

# *The neglected shadow: European perspectives on emotional support for early school leaving prevention*

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*Ene, mene, muh, und raus bist du ... Pädagogische, soziale und strukturelle Dimensionen von Bildungsbenachteiligung und Schulabbruch*

am 19. Jänner 2015, Pädagogische Hochschule Salzburg,

Akademiestraße 23, 5020 Salzburg



❖ International Research and recent reports for the EU Commission (Edwards & Downes 2013, Downes 2014)

❖ 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*. [Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, England, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, Russia, Scotland, Slovenia] 223 interviews

Senior Management Formal 3<sup>rd</sup> level: 60 interviews

Senior Management Formal 2<sup>nd</sup> level: 26 interviews

Non-formal: 49 interviews

Prison: 26 interviews

Government Officials: 27 interviews

❖ Child-centred surveys in Socio-Economically Marginalised Areas of Dublin, Ireland (Downes 2004, 2004a; Downes, Maunsell & Ivers 2006; Downes & Maunsell 2007; Downes & Gilligan (Eds.) (2007) Ivers, McLoughlin & Downes 2010)

Questionnaires returned:

18 Primary Schools: 862; 9 Secondary Schools: 677

Total: 1,539 Focus Groups 57

Consultations with Community groups: 99

“The music is not in the notes,  
but in the silence between.”  
— Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Downes, P. (2011). The neglected shadow:  
Some European perspectives on emotional  
supports for early school leaving prevention.  
*International Journal of Emotional Education*, 3  
(2), 3-39.

## What is missing ?

- ❖ A systemic strategy of emotional support for potential early school leavers – at national, regional, local and school levels
- ❖ Emotional support services at child, family, teacher and school level
- ❖ Outreach dimension to emotional support team to engage with family support issues
- ❖ Early intervention and prevention strategies for emotional support for those at risk of early school leaving
- ❖ Need to bridge a traditional divide between Departments of Education and Health

European Commission Directorate General, Education and Culture, European Education and Youth Forum for "Future Priorities of the ET2020 Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training and Synergies with Youth Policy", October 9-10, 2014

Priority Recommendations of Workshops: Equity, social cohesion & active citizenship, Supporting a new generation of educators, Tackling the low-skills gap:

- A. A1. Holistic bridges between Health and Education -**
- A2. Differentiated Focus on Need through Multidisciplinary Teams (Downes 2014)**
- A3. Outreach – Community and individual outreach**

Workshop 5B1 Family support; partnership with parents; early childhood / early years  
2B1 Focus on family (early tracking)  
2B2 Holistic cross-sectoral approach

- B. Democracy – Inclusive Systems as Emotional-Relational Communicative Systems**

Workshop 5B2 Funding to promote participatory school/learning  
3B2 Enhance educator to become professional

## A1. Holistic bridges between Health and Education

There is a clear need for emotional support services emerging in Austria. This is the response of an Austrian Education Ministry official to this issue (Downes 2011):

‘In another part of our research almost half of the respondents of ISCED 2 level participants stated that personal or emotional problems keep them from pursuing their education. Are there plans on a national level to introduce supportive offers in Austria? In your opinion, how could this situation be improved on a federal level?’

*This brings me back to the working group of federal government and federal provinces’ governments and the plans concerning the lower secondary diploma. We have a strictly calculated size of pedagogical support because we said it’s not working properly without...It is starting with the “visiting” education work, where we want to approach the target group proactively instead of waiting for them to come by themselves. There must be somebody here for them permanently and a certain amount of time should be calculated for this kind of care (Rammel and Gottwald, 2010)’.*

# **A1. Holistic bridges between Health and Education: A mental health/emotional support and early intervention focus for national ESL strategies – depression, trauma, bullying, school climate, family support outreach, substance abuse prevention**

## **Poverty impacts on mental health, mental health impacts on early school leaving**

- Mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, disruptive behaviour disorders, eating disorders, or post-traumatic stress disorder, can negatively impact on a child's school success, as well as general well-being (Kessler 2009; World Health Organization 2003)
- Children living in low-income families are especially vulnerable to mental health difficulties (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2009; US Department of Health and Human Services 2001).

Quiroga, Janosz & Bisset (2013) based on a high-risk longitudinal sample (2000– 2006) of French-speaking adolescents living in Montreal

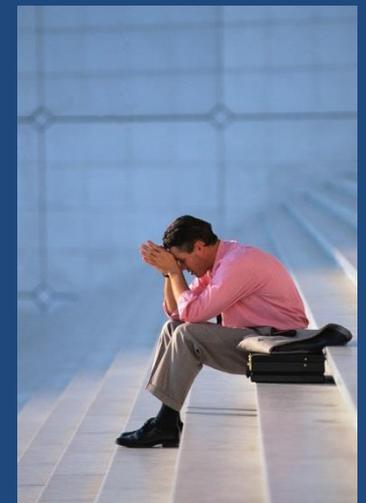
- recruited from two suburban secondary schools ranked by the Ministry of Education of Quebec (MEQ) in the three lowest deciles of socioeconomic status (SES) according to mother's education and parental employment.

\* 493 participants (228 girls and 265 boys).

Quiroga et al. (2013) Results show that depression scores were negatively correlated with self-perceived academic competence but not with self-reported academic achievement –

\*depression symptoms at the beginning of secondary school are related to higher dropout mainly by being associated with pessimistic views about the likelihood to reach desired school outcomes...the connection between early depression and leaving school without qualifications is mostly indirect, as it is accounted for by achievement-related self-perceptions.

Quiroga et al. (2013) “interventions that target student mental health and negative self-perceptions are likely to improve dropout prevention”.



## **Even apart from poverty related depression, emotional distress contributes to early school leaving:**

A troubling number of adolescents showing serious emotional distress and depression symptoms are at risk for school failure and dropout (Quiroga, Janosz, Lyons, & Morin, 2012; Thompson, Moody, & Eggert, 1994; Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, Epstein, & Sumi, 2005).

A meta-analysis of 28 longitudinal studies found that bullying doubled the risk for depression an average of 7 years later, even after controlling for numerous other risk factors (Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Loeber, 2011).

## Emotional trauma (bereavement, rape, sexual abuse, bullying, family break up, sleep related problems) – supports needed to prevent early school leaving

Irish Parliament and Senate Report on early school leaving (2010): Case studies of those who left school early due to trauma factors of rape, bereavement, sexual abuse

Wider referral processes – reach withdrawn kids

-Evidence suggests that the emotional support needs of withdrawn students, who are at risk of early school leaving, may be missed by teachers compared with those students displaying and externalising problems through aggression (Doll 1996; Downes 2004).

### **Downes & Maunsell (2007):**

*“Why do you think some people are dying ? Because there is no one to talk to”*

- *“we should do more personal development”*

- *“girls slit their wrists”*

- *“girls take tablets and slice their wrists”*

- *“girls sleeping around to hurt themselves, other ways instead of slitting wrists”*

## Bullying and Early School Leaving

Estonian national report in Downes (2011):

*Most students come from ordinary secondary schools because they had problems with learning or discipline...The majority of those who have dropped out of or left their previous school are lower secondary students. They had conflicts with teachers or other problems and could not continue in their old school.*

*Lower secondary students are younger than 17 years old.*

*They are referred to us by the Department of Education; we cannot admit such students without the Department's approval.*

*They could not cope in their old school. (...) Some schools (in particular those that have a*

*social worker) refer their problematic students to us. The main problem is bullying. This year*

*we have two such students and they are doing well. Our students are older and bullies cannot dominate (Tamm and Saar, 2010).*

## Multiple domains intervention needed for bullying prevention success – a risk factor for ESL

Pervasive teasing and bullying in a school may lead to disengagement and avoidance of school, distraction and inattentiveness in the classroom, and, ultimately, poorer academic performance (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2011; Lacey & Cornell, 2011).



## **School Climate, Teasing, Bullying (Cornell et al. 2013)**

Notably, one standard deviation increases in student and teacher-reported Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying were associated with 16.5% and 10.8% increases in dropout counts, respectively, holding all other variables constant.

A basic conclusion from Cornell et al.'s 2013 study is that the Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying in high schools deserves serious consideration by educators in addressing the problem of ESL.

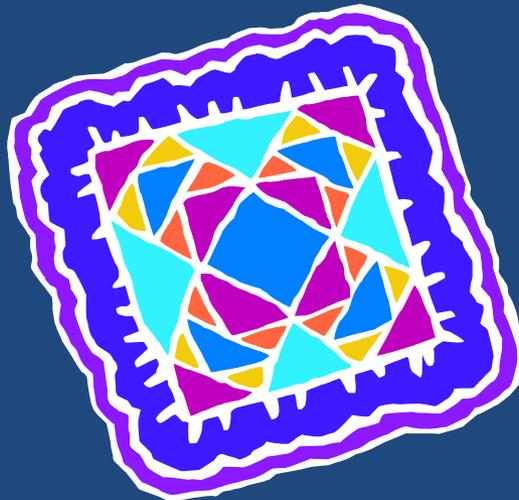
In a sample of 276 high schools, the level of teasing and bullying reported by both ninth-grade students and teachers was predictive of cumulative dropout counts over 4 years after the cohort reached 12th grade.

Cornell et al. (2013) note that dropout programs often focus too narrowly on changes in individual students, without considering broader peer and school influences.

Cornell et al. (2013) “teasing and bullying may be a neglected source of decay to the social capital of schools that generates an atmosphere of mistrust and alienation, animosity and fear that ultimately pushes students to abandon their educational aspirations”.

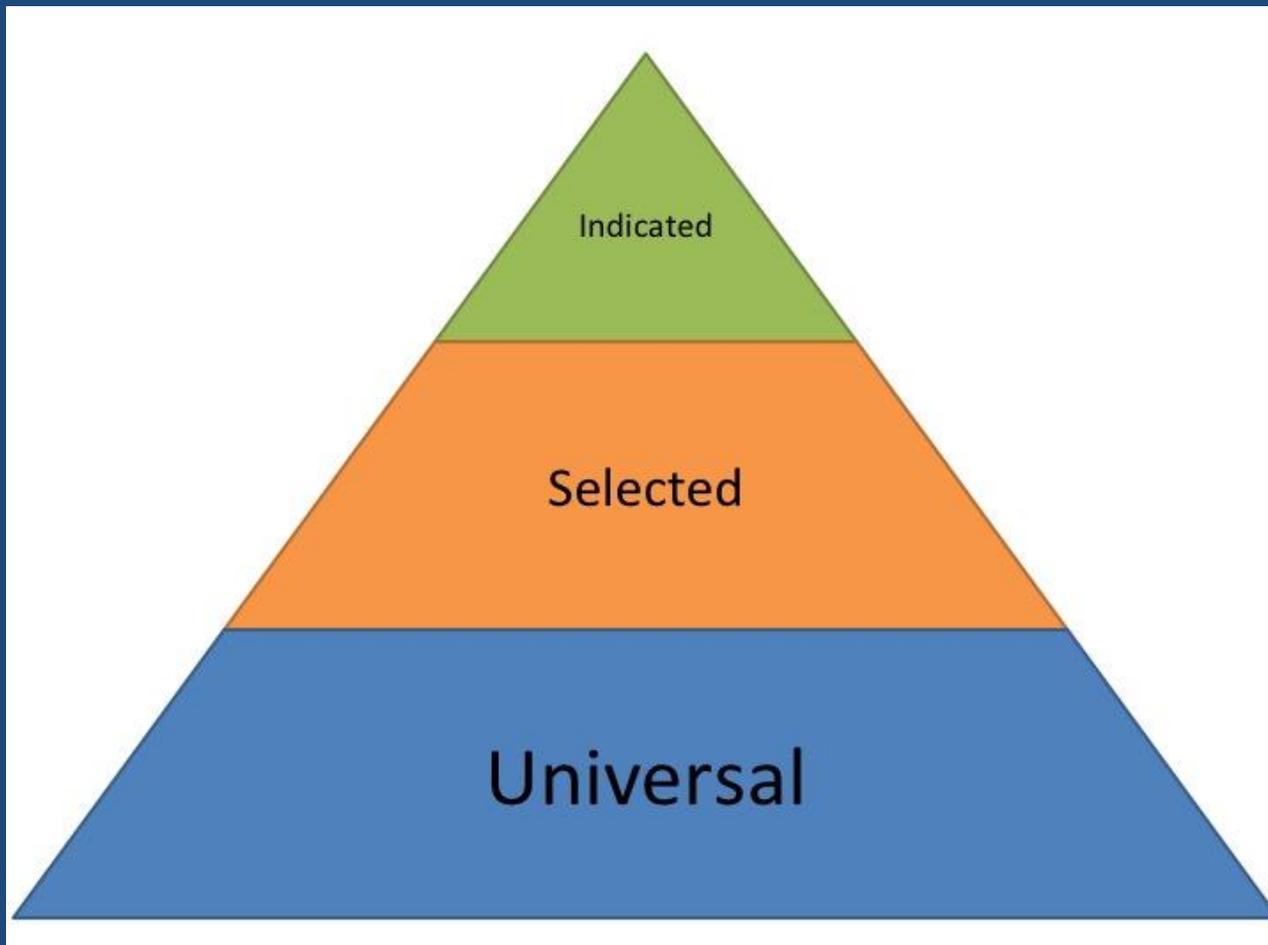
## **A2. Differentiated Focus on Need through Multidisciplinary Teams: From Multiple Agencies to Cohesive Multidisciplinary Teams for Early School Leaving Prevention**

- Emotional support**
- Outreach family support**
- Speech and language**



## A2. Differentiated Levels of Need for Prevention

see Downes (2014) on this for ESL



The *Alliances for Inclusion* report (Edwards & Downes 2013) reviewed the enabling conditions for the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams and crosssectoral approaches for early school leaving prevention, building on 16 examples from 10 European countries.

-A policy focus is needed to go beyond multiple agencies -**Need to minimise fragmentation across diverse services 'passing on bits of the child' and family** (Edwards & Downes 2013)

-**the multi-faceted nature of risk requires a multi-faceted response** that needs to go beyond referrals to disparate services resulting in this 'passing on bits of the child'

- For genuine interprofessional collaboration for early school leaving prevention, for example, between schools and multidisciplinary teams of, **outreach care workers, therapists/counsellors, nurses, speech and language therapists, social workers, occupational therapists** policy-led co-location is not sufficient. Efforts are needed to support inter-professional collaborations and overcome resistance. It is not enough just to designate a desk for these services in schools.

Need to focus on direct delivery and to minimise 'committee sitting' (Downes 2013a)

- For ESL, to adopt a multifaceted approach via multi-disciplinarity through either one team or two collaborating agencies as a common direct delivery network (Downes 2013a)

- A focus is needed on expanding the multi-disciplinarity of existing teams (2 agencies or one team) in a local area, bridging (mental) health and education expertise

Prevention and early intervention focus

- To engage directly with problems related to early school leaving, for example, nonattendance, trauma, bullying, mental health difficulties, language development, parental support, sleep deficits, risk of substance misuse, suspension/expulsion, conflict with teachers

\*Outreach work to reach most marginalised families

- Each family has one 'lead professional' to link them with others (Edwards & Downes 2013a)

\*Continuum of interventions – all, some, intensive individual

## A2. Differentiated Levels of Need for Prevention

### A2. Differentiated Focus on Need through Multidisciplinary Teams

#### Alternatives to suspension

- Downes (2011): Lithuania: *According to management and the teacher interviewed approximately 10 percent of students are expelled from school in each year. The reasons are usually behaviour problems, bullying, harassment, aggressiveness i.e. non-academic reasons prevail. The teacher mentioned that there were no expelled students for not attending classes. The statistics, according to the management can be collected but this will not solve the problem (Taljunaite et al 2010)*

## Alternatives to Suspension

Suspension rates themselves are predictive of dropout rates (Lee et al., 2011).

An English study by Rennison et al (2005) found that young people in the NEET [Not in Education, Employment or Training] group were over three times more likely previously to have been excluded from school than young people overall.



Downes (2011) Russia: A multidisciplinary team plays a key role in devising alternative strategies to suspension in this example from a Russian school:

*The school doesn't practice expulsion or suspension of students. Instead, the psychological support service team regularly conducts preventive meetings and conversations with students who have discipline or study problems. Each school has a Preventive Council aimed at dealing with 'problem' students...The psychologist and social teacher conduct conversations and meetings with adult students in case their discipline or studying practices are improper. Use of preventive measures as an alternative to expulsion shows that the school staff aims to keep as many students at risk of early leaving at school as possible, which proves how much they are indeed interested in students and care for them (Kozlovskiy, Khokhlova & Veits, 2010).*

In Polish national research (CBOS 2006), being put outside the classroom was a sanction experienced by 15% of students, with 53% observing this as occurring for others.

The Irish post-primary figure of 5% for suspension, applied to the total population of 332,407 students equates to well over 16,000 students suspended from post-primary schools in 2005/6 (ERC/NEWB 2010).



Downes & Maunsell (2007):

*-“Suspension is stupid, just gives them a break”*

One service provider suggests that:

*“suspension used a lot, need to put something in place if suspended, not much endeavour to keep them in school”.*

## **Early school leaving is a mental health issue !**

- Kaplan et al's (1994) North American study of 4,141 young people tested in 7th grade and once again as young adults which found a significant damaging effect of dropping out of high school on mental health functioning as measured by a 10-item self-derogation scale, a 9-item anxiety scale, a 6-item depression scale and a 6-item scale designed to measure coping.
- This effect was also evident when controls were applied for psychological mental health as measured at 7th grade. The significant damaging effect of dropping out of school was also evident even when controls were applied for gender, father's occupational status, and ethnicity
- Though early school leaving can have different effects across countries (Van Alphen 2009)

## Prevention of substance abuse

A focus on substance abuse related issues is a key dimension to prevention of early school leaving (Downes 2003; EMCDDA 2003, 2003a) and yet it is given little emphasis across the different examples from schools across the national reports in Downes (2011).

One exception is the Russian national report:

‘The main goal of the psychological support service is to provide favorable conditions for all students, build up trustworthy relationships between them and the school and provide psychological help for those students who lack it in their families.

*“They often come here with their spirit broken. They are offended at the world and intimidated, so it’s very important for us to help them form a strong, stable and harmonious personality, who is fully aware of his/her desires and ambitions. We want to bring up a person who understands that s/he is not alone in the world and that there will be many problems on his/her life path so we teach them to be ready for those problems and be able to overcome them”.* (Kozlovskiy, Kokhlova & Viets 2010)’

❖ Need for strategies to challenge fatalism which is a risk factor for drug use and other self-harming behaviour, including a fatalism associated with early school leaving (Kalichman et al. 2000, Downes 2003; Ivers, McLoughlin & Downes 2010)

❖ O'Connell & Sheikh (2009) explored non-academic (non-cognitive) factors in early school leaving and found strong correlations with smoking and with lack of daily school preparation for early school leaving in a sample of over 25,000 8th grade US students from over 1,000 schools

### A3. Outreach – Community and Individual

**Community based family support centres, with multidisciplinary teams linked with preschools and schools, with a focus on child and parent mental health, emotional support and school attendance**

Between 2006 and 2012 approx. 3,000 of the total 9,000 child care centres in the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) are being developed into certified “Familienzentren” (family centres). Family centres are designed to bundle services for families in the local community. The concept of the state programme “Familienzentrum NRW” acknowledges the significance of early support and intervention for children and families (Eurochild 2011)

As described by Eurochild (2011), the Familienzentrum Nordrhein-Westfalen...

- develops children's day-care facilities into places for learning and gathering experience for children and their parents whose parenting skills get enhanced,
- assists parents in resolving everyday conflicts because such assistance can be provided more immediately and smoothly,
- helps immigrant families and educationally deprived families to be better cared for,

The municipality of Eindhoven has chosen for a family support policy based on multifunctional services directly linked to primary schools in these SPIL Centres. This choice had been made based on the principle of the early detection of children at risk as early as possible and as close to the family as possible. The main reason for this is that schools, day care centres and kindergartens are places with the best access to 'find' children at risk and their parents (Eurochild 2011)

## Downes (2014) 10 European City Municipalities Strategies for Early School Leaving Prevention:

\*Community 'one stop shops' of multidisciplinary teams address system fragmentation of services

\*Beyond community centre focused outreach, there is also a need for individual outreach to some families' homes at the level of highest need (indicated prevention). Many such families may have a history of intergenerational substance abuse.

\*High levels of unexplained nonattendance by a student at school is a clear behavioural manifestation associated with risk of early school leaving. This nonattendance issue is tied up with emotional and mental health issues in the family system and needs to be engaged with through an integrated holistic response, such as with outreach care workers or other professionals to provide psychological and practical support.



There is an emerging European Union consensus on this issue, as the recent EUNEC (European Network of Education Councils) statement on early school leaving, following the Vilnius EU Presidency conference (2013) on early school leaving:

“Tackling early school leaving should be part of a multi-institutional and inter-institutional approach that puts the school in the center of a chain of public and social services. It is about a common approach between the society outside the school and the community within the school. Family and social services, community centers ...are involved”

## B. Democracy – Inclusive Systems as Emotional-Relational Communicative Systems

5B2Funding to promote participatory school/learning

3B2 Enhance educator to become professional

In the EU Commission public consultation ‘Schools for the 21st century’, classroom management strategies were raised as an issue needing to be better addressed by teacher initial education.

WHO (2012) Modifications that appear to have merit include:

- establishing a caring atmosphere that promotes autonomy;
  - providing positive feedback;
  - not publicly humiliating students who perform poorly;
  - identifying and promoting young people’s special interests and skills
- acknowledge that schools value the diversity they bring



Cefai & Cooper (2010), Malta review of qualitative research: 'the autocratic and rigid behaviour management approach adopted by many teachers in their response to misbehaviour. Their blaming and punitive approach was seen in many cases as leading to an exacerbation of the problem...It looks...that perceived victimisation by teachers was more prevalent and had more impact than victimisation and bullying by peers'

A number of US longitudinal studies provide evidence that a teacher's report of a supportive relationship with a student has positive effects on elementary students' behavioral and academic adjustment (Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, & Ponitz, 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson, 1999; Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008).

## Overcoming System Blockages in Communication: Professional Development for Teacher Conflict Resolution Skills and Cultural Competence/Diversity Training

Pyhältö et al. (2010) Finland, 518 students, 9th grade, 6 schools: 'unjustified and authoritarian behaviour that undermined pupil's agency was considered as a source of burden, anxiety, and anger'

A school principal from the Estonian national report:

The secondary education system in Lithuania according to a school management representative: *"The attitudes towards students have to change and then they will feel better at schools. [...] at the moment students are selected under the criteria „good“ and „bad“ and those who get the „bad“ label do not want to stay at such school – they leave it"* (Taljunaite et al 2010, in Downes 2011)

*"schools can create circumstances where unwanted students feel that they have to leave... and they do..."* (Tamm & Saar 2010, in Downes 2011).

# No sunlight ! (Downes & Maunsell 2007)



*“I can’t wait to leave, I would leave tomorrow if I had the choice because I get picked on by a teacher”*

*“No some[teachers] think they own the school”*

Downes' (2004) student centered research in Ballyfermot, Dublin, 12 focus groups and 173 questionnaire responses from secondary students:

*“Have anger management courses for teachers”* (female, focus group):

*“The teachers shouting at you. That makes me really, really down”* (Age 13, F)

*“If the teachers didn't roar at you”* (Age 13, F)

*“Have an equal teaching system and sack ignorant snobby teachers...very harsh teachers usually make me stay out of school”* (Age 16, M)

## Challenge: Improve Experience of School Belonging and School Climate for Socio-Economically Excluded Groups

-Downes (2011): Estonia: *The majority of those who have dropped out of or left their previous school are lower secondary students. They had conflicts with teachers or other problems and could not continue in their old school.* (Tamm & Saar, 2010)

Downes (2011): Slovenia: *You see that he needs help, he needs a hand..., a talk...however... If there were any one to talk to. ... A single teacher may retain a pupil in school and this often happens”* (Ivančič et al., 2010).

# Percentage of socio-economically disadvantaged students who agree/disagree with the following statements (PISA 2012)

Countries	I feel like I belong at school % S.E	I feel like an outsider (or left out of things at school) % S.E.
<b>Austria</b>	<b>82 (1.6)</b>	<b>89.9 (1.1)</b>
Belgium	63.5 (1.6)	88.4 (1.0)
Czech Republic	73.6 (1.9)	80.5 (1.6)
Denmark	69.3 (1.6)	90.3 (1.0)
Estonia	78.2 (1.8)	90.0 (1.3)
Finland	80.5 (1.1)	89.2 (1.0)
France	38 (1.7)	73.2 (1.8)
Germany	83.8 (1.6)	89.7 (1.4)
Greece	87.8 (1.2)	83.9 (1.4)
Hungary	83.5 (1.1)	85.6 (1.6)
Ireland	76.7 (1.5)	91.6 (1.0)
Italy	75 (0.9)	89.3 (0.6)
Luxembourg	71.9 (1.7)	85.9 (1.2)
Netherlands	82.4 (1.7)	89.8 (1.3)
Norway	83.5 (1.5)	89.1 (1.0)
Poland	73.2 (1.8)	88.2 (1.3)
Portugal	87.9 (1.2)	87.4 (1.5)
Slovak Republic	75.4 (1.8)	74.0 (2.3)
Slovenia	83.7 (1.7)	89.0 (1.2)
Spain	92.1 (0.7)	90.1 (1.0)
Sweden	74.8 (1.9)	87.0 (1.3)
United Kingdom	74.9 (1.5)	86.9 (1.1)
OECD Average	78.1 (0.3)	86.2 (0.2)

## Students' Voices – A Clear Gap in the EU Council and Commission Documents (2011) on Early School Leaving Prevention

EU Commission Thematic Working Group on early school leaving report (2013):

“Ensure children and young people are at the centre of all policies aimed at reducing ESL. Ensure their voices are taken into account when developing and implementing such policies.”

Not enough qualitative research on experience of the education system (Cohen 2006).

Article 12 (1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which declares: 'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'

\*Children's voices largely absent from US research as they have not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



It emerges from interviews with government officials in the Austrian national report that there is a central committee at national level for lifelong learning but not for access and social inclusion issues in education (Downes 2011):

*We only have a real panel assignment for lifelong learning. There is also a steering committee for the whole lifelong learning process which is based in our house...What regards social inclusion, people with disadvantages, we don't have any committees, but it is nevertheless a main focus in our work. We know where the problems are from several research results, experts consulting and evaluations, which have been carried out. We know what needs to be done and discuss this also with other concerned resorts. (Rammel and Gottwald 2010 )*

## Priority Recommendations A

**A1. Holistic bridges between Health and Education -**

**A2. Differentiated Focus on Need through Multidisciplinary Teams (Downes 2014)**

**A3. Outreach – Community and individual outreach**

- Funding Strand for Community based, multidisciplinary ‘one stop shops’ for family support and children’s needs linked with preschools and schools

- \*Clear strategy for children and families at indicated prevention (chronic need) level

- \*Individual family/child outreach to homes for pupils with chronic non-attendance at school

- \*Funding for systems of emotional support and mental health supports for most vulnerable children and young people at risk of ESL

## **Priority Recommendations B.**

### **Democracy - Inclusive Systems as Emotional-Relational Communicative Systems**

\*Funding and Review of Existence, Quality and Intensity of Preservice Teacher Education (Primary and Postprimary) regarding Conflict Resolution Skills, Teacher Self-Awareness, Diversity and Cultural Competence, Bullying Prevention Skills

\*Funding and Review of Existence, Quality and Intensity of Inservice Teacher Education regarding Conflict Resolution Skills, Teacher Self-Awareness Diversity and Cultural Competence, Bullying Prevention Skills

\*Increased Access to the Teaching Profession for Socio-Economically Marginalised Groups and Ethnic Minorities

\*Systematic and External Review Processes of Children and Young People's Experiences of Schools in Local Contexts

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