and other providers in accessing funds for what is perceived to be 'alternative' educational provision. A pan-EU funding programme of this type would add the greatest value if it was targeted at activities that aim to create the necessary conditions for transferring good practices; that assist with building capacity and professional skills within the initial education sector, and / or that foster meaningful and sustained collaboration between mainstream and second chance institutions.

With these criteria in mind, some potential strands within a funding call might include the following:

- Experimental projects*** – small scale projects that clearly demonstrate a link to second chance characteristics or good practices (from the framework), and particularly those that are ambitious in their nature and push the boundaries by introducing more experimental techniques that stand to enhance the knowledge and resource base for preventing ESL. To include:
  - alternative forms of student assessment
  - alternative forms of school organisation or timetabling
  - social pedagogical teams
  - coaching and key worker models
  - new models of social and emotional support
- Student-led action research and ethnographic studies*** – studies designed and implemented by students themselves, which stand to enhance the understanding of social and emotional aspects of learning; risk, protective and resilience factors for Early School Leaving, and how learning provision can be re-designed to meet their needs. This might include action research, videos or storyboards, to make the findings accessible to a range of audiences, including peer group.
- New programmes of joint training and development for leaders and managers*** – bringing together head-teachers and senior managers from initial education and second chance institutions to develop new strategies for preventing ESL, and strengthening competencies around school leadership, multi-professional working and new pedagogical approaches
- New programmes of joint training and development for teachers, coaches and support staff*** – bringing together teachers, coaches and learning support staff from initial education and second chance institutions to develop new strategies for preventing ESL, and strengthening competencies around alternative forms of learner assessment; multi-professional working; personal, social and health education, and personalised learner support.

- e. ***Bilateral exchange programmes and twinning between initial education and second chance institutions*** - with a particular emphasis on programmes that strengthen dialogue between the two sectors at all levels, including leaders and managers, teaching and support staff and learners.

### **Recommendation 3:**

#### **To consider funding a new pan-European longitudinal comparative study, to build the evidence base for the impact and outcomes of different types of schemes for preventing ESL**

The study showed that there are still crucial gaps in the evidence, regarding the longer-term effectiveness of different schemes or models of provision designed to prevent Early School Leaving. Where evaluations have taken place, these are often time-limited and specific to individual schemes, and there are limits to their comparability due to key differences in methods and measurement. It would therefore be beneficial for the European Commission to consider funding an EU-wide longitudinal study, to compare the outcomes achieved by different types of schemes, within a common framework of indicators. This study might use a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, and a longitudinal element to track learners over **an appropriate period to establish their 'destinations'** (i.e. their longer-term employment, personal, social and lifelong learning outcomes).

A further recommendation is proposed for **schools, local authorities** and local **partner organisations**:

### **Recommendation 4:**

#### **To review the good practice characteristics identified through this study (Section 3 and Figure 5.1), and consider how they could be best implemented in everyday teaching and learning**

The previous recommendations 1-3 are intended for the European Commission and its efforts in supporting Member States for developing this area further. However, the study identified number of issues that are of key relevance for schools and their wider communities. For example, the study emphasised the role that teachers play in engaging with young people and motivating them to continue their education, especially when their role is understood to include both transferring the knowledge and supporting young person throughout their learning (e.g. engaging with young people outside formal school environment, socialising together, providing support in solving issues outside school environment). Schools themselves make decisions about their day-to-day work and are able to adjust their working practices to accommodate the needs of wide range of learners, thus contributing towards preventing ESL. Although a number of outstanding schools across Europe already introduced number of the features emphasised by the study; there are still a large number of schools that could benefit from the lessons identified by this report.