Let's care

BUILDING SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS
TO FOSTER EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION
AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

D 2.2 Policy paper: economics of early school dropout: impact assessment and policy recommendations

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DOCUMENT CONTRIBUTORS

Deliverable responsible	COMILLAS
Contributors	Organisation
GONZALO GÓMEZ BENGOECHEA	COMILLAS
BLANCA GÓMEZ BENGOECHEA	COMILLAS
ALBA COUSO LOSADA	COMILLAS
ANA BERASTEGUI PEDRO-VIEJO	COMILLAS
AMAIA HALTY BARRUTIETA	COMILLAS
Reviewers	Organisation
ISABEL MUÑOZ SAN ROQUE	COMILLAS
MERCEDES FERNÁNDEZ	COMILLAS
ANA BERASTEGUI PEDRO-VIEJO	COMILLAS
EVA BAJO MARCOS	COMILLAS
GIULIA DI LISIO	COMILLAS
ANTONIO MILA ROA	COMILLAS
PEDRO DIAS	UCP
OLATZ MIRANDA	ZABALA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
ESL	Early School Leaving
E.U.	European Union
E.Z.	Euro Zone
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics

Executive Summary

This deliverable offers a comprehensive view of the consequences of dropping out of school and the policy strategies designed to tackle it.

Firstly, we present the main contributions of literature to the relationship between early school leaving (ESL) and economic performance. The Human Capital Theory is critical for this because ESL affects knowledge, skills, and abilities acquisition. They are the foundations of human capital, which impacts long-term economic performance. The literature that studies the relationship previously mentioned can be divided into two broad blocks. On the one hand, research has studied the individual economic consequences of leaving school early. Students who drop out of school are more likely to have lower employment probabilities, lower salaries, and tend to remain in low-status jobs for longer. On the other hand, literature has been interested in investigating the influence of specific economic circumstances on the decision to leave school. Research has evidenced the relationship between economic circumstances and ESL decisions. However, there is still no unanimous agreement on the direction of this relationship or the mechanisms that drive it. That is because the decision to abandon school can be affected by many different particularities: economic context, labour market dynamics, family environment, and individual circumstances (among others). In addition, results derived from our data analysis suggest that ESL would act as a barrier to growth only in skill-intensive regions. At the same time, it could be a sign of more robust economic performance (with stronger labour demand) in areas with lower skill needs. Second, our analysis shows that a higher unemployment rate may act as a disincentive to keep on regular education, and, from the opposite point of view, a higher ESL may be associated with lower employability.

Having studied the economic consequences of early school leaving, we have performed an EU-27-scoped analysis of policies designed to tackle it. At least six European countries, namely Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta, and Romania, have driven national strategies to combat early school leaving. The remaining 21 European nations have adopted policies encompassing general objectives and specific measures to address this issue. Among the countries lacking a national strategy but implementing concrete policies, this study examines the early school leaving policies of the six Let's Care countries (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Bulgaria, and Lithuania) to detect their main dimensions from the perspective of safe education (that means revising the policy measures that influence the physical and socioemotional determinants of students' security to drive learning, school engagement, and the prevention of early school leaving).

The policy analysis is based on a template designed to detect three matters: policies' main dimensions, targeted vulnerable populations (considering gender, ethnicity, migrant background, low

socioeconomic status, disabilities, and non-parental care), and potential impacts on the different Lets' Care pillars (namely Safe Learning, Safe Teaching, Safe Schools, and Safe Education). More than sixty policies were finally revised. To facilitate the understanding of the analysis, in table 1, we highlight only the policies that cover more dimensions:

Table 1: Let's Care countries highlighted policies against early school leaving.

COUNTRY	POLICIES
Spain	• PROA + Program.
Italy	• National Operational Program "For the School". • Investment 1.4 (Mission 4, Component 1) of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.
Bulgaria	• Project Support for Success. • National Program Together for Every Child.
Lithuania	• Order No. ISAK-2549 of December 12, 2005, about schools for young people.
Poland	• Program Safe and Friendly School.
Portugal	• Educational Territories of Priority Intervention Programme (TEIP) • 21|23 Escola+ Plan.

To conclude, considering the findings of the previous sections, we propose some policy recommendations:

Recommendations considering National Strategies analysed:

- The wording of the policy measures should be clear and concise.
- The text should include a summary chart with all the specific policy measures that facilitates their identification and systematization.
- The text should include a list of indicators in which policy measures would be linked to indicators for correctly monitoring the expected results.
- The document should plan the monitoring and evaluation through the elaboration of regular reports and specific evaluations.
- The text should mention the place in which the monitoring and evaluation results will be published.
- The text should indicate the public body in charge of the evaluation activities.
- Enable the participation of different actors during the elaboration of the policy.

- The Strategy should count on financing.
- The text should expressly mention vertical and horizontal coordination structures with their location and their specific functions.
- It would be interesting to carry out studies that analysed possible relations with other policies that are already into effect.

Recommendations considering the Let's Care countries policies analysed:

- Consider the following dimensions during the design of ESL policies: (i) Permeability of the education system (ii) Facilitate transitions between school stages (iii) Avoid segregation (iv) Language support (v) Expert support for inclusion (vi) Enable students' participation in school.
- Consider the ecological level's scope (individual, relational, community, and political) during the design of ESL policies.
- Consider paying attention to students' well-being and security in the design of policy measures against school dropout.

1. Introduction

European Council defines *early school leaving* in the 2011/C 191/01 Recommendation as "those who leave education and training with only lower secondary education or less, and who are no longer in education and training" (Council of the European Union, 2011, p.1). The European Union rate of ESL was 9.6% in 2022 (European Commission, 2023). This percentage has been gradually decreasing since 2012. The three European Union countries with the highest ESL rate in 2022 were Romania (15.6%), Spain (13.9%), and Hungary (12.4). Conversely, the European Union countries with the lower ESL rate in the same year were Croatia (2.3%), Ireland (3.7%), Greece, and Slovenia (4.1%).

The negative consequences of ESL have been extensively studied. In general, it seems that early school leavers get low-status jobs (Kim, 2013), have lower salaries (Blackemor & Low, 1984), and have worse employment probabilities (Brekke, 2014). Some authors have also alerted about the connection between ESL and poverty and social exclusion. For instance, Kearney & Levine (2016) showed that boys from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds living in areas with high-income inequality are more likely to leave school before graduation.

In Europe, some policies have been implemented to tackle early school leaving. The Europe 2020 Strategy published in 2010 set the target of reducing the ESL rates below 10% before 2020 (European Commission, 2010). One year later, the Council of the European Union developed the 2011/C 191/01 Recommendation. The institution suggested to the member states the development of national strategies against early school leaving that incorporated prevention, intervention, and compensation measures. In the year 2021, the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (2021-2030) was launched, and it renewed the aim set by the Europe 2020 Strategy setting the target of reducing the ESL rates below 9% before 2030 (Council of the European Union, 2021). Finally, in 2022, the Council of Europe published the 2022/C 469/01 Recommendation, which replaced the 2011/C 191/01 Recommendation (Council of the European Union, 2022). This document enhances the development of strategies for school success[1] that also contribute to the reduction of early school leaving. There are two main differences with the previous Recommendation. Firstly, the appearance of references to school well-being linked to student success (teachers' well-being, positive school climate, socioemotional education, bullying prevention, school bonding, and participative environment, among others). Secondly, the introduction of a systemic approach to policy design that

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[1] The 2022/C 469/01 Recommendation understands "school success" not only in relation to academic achievement but also in connection with socio-emotional development and well-being.

considers different levels: student, teacher, school centre, and systemic level. As can be observed, this approach is similar to the Let's Care vision, and it opens ESL policies to the personal, relational, and social dimensions that this investigation has studied. Last but not least, the document attaches particular importance to vulnerable populations (with special mention of socioeconomic and migrant backgrounds, ethnicities, and disabilities).

This deliverable aims to offer a comprehensive view of the consequences of dropping out of school and the policy strategies designed to tackle it to anticipate some policy gaps. In the first section, the economic consequences of early school leaving have been studied, revising what scientific literature has said and analysing what data shows about the issue. Then, ESL policies in the six countries of the Let's Care project were studied to detect their main dimensions from the perspective of safe education (revising the policy measures that influence the physical and socioemotional determinants of students' security to drive learning, school engagement, and the prevention of early school leaving). Finally, some policy recommendations can be found.

2. SECTION I. Economy analysis
## 2.1.	Literature Review

### 2.1.1.	Human Capital Theory

Human capital can be defined as "the stock of productive skills, talents, health, and expertise of the labour force, just as physical capital is the stock of plant, equipment, machines, and tools. Within each type of capital, the performance, vintage, and efficiency can vary" (Goldin, 2016). Economic performance, on the other hand, refers to the overall performance of an economy as measured by indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment rates or productivity.

Theoretical literature has identified four ways human capital impacts economic performance: increased productivity, innovation, competitiveness, and reduced poverty and inequality. Workers with higher education and training are more efficient and can produce more output in a certain period (De la Fuente, 2011; Nelson & Phelps, 1966). Human capital is also closely linked to innovation. Highly educated and skilled workers are more likely to develop new technologies, products, and services, which can lead to economic growth and higher living standards (Engelbrecht, 1997). Consequently, countries with a highly educated workforce can be more competitive in the global marketplace. Skilled workers can attract investments from multinational corporations (Cassiman, 2010; Kunst, 1989) and domestic firms. Finally, a higher stock of human capital can also reduce poverty and

inequality; when individuals have access to education and training, they are more likely to secure higher-paying jobs, which can lift them out of poverty (Attanasio, 2022; Becker, 1995).

2.1.2. The relationship between early school leaving and economic performance in literature

The literature that studies the relationship between ESL and economic performance can be divided into two broad blocks. On the one hand, research has covered the individual economic consequences of early school leaving. On the other hand, it has investigated the influence of specific economic circumstances on the decision to leave school. ESL affects acquiring knowledge, skills, and abilities that constitute human capital, impacting long-term economic performance.

Even though school dropout is a relevant problem, there are not many scientific publications in the European context about it; most of them come from Anglo-Saxon countries, especially the United States. Nonetheless, setting aside the contextual differences, some interesting general findings arise.

The individual economic consequences of early school leaving.

The economic consequences of dropping out of school have been extensively studied in the literature, and a consensus exists among different authors about the following three statements.

Firstly, students who drop out of school are likelier to have lower employment probabilities than their graduate counterparts. In this regard, Campolieti et al. (2010) found that the probability of being employed is lower in the case of dropouts (p.47). Similarly, Brekke (2014) also detected that school leavers' employment probabilities were lower than graduates (p. 32).

Secondly, students who drop out of school are likelier to have lower salaries. In this respect, Blakemore & Low (1984), in a four-year study, noted that as time goes by, dropout wages could be lower in comparison with graduates (p.117). Along the same line, Campolieti et al. (2010) found that dropouts received lower wages than graduates (p.47). Nonetheless, a little nuance could appear depending on the period considered because Rumberger & Lamb (2003) affirmed that, in the short-term, dropouts obtained upper wage premiums (p. 363).

Thirdly, students who drop out of school tend to remain in low-status jobs longer. Kim (2023) used a latent class growth analysis through which the majority of dropouts were classified in the "dead-end careers" category, which implies starting in low-status jobs and remaining in that category over time (p.311).

The influence of specific economic circumstances on the decision to leave school.

Different authors have studied whether economic circumstances influence the dropout decision. There is enough evidence to confirm that this relation exists. However, there is still no unanimous agreement on how this connection occurs. That is because the decision to abandon school, even if we only look at it from the economic point of view, can be affected by plenty of different particularities: economic context (economic crisis versus economic growth), a specific type of labour market (seasonal labour market, low-skilled labour market, …), family circumstances (financial needs, value given to education, …) or a specific individual perception of the economic circumstances. Different variables and methodological approaches can be found in the literature to address these particularities since researchers try to understand the circumstances that affect this relationship in every case. Some examples of these dissents are exposed below.

Considering the authors that used unemployment rates as a proxy for economic circumstances, Crofton et al. (2009), in a study performed in Maryland State, affirmed that lower unemployment rates were connected with higher dropout (p.455). Montmarquette et al. (2007) obtained similar results in Canada (p. 759). In addition, Rees & Mocan (1997), in a study in New York State, reported that a growth in unemployment was connected to a decline in dropouts. Nonetheless, this was only true for White and Hispanic populations, but not for Black ones (pp.105-106).

Adding more granularity to these analyses, some authors distinguish between youth and adult unemployment rates. Campolieti et al. (2010) used provincial rates. They found that a high youth unemployment rate was related to a lower dropout probability, whereas a high adult unemployment rate was related to a higher dropout probability (p.44). However, De Witte et al. (2013), in a comprehensive study that covers different European countries, found that youth unemployment rates boost school leaving (p.341).

From the urban geography perspective, McNeal (2011) highlights that deprived local labour market areas are connected with an increase in the probability of abandoning education, specifically for White males (pp.324-325). Besides, Guio et al. (2018) found that a high incidence of unemployment in the school community impacts in a negative way the students' maths grades, specifically in the case of low socioeconomic pupils (p.312).

Due to the diversity of contexts, variables, and methodological approaches, the literature does not exhibit an undisputed general conclusion on this issue. Nonetheless, we can highlight some aspects that should be part of any study of ESL decisions' drivers. Those would be socioeconomic status, membership of vulnerable populations (regarding ethnicity or migrant background), gender,

unemployment rates (considering the differences that may arise using youth and adults), the type of labour market, and the overall economic context.

2.2. Data exploration

Table 2 classifies the indicators used to build the different analyses contained in this section according to their source, analytical stage in which they have been used, frequency, regional coverage and Let's Care countries availability. The selection of indicators has been carried out under a dual perspective. First, key variables must be supported by their academic relevance. Second, their availability and frequency must be adequate to perform the necessary analyses. Finally, efforts have been made to use different sources to ensure their multidimensional informational capacity.

Table 2: Data Exploration – Indicators Basic Information

SOURCE	INDICATOR	STAGE	UPDATED	REGIONAL COVERAGE	LET'S CARE COUNTRIES	COMMENTS
World Bank Education	Completion rate, lower secondary education, both sexes (%)	Context	Yearly	National	All	Discontinuous
World Bank Education & European Commission	Government expenditure on education as % of GDP (%)	Context	Yearly	National	All	Discontinuous
UNESCO	School life expectancy (years)	Context	Yearly	National	All	Full Data available
UNESCO	Mean Years of Schooling	Context	Yearly	National	All	Full Data available
OECD	Government expenditure on education as % of Gov. Spending	Context	Yearly	National	OECD Countries: No Bulgaria	Full Data available
OECD	Ratio of students to teaching staff	Context	Yearly	National	OECD Countries: No Bulgaria	Full Data available
PISA	PISA Reading Proficiency Levels	Context	Yearly	National	All	Discontinuous
PISA	PISA Mathematics Proficiency Levels	Context	Yearly	National	All	Discontinuous

PISA	PISA Science Proficiency Levels	Context	Yearly	National	All	Discontinuous
Eurostat	Early School Leaving	Analysis	Yearly	Regional NUTS2	All	Full Data - Already exploited
Eurostat	GDP Growth	Analysis	Yearly	Regional NUTS2	All	Full Data - Already exploited
Eurostat	Unemployment Rate	Analysis	Yearly	Regional NUTS2	All	Full Data - Already exploited
Eurostat	At-Risk of Poverty Rate	Analysis	Yearly	Regional NUTS2	All	Full Data - Already exploited
National Sources	Variables reported to the multilateral institutions considered					

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Note: All refers to the six Let's Care Consortium countries: Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, Spain, Poland and Portugal

2.2.1. *Contextual Analysis*

In this section, we describe the educational context for the six Let's Care partners: Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, and Spain. To do that, we have selected indicators from the World Bank Educational dataset, as well as from UNESCO, the OECD and PISA evaluation reports (See Annex I for details on the different datasets used in Section 2.2.1).

National databases are used as a source for the construction of the different indicators published by these multilateral institutions. Eurostat data is used in Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, as they report regional NUTS2 data, not just national aggregates.

Tables 3, 4 and 5 gather the latest available datapoints for the indicators considered. Variables have been grouped around three big categories: resources, features and characteristics of the educational system, and outcomes. This rationale allows us to establish the context in which the relationship between early school leaving and economic impact will be analysed in the upcoming section.

First, in Table 3, we compare the resources that each country invests on education. We do that through the total spending on education as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the education spending relative to total public spending. The Tables contained in this section highlight in orange the datapoints below the average for the OECD and / or the European Union. We shade in green those indicators for which countries in the sample are above the average. For indicators with no OECD or EU average information we calculate the average from the six Let's Care countries.

Table 3: Contextual Analysis – Let's Care Countries. Resources invested in education.

	Resources			
	Gov. Spending Education (% of GDP)	Education /Public Spending (%) Primary	Education/Public Spending (%) Lower secondary	Education/Public Spending (%) Upper secondary
Bulgaria	3.9%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Italy	4.1%	2.1%	1.1%	2.2%
Lithuania	4.9%	1.9%	2.7%	1.1%
Poland	4.6%	2.3%	2.0%	1.7%
Portugal	4.3%	2.9%	2.2%	2.2%
Spain	4.3%	2.5%	1.7%	1.9%
OECD	N/A	3.2%	2.1%	2.2%
EU	4.7%	2.6%	2.0%	2.0%

Source: Word Bank Education Statistics, Commission and OECD. Latest available year.

Data shows that Let's Care Consortium countries tend to spend between 4 and 5 % of their GDP on education, which is similar to the European Union average (4.7 %) in 2022. Portugal shows education over total public spending ratios above EU average in all categories considered. On the other hand, Spain falls behind the European aggregate in all cases. Data availability limits the comparability of the Bulgarian case.

In Table 4 we characterize the education systems of the six countries through three parameters: mean educational life, school life expectancy and students to teacher ratios for different educational levels.

Table 4: Contextual Analysis – Let's Care Countries. Education System Features.

	Characteristics / Features				
	Mean Years of Schooling	School life expectancy	Students to Teacher Primary	Students to Teacher Lower Secondary	Students to Teacher Upper Scondary
Bulgaria	11.4	13.9	N/A	N/A	N/A
Italy	10.7	16.7	11.2	10.7	10.1
Lithuania	13.5	16.4	10.0	10.0	9.5
Poland	13.2	15.9	12.8	9.9	11.3
Portugal	9.6	16.8	N/A	9.0	10.5
Spain	10.6	17.8	11.1	10.8	10.3
OECD	N/A	N/A	12.8	13.2	13.3
EU	N/A	16.3	13.4	12.2	13.4

Data shows three interesting findings. The first one is that, with the exception of Bulgaria and Poland, the other 4 countries school life expectancy equals or exceeds the average for the European Union. The second one is that in countries like Italy, Portugal, and Spain the difference between the mean years of schooling and the life expectancy is above 5 years, which suggests the existence of an important number of educational dropouts. The students to teacher ratio is above OECD and EU averages for all educational levels in Let's Care countries with available data.

Finally, Table 5 shows two national educational outcomes: completion rates for the lower secondary education level and PISA exam grades for reading, mathematics, and science.

Table 5: Contextual Analysis – Let's Care Countries. Education System Outcomes.

	Outcomes			
	Completion rate	Pisa Reading	Pisa Mathematics	Pisa Science
Bulgaria	92.5%	404	417	421
Italy	99.0%	482	471	477
Lithuania	98.4%	472	475	484
Poland	93.3%	489	489	499
Portugal	93.9%	477	472	484
Spain	97.6%	474	473	485
OECD	N/A	476	472	485
EU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Results show completion rates above the average for Let's Care countries (95.8%) for the cases of Italy, Lithuania and Spain. Pisa reading exam scores are above OECD average for the case of Italy, Portugal, and Poland. Regarding mathematics scores, all countries are in the average or above, with the exception of Italy and Bulgaria. For science, Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, and Portugal fall behind OECD overall grade. Spain equals the average and Poland clearly exceeds it.

Poland stands above the average for all the three PISA-related indicators, followed by Portugal and Spain, that exceed it in two of them; Reading and Mathematics the former, and Mathematics and Science the latter. Bulgaria falls below the OECD aggregate in the three observed indicators.

2.2.2. Descriptive analysis

We study the primary observed evidence derived from the relationships found in the literature for the 6 countries of the Let's Care project. For this, we use data from Eurostat, which is the most up-to-date and granular available source to address the question posed in this document. There are

other databases on ESL and human capital with a wider variety of indicators (such as PISA, for example). However, Eurostat data is the only one that combines three key features: annual updating, regional availability and indicators that adequately frame the topic. Our recommendation is to use it for relevant policy analyses, without prejudice to the possibility of complementing it with other sources that provide a national perspective on the issue.

Data in Tables 6 and 7 shows the change between 2015 and 2022 for the following indicators: ESL, GDP cumulative change, unemployment rate, and at-risk-of-poverty rate. We selected 2015 for the beginning of our analysis since it is the first year all data points are available for the totality of the Let's Care countries.

ESL are individuals aged 18-24 who have completed, at most, a lower secondary education and are enrolled in further education or training. GDP in current $ measures the total value of each country's production measured in U.S. current dollars. GDP size is used to track the accumulated growth of each country between 2015 and 2022. The unemployment rate represents the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. Finally, the at-risk-of-poverty rate reflects the percentage of people at risk of falling into poverty based on their income levels.

Table 6: Descriptive Indicators – ESL and Economic Performance – 2015

	2015				
	ESL	GDP Current $	GDP Size	Unemployment Rate	At-Risk of Poverty Rate
Bulgaria	13.4	50.8	100	9.2	43.3
Italy	14.7	1836.8	100	12.0	28.4
Lithuania	5.5	41.4	100	9.1	29.4
Spain	20.0	1196.3	100	22.1	28.7
Poland	5.3	476.8	100	7.5	22.5
Portugal	13.7	199.4	100	12.9	26.4

Source: Eurostat and International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook, April 2023.

Table 7: Descriptive Indicators – ESL and Economic Performance – 2022

	2022				
	ESL	GDP Current $	GDP Size	Unemployment Rate	At-Risk of Poverty Rate
Bulgaria	10.5	89.1	175.5	4.3	32.2
Italy	11.5	2012.0	109.5	8.1	24.4
Lithuania	4.8	70.5	170.2	5.9	24.6
Spain	13.9	1400.5	117.1	12.9	26.0
Poland	4.8	688.3	144.4	2.9	15.9
Portugal	6.0	252.4	126.6	6.0	20.1

Source: Eurostat and International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook, April 2023.

In 2015, Spain experienced the highest ESL (20%) and unemployment rates (22.1%). On the other hand, Poland exhibited the lowest ESL and unemployment rates at 5.3 and 7.5%. Italy, the largest of the countries considered, experienced an at-risk poverty rate of 28.4% and an unemployment rate of 12%, almost a point lower than Portugal's. Bulgaria's data shows the country experienced the highest at-risk-of-poverty rate at 43.3%. Poland ESL was the lowest of the sample (22.5%).

As for 2022, Portugal reported the highest ESL rate (44.3%), while Poland still exhibited the lowest (7.4%). Once again, Spain experienced the highest unemployment rate at 12.9%, and Poland the lowest at 2.9%. Furthermore, Bulgaria grapples with the highest at-risk-of-poverty rate, recorded at 32.2%, while Poland registered the most favourable figure in this category, with a 15.9% rate.

The evolution of GDP size between 2015 and 2022 shows a two-speed growth pattern in the sample. More advanced countries (Italy, Spain, and Portugal) experienced weaker aggregate wealth accumulation than Poland, Lithuania, and Bulgaria. Consequently, at-risk of poverty, unemployment, and ESL rates fall much faster in the latter three-country group than in the former.

2.2.3.   Empirical analysis

Lastly, we studied the correlations between ESL and other indicators following the causal links described in the literature (see Annex I for more details). We show, first, the relationship between ESL and economic performance and, second, the link between the labour market conditions and ESL. We

do it for all NUTS2 regions[2]. Consequently, the time frame of our analysis needs to be adjusted and cover the 2018-2022 period. The results of the literature review conducted suggest that the relationship between ESL and economic growth on one hand, and ESL and unemployment rate on the other, are crucial to address the question posed in this document. While other variables could be of interest (as shown in Annex I), Figures 1 and 2 highlight the central ones.

Figure 1 plots the relationship between ESL and GDP growth in constant prices. In this case, we find a positive relationship between both variables but with an almost flat regression line.

Table 8: ESL (horizontal axis, 18-24 population %) vs. GDP growth (vertical axis, % year on year change). Full Sample

$$y = 0,0439x + 1,209$$
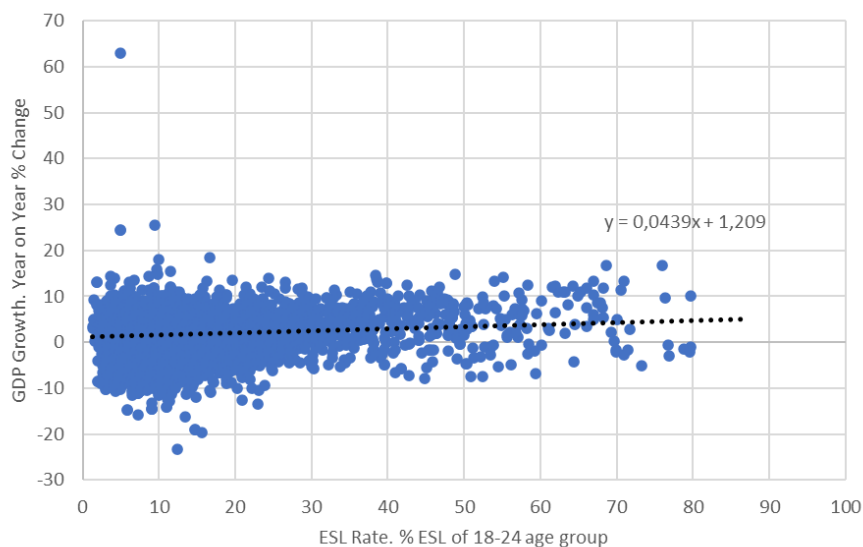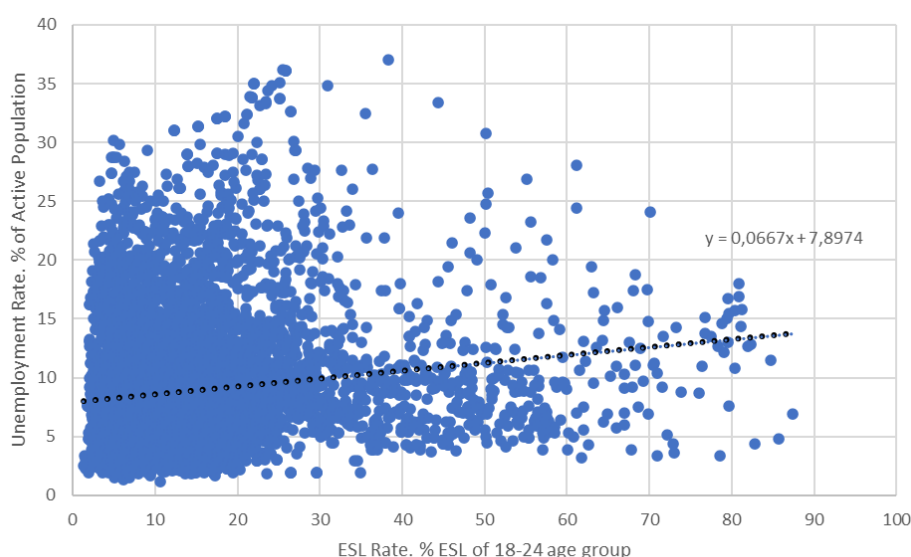
Source. Own estimations based on Eurostat data.

This positive relationship seems to be counterintuitive at first. We hypothesize a reason for this. ESL has been found to be higher in regions where lower-skilled jobs determine a big part of economic growth. It could happen, for instance, that strong performance of low-skilled sectors (such as manufacturing or real estate) may raise labour demand, incentive individuals to leave education, and accordingly increase labour supply by activating and joining the labour market.

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[2] Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics or NUTS is a geocode standard for referencing the administrative divisions of countries for statistical purposes. Following Eurostat's, we include NUTS 2 regions from EU member states, candidate countries, European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries and former members (United Kingdom).

We have found that the sign of the relationship is positive for non-Euro Zone 11 regions (see Annex I), but it turns out to be negative for EZ11 countries' NUTS 2 regions. ESL would then act as a barrier to growth only in skill-intensive regions, while it could be a sign of more robust economic performance in areas and sectors with lower skill needs.

Figure 2 shows the relationship between ESL and the unemployment rate. Data also shows a positive correlation between both indicators.

Table 9: ESL (horizontal axis, 18-24 population %) vs. Unemployment Rate (vertical axis, % of active population). Full Sample

Source. Own estimations based on Eurostat data.

Results suggest the existence of a bidirectional relationship between ESL and unemployment. This means that a higher unemployment rate may act as a disincentive to keep on regular education, and, from the opposite point of view, a higher ESL is associated with lower employability. The relationship between ESL and the unemployment rate is stronger for the EZ11 countries' NUTS 2 regions (see Annex I).

In connection with the literature review, three main conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, as we have highlighted before, some circumstances can change the sign in the relation under study, as seen in Figure 1 for EZ11 and non-EZ11 regions, due to the low-skilled sectors' importance in these economies. Secondly, we have confirmed the consensus from the literature regarding the lower employability challenge that early school leavers face. Third, we shed some light on how unemployment affects the early school dropout decision. Our results show that higher unemployment rates may act

as a disincentive to ESL. Nonetheless, due to the disagreements observed in the literature on this last point, further research is necessary for different socioeconomic groups, regions, and territorial levels.

The correlations shown in Figures 1 and 2 do not imply a causal relationship. There are other variables that could be biasing the relationship between ESL, economic growth, and unemployment rate. Thus, although strengthening human capital is crucial for reducing the unemployment rate, economists often consider labour market dynamics as an inherently macroeconomic issue, also influenced by job demand dynamics (not considered in our analysis). Similarly, our study does not assess aspects such as technological changes, institutional strength, or the proper design of fiscal or monetary policies (to name a few) that are crucial for economic growth and regional development.

3. SECTION II. Political analysis

This section studies the policies aimed at preventing ESL and is split into two parts: The first one summarises the data sources and the methodology used for the policy analysis. The second one provides an overview of the policy analysis. This last section is in turn broken down into two subsections: (1) a review of the Strategic plans for ESL in those EU countries where they exist, and (2) a summary of the cooncrete ESL policies for the six Let's Care-countries

3.1.   Brief methodological notes

The main data source used for the policy analysis is the Youth Wiki from Eurydice, specifically the section called "Preventing early leaving for education and training." The Youth Wiki provides a reliable starting point, as it aggregates information from 27 European countries, with regular updates by national governments. However, as some country profiles in the Youth Wiki might be outdated, we also reviewed the six Let's Care countries' current early school leaving (ESL) policies. We obtained this last information from the Ministries of Education websites.

In total, we revised sixty three policies: firstly, we studied the national strategies against early school leaving of those Euroepan countries that had these developments (i.e. Austria, Bulgaria, Belgium (Flemish Community), Hungary, Malta, and Romania); secondly, we analysed the existing policies related to early school leaving for the Let's Care countries (Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Italy, and Poland). The complete list of the 63 reviewed policies (including the national strategies) can be found in Annex II, and the whole analysis in the Let's Care Hub https://letscare.europole.org/policies/

The policy analysis utilises a structured **template** to identify **three principal elements**: the core **dimensions of policies**, the focus on **vulnerable populations**, and the interplay with various **ecological levels**.

The core dimensions encompass the essential characteristics that define the policies. In addressing vulnerable populations, the analysis considers explicitly groups identified by gender, ethnicity, migrant status, socioeconomic standing, disabilities, and those outside of parental care. The ecological aspect of the policy review assesses its connection to individual, relational, community, and broader political contexts.

The template's design is informed by the ESL (Education, Sport, and Culture) policy measures, as outlined by the European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture in their assessment of the 2011/C 191/01 Recommendation. This foundation is further enriched by insights from an initial policy analysis, the subsequent 2022/C 469/01 Recommendation on pathways to school success, expert consultations, and the Let's Care initiative's emphasis on school safety, support for vulnerable populations, and a multi-systemic approach.

The following table shows the main dimensions used for the policy analysis:

Table 10: Template dimensions and subdimensions

TITLE	DIMENSION	EXAMPLES OF POLICY ACTIONS
TEACHING PROFESSION	Training for teachers	Teachers' training in different issues like tolerance, individualisation of learning, better relationships with students and families, etc.
	Teachers' well-being	Reception plans, good salaries, social recognition, etc.
	Teacher participation	Teacher participation in decision-making (school budgets, curricular decisions, etc.), good practices sharing, etc.
FAMILY AT SCHOOL	Family involvement in the school community	The development of family school bonding through socio-cultural and participatory activities in schools.
	Training and advice for families	Training and courses offered by schools to enhance parents' skills in different topics (education, adolescent crisis, tolerance, etc.).
	Family participation in the educational process	Family involvement in tutoring actions and their right to be informed about their child's academic achievement.
RESPONSE TO	Identification of risks and educational needs	Procedures, actions, or methods that detect students' needs in school.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	ESL early warning system	Toolkits that allow the monitoring of students at risk of early school leaving.
	Educational support	Tutoring, mentoring, or supporting actions to overcome obstacles in the learning process. It can be in or out of school time, in groups, or individually.
	Emotional support	Tutoring, mentoring, or supporting actions to overcome emotional obstacles.
	Financial support	Financial aid for school transport, textbooks, materials, food, etc.
	Specialised and support personnel	Support staff to help teachers during classroom; Multidisciplinary teams (composed of psychologists, social workers, etc.).
	Offer educational and professional guidance	Actions to support students in their academic and professional decisions.
CURRICULUM, TIME, AND SPACES MANAGEMENT	Make curriculum flexible	The possibility of curricular adaptations.
	Make the management of times and spaces flexible	The possibility of schools to be flexible about other learning spaces (such as libraries) and times.
	Individualisation of learning	Individualisation of learning, bearing in mind students' special characteristics, needs, and interests.
	Permeability of the education system	The possibility of changing the educational pathway if the student does not fit well with it.
	Facilitate transitions between school stages	Collaborations between schools from different school stages to facilitate transitions, welcome weeks, etc.
PEDAGOGICAL GUIDELINES	Exploration-based learning	Methodologies that enhance exploring the school environment include teamwork, learning by doing, laboratory activities, project-based learning, etc.
	Develop socio-emotional skills	Actions to improve socioemotional skills of students at school.
INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY	Avoid segregation	Actions to tackle school segregation problems (such as accessible school transports to other educational institutions).

	Language support	Actions regarding language support for students whose mother tongue is not the one used in classroom lessons.
	Expert support for inclusion	School staff to help integrate actions such as social workers, cultural mediators, etc.
	Institutional sensitivity	School actions that raise the awareness of inclusion (such as awareness-raising campaigns, meetings with Roma local leaders, etc.).
NETWORKS BETWEEN SCHOOL AND OTHER ACTORS	The link between the school and other actors	School partnerships with other schools, municipalities, social services, or NGOs.
SCHOOL COEXISTENCE AND WELL-BE-ING	Offer of school and after-school activities	School trips, volunteer activities, sports competitions, or after-school activities.
	Work in the school coexistence climate	Actions against bullying, violence, or harassment; actions that generate a safe and trustworthy environment.
	Physical characteristics of the school	School sizes, renovations of buildings and equipment, as well as new constructions.
	Enable student participation in school	Student participation in decision-making (school budgets, curricular decisions, etc.).

Methodologically, the process is thoroughly documented in Annex III. A total of sixty-three policies were evaluated using this template, which facilitated the identification of policy dimensions, targeted vulnerable groups, and ecological levels. Among these, six policies corresponded to National ESL strategies from the referenced countries, while fifty-eight were ESL-related policies from the countries participating in the Let's Care programme. It is important to note that a single policy measure may intersect with multiple dimensions, highlighting potential synergies.

3.2. Analysing policies against early school leaving

Six European countries, namely Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta, and Romania, have driven national strategies to combat early school leaving. The remaining 21 European nations have adopted policies encompassing general objectives and specific measures to address this issue. Among the countries lacking a national strategy but implementing concrete policies, this study examines the early school leaving policies of six Let's Care countries: Spain, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Bulgaria, and Lithuania.

3.2.1. Looking at the six National Strategies against early school leaving

In this section, we offer a detailed analysis of the ESL strategies in the six EU countries where such developments occurred. We have performed the analysis using the methodological approach described in 3.1, i.e. main dimensions, vulnerable groups targeted, and Let's Care ecological levels.

Table 9 provides a synoptic picture of the six strategies mentioned. The rest of the section offers a country-by-country analysis.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES – SUMMARY TABLE

Table 11: Summary findings of the National Strategies against ESL

RESULTS								
CATEGORY	CRITERIA	AUS	BEL*	BUL	MAL**	HUN	ROM	CAVEAT
MEASURES' WORDING	(1) The wording of the specific policy measure is clear and concise.	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	
	(2) The text shows all the specific policy measures in a summary chart that facilitates their identification and systematization.	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	

INDICA-TORS	(1) The text includes a list of indicators that allows the monitoring of the policy measures.	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	
	(2) The text exposes the indicator linked to the policy measure that is intended to be measured.	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	
MONITOR-ING AND EVALUA-TION PROCESS	(1) The text plans the monitoring through the elaboration of regular reports (e.g. annual reports).	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	
	(2) The text plans the evaluation through the elaboration of specific evaluation reports (e.g. mid-term evaluation; final evaluation).	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO)	YES	
	(3) The text mentions the internet place in which the monitoring and/or evaluation results will be published.	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	

	(4) The text indicates clearly the public body in charge of the evaluation activities.	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	
STAKE-HOLDERS' PARTICIPA-TION	(1) The text highlights the importance of stakeholders' participation (NGOs, business, academy, trade unions, schools, parents, etc.).	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	
	(2) The text expressly mentions that the document was submitted for a public consultation before the date of approval.	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	The consultation can have been done but not mentioned.
POLICY CO-HERENCE	(1) The document counting on financing.	NO)	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	BEL & MAL are Plans and AUS grouped measures already into effect.

	(2) The text gives importance to the vertical and/or horizontal coordination.	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	
	(3) The text expressly mentions vertical and/or horizontal coordination structures with their location and/or specific functions.	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	
	(4) The text mentions that studies have been carried out to analyze possible relations with other Strategies or Plans that are already into effect.	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	
ADDI-TIONAL NOTES	*The Belgium (Flemish Community) document is an "Integrated Action Plan". ** The Malta document is a "Strategic Plan".							

Considering ESL rates available in EUROSTAT (and comparing these six countries), the highest rates of early school leavers are observed in Romania. A downward trajectory (decreasing ESL rate) is observed in Malta and Belgium. The trends in Austria and Hungary are rather constant, although a slight upturn can be observed recently. In Bulgaria, two periods of ESL rate reduction are observed, from 2016 to 2018 and from 2019 to the present.

Austria. National Strategy to Prevent Early Dropouts from Education and Training (2012) [Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen (Aus)Bildungsabbruchs][3]

The Strategy was thought to group different measures that were already taking place in Austria. **The dimensions** to which the Strategy attaches the most importance, or in other words, the dimensions that incorporate more actions are *training for teachers, educational support,* and *educational and professional guidance. Teachers' training* focused on a better understanding of ESL problems and increasing professionalization in the treatment of cultural diversity. *Educational support* is focused on helping students with the acquisition of academic skills, both in primary/secondary and in VET. Finally, *educational and professional guidance* includes actions such as events with companies or direct professional advice. This is in line with the authors' aim exposed at the beginning of the Strategy. They give special importance to the measure called "Youth coaching" which consists of a kind of personalized motivation, support, and guidance for students at risk of dropping out.

The Let's Care ecological level which is more noticeable in the Strategy is the Individual Level (P1).

Regarding vulnerable populations, Austria ESL Strategy describes the risk profile as *"allem Jugendliche aus schwachem sozioökonomischem Milieu, geringer Bildungsaspiration und anderen Erstsprachen besonders gefährdet"* [young people from a weak socio-economic background, with little educational aspiration and other first languages] (Bundesministerium Für Unterricht, Kunst Und Kultur, 2012, p. 21). According to this, one whole measure in the Strategy is centered on the promotion of children with a history of immigration (Bundesministerium Für Unterricht, Kunst Und Kultur, 2012, p. 32). Additionally, other actions can be found in relation to specific vulnerable groups such as specific support and individual learning programs for children with disabilities or gender-specific reading socialization (Bundesministerium Für Unterricht, Kunst Und Kultur, 2012, p. 31).

As for the **connections to the Ecological Levels,** safe school references such as "safe school climate", "warm environment" or "positive relationships" have not been detected.

There is no information about monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, any measure is linked with an indicator. One possible explanation could be that this Strategy was written to bind together measures already taking place, not purposefully.

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[3] Bundesministerium Für Unterricht, Kunst Und Kultur. (2012). Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen (Aus-)Bildungsabbruchs. Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur. Retrieved from: https://ilo.org/dyn/youthpol/es/equest.fileutils.docHandle?p_uploaded_file_id=634

Bulgaria. Strategy for Reducing the Exits of Education System (2013-2020) [Стратегия за намаляване дела на преждевременно напусналите образователната система][4]

The Strategy was thought to complete other policies already existing in the country. **The dimensions** to which the Strategy attaches the most importance, or in other words, the dimensions that incorporate more actions, are the following: *Links between the school and other actors* (mentioning alliances between local businesses and schools -especially for VET programs- or the share of good practices between schools); *Teacher training* (regarding competencies to deal with multicultural environments, special education needs, and risk of early school dropout); *Family participation in the education process; Specialized and support personnel* (mentioning experts in vulnerable populations, teachers' assistants, psychologists, pedagogical advisors, and social workers); *Educational support;* and *Working in the school coexistence climate* (considering non-violence policies, students-mentor plans and discipline approaches). Although it is not one of the most relevant dimensions, it is worth highlighting the importance given to *student participation.*

Regarding **vulnerable populations**, the Bulgarian Strategy does not mention any risk profile. Nonetheless, the context analysis mentions education disadvantages regarding ethnic communities (especially Roma people), students with special educational needs, and students living in rural areas. According to that, the Strategy incorporates one specific measure for improving access and quality of education for vulnerable ethnic students (Министерство На Образованието И Науката, 2013, p. 29), and another specific measure about the same idea but for students with special educational needs.

The Let's Care ecological level which is more noticeable in the Strategy is the Community Level (P3), the one that is focused on the school as a community.

As can be forecasted from the preeminence of P3, the Strategy includes expressions close to the Safe School concept of Let's Care such as "осигуряване на здравословна и сигурна образователна среда за децата и учениците" [healthy and safe educational environment] (Министерство На Образованието И Науката, 2013, p. 27), and "за изграждане на позитивни и конструктивни взаимоотношения" [positive and constructive relationships] (Министерство На Образованието И Науката, 2013, p. 30).

The Strategy incorporates a section in which the expected results have been described. Additionally, there is another section that includes a list of indicators, but they are general indicators, they are not

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[4] Министерство На Образованието И Науката. (2013). Стратегия за намаляване дела на преждевременно напусналите образователната система (2013 – 2020). Retrieved from: https://www.strategy.bg/FileHandler.ashx?fileId=4126

linked with the concrete measure. Annual follow-up reports and intermediate and final evaluations are also foreseen in the document.

Belgium (Flemish Community). Together Against School Dropouts (2015) [Samen tegen Schooluitval][5]

This document stands out for being the one that covers the fewest dimensions, and, at the same time, it also stands out for being the one that writes its measures most transparently and clearly. After an explanatory paragraph, the authors summarised the measure inside a box and linked it with the time framework for its implementation and the responsible institution for carrying it out. In other strategies, the wording of the measures is not so precise, and the paper can support explanations and promises that later do not have to be fulfilled.

The dimensions to which this Integrated Action Plan attaches the most importance, or in other words, the dimensions that incorporate more actions are *offering educational and professional guidance* and *working in the school coexistence climate.* The first of them incorporates actions such as offering information regarding the labour market and further education as well as guidance services. The second binds together measures that include anti-bullying plans, peer mediation against bullying, schools' frequent monitoring of well-being, and restorative work with students who have suffered bullying.

Regarding **vulnerable populations**, the document does not determine any risk profile. This is reflected in measures too, because only one during the whole Strategy incorporates some reference to vulnerable populations. The measure is about early youth care, and it mentions the importance of the stimulation of language development in non-native children (Ministerie Van Onderwijs et al., 2015, p. 37). There is another measure for non-native people but is linked with a study of welcoming education and has not been included in this analysis following exclusive criteria (Ministerie Van Onderwijs et al., 2015, p. 30).

The Let's Care ecological level which is more remarkable is the Individual Level (P1).

The text includes expressions close to the Safe School concept of Let's Care such as "warm en veilig schoolklimaat" [safe and warm environment] (Ministerie Van Onderwijs et al., 2015, p. 33), and "goed schoolklimaat" [good school climate] (Ministerie Van Onderwijs et al., 2015, p. 35).

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[5] Ministerie Van Onderwijs, Ministerie Van Welzijn, Volksgezondheid En Gezin, Ministerie Van Arbeid, Economie, Innovatie En Sport. (2015). Ter Nota aan de vlaamse regering. Conceptnoota. "Samen tegen Schooluitval". Vlaamse Regering. Retrieved from: https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/2021-07/conceptnota_Samen_tegen_SchooluitvalDEF.pdf

Finally, regarding monitoring and evaluation, there is a chart in which the authors linked measures with their starting point and the responsible institution. However, there are no indicators or explanations regarding how the evaluation is going to take place.

Hungary. Medium-Term Strategy Against Early School Leaving (2016-2020) [A végzettség nélküli iskolaelhagyás elleni középtávú stratégia][6].

The dimensions to which the Strategy attaches the most importance, or in other words, the dimensions that incorporate more actions are *specialized and support personnel, individualization of learning*, and *curriculum flexibility.* The first dimension includes the actions of social pedagogues, social workers, pedagogical assistants, and school psychologists. The second includes actions such as individual case management or the consideration of students' interests. The third dimension has actions such as the harmonization of classroom work and extracurricular activities.

Regarding vulnerable groups, the Strategy has not determined any risk profile. However, there is one specific mention of Roma children in measures regarding access to quality education. Additionally, some measures use the general term "disadvantaged students" linked with access to kindergarten and extracurricular activities. There are no measures that mention disabilities, although there are two mentioning special educational needs. Finally, one measure mentions disadvantaged regions and it is about making the physical environment attractive (the appearance of school buildings, etc.).

The Let's Care ecological levels which are more remarkable in the Strategy are the Individual Level (P1) and the Community Level (P3).

Regarding Safe School scope, the Strategy incorporates one idea about the importance for students to feel valued at the school and the good relationships between teachers and students to reduce early school leaving (Oktatási Minisztérium, 2016, p. 42).

The strategy does not incorporate indicators, although its development is promised for the future. In addition, monitoring reports are expected to be carried out every 2 years.

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[6] Oktatási Minisztérium. (2016). A végzettség nélküli iskolaelhagyás elleni középtávú stratégia. Retrieved from: https://eslplus.eu/documents/V%C3%A9gzetts%C3%A9g%20n%C3%A9lk%C3%BCli%20iskolaelhagy%C3%A1s%20.pdf

Malta. A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta (2014-2020)[7]

Compared to other strategies analyzed, the wording of the measures is clear and direct. After an explanatory paragraph, the authors summarised the measure inside a box.

Some dimensions stand out more than others. Those are *training for teachers* and *institutional sensitivity.* Firstly, *Teacher's training* incorporates actions to improve their competencies in working with students with different needs and cultural backgrounds and to overcome the risk of dropout decisions. Secondly, the *institutional sensitivity* dimension includes measures such as teachers' management of classroom diversity or the inclusion of migrant students in the school community.

This Strategic Plan does not set a specific risk profile, nonetheless, some actions are targeted towards some **specific vulnerabilities**. Regarding migrant background, the document sets actions for improving the integration in the school community, language acquisition, access to childcare education, and supporting the development of self-confidence in the host culture. Regarding disabilities, the text sets actions to improve the transitions between compulsory education and further education or employment and to identify people neither in education nor in employment with disabilities. Last but not least, the actions that talk about socio-economic disadvantaged groups are about enrolling parents as partners in education to enhance the presence of those children from very early educational stages and about including the socioeconomic background information in early warning systems.

The Let's Care ecological level which is more noticeable is the Community Level (P3), but P1 punctuation is close.

This Strategic Plan includes one measure on setting up middle schools to reduce the school size to drive better relationships between peers, student-teacher relationships, and the sense of belonging to the school (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014, p. 23). This wording can be linked to the Safe School concept of Let's Care.

This Strategic Plan incorporates a final table in which the measure is linked to the indicator. It also shows whether the measure has already been started or when it is going to start. However, nothing else is mentioned in the document, neither the body responsible for evaluation results nor the deadlines for them.

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[7] Ministry for Education and Employment. (2014). A strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta 2014. Ministry for Education and Employment. Retrieved from: https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/malta_strategic_plan_for_the_prevention_of_early_school_leaving_2014.pdf

Romania. Strategy Regarding the Reduction of Early School Leaving in Romania (2015) [Strategia privind reducerea părăsirii timpurii a școlii în România][8]

The dimensions to which the Strategy attaches the most importance, or in other words, the dimensions that incorporate more actions are *teachers' training, professional guidance, institutional sensitivity, links between school and other actors,* and *physical characteristics of the school.* The first one foresees the acquisition of teaching competencies to work with children under six years of age, with children with special educational needs, and with children living in isolated areas. The second dimension grouped actions as the professionalization of counsellors and the availability of guidance services. The third dimension incorporates actions such as community events with ethnic minorities. The fourth dimension mentioned above has activities in relation to community awareness regarding the importance of education, as well as partnerships with businesses (for VET education). Actions for rehabilitating schools or extending spaces for learning are also considered in the last dimension previously mentioned.

The Strategy determined as a **risk profile** "tineri din comunitățile rurale, tineri provenind din familii cu venituri modeste, romi și alte minorități și elevi care au repetat cel puțin un an sau care au abandonat școala" [young people from rural communities, young people from low-income families, Roma and other minorities, and students who have repeated at least one year or who they dropped out of school] (Ministeru Educatiei, 2015, p. 6). For isolated communities, the strategy includes the following actions: rehabilitating and equipping kindergartens, financial incentives for teachers, specific training, and sharing good practices. For the Roma population, the actions envisaged are about offering individualized support and organizing community events to build bridges. For students with disabilities, individualized support actions and specific access facilities are foreseen (although it is not made clear which ones). Finally, for low-income students, the action expressly foreseen is individualized support.

The most important **ecological level** in this Strategy is the Community Level (P3).

Safe school references such as "safe school climate", "warm environment" or "positive relationships" have not been detected. Besides, the importance of encouraging children to explore the environment

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[8] Ministeru Educatiei. (2015). Strategia privind reducerea părăsirii timpurii a școlii în România. Retrieved from: https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/_fi%C8%99iere/Invatamant-Preuniversitar/2015/Strategie-PTS/Strategia-PTS-2015.pdf

in preschool education (Ministeru Educatiei, 2015, p. 54), and teachers' attitudes towards pupils are superficially mentioned (Ministeru Educatiei, 2015, p. 25).

Regarding monitoring and evaluation, the Strategy estimates the costs for each of the measures. It also incorporates a table of indicators associated with each measure and annual follow-up reports and two evaluations (one intermediate and one final) are foreseen.

3.2.2.   Looking at the six Let's Care countries.

In this subsection, we jointly analyse the six Let's Care countries regarding ELS relevance. In this respect, we have split the subsection into three parts: the first is devoted to the cases of major concern; the second deals with those countries where ESL does not represent a problem; the final part analyses the success case of Portugal.

The in-depth analysis of the policies according to the triple criteria explained in part 3.1 of this document (dimensions, vulnerable groups and ecological levels) can be found in the hub, where a total of 58 policies are analysed in this light for these countries https://letscare.europole.org/policies/

Table 10 provides a synoptic picture of those ELS policies' main dimensions not covered in the six Let's Care countries. The rest of the section offers a country-by-country analysis.

LET'S CARE COUNTRY POLICIES – SUMMARY TABLES

Table 12: nalysis of the not covered dimensions in the Let's Care countries policies against ESL

CRITERIA		DIMENSION COVERAGE						
TITLE	DIMENSION	SPA	POR	BUL	LIT	ITA	POL*	Total number of countries
TEACHING PROFESSION	Training for teachers							
	Teachers' well-being							
	Teacher participation						NO	1

FAMILY AT SCHOOL	Family involvement in the school community				NO			1
	Training and advice for families		NO					1
	Family participation in the educational process					NO	NO	2
RESPONSE TO EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	Identification of risks and educational needs						NO	1
	ESL early warning system		NO				NO	2
	Educational support							
	Emotional support					NO		1
	Financial support						NO	1
	Specialised and support personnel							
	Offer educational and professional guidance							
CURRICULUM, TIME AND SPACES MANAGEMENT	Make curriculum flexible						NO	1
	Make the management of times and spaces flexible					NO	NO	2
	Individualisation of learning							

	Permeability of the education system	NO		NO	NO		NO	4
	Facilitate transitions between school stages			NO	NO	NO	NO	4
PEDAGOGICAL GUIDE-LINES	Exploration-based learning							
	Develop socio-emotional skills				NO			1
INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY	Avoid segregation	NO	NO		NO		NO	4
	Language support	NO			NO		NO	3
	Expert support for inclusion	NO			NO	NO	NO	4
	Institutional sensitivity							
NETWORKS BETWEEN SCHOOL AND OTHER ACTORS	The link between the school and other actors							
SCHOOL COEXISTENCE AND WELL-BEING	Offer of school and after-school activities				NO			1
	Work in the school coexistence climate							
	Physical characteristics of the school						NO	1
	Enable student participation in school			NO	NO	NO		3

ADDITIONAL NOTES	*Only two policies analyzed.

1. *Countries of major concern considering ESL rates*

During the last ten years, Spain, Bulgaria, and Italy have had ESL rates above the E.U. average. Except for a few upturns, Spain and Italy's ESL rates describe a downward trend. The case of Bulgaria has become irregular; however, it also presents a decreasing trajectory since 2019. Regarding ESL policy analysis, Bulgaria is the only country (of the six studied) with a National Strategy for reducing early school leaving. In the following sections, we have highlighted some policies against ESL in those countries for being the ones that cover more dimensions in the template designed by this investigation.

Spain:

The table below shows the main documents analysed for Spain

Table 13: References to the documents used. Spain. For more information about the analyses conducted, resulting data bases are available by clicking on the following link: https://letscare.europole.org/policies/

SPAIN	
TITLE	YEAR
Start Noves Oportunitats:Programa Noves Oportunitats	N/D
Orden ECD/37/2013 de 27 de Marzo 2013 que aprueba el Plan Regional de Prevención del Absentismo y el Abandono Escolar en la Comunidad Autónoma de Cantabria	2013
Plan para la reducción del abandono educativo temprano	2015
Programa Nacional de Reformas 2019	2019
Real Decreto 430/2019 de 12 de Julio de 2019, por el que se establecen los umbrales de renta y patrimonio familiar y las cuantías de las becas y ayudas al estudio para el curso 2019-2020	2019
Resolución de 19 de diciembre de 2019, de la Secretaría de Estado de Educación y Formación Profesional, por la que se publica el Acuerdo del Consejo de Ministros de 15 de noviembre de 2019, por el que se formalizan los criterios de distribución a las comunidades autónomas, aprobados por la Conferencia Sectorial de Educación, así como la distribución resultante del crédito destinado en el año 2019 al Programa de cooperación territorial de orientación y refuerzo para el avance y apoyo en la educación	2019

Resolución de la Secretaría de Estado de Educación y Formación Profesional, por la que se convocan ayudas a centros docentes sostenidos con fondos públicos de educación primaria y secundaria de Ceuta y Melilla, que participen en el Programa de Apoyo Educativo (PAE) en el curso escolar 2020-2021	2020
Resolución de 10 de septiembre de 2021, de la Secretaría de Estado de Educación, por la que se publica el Acuerdo de la Conferencia Sectorial de Educación de 21 de julio de 2021, por el que se aprueba la propuesta de distribución territorial y los criterios de reparto de los créditos gestionados por Comunidades Autónomas destinados al Programa para la orientación, avance y enriquecimiento educativo en centros de especial complejidad educativa (programa PROA+), en el ejercicio presupuestario 2021	2021
Resolución de 10 de septiembre de 2021, de la Secretaría de Estado de Educación, por la que se publica el Acuerdo de la Conferencia Sectorial de Educación de 21 de julio de 2021, por el que se aprueba la propuesta de distribución territorial y los criterios de reparto de los créditos gestionados por Comunidades Autónomas destinados al Programa de unidades de acompañamiento y orientación personal y familiar del alumnado educativamente vulnerable, en los servicios educativos o psicopedagógicos situados en zonas/sectores escolares y centros rurales agrupados, en el ejercicio presupuestario 2021, en el marco del componente 21 «Modernización y digitalización del sistema educativo, incluida la educación temprana de 0-3 años» del Mecanismo de Recuperación y Resiliencia	2021
Plan de Recuperación, Transformación y Resiliencia. Componente 21. Modernización y digitalización del sistema educativo, incluida la educación temprana de 0-3 años	2021
Resolución de 14 de septiembre de 2022, de la Consejería de Educación, Cultura y Deportes, por la que se regula la implantación, organización y desarrollo de los programas Prepara-T, Ilusiona-T y Titula-S cofinanciados por el Fondo Social Europeo+ integrados en el V Plan de Éxito Educativo y Prevención del Abandono Escolar Temprano en los centros docentes públicos de Castilla-La Mancha para el curso escolar 2022-2023	2022

Spanish ESL policies give priority to *educational support* (educational reinforcement and tutorial actions), *educational guidance, exploration-based learning* (participatory methods and the acquisition of jobs' skills), and *links between schools and other actors* (especially with businesses). The importance that Spanish ESL policies give to the connections with the labour market (through VET) is clear. Some curious measures taken related to teachers' training in positive expectations and guidance workshops for families. Spanish ESL policies mention different vulnerable groups, and the main Lets' Care ecological level is the Individual Level (P1). After this general overview, we are going

to highlight the policy against early school leaving that covers more dimensions, hoping it will prove interesting.

The **PROA + Program** [Programa para la Orientación, Avance y Enriquecimiento educativo PROA+] is currently active and aims to reduce early school leaving. It gives relevant importance to vulnerable students with socio-educational needs (Resolución de la Secretaría de Estado de Educación, Programa PROA+, 2021). The Program sets objectives and suggests lever actions to guide the schools' proposals. Considering those mentioned examples of lever actions, Proa+ covered 17 dimensions measured by this investigation, three of which stand out from the others. The *educational support* dimension includes actions such as tutorial activities and educational reinforcements. The *school co-existence climate* dimension contains actions for developing School Coexistence Plans or accompanying programs that involve students from higher courses. Finally, the *flexibility of times and spaces* is proposed by using libraries as learning environments. Hereafter, some measures from other dimensions are expounded in case of interest: training teachers to have positive expectations of students; improving the reception of new professionals in schools; promoting teachers' teamwork; offering workshops for families; guiding students through school transitions; and enhancing emotional work. The Program benefits the educational stages of early child education, primary and secondary, and distributes funds among the autonomous communities. Although there is almost a tie with Pillar 1, the Let's Care Pillar that is expected to be more impacted by this policy is Pillar 3 (Safe Schools).

Italy.

The table details the documents **used for Italy**

Table 14: References to de documents used. Italy. For more information about the analyses conducted, resulting data bases are available by clicking on the following link: https://letscare.europole.org/policies/

ITALY	
TITLE	YEAR
Programma Operativo Nazionale Per la scuola competenze e ambienti per l'apprendimento (2014-2020)	2014
Una politica nazionale di contrasto del fallimento formativo e della povertà educative. Cabina di regia per la lotta alla dispersion scolastica e alla povertà educativa	2018
Documento interno di sintesi. Piano di intervento per la riduzione dei divari territoriali in istruzione.	2020
Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza: Italia Domani	2021

Programma Operativo Nazionale Per la scuola competenze e ambienti per l'apprendimento (versione 2021)	2021
Riduzione Dei Divari Territoriali E Contrasto Alla Dispersione Scolastica Orientamenti per l'attuazione degli interventi nelle scuol	2022
Istruzioni operative, Azioni di prevenzione e contrasto della dispersione scolastica (D.M. 170/2022)	2022
Decreto Ministeriale n. 63 del 5 aprile 2023, individuazione dei criteri di ripartizione delle risorse finanziarie finalizzate alla valorizzazione del personale scolastico, con particolare riferimento alle attività di orientamento, di inclusione e di contrasto della dispersione scolastica, ivi comprese quelle volte a definire percorsi personalizzati per gli studenti, nonché' di quelle svolte in attuazione del Piano nazionale di ripresa e resilienza, ai sensi dell'art. 1, comma 561, della Legge 29 dicembre 2022, n. 197 Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2023 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2023	2023

Italian ESL policies give priority to *teachers' training* (in issues such as conflict management, special educational needs, ESL risk detection), *educational support* (tutoring, mentoring and learning recoveries), *after-school activities,* and *educational and professional guidance.* For Italian ESL policies educational guidance and support (especially in secondary education) is very important. That is why teachers' skills in tutoring and counselling have been strengthened. Besides, school time extension is another Italian policy concern, especially for improving families' work-life balance. That is why, after-school activities and building renovations (in school canteens and gyms) play an important role. Italian ESL policies mention different vulnerable groups and the main Lets' Care ecological level is the Individual Level (P1). Last but not least, it is noted a considerable effort to promote investigations to understand the drivers of early school leaving. After this general overview, we are going to highlight only the policies against early school leaving that cover more dimensions, hoping they will prove interesting:

The **National Operational Program For the School** [Programma Operativo Nazionale Per la Scuola] has been active since 2014 but was updated in 2021. Its main aim is to reduce territorial gaps and to support students at risk in education (Ministero Dell' Istruzione, Dell' Universita' e Della Ricerca, 2014). The Program was structured in four axes, which in turn contained investment priorities. The first axis included two objectives concerning this investigation because they are about improving students' educational competencies and reducing early school leaving. The Program covers 10 template

dimensions, and five stand out. The *teachers' training* dimension contains measures to improve skills in tackling school dropout, school management, and learning individualisation. The *educational support* dimension includes reinforcing activities to improve students' knowledge and competencies. The *educational and professional guidance* is enhanced by mentoring and educational advice activities. The *exploration-based learning* dimension has measures to boost laboratory activities and Erasmus projects. Finally, the offer of *after-school activities* is intensified significantly in the case of sports. The Let's Care Pillar that is expected to be more impacted by this policy is Pillar 1 (Safe Learning).

The Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (2021-2026) contain the **investment 1.4. Extraordinary intervention to reduce territorial disparities in cycles I and II high school** [Piano Nazionale Di Ripresa e Resilienza, Missione 4, Componenti 1, Investimento 1.4: Intervento straordinario finalizzato alla riduzione dei divari territoriali nei cicli I e II della scuola secondaria di secondo grado] (Governo Italiano, 2021). This is linked to ESL because it highlights the "development of a strategy to tackle early school leaving" among its objectives. Different political documents have been boosting the actions contained in this investment (Ministero Dell' Istruzione, 2022; Unità Di Missione Per Il Piano Nazionale Di Ripresa e Resilienza, 2022). The policy covers 9 template dimensions, but four stand out from the others. The *training and advice for families* dimension contains measures such as providing parents with information that helps them in ESL prevention. The *educational support* dimension includes courses to strengthen basic academic skills (also in laboratories). The *flexibility of the curriculum* is enhanced through the development of programs for children with disabilities and the intertwining of curricular and extracurricular learning. Finally, the *collaboration between the school and other actors* is specially designed to promote good practice sharing between schools. The Let's Care Pillar that is expected to be more impacted is Pillar 1 (Safe Learning).

Bulgaria.

The documents consulted for Bulgaria are shown in hte following table.

Table 15: References to de documents used. Bulgaria. For more information about the analyses conducted, resulting data bases are available by clicking on the following link: https://letscare.europole.org/policies/

BULGARIA	
TITLE	YEAR
Сдружение ЕЛА с менторска програма за работа с деца „Готови за утре	N/D
проект BG05M2OP001-3.004 -0001 „Нов шанс за успех" по процедура на директно предоставяне BG05M2OP001-3.004 „Ограмотяване на възрастни – фаза 1".	2016
НАЦИОНАЛНА ПРОГРАМА „С ГРИЖА ЗА ВСЕКИ УЧЕНИК"	2018
Национална програма „осигуряване на съвременна образователна среда".	2018

Национална програма „квалификация".	2018
Национална програма „развитие на системата на предучилищното образование".	2018
проект bg05m2op001-2.011-0001 „подкрепа за успех"	2019
Национална програма „заедно за всяко дете	2020
НАЦИОНАЛНА ПРОГРАМА „ОТНОВО ЗАЕДНО".	2020
НАЦИОНАЛНА ПРОГРАМА „МОТИВИРАНИ УЧИТЕЛИ"	2020
НАЦИОНАЛНА ПРОГРАМА „ХУБАВО Е В ДЕТСКАТА ГРАДИНА"	2022
НАЦИОНАЛНА ПРОГРАМА „ОСИГУРЯВАНЕ НА СЪВРЕМЕННА, СИГУРНА И ДОСТЪПНА ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛНА СРЕДА".	2022
Национална програма „подпомагане на общините за образователна десегрегация"	2022
Национална програма „подкрепа на образователните медиатори и социалните работници".	2022
Национална програма „иновации в действие".	2022

Bulgarian ESL policies give priority to *teachers' training* (in ESL risk identification, tolerance, conflict management), *educational support* (additional training and language support), *exploration-based learning* (learning by doing, laboratory practices), *institutional sensitivity* (meetings with Roma authorities), *links between schools and other actors* (good practices sharing between schools), *after-school activities* (trips, museums, concerts), and *physical characteristics of schools* (building renovations). As can be seen, measures reflect a clear intention to improve school inclusion (teachers' training in tolerance, language support, meetings with Roma authorities, and the presence of educational mediators and social workers). The Bulgarian ESL policies give importance to vulnerable populations, especially the Roma population (usually mentioned through general expressions such as "vulnerable communities"). In line with the above, the most common Let's Care ecological level is the Community Level (P3). After this general overview, we are going to highlight only the policies against early school leaving that cover more dimensions:

The **Project Support for Success** [Проект Подкрепа За Успех] is a wide-ranging initiative co-funded by the European Union that started in 2019 and it is estimated to last 3 years (Министерство На Образованието И Науката, 2019). The problem of early school leaving is addressed in the whole document, being its reduction an expected result. Moreover, the focus is on schools with a high con-centration of vulnerable students. Activities were designed to be implemented in primary and

secondary stages. Those activities cover 11 subdimensions of the template designed for this investigation: *teacher's training, family involvement in the school community, training and advice for families, early warning systems, educational support, educational guidance, individualisation of learning, language support for non-native students, after-school activities, specialised and support personnel,* and *collaborations between school and other actors*. Some examples of these activities could be teachers' training for better identification of students' needs; educational support on the Bulgarian language for those whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian; activities to enhance parents' participation in school life; the hiring of cultural mediators and social workers to improve school-parent relationship; educational reinforcement in some subjects; or interschools' events. Although there is almost a tie with Pillar 3, the Let's Care Pillar that is expected to be more impacted is Pillar 1 (Safe Learning).

The **National Program Together for Every Child** [Програма Заедно За Всяко Дете] was launched by the Bulgarian Government in 2020 for preschool and compulsory schools (Министерство На Образованието И Науката, 2020). The Program aimed to prevent school leaving and to improve access to education. It was organised into two different modules. The first module was for supporting the teams who work for tacking school dropouts. The second module was for improving the good practices of parent involvement. The National Program covers 6 dimensions; nonetheless, two stand out from the others. The *training and advice for families* dimension includes measures such as information campaigns to enhance the importance of education or workshops on violence prevention in the school environment. The *collaboration between the school and other actors* is promoted through good practice sharing. Hence, some measures from other dimensions are expounded in case of interest: increasing teacher teamwork or developing individualised learning for students with special needs. Finally, the Let's Care Pillar that is expected to be more impacted is Pillar 3 (Safe School).

2.   *Countries for which the ESL is not a huge problem.*

Unlike the countries previously studied, Lithuania and Poland have maintained ESL rates below the E.U. average during the last ten years. That is why these countries have far fewer ESL policies than the rest of the six countries.

Lithuania.

The table displays the documents analysed for Lithuania

Table 16: References to de documents used. Lithuania. For more information about the analyses conducted, resulting data bases are available by clicking on the following link: https://letscare.europole.org/policies/

LITHUANIA	
TITLE	YEAR

Į s a k y m a s dėl jaunimo mokyklų koncepcijos 2005 m. gruodžio 12 d. Nr. isak-2549. Valstybės žinios, 7-263.	2006
Mokymosi krypties pasirinkimo galimybių didinimas 14–19 metų mokiniams.	2007
Įsakymas dėl 2007–2013 m. sanglaudos skatinimo veiksmų programos 2 prioriteto „viešųjų paslaugų kokybė ir prieinamumas: sveikatos, švietimo ir socialinė infrastruktūra" vp3-2.2-šmm-06-r priemonės „investicijos į ikimokyklinio ugdymo įstaigas" projektų finansavimo sąlygų aprašo patvirtinimo 2009 m. gegužės 27 d. Nr. isak-1121.	2009
Įsakymas dėl 2007–2013 m. sanglaudos skatinimo veiksmų programos 2 prioriteto „viešųjų paslaugų kokybė ir prieinamumas: sveikatos, švietimo ir socialinė infrastruktūra" vp3-2.2-šmm-04-r priemonės „universalių daugiafunkcių centrų kaimo vietovėse steigimas" projektų finansavimo sąlygų aprašo patvirtinimo 2010 m. kovo 2 d. Nr. v-283.	2010
Įsakymas dėl nesimokančių vaikų ir mokyklos nelankančių mokinių informacinės sistemos nuostatų ir duomenų saugos nuostatų patvirtinimo 2010 m. balandžio 13 d. Nr. v-515.	2010
Į s a k y m a s dėl mokyklos vaiko gerovės komisijos sudarymo ir jos darbo organizavimo tvarkos aprašo patvirtinimo 2011 m. balandžio 11 d. Nr. v-579.	2011
Įsakymas dėl 2007–2013 m. žmogiškųjų išteklių plėtros veiksmų programos 2 prioriteto „mokymasis visą gyvenimą" vp1-2.3-šmm-02-v priemonės „alternatyvus ugdymas švietimo sistemoje" projektų finansavimo sąlygų aprašo nr. 2 patvirtinimo 2011 m. birželio 17 d. Nr. v-1092.	2011
Įsakymas dėl ikimokyklinio ir priešmokyklinio ugdymo plėtros 2011–2013 metų programos patvirtinimo 2011 m. kovo 1 d. nr. v-350.	2011
Įsakymas dėl romų integracijos į lietuvos visuomenę 2015–2020 metų veiksmų plano patvirtinimo 2015 m. sausio 29 d. Nr. įv-48.	2015
Įtraukties Švietime Plėtros Gairės	2022

Lithuanian ESL policies give priority to *teachers' training* (in students' welfare, social exclusion, and special needs), *educational support* (compensatory classes), *links between schools and other actors* (municipalities, social services and other schools), and *school coexistence climate* (adequate rules, early identify of coexistence problems, improving school actors' relationships). Preschool is a very

important educational stage in Lithuanian ESL policies. Regarding vulnerable populations, special attention is paid to students with "special educational needs". A lack of measures that enhance the participation of students and families in the school community is noted. After this general overview, we are going to highlight only the policy against early school leaving that covers more dimensions:

The **Order No. ISAK-2549 of December 12, 2005**, regulated the concept of schools for young people[9] (Įsakymas dėl Jaunimo Mokyklų Koncepcijos, Nr. ISAK-2549, 2005). The Youth People Schools were thought to help people from deprived socioeconomic environments re-enter the education system and pass primary education. This policy covers 10 dimensions of the template designed for this investigation, and those are *family participation in the education process, educational and emotional support, specialised and support personnel, educational and professional guidance, curriculum flexibility, individualisation of learning, exploration-based learning, collaborations between the school and other actors,* and *the school coexistence climate.* Hereafter, in case of interest, some measures are compensatory classes for students who re-enter education; multidisciplinary teams composed of psychologists, teacher assistants, and special educators; alliances with families to avoid student truancy; personalised and hands-on learning; or cooperation with social services. The Let's Care Pillar that is expected to be more impacted by this policy is Pillar 1 (Safe Learning).

Poland

The Polish relevant documents are shown below.

Table 17: References to de documents used. Poland. For more information about the analyses conducted, resulting data bases are available by clicking on the following link: https://letscare.europole.org/policies/

POLAND	
TITLE	YEAR
UCHWAŁA Nr 104 RADY MINISTRÓWz dnia 18 czerwca 2013 r. w sprawie przyjęcia Strategii Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2020.	2013
Rządowy program na lata 2014-2016 „Bezpieczna i przyjazna szkoła".	2014

Polish ESL policies highlight *teachers' training* (for improving teacher-student relationships, improving teacher-family relationships, managing violent situations), *coexistence climate* (suitable rules, peers' mediation, strong cooperation with parents), *emotional support* (psychological and

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[9] In Lithuanian "jaunimo mokyklų".

pedagogical assistance), and *links between schools and other actors* (police services, social networks, and enterprises). Vulnerable populations are mentioned in the measures, and the Community Level (P3) is the most common. Nonetheless, it should be noted that we only found two ESL policies in Poland so results can be biased. After this general overview, we are going to highlight only the policy against early school leaving that covers more dimensions, hoping it will prove interesting:

The **Program Safe and Friendly School** [Program Bezpieczna i przyjazna szkoła] was launched in 2008 and extended its duration to 2016 (Departament Zwiększania Szans Edukacyjnych, 2014). Its main objective was to improve the efficacy of the policies about creating safe and friendly schools. It used a preventive scope to tackle early school leaving and adolescent coexistence problems. The scope of the Program took into account students with migrant backgrounds, disabilities, and special education needs. It covers 13 dimensions in the template designed by this investigation, but three of them stand out from the others. The *teachers' training* dimension incorporates measures to increase competencies in emotional support, class management, and building better relationships with students and parents. The *emotional support* is covered by offering psychological and pedagogical assistance. Finally, the *school coexistence climate* groups together policy measures such as peer cooperation for problem-solving, prevention programs against bullying, or principles and rules regarding school behaviour. The Program has been monitored, and some reports could be found on the Internet in open access. To conclude, the Let's Care Pillar that is expected to be more impacted by this policy is Pillar 3 (Safe Schools).

3. *A case of success considering ELS rates.*

To end with the most interesting case, Portugal has drastically reduced its ESL rates during the last ten years. Nowadays, its ESL rate is below the E.U. average.

Portugal.

The documents consulted in Portugal are in the following table:

Table 18: References to de documents used. Portugal. For more information about the analyses conducted, resulting data bases are available by clicking on the following link: https://letscare.europole.org/policies/

PORTUGAL	
TITLE	YEAR
Edital Programa Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar Abertura de candidatura à apresentação de Planos de Desenvolvimento Pessoal, Social e Comunitário, no âmbito do Plano 21|23 Escola+. Portugal.	N/D

Decreto-Lei N0. 55/2009, de 2 de março, estabelece o regime jurídico aplicável à atribuição e ao funcionamento dos apoios no âmbito da acção social escolar	2009
Resolução do Conselho de Ministros No. 23/2016, de 11 de Abril, cria o Programa Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar.	2016
Despacho No. 5908/2017 de 5 de julho, autoriza, em regime de experiência pedagógica, a implementação do projeto de autonomia e flexibilidade curricular dos ensinos básico e secundário, no ano escolar de 2017-2018.	2017
Decreto-Lei No. 54/2018 de 6 de julho, estabelece o regime jurídico da educação inclusiva	2018
Decreto-Lei No. 55/2018 de 6 de julho, estabelece o currículo dos ensinos básico e secundário e os princípios orientadores da avaliação das aprendizagens	2018
Linhas orientadoras para a elaboraçao do plano pluriannual de melhoria (2018/2019-2020/21).	2018
Despacho Normativo n.º 10-B/2018, de 6 de julho, estabelece as regras a que deve obedecer a organização do ano letivo nos estabelecimentos públicos de educação pré-escolar e dos ensinos básico e secundário	2018
Portaria No. 181/2019, de 11 de junho, define os termos e as condições em que as escolas, no âmbito da autonomia e flexibilidade curricular, podem implementar uma gestão superior a 25 % das matrizes curriculares-base das ofertas educativas e formativas dos ensinos básico e secundário	2019
Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 90/2021 Sumário: Aprova o Plano 21|23 Escola+, plano integrado para a recuperação das aprendizagens	2021
Portaria No. 62/2022, de 31 de janeiro, regula a criação e o regime de organização e funcionamento dos centros especializados em qualificação de adultos	2022

Portuguese ESL policies give priority to the *flexibility of curriculums, times and spaces* (school autonomy in curricular contents, times and groups organization, within a range fixed by the law), *students' participation in school* (procedures to listen in decision-making, school budgets, curricular contents), *families' participation in the educational process* (involvement in tutorial actions and participation in curricular decisions), *educational support* (learning reinforcements and tutorial actions in small groups), and *links between school and other actors* (coordination between schools, local authorities and social services in efforts and resources). In general, Portuguese ESL policies

enhance three issues: school autonomy (because schools are the actors closer to students' needs and contexts), good coordination in resources and efforts between schools and different actors, and good procedures to promote the participation of students and families in school decision-making. Different mentions of vulnerable populations are made but no clear target group stands out. The Community Level (P3) is the most common. Finally, it can be noted that measures are usually linked not only to general plans but also to laws. After this general overview, we are going to highlight only the policies against early school leaving that cover more dimensions, hoping they will prove interesting:

The **Educational Territories of Priority Intervention Programme** [Programa Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária] (TEIP for its Portuguese acronym) is a national program launched in 1996. After an interruption between 1998 and 2006, the Program has continued until now. It is in its third generation (TEIP3). TEIP's main objective is to reduce early school leaving (in preschool, primary, and secondary stages) working in disadvantaged areas with high poverty rates and social exclusion. Each school designs and implements an improvement plan for three years, known as the Multi-Annual Improvement Plan, which is periodically evaluated to orientate new actions in the new three-year period. The guidelines for the elaboration of those Multi-annual Improvement Plans cover 12 subdimensions of the template designed by this investigation (Direçao-Geral da Educaçao, 2018): *teachers' training, teachers' participation, development of socioemotional skills, family participation in the educational process, educational support, institution sensitivity, educational and professional guidance, space and time flexibility, collaboration between the school and other actors, school coexistence climate, exploration-based learning,* and *student's participation.* Examples of actions that schools have implemented are family formation for helping students at home, parents' school committees, school assemblies, collaborative work and good practices sharing among teachers, tutorial support for students at risk of ESL, or methodologies of cooperative work among peers. Lastly, the Let's Care Pillar that is expected to be more impacted by this policy is Pillar 3 (Safe Schools).

The **21|23 Escola+ Plan** [Plano 21|23 Escola+] was launched to recover learning losses because of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, and it is expected to be active until this year 2023 (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros, Plano 21|23 Escola+ Plan No.90/2021, 2021). The actions included in the Plan cover 18 subdimensions of the template designed by this investigation. The dimensions that contain more actions are *teaching training, time and space flexibility,* and *after-school activities.* These three dimensions include training teachers in tutoring functions (particularly in connection with socioemotional skills), school autonomy in organising calendars and classes, and after-school sporting and artistic activities. It should be noted that curricular autonomy and school participation have an essential

place in the 21|23 Escola+ Plan as well as across all ESL policies in Portugal. To conclude, the Let's Care Pillar that is expected to be more impacted by this policy is Pillar 3 (Safe Schools).

3.3.   Policy recommendations

This section contains the main economic policy recommendations derived from the results obtained throughout the policy paper. Given the different nature of the analyses performed, the proposals range from the most general (economic analysis) to the most specific (analysis of national strategies).

Regarding the former, the main result from the literature review (Section 2.1) is that high **ESL rates** lead to lower long-term growth perspectives through two mechanisms: **the poor accumulation of human capital and the mismatch between supply and demand for employment**. Our analyses of the data obtained (World Bank Education, UNESCO, OECD, PISA, and Eurostat) empirically confirm the existence of these relationships for the countries in the Let's Care consortium and the entire European Union.

From the economic policy perspective, this result should be translated into **establishing national plans to reduce ESL**, as they improve the three categories of indicators considered in this report: human capital, labour market efficiency and economic performance. Furthermore, **adopting a broad contextual analysis** would be necessary, as each country and region presents special characteristics that could affect the decision to drop out in different ways. This is supported by the empirical analysis in Section 2.2 and the literature presented in Section 2.1.

From this generic contextual policy recommendation, more specific measures should be derived. The results obtained in the political analysis (Section 3) allow us to **formulate the specific recommendations** that should contribute to reducing ESL rates and, thus, improve human capital accumulation, labour market efficiency and, subsequently, long-run economic performance. We group this category of recommendations **in two blocks**: recommendations considering National Strategies analysed and recommendations considering the Let's Care countries' policies analyse.

3.3.1.   Recommendations considering National Strategies analysed:

All these recomendations are rooted in the analysis produced at table 9 of this document.

Finding 1. Only in half of the documents analysed the wording of the specific policy measures is clear and concise.

Recommendation 1. The wording of the policy measures should be clear and concise. A clear and direct policy measure's wording can improve the transparency of the government commitment.

Otherwise, the paper could support ambiguities (explanations and promises that later do not have to be fulfilled).

Finding 2. Only half of the documents show all the policy measures in a summary chart that facilitates their identification and systematisation.

Recommendation 2. The text should include a summary chart with all the specific policy measures that facilitate their identification and systematisation. These charts offer a general view that can improve the organisation of government commitments. Besides, these tools could serve as the basis for planning indicators, time frames and/or division of responsibilities. Malta's Strategic Plan is a good example.

Finding 3. Only half of the documents include a list of indicators that allow the monitoring of the policy measures. What is more, just two of them expose the indicator linked to the policy measure that is intended to be measured.

Recommendation 3. The text should include a list of indicators in which policy measures would be linked to indicators for correctly monitoring the expected results. This makes possible the monitoring of policies and can allow the policymakers to think about information already available, lost information, lines, types of indicators needed, etc. Malta's Strategic Plan and Romania's National Strategy are good examples.

Finding 4. Most of the documents foresee monitoring reports, and half foresee evaluations.

Recommendation 4. The document should plan the monitoring and evaluation by elaborating regular reports and specific evaluations. The planning of regular monitoring reports (e.g. annual reports) and specific evaluation reports (e.g. mid-term evaluation; final evaluation) enriches the commitment to tracking and assessment (especially when the deadlines are clear) and can facilitate the preparation of the required activities. Bulgaria's and Romania's National Strategies are good examples.

Finding 5. Only Hungary's document mentions the internet where the monitoring results will be published.

Recommendation 5. The text should mention where the monitoring and evaluation results will be published. If access to the monitoring reports and evaluations is easy, it could facilitate the search for lessons learned that can be helpful for other actors and countries.

Finding 6. Half of the documents clearly indicate the public body in charge of the evaluation activities.

Recommendation 6. The text should indicate the public body in charge of the evaluation activities. The designation of this public body improves the commitment to evaluation, foreseeing the structures' existence (or future setting-up) enabling it (showing that this is not a mere promise).

Finding 7. Every one of the documents highlights the importance of stakeholders' participation (NGOs, businesses, academies, trade unions, schools, parents, etc.). However, only Malta's Strategic Plan and Romania's National Strategy expressly mention that the document was submitted for public consultation. Having conducted a public consultation reveals that the stakeholders' participation is an aspiration of the National Strategy and a reality, suggesting that some mechanisms and/or processes that allow participation might already exist.

Recommendation 7. During the policy cycle, it should be essential to make participation of different actors close to the issue at hand possible. Stakeholders' participation can provide meaningful insights based on the real needs and knowledge of the school community. The participation mechanisms should be well-designed and well-driven.

Finding 8. Only half of the documents count on financing. Although Bulgaria's, Hungary's and Romania's Strategies mention financing, only Romania's document mentions the specific amount of money.

Recommendation 8. The Strategy should count on financing. The connection with a specific budget makes the real implementation of the policy measures possible. Romania's Strategy is a good example.

Finding 9. All documents give importance to vertical and horizontal coordination. Additionally, most documents expressly mention vertical and/or horizontal coordination structures.

Recommendation 9. The text should mention vertical and horizontal coordination structures with their location and specific functions. Horizontal (same government level) and vertical (different territorial level) cooperation can avoid the duplication of efforts. Having specific structures for that purpose improves the commitment to coordination.

Finding 10. Only Hungary's and Romania's National Strategies mention the realisation of previous studies to analyse possible relations with other Strategies or Plans already in effect.

Recommendation 10. It would be interesting to carry out studies that analysed possible relations with other policies already in effect. This type of analysis should incorporate the intention of going beyond the frame to detect synergies and trade-offs even with other political domains. This can help to avoid thinking in watertight compartments.

3.3.2. Recommendations considering the Let's Care countries policies analysed:

Finding 1. It has been noted that the following dimensions are often left uncovered: (i) Permeability of the education system (ii) Facilitate transitions between school stages (iii) Avoid segregation (iv) Language support (v) Expert support for inclusion (vi) Enable students' participation in school (see Table 22). This circumstance might occur due to the following reasons:

- These dimensions do not need to be covered because they work correctly (therefore, no policy measure is needed).
- These dimensions do need to be covered, but they are being forgotten.
- The policy measures that cover these dimensions exist but are not included in the policies analysed by this investigation.

Recommendation 1. It would be interesting to consider these dimensions during the design of ESL policies to dismiss that they were being forgotten.

Finding 2. This investigation has studied potential connections between policy measures and ecological levels. It has been noted that the coverage of the different levels varies in each country (see Table 23).

Recommendation 2. It would be interesting if policymakers heeded the ecological levels scope during the design of ESL policies. This framework could improve the understanding of connections between policy measures and ecological levels boosting a comprehensive vision.

Finding 3. The Let's Care project highlights the role of (in)security as a cause of early dropout. Along the same line, in the text of the European Recommendation 2022/C 469/01, notions such as "students' well-being", "positive learning climate", "relationships of trust", and "safe environment" gained importance about the school's success. This investigation has found some policies that incorporate a similar approach and some others that do not. Some examples of policy measures aligned could be Malta's Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving: Strategic Action 3.4, Poland's Human Capital Development Strategy 2020: Specific Objective 5; Lithuania's Child Welfare Commissions: Functions 10.2 and 10.7 of the Commissions.

Recommendation 3. It would be interesting to pay attention to students' well-being and security in designing policy measures against school dropouts.

4. Conclusions

Early school leaving has negative economic consequences for the individuals. The students who drop out of school are more likely to have lower employment probabilities and salaries; they also tend to remain in low-status jobs. Specific policies have been promoted to tackle the adverse effects of abandoning school. At least six European countries have driven national strategies to combat early school leaving. The remaining European Union nations have adopted policies encompassing general objectives and specific measures to address this issue.

In the text of the European Recommendations 2022/C 469/01, notions such as "students' well-being", "positive learning climate", "relationships of trust", and "safe environment" gained importance about the school's success. This attaches importance to considering the physical and socioemotional determinants of students' security in designing, implementing, and evaluating policy measures against school dropout. This scope has been introduced in the analysis developed by this investigation and has contributed to identifying critical areas in the design of the Let's Care theoretical model and the construction of the Safe Education Database.

5. Limitations

This research helps to understand what is being done to tackle early school leaving in the six Let's Care countries: what ESL policies' dimensions have been prioritised, what vulnerable groups are considered, and what systemic levels stand out. At this point, some limitations of the analysis could be mentioned.

Firstly, our analysis offers a general overview of the characteristics of policies against early school leaving in the six Let's Care countries. It should be kept in mind that we have not assessed the policies' success in reducing school dropout. To do this, specific analysis in the policy evaluation field should be applied, considering more variables than the political ones. That is why, in the case of Portugal, a causal relation cannot be deduced between the policies implemented and the early school leaving reduction.

Secondly, simultaneously with this research, the Let's Care project systematic reviews (T.2.1) were being carried out; therefore, the role of (in)security as a root cause of early dropout in a multilevel perspective had not yet been completely theorised and characterised. This could generate difficulties in understanding the connections between safety and early school leaving inserted in the ecological levels of Let's Care affecting the policies classification. We return to the Let's Care Project design and rationale to overcome this obstacle. Firstly, the Individual Level is the one that considers the student as the main subject. As the design of the Let's Care Project pointed out, the academic literature indicates that students from safe family relationships tend to be more open to learning. For instance, Granot and Mayseless published a study in 2001 in which they detected that students with secure attachment bonds presented better school adjustment (Granot & Mayseless, 2001, p. 530). Secondly, the Relational Level is the one that considers teachers and teacher-student relationships as the main subject. Teacher-student relationships can predict academic performance, considering what has been highlighted in the Let's Care project design. Along the same lines, Daniel Quin published research in 2017, concluding that good teacher-student relationships can be linked to school engagement (Quin, 2017, p.373). Thirdly, the Community Level considers school actors and their relations as the main subject. Here, the Let's Care Project design highlighted that a positive school

climate can contribute to academic results. Knowing that the school climate concept encompasses multiple dimensions, an example of one of them can be the following. Ponzo in 2013 affirmed that bullied students showed worse academic marks (Ponzo, 2013, p. 1075). Fourthly, the Political Level following the Let's Care design is the one that promotes and enables the three previous pillars (Safe Teaching, Safe Learning, and Safe School) through policy design and development to address educational and social exclusion. Additionally, in case the above was not enough to overcome the aforementioned obstacle and guarantee Let's Care work synergies, we decided to consult two experts in the field who have been involved in the Let's Care project design and were also working on the systematics reviews.

Given the above, as "Safe Learning", "Safe Teaching", "Safe School", and "Safe Education" were not completely theorised and co-created in the Let's Care project at the time of this research, we took the precaution of mentioning ecological levels instead of Let's Care pillars.

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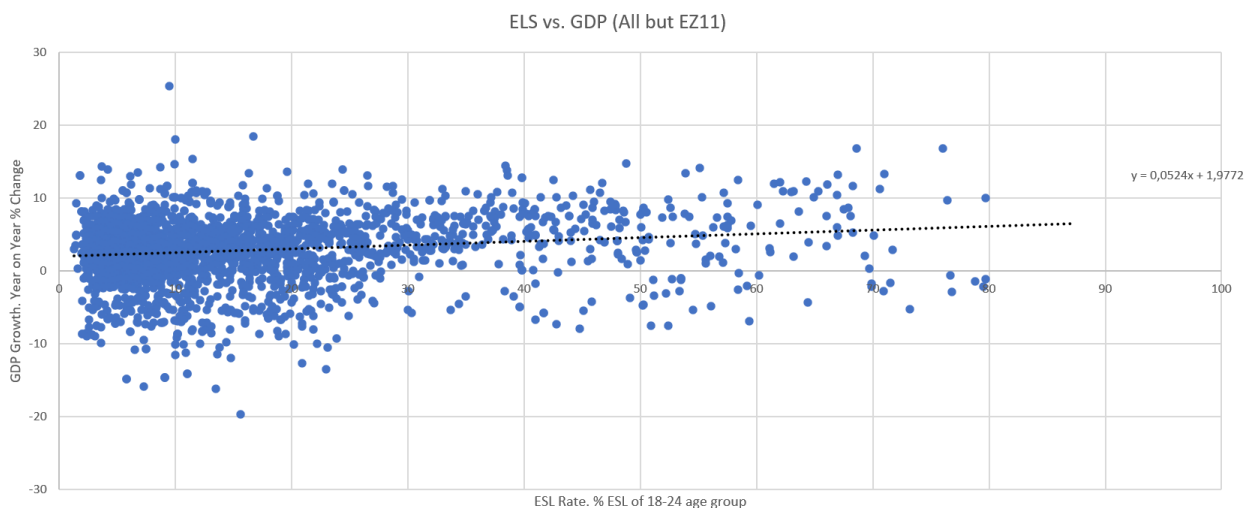
Annex I

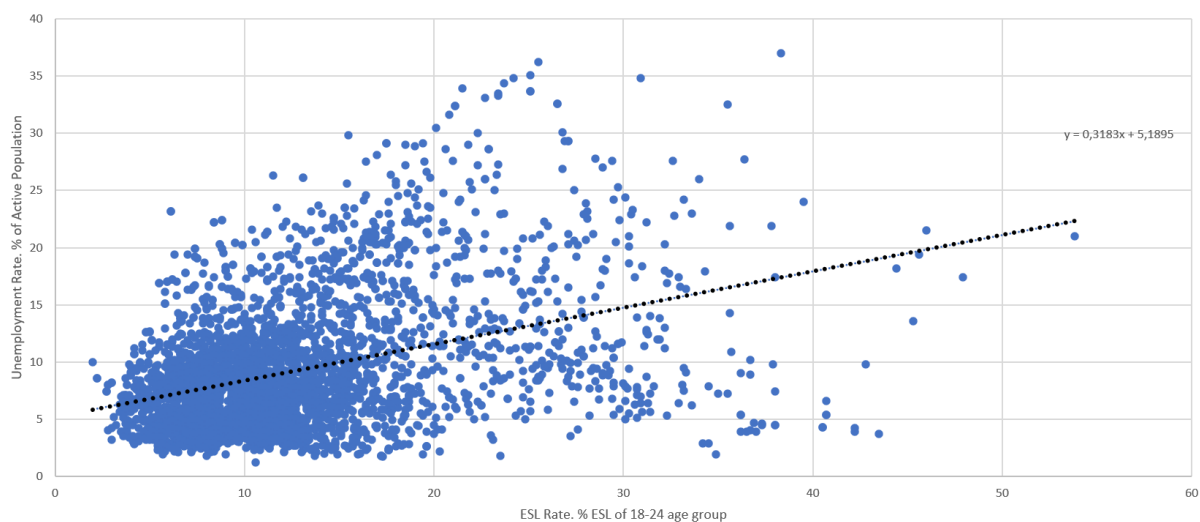*Figure 1: ESL (horizontal axis, 18-24 population %) vs. GPD growth (vertical axis, % year on year change). EZ11*
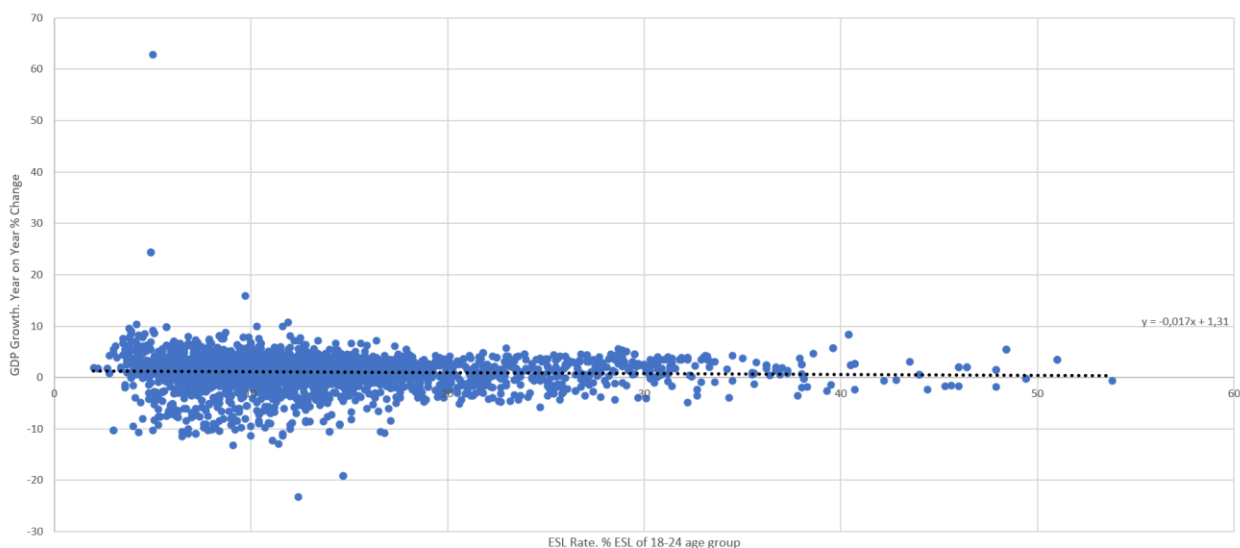
Source. Own estimations based on Eurostat data.

Figure 2: ESL (horizontal axis, 18-24 population %) vs. GPD growth (vertical axis, % year on year change). All but EZ11.
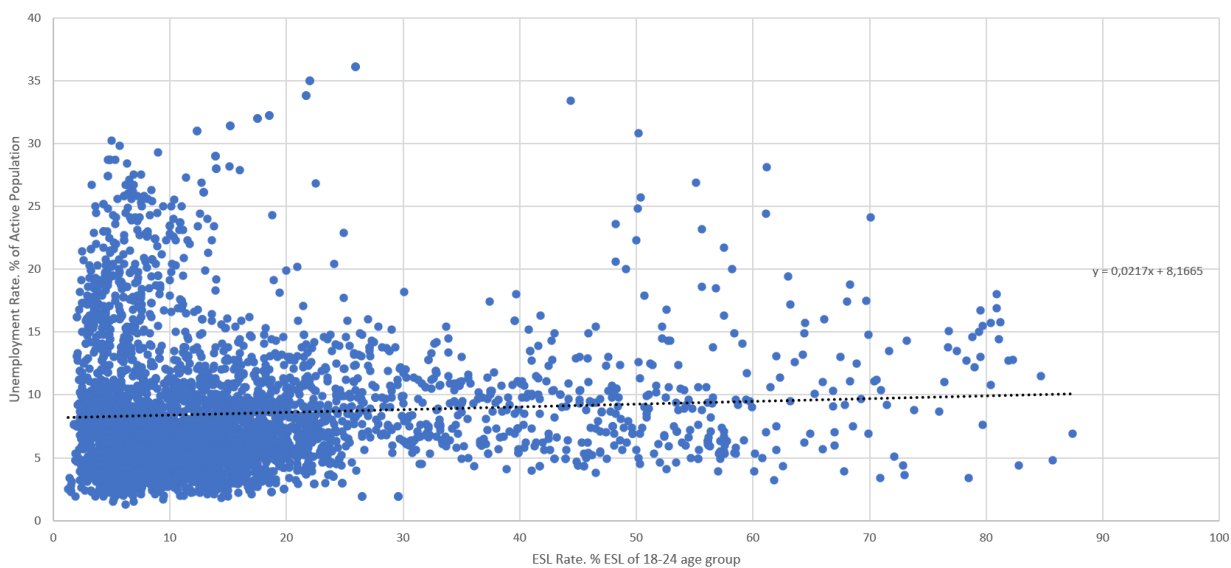

Source. Own estimations based on Eurostat data.

Figure 3: ESL (horizontal axis, 18-24 population %) vs. Unemployment rate (vertical axis, % of active population). EZ11.

Source. Own estimations based on Eurostat data.

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Annex III

FIRST PHASE: What has been said regarding early school leaving at the European institutions level? Have ESL policies been previously classified?

We have revised some of the most relevant documents at the European Union level about early school leaving. Among them, the 2011/C 191/01 Recommendation and (its replacement) the 2022/C 469/01 Recommendation stand out for including political suggestions to tackle early school leaving. Concretely, the impact of the 2011/C 191/01 Recommendation was assessed in 2019. In this analysis, the authors devised groups of policy measures against early school leaving based on the text of the 2011/C 191/01 Recommendation (European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture et al., 2019, pp. A3-A7). We take as a starting point this classification (see Table 27. for more information). Thereon, we rethink it through the whole process described in this Annex (considering inputs from the first policy analysis, the 2022/C 469/01 Recommendation, an expert consultation, and the Let's Care scope and foundations).

Table 24. Relevant references.

AUTHOR	TITLE	YEAR
Council of the European Union	Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving (2011/C 191/01)	2011
European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Donlevy, V., Day, L., Andriescu, M., Downes, P.	Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving. Final report.	2019
Council of the European Union	Council Recommendation of November 28, 2022 on Pathways to School Success and replacing the Council Recommendation of June 28 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving (2022/C 469/01)	2022

<u>SECOND PHASE:</u> Is there any database that contains ESL policies? How are these policies included and classified? How many countries are we going to study? What are the dimensions that emerged from the measures included in these ESL policies?

We have called this phase *"The First Policy Analysis".* In this phase, we started to revise the policies that are contained in the YouthWiki Database in the section called "Preventing early leaving from education and training". Taking a rapid overview of the 27 European countries, we realized that some countries have designed a national strategy against ESL presenting a joint roadmap to fight against the problem, while others have opted for the development of non-connected and varied policies to address the issue. Firstly, we searched for the European Countries that have (or had already have) a national strategy against ESL (at least Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Malta, Bulgaria, and Romania). Then, we also included in our analysis the six Let's Care countries (Spain, Portugal, Poland, Italy, Bulgaria, and Lithuania). In this preliminary study, we studied the policies detected and tried to gather the following information:

- Country
- Title
- Link
- Territorial level
- Year(s) of activity
- Policy brief description
- Institution in charge
- Monitoring and evaluation information
- Measures that can fit with Let's Care aspirations and foundations (the project Grant Agreement).
- Vulnerable population mentioned (taking into account the ones mentioned in Let's Care project: gender, socioeconomical disadvantage status, migrant background, ethnicity, disabilities, and non-parental care).

After this first policy analysis, we revised the groups of measures devised by the authors of the 2011/C 191/01 Recommendation's Assessment so as to introduce some modifications according to our findings in the first policy analysis, the Let's Care research aims, and the study of the 2022/C 469/01 Recommendation suggestions. The decision-making process has been described and substantiated in Table 27. and Table 28. included at the end of this Methodological Annex.

<u>THIRD PHASE:</u> How can Let's Care contribute to the issue? What do we exactly mean by "Safe Learning", "Safe Teaching", "Safe School" or "Safe Education"?

At the beginning of the third phase, we had an initial version of a template that incorporated policy dimensions, and some examples of policy measures that have been previously detected in the *"First Policy Analysis"* explained above. Simultaneously with this third phase, the Let's Care systematic reviews (T.2.1) were being carried out, therefore the role of (in) security as a root cause of early dropout in a multilevel perspective had not yet been completely theorized and characterized (that is why, we do not reference "Safe Learning", "Safe Teaching", "Safe School", and "Safe Education"). To sort out this matter, we come back to the Let's Care Project Grant Agreement in which we have already presented these relationships based on academic literature (see the "Limitations" section of this report for more information). Additionally, we contacted two experts in the caring dimension of education to give their feedback (both were Doctors of Psychology specializing in attachment theory in child and adolescent populations). To guarantee project synergies these experts were also working on the systematic reviews. There were two consultation rounds, in the first one, each expert revised and answered alone, and in the second round, they discussed the issues in which there had been no agreement. We asked the experts about:

a) The identification of those dimensions that could have to do with the idea of generating security (linked to students' self-regulation, teacher-student relationships, or school climate).
b) The identification of those types of measures linked to the Individual Level (student internal regulation).
c) The identification of those types of measures linked to the Relational Level (teacher-student relationships).
d) The identification of those types of measures linked to the Community Level (school climate).

The experts offered us interesting feedback regarding criteria and methodology. After this, we revised the groups of measures devised by the authors of the 2011/C 191/01 Recommendation's Assessment so as to introduce some modifications according to our findings in the expert consultation phase, the Let's Care research aims, and the study of the 2022/C 469/01 Recommendation suggestions. The decision-making process has been described and substantiated in Table 27. and Table 28. included at the end of this Methodological Annex. After this process, we have the final template.

FOURTH PHASE: Are there ESL policies outside the "Preventing early leaving from education and training" section of the YouthWiki database? What is the main vision that we have after the analysis of all the policies mapped?

We have called this phase *"The Second Policy Analysis".* In this phase, we finally analyzed the previously detected national strategies against ESL (from Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Malta, Bulgaria, and

Romania) and the ESL policies of the six Let's Care countries (Spain, Portugal, Poland, Italy, Bulgaria, and Lithuania). All of them are from the "Preventing early leaving from education and training" section of the YouthWiki database. Additionally, we searched on the Ministries of Education websites of the six Let's Care countries to detect some additional policies that had not been reflected in the YouthWiki Database. As a result, more than 60 policies from 11 countries were finally studied[10].

We revised and classified them using the template explained above designed to detect three matters: policies' main dimensions, targeted vulnerable populations (considering gender, ethnicity, migrant background, low socioeconomic status, disabilities, and non-parental care), and potential connections to Lets' Care ecological levels (individual, relational, community and political).

A) To classify policy measures into dimensions we used the following criteria:

Table 25. Template dimensions, criteria, and examples of policy actions.

TITLE	DIMENSION	INCLUSION CRITERIA AND EXAMPLES OF POLICY ACTIONS
TEACHING PROFESSION	Training for teachers	Teachers' training in different issues like tolerance, individualisation of learning, better relationships with students and families, etc.
	Teachers' well-being	Reception plans, good salaries, social recognition, etc.
	Teacher participation	Teacher participation in decision-making (school budgets, curricular decisions, etc.), good practices sharing, etc.
FAMILY AT SCHOOL	Family involvement in the school community	The development of family school bonding through socio-cultural and participatory activities in schools.

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[10] See Annex II for more information regarding the final list of countries and policies analyzed.

	Training and advice for families	Training and courses offered by schools to enhance parents' skills in different topics (education, adolescent crisis, tolerance, etc.).
	Family participation in the educational process	Family involvement in tutoring actions and their right to be informed about their child's academic achievement.
RESPONSE TO EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	Identification of risks and educational needs	Procedures, actions, or methods that detect students' needs in school.
	ESL early warning system	Toolkits that allow the monitoring of students at risk of early school leaving.
	Educational support	Tutoring, mentoring, or supporting actions to overcome obstacles in the learning process. It can be in or out of school time, in groups, or individually.
	Emotional support	Tutoring, mentoring, or supporting actions to overcome emotional obstacles.
	Financial support	Financial aid for school transport, textbooks, materials, food, etc.
	Specialised and support personnel	Support staff to help teachers during classroom; Multidisciplinary teams (composed of psychologists, social workers, etc.).
	Offer educational and professional guidance	Actions to support students in their academic and professional decisions.
	Make curriculum flexible	The possibility of curricular adaptations.

CURRICULUM, TIME, AND SPACES MANAGEMENT	Make the management of times and spaces flexible	The possibility of schools to be flexible about other learning spaces (such as libraries) and times.
	Individualisation of learning	Individualisation of learning, bearing in mind students' special characteristics, needs, and interests.
	Permeability of the education system	The possibility of changing the educational pathway if the student does not fit well with it.
	Facilitate transitions between school stages	Collaborations between schools from different school stages to facilitate transitions, welcome weeks, etc.
PEDAGOGICAL GUIDELINES	Exploration-based learning	Methodologies that enhance exploring the school environment include teamwork, learning by doing, laboratory activities, project-based learning, etc.
	Develop socio-emotional skills	Actions to improve socioemotional skills of students at school.
INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY	Avoid segregation	Actions to tackle school segregation problems (such as accessible school transports to other educational institutions).
	Language support	Actions regarding language support for students whose mother tongue is not the one used in classroom lessons.
	Expert support for inclusion	School staff to help integrate actions such as social workers, cultural mediators, etc.

	Institutional sensitivity	School actions that raise the awareness of inclusion (such as awareness-raising campaigns, meetings with Roma local leaders, etc.).
NETWORKS BETWEEN SCHOOL AND OTHER ACTORS	The link between the school and other actors	School partnerships with other schools, municipalities, social services, or NGOs.
SCHOOL COEXISTENCE AND WELL-BEING	Offer of school and after-school activities	School trips, volunteer activities, sports competitions, or after-school activities.
	Work in the school coexistence climate	Actions against bullying, violence, or harassment; actions that generate a safe and trustworthy environment.
	Physical characteristics of the school	School sizes, renovations of buildings and equipment, as well as new constructions.
	Enable student participation in school	Student participation in decision-making (school budgets, curricular decisions, etc.).

Below, some additional nuances concerning the inclusion criteria are exposed:

- The *"exploration-based learning"* dimension also includes dual VET training.
- The *"educational support"* dimension includes general actions on student's educational support.
- The *"links between schools and other actors"* dimension includes collaboration between business and VET institutions for internships (as well as other external actors).
- The *"identify risks and educational needs"* dimension includes measures on the identification of risk and educational needs not specifically linked to the building and managing of a whole early warning system.
- The *"curriculums flexibility"* dimension includes measures on curricular content flexibility and curricular adaptations to educational needs.
- The *"individualization of learning"* dimension includes measures on individualization regarding processes, planning, approaches, or interests.

- The "*institutional sensitivity*" dimension includes measures on sensitivity to vulnerable populations. It does not have to include all measures that have to do with vulnerable populations, only those that affect the school system (for instance, educational support actions for vulnerable populations would not be added). This would include awareness-raising activities.

B) To classify policy measures into ecological levels we used the following criteria:

The general criteria finally applied are based on the following assumptions: Policy measures linked to Individual Level (P1) are those connected to student internal regulation; Policy measures linked to Relational Level (P2) are those connected to teacher-student relationships and teacher internal regulation; Policy measures linked to Community Level (P3) are those connected to school climate (including the relations between different school community members and the school institutional context); Policy Level (P4) has not been studied because its conception arises from subsequent analysis (it has been considered only for measures related to educational access). Finally, should be remembered that one measure can be classified into different ecological levels at the same time. In the next table, you will see the ecological levels' systematization regarding the template's final dimensions.

Table 26. Template dimensions and connexions with ecological levels.

TITLE	DIMENSION	CONNECTED ECOLOGICAL LEVEL(S)
TEACHING PROFESSION	Training for teachers	P2 – Policy measures connected to teacher-student relationships and teacher internal regulation. *Additionally, it can be also classified in P1 [Policy measures on teachers' training about students' internal regulation] or P3 [Policy measures on teachers' training about school climate (group relational regulation)]. *Furthermore, understanding the interconnections that this methodology allows, some policy measures regarding teachers' training can be classified in other dimensions.

	Teachers' well-being	P2- Policy measures connected to teacher-student relationships and teacher internal regulation. P3 – Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
	Teacher participation	P2 – Policy measures connected to teacher-student relationships and teacher internal regulation. P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
FAMILY AT SCHOOL	Family involvement in the school community	P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
	Training and advice for families	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation.
	Family participation in the educational process	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation. P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
RESPONSE TO EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	Identification of risks and educational needs	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation.
	ESL early warning system	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation.
	Educational support	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation. *Additionally, it can be also classified in P2 [Policy measures that mention tutoring (teacher-student relationships)] or P3 [Policy measures that mention peer mentoring (school actors' relationships)].
	Emotional support	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation.

	Financial support	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation.
	Specialised and support personnel	P2 – Policy measures connected to teacher-student relationships and teacher internal regulation. P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
	Offer educational and professional guidance	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation.
CURRICULUM, TIME, AND SPACES MANAGEMENT	Make curriculum flexible	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation. P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
	Make the management of times/spaces flexible	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation. P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
	Individualisation of learning	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation.
	Permeability of the education system	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation.
	Facilitate transitions between school stages	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation.
PEDAGOGICAL GUIDELINES	Exploration-based learning	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation.
	Develop socio-emotional skills	P1- Policy measures connected to student internal regulation.
INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY	Avoid segregation	P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
	Language support	P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).

	Expert support for inclusion	P2 - Policy measures connected to teacher-student relationships and teacher internal regulation. P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
	Institutional sensitivity	P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
NETWORKS BETWEEN SCHOOL AND OTHER ACTORS	The link between the school and other actors	P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
SCHOOL COEXISTENCE AND WELL-BEING	Offer of school and after-school activities	P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
	Work in the school coexistence climate	P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
	Physical characteristics of the school	P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).
	Enable student participation in school	P3– Policy measures connected to school climate (school actors' relations).

C) To connect vulnerable populations with the policy measures we used the following criteria:
The vulnerability classification depends on the concrete measure analyzed. If it is indicated in the general title of the measure (or in the general objectives of the policy) it will affect all actions, if it is indicated for a specific action, it will affect only that action. The vulnerability categories analyzed by this investigation have been the following: gender, socioeconomical disadvantage status, migrant background, ethnicity, disabilities, and non-parental care.

For expressions such as *"special education needs", "at-risk populations", "vulnerable populations", "disadvantaged groups"* or "marginalized regions" we have created a category called *"indefinite"*.

Besides, wherever possible, the educational stage linked to the measure is identified, and it has been treated like vulnerability classification considerations explained above.

D) Additional methodological criteria applied in this Fourth Phase:

- Last date for policies final compilation: 30th of June 2023.
- This investigation has not analyzed:
    - Specific programs that affect concrete schools or regions (due to possible overlaps in Let's Care project with the work in the Programs Database).
    - Measures on tertiary education.
    - Measures on youth employment.
    - Measures on distance learning or learning through new technologies.
    - Measures on the creation of territorial institutional mechanisms.
    - Measures on ESL investigations.
    - Measures on ESL data and statistics.
    - Measures contained in general policies that are impossible to connect to ESL reduction intention.

E) Additional methodological issues concerning the Excel databases of the policy analysis (available in the Let's Care HUB):

- If the Youth Wiki has included the policy in the "preventing early leaving from education and training" section, we have considered that this policy is linked to ESL (although there is no clear reference to this term in the policy's text). Concerning the mapping performed outside the Youth Wiki (through the information provided by the Ministries of Education webpages), the policies we have selected have references to early school leaving, academic achievement, or educational success.
- Measures and actions have been analysed on a priority basis. However, if these do not exist, general objectives or principles have been included.
- The literal wording reference of the policy measure can be found in the Excel databases in case other researchers find it useful. All the measures have been translated into English language to guarantee a common understanding. We have used Google Translate technology for all the documents' translation.
- One measure can be classified into different dimensions.
- The wording of the measures can be different depending on the document analysed. The general approach is a general title and then an explanatory paragraph. The following structure has been used to explain this relation in the Excel databases:

Figure 16. Syntactic structure in Excel databases.

- For evaluating the existence of Safe School scope (considering Let's Care foundations) in national strategies we have looked for expressions such as "*warm environment", "positive environment", "positive school climate", "safe school climate", "good relationships", "positive relationships"* and *"belonging to school".*
- In the Excel databases of this investigation, appear three dimensions that have not been included in the writing analysis (D2.2.). Those dimensions are the *"key role of kindergarten", "back to school and second chance education",* and *"validation of previous learning".* We have considered them "access dimensions" because they are in relation to educational access but not necessarily linked to students' safety. Nonetheless, their measures (not linked with access but with quality) have been classified in other dimensions too.

FIFTH PHASE: What policies should be highlighted?

We have set the criteria to select the top ten policies to be highlighted in the Safe Education Database. The process was:

- Considering the six national strategies from Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), Hungary, Malta, Bulgaria, and Romania, we selected the best of them taking into account how many dimensions are covered, how the measures are worded, how the indicators are linked, the importance of vulnerable populations, and the incorporation of the Let's Care aspirations and foundations (expressions such as: *"safe school", "school climate", "good relationships";* etc).
- Considering the ESL policies of the six Let's Care countries (Spain, Portugal, Poland, Italy, Bulgaria, and Lithuania), we select the best of them considering how many dimensions are covered, the importance of vulnerable populations, and the possible connections to the Let's Care ecological levels.

Table 27. Working with the starting point groups of measures.

Type of measures	Starting point groups of measures (European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture et al., 2019, pp. A3-A7)	Inclusion	How it has been finally included in the D2.2. analysis	Internal discussion process and final decisions	References from the Recommendation 2022/C/ 469/01 considered in the internal discussion process. (Council of the European Union, 2022)

| PREVEN-TION MEASURES | a) Measures to improve accessibility and affordability of ECEC to families with a disadvantaged background, including migrant and Roma children | NO (included only in Excel databases but not in this report) | | After the first policy analysis and the expert consultation phase, we noticed that these policy measures may be linked to access to education but not necessarily to students' safety (considering the Let's Care scope). Besides, we have chosen to indicate whenever possible the school stage linked to each measure, instead of creating specific dimensions that highlighted certain stages. That is why, the rest of the ECEC measures (not linked with access but with quality) have been classified considering the rest of the dimensions. | |

PREVENTION MEASURES	b) Flexible curriculum choices and pathways, including measures to prevent early streaming, and training options beyond the age of compulsory education.	YES (divided)	a) "Make curriculum flexible": The possibility of curricular adaptations. b) "Permeability of the education system": The possibility of changing the educational pathway if the student does not fit well with it.	After the first policy analysis, we realized that policy measures about flexible curriculum choices (understood as adaptations in the academic content) and flexible pathways (understood as the possibility of changing academic routes in the same educational stage) do not necessarily go together, and analyzing them separately could add an interesting point to the research. For this reason, we divided it into different dimensions.	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Increase the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways, for example by modularising courses, offering vocationally oriented courses or promoting flexibility as regards duration and entry points. Facilitate transitions between levels and types of education and training and between school and future employment, including through recognition and validation arrangements, career guidance delivered by qualified practitioners, and active collaboration with stakeholders, including businesses" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 15).
PREVENTION MEASURES	c) Promotion of active anti-segregation policies, such as those intended to diversify the social composition of schools in	YES	"Avoid segregation": Actions to tackle school segregation problems (such as accessible school transports to other educational institutions).		

	disadvantaged areas (e.g. via admissions)			
PREVEN-TION MEASURES	d) Policies to support multilingual teaching and learning and to promote linguistic diversity in schools, including intercultural learning programmes.	YES	"Language support": Actions regarding language support for students whose mother tongue is not the one used in classroom lessons.	
PREVEN-TION MEASURES	e) Active measures to support parental involvement in school life through partnerships and forums, and parental engagement in children's learning	YES (divided)	a) "Family involvement in the school community": The development of family school bonding through socio-cultural and participatory activities in schools. b) "Family participation in the educational process": Family involvement in tutoring actions	After the first policy analysis, we realized that policy measures about the parents' involvement in school life (e.g. participating in school events) and parents' involvement in the students' learning (e.g. being involved in the strict academic process) do not necessarily go together, and analyzing them separately could add an interesting point to the

			and their right to be informed about their child's academic achievement.	research. For this reason, we divided it into different dimensions.	
PREVENTION MEASURES	f) Measures to ensure access to high-quality VET provision, including the integration of VET pathways into mainstream education, and providing VET routes into upper secondary and tertiary education	NO		1- After the first policy analysis, we noticed that these policy measures may be linked to access to education but not necessarily to students' safety (considering the Let's Care scope). 2- Besides, we have chosen to indicate whenever possible the school stage linked to each measure, instead of creating specific dimensions that highlighted certain stages. That is why, the rest of the VET measures (not linked with access but with quality) have been	

			classified considering the rest of the dimensions.	
PREVEN-TION MEASURES	g) Measures to strengthen links between schools and local labour markets, via access to high-quality work experience, and employer engagement in schools.	YES (grouped)	"The link between the school and other actors": School partnerships with other schools, municipalities, social services, or NGOs.	After the first policy analysis, we realized that we do not need so detailed analysis by each external actor that may collaborate with the school (for the Let's Care project). Therefore, we grouped these measures in a bigger dimension that includes all the different external actors that could be collaborating with schools, such as other schools, businesses, municipalities, social services or NGOs.	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation)* "Encourage collaborative and multi-disciplinary practices in school and partnerships with local services, youth workers, social and health professionals, businesses and the community at large" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 14).

| INTERVEN-TION MEASURES | a) Local or regional governance arrangements to support learners at risk of ESL, incorporating: a) school clusters or networks; b) specialist resource centres; and/or c) multidisciplinary teams or hubs around schools | YES (divided) | a) "The link between the school and other actors": School partnerships with other schools, municipalities, social services, or NGOs. b) "Specialised and support personnel": Support staff to help teachers during classroom; Multidisciplinary teams (composed of psychologists, social workers, etc.). | After the first policy analysis, we realized that policy measures about school clusters, resource centers, and multidisciplinary teams do not necessarily go together, for this reason, we re-organized them by including them in other dimensions (school networks in "the link between the school and other actors" dimension, because it implies collaboration between the school and an external actor; and multidisciplinary teams in "Specialised and support personnel" dimension, because it implies the integration of new staff that supports the specific needs of students). | *(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Provide frameworks in schools offering targeted support to all learners facing learning difficulties or at risk of underachievement, through a multi-disciplinary and team-based approach (e.g. parental engagement programmes through a whole-school approach, mentoring schemes, including peer mentoring, mobilisation of support staff, extra learning time during the school year and/or holiday periods, access to additional learning environments)" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. p.11). ------------------------- *(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Encourage collaborative and multi-disciplinary practices in school and partnerships with local services, youth workers, social and health professionals, businesses and the community at large" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p.14). |

INTERVEN-TION MEASURES	b) Structures for net-working between schools and external actors, including health, youth and community services and civil society organ-isations	YES (grouped)	"The link between the school and other ac-tors": School partner-ships with other schools, municipalities, social services, or NGOs.	After the first policy analysis, we realized that we do not need so detailed analysis by each external actor that may collaborate with the school (for the Let's Care pro-ject). Therefore, we grouped these measures in a bigger dimen-sion that includes all the different external actors that could be col-laborating with schools, such as other schools, businesses, munici-palities, social services or NGOs.	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Encour-age collaborative and multi-disciplinary prac-tices in school and partnerships with local ser-vices, youth workers, social and health profes-sionals, businesses and the community at large" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p.14).
INTERVEN-TION MEASURES	c) Early warning sys-tems for pupils at risk of ESL, including those designed to monitor and take action where learners become dis-engaged from school or where behavioural	YES	"Early school leaving system": Toolkits that al-low the monitoring of students at risk of early school leaving.		

	or attendance issues arise.				
INTERVEN-TION MEASURES	d) Measures to promote inclusive and participatory school environments, including anti-bullying and wellbeing policies within schools	YES	"Work in the school co-existence climate": Actions against bullying, violence, or harassment; actions that generate a safe and trustworthy environment.		
INTERVEN-TION MEASURES	e) Measures to promote rights-based education, including structures to support children's participation in decision-making (e.g. school councils or forums)	YES	"Enable student participation in school": Student participation in decision-making (school budgets, curricular decisions, etc.).		

INTERVEN-TION MEASURES	f) Support for teachers and school leaders working with learners at risk, including ITE and CPD programmes to deal with diversity in the classroom, to support pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds	YES (grouped)	"Training for teachers": Teachers' training in different issues like tolerance, individualisation of learning, better relationships with students and families, etc.	1- After the first policy analysis, we realized that teachers may be trained in other interesting topics that could also impact student success such as attachment psychology, well-being, gender stereotypes or learning individualization (considering the Let's Care scope). 2- Additionally, some policy measures would be difficult to classify under this dimension because their wording was general or brought together very different training topics. So, we decided to make a more comprehensive dimension.	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Make sure that high-quality and research-based initial teacher education and continuous professional development (CPD) prepare school leaders, teachers, trainers and other educational staff to: understand risk and protective factors (...), understand well-being, disability and mental health issues (...), develop competences to teach in multilingual (...) settings, recognise (...) gender stereotypes (...), recognise and address different types of learning difficulties, use collaborative practices (...)" (Council of the European Union, 2022, pp.12-13).

INTERVEN-TION MEASURES	g) Support for teachers and school leaders working with learners at risk to solve difficult teaching situations (e.g. conflict resolution skills) and enhancing teaching staff competences for a positive learning environment	YES (grouped)	"Training for teachers": Teachers' training in different issues like tolerance, individualisation of learning, better relationships with students and families, etc.	1- After the first policy analysis, we realized that teachers may be trained in other interesting topics that could also impact student success such as attachment psychology, well-being, gender stereotypes or learning individualization (considering the Let's Care scope). 2- Additionally, some policy measures would be difficult to classify under this dimension because their wording was general or brought together very different training topics. So, we decided to make a more comprehensive dimension.	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Make sure that high-quality and research-based initial teacher education and continuous professional development (CPD) prepare school leaders, teachers, trainers and other educational staff to: understand risk and protective factors (...), understand well-being, disability and mental health issues (...), develop competences to teach in multilingual (...) settings, recognise (...) gender stereotypes (...), recognise and address different types of learning difficulties, use collaborative practices (...)" (Council of the European Union, 2022, pp.12-13).

| INTERVEN-TION MEASURES | h) Provision of high quality extra-curricular and out of school artistic, cultural and civic education activities for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, including youth exchange and volunteering programmes. | YES | "Offer of school and after-school activities": School trips, volunteer activities, sports competitions, or after-school activities. | For clarification, after the first policy analysis, we realized that in some cases it was difficult to know if the measure was specifically intended for vulnerable populations, so we have also included some general measures. | |

| INTERVEN-TION MEASURES | i) Access to targeted individual support for learners experiencing academic, social and emotional or personal difficulties, incorporating: a) one-to-one academic tutoring; b) coaching or mentoring programmes, and/or c) psychological support (e.g. emotional counselling) | YES (divided) | a) "Educational support": Tutoring, mentoring, or supporting actions to overcome obstacles in the learning process. It can be in or out of school time, in groups, or individually. b) "Emotional support": Tutoring, mentoring, or supporting actions to overcome emotional obstacles. | 1- After our first policy analysis, we realized that policy measures about educational support (considering the academic learning process) and emotional support (considering emotional problems) do not necessarily go together. Additionally, from the Let's Care approach, emotional support is of great importance. That is why we decided to divide it into two different dimensions.

2- Last but not least, we also realized that in some cases it was difficult to know if the support that the measure mentioned was individualized (it was not clarified in the measure wording), so we have included also some general measures. | *(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Provide frameworks in schools offering targeted support to all learners facing learning difficulties or at risk of underachievement, through a multi-disciplinary and team-based approach (e.g. parental engagement programmes through a whole-school approach, mentoring schemes, including peer mentoring, mobilisation of support staff, extra learning time during the school year and/or holiday periods, access to additional learning environments)" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 11).

(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation): "Within inclusive and accessible settings, offer enhanced individualised support for learners with multifaceted complex needs, including social, emotional and mental health needs (e.g. personal tutoring, individual learning plans, interventions by specialist in emotional counselling, psychotherapeutic interventions, multi- |

					disciplinary teams, family support)" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 11).
INTERVEN-TION MEASURES	j) Access to high-qual-ity careers advice and guidance for learners at risk of ESL.	YES	"Offer educational and professional guidance": Actions to support stu-dents in their academic and professional deci-sions.		
INTERVEN-TION MEASURES	k) Financial support for learners whose economic	YES	"Financial support": Fi-nancial aid for school		

		transport, textbooks, materials, food, etc.		
circumstances pose a risk of dropping out, including subsidies or schemes linked to social benefits.				
COMPEN-SATION MEASURES	a) Provision of 'second chance' education and other high quality alternative education programmes for early school leavers, offering flexible and inclusive provision and combining social and academic learning	NO (included only in Excel databases but not in this report)	After the first policy analysis and the expert consultation phase, we noticed that these policy measures may be linked to access to education but not necessarily to students' safety (considering the Let's Care scope). Besides, we have chosen to indicate whenever possible the school stage linked to each measure, instead of creating specific dimensions that highlighted certain stages. That is why, the rest of the second-chance measures (not linked with access	

				but with quality) have been classified considering the rest of the dimensions.	
COMPEN-SATION MEASURES	b) Provision of pathways back into mainstream education for early school leavers, including options for combining education and work or caring responsibilities, and transition or bridging classes	NO		After the first policy analysis and the expert consultation phase, we noticed that these policy measures may be linked to access to education but not necessarily to students' safety (considering the Let's Care scope). Besides, we have chosen to indicate whenever possible the school stage linked to each measure, instead of creating specific dimensions that highlighted certain stages. That is why, the rest of the second-chance measures (not linked with access but with quality) have been	

				classified considering the rest of the dimensions.	
COMPEN-SATION MEASURES	c) Systems to support the recognition and validation of prior learning, including validation of competences achieved in non-formal and informal learning	NO (included only in Excel databases but not in this report)		After the first policy analysis and the expert consultation phase, we noticed that these policy measures may be linked to access to education but not necessarily to students' safety (considering the Let's Care scope). That is why, we have excluded it from the analysis.	

COMPEN-SATION MEASURES	d) Access to targeted individual support for learners in challenging circumstances, incorporating; a) psychological/social, b) educational; and c) financial support	NO		1- After the first policy analysis, we realized that these specific policy measures do not need a specific dimension, they can be included in the "educational support" dimension (if the measure tried to overcome academic learning obstacles), "emotional support" dimension (if the measure tried to overcome emotional obstacles) or "financial support" dimension (if the measure tried to overcome financial obstacles)). 2- Last but not least, we also realized that in some cases it was difficult to know if the support mentioned in the measure was individualized (it was not clarified in the measure wording), so we have included also some general measures.	

Table 28. Working with possible new dimensions.

Possible new dimensions detected during the first policy analysis	How has been included in the D.2.2 analysis	Reasons for inclusion (internal decision process)	References from the Recommendation2022/C 469/01 considered in the internal discussion process. (Council of the European Union, 2022)	Clarifications
Teachers' well-being	"Teachers' well-being": Reception plans, good salaries, social recognition, etc.	The work started around the three systematic literature reviews (Task 2.1) of the Let's Care project was starting to highlight the importance of variables such as "teacher workload stress", "job security" or "job satisfaction with profession" by the time of this report.	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Support the well-being of teachers, trainers, school leaders and other school staff and improve the attractiveness of the teaching profession, including by ensuring adequate working conditions, professional autonomy and active involvement of teachers and trainers in school management, high-quality initial education and continuous professional development, access to support and mental health professionals and services, collaboration and	

		peer support" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 13).	
Teacher participation	"Teacher participation": Teacher participation in decision-making (school budgets, curricular decisions, etc.), good practices sharing, etc.	After the first policy analysis, we noticed that, although teacher participation could be understood as part of their well-being, we would need a separate dimension to compare the results with other dimensions that encompass policy measures about other school actors' participation such as the "enable student participation at school" dimension.	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Support the well-being of teachers, trainers, school leaders and other school staff and improve the attractiveness of the teaching profession, including by ensuring adequate working conditions, professional autonomy and active involvement of teachers and trainers in school management, high-quality initial education and continuous professional development, access to support and mental health professionals and services, collaboration and peer support" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 13).	

Training and advice for families	"Training and advice for families": Training and courses offered by schools to enhance parents' skills in different topics (education, adolescent crisis, tolerance, etc.).	After the first policy analysis, we realized that to support their children's learning process at home, some parents might need the school's help to improve their own academic skills (such as literacy), especially in the case of vulnerable populations (considering the Let's Care scope). The "training and advice for families" dimension could be integrated into the "family participation in the educational process" dimension, nonetheless, we understood it as a previous condition: to participate in the educational process of your child, you will previously need to cover your own academic needs.	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Support parents' involvement in their children's early reading and maths skills, such as through the provision of home books schemes, family literacy initiatives, etc. Increase opportunities for family learning and parents' education, in particular for those with low levels of education and at risk of poverty, in partnership with local services and NGOs" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p.14).	
Identification of risks and educational needs	"Identification of risks and educational needs": Procedures, actions, or methods that	After the first policy analysis, we noticed that we need this dimension (separated from the "ESL early warning system") because in policy measures the identification of educational needs is not always	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Ensure early identification of risk factors such as learning difficulties, developmental problems, language competences and special educational needs, including social and emotional difficulties, as well as early detection of learners at risk of underachievement and dropping out, whilst	

	detect students' needs in school.	linked to the whole development of a specific early warning system.	avoiding labelling and stigmatisation" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 10).	
Make the management of times and spaces flexible	"Make the management of times and spaces flexible": The possibility of schools to be flexible about other learning spaces (such as libraries) and times.	We have noticed that the flexibility and autonomy of curriculum, time, and spaces became especially notable in Portugal's case after the first policy analysis. As Portugal has a successful experience in the reduction of ESL (however, we do not know yet if it is caused by these policies), we thought that could be interesting to include a specific dimension to study the issue and to compare their use in different countries.	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Promote pedagogical approaches that are interactive and experiential as well as culturally and linguistically responsive, in order to build learners' autonomy and responsibility in their learning and to empower them to actively engage in their competence development. Such approaches may include opportunities for blended learning (including digital resources and access to libraries, laboratories, museums, other cultural institutions such as music or art schools, community centres and nature), taking into consideration the needs of learners with disabilities or special educational needs, flexible and heterogeneous organisation of learning time and environments, transdisciplinary teaching and learning, cooperative learning and peer support, as well as the use of assistive technologies for learners with disabilities" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p.11).	We have divided this recommendation into two dimensions ("make the management of times and spaces flexible" and "exploration-based learning") because, after the first policy analysis, we have noticed that the policy measures on flexibility of times and spaces may not be necessarily linked to policy measures on pedagogical issues but rather to school institutional autonomy.

Individual-isation of learning	"Individualization of learning": Individualisation of learning, bearing in mind students' special characteristics, needs, and interests.	After the first policy analysis, we noticed that we were going to need this dimension (separated from others that could already imply individualization such as "make curriculum flexible" or "educational support") for the policy measures on individualization regarding processes, planning approaches, and interests.	*(2011/C 191/01 Recommendation):* "Tailoring teaching to pupils' needs, strengthening individualised learning approaches and providing support for pupils at risk helps them to adapt to the demands of formal education and to overcome barriers created by the education and training system, and can thus contribute to limiting the repetition of school years" (Council of the European Union, 2011, p.6).	
Facilitate transitions between school stages	"Facilitate transitions between school stages": Collaborations between schools from different school stages to facilitate transitions, welcome weeks, etc.	After the first policy analysis, we decided to add this dimension to introduce a difference in nuance with the "permeability of the education system" dimension. In this way, for those policy measures about pathways' flexibility (in the same educational stage) we used "Permeability of the education system", and for those policy measures about transitions' easiness (between different educational stages) we used "Facilitate transitions between school stages".	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Increase the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways, for example by modularising courses, offering vocationally oriented courses or promoting flexibility as regards duration and entry points. Facilitate transitions between levels and types of education and training and between school and future employment, including through recognition and validation arrangements, career guidance delivered by qualified practitioners, and active collaboration with stakeholders, including businesses" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p.15).	

| Explora-tion-based learning | "Exploration-based learning": Methodologies that enhance exploring the school environment include teamwork, learning by doing, laboratory activities, project-based learning, etc. | After the first policy analysis, we realized that we would need a specific category for educational pedagogies policy measures. After the experts' consultation phase, and from the attachment theory foundations (considering the Let's Care scope), they suggested the aggrupation of this type of measures under two different dimensions, one for the exploration view (here we included teamwork, learning by doing, or project-based learning) and the other for the security view (here we included socioemotional education). | *(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Develop curricula that are learner-centred and based on inclusive and relational pedagogies, and allow for diversified and personalised forms of teaching and learning. Active involvement of children and young people in the creation of learning materials should be considered, as appropriate, in particular as regards resources for bullying prevention, social and emotional education, conflict resolution and overcoming prejudice" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p.11). --- *(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Promote pedagogical approaches that are interactive and experiential as well as culturally and linguistically responsive, in order to build learners' autonomy and responsibility in their learning and to empower them to actively engage in their competence development. Such approaches may include opportunities for blended learning (including digital resources and access to libraries, laboratories, museums, other cultural institutions such as music or art schools, community centres and nature), taking into consideration the needs of learners with disabilities or | We have divided this recommendation into two dimensions ("make the management of times and spaces flexible" and "exploration-based learning") because, after the first policy analysis, we have noticed that the policy measures on flexibility of times and spaces may not be necessarily linked to policy measures on pedagogical issues but rather to school institutional autonomy. |

			special educational needs, flexible and heterogeneous organisation of learning time and environments, trans-disciplinary teaching and learning, cooperative learning and peer support, as well as the use of assistive tech-nologies for learners with disabilities" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 11).	
Develop socio-emotional skills	"Develop socio-emotional skills": Actions to improve socioemotional skills of students at school.	After the first policy analysis, we realized that we would need a specific category for educational pedagogies policy measures. After the experts' consulta-tion phase, and from the attachment theory foundations (considering the Let's Care scope), they suggested the ag-grupation of this type of measures under	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Include social and emotional education, bullying prevention and mental and physical health in curricula, from ECEC to upper-secondary education and training" (Council of the Euro-pean Union, 2022, p.11).	

		two different dimensions, one for the exploration view (here we included teamwork, learning by doing, or project-based learning) and the other for the security view (here we included socioemotional education).		
Expert support for inclusion	"Expert support for inclusion": School staff to help integrate actions such as social workers, cultural mediators, etc.	After the first policy analysis, we discovered two roles in school staff that could be important to improve inclusion at schools, especially concerning ethnicity and migrant backgrounds. These roles ("cultural mediators" or "social workers") appear in some policy measures, for instance, in Bulgaria. The introduction of this dimension allowed us to study the issue and to compare their use in different countries.	*(2011/C 191/01 Recommendation):* "Networking with parents and other actors outside school, such as local community services, organisations representing migrants or minorities, sports and culture associations, or employers and civil society organisations, which allows for holistic solutions to help pupils at risk and eases the access to external support such as psychologists, social and youth workers, cultural and community services. This can be facilitated by mediators from the local community who are able to support communication and to reduce distrust" (Council of the European Union, 2011, p.5). -- *(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Encourage effective communication and cooperation with parents, legal	

			guardians and families on their children's educational progress and well-being, including with the help of cultural mediators from the local community. Involve parents, families and legal guardians in curricular and non-curricular activities (such as volunteering in the classroom, reading and homework clubs, tutoring in school libraries, and after-school programmes, as well as job clubs, job fairs, workplace exposure, visits to career centres, etc.)" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p.14).	
Institutional sensitivity	"Institutional sensitivity": School actions that raise the awareness of inclusion (such as awareness-raising campaigns, meetings with Roma local leaders, etc.).	After the first policy analysis, we noticed that we would need a dimension that helps us with the comparative analysis of those measures that have been designed to improve the awareness of inclusion (such as awareness-raising campaigns or meetings with Roma local leaders).	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Promote a school culture which values diversity, fosters the well-being of learners, promotes their sense of belonging, and creates a safe environment for dialogue on controversial issues" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p.14). ---------------------------------- *(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Promote active anti-segregation policies, in particular by adopting admission rules that allow for a heterogeneous school composition and policies focused on the quality of	

			learning, and raise awareness of the benefits of diversity in the classroom for enhancing educational outcomes for all learners" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p.15).	
Physical characteristics of the school	"Physical characteristics of the school": School sizes, renovations of buildings and equipment, as well as new constructions.	The work started around the three systematic literature reviews (Task 2.1) of the Let's Care project was starting to highlight the importance of the school infrastructure in the student's academic achievement by the time of this work.	*(2022/C 469/01 Recommendation):* "Provide additional support for schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, with high numbers of pupils from marginalised backgrounds. This could include reduced pupil-teacher ratios for such schools, where needed, as well as targeted resourcing of materials, equipment and infrastructure" (Council of the European Union, 2022, p.14).	